

FROM 'NOBODY' TO 'SOMEBODY': CHALLENGES AND  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR GUJARATI WOMEN LEARNING ENGLISH IN  
LONDON

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## Abstract

This qualitative case study explores the language learning experiences of a sample of Gujarati women in London and uses tools of qualitative inquiry including 20 semi-structured interviews, two focus groups, observation and document analysis. The process of learning English as a second language is explored through an intersectional lens that takes account of gender, race and class and the corresponding identity constructions of Gujarati women. An inability to speak English for these women is further complicated by inequities brought about by classed structures, private/public patriarchy and processes of 'othering' for migrant women. This study is situated during a period of both rising nationalistic ideas in the UK, and during a precise moment of cultural nationalism in South Asia which is framed by concerns with race, ethnicity, class and gender which informs the formation of British-Asian femininities. This research supports other work that conceptualises identity as being in a constant state of flux, which is made explicitly visible within language learning processes that highlight identity as socially constructed, contradictory, and fluid. The poststructuralist conception of social identity as multiple, as a site of struggle, and subject to change is forms the basis of the theoretical framework. The concept of 'investment' is employed to describe immigrant women's involvement in language learning processes. The findings suggest implications for immigrant language training policies and further research.

While the women interviewed in this research experience 'race' and patriarchy along class lines, they also face a dilemma of balancing their personal lives and protecting themselves from the 'corrupting Western' culture through imposed cultural definitions which might result in them taking up an 'oppressed' South Asian femininity. However, with time and age, the women's subjectivities are reworked through acts of resistance, and examples of subtle manipulation which manifest as expressions of opposition as they perform an appreciation of 'their own culture' while simultaneously appropriating white spaces. Here, through this appropriation, the respondents construct 'resistant identities' and define a new 'third space'. The dichotomies between East and West and tradition and modernity dissipate as the women's agency allows them the actual construction of their identities as they go on learning English and changing their lives. These women's oral histories speak of the gendered and sexualized discourses of assimilation, racism, and 'otherness', as well as other multiple points in which they break down. The conceptual insights gained from studying these Gujarati women are plentiful.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ALBSU	Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit
ESOL	English for Speakers for Other Languages
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FPDA	Feminist Post-Structuralist Discourse Analysis
GP	General Practitioner
IFLL	Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
NIACE	National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
NCGO	National Congress of Gujarati Associations
NRDC	National Research and Development Centre
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
SLA	Second Language Acquisition

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A) MAP OF GUJARAT<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/gujarat/gujaratlocation.htm>

## B) LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN LONDON

### Main spoken language if not English: London 2011

	Usual residents	Share (%)*
Polish	147,816	8.6%
Bengali(1)	114,267	6.6%
Gujarati	101,676	5.9%
French	84,191	4.9%
Urdu	78,667	4.6%
Portuguese	71,525	4.2%
Turkish	71,242	4.1%
Spanish	71,192	4.1%
Arabic	70,602	4.1%
Tamil	70,565	4.1%
Panjabi	68,525	4%
Somali	54,852	3.2%
Chinese languages(2)	53,759	3.1%
Italian	49,484	2.9%
Romanian	39,563	2.3%
<i>Other</i>	578,506	33.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,726,522</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: England and Wales census, 2011. Usual resident population above 3 years of age; \*Share of all those who spoke a language other than English as their main language; (1) with Sylheti and Chatgaya; (2) Mandarin, Cantonese + all other Chinese languages.

## MOBILE

- A poem by Anamika (2005)

[Translation from Hindi by Arlene Zide and the poet]

*"Those who walk within confines are men,  
those who walk beyond are saints."*

No confines for me, no confines  
a closed fist is my boundary wall

I can go wherever I want  
but in this man's pocket

I can connect to anyone anywhere  
but always under his thumb.

Even when he's dead asleep  
he'll tuck me under his pillow  
listening to the tick tock tick of his wristwatch.  
The whole night through  
quietly I'll keep all his messages  
coming from all over the world.

Those silent messages will glow  
in my dark spaces  
They'll glow like the cat's-eyes  
of my dream-memories:  
Mother's ailments  
filed court cases  
all the office scuffles  
all the rush of unfinished kisses all the muffled calls

the faint quivers of many a held-in sob all flicker within me.  
In me flutter the wounded wings of messenger-pigeons  
each feather yanked out and flicked off one by one  
once in a while, even a pat on the wing.  
No matter how modern the world may be  
the expression of love and hate are primordial.

I'm like the roads of old Baghdad  
before the American bombings  
Parallel to the modern malls  
are the old *souks*<sup>2</sup> and the *meena*<sup>3</sup> bazaar  
glittering inside me  
like archaeological ruins dotting the heart of the metro  
But I don't want  
somebody to sit down and  
analyse me  
to pigeonhole me.  
At long last, beyond all contexts  
it's been really hard  
but I've gotten here.

Let me be hummed  
like an *abhang*,<sup>4</sup>  
unfinished.

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<sup>2</sup> Souk is the Arabic word for bazar/market.

<sup>3</sup> Meena means the delicate crystal goblet. Meena Bazar was originally the royal female fete of the Mughals.

<sup>4</sup> Abhang is a form of devotional poetry sung in praise of the Hindu god Vitthala. The word `abhang` comes from the Sanskrit root verb- bhanja meaning 'to end'; 'a' as a prefix means non. Therefore abhang is something non- `ending` or `interrupting`, in other words, a flawless, continuous process, in this case referring to a poem.

હું તો સૂરજમુખીનું એક નાનકડું ?લ,  
મને સૂરજ થવાનાં બહુ કોડ;  
સૂરજને મળતી આખા નભની વિશાળતા ને મારી પાસે છે એક છોડ...

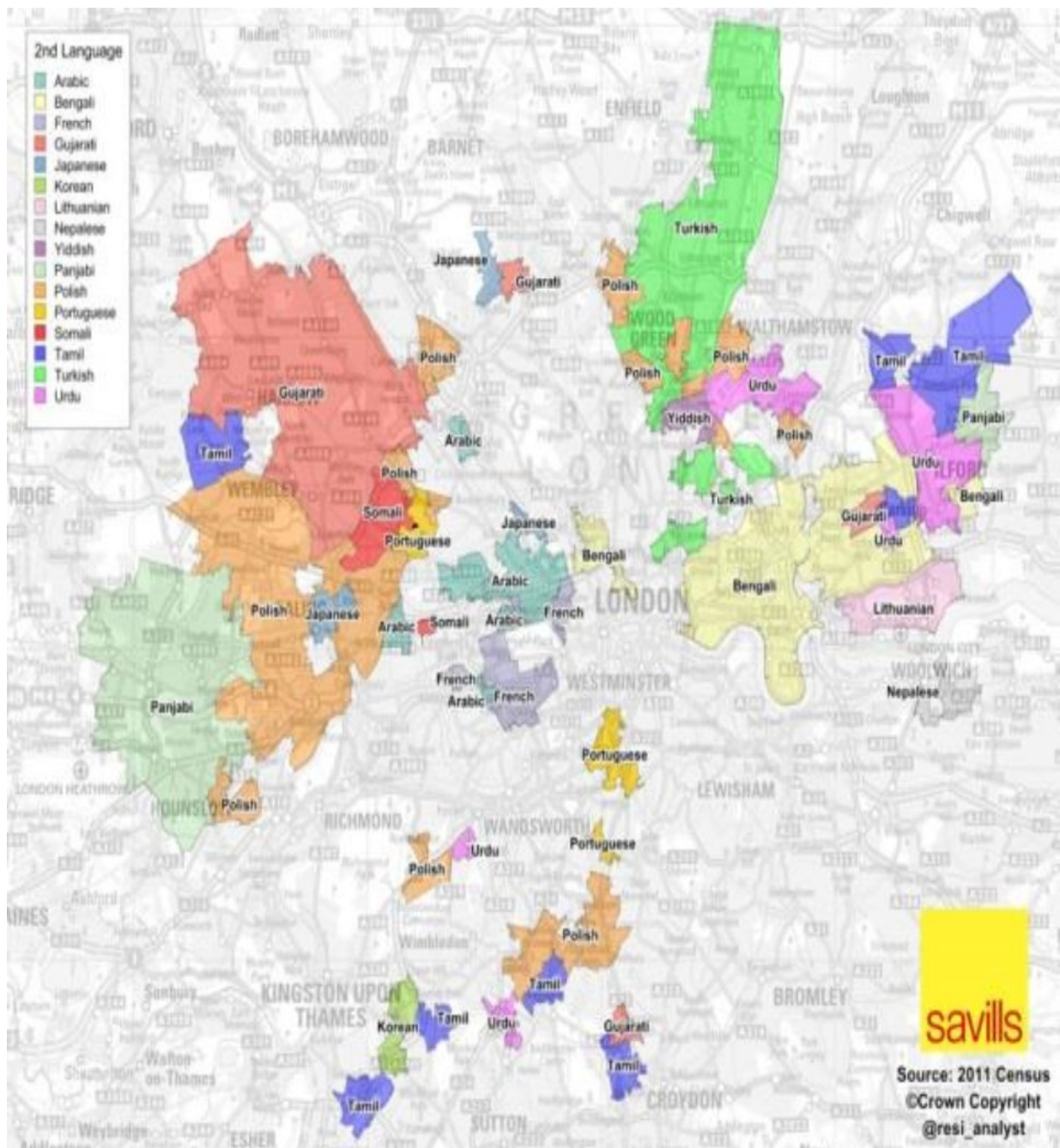
I am a little sunflower  
That aspires to be the sun  
The sun possesses the amplitude of the sky  
All I have is a plant

- Translated from Gujarati, the theme song for a popular TV series based on a best-selling Gujarati novel, 'Saat Pagla Aakashma' ( Seven Steps in the Sky)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Seven steps are significant in Hindu culture as a ritual of marriage where the bride walks seven steps with her groom around the holy fire. It is a promise to be with each other forever with the fire god as a witness.

C) MAP SHOWING THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF L2 IN LONDON<sup>6</sup>



<sup>6</sup> <http://mappinglondon.co.uk/2013/second-languages/>

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. INTRODUCTION: MY JOURNEY INTO THE FIELD

The aim of this research is to develop an understanding of the language learning experiences and resulting narratives of identity formation of Gujarati speaking women in the context of South Asian diaspora in London. The central concern of this research is to analyse the narratives of language learning processes, and to understand the impact that English language speaking abilities have on the daily experiences of the domestic and socio-cultural life of ethnic minority women. This is a qualitative, sociological study and the focus is on the narratives of linguistic adaptation of Gujarati women who negotiate their place within the socio-economic structure of British society. This introduction to the subject of study provides a background, and outlines the aims of the research.

This research topic is the outcome of my personal experiences of teaching English as a second language in London over the past five years. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is a training programme designed to help language-minority adults develop the English language skills necessary to pursue further education, to enter or advance in the job market, and/or to enrich their personal and family lives. ESOL provision is critically important to the UK as it is considered to be helpful for secure social inclusion and it underpins current policy on citizenship and settlement. (NIACE Report, 2006; NRDC Report, 2004)

While I was studying English literature for my MA in Mumbai, the idea of teaching English to South Asians settled abroad was inconceivable to me. In the Indian subcontinent it is generally believed that diasporic populations have a better status, are economically and socially better off and undoubtedly possess fluency in English language. I held a similar opinion about the South Asian community settled abroad. It was only after arriving in the UK that I realised the gendered experiences of South Asian women in Britain, as Brah (1996), Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) and Wilson (2006) have noted, are bound up with differentiation as to, for example, race, class, and region of origin. Being an Indian woman myself, I was aware of the source of social and cultural constraints these migrant women might have had to deal with; yet, I found it ironic that many of these women had to spend

their entire life living in a developed country like Britain without actually being able to learn English. On the other hand, I was also familiar with the collective and individual struggle of South Asian women to resist the power exerted by racialized and patriarchal relations within the context of British society through the academic work of Brah (1996), Yuval-Davis (1992), Shain (2013), Thakar (2003) and Mirza (1997), as well through as my observations of the activities of various social organisations in areas such as Southall<sup>7</sup>. South Asian women have gradually established and secured their rights as individuals in the postcolonial sphere; however, what I particularly found interesting were the new discourses challenging earlier invisibilities and representations of South Asian women. There is very limited research about South Asian women's language learning abilities and their changing identities in the UK, compared to the research about immigrants and English language learning available in the USA and Canada. Much of earlier academic work (Anwar, 1998; Ballard, 1994) on South Asian women seems to have consigned them to either low-status employment or reproduction roles. In fact, however, since the 1970s, South Asian women have been involved in numerous industrial disputes that raised various issues such as low wages, differential rates for the same job, racial and sexual harassment and racism. Brah and Shaw argue (1992:68) that contemporary racialized discourse around the position of South Asian women continues to be informed by that of colonial times. However, over the last few years, there has been an increase in insightful examinations of the position of South Asian women in relation to areas such as family, waged work and collective action.

I decided to focus specifically on the language learning experiences, aspirations and changing identities of South Asian women in the UK, keeping in mind the limited availability of research in this field. I wanted to understand the relationship between power and knowledge, and to find out the role of language in the production of power and difference. This research is an attempt to understand the complexities of language learning, power and difference underpinned by race, gender, age and class. This research examines how South Asian women struggle to reshape the patriarchal relations, racial discrimination and ethnic divisions and transform their identities through, and while, learning English.

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<sup>7</sup> West London's Southall in Ealing borough has strong Indian and Pakistani roots mixed with communities from all over the world.



Being inspired by my observations of South Asian women in contemporary Britain, I wrote an article highlighting the problems of literacy and language abilities amongst the Asian community in the UK for a newspaper <sup>8</sup>in Mumbai (Ray, 2009). I received a number of emails from Indian women living in Britain and India, expressing their views and narrating their problems as well as asking for more information and guidance on these matters. One of these emails reads: 'My life is like a *Tulsi* (sacred basil, found in most Hindu households), I have been uprooted from there (India), planted here (England) and nobody cares.' Her use of the conjunction 'and' instead of 'but' gave a sense of resignation. At the same time, I received emails from two qualified Indian women counsellors who expressed interest in offering help to other Indian women affected by any of the issues mentioned in my article. These responses are eloquent examples of the different layers of South Asian women's identity and agency in Britain today, and they gave me the energy to follow this topic while doing my MA in TEFL, by writing an assignment engaging in the issues of language learning, power and identity of immigrant women in British society.

When I began teaching ESOL in Southall, on one hand I was intrigued by what I perceived as minuscule, even non-existent improvement in the linguistic and communicative competence of these South Asian women. On the other hand, I witnessed some women making progress in leaps and bounds, and owing to lack availability of any further progression retreating into their own world with dejection. It is only through the additional experiences of getting to know several of my participants, being in their homes, and keeping in touch with them over a longer period of time, that I have begun to understand the complicated and profound, weighty aspects of their personal circumstances that seriously restrict their language learning potential and capacity.

I could observe how the general inability to communicate in English affected the women learners in their social lives in multiple ways. They wanted to learn how to communicate with their doctors, with the teachers of their children and with their job search advisors. As a teacher I had to use different strategies to allow more speaking opportunities to women

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<sup>8</sup> Loksatta, published in Marathi, the regional language of Maharashtra, also available online

learners in the presence of male learners in the class. At times I thought it was much easier to use Hindi/Urdu, Gujarati or Punjabi to make their learning easier. It also made me realise that although these women valued their learning, they inevitably had to place their familial duties before their learning. They had to cook, clean, look after the children, the sick and the elderly in the family, attend religious and cultural functions, entertain guests, earn livelihood, in short, do almost all the chores on their own and find whatever little time they could to learn English. No one else but themselves thought that learning English was an important thing for them to do. In a particular class that I taught, I came across a mother-in-law who insisted on sitting in the classroom with her newly arrived daughter-in-law, so that other women didn't have a chance to 'influence' her. I had learners with brilliant career records in their home countries but low self-esteem just because they were not able to speak English. This strengthened my views on the colonial burden of English. In a beginner ESOL parents' group that I taught, I met a Gujarati nurse who had joined her husband in London with her two children after a successful career in Gujarat. She was living in a single room with her family of four, working on meagre wages as a cook during the daytime for other affluent Gujarati families and studying English in the evenings so that she could restart her career as a 'respectable' nurse again. Norton (2000) describes this desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation and the desire for security and safety as the quest for identity. All these narratives of these migrant women highlighted the need to understand their quest for identity in their changing social and economic relations.

Apart from these women whom I encountered as a teacher, there are a number of other women I knew who had problems accessing training programmes owing to numerous reasons such as childcare and male dominance. For me, these intersections of multiple individual trajectories and linguistic worlds were a practical revelation of how learning a language can be an area of struggle. Norton (2000), following Bourdieu, sees language as the locus of social organization and power, and as a form of symbolic capital, the lack of which has proven to be oppressive in case of South Asian migrant women. Older immigrant women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were more disadvantaged. When asked why they never attempted to learn English before, the answers were more or less unanimous: they had never had the opportunity, awareness, time or support.

Bhachu (1988) demonstrates how the migration of South Asian women, as dependants of men, took place in a later period compared to the arrival of men. At the same time she illustrates how this differs within communities as different groups have different trajectories of migration to the UK. The positioning of women when they first arrived in the UK where they were subjected to ethnocentric pathologization forced them to assert their identity either by resistance or assimilation. Although there are many common aspects, the timing of migration has led to differing issues and concerns for the different groups of South Asian women. Brah and Shaw point out that South Asian women's reality is 'constituted around a complex articulation of the economic, political and ideological structures that underpin the interrelationship between race, class and gender' (1992: 64). The term 'South Asian woman' carries within itself various interpretations of religion, caste and class. This complex, heterogeneous group marked by differences of geographical origin, language, class, religion, caste and settlement patterns, necessitates the deconstruction of the category 'South Asian'.

The word ethnicity is derived from the Greek word *ethnos*, meaning a nation. Ethnicity is a multi-faceted quality that refers to the group to which people belong, and/or are perceived to belong, as a result of certain shared characteristics, including geographical and ancestral origins, but particularly cultural traditions and languages ( Bhopal, 2003). These features of ethnicity are not fixed or easily measured, so ethnicity is imprecise and fluid. Ethnicity differs from race, nationality, religion, and migrant status, sometimes in subtle ways, but may include facets of these other concepts. This research has used the terms South Asian, Indian or Gujarati referring to participants in various contexts. The term South Asian is used in this research to define a person whose ancestry is in the countries of the Indian subcontinent, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. This label is usually assigned in the context of UK, although individuals assigned to this category rarely identify with it. It is a prominent signifier of the individual's geographical origin in the Indian subcontinent. A number of participants in this research are twice migrants or the descendants of twice migrant families and do not necessarily share any direct links to the region. Some individuals have shared ancestry with neighbouring countries such as India and Pakistan. The term South Asian is used in this research to identify issues that are

common to all groups belonging to this community. The term Indian is employed to define a person whose ancestry lies in the Indian sub-continent who identifies, or is identified, as Indian or of Indian origin which include several underlying factors, such as language, religion, country of birth, and family origins. A number of participants in this research self-identify with this identity, especially to highlight various aspects their cultural behaviour. The term Gujarati in this research is used to refer to the group of individuals whose linguistic, regional or ethnic identity is Gujarati or individuals identify with this identity.

I began this research with a view that the ESOL classroom itself can be transformed into a research site where a researcher can observe how various intersections, mentioned earlier, play out in the context of language learning. Learning a new language is only part of the experience of migration. The process of acculturation or assimilation as it has been traditionally understood by nations receiving immigrants involves a complicated set of challenges and demands on new citizens. In my ESOL class in Southall, I was faced with pedagogical challenges in the classroom environment that my teacher training courses had not prepared me for. As Roberts and Cooke (2007) rightly point out, classroom based research has been insulated from other domains of the social world and has largely neglected the sociolinguistic processes of globalisation necessary to understand what happens within an adult learning group. As a teacher of ESOL, I was able to observe these intersections in the process of language learning and found myself in a position where I could address the gaps in the research in this field by theorizing the role of language in the production and reproduction of power and difference.

My desire to probe the extraordinary experiences and learning journeys of South Asian women was further intensified by a few insensitive remarks made by an ESOL teaching colleague who was unable to comprehend the reasons why these women were not able to progress in their learning, and who assigned their inabilities to laziness and rigidity. As a female economic migrant of Indian background, I am able to relate to and understand the difficulties these women have to face in their daily domestic and social life; this, too, prompted me to undertake this research.

My informal conversations with ESOL learners often reveal their aspirations to improve their skills further once they achieve appropriate levels of literacy and oral skills in English. The learners often find themselves in a position where they are not offered further access to vocational courses, thereby not being able to polish their acquired proficiency in English further, nor use it in a professional manner. This leads to a loss of their acquired skills over time, and gives them a sense of defeat about their language learning abilities.

ESOL learners have different and specific needs which relate to their educational profile, oral proficiency and their specific language and literacy levels in English. The research into this field is still in its early stages. The Home Office has adopted a reinvigorated policy of citizenship education and integration where English is seen as a key tool for the successful integration of Britain's diverse communities. (Migration Observatory, 2011) However, under the new rules for funding for ESOL, introduced in September 2011, thousands of vulnerable women face being deprived of English language lessons. This move now questions the government's commitment to 'integration' among migrant groups. Following the terrorist attacks in London in 2007, community cohesion and proficiency in English are inextricably linked in the discourse of governmentality, as is shown by the following quote by John Denham (DIUS, 2009a), then Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills: 'the ability to speak a common language is a key factor in securing understanding and integration between communities. It is also a critical step on the path for those seeking citizenship. More than any other factor, learning and using English demonstrates to the wider community an individual's commitment to adapting to life in the UK and enables them to make a productive contribution to the nation's economy.' (Ministerial Foreword, p.2)

If we assume language learning to be an important part of settlement as a citizen, then the question that comes to mind is how much of a role must the country receiving the immigrants play in that process. The services offered in the UK always seemed to be confusing and lacked cohesion. It is difficult to draw a comprehensive picture of the support systems of language classes offered to immigrants due to the sheer numbers of people, varied locations, programmes and services. As a teacher of ESOL and a researcher in a city where migration, integration, cohesion and intercultural communication are contested

issues, the intention of my research is to cast light on the impact of learning English on migrant communities and their changing identities, by studying a group of Gujarati women in the diaspora in the context of London.

## 1.1 THE CONTEXT OF RESEARCH



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It is important to contextualise the process of identity formation of Gujarati women with what was happening in Britain in regard to race relation at both the time of their arrival and the various stages of settlement since. The 1970s was a period when many Gujarati families arrived in the UK as refugees or economic migrants, which is marked as a period of contradictory race discrimination and immigration control legislation (Brah, 1996). Though a new Race Relations Act 1968 had come into force in Britain making it illegal to refuse housing, employment or public services to people because of their ethnic background, the twice-migrants<sup>10</sup> faced racism and prejudice, which made it difficult for them to find

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<sup>9</sup> Source : Google images , East African migrants being received at Heathrow

<sup>10</sup> 'Twice migrants' is a term that is used for people of South Asian origin who have migrated to the UK from countries other than those in South Asia. Typically, these migrants are descendants of people of Indian origin who were settled in British colonies.

accommodation and certain kinds of jobs. It was in 1968 that the Conservative Party MP Enoch Powell made his infamous 'rivers of blood'<sup>11</sup> speech predicting that unchecked immigrants would lead to violence in Britain's cities. This period is also important because of the increasing routine involvement of women in the labour market which was a British phenomenon and a novel way of life to the Gujarati women along with other South Asian and Afro-Caribbean migrant women (Wilson, 2006). Gujarati women who arrived to the UK during that period and who were aged between forty and sixty had few formal educational qualifications and limited grasp of English. Although, they were employed, they were confined to a range of semi or unskilled jobs such as machinists, packers and finishers (Warrier, 1994). However, most women aged between twenty-five and forty during that period, tended to be better qualified and much more accomplished in English (Ramji, 2006). Their skills in English clearly appeared to be a key factor in these women's employability and resultant life-style. Furthermore, their place of origin, whether they were direct migrants from either rural or urban part of Gujarat or twice migrants from East Africa, also made a huge difference to their social status in the UK. Lyon's research (1995) shows that there is a sharp distinction between Africans and Indians settled in the UK. The 'twice migrants' (Bhachu, 1988) appear to differ strikingly from their once-migrant peers. Most of the twice-migrants entered as more or less complete family units had educational qualifications of some sort, many spoke English fluently, and most men (and some women) had professional, technical or commercial employment before leaving Africa. Research shows that the twice migrant Gujarati women who had better skills and competencies could have a better start compared to their direct migrant counterparts who arrived with relatively lower levels of attainment (Ramji, 2003; Warrier, 1994; Spiro, 2003). However, it was not the case for a number of other Gujarati women, who did not have the privileges of education or financial background.

After their arrival in the UK, many Gujarati women strategically responded to the economic needs by becoming active in the labour market as a cheap source of labour. For many, their lack or limited knowledge of English upon arrival, long working hours, familial duties and

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<sup>11</sup> Enoch Powell's April 20, 1968 address to the General Meeting of the West Midlands Area Conservative Political Centre (commonly called "Rivers of Blood") was a speech criticising Commonwealth immigration, and anti-discrimination legislation that had been proposed in the United Kingdom

limited contact with the English speaking community made it impossible for them to gain proficiency in English. Their struggle to improve their status and make their mark, and also their changing and fluid identities are the focus of my research.

Research (Spiro, 2003; Ramji, 2003; Marwani and Mukadam 2014) shows that these transnational migration movements of Gujaratis may be seem to be composed of relatively homogeneous population, however it is a highly complex social movement. The migrants are from various classes, religious sects<sup>12</sup> and economic sectors within their societies of origin. They have migrated with different aspirations and follow different economic, social and survival strategies. By exploring the past five decades of settlement of Gujarati migrant women in London, this thesis investigates the different social locations of sub-groups within the migrant population can have a critical effect on the way the community develops over time. It will also analyse the impact of social policies in the settlement process.

Firstly, this thesis builds upon previous work on South Asian identity and will relate it to the process of language learning. It examines performances of gendered and racialized identities of Gujarati women in London using qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, participatory observation and focus groups. I explore how the identities of immigrant women are negotiated and constructed through the impact of the social policies. A number of researchers have linked social theory to analysis of social trends in specific societies or policy discourses (Solomos, 2003; Shain, 2013; Lewis, 2000; Gedalof, 1999; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Following Norton's (1997) work on identity and investment I will investigate how power operates in relational terms on diasporic communities and profoundly affects their choice of language and formation of identities.

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<sup>12</sup> Various religious sects within Hindu religion; categories: those who worship one or a combination of some of the great Vedic deities or of the Puranic accretions to the orthodox pantheon; and those who deny the regular deities and prohibit idol worship. The former are the Shaivites, Shaktas or Devi Bhaktas, Vaishnavites, and the followers of minor deities. The latter belong to the Arya Samaj, Kabir Panthi, and other such fairly modern sects. These sects are not mutually exclusive. Swaminarayan and Prajapatis are two major Hindu sects in the UK.

Amongst Jainism there are two sects known as Digambar and Shwetambar.

Muslim communities prominently include Ismailis, Dawoodi Bohras and Sunni Bohras. Many of who have their ancestral homes in Gujarati speaking part of Pakistan.



Secondly, following Westwood and Bhachu (2004), I highlight the active ways in which women respond to the circumstances in which they find themselves as a consequence of migration, drawing on available language and literacy resources, and refashion cultural practices and redefine their own identities. The lives of minority women may be complicated not only by gendered and systematic inequalities but also cultural conflicts making them struggle and define and redefine their identity. By exploring their strategic responses to the social context, this research will help to illuminate the basic patterns and principles that are characteristic of women's lives in the diasporic communities in the UK, and will, I hope, contribute to the existing literature.

Thirdly, it is important to probe the theories of Second Language Acquisition where they intersect with the discourses around gender, race and class. By studying the linguistic adaptation strategies used by Gujarati women in the wider social context, this research will bring new dimensions into intercultural communication and individual and institutional interactions and further enhance our understanding of how identities are shaped and performed. Thus this research is situated at the intersection of feminist theory, critical social policy and seeks to explore the issues of gender, race and class as they get entwined in the process of English language acquisition.

## 1.2 THE AIMS OF RESEARCH

The aim of this research is to develop an understanding of the English language learning experiences of Gujarati speaking women in the context of the London South Asian diaspora. This study explores how immigrant Gujarati women learn and use English as an additional language, their perceptions of the place of English in their everyday lives and what learning English means to them. Learning a second language as an adult presents certain challenges, when undertaken in a different cultural and linguistic context. This study provides insights into the migration and learning journeys of Gujarati women and examines their routine everyday experiences as they learn and utilise English. However, the study has significance in raising awareness of perceptions of immigrant women learning and speaking English within the context of UK as these experiences intersect with race, gender and class and contribute to the identity formations of these migrant women. External life experiences and personal relationships are integrally linked to linguistic confidence and identity

formation/subjectivities. This study identifies learners' perceptions, expectations and strategies of their experiences of language learning. It also aims to understand from a sociolinguistic perspective the dynamics of Gujarati women's identities across different migrations and patterns of settlements in the UK. There has been a great deal of change in the policy for ESOL provision in the UK over the past few years. It is known that historically, policy towards ESOL provision has been rather stringent and isolated from other provision for adult education (Hamilton and Merrifield, 2000). Further proposed cuts in funding for ESOL are likely disproportionately impact on women. This thesis argues that it is important to understand women's lives and recognise the context of diverse languages and cultures and the significance of gender while planning for their futures.

### 1.3 OBJECTIVES

- To investigate how Gujarati speaking women understand and value their own experiences of English language learning within and outside the classroom context.
- To examine the challenges and opportunities in the routine experiences for Gujarati women learning English.
- To study the impact of English language learning on shaping identity as it intersects with race, gender and class.
- To explore structural barriers preventing migrant women from learning English.

This research seeks insight into the language learning challenges facing Gujarati adult immigrant women settled in London, who have learnt English upon arrival in the UK, or are still learning the language. While there appears to be consensus on the importance of English language acquisition for the economic and social integration of migrants (Dumper, 2002; Home office Report, 2001; Home Office Report, 2010a, 2010b; Refugee Council, 2005), effectively meeting the specific learning and social needs of adult migrants in the process of learning and teaching the language remains a goal difficult to achieve. It is observed that language learning remains a primary task for many immigrant women who come to the UK but the processes involved may differ by ethnicity, gender, age, culture, and educational level. To understand the complex identities of these women it is essential to

focus on the impact of these component parts on their language learning and the resultant shifts in identity. In this research I plan to investigate the intersecting identities of these women in the process of language acquisition and the social positioning of a group of Gujarati migrant women to enable a better understanding of the structural barriers encountered while learning English and the ways in which they negotiate these in late 2000s.

#### 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research will focus on the following questions:

1. What are the obstacles and challenges faced by immigrant Gujarati women who are not proficient in English? What are the factors that help them gain proficiency in English or prevent them from learning English?
2. What impact do learner identity, subject positioning and agency have on their ability to access, develop and maintain social networks essential to learn a language? How have these challenges and obstacles been addressed by the individuals and the available support systems?

This research unearths a number of challenges encountered by immigrant Gujarati women while learning English upon arrival in the UK, and explores the shifting identities of Gujarati women through analyses of their narratives. The study generated autobiographical data from 20 semi-structured interviews and two focus groups with Gujarati women. The study also explored structural inadequacies namely lack of economic resources, lack of recognition of credentials and experience, racism, accent devaluation, and other issues embedded within processes of assessment, placement, and progression to further education. It also identifies the gender specific needs of Gujarati immigrant women - the focus of this study. The study delves in the issues that affect the process of language learning, such as: isolation and lack of information, family obligations, and cultural barriers, including patriarchal practices and the expectation of women that they carry the main responsibility of being bearers of culture.

The research is concerned to explore how, in the context of migration and second language use, the negotiation of belonging involves the translation and repositioning of self. Through the study of migration narratives of Gujarati women I have sought to examine construction of identity, social belonging and exclusion. In many ways my own experiences as an immigrant mirror those of my research participants. I recall my first and only experience of having my hair pulled and being called a 'paki'<sup>13</sup> by a pair of white kids, on a bus, after coming to London ten years ago. Having lived a relatively privileged life in Mumbai, it was my first experience of being racially marginalized from the dominant mainstream society, which challenged my sense of who I was and forced me to rethink and reconstruct my relationship with a suddenly unstable identity in my thirties. All my relationships with my culture, my religion, my language, my education, my economic and social status were being questioned as an array of identities were seemingly foisted upon me as a non-native English speaker and woman of different colour and culture. This made me crucially aware of how marginalised second language learners constitute their identities and how gender, language, power, and discourse are related to each other in dynamic and transformative ways.

I have followed the feminist post-structuralist notion of identity as "multiple, changing, and a site of struggle" (Weedon, 1997) and drawn on Pennycook (1990), Norton (2000), Pavlenko (2002, 2008) and Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) to explore how post-structuralism identifies 'language acquisition in its social, cultural, and political contexts, taking into account gender, race, and other relations of power as well as the notion of the subject as multiple and formed within different discourses' (Pennycook, 1990:26). This framework offers the potential to examine the impact of political, socioeconomic and historical context on the construction of linguistic identities, not just as complex and shifting multiplicities, but also as sites of, discrimination or resistance. This view inspires research in language learning and use, allowing engagement with full individuals who positioned not only in terms of gender but class. This framework has allowed me to explore discourses surrounding ESOL policies and the unequal distribution of resources that marginalises Gujarati women participants upon migration to the UK, with an additional critical feminist analysis lens. Baxter defines feminist post-structuralist approach as "an approach to

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<sup>13</sup> A derogatory racist term, used in Britain for people from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, originated in 1960s

analysing intertextualised discourses in spoken interaction and other types of text. It draws upon the poststructuralist principles of complexity, plurality, ambiguity, connection, recognition, diversity, textual playfulness, functionality and transformation. The feminist perspective on poststructuralist discourse analysis considers gender differentiation to be a dominant discourse among competing discourses when analysing all types of text. FPDA (Feminist Post-structuralist Discourse Analysis) regards gender differentiation as one of the most pervasive discourses across many cultures in terms of its systematic power to discriminate between human beings according to their gender and sexuality.” (Baxter, 2005:57)

Following this framework implies understanding the possibility of different forms of power for an individual at different (or even at the same) time. It takes into consideration the diversity and multiplicity of speakers’ identities; thus, gender is just one of many cultural variables constructing speakers’ identities (e.g. regional background, ethnicity, class). However, it still views gender as potentially highly significant and it further takes an interest in deconstruction, i.e. working out how binary power relations (e.g., males/females, public/private, objective/subjective) constitute identities, subject positions and interactions within discourses and texts, and challenging such binaries. Thus it entails a ‘transformative quest’ (Baxter, 2005) rather than an emancipatory agenda (Osgood, 2012).

Gender, class and race are constitutive elements essential to agency and identity. Second language learning involves the affective factors such as interactions with the dominant linguistic and cultural group, and related problems of self-concept, identity, and self-esteem. However, these categories are not paid substantial attention to in the larger field of study of second language acquisition. By looking at these intersections this study contributes to an understanding of migration as a gendered process. Through this research I also aim to challenge the stereotypical images of South Asian immigrant women as victims of oppressive cultural and religious systems. Through my interpretation, South Asian women are challenging their marginalisation by performing agency to formulate positive, and often hybrid identities and to create a ‘third space’ for themselves in British society. I argue that we cannot ignore the struggle by these women to fight against the public and private patriarchal structures that they are a part of. Home and family is at the heart of their

existence and they find their ways to construct their identity by establishing their own place. This research brings to light the importance of ethnic communities as meaningful sites for immigrant women. It also plays a part in demonstrating how immigrants contribute to and redefine ideas about language learning, belonging, and citizenship in British society. So the major contribution of this work is to question and rectify the invisibility of women and their presumed passivity in the migration process.

Most of the research about identity and second language learning has flourished in North America and much research about migration and South Asian communities with their experiences of employment, housing, inequality, racism has been conducted in Britain (Brah (1996), Mirza (1997), Puwar and Raghuram (2003)). Through my research I am trying to bridge the gap between these two spectrums i.e. identity construction through language learning amongst South Asian women. Peirce argues that the "lived experiences and social identities of language learners need to be incorporated into the formal second language curriculum" (1995:26). Keeping this in mind, aside from this fascinating body of socio-linguistic literature, I draw upon the research concerning language acquisition, immigrants, and South Asian females to create the theoretical framework for the analysis. The next chapter examines the body of literature that I have used to define 'identity', its significance in feminist theory and language learning, particularly in the social construction of identity along the lines of ethnicity and gender.

## 1.5 THESIS OUTLINE

The thesis is organised into ten chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two provides a review of the literature that has shaped my ideas and the academic context for the study by outlining and discussing theories and concepts that were important to an inquiry into the way language learning impacts identity within the process of migration and settlement trajectories of South Asian women. In Chapter Three, I outline the research methodology, establishing its location in the tradition of narrative inquiry and problematizing the role of the researcher. In Chapter Four I introduce the research participants and general themes emerging from the data. In chapters Five to Eight, I provide

a detailed analysis of the data under the themes of gender, race and class and the impact of 'self' and language learning. In the final, Chapter Nine, I discuss the main findings in relation to my original research questions, then outline their implications and make recommendations for further research on language learning in the context of transnational migration.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The literature that informs this research is reviewed in this chapter. In considering the process as complex and multi-faceted as language learning in the diaspora, there are various aspects that must be considered. This chapter will examine the literature on gendered experiences of Gujarati women and the complex process of their English language learning in the UK. As discussed in the introduction earlier, this research looks at Gujarati women's individual experiences, social realities of being discriminated by gender, race and class where these factors intersect with the process of language learning and contribute to shaping their identities in particular ways. This chapter will review the scholarly arguments in this field.

#### 2.1 OVERVIEW OF SOUTH ASIAN SETTLEMENT IN THE UK

The key features of post-war mass migration of South Asians in the UK due to acute labour shortage in the 1950s are chain migration, kinship and family reunion. Ballard's (1994) detailed account of South Asian communities in the UK has highlighted the multiple ways through which a sense of identity and belonging is created in this process. It discusses the direct impact the place of origin has in building a social universe in a different country. The argument that the initial studies focused on the gendered nature of migration, i.e. a large flow of male transnational migrants and the presence of women as dependant migrants, which led to considerable negligence of women as independent, productive migrants is supported by Ballard's study.

Gordon (1990) has shown through his research how South Asian groups have protected themselves against racial abuse through social and geographical clustering in the UK. The pattern of settlement of South Asians in the UK since the second wave of migration in the 1960s often shows that the migrants move to the areas that already have a South Asian presence. This helps the new arrivals with accommodation and finding work, as well as providing them with a sense of security from racial abuse. Their experiences of racism and discrimination greatly influence their integration into the society. Ballard (1994) has



observed that as a consequence, this often leads to alienation from the majority and radicalization, essentialism or even fundamentalism within the ethnic communities. Brah and Jackson (2008) explored commonalities and differences in ways in which women construct their gendered and sexualised, racialized and ethicized, identities within spaces of sociality and develop alternative ways of being. This sets the background for my research as a number of participants in this research live in an area largely populated by South Asians.<sup>14</sup> My attempt is to further develop the understanding of how these factors impact post-colonial intersected identities of South Asian women by examining the process of language learning.

## 2.2 ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR COMMUNITY COHESION

English language teaching is seen as one of the remedies for community cohesion. The aftermath of 9/11 and the 7/7 attacks in London generated an emphasis in policy on the need to promote 'social (and community) cohesion'. In 2006, while launching the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, the former Education minister Ruth Kelly described one of the aims of the Commission being "to encourage local authorities and community organizations to play a greater role in ensuring new migrants better integrate into our communities and fill labour market shortages." She gave as an example of such an enterprise: "increasing the availability of English teaching" (The Guardian, 2006). After the terrorist attacks on London, in a speech on "Meeting the Terrorist Challenge," the Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown stated, "I believe all who live in this country should learn English, understand our history and culture, take citizenship tests and citizenship ceremonies" (Brown, 2006). A further harsh tone was an indicator of forthcoming changes to immigration policies under the leadership of David Cameron. David Cameron has called for immigrants to learn English, "We're saying that if there's something you need to help you get a job, for instance being able to speak English and learn English properly, it should be a requirement that you take that course, do that study in order for you to receive your benefits" (The Telegraph, 2011). The Home Secretary Teresa May has

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<sup>14</sup> 2001 Census, 39% of the people within the Ealing Southall constituency, comprising Southall and nearby areas, are of British Asian origin. Brent and Harrow top the list for Gujarati.

decided to "get the immigration system back under control". In her proposals in May 2012, she said that it was obvious that British citizens and those settled here should be able to marry or enter into a civil partnership with whomever they choose: "But if they want to establish their family life in the UK, rather than overseas, then their spouse or partner must have a genuine attachment to the UK, be able to speak English, and integrate into our (i.e. British) society, and they must not be a burden on the taxpayer. Families should be able to manage their own lives." (The Guardian, 2012)

The current furore against Islam as a result of the terrorist attacks in Sydney and on the French satire magazine, 'Charlie Hebdo', have once again given rise to anti-immigration sentiments all over Europe and other developed nations. This has also prompted Home Secretary, Theresa May, to pledge to tighten the immigration system that is in 'intensive care' (The Independent, 2014). Under the David Cameron led government, these anti-immigrant sentiments have already resulted in making the funding rules for ESOL courses extremely complicated and funding harder to access for the participants. According to Whittaker and Offord (FE Week, 2015), "By wiping out funding [for most adult skills courses], the government will be risking recreating an underclass of poorly educated adults. They will effectively be withdrawing the opportunity to train or retrain for the least able." This act of denying citizens their basic right to learn English will impact the marginalised communities who desperately need these courses.

Just as the term immigrant is constructed socially by individuals or groups rather than existing as an actual situation or fixed state, so too the socio-cultural identities of immigrant women are constantly being constructed by themselves as they connect with their environments. In my data, I discovered many contradictory, conflicting aspects of their perspectives on their own socio-cultural identities and gender roles. For example, the women of my research cohort appreciated the sense of stability and security provided by their ethnic community, yet simultaneously communicated distaste for the restrictive, controlling aspects of this same community and aspiration to become a part of the mainstream by actively engaging in work and public life. These contradictions show that it is

not possible to categorize them into one static, existing unchanging identity or gender-role conception and blame them for the conditions caused by their social marginality.

The discourses surrounding immigrants suggest that the lack of willingness to learn English is somehow responsible for breakdown in social cohesion or for terrorism. The insistence on the importance of English for community cohesion can be understood; however, the suggestion of unwillingness on part of adult migrants to learn English can be questioned. The struggle women migrants undertake to learn English to become 'active citizens' of British society and the problems they have to face in doing so in spite of being keen on learning English requires attention.

The Gujarati participants I interviewed for this research are residents of those parts of London which are known as 'ghetto' communities of South Asians. As mentioned earlier, Peach et al. (1990) argue that clustering serves as a defensive function against racial harassment, while at the same time creating dense traditional social networks. Ward (2007) and Bhopal (1997) show how this clustering segregates the community, particularly women who have to rely on the family or community network to conduct their lives and never have a chance to interact with the wider social network.

This is one of the obvious reasons Gujarati women, the participants in this research, in spite of their long term residence in the UK, often show limited progress (or perhaps motivation in some cases) in English language learning. Alexander et al.(2010) have shown how this reliance on family and kinship support can prove problematic if those links are challenged through divorce, domestic conflict or death. Diasporic South Asian women experience various forms of patriarchy (Bhopal, 1997) as well as face other factors affecting their active participation in the wider social network. Factors such as educational backgrounds, marital status, age, life stage, personal and family attitudes and experiences all have the potential to make a difference to how they interact with the wider community, access services and succeed in learning.

The visibility owing to their 'difference' does not stop at the colour of their skin but all aspects of their life get scrutinized to highlight their 'different' way of life. Thakar (2003) has

given a good example of how wearing 'respectable' Asian gear can include or exclude a South Asian woman by creating a sense of alienation or belonging. The fear of racialization is so deep-seated that Asian women who conform and wear Asian clothing, find it intimidating to approach White British people and distance themselves by the fear of alienation more so if they cannot speak English. This initial struggle of finding a coherent identity is a constant struggle in daily life where the inability to speak English or the lack of fluency in English and anxiety arising due to this, limits communication and increases segregation. Puwar and Raghuram (2003) have analysed these restrictive boundaries of identity where the traditional and modern dichotomy interplays with multiple layers of self. On one hand, there is a desire for self-fulfilment and independence, and on the other hand there are collectivistic values such as modesty, moderation and role based obligations. The roles prescribed by the culture, such as daughter, mother, wife, sister-in-law etc. are scripted and call for specific behaviours and responsibilities. The cultural considerations invariably impact the balances of power in their private and public life. However, as Ahmed (2003:59) advocates, we must recognise individual 'agency' and hybridised subjectivity in the form of an alternative space, and must not ignore the fluidity of cultural expressions, particularly within diasporic communities. Stuart Hall (1990), Spivak (1988), Bhabha (1990) and many others have used the term hybridity to indicate the evolution of new, dynamic, mixed cultures. When people from one country move into another, they not only bring their home culture to the host country, but with the passage of time, adopt the host culture. This exchange results in two different aspects of cultural formation: on the one hand, there is the localization of global culture; on the other, there is globalization of local cultures—a reciprocal influence referred to by globalization theorists as glocalization. Subsequently, as Vertovec (2006) argues, we see the formation of transnational or hybrid cultures: aesthetic styles, identification and affinities, disposition and behaviours, musical genres, linguistic patterns, moralities, religious practices and other cultural phenomena are more globalized, cosmopolitan and creolized or "hybrid" than even before.

Thus, it can be said of the diasporic communities that identities are constructed within the context of migration to the 'west' thus making the diasporic populations subject to multiple global and local power relations (Ballard, 1994; Werbner and Modood, 1997). Brah (1996)

states that diaspora consciousness and hybridity are expressions of resistance to assimilation, discrimination and fixed categories.

For Hall (1990) cultural identities are 'in transition,' and thus keep evolving while bringing the old and the new world together. Embracing the two cultures can lead to hyphenated identities. Thus, the diasporic location 'is the space of the hyphen that tries to coordinate, within an evolving relationship, the identity politics of one's place of origin with that of one's present home.' The hyphenated space furthers the sense of displacement. In the diaspora, the communities are often in a minority position; thus, they are forced to justify their beliefs and practices. This provokes a consideration of their own culture and religion and their representation in the public space. It can be argued that the minorities are made visible as a result of their minority position and the need for explanation of their identity leads to a heightened cultural and religious awareness. Therefore, diaspora may reinforce faith and lead to "a redefinition of boundaries through the manipulation of symbols and the expansion of their cultural contextualization so as to include as many as possible under a single religious identity." (Radhakrishnan, 1996:207). In order to define and constitute 'self', binaries of 'other' are created which leads to the construction of 'imaginary communities.' Vertovec (2006) argues that this has an impact on the diasporic communities. Women are often seen as the 'cultural carriers' of the group, who transmit group culture to the future generation (Yuval-Davis, 1992).

It is well known that learning English is important for survival in British society. However, as a member of the South Asian community I am familiar with the fear of 'English language learning and its perceived corruptive influence in a largely secular society'. The learning of English therefore, is inextricably interwoven with the development of voice which along with it is perceived to bring in 'foreign' elements of culture to corrupt the essence of existing values. This fear is also reflected in the remarks of certain Indian politicians who at times contemptuously prefer to address modern, English speaking women working in the social and political circles, as 'baalkati' <sup>15</sup>(short-haired).

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<sup>15</sup> Balkati meaning bob haired, this is a remark made by certain Indian politicians to claim that Indian feminist movement is elitist and ignores common women.

Norton's research (2000) in Canada, on the significance of gender in language learning demonstrates that non-English speaking migrant women's investment in English and their opportunities to practise English were influenced by their gendered identities as mothers and wives and ethnographic social practices in their new country of residence. Working with the disenfranchised population and attempting to access silenced knowledge about social reality can be a path of productive knowledge-building. Allowing the women to speak for themselves will not only help us understand their perspective and lived experiences but also support understanding of the interlocking systems of race, class and gender oppression.

Studies have investigated families and what it means for individuals to be positioned between two cultures (Khan, 1979; Watson, 1977). Watson (1977) and Steps-Roe and Cochrane (1990) examine the effect of immigration on the cohesiveness of the South Asian family system, whereas Westwood (1988) explores the force of institutionalised racism which exists throughout the social structure. However, such studies have not specifically examined relations for South Asian women within households. The experience of Asian women within society assumes no degree of difference. Theories of patriarchy have universalised women's experience which may conceal other forms of oppression based on 'race', caste and class which in turn has an impact on their identity formation. Bhopal (1997) citing Walby's work argues that there is a continuum between private and public patriarchy and this concept can be used to explain women's position within society. My research focuses on the construction of Gujarati women's 'identity' which is not a fixed construct but must be understood with respect to their relationship to the broader social, political and economic world. The identities become sites of struggle, change across place and time, and are reproduced in situated social interaction. Drawing on Norton's views on poststructuralist constructs of identity in relation to language learning, my study attempts to gain insights into the power of Gujarati women as language learners, to act as social agents to resist or rewrite their stories.

According to the quantitative findings of a NIACE report, South Asian women are amongst the most disadvantaged adults in British society and are less likely to secure sustainable employment. (Aldridge et al., 2008). They possess few or no English language skills and also

have fewer opportunities to participate in social and civic society which makes them the most excluded women in the UK (Ward, 2007; Shain and Ozga, 2001). Previous studies by Yeandle et al. (2007) and Tackey et al. (2007) see lack of English language skills as the biggest barrier to employment. Further evidence from a NIACE report (2006) suggests that enhancing English language proficiency can help women to build a firm foundation to tackle oppression, discrimination and inequalities as the ability to use English underpins autonomy and independence and increases self-esteem. However, these findings place the onus on South Asian women as individuals rather than viewing structural inadequacies as a cause. All these structural inadequacies such as care responsibilities, shift patterns in low-paid jobs or prioritising study time as well as the social and familial barriers, in my view, call for an examination of the social construction of learner identities.

### 2.3 FEMINIST POST STRUCTURALIST APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE LEARNING

In the 1970s prompted by feminist concerns, language and gender emerged as a separate field of enquiry. Lakoff (2004:166) emphasised how important it is for language teachers “to realize that social context is relevant in learning to speak a second language fluently” and drew attention to language practices and gendered performances. The extent to which power operates to reinforce inequalities in communities is not fully recognized. Pavlenko and Piller (2001) argue that it is essential to understand why it is that women who do not have access to educational resources are often immigrants and from working class backgrounds. Through this research I touch upon this key area to highlight gendered inequalities in access to educational resources, and difficulties arising as a result of socioeconomic background as well as social and cultural practices. The development of voice, often termed “the right to speak” (Bourdieu, 1991), through personal narratives as a form of self-disclosure and knowledge remains a central concern of this research.

### 2.4 SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND MOTIVATION

Researchers in the field of SLA (Second Language Acquisition) regard motivation as a variable independent of social anxiety (Krashen, 1985), which means in spite of high levels of social anxiety, the learner strives to acquire the language. Gardner (1985) argues that

self-confidence arises from positive experiences in the social context of the second language. Many other theorists such as Ellis (1985) and Schuman (1978) have observed that language learners do not live in idealized, homogeneous communities but in complex, heterogeneous ones which have generally been understood uncritically. It is through language, that a person gains access to powerful social networks, therefore it is important to understand how the participants in this research construct their identity with reference to the relations of power and motivate themselves to learn English. Ellis (1994) takes the position that female learners generally do better than males by making use of positive attitudes and better learning strategies. Yet, research shows that in Britain, South Asian women consistently have fewer English language skills and are less likely to secure sustainable employment, indicating that they are the most excluded women in the UK (Tackey et al., 2006). As Norton explains, SLA researchers such as Schumann F. and Schumann J. H. did not consider that the variables (motivated/unmotivated, introverted/extroverted, inhibited/uninhibited) “are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing over time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways in a single individual” (2000:5).

While the terms post-structuralism and postmodernism serve as an umbrella for a variety of theoretical approaches, they maintain a common focus on language as the “locus of social organization, power and individual consciousness.” (Bourdieu, 1991; Pavlenko, 2001:120). Similarly, feminism also embraces a variety of movements, all of which focus on challenging the dominant patriarchy and improving life conditions for the “oppressed groups” (Pavlenko, 2001). Feminist post-structuralism in the study of language learning and identity is, therefore, understood as “an attempt to investigate and to theorize the role of language in construction and reproduction of gender relations, and the role of gender dynamics in language use and change” (Pavlenko, 2001:120). My research draws from this framework, and observes how Gujarati women perform identities through English language learning and how this process impacts their identity. To understand the relevance of public and private patriarchy on these women’s lives it is important to investigate the parameters of power structures these women have to deal with.



## 2.5 GENDER AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

If we assume, as Weedon (1987) has argued, that gender is not a set of traits or a role but rather, a system of culturally constructed relations of power (re)produced through interaction among men and women, then we have to investigate the access to linguistic resources and options for expressions that women have.

Several research studies have investigated the ways in which gender functions not only as a set of social relations but also as a hierarchy, whereby men are at the top (Peirce, 1994). As a result, many communities attribute less value to women's way of speaking and render it inferior to men's linguistic behaviours. As the gendered ideology continues to reproduce itself, the community internalizes such ideas and informs them of whose speech style is normative, whose language is seen as inferior, which forms of communication prevail and ultimately, who gets to speak and where (Pavlenko, 2001).

There has been a growing interest in the field of identity and language and an investigation of the ways in which relations of power impact on language learning has been initiated by a number of researchers (e.g., Sunderland, 2004; Toohey, 2000; Pavlenko and Norton, 2005). These researchers have emphasised the need to understand the heterogeneity of society with reference to inequalities in the society in which gender, race, class and ethnicity play a big part in marginalising the second language learners. Pavlenko (2002) emphasises the need to understand gendered inequalities in access to material and symbolic resources where minority women face a number of gatekeeping practices that restrict their mobility and access to linguistic resources and learning opportunities. As part of South Asian communities the participants in this research have to face and struggle against several restrictive practices. In this research I explore how these restrictive practices have an impact on the process of learning English and analyse how the participants respond to them.

Re-negotiation of identity has been fundamental to the lives of South Asian women in Britain. When it comes to the question of which language to speak at home the decisions are made depending on the communicative competence in English of the members of the family, as well as the desire to assimilate in the host society. The majority of studies on the

language capability and literacy of minority ethnic groups in the UK (JRF Report: 2008) have identified the first language to be the 'preferred' or 'home' language of South Asian populations. As a second-generation born Gujarati, Mukadam (2007) has raised this issue of giving way to linguistic imperialism by assimilating through English language. She further cites the findings of the research by Mercer et al. (1979) where 94% of the respondents, who were sixth form students, were in favour of the maintenance of Gujarati as their primary language. While a lot of studies mainly focus on the second generation (Mukadam, 2014; Ghuman, 1994; Anwar, 1998; Ballard, 1979; Brah and Shaw, 1992), very few pay attention to the linguistic problems of the first generation or parents' cohort. For the first generation, in the early period, their communication with White British people was reliant upon their economic roles, and was influenced by racism and negative stereotyping (Kershen, 2000).

However these studies have not highlighted the additional gendered discrimination such as gender oppression, family opposition, lack of independence or other cultural obstacles faced by women of different cultural backgrounds. (Dumper, 2005; Home office, 2001; Refugee Council, 2005). The support needs vary among groups of South Asian women depending on their experience of prior learning. Women who have little literacy in any language and lack study skills from previous experience of formal education make slower progress and require more intensive and different kinds of support than individuals with high levels of education and literacy skills in other languages. Baynham et al. (2007) and Rosenberg (2007) point to the challenges of trying to respond to the diverse and complex needs and priorities of different individuals learning in the same groups.

Further evidence from a NIACE report (2006) suggests that enhancing English language proficiency can help women to build a firm foundation to tackle oppression, discrimination and inequalities as the ability to use English underpins autonomy and independence and increases self-esteem. Ward and Spacey (2008) researched the Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali women in the UK in their 'Dare to Dream'<sup>16</sup> project and have recommended further

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<sup>16</sup> Ward and Spacey also find that Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali women with little education or fluency in English 'are highly likely to be living in poverty with little access to paid employment and that they are

investigation of the language learning needs of ethnic minority women to advise planners and providers to make the learning process more inclusive and effective.

All of this raises important questions in relation to women's acquisition of English such as their motivation and investment in the process of language learning, the role of religion, ethnicity, gender, culture and class in this process and the spaces of agency they map and whether all these distinctive features are sufficiently accounted for in the models of provision and pedagogy of ESOL policy.

Thus the language learning experiences of Gujarati women can be understood in the light of the discussion about their marginality and exclusion. In order to understand the conditions under which these marginalised women as language learners learn the language, we have to question the complex relationship between language and identity as well as the inseparable relationship between speech, speakers and their social relationships. The contexts of second language learning are imbued with issues of power, identities and access, all of which are capable of changing the language learning endeavour. In short, the feminist poststructuralist view of the relationship between language and gender highlights the inadequacies of existing psycholinguistic theories and allows us to view the processes in a new light.

Kourtzin's study (2000) of immigrant mothers takes into account the power relations, integral to learners' social and cultural contexts. She concludes that:

'many, though no means all, of the restrictions to these women's participation ... are embedded in the cultural power dynamics which exist between men and women' and that 'By so conflating access to education with availability of education, we deal only with the surface aspects of access and fail in our desire to provide relevant, timely, and appropriate English language education' (2000:29-30).

Drawing on from these conclusions this research has probed further into the aspects that are thought to be relevant by the predecessors in this field of enquiry.

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significantly underrepresented in adult education'. This underrepresentation was investigated by NIACE and DWP in 2012 and reported on in ESF Fund: gender Equality good practice guide. This report, which recognises the importance of language, identifies some key barriers to women participating in education such as lack of confidence, fear of losing face or respect with their family and friends, and lack of funds for fares to access programmes.

## 2.6 IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Being fluent in the language of the host society and being included socially, plays an important role in the life of a migrant person. As pointed out earlier, a strong body of research on the topics of identity and language learning in the context of the USA and Canada (Pavlenko, 2002; Pennycook, 2010; Norton, 2000; Rampton, 2006; Norton and Toohey, 2011) highlights that slowly and gradually there is a much needed shift in the field of language education to change the focus from psycholinguistic models of language acquisition to include greater interest in sociological and anthropological dimensions of language learning (Norton and Toohey, 2001; Pavlenko and Blackledge 2003). Special issues of the *TESOL Quarterly* on “Gender and Language Education” (Davis and Skilton-Sylvester, 2004) and “Race and TESOL” (Kubota and Lin, 2006) contain insightful debates on gender, race, and language learning. Recent monographs by May, 2008; Heller, 2007 and Norton and Toohey, 2011; featuring issues of language, ethnicity, and class are evidence of the growing body of research in this field.

It is vital to note the relevance of this framework against the backdrop of psycholinguistic theories of SLA.<sup>17</sup> According to traditional Second Language Acquisition theorists, the inability to speak a second language results from lack of motivation, affective filtering, or socialisation (Krashen, 1985). However, Norton through her research on immigrant Canadian women, established ‘identity’ as another variable operative in the language learning process (1997), which she defines as a term that refers to how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space and how people invest in them. She follows West (1992) in taking the position that identity relates to the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation, as well as, the desire for security and safety. Norton’s qualitative study of immigrant women in Canada established that immigrant women are more likely to be employed in jobs which do not provide an opportunity for second language acquisition. Norton (2000) further establishes that where social distance between the second language group and target language group is wide, the

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<sup>17</sup> Some linguists, in particular Stephen Krashen, distinguish between acquisition and learning. Acquisition is supposed to be a subconscious process which leads to fluency. Learning, on the other hand, is a conscious process which shows itself in terms of learning rules and structures. Furthermore, Krashen claims that there are three internal processors that operate when students learn or acquire a second language: the subconscious ‘filter’ and the ‘organizer’ as well as the conscious ‘monitor’ (Krashen, 1982: 11-45).

second language group are deemed by the host society not to become proficient speakers of the target language. A similar idea has been reflected in the definition of language provided by Fairclough (2001) as “a product of social differentiation – language varies according to the social identities of people in interactions, their socially defined purposes, social setting and so on” (p. 17). However, not all people have access to the language required for participating in certain discourses because of its unequal distribution (Fairclough, 2001: 20).

Bourdieu (1991) discussed social position in relation to language use. The use or production of language is directly related to the speaker’s position in society. He further added that not all styles are appropriate for all settings, nor are they all “legitimate.” Not all speakers possess the competence necessary to speak the legitimized version of the language, which depends upon their social positions. “Speakers lacking the legitimate competence are *de facto* excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence” (Bourdieu, 1991). This “linguistic capital” and the ability to “make a profit” demonstrates a clear affinity between linguistic capital and material wealth, both of which are distributed unequally and depend on the location and the position of the individuals in society.

Pavlenko (2001) further argues that the degree to which a second language is learnt is dependent on the relative size of the benefits which will accrue to the individual from learning the language. In their research on multilingualism, second language learning and gender, Pavlenko and Piller (2001) have allocated four areas relevant to further study of relationship between gender and second language learning:

1. Gendered access to linguistic resources in multilingual contexts
2. Gendered agency in second language learning and use
3. Gendered discursive interactions in multilingual contexts
4. Critical and feminist pedagogy

They also cite the work of Harvey (1994) and Loftin (1996) which shows how the dominant language is representative of masculinity as a power code and minority languages are

associated with femininity and domesticity. As Cameron (1992:202) argues "In a male dominated society, men can resolve this problem [of assimilation] by taking the rewards of cultural change for themselves while requiring the community's women to be living symbols of tradition".

Drawing on this theoretical discussion, I have aimed to problematize the dichotomy between the language learner and the language learning context and foregrounded the role of language as constitutive of identity in my research.

## 2.7 GENDERED SUBJECTIVITY AND AGENCY

According to Weedon (1987:21) language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed. Thus subjectivity consists of "an individual's conscious and unconscious sense of self, emotions and desires" (Weedon, 2004:18). However, individuals are not the authors of their subjectivity, for this is imposed on them by their social context, and the relationship between an individual's subjectivity and her 'self' is therefore imaginary. Ideological state apparatuses, "such as religion, education, the family, the law, politics, culture and the media produce the ideologies within which we assume identities and become subjects" (Weedon, 2004:6). These ideologies are internalised in an individual because they "repeatedly perform modes of subjectivity and identity until these are experienced as if they were second nature" (2004:7). Within this paradigm the individual is seen as diverse, contradictory, dynamic, multiple, and decentred.

It is the notion of agency that holds the key to know how an individual constantly renegotiates positions while moving through wide ranges of available discourses (Davies, 1990, Weedon, 1987). According to Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001), agency is "a relationship that is constantly co-constructed and renegotiated with those around the individual and with the society at large" (p. 148) and infers that agency is connected to the power relations in discourse and is related to society's system of stratification.

Ramji (2003) has explored twice migrant Hindu Gujarati women's agency in successfully establishing communities by developing skills, language, familiarity with urban processes and demonstrating flexible cosmopolitan approaches. However, a number of participants in Ramji's study represent a different class of twice migrant women with prior language learning and work experience. So their responses to the process of migration vary owing to their educational, linguistic background and social status. The focus of my research is marginalized Gujarati women's language learning experiences as they intersect with gender, race and class.

A number of participants in this research have spent considerable time in different geographic locations and many of them are able to communicate in more than one or two languages. Language learning is not a linear process, but a complex process, where individuals are socialized into corresponding communities and they undergo some form of cross-cultural adaptation. As a result, the terms, "target language" and "target culture" often do not relate clearly to the experiences of many transcultural, transnational migrants as they negotiate identities through learning new languages (Higgins, 2009). Instead, and because of these new forms of globalization, new possibilities for self-making have emerged which produce hybrid, in-between, and transcultural identities. Following Blommaert (2010: 102), it is essential that we explore the 'sociolinguistics of mobile resources' which emphasizes the ways that people acquire and use their sociolinguistic repertoires within new spaces and forms of cultural production afforded by globalization.

According to Higgins (2011) much scholarship on language learning often references a target community, a term that refers to the idea of a mostly cohesive group of people who speak a (standard) language in relatively homogeneous ways, and whose cultural practices are likely to differ significantly from those who study the target language of that community. However, these assumptions underlying the visions of language learners and the communities in which they use their additional languages do not relate well to the contexts of actual usage of second language, at times referred to as L2. Adult immigrants often experience social exclusion as well (Norton, 2000), and, in spite of living in the 'target

community' many immigrants often struggle to find opportunities to use their second language in interactionally rich environments (Warriner, 2007).

In order to problematize the language learning in the 'target community' another important strand of identity research, i.e. a post-structuralist approach, is taken into consideration to theorize how second language users develop a sense of self through finding their voice in their second language. (Norton and Toohey, 2004)

Rather than creating fixed identities for learners, including the identification of a specific 'target community ' poststructuralist researchers typically view learners as negotiating their identities in 'sites of struggle' (Norton, 2000). It has to be understood that language learning is a highly multidirectional and multidimensional process and what most of the research in this field has to engage with is the role of globalized identities in these sites of struggle. I find Pavlenko's line of research (2001, 2002, Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004; Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000; Pavlenko and Norton, 2005) central to my research framework. Pavlenko has drawn on positioning theory (Davies and Harr, 1990) to theorize second language learning and use as 'discursive assimilation', 'self-translation' and the 'repositioning' of the self in a new language environment. She further explains that different languages and cultures provide different subject positions for individuals to take up, and because subjectivities are not entirely shared across cultures, learners often must undergo discursive assimilation in order to find 'ways to mean' in the new environment (2001: 133). She has defined feminist post structuralism as approaches to language study that strive to understand relationships between power and knowledge; to theorize the role of language in production and reproduction of power, difference, and symbolic domination; and to deconstruct master narratives that oppress certain groups - be it immigrants, women, or minority members- and devalue their linguistic practices (2004:53) This approach is pivotal to my study, as it recognises the choices made by participants with regard to learning English and shaping their particular understanding of their worlds, and the subject positions they take up within different discourses will tell us more about themselves as women of a particular race, class and culture. These lessons in turn affect how they see themselves as learners and shape their future learning experience and resultant identity.



Along similar lines, Norton (1995) and Weedon (1987) have conceptualized the relationship between power, identity and language learning. Language is seen in the paradigm as the locus of social organization and power and a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) as well as a site of struggle where subjectivity and individual consciousness are produced (Weedon, 1987). It is a general view that language learning is beneficial for society and the individual; however, according to Leathwood (2006), although this is presented as the logical choice for individuals, there is no acknowledgment of the ways in which the choice-making individual of neo-liberal economic policy is a gendered, classed and racialized one (p44). Leathwood (2006) explains how the policy discourse surrounding language learning is constructed in a way that the learner has to take full responsibility for their own learning. Shain (2013) argues that the social mobility is on decline in the UK over the past few decades leading to further structural inequalities as a result of negligent policies of the government. The current funding cuts in ESOL provision, reflecting the neo-liberal shift away from state responsibility to that of the individual in a market economy, implies that individuals, i.e. ESOL learners in this case, are expected to adapt to these 'new times'.

These studies reveal the social and economic exclusion of migrants, based on language and race, and the imposition of colonising identities of reduced symbolic capital by the dominant society. Resorting to this poststructuralist framework, I have located my study broadly within the scope of transnationalism and migration research, and in the view that there is an interplay between the wider discourses in a society and the construction of belonging in the individual efforts of women migrants to the UK. In order to understand the use of these discourses of language learning and identity of Gujarati women, I provide an outline of my approach to identity as flexible, multiple, contextually negotiated and constructed through discourse.

Pavlenko (2002) has discussed agency by describing second language users, seen through the lens of post structuralism, as "agents in charge of their own learning. Human agency is the key factor in their learning" (p.293). Lantoff and Pavlenko (2000) describe agency as co-constructed where individual choice is only part of the picture. They further explain that agency is "both unique to individuals and co-constructed" (p.148) and "allows us to ponder

upon the nature of mediated relationship [sic] between learners and communities of practice and to two possible stages: peripheral and full participation in a particular community of practice” (p.148). If students’ attempts to speak the second language are rejected, learning that language will most likely become a problem. Additionally, over time, human agency shifts according to the social context in which learners find themselves and allows learners to change their investment in, and their goals for, their language learning. Poststructuralism sees human agency and language socialization as primary elements in the activity of second language learning and use. Drawing on these aspects of poststructuralist theories of identity (Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2001; Weedon, 1987; Norton, 1997) I have examined the construction of multiple and situated identities of Gujarati women in social discourse.

## 2.8 TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND IDENTITY

As a result of rising Gujarati migration to the West, research about the state of Gujarat, and its communities, is growing. However, such interest has increased since the turn of the millennium for the wrong reasons. The 2002 post-Godhra<sup>18</sup> pogrom, the genocide of hundreds of Muslims, and the subsequent upward political mobility of Gujarat’s chief minister, Narendra Modi (who eventually became the Prime Minister of India in 2014), in India’s political scene since 2002, has brought Gujarat some international attention, and studies relating to the political make-up of Gujarat have taken precedence. Otherwise, much research still needs to be conducted on Gujarat’s history, culture, and the migration patterns of Gujarati communities. This lack of research may partly be attributed to the drive towards mercantilism and the relatively few Gujaratis in academic and scholarly research fields. Gujarat Studies Association is perhaps, the only international body catering to the needs of scholars focused specifically on Gujarat and Gujaratis, to the best of my knowledge, which, by organising conferences, provides a unique, much needed, platform for research in this area.

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<sup>18</sup> In Gujarat the worst religious violence directed against Muslims by Hindus took place in February and March 2002, leaving an estimated 2,000 dead and 100,000 displaced into refugee camps. The events in Gujarat from 27 February 2002 mark a turning point in contemporary Indian politics. These have profound consequences for the continuation of India as a multi-cultural, secular society, for survival of democracy, and for the unity and integrity of the country.

My major concern in this research is to explore the way in which Gujarati women have experienced what has been termed 'transnational migration' (Ballard, 1994), tried to acquire the language of the host society, and how these processes contribute to shaping their identities. Migrant women's life has been a marginalised genre, as women's role in patriarchal societies was mostly in the domestic spheres, which were not considered notable enough to study. Thus, women's voices have remained generally unheard, including in the field of language and transnational migration.

Basch et al. (1994) define transnationalism as "the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. These processes are called transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders.... An essential element is the multiplicity of involvements that trans-migrants sustain both in home and host societies" (p.6). The intersection of multiple individual trajectories and linguistic worlds offers a unique space to engage in social construction of gender (Pavlenko, 2004). Macdonald (2009) argues that feminist theorists contribute an analysis of women's complex decision-making within migration and economic discourse which regards them as 'aspiring migrants [who] are happy to make easy money doing unskilled work and view it in the context of being an opening to greater opportunities' (Cuban, 2010:180-181). However, this generalisation fails to recognise women's invisible work including attendance in ESOL classes and supporting their children's learning (Reay, 2004) or, in case of South Asian women, taking up other caring responsibilities, for the extended family network.

Transnational migrant women play a crucial role in the construction of what is referred to as 'global care chains' i.e. representing the "personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring." Basch et al. (1994) suggest that the type of work women undertake and their low wages is directly related to patriarchal and capitalistic systems. Segregation within the labour market is symbolic of the roles and responsibilities migrant women have in the family (Walby, 1991). They are mainly based in the caring, clerical, catering and teaching professions but are not able to occupy senior positions easily in their professions. According to Levitas (1998) social inclusion is largely framed in terms of

inclusion in the paid workforce. It ignores women's unpaid work in the home and community. This argument is further strengthened by the Communities Minister, David Miliband in his speech at LSE in 2005:

"Social exclusion is not just about basic conditions. It is about not having access to the things most people take for granted - basic skills, a job, a decent home, sufficient income and contact with friends and family. It is also about the extension of freedom and control that most people feel. " (2005:5)

Bhopal (1997), whose research investigates dynamics of gender relations in South Asian households, points out that domesticity and the home environment is the root creator of patriarchy and oppression. The roles ascribed to women in the home by society and men allow for oppression and patriarchy to flourish. Women are nurtured to believe and accept roles that men want them to do, such as doing housework and being a dutiful and obedient wife and mother. She argues that women are dissatisfied with not having their domestic labour recognized since many women undertake full-time work and are mothers and housewives all at the same time. At the same time migration also necessitates changes in the role of breadwinner in the family across gender lines. There may be considerable cost to individuals, families and communities in terms of damaged male self-esteem, resentment and increased authoritarian behaviour towards women. It may lead to identity confusion and weakening of family cohesion and solidarity. However, I find that by placing women into 'traditional' and 'modern' binaries, Bhopal ignores the 'third space' created by these women to resist patriarchy. This research explores this 'third space' created by these women to reposition themselves in their space and time through agency.

Brah (1996) argued that South Asian women have been neglected in terms of research on understanding their experiences of patriarchy and oppression. South Asian women may also have experiences of oppression from other women such as mothers-in-law or sister-in-law who may act as 'gatekeepers' to women participating fully in society. Brah (1996) further states that Western feminism does not address fundamental issues such as race, class, caste or religion in their discussions of patriarchy and oppression or how this impacts on the way women see their own identity and how others see their identity. This is also supported by

Mirza (1997). She sees the need to recognize “the patriarchal power, its manifestation in terms of female invisibility, and the inevitable psychic social and economic oppression it engaged across the globe” (1997:9) and calls for recognizing difference and diversity within the feminist discourse to interrogate the contradictory white feminist theoretical claims and reclaim a space. This type of reflection and re-negotiation is essential to enable the self-discovery after the long journey through migration, work, identity politics, racism and feminist exclusion (Parmar, 1990; Mirza , 1997).

While studies of South Asian migration, colonisation and class have formed an important context for understanding ethnicity (Ballard, 1994; Brah, 1996), the intersection of gender within migration and class structure remains unexplored. In terms of such research, Gujarati women have also been a neglected group, with some of the early histories in this area (Ballard, 1994; Modood, 1994) focusing exclusively on men. Yet Gujarati women migrants play a distinctive role within transnational communities. Ramji (2003); Mukadam (2007) highlight their economic role in strengthening kinship ties, often to the detriment of their own needs. Each of these areas of research literature provided useful concepts for my theoretical framework for this inquiry. By exploring how participants’ family and community relationships and interactions affect Gujarati women as English speakers, this enquiry has developed a critical feminist approach foregrounding participants’ voices and giving rise to a set of distinctly feminist concerns. Through an intersectional lens of gender, race and class, observing overt and invisible structural discrimination, I have connected the discourses surrounding immigration and settlement and learning English. As my research arises from experience in the provision of English language support programmes, it also aims to increase the awareness available to such programs in the provision of settlement education that will more adequately address these deeper and broader issues.

In this chapter I have discussed the literature that has helped me develop a poststructuralist view of the social construction of identity. I began with the outline of South Asian settlement in the UK, to establish the background for fundamentals of language socialisation in the context of transnational migration. I have considered the ways in which new migrants are subject to coercive norms of an ‘imagined community’. I have also

highlighted the notion of invisibility and the processes of 'othering' through the existing research. I have outlined feminist approaches to theory that provide a framework to contest subjectivity and established the poststructuralist paradigm that is relevant to a consideration of language learning and identity construction resulting from transnational migration for my research. My research is unlike previous studies of migrant language learners in that it provides a holistic analysis of the impact of English language learning on the self, in both private and public interactional domains, in relation to family, society and work.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter is concerned with the methods used for collecting and analysing the data in this research study, and the theoretical principles underlying those methods. It is important to be clear about how the data is gathered. This is a qualitative study exploring specific aspects of the migration and language learning experiences of Gujarati women. As stated in Chapter One (see 1.4) the research questions are:

1. What are the obstacles and challenges faced by immigrant Gujarati women who are not proficient in English? What are the factors that help them gain proficiency in English or prevent them from learning English?
2. What impact do learner identity, subject positioning and agency have on their ability to access and develop and maintain social networks essential to learn a language? How have these challenges and obstacles been addressed by the individuals and the available support systems?

#### 3.1 EPISTEMOLOGY

In adopting the qualitative methodology, I accept that reality and meaning are co-constructed by participants and contextualized, rather than having intrinsic meaning (Gray, 2003). It also means that the researcher cannot achieve objectivity but rather acknowledge what we ourselves bring to our research in terms of our lived experience, certainly, but also our politics and our intellectual frameworks” (Gray, 2003:63). My role as a researcher here is entangled with my various roles as an Indian migrant, an ESOL teacher, a researcher, and a feminist.

This chapter explains and justifies the following:

- the epistemology employed;
- the data collection methods, comprising a discussion of the literature underpinning the methods of data collection, the recording and presentation used, and a description and critical appraisal of the methods and procedures used for data collection;
- the methods of analysis, comprising a discussion of the literature underpinning the methods of data analysis used and a critical appraisal of them, and a discussion of

the literature underpinning the methods used to ensure rigour and transparency of the data and a critical appraisal of them.

### 3.2 THEORETICAL APPROACH

My aim was to examine the ways in which gender, race, religion and socio-cultural background as well as migration history intersect with the process of language learning. In order to investigate this, my research has focused on Gujarati women and their relationship with the majority institutions by taking a woman centred approach.

First of all, as mentioned in the previous chapter, challenges for feminist researchers were focused on the omission of women from 'most forms of codified knowledge' which created a world mainly experienced in terms of male interests and male ways' (Maynard and Purvis, 1994). However, recent feminist research on migrant women has moved beyond this, starting with the deconstruction of simplistic polarization of women/men and essentialist categories of women to focus on the patterns of difference between women and the intersecting axes of inequality and power (Andall, 2003). Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) have examined the intersections of ethnicity and gender, arguing that racial categorisation involves discourses relating to subordination as well as exclusion. During the past two decades, an increasing body of post-colonial, non-white, feminist writers has emerged to elaborate feminist theories of intersectionality by considering the multiple positionings through sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, class and culture identifying 'women' and their codifications of identity. (Gedalof, 1999).

The origin of the notion of intersectionality can be found in Kimberly Craneshaw's article, 'Mapping the Margins' (1994). She uses the concept of intersectionality to denote the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences. Her idea is to illustrate that many of the experiences Black women face are not subsumed within the traditional boundaries of race or gender discrimination as these boundaries are currently understood, and that the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the women race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately (Craneshaw, 1994).



According to Susanne Knudsen, intersectionality is a theory “to analyse how social and cultural categories intertwine. The relationships between gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, class and nationality are examined on multiple levels to explicate various inequalities that exist in society. They are not independent of one another but instead are interrelated forms of oppression that are manifested in multiple forms of discrimination” (2006:61).

Few researchers have explored issues of difference and diversity within the research process (Bhopal, 2001; Maynard and Purvis, 1994). Some have explored how issues of ‘race’, class and gender positions of the respondents intersect with those of the researcher (Bhopal, 1997; Osgood, 2012). Gujarati women, the participants in this research, as immigrants in the UK, experience marginalisation because of their inability to speak English which intersects with other aspects such as their gender, race and class. By following the feminist research methodology, I intend to challenge the commonly accepted uni-dimensional view of South Asian women which constructs them as passive, deficient, backward and lacking agency, and create a positive and empowering research experience for the participants by including their voices in the existing body of research. Ward (2008) in her ‘Dare to Dream’ project on the learning journeys of women mentions that there is a dearth of literature on the lives, aspirations and learning needs of ethnic minority women and her research starts to scratch the surface.

Block (2007) notes how identity is apparent in the work of Norton (2000) on immigrant women in Canada, Pavlenko, Blackledge, Piller and Teutsch-Dwyer (2001) on language learning and gender, Bayley and Schechter (2003) on language socialization and multilingualism and his own work on multilingual identities in London (Block, 2007). According to him, in social sciences and in applied linguistics in particular, the default position as regards identity is to frame it as a social process as opposed to a determined and fixed product, following the tenets of poststructuralism. He further argues that, identity is a key aspect and there is a need to balance the acceptance of structure without sidelining the concept of hybridity.

“Indeed, the broadly post-structuralist approach to identity that has been borrowed from the social sciences by applied linguists has been poststructuralist in its embrace of hybridity and third place, but it has also included and retained structure.” (2006:24).

Duff (2012) outlines this position as follows:

Poststructuralism is an approach to research that questions fixed categories or structures, oppositional binaries, closed systems, and stable —truths and embraces seeming contradictions (p. 412).

Post-structuralist researchers examine how such categories are discursively and socially constructed, taken up, resisted (the site of struggle), and so on.

Relations between learners and their host community are recognised as sites of immense struggle by Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) and Blackledge (2005, 2006). On the other hand, Brah (1996), Bhopal (1997), Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) inform us about the intersectionality experienced by women from different ethnic minorities. As minority speakers negotiate entry into a majority-speaking society, they face difficulties, which according to Block ‘rather less research has identified the ways in which such domains are constructed and their borders reinforced’ (2006:22).

Another reason why intersectionality matters in my research is that it has always been argued that Gujarati Diasporas are making a great contribution to the socio-economic, cultural and political life of the host countries. A number of prominent Gujarati personalities such as Lord Dholakia, Lord Meghnad Desai, Lord Bhiku Parekh and others provide just a few examples of successful Gujaratis in the UK. The majority of Asians in the United Kingdom live in what Gidoomal (1993) refers to as the ‘£5 billion corridor’ that extends diagonally from Lancashire in the Northwest down to Kent in the Southeast. The Gujarati Diaspora has always retained its emotional, cultural and economic relations with the places of their origin in a very special way. It is noticeable in their desire to make emotional and economic investment in Gujarat by establishing hospitals, schools and colleges. They have successfully lobbied in their host countries for foreign investment in boosting and developing industries in Gujarat. However, as Mukadam’s research (2014) shows, it must be stressed at this point

that these experiences were not of the majority, but of a minority whose business acumen had enabled them to capitalise on opportunities after arriving to the UK. In contrast many who arrived as refugees had to suffer and face discrimination in jobs, housing and education during the Powellian<sup>19</sup> era. In an article published in *The Independent* on 29 October 2001, Yasmin Alibai Brown<sup>20</sup> describes life in this interim period: "Resettlement camps, language lessons and other essential teaching were provided for us by the State. People could choose not to go to the camps, but most decided to take up the offer." In spite of the efforts to assist the refugees in settlement, the state apparatuses were already making the migrant refugee communities alienated from the mainstream. Given this historical background it is relevant here to explore how communities have struggled to survive and maintain their distinct cultural, linguistic and religious identity and at the same time to observe how intersections of class and gender interplay in the process of settling in a new community. As mentioned earlier, as a defence mechanism against racism and discrimination, South Asian communities have protected themselves against racial abuse through social and geographical clustering. This has had an impact on women in terms of linguistic communication with others, i.e., native English speakers. This research investigates these challenges facing Gujarati women who have been trying to build a new life in UK. By doing this, the study fills the gap in understandings of Gujarati women's construction of identity, as identity implies the intricacy between the material relationships of social locations and sense of self. (Craneshaw, 1994)

The purpose of the study is to explore within a feminist poststructuralist framework (Brah, 1996; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2001) the ways in which immigrant Gujarati women negotiate English language acquisition through multiple social identities, i.e. race, gender, class, religion, caste and culture, following Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007) "...by documenting women's lives, experiences and concerns, illuminating gender-based stereotypes and biases and unearthing women's subjugated knowledge....". Through this research I seek to

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<sup>19</sup> Powellism is the name given to the political views of Conservative and Ulster Unionist politician Enoch Powell. He is famous for his speech 'Rivers of Blood'.

<sup>20</sup> Ugandan-born British journalist and author and a founder member of British Muslims for Secular Democracy

challenge stereotyped constructions and instead project Gujarati women's agency by highlighting their responses and resistances.

The aim of feminist epistemology is to place women at the centre of the research process. There is a need to repair the historical trend of women's exclusion from the domain of knowledge and to recognise that, knowledge must be built from women's concrete, lived experiences. As Marjorie DeVault (1990) found, many women had not often had the opportunity to talk about their experiences with an interested party. This view was expressed when I approached the research participants for interviews; they were delighted that someone was willing to listen to their stories. They felt overwhelmed by the thought they were being heard, and the realisation that their lives matter too, made them express their views without any hesitation.

Brooks (2007) cites Jaggar (1997) to explain how this type of research as an accurate and reliable appraisal of society which also grants us a better chance of ascertaining the possible beginnings of a new society, in which all members can equally thrive (p.69). However, some feminists challenge this view by saying that these claims to accuracy can be promising yet problematic, because the experiences of some women are labelled 'more real' (better or more accurate) than another's. However, I find Hesse-Biber's view on this encouraging, that 'every woman's unique lived experience and the perspective, or standpoint based on her experience gains a hearing.' Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007) argue that Foucault's work professes that all knowledge is contextually bound and produced within a field of shifting power relations. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007), research that follows Foucauldian tradition may interrogate cultural texts to unravel marks of the power relations that produced them, including traces of the dominant worldview embedded within the text as well as the 'silences'. Moreover, the structure of society is embedded within language and representational forms. That means the dominant group may try to exercise absolute power over the symbolic resources (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007:293). Gujarati women this research, marginalised subjects are subject to exploitation. To question their 'silencing' and invisibility in British society I have explored how patriarchal ways (private and public) shape discourses, including language, ideology and their impact on identity construction of Gujarati women who collude, challenge or resist these discourses.

### 3.3 QUALITATIVE STUDY: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As stated earlier, this study is an exploration, using qualitative methods, of specific aspects of the migration and language learning experiences of South Asian women. I am interested in recording women's own perspectives on the effect/affects of learning English on their lives and on their sense of self, because according to Greene, "what is important to know, what constitutes an appropriate and legitimate focus for social inquiry, is the phenomenological meaningfulness of lived experience – people's interpretations and sense makings of their experiences in a given context" (1994:536). It is however, essential to clarify what is understood and involved in a 'person's sense of self', which in itself becomes an intellectual journey.

Poststructuralism views identity not as something fixed in early life and singular, but rather multiple in nature and constructed across space and across time, in the speech acts and social roles of the individual. It is also negotiated within the dynamics of inequalities of power (Gee, 2000; Skeggs, 1997; Norton 1997). It is evident from the work of Norton (1993, 2000), Pavlenko (2001), Piller and Pavlenko (2001), and Weedon (2004) that this construction has significance in transnational migrations where migrants have to cross social, cultural and linguistic borders. Drawing on their work, I have taken a fresh approach to provide an insight into how Gujarati women negotiate their identity while/by learning English as a second language by giving them a voice and exercise agency through participating in research.

### 3.4 POSTSTRUCTURALIST FRAMEWORK

This thesis has situated itself within the framework of poststructuralist notion of identity as "multiple, changing, and a site of struggle" (Butler, 1990; Weedon, 1997; Toohey and Norton, 2005). The poststructuralist theorising of identity in the context of language learning implies that there are multiple selves performing in the construction of identity. Feminist critics take issue with socio-linguistic research from theoretical standpoints. They enumerate inherent problems in measuring women's linguistic behaviour against that of men. (Pavlenko, 2001). Language as a means of communication cannot be learned by direct instruction, but by the process of language socialization in which language learners

construct shared understandings as a member of the community (Gee, 2000). Moreover, language socialization occurs through multi-layered contexts of life, language, literacy, and culture in which learners construct their multiple identities using the language in a social and cultural context (Gee, 1996; Norton Peirce, 1995). Peirce sees these women's relationships to the target language as socially and historically constructed. She refers to Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, which describes the varying ways of thinking and sets of knowledge and experiences of people from different classes and groups. Her theory rests on the concept of "social identity as multiple, a site of struggle, and subject to change" (Peirce, 1995:9). She draws on the theory of social identity and subjectivity of Weedon (1987), who set out three characteristics of subjectivity as multiple, a site of struggle, and changing over time. Within this paradigm of poststructuralism, the individual is seen as diverse, contradictory, dynamic, multiple, and decentred.

I use poststructuralist theories of identity (Weedon, 1987) to understand the Gujarati women's construction of multiple and situated identities in social discourse. They experience multiple identities based on race, ethnicity, culture, gender, age, socio-economic background, profession, etc. The poststructuralist concept of identity is vital in order to understand the structure of self as both "being forced to negotiate multiple identities among discourses" (Gee, 2000).

This line of inquiry is also consistent with the notion of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1994; Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1997), which considers it "impossible to separate out gender from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained" (Butler, 1990:3). It can be argued that poststructuralist theory sits in tension with feminist emancipatory aims and beliefs and emancipatory narrative is the basis of feminist research. However, this view obscures oppression in terms of class and race as feminist frameworks often approach men and women as undifferentiated and unitary groups and, as a result, treat gender as an essentialized variable that influences the process and outcome of language learning. Drawing from Pavlenko (2003) and Osgood (2010), I employ a poststructuralist framework for this research as it engages with individuals who are positioned not only in terms of gender, but also in terms of age, race, class, ethnicity,

national origins, immigrant status and sexuality. This framework allows me to explore oppression through dominant discourses of gender and subjectivities and challenge simplistic dichotomies between empowerment and oppression (Pavlenko, 2003:55)

Identity from a poststructuralist perspective involves two interrelated assumptions: firstly, identity is not a fixed entity but fluid; secondly, self/other relationships are products of historical, social, cultural, religious and ideological constructs. These assumptions force us to consider the importance of knowing and understanding the self in terms of others and articulate subjects in the dynamic relationships between the individual and the social. The interaction with larger social processes helps to produce, intensify, or reject social identities. Within poststructuralist approaches individuals conceptualize the self in new ways to understand a sense of self and its formation with regard to changing social and material conditions of language, culture, life, and subjectivity (Collins and Blot, 2003).

This implies that my epistemological approach, rather than being phenomenological, is more closely aligned to that of the constructivist-interpretive paradigm, in assuming that there are multiple realities, that meaning is constructed between the researcher and the researched, and in deriving data from “a naturalistic set of methodological procedures” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:32)

### 3.5 NARRATIVE INQUIRY

The ability to narrate is closely associated with the speaker’s socio-cultural context of communicating, it depends on their social knowledge and plays a significant role in their socialising (Malan, 2000). The use of narrative data as a means of communicating participant voices, has been defined as a means that “allows individuals to regain control over the self, the world, and their own life story narrative” (Pavlenko, 2001:325). This research which is firstly among migrants and secondly among women, and highlights the importance of narrative inquiry of this kind. For women to counter the ways that they are constructed as object (Pavlenko, 2001) they must reclaim the right to speak for themselves, to have a say in how their experiences are represented. A number of poststructuralist feminists, including Irigaray (1993), Weedon (1987), and hooks (1981) have spoken of the

need for disempowered people to develop voices of their own, rather than just to be spoken about, or to speak in the language of the dominant group.

It is well known that for centuries and across cultures, women's life stories have been documented less often. Their experiences often remain underground and invisible. It is essential to build new knowledge from women's concrete experiences from a feminist position. Donna Haraway (1991) argues that knowledge grows out of women's unique lived experiences and the specific interpretations of social reality that accompany those experiences. As Marjorie DeVault (1991) has argued, many women lack the opportunity to talk about their experiences with an interested party. Jaggar (2007:69) also explains that this type of research is reliable appraisal of society which also grants us a better chance of ascertaining the possible beginnings of a new society, in which all members can equally thrive. However some feminists challenge this view by saying that, these claims to accuracy can be promising yet problematic, because it tends to label the experiences of some women 'more real' (better or more accurate) than another's.

Nevertheless, this type of research allows the participants to narrate their experiences in the language of their choice. In the case of my research, some of the interviews were conducted, where appropriate or necessary, partially in Gujarati language which was an important aspect of my shared identity with participants. At the same time, it also allowed the participants to choose the best linguistic repertoire to express their 'self'. I have analysed the issue of code-switching during the interview or in the life situations by the participants, further in chapter six. Devault (1990) urges researchers to pay attention to the language with which a respondent expresses his or her own reality and researchers should honour hesitant language, terms and tone and the respondent's use of language. Being fully aware of the linguistic nuances of the respondents' first language helps to identify markers, which are valuable source of information that lead to rich qualitative interview data. The decision of choosing English, Hindi or Gujarati for answering my questions or code-switching as the topics change provides an insight into the participants' linguistic connection to the topic under discussion. For example, a participant chose to speak Hindi but switched to Gujarati while speaking about her gambling husband and then to English when she was



asserting her own views on the importance of English, or the participants expressed how code-switching takes place in the family conversations.

According to SLA theories, it has been notoriously difficult to define the concepts of bi- and multilingualism. Ellis (1985) defines bilingualism as, “The ability to produce meaningful utterances in two (or more) languages, the command of at least one language skill (reading, writing, speaking, listening) in another language, [and] the alternate use of different languages” (p 57). Pavlenko (2006) uses the term bilingual to account for speakers who use two languages in their daily lives, and multilingual for those who use more than two languages in their daily lives. However, in accordance with traditions within the field of bilingualism, she uses the term bilingualism to account for research that examines both groups of speakers (Pavlenko, 2006:2).

In the first half of the 20th century, Whorf and Sapir claimed that ‘the way we think, is conditioned by the language we speak’ (Norton and Toohey, 2004). This hypothesis remains valid. Questions of translatability of emotional concepts, and states between different languages, as well as, questions of feeling like and being perceived as “different people”, when speaking different languages have been explored in a recent volume on language and emotion (Pavlenko, 2006). It has further been pointed out that differences in registers and styles are not restricted to multilingualism but also found in monolingualism, where speakers switch between linguistic repertoires when speaking to different interlocutors (Pavlenko, 2006:1). Pavlenko further argues that results from a web-questionnaire with 1039 bi-and multilingual respondents, however, show that many bilinguals do perceive themselves as being different when speaking different languages, and that this notion is not restricted to late bilinguals, but rather a more general part of multilingual experience (Pavlenko, 2006: 27).

The participants in this research speak Gujarati as their first language and can communicate in other additional languages of the country of their origin. The impact of their ability to communicate in various languages on their identity depends on various other factors such as their location, social status, class, race etc. In this case, hybridity is particularly useful in

looking at how identities are necessarily renegotiated in these increasing sites of cross-cultural and multilingual interaction for the participants.

Post-structuralist theory opens up ways of thinking about issues relating to language, identity and difference (Weedon, 1997; Pennycook, 2010). The significance of post-structuralist theory lies in its recognition of the constitutive force of language in identity formation as well as its conception of the notion of identity as fluid, complex, contradictory and multifaceted (Norton, 1997). Hybridity theories of Homi Bhabha (1990) and Stuart Hall (1992) are significant in offering a more complex view of ethnicity and language than simplistic categories premised on the idea of the fixity of positions. Spivak (1988) argues that there is 'no space' from which the 'subalterns' can speak and she further advocates the idea of 'third space as a place of contestation and negotiation', deeply grounded in re-translation. The lived experiences of the participants in this research, like others, are marked by constant acts of border crossing, cultural contestation and appropriation (Coombes and Brah, 2005; Pennycook, 2010). Further, the participants' negotiation of their different identities is marked by their numerous investments that may not always be compatible (Norton, 1995). According to Gedalof (1999) rethinking identity categories also means rethinking the connections between apparently discrete categories of analysis and resistance.

The construction of the stereotypical South Asian woman is being challenged through the women's role as active agent in society. Through her participation in an interview, she is given the opportunity to talk about her experiences (both social and personal), i. e. it creates a space for their voices to be heard (Mirza, 1997; Puwar and Raghuram, 2003; Wilson, 2006) This supports the assertion that listening to women's voices is crucial in feminist research particularly with reference to knowledge production and to challenging pathologising discourses. (Brah, 1992)

However, Osgood (2010) has questioned the ethics of representing the voices of others through qualitative research on the grounds of the privileging that occurs in the decisions that are made and the ways in which participant voices are portrayed and presented. She

argues that 'voices heard' are only ever partial, interpreted, reframed, and presented with certain (feminist) aims in mind and hence they should only be cautiously adopted for the potential they offer to 'hear stories'. Considering this, I would argue that Gujarati women's voices in my research highlight their experiences, not as an 'authentic truth' but as a method of uncovering how their subjectivity is constructed and the discursive character of experience.

The approach used in this thesis allows for a more informed understanding of subject positioning in relation to wider British society. For me the research has been an opportunity to challenge the stereotypical notions of South Asian womanhood and to present these women as active agents in their identity construction as language learners, mothers, daughters, sisters, wives, migrants. They negotiate multiple intersecting identities to make sense of themselves. By drawing on the voices I have sought to develop an enhanced understanding of the relationship between identity and language learning.

### 3.6 POSITION OF THE RESEARCHER

Researchers have discussed how the influence of outsider or insider status affects the research process. (Bhopal, 2001; Song and Parker, 1995; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007). According to Song and Parker, (1995) the cultural identity of the researcher may shape the research situation when interviewing persons of the same or partially shared background. Bhopal (2001) argues that our racial identity can and does affect the research process in which women have some shared experience with researchers may be willing to speak to researchers who reflect this. However, according to Phoenix (1994) it might be problematic when researchers have difficulty in dealing with respondent's negative comments about the research. Drawing on this debate Gunaratnam (2003) advocates a move from an emphasis upon 'commonality' to 'connectivity'.

My structural position as a migrant South Asian woman facilitates the research process both in accessing and recruiting participants. Although I share a number of similarities with my informants, such as shared histories and experience of an Indian background, migrant identity and settlement in the UK, our language learning experiences are completely

different. My first language, Marathi, was the medium of instruction for my primary and secondary education. After that English has been the main language for my entire academic career. I have experienced the anxiety of communicating in English, during my transition from a vernacular school to a prominent higher education college. Even at this stage in my life, I sometimes find myself at a loss for words in English in spite of my native-like fluency in it. Drawing on this experience I am able to connect with my participants. However, in terms of my current advanced level of English and the role of a language teacher I am an outsider for respondents who are not fluent speakers of English.

Reflexivity is seen as an important tool that allows researchers to be aware of their positionalities, gender, race, ethnicity, class and any other factors. The fact that some of the interviews are conducted, where appropriate or necessary, in Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu became an important point of access for me. My non-Gujarati ethnicity makes me a partial outsider which can be an advantage. Most of my respondents are married and have experienced motherhood. During our informal exchanges the participants expressed their curiosity about my marital and family status. Their responses to my being a childless woman were of sadness, surprise, curiosity, disappointment and neutrality. Initially, I assumed that my status as a married, but by choice childless, middleclass academician might have made them consider me as an outsider. However, their reactions can be understood by Naples' position which states that being 'insiders' or 'outsiders' are not fixed experiences or positions; rather these experiences are contextual and shifting (Naples, 1996: 140). Weston (2004) urges the researcher to reflect, to negotiate the differences and similarities with respondents to gain access and obtain data that would not have been available otherwise. Sometimes sharing some insider characteristics with a respondent is not enough to ensure that the researcher can fully capture the lived experiences of those being researched (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007). Nevertheless, as Bhopal argues, the researcher and the participant establish a relationship that is based on a fair exchange, but power relations may never be fully neutralised (1997).

### 3.7 VOICES OF WOMEN

This study seeks to inquire into aspects of women's lives, using qualitative methods, and to problematize the findings, as well as my role and to situate the women's stories and language learning experiences – lived experiences - in the gendered social and political context in which they take place. I am drawing from feminist poststructuralist theory to examine the complicated and, at times conflicted, positioning of the women I am researching. This is not an attempt to establish universal truths, but “create the space for an absent subject, and an absent experience that is to be filled with the presence and spoken experience of actual women speaking of and in the actualities of their everyday worlds” (Smith, 1987:107).

It is acknowledged that the interpretation of the data generated by any qualitative research study will be influenced by the researcher's own social world, including culture and worldview. The research process is one of co-construction between researcher and participant and this has the implication that “it is impossible and undesirable for researchers to be distant and objective. It is through mutual engagement, that researchers and respondents construct the subjective reality, that is under investigation” (Hatch, 2002:15). Hatch (2002) further notes that, “Instead of pretending to be objective, the stance of qualitative researchers is to concentrate on reflexively applying their own subjectivities in ways that make it possible to understand the tacit motives and assumptions of their participants” (p. 9).

According to Fontana and Frey, the qualitative researcher should forget about even trying to imagine that the qualitative interview is, or ever has been, a tool for neutral-stance data collection, and instead accept and explore the role of “empathetic” interviewer, who not only takes up a political stance towards what is revealed, but is also conscious of how the interview is reflexively experienced (2008:116-118).

It is important to acknowledge that the researcher, by selecting particular research themes, presenting data, and situating research within a particular body of literature, is not neutral or detached from the study. As a researcher, I cannot escape the fact that I approach my

task from within a set of personal and social preconditions, founded in a particular moment in history, class, race, gender, and in language. But rather than beginning with a hypothesis about identity and language learning, I began with curiosity. From my own experiences of learning English as a second language, transnational migration, I was interested in recording and relating how these women view their experiences of crossing borders, learning languages, adapting socially and culturally (Anthias- Yuval Davis, 1992.). An examination of the everyday experiences of adult non-native speakers of English may seem mundane and trivial, but it is these experiences that lead to understanding the phenomenon of second language learning and usage from the perspectives of those who have been involved. When using a qualitative approach there is always the danger of misrepresenting the subjects' life or story, although this approach allows the interviewer to develop an atmosphere of mutual learning, where power relationships are less predetermined, and a dialogue and negotiation surrounding interpretation with the respondent can be established. Furthermore, my experience as an ESOL teacher has made me aware that women participants are more concerned to be understood than to understand others.

According to Song and Parker, (1995) the cultural identity of the researcher may shape the research situation when interviewing persons of the same or partially shared background. However, shared experiences and identifications must be critically addressed and in my case inevitably remain partial because of my non-Gujarati background, educational status and position as researcher. Initially I thought that my structural position as a migrant South Asian woman might be helpful in facilitating the research process both in accessing and recruiting participants and in shared histories and experience of an Indian background, migrant identity and settlement in the UK. However, I hadn't envisaged the institutional gatekeeping mechanisms operating at various levels and had to change strategies to gain access. For example, I was invited to join a women's weekly meeting by the secretary at a Women's Centre in West London. I was asked to wait for a long time before I could participate in the meetings. After a while, to my surprise, I was asked to leave without being given an explanation. When I insisted, I was told that the chairperson, an elderly lady, was furious that the secretary had allowed me – a complete stranger- to enter the place to interact with the members without consulting her. Brah (1999) addresses the tension

between insider and outsider using Urdu terms 'ghair' and 'apna' to elaborate the concepts of Self and Other. She explains how the idea of 'ghair' is much more difficult to translate for its point of departure is intimacy. The secretary's response shows how my idea of approaching the group as an insider, differed from that of the chairperson, as it did not match her perception. This experience made me aware of the fact that the boundaries of being an insider or outsider are much more subtle, flexible and relative. At another religious place, the male secretary demanded my questionnaire before allowing me to interact with the female members, and later informed me that the ladies were reluctant to participate. I assumed that the above mentioned religious figure did not want the women attending his temple to answer my questions designed to probe the patriarchal system within South Asian cultures. The insider status has been however helpful in obtaining cooperation and rapport with the respondents after gaining access through snowball sampling. I did not find it difficult to recruit participants through my personal contacts.

The racial insider status may be intertwined with other differences such as class, cultural or educational background. But as Bhopal (1997) states, the researcher and the participant establish a relationship that is based on a fair exchange, but power relations may never be fully abolished. Feminist researchers are particularly concerned with reducing the hierarchy between the researcher and the researched as the issue of power and authority can arise between the two. While self-reflection is important to decreasing the power differentials between the researcher and the researched, being too personal with a respondent can provide a false illusion that there is no power and authority. This case might make the respondents more vulnerable, encouraging them to reveal the more intimate details of their lives.

According to Thakar (2003), it is continually debated whether those sharing a 'race' can produce 'better or more authentic' data and have an impact on data (Bhopal, 1997; Edwards, 2014; Bhavnani, 1994). 'Authenticity' can become problematic because the data produced is more likely to represent the interactions and relationship between the researcher and researched during the time of the interview. Interviews provide a 'snapshot' of people's lives (Skeggs, 1994), they do not provide a full picture, but involve positioning

within discourses and locations in society and the dynamic between the researcher and the researched. Narratives given in interviews can also differ according to the 'race' of the interviewer.

At the earlier stage of this research I had this dilemma about who to interview, in relation to concerns about the possible influence of caste and religion as intersecting factors in the process of language learning. Werbner (1990) argues that in South Asian communities “zat” (p. 81), caste and class plays a significant role in establishing inter-community networks, underpinned by notions of reputation, prestige and status. Rao (2003) and Rege’s research (2003) engages with rights, resources, recognition/representation of Indian women and argues that South Asian women’s subordination and vulnerability is grounded in Hindu caste practices and patriarchal culture, however, little is known about how women’s subordination through caste, class and gender influence their survival and coping strategies. Furthermore, we know little about how women negotiate these boundaries that appear set and internalized in women’s lives. I have observed how caste loyalties are considered to be important and observed, albeit subtly, among diasporic South Asian community in the UK. However, it is an issue that is not discussed openly in social discourses. Initially I had included a question regarding caste in my questionnaire. I was hopeful to get some insights into the caste dynamics among Gujarati women and the impact of this on their language learning process. My awareness of social problems arising due to the caste system, especially for those belonging to the so called ‘lower castes’ allowed me to consider that these women would have an additional layer of discrimination to deal with in the process of settling in the UK. After the pilot however, I realised that participants were not comfortable speaking about their caste openly. Upon arrival to the UK, participants become increasingly aware of the issues related to discrimination. The upper caste women choose to refrain from discussing the privileges attached to their better social hierarchical position and the lower caste women prefer not to reveal their caste identity, which I believe they choose to leave behind after arriving to the new country of residence. Considering the sensitivity of this topic, I decided not to include this intersection for this part of my research. I gleaned the relevant information from my general observations about the community rather than specifically asking the question directly to the participants. However, I understand the



importance of this social issue among diasporic South Asian community and consider it to be a topic that needs more detailed attention in any further research.

Similarly, the experience of migration also differs according to a group's point of departure, migration history and religion. The readings from the pilot revealed that while religion and religiosity were mentioned in the interviews, it did not appear to be a central part of the identity of the research participants in their language learning process. Therefore I decided not to examine women's understandings of religion by asking further probing questions and made the decision to choose the participants randomly to focus mainly on Gujarati ethnicity. I have interviewed three Muslim Gujarati women participants for this research, and only one of them spoke about her 'othering' on the basis of her religion. Not surprisingly, gender, 'race' and class were the major themes that reoccurring throughout each of the interviews.

Before I began, I had assumed that being a South Asian woman, I would gain unlimited access to South Asian women through commonality. Although this commonality made it easier for me to gain access, it also posed other difficulties such as patriarchy and hierarchy. When I tried to contact a Gujarati acquaintance, who I knew had struggled a lot and achieved a lot over the past thirty years, she showed interest in my research. However, when I called to arrange a meeting with her, her husband decided to speak on her behalf, demanded the interview schedule by email and eventually decided that his wife was not the right person for this research and suggested that I should find other participants. Similarly, an upper middle class woman, who was happy to be interviewed by me, thought it was irrelevant for me to interview her cook, a recent arrival from India, as she thought her domestic help did not have any 'worldly knowledge' to offer to an 'intellectual' like me. I had also received information about a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law studying for their 'Life in the UK' exam at one of the centres I was associated with. When I expressed interest in interviewing them, the manager of the centre politely declined. He considered that this might create friction between his clients.

### 3.8 DATA COLLECTION

For this research I conducted 20 semi-structured interviews and two focus groups consisting 3 and 10 participants each. There were 4 participants in the pilot stage, following which I interviewed another 16 women in the later stage. The first focus group consisted of 3 participants who were recent arrivals to the UK. I was able to spend a considerable amount of time with these 3 participants and gather a lot more personal data from them. Although it was a focus group, I have included their names in the main list of participants (Appendix 1, page 273) as I was able to identify their narratives well as individuals. The second group consisted of 10 participants from elderly cohort, whose personal details were not collected but were given pseudonyms in the data for identification purposes. There is no overlap of participants as all 33 participants are different individuals. Personal profiles of participants are presented in table D (Chapter Four, Participants' Demography, D1 and D2 page 89-91). A brief life story of each participant is included in the Appendix 1 (page 273).

Three distinct approaches were taken to collect data from the participants; namely, a short written personal information questionnaire done either by the participants or by me (depending on their literacy skills); semi-structured personal interviews; and focus group discussions. In addition, I collected data from my own involvement in the research process, in the form of extensive field notes and a journal, which I kept to record my thoughts and discoveries, my ideas for how the project should proceed, and electronic exchanges about the project that I had with colleagues and supervisors.

During the initial phone contact, I gave participants a brief summary of the research project and objectives and addressed any general questions. I offered participants interview appointments at their convenience and the majority indicated a preference to be interviewed in their homes as well as their ESOL classrooms after class hours. One of the participants preferred to sit in her car while waiting to pick up her daughter from school in the car park. Incidentally, I was also able to interview a woman travelling from Heathrow to India on our flight to Mumbai. As the sole researcher I interviewed all participants in the study. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and were audio taped with the expressed and voluntary consent of the participant. The first interview was an open-ended

unstructured interview and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes (see M: Protocol for Interviews, p. 256). Participants were asked to respond to the following question: "Tell me about your migration to England? What prompted the move? How did you feel about it?" Minimal prompts (i.e., tell me more ....) were used to encourage participant stories.

Using an open-ended question in the interview forms a fundamental component of feminist interviews where the interviewer is concerned with gaining access to the voice of the marginalised. A fundamental assumption of qualitative interviewing is that a participants' perspective is meaningful and a valid source of knowledge (Fontana and Frey, 2000) Interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher. This asset is particularly important for the study of women because in this way learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women. (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007). Many of these participants were ESOL learners. Drawing on from my experience as an ESOL teacher, I was able to keep the right pace of English depending on the English speaking level of the participants. The participants were able to switch code as per their desire during interviews.

Semi-structured interviewing offers the researcher some control over how the interview is constructed and still be open to form new questions throughout the interview. This structure helped as there were areas that I had not anticipated would open up , such as the participants' feelings about being 'deficient' mothers. I decided to let the participants speak a bit more on those topics as they seemed very passionate about them. Prior to beginning the interview, I asked participants to complete a demographic information sheet (see I, p. 249) and two copies of a consent form (see L, p. 255). The first copy of the consent form was kept in each participants' file, whereas the second copy was given to participants for their personal records. If participants had any questions about the project after completing the consent and demographic information sheets, they were addressed prior to beginning the interview. There were only two participants who took their time to read the information sheet and wanted to know more about this documentation. All other participants trusted

me as an 'insider' and accepted the information sheet as 'unavoidable paper work to be completed' before we began.

I started the pilot in May 2012, initially interviewing 4 participants. My first two participants were attending ESOL entry level courses at that time, , whereas other two participants were long term residents, one of them younger and the other one much older, who had never attended any English language courses throughout their residence in the UK. After the initial data collection, I was at first concerned that I was sometimes falling short of a 'correct' researcher stance; I was looking at their lives through my middle class lens and in my mind I expected to receive the information that would express their frustration, anger and despair against the system and their oppression. For the participants however, it was a just way of life that one has to accept and fight against and find a way to progress. As many postmodern theorists explain (Fontana and Frey, 2008,) there is no neutrality in this type of research. Upon reflection I realised that I am ultimately far more interested in the data that was co-created owing to my background of active participation in social issues in India, and I needed to withdraw the activist part of me and turn into a neutral researcher. I decided to revise my questionnaire to make it more open-ended to allow them to narrate and focus on various social aspects of identity and language learning rather focusing centrally on the process of learning the language. Most of the data was collected during the period of October 2012 to April 2013. October 2012 was the festive season of Diwali, which was a busy period for most Gujarati women but they were happy to include me in their celebrations. A number of candidates were recruited by the snowballing method. From my cultural knowledge of South Asian women, I knew that it would be easier to communicate with women if I went to the places where they visit regularly on their own and where we would be able to establish a rapport with each other. I went to a local temple in Southall and randomly spoke with some women and asked them if they would like to participate in this research. I succeeded in recruiting a few participants this way. As I am not a regular visitor at the temple, the women wanted to know whether I have any particular days that I frequent the temple. Although I have hardly visited any temples in the UK, I did not want to jeopardise the sense of empathy and belonging we had created by my physical identity. I wanted the women to trust me and share their narratives without them having any preconceived notions about my religious beliefs or my social stance on religious issues, I had

to assure them that my local temple was in a different area and I go there only on festive occasions. As Bhopal (2001) argues, our gender and racial identity *can* and *does* affect the research process and in some cases women who have some shared experience with researchers are more willing to speak to researchers who reflect this.

To recruit candidates for qualitative interviews, I approached a Further Education college in Wembley, an area in north-west London heavily populated with Gujaratis. I liaised with the ESOL Programme Manager, incidentally a Gujarati female, at a local authority funded further education establishment, who took interest in my project and arranged to interview a few participants before or after their class time. I was allowed to use one of the classrooms at the centre for this purpose. I visited their ESOL classes while they were in progress and explained my project and invited Gujarati women to participate in the research. I had a very good response to this and we agreed to meet before according to the convenience of the participants. Some of them wanted to see me in the morning before their classes and some were available during afternoons.

For the purpose of triangulation of data, it was also decided that, alongside individual interviews, focus groups would be conducted in order to elicit further data, the major appeal being the ability to access 'subjugated voices' (Hesse\_Biber and Leavy, 2007). Research in the field has shown that in focus groups, public discourses are frequently reproduced in ways they do not appear in individual interviews. This method also allows researchers, to challenge their own preconceived ways of thinking and categorizing experiences by adding diverse voices (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007). When I met with the elderly cohort for focus group session, one of the participants, who was wearing the traditional Gujarati sari, said she had to leave early because she had a swimming session to attend. I was rather surprised at my preconceived notion of somehow not being able to associate swimming activity with her because of her traditional gear. It was as if to highlight the purpose of my research; to show that immigrant women are not "passive victims", lacking in autonomy, but on the contrary exercise agency in the diaspora. Similar to the thoughts arising from this one incident, further findings of this research concur with Stuart

Hall's view that identities are "fluid and constantly negotiated in the 'interaction' between individual and society (1990).

Focus groups are thought to be an extremely useful tool for understanding the daily experiences of individuals whose experiences are largely invisible. The group effect or group dynamism can have positive and negative outcomes by opening up conversation around difficult topics and producing important discussion. The group creates a comfortable level around personal subject matters, as well allows us to challenge some personal beliefs, which is an important aspect of feminist research. (Edwards, 2014)

Participants can help each other figure out what the questions mean to them, and the researcher can examine how different participants hear possible vague or ambiguous questions. This is important in studying gender because certain issues are "naturalized" to such an extent that it is very difficult to recognize one's own preconceived notions, much less challenge others' taken-for-granted assumptions. The expansion of the roles available to women in a group interview, beyond the strict separation between "interviewer" and "interviewee" allows for interactions that are likely to reveal and even challenge these taken-for-granted assumptions. (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007)

For my research, I was able to hold my first focus group of 3 recent arrivals, a group of mothers learning English. As I wanted to interview candidates from various social backgrounds, I changed groups with members who are dissimilar and more diverse. It allowed me to recruit members from marginalized backgrounds as well as those with more established or privileged voices. This comparative dimension of differently positioned within the same culture generated rich data. To recruit participants for my second focus group, I searched the internet to find active local centres for Gujarati women and approached them. Most responses I received were positive. I managed to hold the second focus group at a Yoga Centre for senior Gujarati ladies. There were 10 participants in this group, most of them long term settled, twice migrants. I was asked if I would like to join the session to practise yoga with them to which I happily agreed as I saw it as an exercise to bond with the participants before the meeting. The ladies seemed to like the fact that I took interest in

their activity and started opening up. I was allocated the session after their yoga routine, during which they have their tea and informal chat. I was not expecting more than 7 or 8 women for the focus group session. However, when the women heard about the topic, many more wanted to join the session. I had to restrict the number of participants to 10 to keep it under control and manageable. Their enthusiasm to participate in the discussions was overwhelming. The women were at ease while talking to me about their life stories and experiences of transnational migration because during the yoga session they were able to communicate with me and knew the purpose of my visit. And because they were fully convinced about the purpose of my research, they were more than willing to participate. Some of them kept chatting with me even after the tea club meeting and focus group session, which also provided me with further insights into their lives. I was asked personal questions about my marital life, family, work and ethnicity. Since this second focus group which consisted of 10 Gujarati women, and most of them were above 50, I found them more curious about my social and cultural status and background.

The style of moderation I adopted with this group was linked to my research questions and theoretical framework. Since it was a large group, I had to control the discussion in various forms, to guide conversation, letting people speak and ensuring each member had an opportunity to participate. For my action research for my MA in TEFL, I had submitted the dissertation on the topic of 'improving classroom interaction with effective pair work and group work'. (Ray, 2007) The theoretical knowledge of effective group work and practical experience of teaching ESOL was helpful for me to effectively moderate and navigate the discussion. I was flexible with the language use in this communication, which kept switching to different languages such as Gujarati, Hindi and English, for example, speaking of their experiences of racism they chose Gujarati rather than English or when they thought something very important that me as non-Gujarati should understand, they used Hindi. I wanted the participants to share the topics that were important to them freely, and as I am fluent in all three languages, I did not see it as a problem. In fact, it provided another dimension to my observation, i.e. the language preference for the topics that they considered important, which I have discussed in chapter six.

I was able to gather personal details of 20 participants that I interviewed one-to-one. As the first focus group consisted of only three participants, I was able to get their personal details as well. I couldn't get all the personal details of the focus group participants. I learnt names and life stories in brief, of three participants from the focus group during informal chats, which I have discussed where I found them to be relevant.

In conclusion, this study has attempted to understand the challenges for a particular fragment, i.e. Gujarati community, of larger South Asian community. It aims to comprehend how the women understand themselves as they try to learn English, and how through the negotiations of ethnic and cultural social identifies they reinvent their self within the structures of family, neighbourhood and larger social networks. These data will be looked at in greater detail in the next four chapters and will allow us to situate the 23 women within the context of the larger South Asian population. The stories of their language learning and the impact of this on the construction of identity will be discussed and the research will show, groups and individuals of unequal power and unequal access to resources and to dominant ways of being try to find and produce a liveable third space (Butler, 2004).

### 3.9 THE PROCESS OF ANALYSING THE DATA

There are two main methodological stages to this research study which uncovers important issues and themes that emerged incrementally from each step of the research. The first phase was the pilot stage in which four participants from long term settled and recent arrivals were interviewed. It was followed up with the next stage of semi-structured interviews. The pilot stage was important as there were some modifications made to the interview questions.

Oppenheim (1992) stresses the importance of piloting the schedule as: "It is dangerous to assume. Therefore when in doubt and especially when not in doubt do a pilot run" (Oppenheim, 1992:48). I was concerned that if I did not ask the right questions then what I was trying to uncover about identity and language learning would not be revealed. I was not conscious of having a fixed idea of what I would find, and I felt that if I did not ask the right questions, I would not be able to do justice to their narratives and my research. Some questions in the questionnaire needed to be more open-ended. It was important to give the



opportunity to give an individual voice to respondents. More interviews were undertaken again to provide an individual voice to respondents and also to address the question of validity through the consistency of themes. To analyse the qualitative data, I transcribed the individual interviews verbatim and coded them manually for categories or themes. When I transcribed the text of the conversation, I changed the names of the participants for the purpose of anonymity and ethics. Names during data collection had helped me maintain the attachment in a powerful way. That is why changing names was difficult for me but being aware of the need to create some separation and for ethical purposes the names had to be changed.

In accordance with the guidelines of Feminist Research Praxis (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007) the pointers used to analyse the data included:

What social actions and agency are taking place in a particular setting; what it means to the participant; what are the social and cultural constructions of this agency; does a pattern or rule exist; how these patterns relate to each other across different dimensions; and how the patterns of agency affect the power relationships.

Keeping these guidelines to analyse the data, I used different coloured highlighters to organize the data indicating their experiences and interactions associated with gender, language learning, race, family cultures, and religious contexts. By going over the content and re-examining them individually and grouped according to their colour code, I explored them for recurrent themes. The re-examination allowed me to further categorize the data according to specific subcategories contained within the larger classification.

While analysing qualitative data, deconstruction as an analytical tool rests on several assumptions. “Deconstruction turns attention to how language creates some meanings and suppresses other meanings” (Manning, 1992:203-204). “Deconstruction is a means to see words in context and to examine the effects of changing contexts on meaning” (Manning, 1992:202)

Deconstruction can be accomplished by looking at a text (transcript of verbal exchange in this case) and finding out what is said. It also includes looking at what is not said, silences and gaps, and analysing disruptions. For instance, none of the participants says specifically

that they are unhappy about the lack of information or provision of support when it comes to learning English, but at other places they mention that it would have been better for them had they started learning the language earlier (Feldman, 1990).

Within discussions of reflexivity, attention is often drawn to the importance of recognizing the social location of the researcher as well as the ways in which our emotional responses to respondents can shape our interpretations of their accounts. However, few methods offer concrete ways of doing this voice-centred relational method of data analysis. Ribbens and Edwards (1998) suggest reading for the lot, reading for the voice of 'I', reading for relationships and reading for placing people within contexts and social structures.

Although data analysis is an on-going process, it requires researchers to engage in many levels of cognitive analysis. A central task in analysing qualitative data is generating categories and examining emerging patterns from the data that assist in making sense of the information participants have offered. The development of categories and themes provide a description and explanation of cases, but it is also important to consider and identify potential relationships in the data (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007). Therefore, using the central premise of generating categories, themes, and the relationships in the data, a latent content analysis was used to analyse text data.

This first stage involved in this process was identifying recurring patterns and concepts in the data (words, phrases, expressions). All of the data collected from focus groups and participant interviews was entered into Nvivo software. This helped me to organise and work through the texts and code blocks of text to one or more NODES or sub-nodes representing themes. I created attributes for respondents and assigned initial values to classify the primary data such as age, country of origin, marital status, employment, residence in the UK etc. With 'open-ended' questions Nvivo allowed me to actually see what the respondents are telling me before I construct the coding frame through which I constrain text – information held in the natural language of everyday life. (Hutchison et al, 2010). The process of data analysis began with the review of the first interview transcript and continued throughout the project. The general analytic procedures of content analysis were used to draw out general patterns and themes from the data.

The first phase of analysis involved thoroughly sifting data into segments as individual files in the computer. At this stage of analysis I drew data segments that exemplify particular themes. My aim this was to attempt to provide as detailed a picture as possible of the participants' post-migration settlement trajectories through their experiences of learning and speaking English, and to forefront their reporting of it. In each of the resulting analysis chapters a theme-based approach is taken which deals with issues relating to self in the family and the issues of language, gender, parenting by elaborating the theme and drawing on one or two specific women as examples. Most of these issues cut across all participants, however, taken as a whole they are revealing of the kinds of transformations of the self that can accompany transnational migration involving language change.

After initial enthusiasm for NVivo, I realised that it is mainly acting as an excellent organiser. I was able to search frequently occurring words and find relevant themes. For example, I realised that the word confidence occurs almost 63 times in the data. Although it was helpful in the beginning, I felt a disconnect with the data while using Nvivo and decided to move away from it and resort to traditional method of working with a hard copy of the transcript. To reconnect myself with the data, I listened to the recordings again and assigned labels to sections of the text to identify and summarize the content and topic of each section. I tagged data with labels (Hutchison et al., 2010), highlighted segments of the text with neon markers, and wrote labels in the right hand margins. Each transcript was labelled in this manner, resulting in a broad and general list of labels outlining salient elements within each transcript and across all transcripts. This list consisted of approximately 20 labels, including the motherhood, the experiences of racism, discrimination; personal process; identity issues; language socialisation, difficulties with access and progression; personal challenges; coping strategies; family/upbringing; social networks and language socialisation; workplace experiences, connection to their community; cultural values; domestic responsibilities, changing roles; childcare; and religion. The list of labels became more comprehensive as I worked with each successive transcript. This process of coding allowed me to become familiar with the text data and with each participants' unique experience of living in London as a migrant trying to learn English.

This process also allowed me to begin asking more analytic questions of the data, for example "What are the significant influences in these women's lives? ", and "What are commonalities in their stories?"

The second step of analysis involved shifting focus from individual participant experiences to a broader focus. I reviewed the transcripts and began developing broad categories to reflect the common elements of participant experiences. This process required working alternatively with hard copies of transcripts and creating individual category files on the computer. Using the summarized lists from topic coding assisted me in identifying links between topics and thereby initiated the process of developing general categories. As categories were defined and developed, text data were cut and pasted and added to separate category files. Some text segments included multiple themes and were therefore included in multiple categories. I used different font colours for my own convenience to sort data under multiple themes and within each category file, the text segment was identified by a title header that included the transcript and relevant sections of interview. This made all text segments easily retrievable and identifiable as to original data source and transcript.

Following this, I explored the themes under the labels such as 'self' in the society, family or at work and post-migration language, race and gender issues as they emerge. Reflecting on the research questions about identity, subject positioning and agency and the ability to access and develop and maintain social networks essential to learn a language, I analysed the data to expose the power relationships that operate in the negotiation of identity. Following the core framework (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007) mentioned earlier, I focused prominently on the power imbalance caused by the process of othering; discrimination resulting from gender, race, ethnicity or class; as well as language socialisation resulting from social turn in second language learning; recording these through the lens of poststructuralist approach to identity throughout the process of analysis.

Qualitative research involves interactions with individuals and as consequence of developing rapport with participants and getting them to trust, the researcher may find they open up in very personal ways. During the interviewing session in one of the temple visits, one of the participants was curious about my temple visits and the frequency of it. Instead of giving a

straightforward answer to her question, that I do not practise religion, I circumvented the question by answering that I visited a different temple on certain occasions. Reflecting on this, I realised that this could raise an issue of ethical concerns over not being honest and transparent with the participants in order to establish rapport with them. However, I did not feel that by answering the question in an indirect way I was being untruthful. Although I do not practise religion, I visit religious places on certain occasions such as weddings or family events. I was concerned that being totally honest about my religious (non)beliefs might have created a gap in our connectedness, and participants would not have opened up to discuss their inner feelings wholeheartedly. Martin Buber defines relational ethics as doing what is necessary to be “true to one’s character and responsible for one’s actions and their consequences on others” (Lincoln, 1995) Relational ethics recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work (Lincoln, 1995, p. 287)

In this chapter I have discussed the rationale underpinning the choice of methods and methodology in detail to clearly establish the theoretical stance of this project. I have explained the process of data collection and data analysis. The next chapter will introduce the background of my research participants and examine the general findings of this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MIGRATION STORIES: DON'T KNOW WHERE THESE PEOPLE COME FROM!

In this chapter I present a general historical and geographical background of my research participants before offering an analysis of the data. Most observations in this chapter are results of collective discussions of the focus groups that will set the scene for further in-depth analysis. These narratives mainly illustrate the experiences of the elderly cohort of twice migrant Gujarati women's stories of arrival to England, initial bewilderment because of racist abuse, employment opportunities and struggles and their resilience.

#### 4.1 BACKGROUND

There are approximately 27 million people of Indian origin living in the diaspora and Gujaratis comprise over one third of the global Indian diaspora. "Gujarati loko" or Gujaratis is a term used to describe people whose ancestry can be traced to the state of Gujarat, India. There are about 1.2 million people of Indian origin in Britain, where they or their parents came directly from India or from the many other parts of the British Empire. Of this 1.2 million, around 600,000 are Gujaratis. (NCGO, 2012) Gujaratis are a heterogeneous group in terms of their religion but share a common language, Gujarati. Gujarat, located on the coast, north- west of India, is a region renowned for its rich cultural and economic history. Gujaratis are known for their entrepreneurial spirit, business acumen and the commercial networks that they can build out of this (Oonk, 2007). Given its strategic location, Gujarat has for centuries, established trade links with communities in East Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. Alongside Indian indentured immigration, many Gujaratis emigrated as "free" or "passenger"<sup>21</sup> Indians in search of economic opportunities, to North America, the United Kingdom, East and South Africa. In South Africa, Gujarati speaking Hindu and Muslim immigrants arrived in the late 1890s. After the initial migration of men, Gujarati women began arriving at the turn of the century, mainly as sponsored immigrants. Research shows (Ballard, 1994; Oonk, 2007; Mawani and Mukadam, 2004) Gujarati immigrant women have not only displayed resilience in the midst of adversity but played a

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<sup>21</sup> Mukadam and Mawani Gujaratis in the West, p.6. "Passenger" refer to immigrants who paid their own passage fares, who came as "free" Indians and who did not come under a contractual labour system.

pivotal role in retaining and maintaining their regional and religious identity in the diaspora. Gujarati women have been migrating to various destinations over a period of more than a century. My research has explored experiences of English language learning of Gujarati women who have migrated to the UK from various locations across the world, over the past 50 years. Many of them have come from East Africa either as first time or twice migrants and many others have arrived as direct migrants from India.

As gendered study of the migration of Gujarati migrants is mainly neglected in existing research, I have explored their experiences of coming to the UK, learning English and adjusting to the life here. I argue that given the variation in patriarchal attitudes as well as their own agency, some women negotiated their roles, more so than others and thus showed that gendered roles are neither monolithic nor static, but should be understood in the context of both cultural and economic elements within which they interact. By examining notions of agency, I have challenged the popular image of South Asian women in the diaspora as being marginalized and “passive”.

In a study on Gujarati Hindu women in Sweden and the United Kingdom, Hole (2005) has argued “the homeland” conjures up nostalgic memories of the “better past” to which they long to return. She states that “Their shared experiences and backgrounds also make a sharable desire of return.....they are longing to return”. Thus their urge to return to their homeland means that they will “never truly settle” and therefore are “neither here nor there”. Ramji (2006) in her analysis also examined the homeland as an important variable in creating a distinct ethnic identity and in understanding the Gujarati Hindus relative success in the diaspora. My research findings conflict with Hole’s (2005) analysis of sense of “belonging”, but concur with Ramji’s (2004) with regards to the importance of place of origin in defining one’s ethnic identity. The data suggests that these women have made Britain their ‘home’ and chosen it as their final destination to settle. Although the gender-role pressures exerted by the traditional, patriarchal, religious cultures of South Asia surface as one of the major factors involved in the language learning process, this study shows that socio-cultural identities of these women are continually changing, being constructed, sometimes conflicting, and are interpellated on them by their socio-cultural

position, as well as have an impact on and are impacted by the process of learning English as a second language upon their arrival in the UK.

In her theorization of identity, Craneshaw (1991) has argued that the failure of feminism to interrogate race means that the resistance strategies of feminism will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of colour, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of women (Crenshaw, 1991).

The narratives of some of my participants, of their formative years in Gujarat, as well as in East Africa, reflects the patriarchal nature of Indian subcontinent, with constraints placed on women's social mobility, decision making and economic independence. However, migration prompted a new scenario, highlighting women's transition from domestic seclusion to more visible roles in the public sphere, and their capacity to initiate change resulting from personal and economic factors.

A number of Gujarati women participating in this research have shifted continents many times before permanently settling in the UK and are still maintaining affiliations with their transnational families across the globe. They have lived in different parts of the world through different stages of their lives and constantly negotiate their sense of belonging in myriad ways. Their relationships between wider social contexts, national and transnational, and self are entextualized in the ways these women negotiate their identities, their use of linguistic resources in constructing and negotiating national and transnational belonging. Vertovec's work on superdiversity (2007) explores how identities are fashioned at the intersections of local and global flows of people, linguistic resources, and space, and these call for attention to the need for research on language to examine the fluidity, rather than fixity of language in the context of globalization. Blommaert (2010) also shows a deep concern about linguistic right and linguistic and social inequality. In this study, I have resorted to the view that there is an interplay between the wider discourses in a society and the construction of belonging in the individual utterances of Gujarati women who have migrated to Britain. Drawing from this theoretical framework, which I have discussed in the



previous chapter in detail, my study is broadly located within the scope of transnationalism, post-structural feminism and contemporary discriminatory practices and the construction of identity for Gujarati women, through the process of learning English.

To achieve a thorough perspective to all aspects of my research questions, my intention was to recruit participants who have been long term residents, as well as recent arrivals. For the participants who have arrived recently, I contacted a local ESOL provider in West London that receives women from South Asian background as their learners. In order to contact long term resident Gujarati women, my initial method was to spread the information via word of mouth. I knew a couple of local members of the Gujarati community who were happy to guide me in my search for candidates to recruit for this research. Those initial contacts provided me with the information about several social and religious groups for Gujarati women. Following that I was able to co-ordinate with other members to participate in the focus groups. Following is the table with age, country of origin, marital status, employment stats and time spent in the UK for the research participants:

#### D) Participants Demography

##### 1. Direct Migrants

PSEUDONYMS	AGE	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN – COUNTRIES CROSSED	MARITAL STATUS	EMPLOYMENT	ARRIVAL TO UK
1. Anshu	30	<u>India-Portugal-UK</u>	Married	No	2004
2. Champa	46	India-UK	Married	Yes/supermarket assistant	1984
3. Deepa	35	India-UK	Married	Yes/Self-employed	2004

				beautician	
4. Fatima	35	India-UK	Married	Part-time/school meals assistant	1997
5. Hira	27	India-UK	Married	Yes/ fast food restaurant order taker	2010
6. Leena	42	India-UK	Married	Yes/ cashier	2000
7. Madhu	28	India-UK	Separated	Yes/ factory worker	2008
8. Mamta	72	<u>India-Uganda-</u> <u>India-UK</u>	Widowed	Retired as a factory worker	1975
9. Meena	32	India-UK	Married	No	2001
10. Rani	35	India-UK	Separated	Redundant/job seeker/bus driver in 2014	1999
11. Rupa	31	India-UK	Married	No	2005
12. Soni	42	India-UK	Divorced	No	1987
13. Urmi	75	<u>India-Uganda-</u> <u>UK</u>	Widowed	Retired as a warehouse worker	1964
14. Zahra	32	India-UK	Married	No	2004

## 2. Twice Migrants

15. Charita	50	Singapore-India-UK	Married	Yes/civil servant	1987
16. Devi	54	Kenya-UK	Married	Employed/job seeker	1979
17. Joshna	75	Kenya-UK	Widowed	Yes/Pharmacy	1972

				store assistant	
18. Kunju	82	Uganda-India- Canada-UK	Widowed	Self-employed as a dress-maker	1980
19. Maya	37	Mozambique- Portugal-UK	Married	Not employed at the time of interview/part- time job as a school meals assistant in 2014	2006
20. Naru	75	Uganda-India- UK	Widowed	Retired as a warehouse worker	1969
21. Rashmi	50	Kenya-UK	Married	Yes/ shop assistant	2006
22. Rekha	41	Mozambique- Spain-UK	Married	Yes/Nursery teacher	2003
23. Sangita	52	Uganda-Kenya- UK	Married	Yes/civil servant	1979

- Refer to Appendix 1 (page 273) for a snapshot of participants' backgrounds and life-stories.

E) Map of countries of origin for participants in this research:



#### 4.2 NARRATIVES FROM FOCUS GROUPS

This section illustrates narratives mainly selected from the focus group that was conducted with the senior cohort Gujarati migrant women many of them originating from east Africa. They articulate that the ‘twice migrant’ experience has taught them resilience and a positive attitude. Most of them had a very comfortable life in Africa and enjoyed a sound financial and satisfying social life. When they arrived in the UK, after an initial period of struggle, gradually, with the passage of time, migration brought a sense of security in the new environment which some found to be more welcoming than the one from which they were expelled (particularly true among Ugandan Asians, who were given just 90 days to leave the country by the dictator Idi Amin in 1972). The forced migration resulted in loss of wealth and social status but embarking upon a new life in the UK was characterised by a strong

desire to rebuild lives in a new country. As members of enterprising Gujarati community, they showed flexibility to adapt to new opportunities in business and, through the commitment of the whole family in the early generations of migration. Almost everyone had some kind of work experience. Their work always involved tiring long hours without complaining about it to anyone. Excerpts from some of their views:

*“We all worked, some of us still work, now our children tell us why are you doing this? What would you do without working? We toiled like donkeys once, (they all share a hearty laugh) .. we worked seven days, not now.. but.. we did when the kids was young.. means .. we been through hell when...you know sometimes ‘they’ don’t like us.. but we just kept low profile and get on with the work.. we had guts.. now our kids have done well and we are proud of them...it’s all god’s grace... no regrets....no complaints...” (Focus Group Participant, Abha)*

They supported each other with strong community networks, by looking after each other’s children and elderly relatives. They worked from home to support family businesses if required or managed the back of shops where families were in the retail business. However, all this work was not considered legitimate as it was rarely paid work. Very little research has been done to explore this aspect of migrant women’s lives.

Revisiting the research question, I wanted to examine issues of agency and argue that given their personal, economic and social circumstances, migrant Gujarati women were able to negotiate new roles for themselves in their new location. Migration generated new challenges which they were not prepared for, which resulted in some women exercising more agency than others. The narratives of elderly cohort are examples of how these women had to leave their familiar and comfortable lifestyle behind and learn to live in a completely different and at times hostile environment. By examining these notions of agency, these findings help us to dispel the myth of the “passive”, “docile” South Asian women, lacking autonomy in their lives.

Sharing of her experience, one of the participants said:

*“This is a hell lot of experience, one day I decided to go out, took the kids with me, and then forgot the pushchair in the bus, I came home and told my husband, go get it*

*if you can, how can I look after all these things? So then decided to learn to drive...good because I never depend on him now...you know how easy life becomes when you have your car..."*

During this conversation when I mentioned that I wouldn't know as I do not drive in London, the entire conversation took a different turn in order to motivate me to start using a car. I found these women surprisingly unhesitant in sharing any kind of information with me. I assigned this to our female bonding as well shared cultural background. I also felt that sharing something personal about myself helped me break the class barrier, as it allowed the women to see themselves performing better in certain aspects of their lives, than someone who they thought was better educated, spoke fluent English and hence well placed in the society.

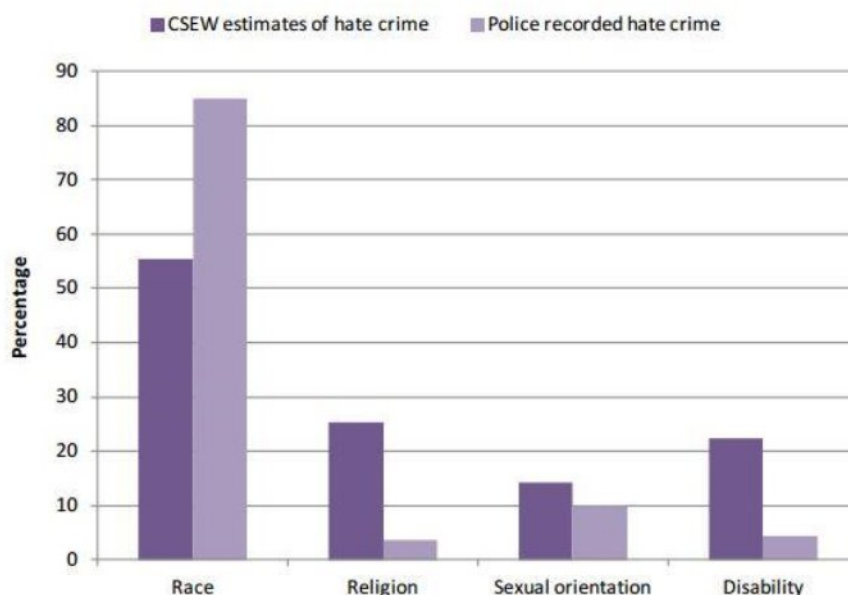
Most middle-aged women in the group, mainly those who had jobs had learnt to drive as they preferred not to depend on anyone else for the school runs, shopping or socialising. It was not only long and hard working hours, the surroundings or the long commute to work but also the journey to work was not a very pleasant experience in some cases. Another participant, Meera added to this conversation by mentioning the general experiences of subtle racism during the early period of the first wave of migrants:

*"Oh, the way we used to run after buses then, can't imagine it now...and then everyone would stare at you...as if saying... Na Jane kahan kahan se chale aate hai (don't know where these people come from)... You know what I mean? It was difficult for us... not like in London now.."*

'Don't know where these people come from?' This sentiment was reiterated in many conversations by my participants while describing different situations. Meera's repeated utterance 'You know what I mean?' or 'You know what I mean!' shows how she considered me an insider who would definitely know what it means to be a 'Paki' and considered to be a 'foreigner' who does not belong here. According to the statistics based on Crime Survey of England and Wales, (2013) hate crime based on race is the highest amongst all hate based crimes such as, hatred against religion, sexual orientation or disability.

## F) Statistics of hate crimes in England and Wales

**Figure 5: Proportion of hate crimes by each strand, CSEW (2011/12 and 2012/13) and police recorded crime (2012/13)**



For the participants who were forced to seek refuge in the UK from the 1960s onwards these hate crimes were a daily experience. Considering this, learning to drive was also a defence mechanism that helped them to keep away from the nasty stares, racial abuse and allowed them to carry on with their lives feeling confident.

As another participant expressed her earlier anxiety and fear and at the same time expresses her own amazement at the triumph over the situation.

*“How we used to get scared of every little thing, and look at us now... when I look back, I think, how did I do that?” (focus group participant, Lochana)*

I relate my participants’ experiences of natural language learning to Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of the legitimate speaker. He argues that, when a person speaks, the speaker wishes

<sup>22</sup> Survey Report CSEW

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/266358/hate-crime-2013.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/266358/hate-crime-2013.pdf)

not only to be understood, but to be 'believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished' (p.648). His position is that when a speaker's ability to command the listener is unequally structured, it symbolises imbalance of power.

".....the people [who] talk to each other, are on 'speaking terms', that those who speak regard those who listen as worthy to listen and that those who listen regard those who speak as worthy to speak." (p.648)

Puwar (2004) argues that it is essential to engage with difference through rigorous investigation in order to question the spaces marked by whiteness and masculinity. The women in my research appeared extremely concerned about external perceptions, and the processes of being marked as other because of visible differences of skin colour, clothes and various other aspects of their lives.

It was interesting to observe when one of the oldest member of the group, Urmi, who was quiet for a long time and then started to speak English with me to answer my questions, all other women stared at her in amazement as if they could not believe the fact that she could speak fluent English. She explained to them in Gujarati:

*"Yeah, I do speak English, may be not very well, but I can get by."*

They all started to make fun of her, perhaps because they had never seen her speak English in their group. So someone asked her, '*so do you eat English food?*' And they all laughed heartily. Urmi thought it was important that I understand what they meant, explained:

*"You know that ..(Gujarati)... community is vegetarian. When we came here ... could not find any Indian food shop. You go to different areas to get your type of food. Because that time.. in Leicester... is full Gujarati people, and we had relatives, so we went there to get some special items. Now you have everything here in a corner shop, at least in this area. But now grandchildren are not pure vegetarians, right, don't like our food. They like English food, pizza."*

Another lady added:

*" Behn<sup>23</sup>, thank god they don't eat beef<sup>24</sup> at least".*

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<sup>23</sup> Behn is Gujarati word for sister. Common attribute used to address women.

<sup>24</sup> Cow is a sacred animal in India and eating beef is generally prohibited in amongst upper caste Hindus.



This particular comment about food habits is also a comment on how Gujaratis have maintained the religious principle of vegetarianism in practice in their transnational journeys. Jain community adhere to even stricter principles of vegetarianism. One of my research participants, Charita, whose religion is Jain,<sup>25</sup> explained how some members of her family observe these principles and how others have relaxed the rules for themselves.

The narratives also reveal how their place of origin, played an important role in constructing their ethnic identity, in defining group consciousness, solidarity, their work ethics and their relative success in the Diaspora.

I found this discussion in the focus group particularly enlightening as it focuses on a number of cultural aspects of Gujarati community. In many respects the lifestyles Gujarati people personified the multicultural ideal advocated by Roy Jenkins (LSE Journal, 2011) Many women who had arrived here during the first wave, had received an education, were adept at languages, speaking English, Gujarati and one of the African languages such as Swahili, (the African language would be spoken at home, and often still is, forty years after the enforced migrations of the 1970s). They were often committed to their faith and wished to see a visible expression of that commitment in the establishment of new religious buildings (or the conversion of existing buildings that can be seen in many places in London) as their places of worship. What they wanted was equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance. However, soon the realisation came that, in spite of having the required abilities, their social status was to remain that of second class citizens.

One of the participants said that;

“Forget my case, I was not much literate, even Gujarati problematic for me.... My ‘nanad’<sup>26</sup>, she had a degree from good university in Africa... we worked in the same factory....when we came... she changed her job after some time...but we used to

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<sup>25</sup> Jainism is an ancient religion from India that teaches that the way to liberation and bliss to live a life of harmlessness and renunciation. Jainism prescribes non-violence and hence strict vegetarianism is a way of life.

<sup>26</sup> Nanad is a Gujarati word for sister-in-law

think.. look at her... poor thing...ok for us.. not ok for her..." (focus group participant, Meera)

It was the realisation that knowing English and having competency did not automatically lead to social acceptance. Nair (1998) in her research on immigrant women in Canada, has argued that dominant groups in society, through institutions, markets, and discourse have often been able to perpetuate negative images of particular groups and have kept them in oppressed positions with limited access to power and resources. Something similar was experienced by this group of non-white migrant, 'strange' South Asian groups of people upon their arrival to the UK.

#### 4.3 POLITICAL AGENCY

Despite the negative portrayal of South Asian women as being unable to resist the power exerted by patriarchal relation, there have been accounts of political agency where South Asian women have organised themselves against issues of racism, sexism and discrimination (Thakar, 2003). An inspiring story of Jayaben Desai, a Gujarati trade unionist, who passed away in 2014, is an example of how a single woman can channelize a tradition of solidarity and action in defence of a small group. Jayaben was known for the force of her character, eloquence and courage. A photograph of her confronting a row of police officers, a handbag dangling from her arm, became one of the iconic images of the 1970s.

Originally from India, she had arrived in Britain in the early 60s, as a twice migrant from Tanzania. The Grunwick<sup>27</sup> film processing factory in Brent, had taken on many migrant women workers, mostly Indian women from East Africa. The Grunwick workers were forced to work in an atmosphere of fear and control by the managers at their workplace. While these migrant women were willing to accept jobs that had low status and low pay, they were unwilling to accept the degrading treatment that in those days was typically handed out to 'unskilled' non-white immigrants in workplaces. Jayaben led a walkout of the Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories in the summer of 1976 in an attempt to convince

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<sup>27</sup><http://www.wcml.org.uk/contents/protests-politics-and-campaigning-for-change/grunwick/>

managers to recognise a unionised workforce. Perhaps her best-known statement was issued in confrontation with a manager at Grunwick, who she told: *"What you are running here is not a factory, it is a zoo. In a zoo, there are many types of animals. Some are monkeys who dance on your fingertips, others are lions who can bite your head off. We are those lions, Mr Manager."*

The Grunwick strike became a turning point in the history of trade and Unions in the UK for the way in which predominantly Asian and female workers stood up to their employers. The dispute by the women – who became known in the press as "strikers in saris" – lasted more than two years, and Desai's defiant campaign gained national recognition. (The Guardian, 2010)



*"I want my freedom. I am going, I have had enough."*

*-Jayaben Desai, as she walked out of Grunwick, 20 August 1976.<sup>28</sup>*

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=anxCrbMNn8A>



<sup>29</sup>Defiant Grunwick strikers including Jayaben Desai<sup>30</sup> staging a hunger strike on the steps of the Congress House <sup>31</sup>. Jayaben's story was well-known in the focus group that I conducted. Many older participants were aware of her impact on their working conditions in the later years and expressed their gratitude and pride in her achievement. Focus Group participant, Hema says:

*"When we were in Africa, we always heard 'aapna bapuji's'<sup>32</sup>(Gandhi) story, we feel proud of him; my father's seen him fight for India. We know how to fight for our right from him, so I am very proud of Jayaben, no? What she did for our kind of workers! We met her in one programme some years ago, so humble, so humble, I tell you. I really like her, like she has strength to offer in our daily job. All Gujarati women working here, need to know her life."*

When Jayaben's contribution was introduced as a topic for discussion within the focus group, the women became animated when narrating her life-story. Relatively recent arrivals to the UK who participated in the group discussion were not familiar with her work, and were introduced to her inspirational achievement by others who understood the relevance of her actions.

Jayaben's unique story would remain an inspiration not only to many other South Asian women but for all the women who are oppressed and marginalised. This defiance or rejection of disempowering discourses for self-definition and affirmation (Hill-Collins, 1990)

<sup>29</sup> Morning Star November 22, 1977, <http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/> TUC Collections, London Metropolitan University

<sup>30</sup> Jayaben Desai, trade unionist, born 2 April 1933; died 23 December 2010

<sup>31</sup> Morning Star November 22, 1977, <http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/> TUC Collections, London Metropolitan University

<sup>32</sup> Mahatma Gandhi is loving called 'the father of the nation' also known as 'bapu'

is reflected through the narratives of Gujarati women in more covert ways. As Thakar (2003), argues where some women conform to transform in such a way that their agency is not overtly manifested. The data has revealed how Gujarati women have been active agents in redefining their identity in the diaspora.

#### 4.4 MULTICULTURALISM

Harmonious immigration and gradual integration is a two-way process: the migrants have to learn to adapt to their new circumstances at their own pace; but the welcoming host community has also to learn to adapt to their new circumstances at their own pace.

The equal opportunities agenda which made possible the harmonious adaptation of migrants to their new circumstances was implemented by far-sighted individuals of the majority community. In 1966, the then home secretary, Roy Jenkins, said:

*"I do not regard [integration] as meaning the loss, by immigrants, of their own national characteristics and culture. I do not think that we need in this country a 'melting pot', which will turn everybody out in a common mould, as one of a series of carbon copies of someone's misplaced vision of the stereotyped Englishman... I define integration, therefore, not as a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance."*

It was the implementation of multicultural policy which created the circumstances leading towards harmonious co-existence of communities. However, recently, David Cameron's speech on immigration in April, 2011 warned of a 'discomfort and disjointedness' in communities with large immigrant populations. He has frequently signalled that "State multiculturalism" has been a failure, tried to implement a new hardening of policy towards immigration and migrant communities. It must be highlighted that recent research by Alan Manning at LSE <sup>33</sup> (LSE Research, 2011) separation between communities does not in fact create a feeling of alienation amongst migrant groups.

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<sup>33</sup> LSE : London School of Economics

According to this research the multicultural project has paid too little attention to how to sustain support among the white population.<sup>34</sup>

#### G) Ethnic groups in the UK

Ethnicity	All	UK-born	Foreign-born
White British	100%	100%	92%
Indian	73%	97%	64%
Pakistani	81%	95%	71%
Bangladeshi	80%	92%	77%
Black Caribbean	88%	97%	79%
Black African	51%	86%	45%

The research also suggests that the belief that some ethnic and religious minorities do not think of themselves as British, subscribing to some other identity is exaggerated. Participants in this research have expressed that they are very proud in their British-Asian identity.

Focus group participant, Lochana said:

*"Of course, we are British first, then Gujarati, Hindu, Indian, African and everything...we respect the law, we like the freedom.. how people are polite.. not like in our culture.. we are equal here.. we have rights.."*

She was interrupted by another participant (Radha) to add further:

*"We pay tax too.. we work so hard , no?...sometimes more than white people."*

Similar views are expressed by Rani in her interview:

*"I know I don't speak perfect English, so I am a second class citizen? What about my tax?"*

A number of women in this research who work and pay taxes feel that their economic contribution is not valued as citizens and they receive a second class treatment everywhere.

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<sup>34</sup> <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/multiculturalism-immigration-support-white-population/>

According to Brah (1996) in the economy, gender is manifested in the categories of breadwinner and housewife that anchor the invisibility--the non-recognition--of women's work. Her analysis indicates that the relationship between these two categories defines women as non-workers, which makes possible the definition of men as workers and breadwinners. This allows traditional patriarchal ideologies being employed to develop capitalist production. She further argues that these norms are based on the fundamentally masculine concept of work and offers that a feminist concept of work would include both biological and social reproduction, and not be confined to the production of goods and services. The presence and legitimacy of the ideology of the housewife, which defines women in terms of marriage and their place in the home has emerged as one of the many themes in this study as well.

Lochana says:

*"Afterall, all the domestic chores are our responsibility, no? Indian men don't work in homes, you know, na? When we get married they say 'pati ka ghar' (husband's home) is your final destination. You only leave, when you die. And after coming here, now, we have to work, (ghar ke bahar, ghar ke andar), inside and outside!"*

Leena adds further:

*"Yes, our life here is all mixed, we work like white women but our men don't help us like white men much... I mean some do, but they feel community will laugh.. even I feel, if I ask him to do some 'ghar ka kam' ( household chores) other women will laugh."*

Many women expressed how they are made to feel inferior because of their status as a 'housewife'. Radha a home-maker, narrates how her inability to speak English and hence being unable to work, has affected her status in the family.

*"My husband .. working in a big company.. so money is not a problem but I feel.. like you know.. he never ask me about big decisions..now the children too.. they think..you don't know nothing mom.. I laugh.. but tell you the truth.. 'dil toot jata hai'( in Hindi) ( the heart breaks)... ' aa saambhline hoon thaki gayi haji' ( I am fed up listening to this now)(in Gujarati)."*

Moreover, if they are not able to speak English fluently, they feel that they might lose their parental authority over their offspring owing to this 'deficiency'. Radha further adds;

*"Now I don't know what my children do, it was ok when they were younger, but now they saying, mom you won't understand... leave it.as if I am nobody."*

Spivak (1988) maintains that colonization brought colonized women progressively down from positions of relative power and independence to a degraded status -a counterpart to the process that "civilized" European women. According to her, this move to devalue women was crucial for the ideological construction of the "weak" woman, which served the economic purpose of lowering wages for women and creating a casual labour force in both colonial powers and colonized regions. This analysis is useful in tracing the historical development of immigrant women's housewife status, and thus men's breadwinner status and dominance in the family.

Many studies about South Asian women suggest that the persistence of 'traditional cultural values' maintains the institution of patriarchy. This results in perpetuating gender inequality. These studies (Agnew, 1997; Bhopal, 1997; Brah, 1996) have also often argued that South Asian society is pre-modern and that the institutions have not yet undergone the social transformation to 'modern' industrial farms. They suggest that it is only when South Asian women migrate to the West , where they have access to economic opportunities, are exposed to multiple ideologies including egalitarianism available through the media, and encounter egalitarian patterns of interpersonal relationships, that they are liberated.

*One focus group participant said;*

*"ketli judi che ne ahiyaani lifestyle, (How different the life style here is)..You know one day my daughter came home and said mummy, don't say Lalita aunty is fat. It's not a nice word. We use jokingly always.. I never knew ...this all making you think..that women have so much freedom over their life...innit? ane marad logo pan ketli help kare che ne baydi ne ( and even men are helpful in a number of matters to their wives)...who cares about woman's life in India?"*

She was interrupted by Hema:



*“Evu nathi, (it’s not like that). Even in India we have female on high position, don’t you know Sarlaben’s daughter-in-law is the head of her village?”*

A number of participants in this research have expressed they only truly became aware of the concepts like individual liberty, equality and sense of ‘self’ after their migration to developed nations. However, such interpretations suggest that gender oppression is located in South Asian culture and neglect the significance of racism, classism and gender discrimination prevalent in the host society. I would argue that it is not because the women enter into British society that such issues as gender oppression vanish. In some situations, the women describe the burden of work they face in the home to be greater in Britain than in their places of origin. When I came to London in 2004 and became a part of the South Asian community in West London, I was surprised to see some age old practices such as dowry or giving birth to a male child still continue to be of immense importance to some sections of the community. When I compared the life of urban women in India, to some of these South Asian women, I felt that their Indian counterpart had more awareness of their rights and if they wanted, and more avenues of support if they wished to take control of their lives for betterment.

Many participants in my research have expressed this concern about the burden of work, owing to lack of domestic help or even extended network of family members. Champa, Joshna and Leena are a few examples of women who expressed their loneliness after bringing home their new born babies from hospitals. What has changed, however, is their relationship to the home given their decision-making power, their economic contribution, the fact that they have come here as adults and now belong to nuclear families. It is important to note that these women's stories do not negate home as a place where they are constantly working or where they face pressure to conform to more traditional roles, but home has taken on other hand, more significant meanings since migration. For some of them in spite of their lack of fluency in English, post-migration they experience a control over their family and they more often to home as a place of belonging, where their Indian culture and identity is accepted without question. For them it is a complicated space and sometimes paradoxical, but it is a place where the women have agency and redefining their self. For a number of participants in this research this situation has further improved as their

performance in English improved. They express how knowing English and being able to communicate fluently in social situations made them feel better about themselves as well as allowed them to earn an important position in the family matters.

Drawing on the focus group discussions, I have discussed the social location Gujarati women in the wider British society, within their social and cultural network as well as their position within the family. In the following section, I will link their narratives from interviews to understand how the participants negotiate their 'self' in the in their public and private life through the process of language learning. I will now move on to the analysis of the narratives by thematically examining how the intersections of gender, class, race interplay in the construction of identity through the process of learning English.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### WE SOMEHOW MANAGE: LANGUAGE LEARNING

One of the main objectives for the present study is to gather qualitative data through interview narratives in order to understand better the experiences of Gujarati women learning English and the impact of this on their private and public lives, namely, in terms of their changing identities, family and social relationships, employment, and settlement and integration. In this chapter I will discuss the practical difficulties the participants face in accessing English language courses and their thoughts about it.

It is well known that much of the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature, as well as the literature concerning South Asian women, has been written from general perspectives, and does not consider the issues from the perspectives of individual language learners. I aimed to delve into the actual experiences of learning English by Gujarati women, recording their interpretations of their language learning and redefining their 'self'. Rather than universalizing their experiences, or attempting to make generalizations about all South Asians, I simply listened to their perceptions and lived experiences. Several of the details of their everyday circumstances which impeded their progress in English emerged from their narratives. The central theme that stood out from their stories was that the women chose to get on with their lives without complaining but at the same time tried to explore ways to overcome whatever obstacles they had to face.

#### 5.1 INFORMATION AND ACCESS:

The original impetus for this research was an outcome of my observations of structural obstacles facing women with caring responsibilities, especially young children, and women working in shift-patterned low paid jobs and struggling to attend English lessons. One of the main issues arising from the research data is the issue of access, which is especially crucial given the relationship between participation in language training programs and immigrants' enhanced social and economic wellbeing. The data reveal some specific examples of access barriers such as eligibility requirements that exclude many women who are classified as

dependants, lack of programme supports (e.g. child care), funding sources for training, lack of awareness of such programmes and personal barriers such as low self-confidence and/or lack of study skills.

Anshu says:

*“How to know.. nobody tell us.. you go here .. learn English like that.. then with small children .. I confused..at that time.. not knowing ..you know crèche ... may be there and (laughs) I learn the word first time...I am thinking... crash means some danger...”*

Madhu narrates the similar experience:

*“I know I want to learn. But I don’t know how.. now I have information everything about class..but when I come new..no information giving somebody to me.. kaise pata chalega? (How will I know?)”*

It also reveals how these women network with each other and try to help one another who are in similar disadvantaged positions. Hole’s (2005) research on Gujarati women in Sweden shows similar patterns of socialization and social interaction tying them to a communal role. The global migration pattern has involved people to maintain a combined relationship with people who came from the same country or region (Gujarat, Africa etc.) as well as the same religious group (i.e. Muslim or Hindu). These relationships sometimes might be widening support and friendship across family borders, where women also played a vital role in making a communicative relationship and building up a small community in an alien place.

Joshna says:

*“You only get to see your people if you visit the community places. So you look for events like festivals, to gather, to share your happiness and sorrows. Otherwise, you will feel so lonely here. We do things for each other, because after coming here we feel like a part of the family. I like these programmes. We want to help each other.”*

Participants in my research extend helping hands in looking after each other’s children, celebrating a number of activities together and supporting each other. A number of participants learnt about ESOL courses from a female member of her community or neighbourhood. They not only share the information with each other but encourage actively engaging in full participation by introducing them to people/locations/organisations or

offering to take care of the responsibilities that might hinder the participation in such activities.

A number of participants interviewed in this study have accessed the English for Speakers of Other languages (ESOL) training programmes funded by the government at some point of time upon arrival in the UK. The research has gathered their views about the accessibility and usefulness of these training programmes. It examines ESOL provision in the UK against the backdrop of gendered access to linguistic resources, as well as gendered agency and probes whether the policies understand and address linguistic socialization and identity transformations, to impact learning and teaching for better.

Naru says:

*“We managed all these years with our broken English. Etla varas thaya..chaalse<sup>35</sup>.. (all these years passed, no problem)”.*

Most participants, talking about their lack of fluency and difficulties in English, used the expression; “We somehow manage” without adding any tinge of disappointment to the word ‘somehow’. I analyse the word ‘somehow’ as a critical comment on the subtle form of discrimination in the political discourse and policy texts, detrimental to these women’s lives and learning.

## 5.2 USEFULNESS OF ESOL

Contemporary ESOL practices have evolved in response to the needs of growing transnational migration. The ESOL provision originally started as a service by volunteers and was influenced over the years by various government legislation (Hamilton and Merrifield, 2000) and was not included in the 1975 Right to Read literacy campaign, which shows how bilingual speakers were totally invisible in the eyes of the policy makers in spite of the relevance of this provision to the ethnic minority communities. The elderly cohort in this research, who had arrived in the early 70s, unanimously agrees that the conditions were not conducive for them to learn English during that period. However, they value the

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<sup>35</sup> Chaalse means something works, worked in the past and will work in the future too.

contribution of the neighbourhood volunteer groups that were set up to help newcomers learn English. These groups had limited resources and lack of childcare was a major problem for mothers who were keen to learn English. Finding classes that suited working women was also a problematic issue for women who had long working hours and a family to look after too. In 1992, the Further and Higher Education Act resulted in ESOL provision being classified as a vocational course that qualified for funding from Further Education Funding Council. This enabled provision of childcare and flexibility of hours, improving the possibility of attending these courses for working mothers.

Rosenberg (2007), in her comprehensive and detailed account of contexts and policies of ESOL, has categorically emphasised that the role of Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU) and Basic Skills Agency has been less effective when it comes to ESOL. Drawing on her own personal experience, and that of established and respected practitioners, Rosenberg (2007) critically evaluates adult ESOL provision over time and across sectors, for not doing enough to meet the needs of ESOL learners.

Participants in my research, however, value whatever patchy support that was available to them in the initial stages of learning English.

*Mamta: I have attended the English classes. I have done four exams. I even have the certificates. When I came here (in the UK) I couldn't speak English. I could only yes, no. My children were young and I couldn't work. Then someone told me there are English classes. I didn't know A from B; I couldn't read or write a single word. Then I did English for four years and then I could read, write and speak. Can you believe, I didn't know anything before? Like when you have to go somewhere, you have to say excuse me, can you help me? The classes gave me that confidence. I could sign my own documents and all. And that's why now I can communicate with my grandchildren, no?*

Mamta, who arrived in London in the early 70s takes pride in her achievements in bringing up children, learning English, working in a warehouse. In the focus group, while Mamta was telling how she was scared in the beginning, her 75 year old sister-in-law who was also present in that group laughed and said:

*“Mamta and scared? Impossible! I got to know her since she was 7 years old, that’s when I got married and entered the house. She is not scared; she scares other people with her ‘bindhast’ (bold and careless) behaviour. That’s why she learn so fast, no?”*

Seventy-two year old Mamta’s energy is visible throughout our communication in that focus group. She might have felt a little out of place when she arrived in the UK without having proper knowledge of English. But once she accessed the language through ESOL classes, she has never looked back. She mentions how she forged a bond as a daughter to an elderly white lady supervisor at her warehouse, thus bridging the gap between communities. She also mobilises other Gujarati women to participate in various community activities such as picnics, yoga groups, swimming lessons. She has cared for her 8 grandchildren so that her daughters and daughters-in-law could continue their jobs. Her case underlines that although ESOL provision is currently constructed on a social deficit model, (McDonald, 2007) and does not fully meet participant’s learning needs, it is nevertheless vital for successful language development of learners and can be a stepping stone to the path of success.

Studying the impact of language training programmes on immigrant women’s lives in Canada, Duff et al. (2000) observe similar outcomes. They state, “to have been given the opportunity to continue to learn, to obtain marketable skills, to meet new people, to feel like valued individuals with something worthwhile to offer society, and to gain confidence in English language use that extends far beyond the realm of language for work are benefits that have a ripple effect: a growing sense of self, value, competence, and wellbeing in turn has a positive impact on members of participants’ immediate families, communities, and society.” The participants in this research showed a very positive attitude towards ESOL courses and shared stories of how they began with zero knowledge of English and how these courses have transformed their lives. In fact, during the period of my field work, I was able to see how Maya and Fatima completed their Level 1<sup>36</sup> ESOL exam and started to work in a local school as part time school meal assistants. Fatima was so pleased with this achievement that she decided to enrol on a cooking course to take her career further in this field. Rani, who took private lessons to pass her bus driver exam, got her dream job as a

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<sup>36</sup> Equivalent to B2 or Upper Intermediate level

driver on London buses. Devi, who had worked in a factory for many years, has started to focus on improving her writing skills. Most participants considered their ESOL classrooms as a safe haven and praised the education system that treats them fairly at least within the classroom structure.

Cooke (2006) shows that teachers need to make the classroom a stable space, adding that they should also be encouraged to invest in each other's lives, encouraged to invest classroom community as a productive space for learning' (2006:93). Although attending these courses was challenging owing to lack of availability of good quality childcare, as well as other caring responsibilities at home, the participants' experiences of ESOL classroom remain very positive.

Macdonald's (2013) research observed that mothers are keen to struggle to sustain language learning and progress to further education but can be constrained by family responsibilities as well as work patterns. Her research confirms the findings of previous work by Kouritzin (2000), Ward and Spacey (2008), Rosenberg (2007). These findings were not specific to any ethnic group but overall female ESOL students. My research in the specific Gujarati community shows that Gujaratis being a trader community, aspire to rise above such constraints and find a way to make things work for financial stability and upward mobility. Speaking of the community, Gujarati people say that they will make the most of anything that is freely available. Deepa expressed her sadness that she is unable to utilise these courses fully as her work demands more of her time. Leena said that it would be 'stupid' not to make use of something that the government is offering freely. However Rani, who paid to improve her English, highlights the women's desire for betterment. Their sense of practicability of ESOL courses and learning English, makes them highly motivated learners.

### 5.3 PROBLEMS IN ACCESSING THE PROGRAMMES

Despite the keenness of immigrant women to learn English, access and information surrounding language training programmes remains problematic. Women receive the information about language courses mainly through word of mouth publicity, owing to the



lack of coordination among various service provisions. By having a language requirement as part of the requirements for citizenship, settlement, and permission to work, train or study in the UK, (Home Office, 2007) there is an underlying assumption that proficiency in the language of communication in the wider society is a democratic responsibility and a democratic right. However, lack of awareness and ownership of the needs of beginner learners, a definite direction in relation to progression to further vocational studies creates barriers in achievement rates. Another factor that adds to this neglect is a dismissal of child care needs, which is evident in the outcome that a number of the elderly cohort never had a chance to learn English, at the start of their settlement in the UK, and later they thought it was too late for them to join any courses which they blamed on their low levels of confidence or, because they didn't see any practical use of English in their current settled ways of life. It is however, astonishing to observe how these women in spite of their isolation and lack of information, family obligations, cultural barriers including patriarchal practices, have worked, looked after extended families, brought up their children and lived a very content life with their 'we somehow manage' level of English.

*Naru says: I did English lessons but may be because of age, I don't know, I just couldn't remember anything. And now I am too old, my children, grandchildren do everything for me.*

Similar views are expressed by Kunju, who is 82 and lives on her own:

*Smita: So do you manage to speak English?*

*Kunju: I manage somehow, not much. When people speak I understand.. I read too.. but I don't get any speaking practice...Who's there to speak with? And now I am 82... so what's the point..? Never got an opportunity when I was young...I studied in Gujarati when I was in India.. went to a Gujarati school...there I studied to read English...so I can read it.. I can also write a little bit...and of course understand when people speak.. now that I am old.. (laughs heartily)*

The obstacles or challenges migrant women face in acquiring proficiency in English are complex and varied, and even differing one from another. Most participants stated that they became aware of these programmes through someone else who has attended the

courses; mainly other mothers at their children's school would disseminate this information. No definite guidance through any government agencies was available to them upon arrival, so that they could access the courses at the earliest opportunity.

*Smita: Do you know there are ESOL classes for newcomers?*

*Rani: yes they charge. They took so much money, ESOL classes. They charge 300 /400, not everyone can pay for that. I went for that 2 time you know, and I came back home. I don't want to pay 300 pounds. And after that I stopped...*

*Smita : There are free ESOL classes if you are eligible.*

*Rani: They are not giving free classes? (sounding extremely surprised) Where, where is it? Free classes? I don't know about that.*

*Smita: There are places in..*

*Rani: Free classes? Really I don't know... may be they can, how can they.... Ask .. to tell the ladies.. how can they....*

*Smita: Yes, perhaps you were not aware...*

Although Rani lacked accuracy of grammar, she could communicate fluently. She was willing to pay to improve her literacy and grammar. She was quick enough to offer a solution to make women like her aware of such courses.

*Rani: Yes, no advertisement. They can give it to Hindi radio, or Desi<sup>37</sup> radio, all the ladies can listen. Punjabi radio, Hindi radio, so Punjabi lady, Gujarati lady, everyone sitting at home, everyone got in their kitchen, radio, you know when they are cooking, so they are listening. They will... may be thought, oh I have to get the English class. Because all the ladies are sitting at home to look after the kids, how can they know they got English class or not?*

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<sup>37</sup> Desi [de:si] is a term for the people, cultures, and products of the Indian subcontinent or South Asia and their diaspora, derived from the Ancient Sanskrit *deśá* or *deshi*), meaning *country*

*Smita: Do you know there are places, such as crèche, where you can keep your child and you can study, provided by the government?*

*Rani: I know that, I heard it. But before, I think 3- 4 years before I didn't. I work before and I pay £70 that lady to look after my kid. That's a lot of money.*

Rani, separated from her partner, who has moved back to India, aspires to become a bus driver. She works 12 hours a day and lives on her own now, that her children are sent to her family in India. When I met her she was doing a private course to learn English for her interview to drive the 'red bus'. She has lived and worked in London for more than a decade but has never heard of free ESOL courses. When her children were young and with her, she was unaware that crèche facilities were available to enable mothers to attend English lessons. Rani was one of my first interviewees. When I interviewed her, she was preparing for her public vehicle licence. After a period of almost 14 months, I happened to get on one of the buses, which to my surprise was being driven by Rani. It was an exciting moment for me as well as for her. She was extremely proud of her achievement and I could see the pride in her eyes, and I was happy to see that she had kept her dream alive and succeeded.

Leena, who is a recent arrival and has two young children at school, learnt about the training courses through her friend, another mother who has children at the same school.

*Leena: When I was new here, I didn't know that there was classes available, Then I see ... every morning, saw my friend, Anu is always in a hurry after dropping her children to school. At first I am thinking...thought...(self-correction of grammar error) see this is I am learning from doing class...(laughs) so every day I thought...she had housework or may be something....then one day I asked, where you go in hurry every day? hurry. Then she is telling, she attends English classes and then she pushed me, why don't you join? We learn a lot there... I never knew about these classes....then I thought maybe I can try like her.*

Leena's is an example how early intervention through proper channels can motivate to improve speaking skills for women who are willing. Some participants learnt about these

courses through their doctors at the surgery, who encourage them to join the neighbourhood community courses. Within a few years of her arrival, Leena improved her English through attending ESOL courses; it was evident from her self-correction how the course was helping her with her accuracy; and found herself a job at one of the biggest supermarkets. This job allows her the flexibility to work in evenings when her husband is at home to look after the children. She feels that she could do this only because she is in a developed country like England and that is what makes her 'love England'.

As shown by Ward and Spacey's study of Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali women in and out of ESOL, 'Caring for children is the major practical barrier to taking up organised learning' (2008:3). The participants in my research voiced similar concerns and expressed their lack of knowledge, in the early stages, of such care provision through local providers free of charge for them to attend courses. This demonstrates the significant disconnection between the women's lives and the government's policies.

Extending Sunderland's observations (2004), it can be said that although none of the government policies are explicitly racist or sexist, they create gendered and raced boundaries. The dominant assumption enshrined in the policy discourse is, that minority individuals and groups 'choose' to selfsegregate and live 'parallel lives' outside (and opposed to) mainstream culture and society. In relation to the strategies of connecting discourses of the national economic interest and community or social cohesion the provision of ESOL provision should discover ways to explore these policies through gender lenses.

Kafman et al. (2005) examine the factors that underlie the neglect of gender and the consequences of this neglect for understanding migration processes and outcomes. The authors suggest that not only the proportion of women in all migration flows is increasing but that their modes of entry and access to rights in the UK are increasingly complex and diversified. The experiences of the participants in this research reveal that there have been no comprehensive measures that influence the arrival and settlement of women migrants. The guidance available to them is limited and their gender and culture-specific needs are

not taken into consideration. Macdonald's research (2013) investigated how Asian women have the fewest English language skills, are 'hard to reach' and are under-represented in education and training programmes. The data reveals that these women are triply oppressed; firstly they are workers or workers' wives (class), secondly, they share the fate of women in all class societies (gender) and thirdly, they are migrants, i.e., subjected to discrimination (race). Their narratives have a vital role of linking their individual lives to collective decision making of the society.

#### 5.4 ELIGIBILITY

Apart from this situation in accessing the language service provision, eligibility for the existing courses also appears to be problematic. Women who come to the UK to join their fiancés/husbands, who are present and settled in the UK, are subject to a two-year probationary period of residency, also known as the 'two-year rule'. If their relationship breaks down during this period, they no longer have the right to remain in the UK, and are barred from accessing public funds—the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) requirement. (Home Office, 2007).

One of the respondents, Madhu, came to the UK in 2008 after being married to a British Gujarati businessman in India to become a part of his extended family. Her husband who has a white girlfriend and had no interest in Madhu, only agreed to marry to keep his parents happy. Soon after her arrival, she realised that she had been brought over to serve the family as a maid, rather than a spouse to her husband. She had to get up at 5 o'clock in the morning and be at the beck and call of everyone else in the family, which included her husband, his parents, his sister and her husband and their little kid. She was often belittled because she couldn't participate in the family conversations that took place in English. After suffering for a year and half, Madhu gathered the courage to walk out of that home with the help of a friend and a local organisation. When I met her she had rented a bedsit, was working in a local factory and studying ESOL course at the Upper Intermediate level. Women like her are hardly in a position to negotiate better terms of services and are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse because their lack of basic tool such as the language of the community.

*Madhu: I cannot tell ..how it feels, when everyone else was speaking, laughing in English and I just sit . They think I am their servant, stupid...why? I can't speak English like them? It make me so angry all the time. I cry alone and didn't know what to do. I was new, not know anybody and no English also. ..it was like bird in cage. I thought, nothing doing...I must get out of this. I must learn English... very important for me.*

*Smita: So how do you feel now that you are doing this course at this level?*

*Madhu: I miss my family in India but I am happy...now I know I can speak English. . I can do anything. I don't need anyone to help me. I work, I share a bedsit with my friend. She help me a lot...like job and contact for help. I don't like to rely on government. They help me a lot already.*

'Desire in language is the basic drive toward self-fulfilment' (Kramsch, 2009:14). It is clear from this how complex and acute the process of language learning is which has an immediate impact on identity development and investment in language learning. For Madhu learning English becomes a survival tool. Madhu, who came to England to live a traditionally assigned married life as someone's wife, is now an independent woman willing to change the course of her life. This reconstructed aspect of her identities seems to correspond to her shifting desires, efforts and access to learning English. By understanding these identity changes as an evolving construction we can understand the complex processes of identity formation as fluid, shifting and contingent.

If we look at one of the four principles of social policy for lifelong learning, it says: "People should have access to learning at the time which suits them best. For most people, this is at the earliest possible point, when their motivation to learn and integrate is highest, and before they learn to survive without integrating. Access to learning is a particular issue for the most vulnerable asylum seekers, who are currently barred from learning on arrival. For some migrants, other pressing needs may make it necessary to delay learning until later." (IFLL: NIACE, 2009) This is reflected in a number of participants' views. One research participant, Meena, is exasperated by her inability to speak English and wishes to have had opportunities of learning English earlier.

*"If someone told me, when I came here, to do these classes, may be ..by this time, I would be speaking better English... (laughs) .. even this interview...you don't have to repeat your question or speak Gujarati with me."*

Another participant, Urmi, feels deprived that she was unable to learn when she was young and had enthusiasm. She considers that she is past the age to attend any courses to improve her language skills.

Similarly other narratives of immigrants in this study reveal factors such as the high cost of living, coupled with the difficulty they face in having their credentials recognized so that they can get appropriate jobs, means that the family need two incomes to make ends meet when they arrive. For women with children, language training becomes an unaffordable luxury. When they have young children, they are at home either looking after them, due to lack of affordable child care, or working in menial jobs unrelated to their level of expertise.

The data ascertains that the eligibility criteria, to learn the language, should be reviewed and made accessible. Previous education and skills of the migrants need to be taken into consideration to help them pursue their interests and prepare them to transfer their knowledge and skills once they are fluent in English.

## 5.5 THE CONTEXT OF LEARNING

The poststructuralist view of language socialization taken in this dissertation allows for languages to be conceptualised as a site of struggle in which meanings and the identities of the speaker are negotiated and renegotiated with each utterance and experience in a speaker's life, and which may or may not involve development of second language competence. As discussed earlier in the methodological framework, Language Socialization and Poststructuralism have been brought together in recent studies (Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2002) and make an appropriate theoretical framework from which to work. There is an acknowledgement that language learning can involve, for example, power and gender struggles while learners, are in the process of being socialized into the host communities and cultures. The research investigates how novices use language to become socialized into other cultures and their norms, i.e. to become a participant in various communities of practice. In this case subject positioning contributes to public identity. As Pavlenko argues,

The process of language learning is not simply a cognitive process, but a process of “socialization into specific communities of practice” (2002:286).

As discussed earlier in the methodology, SLA theories do not always problematize the social context of learning. My data affirms the argument that, in the context of transnational migration, SLA theorists have not adequately explored how inequitable relations of power limit the opportunities the speakers have to practice the target language outside the classroom. They simply define the learners to be motivated, unmotivated, introverted/extroverted, inhibited /uninhibited without considering that such affective factors are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power. In fact the learner is seen “as an information processor that receives input from caretakers, teachers and peers, processes this input into intake, and, ultimately, produces output of a measurable kind” (Kramsch, 2009). Moreover, the ideal outcome of the process described is native speaker competence.

SLA research (Norton, 1997; Pavlenko, 2004) reveals that even students who have intensive classroom instruction will have difficulties progressing and developing if they do not have a chance to interact with fluent native speakers. Access to more experienced speakers of the second language is mediated by the learner’s class, race, gender, age and linguistic background, among other things. Respondents in my research frequently voiced this question: ‘Who do I practise my English with?’

The participants are disadvantaged by their gender, race and social status and become invisible and excluded. Their language learning is inseparable from their identity performance and negotiation. The positions we negotiate in interaction through our linguistic repertoires can be seen as a situated performance of identity. Performance theory (Butler, 1999) and performativity (Hall, 2000). Socialization and the context of identity performance are seen to shape one another. This is relevant in the participants’ responses about their access to ‘sympathetic’ native language speakers. Marginalised Gujarati women, are surrounded by people like themselves who are not fluent in English. At workplaces if they are employed in low paid menial jobs, the possibilities of communicating with native



speakers are bound by imbalance of power structures where the listeners are not interested in the speakers. Rupa, who belongs to the upper class, however, finds it easier to practice English with sympathetic fluent speakers of English within her extended family circle. On the other hand, People like Rani have difficulties in getting someone to practise their English with.

*Smita: So do you think you don't get enough chance or opportunities to practise English?*

*Rani: No there is (not) really, not enough for Indian lady, Gujarati lady, Punjabi lady doesn't really have.*

*Smita: But when you came here how did you practise English? Because you are always in your community, so how did you improve your English? With whom?*

*Rani: I just go out in the community, go out to burger shop, pizza shop, I order in English. If they don't understand once, I tell them again, again and again. I learn like this English. I watch TV programmes lot, I watch English programmes, so I learn the accent. I really can tell you without English it's difficult. It's very very difficult.*

Language learners as agents, actively engage in constructing the terms and conditions of their own learning" (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001:145). Which implies 'you have to work your way into the spaces where that socialization can happen, and second you have you to let yourself be resocialized in ways that allow for demonstrations of profound mastery' (Heller, 2011:37). Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) state that their view of human agency is about more than just "performance, or doing; it is intimately linked to significance....things and events matter to people—their actions have meanings and interpretations" (p.146). This links to the concept of motivation, more recently conceptualized as investment by Norton Peirce (1995), to action and defines myriad paths taken by learners. The participants in this research try to employ various methods to improve their linguistic repertoire by watching programmes such as the BBC news programmes, or entertainment programmes such as *Eastenders*,<sup>38</sup> *Deal or No Deal*, *Cookery shows*. They repeat the words that they have to use

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<sup>38</sup> *Eastenders* is a very popular programme amongst ESOL learners who can relate it to their lives and try to learn English by watching it.

frequently, they take help from their children to understand the pronunciation or meanings, they make lists of words that are useful for them, they sit and do the homework with their children so that they can learn along with them. Rekha, who works as a nursery assistant, and others who are in parental roles, have to show that they are gradually acquiring the status of 'legitimate speaker' who wishes to be not only understood, but also 'believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished' (Bourdieu, 1977:648), a position which can be particularly difficult for immigrant women who can find it difficult to achieve the 'right to impose reception' (Norton, 2000:113) on their listeners.

## 5.6 LOCATIONS TO PRACTISE

The places where these women can practise English with a sympathetic listener are limited. They devise strategies to improve their listening input mainly by watching television, speaking with their children or forging a bond with another person from a different community. Hira who works at a fast food restaurant and has to travel to Central London by public transport utilises her time to listen to English wherever she can:

*Hira : I try..like in the morning.. you see school children.. teenagers .. their English .. difficult to understand..I try to listen to them...or on the underground..I find a seat where I see if people are speaking English...*

*Smita : (smiles).. the place usually 'people' avoid ..*

*Hira : I know, for me.. you know this story of Mahabharata right? When Arjuna wants to learn to ...'baan chalana'.. how to say in English?*

*Smita : Archery...*

*Hira : Yes, he can only see the bird's<sup>39</sup> .. his target eye...I am like that when I learn English..*

Hira's is an example of a language learner who seeks opportunities, is highly motivated, has attention to detail (Norton, 2000) that shows how the relationship between the language learner and the social world is problematic. This is an example to further strengthen the

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<sup>39</sup> The Indian epic Mahabharata talks about the story of the famous guru Drona and his student Arjun. It is said that Arjuna could hit his target in darkness of the night. When asked to hit the target of a clay bird, he said that he could only see the eye of the bird, signifying the importance of concentration.

arguments of feminist poststructuralists like Norton (2000), Pavlenko (2004) that the inequitable relations of power limit the opportunities second language learner have to practise the target language outside the classroom. Learners like Hira are deprived of the self-confidence arising from positive experiences in the social context of the second language because of processes of 'othering'. These examples show how language intersects with race as a mechanism for invisibility and social exclusion, and influences gender constructions in the post-migration society.

### 5.7 DIFFICULTIES WITH ENGLISH

'Everyday I learn something new, not only the language but about life in general'. Rekha's remarks about attending ESOL classes capture how respondents attending ESOL courses feel about their learning. I have identified the numerous factors influencing the participants' post-migration constructions of self in social interactions pertaining to specific difficulties with English language. These include the experience of using English in various situations such as schools, workplaces and social gatherings, accent and culture gap.

Respondents explain the practical difficulties they have to endure because of the lack of substantial vocabulary in English be that at a pharmacy, surgery or parent teacher meetings.

*Rani: One time I have constipation, you know? I don't know how to explain them. It is so hard to explain them.*

*Smita: Now you know these words, before you didn't..*

*Rani: Before I don't know these words so I don't know how to tell them, please help me I got this problem.*

Mothers like Rupa, Rekha and Anshu express their exasperation when they are unable to contribute their valuable input in PTA meetings. They talk amongst themselves about the funny mistakes they make while speaking;

*Anshu: One day I say.. when I was Entry 1 yeah.. there's microwave in the chicken .. and everybody laugh in the class.. because I say chicken and not kitchen... I laugh also... because nobody speak best English here...in the class.. no?*

Meena also reminisces how once she said to everyone in the class ‘bye bye everything’ and the teacher could not hold her laughter. Although at times such classroom experiences can cause shame and embarrassment, the participants took these experiences in a positive stride and seemed more optimistic about their learning.

Working women like Hira and Devi were frustrated at the beginning of their career, for not being able to communicate with others and thought that their work was devalued because of their lack of fluency in English, In spite of displaying high standards and strong work ethic.

For some it is a difficult task to understand the spellings rules and apply them, resulting in low level literacy , especially the elderly women who mainly get information through their community social network and have to rely on their children to access support.

*Smita: What do you think is your main problem now that you are studying English?*

*Devi: I find spelling difficult to remember ...the spellings.. they are not like in Gujarati.. you say the same thing.. you write the same thing... not English like that. Last week I write laugh' l.. a ..f ..then teacher say.. laugh... also Gujarati people have problem with accent... s sound... I said one time... in my factory.. I want a sheet.... but when I speaking.. seat....so much confusion...*

Although English was part of formal education for many, it was not a subject that students, teachers, or parents took seriously. Research is also beginning to show that women seem to do best in learning environments where affective forms or knowledge that come from life experiences are valued (Dighe, 2005). In short, they do best in learning environments where there is an effort to relate theoretical concepts to real life experiences. Such environment allows women to recognize their own ability to think independently, to think critically, and to come to their own conclusions. It is within these connected teaching-learning situations that many women come to recognize and hear their own voices. Women learners come to an educational programme with specific personal histories, learning styles and expectations that are shaped to varying degrees by their experiences as girls and women in a society characterised by male power and privilege. It is essential to capitalize on this knowledge and experiences of women learners to provide appropriate educational programmes to their

needs. The discourses connected to ESOL policies, need to understand and work through gendered lenses to acknowledge and improve the lacuna in current practices.

## 5.8 ANXIETY

The data reveal that despite motivation, not all participants identified themselves as being successful in their language learning. Cooke and Simpson (2008) found that ambivalence towards home languages and the need to support children was a central concern for parents. 'Specific personal histories, learning styles and expectations that are shaped when their children are growing up' (2008:19-20). This finding is confirmed by all the young mother respondents who saw themselves as lacking in the capacity of providing much needed support to their children, because of their deficiency in English. In spite of this motivation, high anxiety is cited as one of the major reason why participants withdrew from the process of language learning. Participants from the elderly cohort, who did not have any previous educational background, lacked the confidence in study skills.

For Radha , who never had any opportunity to study , stated that :

*"For someone like me...never held a pencil in her hand in life.. how can I suddenly go to school and study? This made me very stressed. I manage to read with the help of some alphabets. When my children were young I learnt with them. I can, like names, place."*

For Maya , when she was a new arrival, a simple task of communicating with other would be stressful.

*Smita: So, there must have been some problems because of lack of English.. ?*

*Maya: yes, many... like when we had to go to the doctor.. it becomes very difficult to communicate...and understand... well.. I used to explain in my own way.. but when they spoke... I wasn't sure what they spoke.. even if you understand one or two words.. you miss other words.. isn't it ? so it's very difficult.. It was very difficult.. in a way. Because when someone says something I couldn't understand anything. So when someone spoke, I always tried....face...like I always tried to read their faces*

*when they spoke... like what are their expressions... what are they trying to say... but it was really very difficult.*

But Maya who is a highly motivated learner, overcomes anxiety by devising new strategies to improve her performance, either by observing the speakers lip movements or telling the speaker to slow down or simply persevering until she has some comprehension.

*Smita: Now when you speak these days.. do you get worried?*

*Maya: Not that I am speaking right or wrong. But sometimes I feel whether I am speaking the correct words or not.. whether the whole sentence is right nor not.. but not that I am afraid of making mistakes.. even if I make mistakes, I always carry on.. because then only will I learn what I have to do next time..*

*Smita: Do you feel you are stressed while speaking with native speakers?*

*Maya: No, no because wherever I go, I tell them beforehand, I don't speak fluent English. So always there is this understanding.. that they know that I can't speak fluently.. because both parties know..*

For those who come from a different cultural background, the previous experiences of learning can be stressful and traumatic leading to increased anxiety in a formal setting resulting in the new set up. This desire in language is seen as the basic drive toward self-fulfilment (Kramsch, 2009:14); however, the present study has shown that second language learning is a constant negotiation and re-negotiation of access, agencies, subject positions and identities between learners (my participants) and more experienced users in the host language community. So in spite of the desire, their journey towards the self-fulfilment is not easy because these learners do not have unlimited access and interactional opportunities.

This chapter has outlined a number of problems faced by my participants in accessing and attending ESOL courses. Also discussed are the ways and means by which these women confront various issues and overcome them. I found that stereotypical accounts of "disadvantaged" South Asian women as oppressed within families fails to address the

questions surrounding their approaches to learning English. In contrast to the stereotype, South Asian women should be seen as women as constantly reworking their identities dependent upon time, space and place. Rather than a simple acceptance or rejection of new values, these participants variously (re-)interpreted and performed their subjectivities - within communities, in work contexts, at college, within families. It is clear that class differences in the country of origin makes a difference to the language learning experience, job opportunities and also impacts on class positioning within this country. The narratives underline the interrelation of gender and class in the context of language learning. In the next chapter I analyse the impact of the ability or inability to communicate in English upon family life.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SAB JUGAAD CHALATE HAI: THE SELF IN THE FAMILY

I have discussed the challenges encountered when endeavouring to access English language courses for the participants in the previous chapter. In this chapter analyse how language learning and in/abilities to speak English impacts on social status in the family and changes the dynamics of relationships within family structures. The first focus is on the participants' post-migration construction of the self in key family relationships. It is observed that language and gender impacts the participants' negotiation of key family relationships with their partners and children (Norton, 1997). The data reveal a number of issues surrounding the language choice in the family and language investment in family communications, imagined identity, and language and gender based power dynamics.

#### 6.1 WE MAKE ANYTHING WORK: HYBRID COMMUNICATION

For most of the respondents the outside world is often uninviting as second language speakers of English. As mentioned earlier, in his notion of the legitimate speaker, Bourdieu (1978) argues that, when a person speaks, the speaker wishes not only to be understood, but to be 'believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished' (p.64). However for less fluent second language speakers, their ability to command the listener is unequally structured because of the symbolic power relation between them. Leena's case is an example of how this type of symbolic power imbalance can operate even inside families where some members are equipped with the linguistic capital. Leena explains how she decided to keep quiet as she was not able to convey her ideas to other members in her family, in any important family matters. Everyone else was fluent in English and she felt that her opinions were not valued because she was not able to speak English fluently.

*Leena : In the beginning there were times when I had to sit quietly and just smile. You know, you don't feel confident. If I had to say something, I used to tell it to my husband in private but never in the family gathering. One day, I went to collect my children from school.. I come home and see that bedroom window open.. so I worry.. I go home in the room ... someone took money from the safe... everything lying on*



*floor. I go to sister-in-law next door and tell.. she laugh for my English..I was very disturbed that time...*

It shows how a dependent female is rendered powerless not in relation to her male counterparts but other female members of the family, because of her lack of fluency in English. Another study in Canada by Agnew (1990) shows similar findings. Agnew interviewed a community worker, who said that 'South Asian women's problems required different approaches than other groups. Immigration removes the protection of the cultural norms of their home communities, leaving them more vulnerable to male oppression within the family' (1990:69). The experiences of participants in this study illustrate that there is an added complexity of migrant women being more vulnerable to oppression from other female members. Their accounts, however, also stress positive aspects of 'sisterhood' from other female members of the family or community.

Gujarati women's experiences of communicating with others showed how they felt alienated as they could not command the attention of their listeners. Anshu's case where she feels that she may not be able to exercise control over her children, Devi, who was unable to demand a just rota at work, Madhu, who was treated almost as a domestic slave, or Rekha who is ignored at PTA meetings, are a few examples of this alienation. In the discourses circulating within family, they found it easier to communicate in the language that was more natural. The choice of language also reflected their emotional state of mind depending on a given situation, Oonk argues that "together with religion, food and dress habits, and a shared history [real or imagined], 'language' is among the key variables of most definitions and descriptions of 'ethnicity'." (2007:68)

Five of the participants reported using a mix of languages, including English, with their husbands. Maya and her husband primarily used Gujarati and Portuguese while they were in Portugal, but since moving to the UK they find themselves using English quite often alongside Gujarati and Portuguese. Maya makes deliberate efforts to speak English with her children but the children tend to use Gujarati or Portuguese with her at home. However, she mentions her daughters are very supportive of her in her English learning process. They correct her, they make her aware of her pronunciations and encourage her.

*Maya: We decide to speak English....but then the girls forget and switch to Gujarati or Portuguese again... umm..but...I am lucky.. my daughters.. my second one... she is always telling... mummy.. like this.. not like this....but we are always (speaking mainly Gujarati at home)*

It is observed that as immigrant families climb the social ladder and move upward, the home language changes from L1 to English. Gujaratis however are known for preserving their culture and language in best possible ways (Oonk, 2007; Marwani and Mukadam, 2014) Charita, who belongs to the upper strata of the society, explains how the communication in the family is hybrid.

*"See, whenever we are all together, by that I mean the extended network of family, mother-in-law, sister-in-law's family, brother-in-law's family, you will never hear a single word of English. It will be all a mixture of Gujarati and Hindi... even the younger kids.. But if there's even one person who cannot understand this...,then we all speak English. Sab Jugaad<sup>40</sup> chalte hai.. (We make anything work)."*

As I already discussed, Hole's research (2005) argues that "neither here nor there" positioning produces ambivalence and contradictions in one's being, compelling one to act towards negotiating the difference. In postcolonial discourse, however, "hybridity is celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence, owing to the advantage of "in-betweenness," the straddling of two cultures, and the subsequent ability to "negotiate the difference". Using the postcolonial notions of *hybridity* and *third space* (Bhabha, 1990; 1994), after examining my research participants' responses, I argue that an "in-between" linguistic, cultural, and identity positioning of my participants is their response to this new transition. Bhabha (1990) marks hybrid identity as one that moves into 'a third space' or beyond socio-cultural dualism. Hybridity functions as a meshing of identities that demands new ways of communication, resulting in a transformation of culture and identity.

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<sup>40</sup> Jugaad is a colloquial Hindi-Urdu word that can mean an innovative fix or a simple work-around, sometimes used for solutions that bend rules, or a resource that can be used as such, or a person who can solve a complicated issue. It is used as much to describe enterprising street mechanics as for political fixers. This meaning is often used to signify creativity to make existing things work or to create new things with meagre resources.

## 6.2 MULTICULTURALISM

Mukadam (1994) has argued that early migrants from ethnic communities were seen as inferior to the majority or dominant group. She further notes that many second-generation individuals responded by hiding or suppressing their ethnicity and developed a Western persona in order to avoid racism and discrimination. She cites Hutnik (1991:63) to outline three historical trends in ethnic minority research:

The inferiority model is where the individual tries to hide their roots/belongings. The deficit model is where the individual feels safe in the 'ghetto' community. The Bi-cultural or Multi-cultural model is where the individual tries to combine the best values of both cultures. As discussed earlier, thirty years ago multiculturalism was widely seen as the answer to many of Europe's social problems. Today it is seen, by growing numbers of people, not as the solution to, but as the cause of, Europe's myriad social ills, especially after the recent events in Paris.<sup>41</sup> That perception has been fuelled for the success of far-right parties and populist politicians. According to Malik (2012), multiculturalism is a political process, the aim of which is to manage that diversity. He argues that the experience of living in a society that is less insular, more vibrant and more cosmopolitan is something to welcome and cherish. He argues that multiculturalism is a case for cultural diversity, mass immigration, open borders and open minds. However, as a political process, multiculturalism means something very different. It describes a set of policies, the aim of which is to manage and institutionalize diversity by putting people into ethnic and cultural boxes, defining individual needs and rights by virtue of the boxes into which people are put, and using those boxes to shape public policy. It is seen as a case, not for open borders and minds, but for the policing of borders, whether physical, cultural or imaginative.

A number of participants seem to have accepted their 'secondary' status in the British society owing to the 'difference'. Participants' narratives from different class backgrounds are critical of the state apparatuses for institutional racism.

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<sup>41</sup> Charlie Hebdo is a French satirical weekly magazine, featuring cartoons, reports and jokes. The magazine has been the target of two terrorist attacks, in 2011 and more recently 2015, presumed to be in response to a number of controversial Muhammad cartoons it published. In the second of these attacks, 12 people were killed, including Charbonnier and several contributors.

*Smita: So, how do you feel now that you are improving your English? Do you feel confident?*

*Soni: Now, what is this confidence? You can read and write and all that.. but our voice? That will never work! I tell my doctor too...I don't know what's with this country or the people...the problems I have with the housing ...or any other matters...I don't involve the police.. because I know...it's not going to work for us...My housing officer says, I don't care...Even if my son comes to stay with me...someone will complain...then the police will come and check my passport..*

This fear of institutional racism and discrimination is evident in the narratives of other some participants. When people from third world countries are transported to wealthy nations in the Western world, they usually experience downward social mobility. Dislocated from the place where they belong, the privileges of the social hierarchy may result in producing intensive affiliation to the culture left behind in their country of origin. Charita, a civil servant, who belongs to the upper class in Gujarat, shares her views on racial discrimination.

*Charita: Workwise it was a struggle, though we speak English as such...I think equal opportunities were still not .. that was very difficult...but racism still exists...in London, because I worked in London for a good number of years... 20, 15.. ..I'd say 18 years...then I moved out of London, now my work is in Reading. ..then you feel London is better...it's not visible here.. even if there are elements of racism, they are afraid to show...but the minute you go out of M4, you will feel...I didn't realise this...when you walk in there...you really feel out of place...moving in this area also was very difficult...we had tough times.. there were complaints here, complaints there...but we were determined, we carried on...My neighbours, a head teacher, Hindu.. the only 'coloured' as you would call it...has been living here for 40 years. She said, she found it very tough. It's not that you have to fight back.. but you feel the difference. It was difficult to break that ice.. even to get hi and hello...it took me 10 years .. (laughs)..it will take another 10 years to get things normal...but it's getting there.*

Parekh, while stating that multiculturalism is about cultural diversity or culturally embedded differences (Parekh, 2001:3), distinguishes three common forms of cultural diversity (multiculturalism):

- Subcultural diversity: for example Gays and Lesbians share their society's dominant system of meaning and values and seek spaces for their divergent lifestyles. They seek to pluralize the existing culture;
- Perspectival diversity: for example feminists who are critical of some of the central principles or values of the prevailing culture;
- Communal diversity: for example national minorities, immigrants, indigenous people and other groups that represent self-conscious and more or less well-organized communities living by their own different systems of beliefs and practices.

According to Parekh the terms "multicultural society" and "multiculturalism" are used to refer to society that exhibits all three, possibly other kinds of diversity, or to society that displays the last two kinds, or to that characterized by only the third kind of diversity.

Parekh further notes that a multicultural society that includes two or more cultural communities cannot necessarily be multiculturalist. The term "multicultural" refers to the fact of cultural diversity, the term "multi-culturalist" to a normative response to that fact (Parekh, 2001:6). Although the concept multiculturalism has received much reflection and analysis in the theory field, sometimes it has been discredited among practitioners who may prefer to speak about social justice, inclusion or racial equality while referring to issues relevant to multiculturalism.

It can be observed that the persistence of multicultural debates in Europe and the United States is "testimony to the incapacity of states to prevent their minority populations from linking themselves to wider constituencies of religious or ethnic affiliation". (Appadurai, 1996) He argues that it cannot be assumed any longer that all or most "viable public spheres" are national. "Diasporic public spheres, diverse among themselves, are the crucibles of a post national political order. The engines of their discourse are mass media (both interactive and expressive), and the movements of refugees, activists, students, and labourers" (Appadurai, 1996:23). Once again, in the recent discussions about the Charlie Hebdo case, the Western media has shown to attack the notion of 'No Go' zones in some cities like Birmingham. (The Guardian, January 2015). It is being portrayed through some

Islamophobic sections of the media, that instead of national public spheres, we now have a post national order of diasporic public spheres and these spheres are considered to be a threat to the host nations. The repercussions of which are seen various incidents of attacks racist attacks on Muslims in many developing countries. Fatima has lived in London since 1997 narrates the experiences of increasing verbal racist abuse after the 9/11 terrorist attack in America or 7/7 London Bombing offers her view:

*“It is very difficult here now. For us, you know.. the first thing they notice is our religion...here they call you .. you know even when you are walking on the streets, the young white boys, sometimes walk past and say...you paki, you stink fish ...or go back to your country ...You just know, they don’t want you here..”*

Having understood this changing scenario it can be surmised that in multicultural cities like London, where the population is diverse and general awareness and understanding is improving, there is still a rising anti-immigrant sentiment. In order to pacify the majority white population, the government under David Cameron’s prime-ministership has resorted to a somewhat anti-immigrant stance (LSE, 2011). This has resulted in reduced funding for support to a number of activities such as language learning, child care, social activities. This has in turn affected members immigrant community such as the women in this research.

However, what the research reveals is, given the right support and tools, diasporic populations find harmonious ways to navigate through two different cultures, with the help of hybridity. So the current stand on provision of these facilities seems short-sighted and detrimental to general welfare and social cohesion.

Charita shares her views about community:

*Smita: What do you think about communities and integration?*

*Charita: See, it’s good that you are within your community and I recommend that. There would be pots of communities but what I don’t like is that pot of community just becoming isolated. They must have leadership and ownership of moving out. I dip in and dip out. The communities should spread out. It has an impact on the children, the way they have to wear clothes, when you go out wear this, inside you wear that.. I don’t impose this on my children. We have drinks in my house.. I let my*

*children drink...if they want to eat meat , the choice is theirs. You don't bring it to my house, I am strict with that.. but they can eat outside. But now the children are well-educated, they choose what they want to do. (Laughs out) . I have my Malibus, I have my wine glasses..*

Participants spoke of 'vegetarian' barbeques, gardening as their favourite things to do. They wear 'Kurtis'<sup>42</sup> on their denims and sprinkle spicy chillies on their pizza. From the data it can be seen that a number of women, after having attained the basic level of communication have forged bonds with other white female colleagues or neighbours. They celebrate festivals like Diwali, Eid and Christmas with equal zeal. They experiment with available ingredients to create new fusion cuisine. In spite of most Gujaratis being vegetarian, they have invented vegetarian burgers and other recipes for barbeque parties. Different individuals 'pick and choose' different aspects of culture i.e. food, clothes, religious practices, either eastern or Western, or whether they have learnt them in their African homes, they exercise agency in retaining, modifying or discarding some over others. They have created a third space for themselves in order to become active members of the host society.

### 6.3 WHAT WILL THEY DO?: LANGUAGE AND POWER

Key aspects to arise from this data and which require further attention are the interplay of language and power in key family relationships. These relationships also reflect how the support from close family members can both encourage and discourage language learning. Rupa uses the word 'durr' – fear - quite often and feels the need to tag her husband along whenever she has to go to hospitals or places like these. She finds it strange to speak English with her husband whose first language is English and who speaks Gujarati as a second language. Hira expresses a similar feeling of mortification, exasperation when she is not able to understand her customers while taking orders.

The data suggests that there are a variety of ways in which anxiety and self-confidence influence communication. Norton (2002) has argued that anxiety is not only constructed within social interaction but also with reference to the learner's preoccupation with

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<sup>42</sup> A shorter version of traditional top garment worn by South Asian women

stressful day-to-day living conditions. Contrary to earlier SLA theories, she considers anxiety as a condition constructed by poor economic conditions and limited life chances and not just an invariant personality trait (p. 124). The data indicates that anxiety plays a major part in communication where learners have little control over the rate or flow of communication i.e. while speaking with fluent speakers who are not considerate of the speaker's marginalized positions. She further argues that there is a specific kind of anxiety that in the case of many learners interferes with second language learning.

Language choice in key family relationships not only has implications for identity construction and the preservation of intimacy but also the way power dynamics are negotiated in that relationship (Piller and Takahashi, 2011).

Rupa and Rekha's husbands speak English as their first language but according to Rupa and Rekha, they do not have the patience to teach or practise English with their wives. However they are supportive of them to go out and learn. Whereas for Meena and Anshu, it is a struggle, even attending English classes. Their husbands, who come from rural parts of Gujarat and do not speak English very well themselves, discourage their wives from learning English.

*Smita: So how is it for you to learn English here at school?*

*Meena : I love it so much.. it makes me so happy...umm...but...my husband doesn't like it at all.. he says what are you going to do by learning English at this age? .. when my husband sees me doing my homework with my children... he shouts...(hearty laughter...) Are you going be a businesswoman or what ?..*

*Smita: So does he accompany you when you have to go to some place for getting things done?*

*Meena: Now I go myself.. I don't need him anymore.. like. It's been 3-4 years now.. I can understand English now.. .*

Now that her husband feels superfluous, in terms of speaking English, she sets the terms of their linguistic interaction as a means of negotiating power dynamics in their relationship.

Anshu's husband doesn't speak English much and according to her he makes no effort to learn because he prioritises paid work to support the family and so cannot attend English



lessons. She feels it is her responsibility to learn fast to help her children with their homework. At times she feels exasperated and cries because her English proficiency is limited and she has to depend on others. She feels that if she could turn back the time, she would go back to India and learn English. When asked about how she manages to study English she said:

*Smita: So do you get time to do your homework?*

*Anshu: sometimes I sit with my children.. it feels so nice.. but I have to make myself free and do all the cooking before my husband comes... otherwise (smiles).....*

*Smita: hmmm...(nodding)*

*Anshu: He goes to work.. he understands a little bit.. I tell him.. why don't you study? I tell him go in the evenings.. he says.. I feel embarrassed... well.. I can't teach him.. my eldest daughter tries.. Papa. Do like this.. like this.. and I know things that he doesn't.. so I tell him.. you know nothing... (laughs aloud)*

Both these cases show how the woman's language identity was being coerced, and how it was possible to express agency in negotiating the terms of interaction and language-mediated identity constructions. Anshu does not want to jeopardize her relationship with her husband by asserting her strong desire to learn English. But she finds a way to exert control over the interactional space by resisting her partner and taking charge of her desire to learn English. She thinks the men are confused and do not know how to deal with their new role in a new society.

*Anshu : we are a very banias <sup>43</sup>... you know we are always looking for better deals, pragmatic ...but our men need to find out what exactly they want from their women. They want us to make money and not learn English because that will spoil us? How is that possible? Why and what are they so worried about? Now, I think.. what will he do? Actually anybody, what will they do?*

Following Brah (1996), it is evident that the simplistic stereotype of docile, submissive South Asian women oppressed by traditional patriarchy needs to be challenged. Cummins (1996)

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<sup>43</sup> Bania an occupational community of merchants, bankers, money-lenders or dealers.

has made an important contribution to understanding the relationship between identity and power. He argues that collaborative relations of power can serve to empower rather than marginalize. Power is not a fixed, pre-determined entity, but can be mutually generated in interpersonal and intergroup relations. Participants have shown that helping each other by introducing English language courses, supporting each other with childcare or other domestic commitments and recommending work are effective strategies when seeking to negotiate new subjectivities. This might be attributed to the distinctiveness of this cultural group, who have been argued to be hard working people the Gujarati community exercising considerable influence over trade and businesses in Britain (Oonk, 2007).

#### 6.4 WHY I TRY?: MOTIVATION

All the participants in the study are highly motivated to learn English. They take extra efforts and crave social contact with people who might put them at ease to speak English. They find ESOL classes extremely helpful because they provide a context which allows them to gain self-confidence and provide a stress-free environment.

However, according to Norton (2000) motivation is very complex matter. She states that a learner's motivation to speak is mediated by other investments that may conflict with the desire to speak- investments that are intimately connected to the ongoing production of learners' identities and their desires for the future. As discussed in the literature review, the traditional SLA theories consider motivation a determining individual factor in successful language learning, making learners primarily responsible for progress in learning the target language. However, these theories do not adequately address the problems arising from relations of power in the social world and their impact on social interaction between second language learners and target language speakers.

By exploring the women's investments in English, it is possible to understand how they create and respond to opportunities. For Hira and Rani, English represents a means towards economic independence in the public world and being able to do their dream job (being a nurse and a bus-driver respectively). Rani who has a driving licence and wants to become a

'red bus driver' expresses her frustration when she got all questions right in her reading exams but failed in her writing as her grammar is 'terrible'.

*"He asked me very simple question, I don't understand, that's why he is not sending me application. So that's why I am struggling for job? Because of one question only? This is not good. We should have to learn English."*

However this rejection made her enrol on English lessons and find renewed determination to get a job as a driver. After almost a year from this interview, Rani called me in an excited state to report that she had secured her dream job as a bus driver. This indicates that it is vital to understand the individual in the social context of second language learning by linking it to individual experiences and social power in a theory of subjectivity as mentioned earlier. 'Subjectivity is 'the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world' (Weedon, 1997: 32)

The term "agency" has been contested and theorized in new and variegated writings of feminist scholarship. Drawing on from Mirza's (1997) call to voice black women's experiences; "... to shout from the roof tops 'we have arrived!'...listen to me .. this is my story", (p.4) I view "Agency" being constructed here as "someone who acts and brings about change", to "effect change in themselves and their situations". These Gujarati women play important roles in shaping that identity for themselves and their families and, through their efforts. They challenge and change the notions of what it is to be Asians and the meaning of being British in Britain. Rather than remaining marginalized and excluded they have chosen to revitalize and reconstruct their own realities and world views to represent and validate their attitudes and beliefs. They are constantly shifting identities depending on their locations to fit in with whatever linguistic ability they have and try to improve further with the limited available resources. This can be explained further by the story of another participant, Deepa.

Deepa's case provides another example of how women have been exercising agency without considering linguistic barriers to be of any significance in order to pursue their dreams. I met Deepa, in one of the beauty parlours she runs. We spoke while she was

multitasking. Deepa had her own beauty parlour in a big commercial city in Surat, in Gujarat. Her husband lost his job and suddenly the family were concerned about financial security and for their children's futures. Although the husband was looking for work, the job offers with adequate salaries. Deepa decided to take a chance and came to London as a visitor to explore opportunities to assure better prospects for her family in the UK. During her initial stay, she built rapport with different beauty businesses and identified a plan of action. She then went back to India, applied for a work permit for herself and brought her family here.

*Deepa: See, in life you take chances, if it works, fine ! If it doesn't, well, you find something else. I started this with eyebrow threading for two pounds. Then I also started doing henna, you know, henna right...for weddings and all. When I first came, I had problems with English. But we are 'beparis' ( traders) first.. so we find ways to do business.. so first I started with our community, but slowly I could see the gap in the market. So we hired a shop.*

*Smita: How did you manage with your low level of English then? Did you learn the language?*

*Deepa: I had English reading and writing skill from India a little bit. I know, not perfect English but see...never problems with customers... In this business service is important.. and I try to offer the best.... Now I have a good reputation... You can see now I manage, the rest my husband manages that part for me, he was a manager in India. But because it is my business, he didn't understand much about the customer need, like the ladies demand, but because I work I know. But we both learned together. Initially I worked for someone else, then working hours were difficult. I had two kids to look after. The children say mummy, why are we here, we want to go back. But they are young, they miss their friends. But my husband is understanding.(laughs) What option does he have anyway? I make more money now. But we work as a team , innit? He takes care of children, homework and all. So I can finish late.*

*I try to cook English food, our food smell a lot... you know clothes and all. I don't like it... I mean I like the food but you know the 'tadka' (the food tampering in hot oil with spices), leaves a different smell in the house.. I like my house to smell nice like British people.*

*Smita: But then what do you cook?*

*Deepa: I try to make pasta and British food.*

*Smita: Are you not a vegetarian Gujarati then?*

*Deepa: No, the family have always been vegetarians like most Gujaratis. You know, when I was new, those white kids, one day one boy said to me, you stink of fish.. you Paki...I was very disturbed. But you learn to ignore .In my line of business, I need to be modern. I will change where possible, clothes food, so it is ok if the kids want to eat KFC burger. I will not stop them. Because I know my kids will always learn the basic values of our culture from their parents. We don't harm anyone. We are 'live and let live' people. Do you know this 'sher'? <sup>44</sup> "Shehr ki aankh badalana mere bas me na tha.. kya kiya maine ki bhens badalke dekha" (It was impossible for me to change the world view, what I did was to change myself)<sup>45</sup>. This is what, at least I am doing.*

Deepa's case is an example of how Gujarati women have kept their resilience and played a pivotal role in construction their own identity. When Deepa says 'I need to be modern', she is reflecting on her social relation to reinvent and redefine her identity. It is these types of experiences in the diaspora that I was hoping to explore via their narratives and understand the notions of women's agency. It is this type of submerged and hidden experiences that show how South Asina women claim the third space (Mirza, 1997; Bhabha, 1990). As Mirza (1990) argues, "as black women we see from the sidelines, from our space of unlocation, the unfolding project of domination." She further urges to voice 'our being and our presence within the patriarchal imperial project of sexualised racilazation is to actively contest that system of which we form a part.' (p.6)

Deepa's entrepreneurship, characteristic of Gujarati culture, reminded me of Mira Kamdar's memoir, *Motiba's Tattoos: A Granddaughter's Journey from America into her Indian Family's Past*, published in 2000. The memoir inherently looks back, but Kamdar's family history is also the story of twentieth-century globalisation and, in turn, a piece of history of Gujaratis in diaspora. It was intriguing to find how Kamdar "negotiates strangeness";

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<sup>44</sup> Sher: A form of poetry in Hindi/Urdu

<sup>45</sup> I later searched for this couplet on the internet and found that it is a work of Urdu poet, Haseeb Soz

strangeness of food, language, and traditions, in the presentation of her own, as well as her grandmother's identities. She presents snippets of Motiba's life and connects them to her own life in the West. Through this she familiarises readers with the complexities of living across national and racial boundaries. She suggests that the Gujaratis' "devotion to family, community, and moneymaking" gives the Gujarati community "its ability to survive." The ability to survive is central to the lives of my research participants; also the reason why they did not complain much about things that were not in their favour.

Similarly, Deepa's narrative shows that home is a site of construction or reconstruction of one's identity, meaningful to one's own desires. I would argue that Deepa's insistence on making her home 'smell nice like British people' or cooking English food, is through the shaping of a fluid identity, so that she and her family can be at 'home' in the British society. Deepa's remarks 'those white kids' reveal a consciousness of the 'difference' she faces because of the colour of her skin. I relate her experience of being called 'stinking paki' to her desire to keep her home 'smelling like British people'. Many women in this research feel that their difference is not openly accepted outside the home. Some resist exclusion by creating inclusive home space, whereas others, like Deepa, choose to assimilate in some ways. This performance of identity is framed reflexively as an awareness of emerging 'self'. This takes us back to Norton's (2000) definition of identity "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p.5).

In their book on Gujarati communities, Mawani and Mukadam (2012: xxii) discuss the migration of the Gujaratis; they suggest that the community, by its very nature of being a mercantile community, is a group for whom migration has always been a way of life. The idea of adapting and adopting, as well as discarding and recreating the various aspects of their identities, has been a key factor to their trajectories.

Sangita describes these characteristics in a Gujarati proverb;

*"You know we have a saying, kad, vakad no trewad trijo bhai (Stewardship, resourcefulness and thrift are three brothers). Material success matters a lot in our community, but we work hard for that, haan (eh!)..."*

The utterance 'haan' pronounced in a certain way at the end of her quote implies a sense of pride. Another participant shared a joke with me about the astronauts when landed on the moon were surprised to see corner shop with a Gujarati in it.

Deepa's demure exterior belies her dynamic and flexible personality. She has worked hard to achieve success within a decade. With the help of her husband, she has set up her business which is making good progress. The narratives in this research show that women negotiating their traditional roles were influenced by differentiated social and economic milieu in which they found themselves. Apart from these narratives, there are many such examples that I observed in the part of West London, where I have been a resident for the past 10 years. The corner shop where I buy my travel card every week is run by a Gujarati woman, who opens the shop at 6 am every morning. Her husband, who she says, is a gambler, helps her but she does not trust him with any financial matters. While travelling all over England, I have observed a number of women working quietly at the back of their shops, silently supporting the family run business, while male members manage the front desk.

Their economic contribution to the family is not only visibly vital but contributes immensely to its survival. Immigration to Britain for these women is also accompanied by drastic changes in the standard of living. In Indian society, some aspects of the lifestyle of the middle class resemble that of elite segments of British society. Domestic help is easily available if you live in urban areas. Most of the participants come from joint households where the husband's parents and extended family members are a part of the unit so workload is always shared among family members; their households employ domestic workers and in some cases even drivers for their cars. In Britain, the women carry the burden of household chores on their own. "You have to do everything by yourself here", "I miss my 'kamwali baai' (domestic assistant)", are a few examples of how the participants feel about this lack of support for household chores. Many of their husbands who had once occupied prestigious jobs in the places of their origin, or had studied for professional degrees such as engineering, accepted jobs in London that placed them in lower income brackets or lower socio-economic strata in the beginning of their careers. From a

patriarchal point of view, this also creates a dent to their male ego, which is sometimes reflected in their behaviour towards the wives. In their home countries, these women have a network of close family members or friends with whom these delicate matters can be shared to get emotional relief. Ballard (2002) argues there is high correlation between upward socioeconomic mobility and 'assimilation'. Trajectories of many participants in this research reveal that migrant women in their new home countries have to cope with financial, social, psychological pressures without any support system. Meena, Anshu, Rupa and other working class women expressed how they get stressed by the workload at home and find it difficult to focus on their language learning.

Anshu says;

*"There's so much to do at home..24 hours no enough... looking after children, in-laws, and sometimes.. we work at home...and here everything you do... go drop ...pick up children...in India children go to school ..I never go with them...and now.. my homework...where to find time? (laughs)"*

The participants in this research have shown resilience and survived through the most difficult times. They have created their own support system with the help of female bonding. Hira and many others show how the desire to perform better at work and guide their offspring in their homework motivates them to improve.

## 6.5 ENGLISH IS OXYGEN, NO?: LANGUAGE USE AND MOTHERHOOD

The data reveal a number of issues connecting language issues to identity construction and language learning in key family relationships and the significance of language used in parent/child relationship. A number of participants articulated their reason for migrating, and the basis of their post-migration identity constructions, in terms of the archetypal subjectivities of wife and mother. The underlying theme that emerged was migration was a positive thing for the children's future. As Yuval-Davis (1997) points out, multiculturalism places a huge burden on immigrant women to represent themselves as symbolic bearers of the identity of the collectivity. The data reveals that mothers in my research not only maintain cultural experiences within the family, but do most of the teaching of children as well. For Anshu, Meena, Rekha learning English is important as their gendered identity as a mother. It also represents a challenge to Meena and Anshu as their authority in their private



world as wives. Anshu and Meena's husbands do not speak English very well, neither encourage their wives to learn the language. Anshu thinks it is possible for her children to fool her; she uses the word 'ullo' <sup>46</sup> (which means stupid); in daily matters because she is not able to speak English. She does not want to lose her control over her children because of her inability to speak English. Meena finds it frustrating that she has to take help from others for her children's homework. But other participants like Maya, Devi, Leena are happy that their children help them to learn English. Whether they are able to speak English fluently or not, most of them want their children to be able to communicate in Gujarati. As Maya and Meena want to improve their English, they negotiate with their children how and when they can practise speaking English. As parents, they negotiate what components of their cultural identity and experiences to maintain and pass on to their children.

Rashmi who is a twice migrant from Kenya, and now a fluent speaker of English, insists on speaking Gujarati at home. Her husband who had renounced his Kenyan citizenship and travelled to the UK as a British Overseas national was deported to Kenya. He spent 400 days living between the departure lounges in a stateless situation. Rashmi feels that she and her husband are making sacrifices so that their son can have the best education in the world, here in the UK. Rashmi has strong opinions about her language and culture but at the same time takes pride in her English language skills and British citizenship.

*Smita : Do you ever find yourself speaking English with your son?*

*Rashmi: Never, not with my son, not with my husband, see.. what is important is our language, our religion and our culture. Never ever forget these three things.. sometimes we use some Swahili words because I grew up in Kenya.. but I insist on teaching my son what my parents had taught in Africa. At home he must speak Gujarati....*

Mirza (1997) argues that during the 1980s, owing to the desire for visibility through celebrating cultural, religious and sexual difference gave way to open a space for hidden subjugated selves. She further argues that identity politics, a political ideology that

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<sup>46</sup> Ullu : literal meaning an owl, figurative meaning to fool someone

appeared to empower marginal groups, was superficial. Women became the victims of 'triple oppression' of 'race, class, and gender' (1997). The best way to challenge these wider structures was only possible through changing personal behaviour.

Rashmi, mentioned above, comes from Kenya, belongs to the twice migrant category of South Asian women. South Asians from East Africa were brought up with a history of language maintenance and community-run schooling in the 'mother tongue' alongside mainstream English medium schooling. Bhachu (1985) has highlighted how their twice migrant status gave them another layer of identity, differentiating them from direct migrants and creating a class structure within the community.

This research reinforces ideas of the Gujarati female; that South Asian women are often carriers of culture. "Brown" women's bodies are a symbol of tradition and, thus, they are often "used to represent national identity or ethnic loyalty" (Puwar, 2003:14). The women in this study emerge as the bearer of tradition. They are expected to reproduce "South Asia" in the home (and be responsible for preventing acculturation of the children). The discourse of an imagined "true" South Asian culture reproduces a cultural nationalist logic that is predicated on the idea that an imagined South Asian community loses itself to the 'corrupting' influences of the Western culture. Some participants in this research were worried that their inability to speak English fluently would impact on their ability to understand their children fully. However, some participants were confident that providing strong cultural foundations to their offspring would result in keeping the ties with their roots firm.

Conversely, another participant, Hira who was a nurse in India and works in a fast food restaurant now, insists on speaking English with her one year old daughter to the annoyance of her husband's parents and other Gujarati women in the kinship. Hira however wants to continue speaking English with her daughter. She is bitter about race and class differentiation and feels that at the beginning of her career, her inability to understand fluent native speakers at work has made her vulnerable to racial discrimination. She laughs nervously as she narrates how a white female customer complained against Hira four times

because Hira couldn't understand the customer's orders. She mentions how she used to come home and cry every night, feeling worthless. However instead of quitting, she decided to work harder and started to write down everything. She would come home and study food orders by reading them aloud until the sounds became familiar to her. Hira has strong opinions about hierarchies and social divisions. She aspires to move up the social ladder, and considers that speaking excellent English is her passport on this journey.

This study reveals that Gujaratis, belonging to all religions, try to retain their traditional language, Gujarati, although the second and third generations have difficulty speaking and reading fluently in Gujarati. To address this gap among young Indians, religious institutions open Gujarati schools so that the traditional language of their parents and grandparents persist. The study reveals that preserving ethnic identity becomes a critical issue in the family where the women negotiate culture, shape identity and innovatively use space to provide a forum for the uninhibited expression of Gujarati culture. The house is an important place of transition into a new society because it is a space where culture is mediated and negotiated. South Asian children face a situation where they have to understand and behave appropriately in two or more languages. This results in two situations, i.e., making Gujarati compulsory at home and English at school or desperately trying to insist on Gujarati but fail due to child's need to conform. (Mukadam, 2003). In a number of cases the offspring becomes monolingual with passive knowledge of the first language. Mothers face the dilemma of choosing a language to communicate with their children. Women in this study, wishing to improve their own English speaking skills, resort to practising it with their young children. Some participants in this research expressed sadness that their children are not able to communicate with them in Gujarati. Some participants, however, consciously choose to speak English with their young children. Hira feels that she is surrounded by Gujarati community who are not able to understand her aspirations of bringing her daughter up with English as her first language.

*Hira: Our Gujarati people.. they differentiate a lot.. if we Gujarati people are together and even if I speak a little bit of English.. they would say..umm... look at her.. she has just arrived..but trying to show off..umm.. now I have to speak English with my daughter.. she is going to grow up here. So I have to teach her, isn't it?...*

*Smita: Yeah...that's probably her first language....*

*Hira: That's it.. people don't understand this.. My mother-in-law, father-in-law.. they all say.. why are you teaching her English right now? ..How would she understand (English) if I don't speak with her? Everybody scolds me... they say.. she won't know Gujarati...I say.. that's her language, she will learn it automatically....*

Talking about her connectedness of her community Hira uses the term 'we Gujarati' but when she has a difference of opinion, she uses the term 'they say' or 'people'. These discourse markers highlight how identity formation is fluid, constantly changing, multiple and continually in negotiation. Macdonald (2013) states "English is presented a morally and practically superior, modern, usable in the wider society whilst mother tongues are 'historic', evoking concepts of redundancy, old-fashioned or out of touch." She further argues that this dominant discourse reinforces the use of English as the primary language of families. However, Hira, who is a qualified nurse, offers a different explanation to her choice of English as the first language for her daughter. She uses the analogy of learning English for her daughter with being pregnant and eating well for the healthy growth of the child in the womb.

*Hira : See, when you we are pregnant, we eat and eat so that the baby come out healthy. I think I do the same with English for my daughter. If I know good English, teach her, she face no problem, like me. This Oxygen, no? I need enough, to give my child.*

This shows Hira's performance of coherent identity stressing the importance of intimate belonging for English she wants to create for her child. To achieve this she has to negotiate her position in relation to others and larger social community network.

But there are others like Rashmi, Anshu, Meena who worry about the loss of the mother tongue for their children which resonates with the work of South Asian-American writer, Sujata Bhatt (1993:359-64) in 'Search for my tongue' tells of a speaker whose mother tongue, Gujarati, is slipping away.

The language, which for her now holds minority status in a foreign environment, must compete with the dominant language, English. In a setting where bilingual behaviour is held circumspect, she suffers in silence with a foreign tongue in her mouth.

Days my tongue slips away  
I can't hold on to my tongue  
it's slippery like the lizard's tail  
I try to grasp  
but the lizard darts away —  
mari jeebh sarki jai chay [my tongue keeps on moving]  
I can't speak — I speak nothing.  
Nothing.  
Kai nahi-hoo nathi boli shakti [nothing ; nothing can be said]  
I search for my tongue . .  
You ask me what I mean  
by saying I have lost my tongue.  
I ask you, what would you do  
if you had two tongues in your mouth,  
and lost the first one, the mother tongue,  
and could not really know the other,  
the foreign tongue.  
You could not use them both together  
even if you thought that way.  
And if you lived in a place where you had to  
speak a foreign tongue —  
your mother tongue would rot,  
rot and die in your mouth  
until you had to spit it out.  
I thought I spit it out  
but overnight while I dream . .

This poem echoes the feelings of a number of immigrant women in my research who struggle to learn a new language and fear that their children would not be able to speak their first language.

Hira is upwardly mobile and is determined to provide her daughter the best parenting is impressive. Therefore she prioritises taking control of her language learning, whereas Rekha feels restricted because of her inability to speak fluently when she cannot participate fully in the parent-teacher meeting. The data revealed that the complex process of identity construction and negotiation involves not only the ways in which one views oneself but also how others' perceptions. Here I note the interplay of race and language when Rekha implied that other parents' (native white speakers) voices are not only heard, but also accepted. On the importance of narrative discourse, Weedon notes that, if the voices are predominantly white, then this serves to "marginalize non-white readers, whose experiences are likely to be very different from this assumed norm" (2004:62). As Norton (2000) reveals, migrant English language learners experience social exclusion in naturalistic language settings, so their ability to assert selfhood is negatively affected. This process of othering and silencing has an impact on the self-confidence of language learners.

*Rekha: It happens, when other children's parents, moms,... they speak English very well... and they say something.. and I want to say something... but I can't because I am embarrassed that I might speak wrong... then I go home and tell my husband.. this one was saying something like this.. then he says.. why didn't you say that over there ?.....you know..*

Whereas Meena feels it is important for her as a parent to learn English. She never had a chance to study while she was young because her father was an alcoholic and her mother had to work day and night to support the family. As a result, Meena had to stop school and help her mother in household work. Given this background, the education of her children is the main focus of her life.

*Meena: As a parent it's important for me learn here with other parents... you know these kids here.. they can fool you so easily...*

*Smita: Like what..?*

*Meena: I have to get homework done from child.... They come and say I have to do this homework.. and I don't know anything... now their elder siblings help them.. but*

*initially I used to take them to my friend's house... I worry about their homework a lot...*

Children's education is highly prioritized in South Asian families (Modood, 2001). Most of the childcare activities in the respondents' families were performed by mothers. Meena, Anshu and Devi described feeling anxious as they encountered obstacles to participating in their children's education because of language and literacy barriers. Whereas Rupa, Joshna, Zahra and Fatima who had some form of education and were literate in English used this time to interact with their children, help them and upgrade their own speaking skills simultaneously. In sum, the participants' investment in English is regarded as the means to help them secure a better life for their children. Their identity as mother and primary caregiver is the one structures their relationship with the private and public world.

#### 6.6 WHO WOULD LISTEN TO ME?: SILENCING

The data highlights that the complex process of identity construction and negotiation involve, not only the ways in which one views oneself, but also the perception of others.

It is through mediation and negotiation within specific contexts that one constructs identities. Canagarajah (2004) explains this "struggle for voice in relation to the selfhood imposed by macro-social and extra-linguistic constructs" as a conflict between instinct and institution". He further added, " 'Institution' represents established or preordained selves that are historically, socially, and ideologically established. Taking on these selves, results in a form of silencing" (p.268). Obviously, the 'voices' that will be heard will be from the dominant institutions, the native speakers of English. It takes place because of 'audibility' (Miller, 1999), or what the speaker sounds like.

Bengali poet Shobha Ghose (1977:37-40) describes her marginalized linguistic existence in her poem "Of Poets and Poetry"; she speaks as a lost soul among millions because she cannot speak the 'tongue' of the foreign land.

I have tried in time past  
to make myself understood  
slurred speech, feeble

attempting communication  
lonesome in a foreign land  
amid total strangers:  
I picked up sounds, notes  
and lost them.  
My ears untuned to strange speech,  
I looked with sad eyes, dejected,  
incapacitated by a crippled tongue:  
innocuous groping  
cataract curtained eyes  
seeking light, speech  
for my feelings . .

Within this study, it has been observed how 'silencing' plays an important role in the reconstruction of identities. For example, Rupa is a graduate of Commerce from Mumbai University and she can read and write English but when it comes to speaking she feels that she is 'not good enough'. Rupa narrates the story of her arrival and explains how it was for her when she arrived at the airport. It was her English speaking friend who took charge at the immigration counter.

*Rupa: I don't like the difference in people's mind that because she can't speak English, she is dumb. I don't know English.. but I have other qualities, skills...so it's not like that.. that I am dumb...stupid...they feel... it is like because I know English , I am superior.. I have seen it all the time..*

*Smita: and who are these people?*

*Rupa: see.. when I go to NHS, or the education department, the people who work there, ... white people... some are very understanding.. they explain...but some... it's sometimes also our own Asian people.. they don't think like that...sometimes they do things for us but they don't tell us...they have a different attitude...*

*Smita: But now that you can communicate, how do you feel now?*

*Rupa: See, I know I can never speak fluently like someone who speaks from childhood, but I can do things without anyone's help.. that's important for me.. Some*



*women's first preference is moneywise...instead of learning they prefer to earn money.. they don't think long term....that if they learn.. this a lifetime achievement...*

It is also interesting to examine how class intersects with race and linguistic confidence in identity constructions. Hira often feels distraught to the point of tears when her communication in English is not effective because her performance at work depends on speaking skills and her employment determines survival in the UK. On the other hand, Rupa, whose husband is a UK born , well-settled professional, takes pride in her other skills and she is very vocal about her linguistic and cultural identity. She can also afford to devote time to improve her English because her family does not require her to work for financial support.

Another participant narrates her experiences about being bullied at work and in her local community for her lack of fluent English. Deviben, who arrived in the UK in 1979 has worked since the very next day she landed. She worked in factories, as a cleaner, as a machine operator and in a pharmaceutical firm. She was made redundant last year. She feels that in spite of being the most senior person in her job, she was the first one to be made redundant because of her inability to speak fluent English , although her work ethic was exemplary.

*Smita: What do you mean.. they bully you...?*

*Devi: There's people at workplace.. there is people .. too much bully... managers, co-workers... I work in this company.. 12 years.. no single day sickness... no day off.. no late time.. regular time.. but then... they kick out to us...*

Peirce (1995) proposed the concept of investment to capture the complex relationship existing among power, identity and language learning. The concept of investment reflects the socially- and historically-constructed relationship of the learner to the target language. The language learner here is recognized as a complex social being with multiple desires, constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who she is and her relation to the social world. Thus, an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own social identity, an identity that is constantly changing across time and space (Peirce, 1995: 17). For Hira, Rani, Devi, Abha and Champa learning English was a part of their identity as someone who has career aspirations. For others like Maya, Fatima, Meena, Rupa, Rekha and Anshu the priority is their identity as mothers and helping their children with homework.

They also have this imagined identity wherein they have improved their speaking skills and found a desirable job in the future. The elderly cohort, Naru, Mamta and Kunju who managed to live in England with limited fluency in English, held jobs, raised and educated their children, is happy with their achievements and do slightly regret that they did not have enough opportunities to learn English and become fluent. But someone like Devi, who never had time to upgrade her skills, is now redundant, has more time and has decided to improve her literacy.

These views demonstrate strengthen Peirce's (1995) investment theory by showing that investment in the target language is also an investment in learner's identity which is constantly changing across space and time. ( Norton , 2000:11)

#### 6.7 THEY DON'T LIKE US: SOCIAL INCLUSION AND MARGINALITY

According to Piller and Takahashi (2011), social inclusion in the age of globalisation and transnational migration implicates language in modern, multicultural societies, where proficiency in an officially recognised language is (perhaps misleadingly) seen as key to social and economic inclusion, and where attitudes to multilingualism can determine the way that the social inclusion agenda is articulated. However, some migrants, perhaps through difficulty with linguistic acculturation, always remain on "peripheral trajectories", where full participation never occurs but identity is still influenced by the community of practice (Wenger, 1998:154). Others may be persistently marginalised within communities of practice, due to racial, cultural or gender discrimination, where "non-participation prevents full participation" (1998:166). For example, "Women who seek equal opportunity often find that the practices of certain communities never cease to push them back into identities of non-participation. In such cases, forms of non-participation may be so ingrained in the practice that it may seem impossible to conceive of a different trajectory within the same community." (Wenger, 1998:166-7)

The study of Gujarati women undertaken in this research observes that the construction of the "other" robs the participants from having meaningful and in-depth communication with the mainstream population. Gujarati women have more non-white contacts as their friends and feel that, in general, those who do not speak English are treated as aliens and

substandard because their silence is interpreted as lacking intelligence and being cognitively challenged. The cultural patterns of minority groups are viewed inferior to mainstream norms which has its roots in the cultural deficit model. The cultures of non-dominant groups are viewed as “lacking in the social and cognitive resources” needed for succeeding in spoken skills. (Norton, 2002)

This can be illustrated by the examples of two elderly Gujarati women, Naru and Urmi. Naru (70 years old) lives with her youngest son’s family in West London. She moved to Uganda from India, after her father’s death, to join her brother’s family when she was 14. She got married in Uganda and had three children. Her family was forced to come to England after the Ugandan crisis in the early seventies. She narrates the harrowing experience of being stopped and searched at each check-post in Uganda while getting out of the country. She reminisces about the good quality life in Uganda and the things that they had to leave behind. She takes pride in telling how they had worked hard to get where they are now, after arriving here with only fifty five pounds with them. Talking about her experiences of racism in the 1960 she says:

*“When we were sent here, we had to go to Wales, there were no people from our community there.. you had to go to Leicester to meet people.. the white people didn’t like us. When I used to go to work, on the bus...nobody sat next to me.. When in Wales, my son goes (went) to school, he very clever in studies, so people.. like other parents, spit (on him).. it’s not much in London, but in small country side.. life is difficult..”*

As discussed the literature review Gordon (1986) illustrated how South Asian groups have protected themselves against racial abuse through social and geographical clustering in the UK. Peach et al. (1988) also illustrate consequences such as alienation from the majority and radicalization, essentialism or even fundamentalism within the ethnic communities. Naru’s narratives elaborate why clustering serves as a defensive function against racial harassment. On the other hand, it segregates the community, particularly women who then rely on the family or community network to conduct their lives and never have a chance to interact with the wider social network (Ward, 2007; Bhopal, 1997).

Urmi, (75 years old), spends most of her time in the UK but travels extensively to Kenya and India as a transnational citizen. She considers life in Kenya to be the best time of her life. She says:

*"We were foreigners in Africa too, but we never felt like outsiders. We had a good social life. I was in East London refugee camp, it wasn't good. The teenager boys, used to kick us as we walked. They removed things from our trolleys when we went for shopping. They used to pull our hair.... Used to say why are you here?... called us Paki .. ( laughs....)"*

To understand the meaning of this laughter, we have to look at the political scenario in the state of Gujarat in India. In 2002, under the leadership of a staunch Hindu activist Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, the state of Gujarat took pride in advocating strong Hindu sentiments. It is also notorious for the Godhra riots where innocent Muslims were strategically attacked. However, Modi's dynamism is highlighted through the media by the constant propaganda of the economic progress of Gujarat and within the past few years he has risen to the highest position as the Prime Minister of India. According to Vertovec (1999) Right-wing religious organisations in the homeland are known to gain much support from overseas populations: most notably, Hindus through the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (and, by extension, the Bharatiya Janata Party, BJP, right wing ruling party). In India the term Paki is used for someone who is considered to be anti-Hindu or a traitor.

According to Ballard (2002): 'Whilst it is undoubtedly the case that anti-Islamic sentiments are even more deeply entrenched component of the British cultural tradition than they are in South Asia, there is little evidence that most members of the indigenous majority can accurately differentiate between South Asians who are Muslims and those who have other religious affiliation: indeed in the first instance they are all popularly identified as 'Pakis'. It is possible that religion is an identity marker that helps these women to preserve their individual self-awareness and group cohesion (Rayaprol, 1997:16). The reconstruction of religion in a diasporic context occurs in two ways. First, religion attaches itself to culture, and second, it becomes identified with ethnicity. Martin Baumann (2001) through his research, provides instances of how the members of the host society generally value Hindus

and their religious practices as alien. He points out that Europeans treat Hindus and their religious practices as “foreign, exotic, being only a tolerated, but not really [an] accepted part of European culture” (p. 59).

However, the immigrants, through their religious and cultural symbols, negotiate this identity over the course of time. Interviewing the elderly Gujarati women shows how these women have created a strong network to support each other through religious activities. This platform provides them the essential support they lack from the mainstream community. Urmi and Naru who are neighbours were discussing their next monthly group meeting when I met them. A group of 10 to 15 elderly women take turns to arrange monthly religious singing groups. These meetings are a highlight of their otherwise quiet, monotonous life. I was told that they were going to attend a meeting to mourn the death of ‘Naru’s uncle’s daughter-in-law’s sister’ who had passed away in Kenya. This distant relationship may sound like a laughable matter from a Western perspective, but the kinship networking remains strong and meaningful in diasporic South Asian communities and as it provides a purpose to the lives of these women.

## 6.8 RACIALISATION

Zahra provides an example of how language learners are disadvantaged because of the increasing barriers of racialisation, post 7/7 bombings in London. Zahra who is from Ahmedabad, the biggest city in Gujarat, had a sound grammatical background in English, but lacked fluency in speaking when she came to London recently, after getting married. She is very positive about learning to speak English proficiently and apply her skills in Mathematics to find a teaching post. However, she tries not to be dismayed by her initial experience of being distanced from her imagined social identity because of her religious identity.

*Smita: So tell me, how and where were you able to practise speaking after coming here?*

*Zahra: (laughs) When I was in India, I studied English, I mean all 5 years of college, everything was in English. But could I speak it properly? No. Then after my marriage, I thought, ok this is my chance. Now I will learn to speak English properly.*

*Smita: Then?*

*Zahra: My first shocking experience was when I arrived here...we have this elderly white man in the neighbouring house. I said good morning to him. He didn't say anything. I asked my husband, why? He said, perhaps because we are Muslims. Can you believe this? And I don't even wear a hijab. You know right, even in Gujarat we had some religion problems? ...But in daily life...we are ok with each other...I think I will still try .. May be one day I can speak English with him too, of course, now I can speak very well too...ok...accent is there (laughs).. but funny thing... he doesn't speak.. but that day he helped me with my heavy bags to my doorstep... so may be something's changed.. I don't know.*

Zahra's passing reference to Gujarat riots is a reminder of the cultural and structural violence against Muslims in the year 2001, in the state of Gujarat, signalling the increasing violence against the Muslim community post 9/11 and a tendency to equate Muslims with terrorism, anti-modernity and religious hysteria. As mentioned above, Gujarat's Chief Minister during that period, who is now the Prime Minister of India, publically declared that all Muslims are not terrorists but all terrorists are Muslims (You Tube, 2008). Having suffered the Islamophobia in her birthplace, Zahra is agitated to face similar experiences in her new home country known for her democratic and liberal values. However Zahra's optimistic view of life allows her to see a glimmer of hope of creating a friendly connection with her neighbour and the community.

Zahra's example improves our understanding of 'belonging' further, through gendered, racialized and ethnicized identification and shows us how women negotiate and understand their multiple diverse diasporic identities (Brah, 2007).

## 6.9 LANGUAGE SOCIALISATION

One of the advantages of the Poststructuralist-Language Socialization approach taken in this study is that it considers the language learning process to be a social one. That is, language learning is not simply a cognitive process, but a process of "socialization into specific

communities of practice”. Norton and Toohey (2004) draw on Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) who states that “language socialization” consists of two parts – “acquisition of the appropriate uses of language as part of acquiring social competence,” and understanding “how language is a medium or tool in the socialization process” (p.167). They have identified that both these processes are intertwined and do not exist separately. Hence, the language socialization process would require the learner to use the language with an expert to gain “the knowledge, orientations, and practices that enable him or her to participate effectively and appropriately in the social life of a particular community” (Garrett and Baquedano-López, 2002:339). The process of socialization is not unidirectional but bidirectional because it involves negotiation on the parts of both the “learner” and the “expert.” According to Garrett and Baquedano-López (2002) language is “the primary symbolic medium through which cultural knowledge is communicated, negotiated and contested, reproduced and transformed” (p. 339). Within the scope of transformation, in certain contexts the position of the ‘novice’ and ‘expert’ can be interchanged because these categories or identities are not fixed, but rather fluid, and shift depending on the dialogic interaction.

The present study has shown that second language learning is far more complex and is instead constant negotiation and re-negotiation of access, agencies, subject positions and identities between learners (my participants) and more experienced users of English.

Speaking of ‘language socialisation’ Naru says:

*“We can’t mix with them (the white people), our children can... we just can’t mix with English people, at the most we can say hello, how are you etc.. I mean we can speak, like now when I go shopping and all.. the women know me now.. so we have a few exchanges, some right, some wrong...I don’t know...even I try to watch the news programme... I don’t understand it fully, so I can’t enjoy it fully... like my children do.. I just guess...(what’s going on)”*

She further narrates about her workplace experiences and explains owing to the lack of fluency in English, she suffered at work.

*"Someone else made some mistakes , or took my turn, and I can't explain this properly to my supervisor, they take the credit of good job and I get telling off, that your job is not done properly... all I can do is go home and cry..."*

Whereas Urmi tries to analyse the distance between 'them' and 'us':

*"Sometimes I think, language is the reason why we are distanced...but then I think... may be they are like this.. they don't like us being here...how can I travel alone? Even when I was new and I asked some boys for directions, they always sent me to a wrong place.*

*Smita: It happened to you?*

*Urmi: Many times, when I was new, I approached young school going children, you know like we do in India... you trust them, they know things.. but here.. they send you to a wrong place..*

*Smita : You think that they did this on purpose?*

*Urmi: I am sure.. at first I didn't know.. but it happened once again.. but that time...this white lady.. she saw me from a distance... and then she ...a good lady.. walked some distance and said something like.. -boys.. your leg pulling.. at that time... I didn't know what it means.. (laughs)... so there are good people too..*

The research participants were questioned about the impact of learning English on their sense of self. The data reveals that observing the British way of life has changed their perceptions about independence and freedom. Changes in self-perception were revealed by participants, who expressed increased level of confidence as a direct result of an ability to speak English, which allows them to undertake various responsibilities above personal expectations. Some participants expressed pride at their ability to communicate with confidence upon visits to hometowns in India. For some, it was a sense of pride borne of a fulfilment of their educational and employment potential, which might have been entirely denied had they remained resident in their respective home countries.



Hira thinks that coming to the UK has enabled her to fulfil her aspirations and live life on her own terms. She feels that she had no place in the social life while she was in India. Although she is still learning English and struggling to get ahead in her career as a nurse, she imagines her identity as a fully integrated British citizen providing health care.

*Hira: When I first came here, I didn't know anything, how to speak, what to wear and go out.. how to get ready and go to the shop.. then I went there, talked to everyone...and my life changed.... here we can study whenever we want, whatever we want.. In India they will say, why do you want to study now, you are so big.. do this.. do that. .make babies.. (laughs)*

Meena's husband derides his wife learning English and improving her skills but Meena works out ways to continue learning English without creating an imbalance within family life. Discussions of the interrelationship of the Western world with third-world countries often rest on a notion of 'traditional' society versus 'modern' (or 'Westernized') society. As Thakar (2003: 224) argues, some women may conform to transform, so that their agency is not an overt manifestation of resistance but is subversive and transformative in more covert ways. Contrary to Bhopal's (1997) binary of 'traditional' or 'modern', Thakar's position on agency in many ways captures aspects of the lives described by my research participants.

I considered the impact of constructions of gender in key family relationships and the specific influence of migration involving language change. I have shown here, with the help of various examples, how the women negotiate their place within the family, with their children or their marital partners. I have also considered cultural issues and imbalances of power within the family owing to linguistic abilities or inabilities. By looking at the gendered nature of this process I explored how women negotiate power, subjectivity, and family relationships. The narratives illustrate how women negotiate changes and develop a voice. I explored the participants' investment in English with greater emphasis on their maternal identities. I also stressed that social inclusion has been an ongoing issue that continues and which leads to racialization and marginality. In the next chapter I map how these women perform gender roles prescribed by their culture.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### WE DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY: GENDER ROLES

This chapter explores the ways in which some participants articulated investments in the post-migration society as a means to construct identities in multiple ways as South Asian women, and how language learning was implicated in this. What is of particular interest to is the specific ways that transnational migration involving language change can impact upon post-migration gender subjectivities and constructions of the self. A number of women in the study came to the UK as secondary visa applicants or on spouse visas, indicating that the very process of migration was initially defined by their relationship to a man, rather than as an individual who had initiated the migration process. However, quite a few in this study arrived prior to the entry of their partner and sponsored their spouse after settling here, or arrived independently and then got married to a person already settled in the UK. It shows their 'agency' i.e. 'how an individual takes control over some aspect of his or her life' (Cooke and Simpson, 2008:13). This chapter will explore agency in the process of settlement.

#### 7.1 PATRIARCHY AND AGENCY

Many participants expressed how they initiated the process by motivating their partners to explore possibilities of settling in the UK. This implies that although their visa status was dependent or secondary, in reality they were the ones who were very keen on settling in the UK and initiated the process. Many participants explained that the desire was prompted by a vision of better life and better prospects for their children. Cooke and Simpson (2008) have demonstrated how English contributes to transnational family life at a time when the West is experiencing a tightening of the relationship between language, immigration, citizenship and national security.

The gender-role pressures exerted by the traditional patriarchal religious cultures of South Asia surfaced as a major factor involved in the language learning process. Most of the women in this study shared the view that women in contemporary India have greater opportunities in terms of careers and education. Women also exercise more choice in choosing their spouse and the timing of their marriage than in the past. Many of the women

felt that when they were young they were expected to obey the decisions that their parents made and, later, decisions that their in-laws or husband made. They were expected to value marriage and family above all else. Conceptions of ideal female behaviour as dedicated daughters and wives were often reinforced in family relations. Many of the women discussed the pressures they experienced in trying to meet ideals as a daughter, wife, and daughter-in-law. Accommodating these expectations became an important way in which they made homes for themselves both in their own families and the new ones they joined after marriage.

Sangita's story provides an example of young women's attempts to fulfil traditional roles at the same time trying to be independent; not only that but she also managed to bring about positive changes in her mother-in-law.

Sangita, who is a civil servant and works in the state pension and welfare department, was sent from East Africa, by her parents, in 1979 to get married. Sangita was really interested in my study and therefore keen to recount her story in detail. She was one of the participants to maintain contact to find out how the study was progressing beyond the fieldwork stage. She expressed pride at participating in an academic study about the lives and experiences of South Asian women. She provided a detailed account of being a good daughter, a good daughter-in-law and a good mother.

*"When the question of me getting married came, he asked me. I said, ok, you won't have me not married, what choice do I have? So, when I came here in 79, I got the shock of my life. Although you are in a small town and your mother and father approve of you going to study, and suddenly, you get these new relatives, and they say you can't go out, you can't do this, you can't do that. You can't sit in the library, you can't stay late. It was an eye opener. You come to study here and suddenly you can't do that. I couldn't believe my eyes. I am in a developed country."*

Sangita's case shows that after arriving to the UK as a newly-wed bride, the daughter-in-law has to adjust to a number of changes to her way of life. Other participants in this research spoke about multiple contrasts including the cold weather, the different culture, and the lack of understanding of some family members. Whilst, as young brides these participants

appreciated the social support, there were disadvantages associated with living with or in close proximity to a husband's parents. It was commonly explained as being 'old-fashioned' 'conservative' or 'uneducated'. In some cases, mothers-in-law were a specific cause of frustration. As mentioned in the introductory chapter to this thesis, I experienced a mother-in-law's insistence that she attend ESOL classes alongside her new daughter-in-law, who could not speak any English upon her arrival from India to the UK after marriage. In such cases it was clear that English learning or going out of the house to attend classes were read as a form of 'empowering' Asian women against gendered familial constraints.

The powerful constraints in some areas of South Asian culture mean that the maintenance of both Indian and British identities required young women to develop a range of personal strategies. Bhopal (1997) argued that there are 'traditional' Asian women who acquiesce in the demands of their husbands and fathers, and subsequently the other authoritative figures in the family whilst 'independent' women refuse this positioning. This binarised analysis ignores the third space that women create for themselves without subscribing to 'traditional' or 'independent' categories. Participants in this research demonstrate processes of negotiation to reach a 'third space' in which they can express their identities around multiple axes. Sangita negotiated her position in the family to acquire personal space and complete her education. She acquired a space in the social sphere which is simultaneously oppressive and empowering, but she demonstrated a firm commitment to reinventing her place within the family at various, seemingly inconsistent moments:

*Smita: So how was it for you, living here?*

*Sangita: It was a big turmoil. You know you can't study because you have to go home. They were loving and caring and I was well looked after but it was a shock for them as well, to understand that I wanted to study.*

*When the children came along and I was in the hospital, my mother-in-law said, I am not coming with you because I can't take the bus. That day I put my foot down and I said, whatever happens Mum, I am going to see at the hospital. She never did it for herself for donkey's years. After that she started going out on the buses and going out. So in a way I pushed her to do these things, otherwise she was never going to do it.*

It is evident that, on the occasions when young women reported disregarding their elders' wishes or advice, this was not necessarily be taken as disrespect for their elders. Advice and warnings might be acknowledged and seemingly unquestioned, they were not heeded for different reasons. In this case the daughter-in-law apparently adheres to the wisdom offered by mother-in-law to enable her to fit into the society.

*Smita: Did you have any problems learning the ways of this society?*

*Sangita: Society was not a problem, I knew I would fit into the society. The only language issue I had mainly was the accent because I came with a Kenyan accent and basic English. Also how the British say and how the Kenyans say things are slightly different. We do things differently, we dress differently, sometimes people don't know how to understand. These are barriers, when people talk about racism, I don't think it is racism. I think we should discuss and suddenly you find barriers eroding. It is also important what message we are giving out."*

Sangita's view underlines that harmonious immigration and gradual integration is a two-way process: the migrants have to learn to adapt to their new circumstances at their own pace; but the welcoming host community has also to learn to adapt to their new circumstances at their own pace. Sangita remarks about how 'we' are perceived which indicates that she does not want to lose her identity, but would rather make others aware of the differences and make them feel comfortable with the unknown aspects of her culture. Once again referring to Bhopal's remarks about assimilation, she does not consider the possibility that assimilation might involve succumbing to universalizing norms of an ethnocentric white Britain, or that refusal to assimilate might be a strategy of resistance to racism.

South Asian women acquire their ethnic identities in an environment replete with images of the traditional and unskilled woman oppressed by her old culture. Interviews with South Asian women, however, cast doubt on such popular and mistaken stereotypes. They suggest that ethnic identity and gender roles for South Asian women do not exist in fixed and unchanging cultural codes but are constructed and reconstructed in the context of work, family, and social relationships (Agnew, 1990). Particularly, in the context of immigration,

analysis of the changes that occur among individuals and the community at large reveals the mutable, unfixed nature of these socio-cultural norms which seem so potent and unchangeable back in the home culture. For example in case of my research, participants speak of a freedom from the eyes of 'society' in terms of a liberty to dress, move, and negotiate gender roles in housework which would have been unthinkable in their country of origin. The gender-role pressures exerted by the traditional patriarchal religious cultures of South Asia surfaced as one of the major factors involved in the language learning process. But the women also appreciated the safe haven provided to them by their ESOL classes. ESOL classes provide a platform for women to share their food and culture with other groups in a way that they can feel proud of and most importantly without the fear of being judged as 'different'. It offered them a sense of belonging and community and a way to understand other cultures apart from the host British culture.

Champa, who migrated to the UK when she was 16, to get married to someone already settled here, has never returned to India in the past 30 years. She could only see her sister after 20 years, when she met her sister while she was in transit on her way to the USA. Whilst she considers UK her homeland in certain aspects, i.e., because this is the place where her husband and daughters were born and raised, she finds it hard to have any emotional attachment to this land. Her heart still considers India to be home because that's where she feels she belongs and she will never be an outsider there. Her bond to the UK is mainly because of her daughters. She mentions:

*"First of all, no child of age 8 or 9 would pull my hair on public transport in India and even if somebody did, I would know what to do. What's my value here? Paki? To say this is my country.....but you know what.. I still feel this is mine because now my daughters belong here."*

Another respondent Rashmi, whose son's education is a priority in her life, explains her view:

*"We live in Britain, so we are British. India, Africa all are our past. England is our future. This is my son's future."*

This reflects the importance of education in South Asian families, and it also confirms Norton's theory of learner's investment in the target language.

Across all modern societies, women have this type of relational subjectivity which defines them primarily as daughters, mothers, and/or wives, so the participants' decision to migrate/settle can easily be explained in the context of their family relationships.

However, to understand the notion of social and political belonging, it would be useful to look at the three major analytical facets in which belonging is constructed as argued by Yuval Davis (2011) According to her, the first facet concerns social locations; the second relates to people's identifications and emotional attachments to various collectivities and groupings and the third relates to ethical and political value systems with which people judge their own and others' belonging/s. These different facets are interrelated, but cannot be reduced to each other. What she considers to be 'ethics of care' seems apt in cases similar to Champa in this research.

A number of women articulated how their ongoing commitment to migration enhanced their role in key family relationships. Particularly female participants coming from urban parts of India expressed how they had to forsake their jobs, careers to follow their spouse. Although they articulate their post-migration subjectivity in terms of their roles in their family life, they negotiate these changes primarily for the wellbeing of their family and children. These renegotiations of gender role relate to changes in socioeconomic position, place in the family, and place in society.

A number of women identified linguistic and/or financial dependence on their partner as something they were uncomfortable with or aspired to change. For these women, both kinds of dependencies were causally related to transnational migration and language change, and they were engaged in efforts to alleviate the dependence, through learning English and gaining meaningful employment. However, one participant, Rekha, who reported feeling isolated by her lack of English and was keen to alleviate her initial language dependence on her husband, was at the same time able to find something deeply meaningful to her sense of being a woman in being so dependent on a man. Nevertheless, she is strongly convinced that she cannot depend on him forever and needs to be independent so that she can have her own identity.

*Rekha says:*

*“When I was in Portugal, we only studied Portuguese. Now they have started to teach English, you know, after entering the EU but I was older by then. Well, I left school when I was 13, to help my mother in household chores. I came to London with my sister, rented a place and started to work. But we didn’t need to speak English that much then because we were always amongst our own people. But when I got married, it was difficult when we had to go out, to the doctor, etc. But my husband is educated, he understood my problems and looked after me always. It was nice that someone was always there to care for you but that made me want to learn English more because I knew it will not be possible for him to help me all the time. Also, I loved to work with children which I wanted to do. I am happy I can do that now.”*

Workplace skills are not always equivalent from one country to another, for example, in Hira’s case her experience of working as a nurse in India is not immediately recognised in the UK, which means she will have to struggle before she can secure a job that she is qualified to do and aspires to do in the UK.

*Smita: You used to work in India?*

*Hira: Yes, in a hospital.*

*Smita: So you had to leave that job to come here?*

*Hira: Yes, and we don’t get the job in the field of our education here, that becomes a problem. I used to work as a nurse in a hospital, but I won’t get that job here. That’s a big difficulty, now that I have to work tough jobs, like Subway and all, hard work.*

*Smita: Yes, I can understand.*

*Hira: I had a good job in India and then I came here, then cleaning jobs, cooking jobs, I didn’t have job in the beginning, but I had to work , so did all these jobs...then I got a job in the pharmacy..*

*Smita: Was it a good job?*



*Hira: hmm..this Subway is owned by the boss of the same pharmacy, so he offered me a job there... so I used to work in the pharmacy for two days and three days in Subway. Life was hard and I was struggling on all levels.*

This change in access, in particular along gender lines, is accompanied by a discursive re-evaluation of the place one has in one's family, social network, society, and in relation to self. When asked about the difficulties in learning English, Fatima talks about the responsibilities a woman has to undertake in her family that stop her from doing what she wants to do:

*Fatima: Sometimes they are not allowed to go out, so obviously... sometimes children.. sometimes some elderly people living with them or some joint family.. so these .. can be the.. yeah..*

Transnational migration can be seen as a means of coercing important shifts in gender subjectivities that privileged a more traditional division of labour and, arguably, affected power dynamics within the relationship.

*Smita: How do you think cultural differences stop women from learning English? What are their problems?*

*Rani: Sometimes they are shy. Sometimes everything is there. Their husband is telling ok, but they just feel they don't have confidence. They think, I won't be able to speak, I can't write, I can't read. That's how we are trained in our culture. In the house, sometimes in the family, they will just keep you ... you know...like don't go out and see the world. They are just there to cooking and cleaning but I don't think it should be like that. Everybody should be like equal.*

A similar view is expressed by Anshu, who says that her husband finds it annoying when he sees her studying with her children when he arrives home from work in the evening. She prefers to finish her homework before he arrives, otherwise he ends up asking questions like: Why do you want to work? What are you going to do with learning English now? Are you going to be a prime minister now?

Although now she feels that she can speak better English than him, she thinks it is better not to use it front of him, so as not to offend him.

*Anshu: I know now my English is better, I can speak better than him but in front of him I don't say much in English. (laughs) I know, he will not like this.*

This subversion, another form of agency, (Butler, 1990) as mentioned by Thakar (2003) is a strategy adapted by a number of women who want to be independent without disturbing the peace within the existing structure. Many participants constantly shift identity to perform various roles in order to achieve what they aspire to.

## 7.2 STRUGGLE AGAINST PATRIARCHAL NORMS

In this section I investigate the dynamics of gender relations within households, and the impact of patriarchal system on Gujarati women's English language learning. Bhopal (1997) in her research on South Asian women in East London, argued that patriarchy was either private or public, and women were either traditional or independent. The form of patriarchy is directly mapped onto the type of woman, because different women experience different forms of patriarchy. She further established that the type of women and the form of patriarchy they experience is dependent upon their level of education and in turn, their position in the division of labour. However her general application of patriarchy theory as a framework would imply all South Asian family structures and gender relationships are inherently oppressive. It further implies that to be a successful woman is to turn your back on the religion and culture (Ahmad, 2003). These binaries are restrictive, act to pathologise South Asian women and are employed by the media to portray everyday stereotypes. Spivak (1999) has questioned why South Asian women are subject to only two kinds of validations such as traditional and modern. Singh (2013) argues that the false binary of 'traditional' versus 'liberated' is constantly fed through the cinographic representation. She further adds that media presents South Asian women as "constrained, oppressed and sexually repressed, instead of reading their representations, actions and motivations in a wider context." (2013:4)

Drawing on this, I investigate how South Asian women are still developing a discourse and seeking alternative spaces, arguing against generational accounts. To authenticate these accounts we need to work with new theoretical tools to show 'Othered' women's performativities. Black feminists such as Brah (1996), Mirza (1997), have launched critiques of the hegemonic and Eurocentric view of Western feminism that produce racial discourse that pathologise black women. Drawing on their theoretical discussion I examine how diasporic Gujarati women accept, resist or modify to find ways through their gendered subjectivities.

Pavlenko (2004) and Norton (1994) argue that the language learners' actual and desired membership in the imagined community affect their learning trajectories, influencing their agency, motivation and investment and resistance in the learning of English. Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed (Weedon, 1987:21). However, she refers to Althusser's (1970) views that individuals are not the authors of their subjectivity, for this is interpellated on them by their social context, and the relationship between an individual's subjectivity and her 'self' is therefore imaginary. Ideological state apparatuses, "such as religion, education, the family, the law, politics, culture and the media produce the ideologies within which we assume identities and become subjects" (Weedon, 2004:6). These ideologies are internalised in an individual because they "repeatedly perform modes of subjectivity and identity until these are experienced as if they were second nature" (2004:7). In order to understand the power relations that divide different categories of women within society it is essential to understand the discourse of 'difference' analysed by post-colonial feminist scholars such as Butler (1990), Spivak (1988) and Brah (1996). In their study of ethnicity, race and gender, Anthias and Yuval Davis (1998) have argued that differences among women and their membership in the different collectivities should be understood within structures of power and other social relations. This standpoint is useful in understanding the experiences of Gujarati women of South Asian community in the context of diaspora in the UK where the women struggle against public and private patriarchy, racism and class. The institutional practices and language ideologies inhibit or encourage

their access to social networks and, as a result, linguistic and interactional opportunities. The participants in this research show how they are oppressed at their workplaces and not only because of their lack of English but also because of their 'difference'. I have considered the participants here as people with herstories, stories, and goals and motives for the language learning experience. The Poststructuralist perspective taken here has allowed me to show that "languages delineate and constitute identities of the speakers. ... [Poststructuralism] allows us to account for ambiguities and complexities in the learning process" (Pavlenko, 2002:296). It is imperative, then, to understand that the onus for language learning cannot be left solely with the language learners.

### 7.3 CULTURAL IDENTITY

Multiple narratives make up the cultural identity of a group. Cultural narratives serve as a collective representation for categorical identities with 'dis-embodied' social actors. The categorical identities generally associated with family, gender, religion, nationality and ethnicity are constantly being re-created, challenged and negotiated. Loseke (2007) argues that these cultural identities are 'formula stories.' Such stories pertaining to ethnic identities serve to re-enforce cultural expectations and perceptions of morality, as well as simplify complexity. She states, however, that the way individuals make sense of their lives (personal narratives) are varied and complex. They do not always fit into a neat and compact formula story. While new stories are being constructed, those already created become modified or even discarded according to individual and broader experiences (Loseke, 2007). Many researchers (Brah, 1992, Phoenix, 1988, Westwood and Bhachu, 1988) felt studies on black people used a narrow definition of cultural influence to explain their behaviour. Such explanations are unsatisfactory because they oversimplify cultural influence and in doing so, serve to reinforce the social construction of black people as deviant from the norms of white British behaviour. In the case of Gujarati women in Britain, contrasting cultural narratives of identities play a major role in creating and re-shaping their personal identity narratives, as they each influence one another.

Rege (2006) has argued that religions and cultural practices within India are patriarchal and the belief that men are dominant/superior to women. Although the traditional cultural

narrative in the Indian subcontinent dictates women to maintain the home and family, and exercise unconditional self-sacrifice and nurturance, there is literature that illustrates how women challenge the image of passivity and exercise agency. (Brah, 1996; Puwar and Raghuram, 2003; Mirza, 1997). One line of research suggests that cultural pressures to maintain these aspects of traditional female identity continue. Not adhering to these expectations often translates into perceived failure and dishonour (known as 'izzat') of the community they belong to and/or family (Rege, 2006; Brah, 1996).

As part of my research, I interviewed long term settled Gujarati women who entered the UK 30/40 years ago. Many of these women entered the labour market in the early phases of post-war migrations, taking up jobs in factories. They all, married or single, had housework and other caring responsibilities. Generally the cohort of elderly Gujarati women interviewed in this research, seemed to have internalised private forms of patriarchy, placed importance on culture and religion and accepted the cultural dictation through patriarchy.

*Rashmi : No matter, where you go you should always remember.. I tell my son... never forget ..bhasha..sanskar and dharam....your language, your culture and your religion. We Gujaratis take these things with us ..wherever we go...*

However, Kunju (82 years old), who has four sons, in different geographical locations including India, Africa, USA and UK, and she travels alone to visit each son at her own will, which might be read as a reflection of power management with domestic financial relationships.

*"I don't expect anything from my sons... I live all alone.. I don't like to ask for money from anyone else.. If I stayed with my daughter-in-law, she might not like it.. because I sew clothes for other ladies... I have visitors all the time... I prefer to live alone..."*

They also considered being married, having children and raising a family were the most important goals in woman's life. However, they showed a great admiration for educated women and thought modern women's lives to be much harder but fulfilling in some ways. They placed great emphasis on the need for women to be economically active. Where the families were initially reluctant to allow women to work, some of these respondents used a variety of strategies of persuasion to obtain consent to help negotiate a desired outcome.

As Purewal (2003) argues, the choices available to women to collude, play on or challenge patriarchal mores and ways are vast. Brah (1996) argues that patriarchal norms and practices cannot be regarded simply as 'external constraints' but the women may be positioned or consciously position themselves differently within patriarchal discourses.

Naru, whose daughter in law works as a civil servant, talked about helping her daughter-in-law by looking after her grandchildren when she took evening courses to complete her degree. The daughter-in-law, who was present during the first few minutes of the interview, had to leave for work. After she left, Naru was full of admiration of her achievements. It struck to me that she was not the same stern mother-in-law figure that she appeared to be a few minutes before.

*"....She works so hard...she was young when she came to us... we were new in this country.. everything was difficult... I couldn't speak English... she wanted to finish her degree... I was not very happy about it in the beginning... but she was so strong..I had to look after the boys... which I didn't mind... look at her now...she helps so many women like me in her job.. all women.. even goras (white people)..I tell everyone.."*

This is an example of performing 'traditional' South Asian mother-in-law within the household to keep the patriarchal norms but playing out a shifting identity to express a possibility of patriarchal 'redemption' whenever possible. (Brah, 1996)

According to Parekh (2007) although religious, Gujaratis carry their religion rather lightly and are prepared to make such changes as the circumstances require. At the same time, Gujarati as a community is well known for retaining close ties with Gujarat, and is more easily influenced by its religious and political movements. (Ballard, 1994; Ramji, 2003) Moreover in the modern diasporic world, technology plays a vital role in transferring and reconstituting cultural patterns and social relations in new setting, one that usually involves the migrants as minorities becoming set apart by "race," language, cultural traditions and religion. It also enhances the key role women play in reproducing religious practice -- particularly by way of undertaking domestic religious practice (Rayaprol, 1997). Simultaneously, secular and civil society discursive practices of the diasporic society are also

inculcated on them. Naru, mentioned above, is a good example of how traditional women mould to accommodate new standards of behaviour and relations inside the household.

#### 7.4 LOCATION

The participants in the present research reveal that the cultural narratives of identities of Gujarati women are shaped by their location. Twice migrant Gujarati women participating in this research have been shown to take more initiative and flexibility to adapt culturally, the first aspect is learning the language of the country of their settlement. Most participants acknowledge that for social inclusion it is important to participate in the language learning communities of practice, however, the post-migration society exerts coercive norms that position the migrant language learner as 'other'. Temples, mosques or other places of worship and community activities are the locations of utmost importance to these women's lives. Being active in a religious movement allows women a legitimate place in a public sphere which otherwise might be blocked to them by the process of 'othering'. For women of racial and ethnic minorities, it can also provide the means by which to defend themselves as well as to defy the hegemonic racist culture. (Brah, 1996; Mirza, 1997)

Many Gujarati women who participated in the research can communicate in Kiswahili ( or other regional African dialects), Portuguese, Spanish, Malay apart from other South Asian languages such as Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi, which signifies their ability to learn and speak other languages. It also underlines the fact that they may be persistently marginalised within communities of practice, due to racial, cultural or gender discrimination, where "non-participation prevents full participation" (Wenger, 1998:166). Brah (1996) argues that there was a remarkable continuity between the imperial discourses of Asian women and those which construct Asian women's experiences in post-war migration. These discourses pathologised the Asian family, presenting it as the main site of problems faced by Asian women, rather than the effects of racial, sexual and class inequalities. When the participants refer to native English speakers as 'they' and talk about second language speakers as 'people like us', it signifies unequal relations of power. If these women managed to speak African dialects during their stay in Africa, it follows that they can learn to speak English in England. However, the main question that participants frequently asked is 'Who do I speak

English with?’ Norton (2000) questions ‘What happens when the target language speakers avoid interaction with second language speakers?’ Having examined how location plays an important role in learning to speak English, I will discuss how cultural background can impact language learning.

### 7.5 THIRD SPACE

Although Gujarati women from rural parts of India do not approve of certain aspects of the culture, have an accommodating approach to the traditional cultural norms, whereas for women from urban parts of Gujarat and major cities in East African countries and other parts of the world, the approach seems to be much more flexible. Their positioning is comparatively advantageous, owing to their urban upbringing and exposure to modern life, than their counterparts from rural parts of India. While each of the women stated experiencing different types of cultural pressures from themselves and their surrounding communities to adhere to varying aspects of the traditional Indian female identity, they all appeared to be interrelated. The main themes tying each of them together were their attitudes towards language learning and education and their outlook on the patriarchal system. They see learning English and educating themselves as a step towards gender equality. Their struggle begins with fighting for the right of receiving basic education no matter where they are.

Rekha explains :

*“..This is a mindset of Indians...it doesn’t happen only in India.. but even in Africa...or wherever they go... we grew up in Mozambique.... but the parents followed Indian way of life.. .they didn’t allow girls to study...everything is allowed for a boy... the girl has to stay home..they worry what would others think if the daughter speaks with someone (other boys)...”*

Charita, who works as a civil servant and holds a high stature in the community, shares a similar experience:

*“My family is from India but they migrated to Singapore....they first went to Rangoon but settled in Singapore.... We are Jains as a religion...as the kids started*



*growing...my parents were very strict... very religious...pure vegetarians...one thing that actually stood out from everything...that the girls were not allowed to study more than the boys...and the boys in my family were business orientated and were not interested in studying.. as a result of that I was not allowed to go beyond a certain level of study.. I was told you will not get a boy more educated than you....but I forced my way through to pay for my own fees and got a diploma.”*

Some other elder women conversely believe that restrictions are placed on the value of a woman's education. Because these women perceived expectations of a housewife and mother once married, little value is placed on their education. These women, owing to the lack of exposure to any other source of educating and enlightening themselves, have been socially conditioned to behave as South Asian culture dictates. They fit the description of 'cultural carriers' of the group (Yuval-Davis, 1992), who transmit group culture to the future generation (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1998). Bhopal (1997) sees the control of women and the patriarchal family as central features of fundamentalism. Views expressed by some of the respondents in strong support of the Chief Minister of Gujarat, a Hindu hardliner, Narendra Modi, reinforce a form of religious, patriarchal control exercised on women to keep them powerless and controlled by men. I contend that traditionally religious women are likely to only comply with traditional religion so long as they are content and able to conform to its ideal construction of women's place as wife-and-mother.

I would argue that women react differently to the challenges of modernity, but where they are attracted to religion, it is generally because it reinforces or helps them cope with their negotiation of daily life. Religion can break down the dualistic split of public/private and create a 'third space'. The term 'third space' has been employed by Bhabha (1990) in his work in postcolonial studies to denote the cultural practices of hybridized populations (specifically immigrant and displaced populations) in making their new space home. The identities of immigrant and displaced persons are composed of both a new identity and their old identities and so are both and neither – hence they create spaces that may be called 'third space' (Bhabha, 1990).

While striving to create a 'third space' for a 'whole-self', these women face many dilemmas and struggles in their quest. Their identities are thus fluid and contested and heterogenic and not homogenous and fixed. Brah (1996) points out this formation of 'new identities' have become linked to debates about cultural and religious habits.

In contrast to the traditional women, other respondents highlight the importance of education and making it valuable by learning English so that they can have their own identity ('pehchan'). These women viewed independence as being more than just financial self-sufficiency. For most of the first and second generation women, independence meant having a career, supporting the children in all aspects of their lives and being able to do things without anybody's help.

Many of the young mothers interviewed, having gone through the hardships of being a girl-child, want to change things for their daughters. Devi, who has three daughters, had tears in her eyes when she explained how being illiterate had affected everything in her life, while showing pictures of her daughter's graduation on her mobile.

*Smita: Why do you think you were not able to learn English for so many years?*

*Devi: Because I got a job.. no time.. ....but now my three daughters... I am very happy about my daughters...I am not educated, my husband is not educated, but my three daughters educated, first one is HR, second one is data IT, the third one is a lawyer...Three of them.. good.. Master (MA)*

The way Devi emphasised the words MA, was a reminder of the universal pride of a mother can have on her daughter's achievements. I was familiar with this expression as it reminded me that my barely literate mother would say the same thing about me. It is very satisfying for uneducated parents to educate their children and see them climb the ladders of success.

*Smita: So how your day used to be like in the morning.. evening?*

*Devi: Everything you finish...work, housework...outside work...when I had my first daughter.. my father looked after. When I got my second daughter, I left the job...two years I stayed home. Then found a part time job as a cleaner. There I... my daughter*

*going to school , my neighbour picked up my children and drop at home...played with daughter..”*

It is also significant that Devi's father looked after her daughter while she was working. It challenges traditional gendered roles within the family in, especially in South Asian cultures, where there is strict separation of spheres dictated by cultural norms that deem domesticity as woman's domain and economic responsibilities as the male realm. It indicates that women are slowly moving away from traditions that defined domestic arena exclusively as women's domain. It also indicates that the loss of class privileges, especially the loss of domestic help, or extended kinship network, as a result of migration, strongly influenced women's desire to redistribute domestic tasks.

Maya, who also has three daughters, takes pride in her daughters' achievement and encourages them to study.

*Maya : Now everyone thinks that education is important.. so now everyone is educating...because there is nothing without education... even here... but a long time ago.. like 20/25 years ago.. people didn't think like this.. even my parents... I have only studied up to year 4... My education ended when I was 9. I never studied after that.. I have begun now after that... so I can't remember very well too.. after all these years.. but now it's the most important thing for me.. for my daughters..*

Maya who was unable to find work because she did not have oral or literacy skills English, wants better education for her daughters. In general, South Asian parents want an education that equips their children for the British job market. On a simple level, one would expect to find a gap between the views of rural migrants and urban or twice migrants regarding education. However, education is seen as a ladder to step up in social hierarchy and is considered of utmost importance. The data reveals that it is one of main causes of concern for women who were unable to help their children with their homework.

While each woman's experience of gendered relationship with the public and private patriarchal systems, transnational migration had an impact on the way that dynamic was performed, in most of these cases by significantly altering the role of the woman in the

relationship. In the case of Maya, Fatima and Deepa, transnational migration was seen to advance the financial status and symbolic capital of the husband during the immediate post-migration period, and in the case of Lochana, the circumstances of her post-migration settlement, which included English language acquisition, were seen to afford her greater cultural capital and the means of contesting the pre-migration power differential that existed between her and her husband.

Bhopal (1997) states that feminists such as Barrett, Finch and Oakley have argued, the family is the key site of oppression for women and we need to abolish the family in its existing form to achieve equality. She further adds that some black feminists however, e.g. Carby, hooks maintain that the black family is a qualitatively different proposition from the family structure in which white women are involved. Bhopal (1997) argues that forms of households in 1990s Britain vary between different ethnic groups, not only between white and black, but within ethnic groups themselves. The family is a source of oppression for black women. She further argues that some South Asian women are oppressed in the family, by the form of marriage they participate in, the giving of dowries, participating in domestic labour and the degree of control they have in domestic finance. The specific cultural norms and standards of South Asian families are reinforced through different forms of patriarchy experienced by women (Bhopal, 1997).

There is a gap in understanding patriarchy and oppression experiences amongst South Asian women and the pitfalls are even more apparent in relation to the experiences of the Gujarati community. I would argue that it is important to understand that there is no one definition for what constitutes patriarchy, how it impacts on the lives of individuals or how it manifests itself generally. It is observed that migration decisions in South Asia are made in the context of household needs and social relations (Gardner, 1995; Mand, 2004; Shaw, 2006). It is evident from the responses that power relations also govern families and other structures through which positioned actors bargain and negotiate for resources. The significance of Bhopal's research in the 1990s cannot be ignored but it requires some scrutiny regarding women's negotiations, agency, shifting identities and changing roles within the households in the contemporary context in which this research was undertaken.

## 7.6 CHANGING ROLES

In many South Asian families, people live in a joint family system and often women in this family unit experience emotional stress “not only from the desire of the male to control and dominate his spouse, but also from the desire of other women to reinforce their own authority within the home” (Agnew, 1998:171). A new bride in the family will have to find her place within the home next to a sister-in-law and a mother-in-law. This hierarchy makes it difficult for women to challenge gender roles collectively as the women in the family are also competing for status. The role of the daughter-in-law in the Indian family is a position that is limiting and complex gender role construction begins by South Asian immigrant parents being hyper-vigilant in regulating the behaviours of their daughters as these daughters represent the purity and honour of the family name as well as their cultural lineage. In some families, learning English meant exposure to corrupting Western thought, hence it was not encouraged amongst women. These days, the importance and the status of English language have gained recognition but the ‘corrupting’ influence of Western ideas remains a deep concern.

After marriage, the gender role construction of a woman is monitored by the in-laws. The in-laws often take it upon themselves to re-socialize their daughters-in-law on how to behave in their family unit. This in-law relationship is powerful, burdensome, and frequently heavily restricting for married South Asian women. With the monitoring of their behaviours, South Asian women often find themselves situated in conflict between trying to forge an independent identity from their family obligations so that they can live, socialize, and compete professionally in Western society, while simultaneously being pressured to retain their ethnic identity. The daughter-in-law/mother-in-law relationship can be a complex arrangement in which “newly married Asian women have to conform to yet another set of cultural expectations and pressures about how to fulfil their [newly] prescribed roles” as daughter-in-laws” (Rana et al., 1998:222).

The general South Asian stereotype of mother-in-law, presented through the narratives in the mainstream South Asian culture and highlighted in the media, usually portrays them as evil and controlling women. While teaching ESOL at Southall, I had come across an Indian

woman attending the ESOL course to accompany her newly arrived daughter in law. I had also heard the story of a friend's daughter married into a Gujarati family had to face acute difficulties in adjusting to her husband's family as they expected her to get up before dawn, serve everyone in the family and go to bed after midnight, only when everyone else had retired. Given this background I was expecting to hear similar horror stories about mothers-in-law making life miserable for my participants. However, a number of participants shared their positive experiences about mother-in-laws, which highlights the fact that identities are constantly changing and gender roles are flexible. Speaking of her successful career after coming to the UK, Charita, a civil servant, mentioned earlier, credits her mother-in-law for supporting her achievements.

*Charita: My mother –in-law; she struggled a lot in her life. She is settled here and she is very determined. She can't read nor write, however, she managed to get all her kids well educated, well-placed and well-disciplined, I must say. She always wanted to study. She attended some ESOL but she was always busy, she ran her own business, when the father-in-law passed away, with her own money and her own determination. My whole family from husband's side is in Dar-e-slam in Tanzania, she is the only one who moved out. She brought all of us here. I give her a lot of credit. She is struggling with her writing. We teach her, we teach her lots of words. She is just superb. Usually, you would never hear the daughter-in-law talking good about the mother-in-law but this one is commendable. Both my mother and my mother-in-law are still alive .. and I tell my mother, you got no place .. (laughs). Probably I am one of those open-minded ones, I don't sit on the fence, I take no nonsense. Get on with things and move on.*

Charita then compares how her mother pestered her for getting married. She recalls how she struck a deal with her mother in order to live her life the way she wanted to. She promised her mother to marry the boy of her mother's choice as long as her mother allows her to do whatever she wants until she is 28. She also narrates how her determination to lead her own life on her own terms changed her mother over the period of time. Now Charita's mother wants her daughter-in-law to complete her education. She is even willing to pay for her education. She insists on her granddaughters receiving the best education. Charita's struggle to pay for her own further education has changed a lot of things for her

entire family. Her rebelliousness and aspirations are an example of how South Asian women reconstruct their identity on their own terms. While doing so, Charita also tries to abide by her religion, Jainism, with adherence to strict dietary and religious restrictions, in the best possible way.

As mentioned earlier, the case of another participant, Sangita, tells us how she strategically managed the relationship with her mother-in-law and eventually won her over, motivated her to be active and live a meaningful social life.

Just like the daughters-in-law changing their ways to adapt to the new social and cultural life, the mother-in-law cohort are also adaptive and challenge mother-in-law stereotypes. Kunju, who even at the age of 82 still manages to live on her own because she does not want to disrupt the lifestyle of her daughter-in-law. Usually in South Asian culture, it is implied that the son will take care of the mother. Kunju however, prefers to live on her own and even support herself by sewing clothes.

*Kunju: I like to live alone... if I live with my son, and I do this sewing work, I don't want them to feel that I have people coming and disturbing them. I like to be independent...*

So it can be seen that it is not only the daughters-in-law that defy traditional notions of female behaviour; mothers-in-law in the diaspora are also responding to the changes in the life style by doing things differently.

It is generally observed that the dynamics of relationship between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in South Asian culture is usually stressful because of the patriarchal structure of the family. However, these examples show that they are perceived within an essentialist framework, they are not immutable entities, but constantly reconstructed and specific to particular historical periods. Accepting a white daughter-in-law, although, remains shocking to Gujarati families. One woman in this research has accepted a white daughter-in-law. She found it difficult to digest it initially.

Urmi expressed her thoughts:

*"When my son said he wanna marry a white girl, it was so stressful for us.. we thinking how can we have a white girl , will she understand our culture...will she*

*laugh at my English? Then we came to know she is from Bulgaria... means... no white like English people who speak English."*

Urmi's views on the racial difference of her daughter-in-law were more concerned with language and culture than the difference of skin colour. Parekh (2000) in his report on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain argues: "All communities are changing and all are complex, with internal diversity and disagreements, linked to differences of gender, generation, religion and language, and to different stances in relation to wider society. Also, there are many overlaps, borrowings and two-way influences – no community is or can be insulated from all others.

Areas for future research should examine the role of the mother-in-law in the diaspora, as this group of women has also not been widely studied within the South Asian community and thus could provide an excellent balance to the voices of South Asian daughter-in-laws. Further, deconstructing the mother-in-law role will presumably compare and contrast the changes this group of women has experienced to that of their daughter-in-laws. By finding the similarities or common ground that women experience, resist and modify in South Asian families, women can challenge the essentialized images (Mirza, 1997).

## 7.7 ACROSS THE BORDER, BEHIND THE DOORS

A number of gender-related issues are apparent in Gujarati women's negotiation of a post-migration identity in the UK. These stem from shifts in the women's primary cultural identity and include dealing with conflicting locations for the performance of gender roles and the impact of this on the desire for language learning and socialisation. The obstacles to learning English, cited by Gujarati women in my research, are similar to those reported by ESOL students participating in the research conducted by Skills and Lifelong Learning in 2008. Ward and Spacey's research (2008) on Bangladeshi and Pakistani women highlighted that family or work commitments and lack of affordable childcare were major obstacles preventing them from participating in learning. However Gujarati women are shown to have a different household composition to that of other South Asian women. Warrier (1988) examined how many Gujarati women entered paid employment in Britain, mostly working



in factories upon arrival from Africa. Since their menfolk were located in similarly disadvantaged positions, the income brought by these women often spelled the difference between poverty and a fairly reasonable standard of living. The composition of household for these women was rather fluid and not fixed and households were becoming more egalitarian, which meant a household with parents and children, or a three generational household, or a joint household formed by brothers (Bhachu, 1988).

Migrant women have been considered to be a cheap and flexible source of labour, and they continue to be over-represented in jobs that are characterised by low pay, low status, and little opportunity of advancement (Westwood, 1988). It also involves doing laborious jobs at home; 'homeworking' such as preparing large quantities of meals, sewing, packing. Three participants in my research (Meena, Anshu and Kruti) reported working from home to boost their family income in order to survive. It involved packing envelopes for long hours with very little remuneration. Another participant from the focus group, Abha, narrated how she suffered humiliation and exploitation in her earlier days before naturalizing as a British citizen, while working as a cook for three different families when she had 'no papers' and 'no English'.

*Abha: What option did I have? Now that we taken the step of crossing the border... we had to get through... you do anything to survive...you gamble...you hope that one day this all will pay off...you dream of a better future for your children..*

In governmental discourses (Skills for Life: Access for All, 2005) on building integrated communities and preventing social breakdown, gender as a factor is highlighted as an issue in, for example, reaching isolated and vulnerable learners, but is rarely debated from the starting point of meeting the needs of women as the mainstream learner population who have specific issues arising from inequitable power relations. Ward and Spacey (2008) argue: "Gender is significant. Women often experience additional discrimination, and have particular difficulties that are often overlooked. Gender oppression, family opposition, lack of independence or other gender related cultural factors can restrict opportunities to take up learning" (p. 3).

### 7.8 'MODERN' OR 'TRADITIONAL'?

Earlier studies of South Asian communities characterise 'Asian women' as 'caught between two cultures' (Khan, 1979; Shaw, 1994) and torn between 'traditional duty' and their 'own' individual desires. However, contrary to these perceptions, the interview narratives of Gujarati women reflect how respondents support and remake 'South Asian' familial and community structures by exercising agency in order to construct alternative, multiple identities. They often encounter and overcome patriarchy by challenging, resisting and negotiating patriarchal structures. Much of the impetus for challenging this private patriarchy emanates from their individual desires. Migration causes shifts in the individual situation and the social setting that opens up opportunities for new forms of autonomy. Westwood highlighted out that when Gujarati women became wage earners it was, 'largely an extension of familial roles rather than a source of independence for women' (1988:120). Factory work meant no reduction in domestic responsibilities, such as childcare, supporting other households, and contributing to community projects. Although it meant endless hours of hard work, it also brought a sense of independence to these women.

Some respondents refuted the idea that women are compelled to stay at home due to patriarchal constraints within the family or oppressive gender roles that deemed their employment outside the home unacceptable; rather, staying at home was framed as a positive aspect of their lifestyle. Rupa, fluent in four Indian languages, says that right now her children are her priority and she is lucky that she can afford to stay at home and devote her time to her family. This sits in direct alignment with discourses around modern motherhood in the UK as explored by Allen and Osgood (2010). They examine how class permeates the ways in which 'good' and 'bad' mothering is constituted within government welfare policy discourse.

*Rupa: In my case, my family is fully supportive. My father-in-law and my husband both are well-educated and speak very good English. They are very helpful in the matters what will help me gain confidence. For some people, sometimes, moneywise, time-wise, first preference goes to earning money...they don't think long term that if I study English, this will be a life time achievement...that they won't have to rely on*

*others. I may not be able to speak English as if it is my first language, but I will be able to do things without anyone's help.*

A similar view is expressed by Rekha who works part-time mainly to keep herself occupied when her children are at school. She would like to gain fluency in English for a better job opportunity but she feels no urgency. These women are representatives of the Gujarati middle class families where the husband's family is well settled in the UK and the women have joined them as marital partners and hence can afford to prioritise studying English. This does not follow a stereotypical picture of the British Asian woman learner; in fact they are very diverse, many were well-educated and resourced. They do not always live in large family groups and can be fairly isolated from relatives.

To understand the barriers placed on Gujarati women owing to the nature of familial and cultural structures, it is important to understand the South Asian family as an institution. The term 'parivar' derived from Sanskrit, used in many Indian languages, refers to an extended family consisting of a three-generation resident unit. In South Asia, personhood is thought of in reference to a collectivity such as a family, kin or caste group, whilst other broader differentiation occurs on the basis of religion and region (Gardner 1995). According to ancient Hindu religious scriptures, women are 'temporary' members and 'guests' in their natal household and, following marriage, are seen as outsiders. Although it is widely acknowledged that women leave natal households to join and care for their husband and by extension his household, research has indicated that women contest such ideological constructs and speak/sing about their connectedness to natal homes (Raheja and Gold, 1994). Research suggests (Ramji, 2003; Warriar, 1994; Spiro, 2003) that the activities of members of the Gujarati 'community' are constantly monitored by kin and the wider Gujarati 'community' and that culturally unacceptable activity could negatively affect a person's family honour. Aspects of 'South Asian family values' described by participants in Herbert's (2009) research, included intimate and frequent contact with wider kinship networks, knowledge of family history and looking after parents in their old age. Supporting other households without involving any monetary transaction has also been a significant factor in extending mutual help, especially in care for children, elderly and ill family

members. This aspect of community interaction has been well utilized by two participants in my research, Anshu and Meena, who take turns to look after each other's children after school so that they could attend evening courses to learn English.

### 7.9 FAMILIAL DUTIES

While talking about prioritising familial duties over socialisation for learning English, participants in my research voiced concerns about the pressure to perform domestic duties to 'acceptable standards'. Gujarati women in this research who had employment and families to look after often found it difficult to attend English classes in spite of their strong desire because they felt pressure to perform household chores to culturally acceptable standards. Migration's dislocations provide women with new ways to renegotiate power and recreate patterns that are favourable to them. For someone like Naru, who is culturally conditioned to cook every meal fresh, cooking just once in the morning to enable her to attend English classes in the evening was important and underlined English language learning as a primary need.

*Naru: Get up early in the morning, start work at 8 am , finish at 5 pm. Left home at 7.30 am, even earlier. I took the public transport, my husband had a car. He started early and finished early. He used to come home at 4...but I had to come and cook and then go to evening classes. Then sometime I cook only one time..so I get keep my evening free ,but you know..how it is.. when we have guests coming...you have to cook everything fresh..*

It is interesting to see how Naru mentions ' you know how it is..' and aligns herself with me, considering me as a 'knowing' insider, making our shared ethnicity cut across other differences such as age and class differences.

*Smita: So how did you manage your life without much English?.*

*Naru: Wasn't much of a problem...we manage that much.. and kids knew a lot .. we used to take them with us.. we preferred them than the interpreters. I also did some classes, so I could manage quite a lot.. Now I tend to forget...I want to speak.. but I know it's all wrong...I speak, but the past tense and present , they all get mixed up.. but because I went there I could understand.. that coming and going... otherwise, I always said come and go...I used to finish work go home, cook and then go to the*

*classes, once a week.. there was this old lady. ..I understand when someone speaks slowly and simple..also accent..I don't understand.. but it's not a problem now.. this is all past now.. I have forgotten all those problems...(laughs heartily).. I have forgotten all my problems now... good, no?*

Using children as interpreters to overcome the difficulties in communication is a common feature within most narratives. There were other family obligations that these women had to attend to without complaint which involved taking care of extended family members. Most women accepted this as a part of their duty towards their 'biradari' – kinship. Joshna narrates:

*"Because we had a British passport, there was no visa, or anything and my husband was already here, so straightaway I came here. Then I felt very lonely... I missed my parents..at 17 I was in school and then came here ... who was I going to talk to? So I got a job.. made a lot of friends...When I was 21, I became pregnant..but that was difficult time.. when my baby was born... I used to cry all the time.. I had nobody to look after... that was a difficult time...then one by one..my in-laws started to come..I was only one lady. .and there were four men...my father-in-law, my brother-in-law and I used to look after another boy, my sister-in-law's son and my husband... and I had a small baby..so you had to cook...it was difficult to stay with the in-laws.."*

Bhachu (1988) and Bhopal (1997), through their research on South Asian families, have illustrated how migration decisions in South Asia are made in the context of household needs and social relations. While it is true that the majority of Gujarati women I spoke to had migrated initially for marriage, the interviews reveal that it should not be assumed that migration is driven by men. Speaking of arranged marriages Bhopal (1997) argues that 'independent' South Asian women do not participate in arranged marriages, have adapted their lifestyles in British society and are redefining their identities, whereas 'traditional' South Asian women portray conformist, traditional attitudes and experience private patriarchy. I would argue that to choose or agree to marry someone who has migrated abroad is an affirmative decision, as decisive as choosing to move for any other reason such as education or work. A number of participants in this research agreed that they accepted the proposals to marry someone abroad because the idea of moving to a different country,

although daunting was equally exciting. Furthermore, mothers and other female relatives were often involved in finding marriage partners. Secondly, it is observed that after marriage, twice- and thrice migrant women often had an important role in deciding where to live. Some respondents in my research like Rashmi and Maya claimed that they were the key decision makers in the drive to move from one place to another in the search for better education for their children. Others like Devi and Joshna came to London at a very young age, on their own, met their future husband and then got married, whereas some participants like Hira or Rani, arrived here prior to their husbands. Thus, Bhopal's 'traditional' and 'independent' binaries do not capture the complexities of South Asian women in the UK. The 'traditional' women reject certain practices in favour of others and there is an ongoing process of cultural re-definition. Following Ahmed (2003), applying Bhopal's patriarchy theory as a general framework, implies that all South Asian family structures and gender relationships are inherently oppressive. I draw from Ahmed's position that seeks alternative spaces to recognise the fluidity of cultural expressions of diasporic women. I learnt from my informal chats with Rani that while she was trying to succeed in making a career as a London bus driver, her husband decided to return to India with their children. Rani decided to stay in the UK and support her family financially. She visits her family in India every year and has accepted this long distance family life as a way of life. It shows that South Asian women negotiate and resist by questioning prescribed codes of behaviour to create alternative, non-traditional identities.

Of all the participants I interviewed, Soni's story was the one that truly touched my heart and will stay with me forever. Her life-story is an example of the impact the workings of public and private patriarchy can have on a South Asian woman, both in the country of birth as well as her new 'home'. She had to fight against multiple oppressive systems that cause misery and pose a threat to mental wellbeing. Soni was born in a poor family in Rajkot, a large city in Gujarat. She had 3 brothers and 5 sisters. At 6, she was sent to live with a rich family to work as a maid and to look after their children. This provided sufficient income to allow her siblings to eat. She recounted not having experienced parental love or family life. In the orthodox setting where she was born, girls are married off as soon as they get their first period. She was attracted to a young local boy but she was married off forcibly at a very

young age to someone from England, a much older but wealthy man. Once in England Soni was physical abused by her new husband and ill-treated by the member of his family. She had two children, later divorced. The tragic events resulted in depression made worse by the threat of eviction from her home.

Soni describes having to remove herself from social roles within her family in order to uncover her 'true self' from beneath a cultural baggage of 'Indianness' that she ultimately considers inauthentic. She could not speak English when she arrived in England and was not allowed to venture out from the family home. After many years of suffering, Soni realised that she was the only one trying her best to keep the family together, maintain the 'izzat' – honour of the family. Eventually she took control of her life and broke free from the oppressive marriage. She now lives independently, as her husband has custody of their son and she is working hard to improve her English.

Amos and Parmar (1997) argue that the framework of the Black family is seen as a problem in terms of its ability to adapt to advanced capitalist Western life and a force prohibiting 'development'. They argue that Black women cannot simply throw away their experience of living in certain types of household organization; they want to transform familial relationships. Soni's narrative acquires a continuing relevance to the representation and construction of South Asian women in the postcolonial diaspora.

*Soni: my parents said.. dear.. you cannot dream of being (attached) to such a rich family.. we are poor...so we tell you .. you get married to this one...doesn't matter if you like him or not.. at least you will get two meals a day.. in this person's house.. so I was forced to come here...I am not happy even now about this..*

*Smita : Did you speak any English when you came here ?*

*Soni: My husband just didn't allow me to go out.. I couldn't see anyone.. anyone couldn't come home... he would say you do what I tell you to.... if my friends came home..that would be a cause of argument...he only wants his sister to come home...she comes all the time...she used to take all the things that belonged to*

*us...Once I stopped her.. and told my husband... so his elder sister , slapped me..so he wants me to do what his sisters tell me too.*

*Smita: Do you believe in religion?*

*Soni : I used to... not any more.. after coming here.. I have been troubled so much .... I can't speak English, I don't have knowledge... I am abused everywhere and I suffer in silence...kaunsa bhagwan..(which god?)*

She is very forthcoming about the 'difference' and the difficulties to assimilate in British society.

*Smita: Do you feel confident now that you are learning English?*

*Soni: Confidence..what is it.. that you can speak properly and all? But our voice will never work.. right.. ? Sometimes I wish I was educated... then I would find a law that would help women like me...I feel like my neck is stuck in a net and I can't get out and can't breathe...*

Phoenix (1997) argues that racism operates structurally to maintain black people in a state of relative powerlessness in comparison with white people. As noted by Carby: 'Black women are subjected to the simultaneous oppression of patriarchy, class and 'race'. (1982:213)

The narratives of the participants outlined here demonstrate how they challenge the strict separation of spheres dictated by cultural norms that deem domesticity as woman's domain and economic responsibilities as the male realm. They propagate new identities that argue for principles of shared domestic responsibility with men. Public discourses highlight the dichotomy of 'modern British' versus 'traditional South Asian' gender and family relations. My research highlights the inadequacies of a view that portray families of South Asian background as the embodiment of tradition in the sense of patriarchal gender relations and contrast them with the modern British family. The women's role of the overbearing, caring mother has been ascribed to migrant women of South Asian origin which does not take into account the ways in which women have been actively adapting their mothering or other familial duties to the migration experien



Furthermore, the respondents in this research demonstrate different forms of social divisions and cultural interactions pertaining to their places of origin. Africa has been an important experience for the twice migrant community for many reasons, including enhancing their skills of adaptation. Bhachu (1985) has highlighted how important twice migrant status was when differentiating South Asian immigrants. The presence of women from the outset was not only an important differentiation with other South Asian communities but also had implications for women's roles in the settled communities. (Ramji, 2003). According to Bhachu (1985), the high rate of employment amongst East African Asian women in Britain can be seen as an extension of their previous experience as they moved from 'metropolitan Africa to metropolitan Britain' (Bhachu, 1996:290). Conversely, a number of Gujarati women, especially the direct migrants from rural parts of the South Asian subcontinent who lack knowledge of English upon arrival in the UK, have strategically responded to economic need by seeking employment in semi or unskilled jobs. These women accepted semi-skilled jobs as machinists, packers, finishers in food processing, shared a joint household and entrusted child care to the grandparents to respond to financial pressures (Warrier, 1994). Being at the bottom of the socio-economic scale, particularly if they are recent arrivals, apart from being disadvantaged as women these women are also disadvantaged as 'foreigners' who cannot speak English. Their low-paying occupations do not require any oral communication extensively. When asked about their English language practice, 'Who do I speak English with?' is a common question asked by the respondents.

In this chapter I have discussed how the participants perform agency to resist public and private patriarchy. I have explored how the dichotomy of traditional or modern is seamlessly turned into a third space to allow whatever works for different individuals. I have also shown how changing of traditional roles in the diaspora has created a new way of life for participants. Having addressed the intersections of gender with the processes of language learning, in the next chapter, I will move on to further intersections of race, class, cultural differences and performance of identity.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### SELF IN THE SOCIETY

Gujarati women participating in this research project revealed how class structures play a role in constructing linguistic identities. Social class identities are expressed and negotiated through Gujarati women's English language learning journeys in Britain. Drawing on the data, this chapter analyses Gujarati women's socioeconomic status and their class structured interaction opportunities, and the display and reconstruction of their social class identities in various social contexts and further relates it to their journey of learning English as a second language.

#### 8.1 SOCIOECONOMIC CLASS AND LEARNING ENGLISH

According to Smith, (1987), inquiring into the experiences of women, as a woman, is a way to participate in writing the sociology of women, "beginning in the world that both sociologist and those she observes and questions inhabit on the same basis" (1987: 111). Arguing for the importance of experience as a methodological cornerstone in analysing and understanding the lives of women, Skeggs (1997) says woman "is a category which is classed and raced and produced through power relations and through struggle across different sites in space and time" (1997:27). The narratives of Gujarati women can be seen as their self-construction as classed and gendered 'other', as well as their relationship between the 'self' and society.

Much of the early work in the fields of SLA regarded learners as "bundles of variables" (Kingtoner, 2004:199-220) such as, "motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, inhibited or uninhibited" (Norton, 2000:5). This implies that immigrants settling in the host society should find it easier to learn the target language if they are motivated, extroverted and uninhibited. Peirce (1995) uses the term investment as opposed to Gardner's term motivation which has been prevalent in second language acquisition literature. She refers to Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, which describes the varying ways of thinking and sets of knowledge and experiences of people from different classes and groups. Contrary to earlier SLA theories, the study establishes that class, race and gender must be seen as

important facets of migrant women's lives but interlinking in different ways for different groups of people. It observed that access to the host community's social practices were not always readily available to learners. In the matters such as attending courses, childcare or even finding someone to practise speaking, participants were disadvantaged because of their marginalised social status.

“Kiske saath aur kaise baat kare, samaz me nahi aata! Koi haihi nahi. (With whom, how to speak (English), I just don't know, no one around me for that!)”

(focus group participant)

As a result, despite being highly motivated there were particular social conditions under which the women in the study were acutely uncomfortable and therefore unlikely to speak. The data suggest that a language learner's motivation to speak is mediated by investments that may conflict with the desire to speak. “An understanding of motivation should therefore be mediated by an understanding of learners' investments in the target language-investments that are closely connected to the ongoing production of a language learner's social identity” (Peirce, 1995:19-20).

This aspect of her theory pertains to the narratives of my participants as well. When I began the research, although I was expecting social class to emerge as one of the major issues affecting the language learning process, I did not envisage it to be of huge relevance in the process of language learning. I did not use a specific structure or markers to distinguish class differences; however, I was able to identify the social status by the jobs they did, their places of residence, the clothes they wore and even the way conducted themselves in social places. My Indian upbringing and cultural knowledge such as the significance of certain surnames allowed me to make these judgements. The data reveals that social class has a huge impact on how second language is learnt. My research confirms that working-class black women have been marginalised and subjected to ‘simultaneous oppression of patriarchy, class and ‘race’ (Carby, 1982:213). Collins (2006) suggests that social class as a feature of identity is a sense of self in relation to other, and thus should be explored as a process which takes place within different ethnicities as well as wider social groups.

Language Socialization and Post-structuralism have been brought together in recent studies (Pavlenko, 2002) to provide an appropriate theoretical framework from which to work because there is an acknowledgement that language learning can involve, for example, power and gender struggles while learners are in the process of being socialized into the host communities and cultures. Language socialization investigates how learners use language to become socialized into other cultures and norms, i.e. learning to become a participant in various communities of practice. Researchers with a poststructuralist perspective build on the notion that unequal social structures complicate the process of language learning.

A post-structuralist framework offered this study a means to investigate and to theorise the role of language in construction and reproduction of social relations of Gujarati women, and the role of social dynamics in the processes of language learning and use. At the centre of this theory is the view that language is symbolic capital and the site of identity construction, that language acquisition is also language socialization, and that language learners are agents whose multiple identities are dynamic and fluid. (Pavlenko, 2004)

Language learning requires the participation of many people: teachers, students, and researchers. Pavlenko further argues:

“In reality, however, no amount of motivation can counteract racism and discrimination, just as no amount of positive attitude can substitute for access to linguistic resources such as educational establishments, work places, or programmes and services especially designed for immigrants and other potential L2 users. Thus, the social context is directly involved in setting positive or negative conditions for L2 learning” (p.281).

The data reveals that socio-economic status can influence learners’ progress in second language learning. Participants, whose marital partners and family are well-settled in the UK, have the option to stay at home, look after the family and devote time to learning English. Others, who are not educated or literate, need to support the family financially by

working in low-paid factory jobs, as well as responsibilities for domestic caring and housework. For some women, due to their socioeconomic class, it may be necessary for them to work outside of the house even though they may not be accustomed to it, thus adding to psychological stress on various levels. Devi arrived in London in the late 1970s, started to work on the next day upon arrival and continued to do work until being made redundant last year. She says:

*“(Kaam bagaire kevu thaay ahiya?) How can you survive without work here? Big family.. mouths to feed.. educate the children...give them good life .. we don’t have it.. but they can”.*

Another example, in the present study, Rani whose husband moved back to India with their children, has to support herself financially and she is uncomfortable with the idea of financial support from the state. In her situation, her employment has made it difficult for her to benefit from English classes. When I interviewed her, she was looking for work and had some free time, and she was trying to improve her literacy skills in English. Anshu does some packing work at home to support her husband financially and look after her young children at the same time. According to Ehrenreich and Hoshchild (2003) without migrant women’s labour in many affluent global cities, an array of products and services that are widely available today at an affordable price would simply disappear. The lifestyle many citizens of the First World enjoy today relies on the low wage and physically- and emotionally-intensive labour provided by migrant women from the Third World. Therefore, it is possible that because of their economic status, they are essentially trapped; wanting to learn English, but being unable to because of inconsistent employment, while relying on employment to provide for their needs. It is an interesting observation that in the early 1980s, Devi was able to leave her children with her neighbour who would look after them while Devi worked long hours. Although living in the ‘ghetto’ community had its drawback, such as not being able to communicate in English, the issue of childcare was solved by the support available in the local community. Thus these narratives make it clear that gender inequalities are profoundly embedded in the hierarchy of other aspects of identity, particularly race, ethnicity and class.

The interaction possibilities with English speaking members of the society, only become possible when the subjects are able to access the social status to communicate with sympathetic listeners (Block, 2012). As Rupa, whose husband and his family are well-settled in the UK and encourage her to learn English, mentions:

*“See, people around me know ... I am not fluent...but they try to help me...they show patience...We also , when we go to see parties and all that, my husband has white people friend, they are also very kind and understanding... so I am slowly getting more and more confident...”*

However, contrary to this situation is Anshu’s position where she has to face humiliation for not knowing English which she feels is also owing to her low social status.

*Anshu: I feel bad, when I go to doctor, GP surgery... I book appointment with someone help me..and there ..the lady..(pauses, trying to think of the word ) receptionist she get angry yeah because she feel I waste her time ....That day our teacher show us this film, with Sridevi....English Vinglish<sup>47</sup>...remember? She goes to America and café... looking at the board (menu) for long time and the woman ..waiter...no order taking woman... get very angry... when I see that film, I cry.. it is like my story... but she has chance to learn... I am what? Here some people are like.. they look at you and they decide ...*

By chance Anshu implies the means to study English , the luxury of time and the ability to do things as the character in the film does. By saying ‘they look at you and they decide’ Anshu is pointing at her social class status. She feels that she does not get the right treatment because not only because she cannot speak English but also because of her social status. In contrast to Anshu’s situation, Rupa, owing to her higher socio-economic status feels comfortable in most social situations, in spite of her lack of fluency in English. It is clear that linguistic competence is a minor detail overshadowed by the complex web of socio-cultural factors involved in learning a second language. These women are not able to focus on their language learning as there are numerous other problems they have to deal with that are crucial to their survival in the UK.

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<sup>47</sup> English Vinglish is a Bollywood film (2012) in which a tradition-minded Indian housewife (Sridevi) enrolls in an accelerated English-language course after she finds herself unable to place a simple order in an American restaurant.

## 8.2 IDENTITY AND CLASS

According to Brah (1996) women may often stress the importance of 'family' but, by doing this, they do not necessarily accept as legitimate the hierarchical organisation of the household, or the exercise of male power. She further highlights that despite the Western stereotype of the abjectly submissive Asian woman, we have a long history of resistance and struggle, both in the sub-continent and in Britain (1996:81). The participants in this study value the 'family' system but at the same time they try to re-negotiate their position within the family by constantly challenging the norms in various ways.

ESOL classrooms allow these participants to connect with other female kin to create a dynamic and lively social and cultural life. These female cultures may not be void of tensions, rivalry, differences but at the same time they seem to provide some structures of support and space. Some women feel uncomfortable with those who come from a different religion, class, caste or sect. Some women laid great stress on the differences between women of urban and rural origin. Possessing the right variety of cultural, social, linguistic capital can become invisible symbolic power which makes the member within that group more privileged. Brah (1996) sees these spaces as the arena where diverse and heterogeneous women's identities are played out. As the participants mention:

*Rekha: Now we no more feel embarrassed...we see that lots of women of our age are learning.. initially we were so embarrassed...*

*Anshu: We learn a lot here.... Not only English...but about each other's well-being.. we share a future together.. we dream together... it feels so good...*

The Brah and Jackson report (2008) on women's intersecting identities and spaces of sociality in London explores how women negotiate 'liveable lives' (Butler, 2004) in the spaces of a post-colonial city, highlighting the complexities of locality and belonging in place. Their research has furthered understandings of South Asian women's 'belonging' through gendered and sexualised, racialised and ethnicised identifications. The research identified ways in which spaces of sociality enable women to negotiate and understand the multiplicity of diverse identities, including diasporic identities (Brah, 2007). The participants in my research produced a sense of belonging through multiple identities. Their language learning in ESOL classes goes beyond mere acquisition of skills. It develops practices of

friendship and networks of connections in informal spaces of sociality. This gives them a sense of identity and community to be produced and advanced in the 'private' and semi-public spaces in their diasporic home.

It is observed that in the host country, South Asians interact with other South Asian groups, with different ethnic minorities and with the majority population, who all potentially represent powerful figures of Otherness. For example, national identities such as Indian and Pakistani or regional identities such as Punjabi and South Indian, or ethnic identities such as Gujarati and Malayali, forge associations in the diasporic state. And the representations and relationships thus generated are highly unstable, as they depend on complex interactions between the global context and regional affiliation.

It can also be argued that although nationalist discourse is opposed to expatriation, and to the mixing of population and the transgression of national boundaries it implies, migration tends to foster nationalism both among the indigenous population (through defensive, xenophobic forms of nationalism) and among migrants, through heightened expressions of national identity, defined along ethno-religious lines (Shain, 2013). Some participants in this study expressed zeal over the surge in popularity of Narendra Modi, the leader of Hindu Nationalist Party, who was the Chief Minister of Gujarat at that time (now the Prime Minister of India). Sangita said:

*"India needs someone like him. He is very popular, good for our people. Last time we visited Gujarat, we saw good change."*

By 'our' people, Sangita implied the Hindu population. It was observed that such nationalistic expressions were more common amongst participants belonging to upper class and caste. This is an example of how investments in nationalism are mutually exclusive. It also prompts people to reinvent the past, to naturalize the link between people, culture and territory and on antagonist constructions of the others. Women as the carriers of culture (Brah, 1996) bear the burden of symbolising the visibility of this nationalism have to make choices when it comes to passing on the language and cultural values in the family.



Drawing on this, the participants in my research, when faced with this dilemma of preserving home language and home culture, chose Gujarati over English to communicate with their children. Although when I began this project, I did not think that class structure within the group would emerge as an important theme. Soon I realised that the women had their own social divisions. There are various social and particular reasons, such as different sects etc. regarding this separation but class and rural versus urban origins seemed to be the most important factors. I observed that upward social mobility (Ballard, 2002; Block, 2012) played a huge part in the linguistic choice of the family. In the lower, working class members, Gujarati remained the main language in the family. But for them learning English was of utmost importance as a survival tool (Norton, 2000). Their lack of English also created a feeling of being alienated from the dominant sections of the society which resulted in the strong cultural pull towards their own culture. In the middle class group the parents spoke Gujarati with their children but allowed the children to respond in English. This group shows moderation in all aspects of culture and flexibility and adaptation. The communication at home, at times, was in multiple languages. Although the upper class members preferred English as the language of communication, their choices varied according to their political stance about nationalistic ideas. I observed that upper class members who were already in possession of linguistic capital, placed importance on preserving cultural practices and passing these on to their children.

### 8.3 INTERSECTIONALITY

Since the ability to study English involves financial implications such as childcare, transport or adjustment to working hours apart from other social factors, the issue of social class ought to be one of the central concerns of second language learning scholars, but in fact it has been seldom discussed in second language learning literature. I examined my data to help me understand how the position of Gujarati women as language learners influenced their access to and practice of English. By capturing the complexities of individual experiences I tried to link them to larger social structures. This exercise offered valuable insights into how the opportunities to practise English are structured across gendered and ethnic identities. However, merely focusing on gender and ethnic identities would

oversimplify the discussion. Following Ng, Norton (2000) notes, question of gender and ethnicity are integral constituents in the organization of class relations and should not be abstracted from the larger social relations in which they arise.

As a researcher, I cannot escape the fact that I approached my task from within a set of personal and social preconditions, founded in a particular moment in history, class, race, gender, and in language. "Every researcher speaks from within a distinct interpretive community that configures, in its special way, the multicultural, gendered components of the research act" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:28).

I explored this narrative enquiry from within a specific cultural and class context. While growing up in a lower middle class family of a mill worker father, as a young student, I aspired to speak English fluently. Fluency in English was seen as the first step towards upward social mobility in the Indian context which was fast opening up to globalisation in the early 80s. While everyone around me would speak Marathi or Hindi, I had to seek opportunities where I could practise English during my secondary school years. I relied heavily on reading English literature and newspapers but realised that speaking English fluently was still challenging. When I was a teenager, I happened to join a religious group which was my first step into a group of English speaking peers. However, this elite peer group made me acutely aware of how out of place I was in that social group. The fear of speaking incorrect English was so impressed on my mind, that I still remember the grammatical error I had made while speaking with one of the fellow members. When I relate this with the experiences of the research participants, I become acutely aware of the relationship between identity and symbolic power. Participants in this study expressed their anxiety when they have to speak English. Rupa says:

"Sometimes even I make mistakes in 'he' or 'she' (laughs) because I get nervous and make mistakes. Not that I don't know.. but.. I become conscious... Yes, especially with speaking...when my husband wasn't around, I used to think how will I manage, especially when I had to travel?...what if I end up somewhere else, nobody will help me here. But now I have become free from that.."

As Weedon (1987:21) says, “Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed.” Participants from lower socioeconomic class frequently utter the expressions such as shame, embarrassment and awkwardness while speaking of their inabilities to speak fluent English in the UK. Maya says;

“I am always stressed when I go out.. then my daughter say, Mom, it’s ok ...chill”

Participants of higher socio-economic stature, however, have strong views about their religious, cultural and linguistic identity. Once again I quote Rashmi, who is from East Africa and now a fluent speaker of English, mentions,

*“Three things we should never forget, our religion, our culture and our language.”*

We must not forget that English is a language that carries a colonial burden on the minds of masses. The Indian education system, carried out through the *standard* form of the colonizer’s language, was established as the norm and marginalized all other languages. It assisted in creating a new privileged class who received education in English while a large chunk of the population remained deprived of even basic formal education. The intention is clearly brought out through the words in Macaulay’s Minutes (1835) that “a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect” (Pennycook, 1994:138) would be created who would act as interpreters between the British and the locals. It would also enable the colonizers to exercise social control over the people, and impose Western ideas (Pennycook, 1994:102).

For the post-colonial subjects in English speaking country, English is regarded as a cultural mirror, the universal tongue, but also an expression of anguish associated with alienation, rootlessness, and the post-colonial consciousness. For some migrant women, English is the language of freedom, discovery, and rebirth; and for others, it represents linguistic defiance, a means to set up an alternative cultural model to define the female identity for which there is no existing model. Kachru (1996) names this dual personality as the agony and ecstasy generated by the power of English.

After 66 years of independence, although access to English is becoming more common, English is still constructed as a gatekeeper language in India, a means of ensuring that the best opportunities are available to the elite who have the resources to master English. Charita, Sangita, Rashmi, Zahra and Rupa were able to devote time to learn English because of their socio-economic status and upper class family background. While others such as Devi, Meena, Anshu, Hira and many others had to struggle to survive. Access to English continues to be restricted to the people from privileged classes. The elite continue to argue for English and English-medium education on the grounds of English being a 'global language', while subtly ensuring that English retains its value as a class marker in India. Schools offering English as the medium of education are expensive making it difficult for lower economic groups to enrol their children in these schools. The class barriers also make it difficult for learners to practise speaking English with peers which results in lack of confidence in speaking. Hira, Leena, Zahra who have tertiary level education were able to read and write but unable to speak as they lacked confidence.

Given this background, the participants in my research, direct migrants from rural parts of Gujarat find themselves marginalised even in India when it comes to learning English, where the material and social conditions are not conducive for women to get basic education. Upon arrival to the UK, they are further marginalised on the basis of larger patriarchal, material and racist social structures. Their investment in English must be understood with reference to their desire to resist the structural norms in the public and private spheres. Participants in my research, nevertheless, express shame and guilt at not being able to communicate English. Rupa uses the word 'sharam' <sup>48</sup> that she feels when she is unable to express herself.

*Rupa: Do you know how it feels? You have something important to say and you have no words to say ? You feel worthless. .. such 'sharam' I feel about myself.*

According to Busch (2013) a feeling often mentioned in biographies in connection with multilingualism is that of shame, arising because one has used a 'wrong' word, a 'wrong'

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<sup>48</sup> "sharam" (shame) which influence individual and familial reputations in Asian communities

tone, or is speaking with a 'wrong', out-of-place accent. This is often described as feeling as though everyone is looking at you, or wishing the earth would swallow you up. It results in a kind of paralysis, an abrupt suspension of the capacity to act. Interestingly, my research shows similar kind of angst by participants who are marginalised and subjected to discrimination on the basis of their gender and class. Hira who works at a fast food chain feels:

*Hira: I used to feel so bad... I used to come home and cry... that I don't know anything here.. and these people look at us like as if we are nothing in front of them...*

She is an Anglophone, but initially she neither had access to the social networks within the workplace and no encouragement from her family. Although she eventually gained access to speak at her workplace, this was only to find her confidence levels shaken by the initial marginalisation and later by 'othering' as a foreign worker.

Rupa's narration affirms what Gumprez (1964:138) observes about locating linguistic repertoire in a linguistic community. He says that "stylistic choice becomes a problem when we are away from our accustomed social surroundings". A lot of participants used the word 'izzat'<sup>49</sup> (status/respect) being at stake because of their inability to communicate in good English.

We are ashamed about transgressing or disregarding a norm, standard, or ideal; we feel shame before others. Such situations of intense shame affect self-image. An accumulation of situations of shame can become concentrated into particular dispositions or attitudes, such as feelings of inferiority or shyness. In terms of linguistic experience, this may mean that people stop speaking a low-prestige minority language in public, that they give it up completely, or that they avoid speaking in public at all, regardless of language.

Meena, whom I found to be generally cheerful during our interaction, expressed a hint of despair while talking about a specific incidence, described the effects of speaking publicly with limited linguistic capital:

*Meena: I get jitters when I have to take the children out to city.*

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<sup>49</sup> "Izzat" is a phenomenon which confers status and respect, is fluid enough to shift from the individual to the collective domain

Smita: *So what do you do? Do you prepare what to say and all?*

Meena: *Yeah , we always worry, we are always thinking, will they understand... even when I go to my doctor.. no problem if the doctor is Indian... they understand...but we are stressed, when the doctor is English.. When I was new and I was pregnant, it was so problem...even now.. sometimes my doctor laughs with something I say... ( laughs heartily..) ...So we went to this big place, you know near Paddington, you take picture with statues, very famous ...Indian people go no? You know Shahrukh Khan\* and Indira Gandhi, Bapu statue there?*

Smita: *You mean Madam Tussaud's?*

Meena: *Yes, yes, I can't remember the name (laughs)..*

Smita: *So , what about that?*

Meena: *No, my children want to go, they love Salman Khan.. so we are taking photo near..some famous .. I don't know English person name, my children like ..photo of children me taking.. so they stand and some foreign tourist (gora) suddenly comes in front.. and I say 'ssshhhh' ( waving her hand in a gesture to shoo him away)... and I see my daughter's face... she look horrified... rolls her eyes.. and shouts 'Mum, stop it !' I don't know why she so angry...then she tell me it's very rude .. to do this.. You know we always do this in our gaam<sup>50</sup>..but now I remember and learn. But sometimes.. I am sad.. I need to teach this to my.. like ... (laughs)..."*

So when observable linguistic behaviour , like Rupa's is in the foreground, and the focus is on rules and conventions of communicative interaction, which are learnt, followed, and occasionally subverted or broken it becomes engraved on one's linguistic body memory. Once again, I remember my own experiences of lacking the confidence in participating in extra- curricular activities, when I had entered the English medium junior college after successfully passing my secondary school certificate exam from a vernacular school.

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<sup>50</sup> Gaam : Village in Gujarati undeveloped, often with poor roads, no electricity, drawing water from the well and using the ox and wooden plough for farming. Village life means hard work.

I found that more than the shame associated with transgressing or disregarding the 'norm' or the 'standard' , was the affect of it in front of others, in Meena's case it happened in front of her daughter who disapproved vocally. Meena says now she will remember this, which she will probably remember forever because of the hurt she considers her behaviour has caused her daughter. For Meena the intense shame affects her self-image negatively so that a defence she might be read as an incompetent parent. Meena used laughter as a defence mechanism quite frequently throughout the interview.

According to SLA theories, when learners are bored, angry, frustrated, nervous, unmotivated or stressed, they may be unsuccessful at learning a second language. Krashen (1985) calls this 'affective filter' an imaginary wall that is placed between a learner and language input. If the filter is on, the learner is blocking input. The filter turns on when anxiety is high and self-esteem is low. Hira's high affective filter (Krashen, 1985) was produced within the context of inequitable relations of power at workplace. A similar pattern emerged for women lacking good English skills and working in low-paid, low-status jobs , which is highlighted in Devi's case where she speaks about bullying or Naru who expresses how she was disadvantaged owing to her lack of fluency in English.

*Naru: I worked there for 30 years. I couldn't speak English so I used to cry. I couldn't speak very well and if there was anything I had to convey to the supervisor, my words didn't carry any weight. I couldn't argue with my supervisor, that this is her turn or my turn. All others were white and I was alone. I literally cried. That was a tough time. I could do my job that wasn't a problem because I had that much intellect but just couldn't manage to speak. I mean not much, just minimum.*

Rekha, Meena and Anshu express similar angst for not being able to speak English, as if it is their fault that they cannot speak English well.

However, participants including Rupa, Rashmita, Joshna who have financially stronger background have different views on their initial incompetency in speaking English. For them their first language and cultural identity is more important than being able to speak English fluently. They also found it easier to access the network and resources to practise English. Norton's (1997) research shows that younger women with fewer domestic responsibilities and more time and energy devoted more time to learning English and found work that

would give them access to English speakers. (p.42). However, cultures of different groups differ considerably. According to Brah, (1996:76) in South Asian cultures, marriage constitutes a pivotal mechanism in the regulation and control of women, making it difficult for them take decisions about their education, skills and work. But at the same time the data reveals that although women stress the importance of 'family' they do not necessarily accept the hierarchical organisation of the household, or the exercise of male power.

It is evident from the example of Anshu, whose husband is not very keen on her learning English, that ways to resist his opposition to learn English can be found;

*Anshu: When I sit with my kids and do my English homework ...he sees it and says .are you going to become a businesswoman or what? He thinks I don't need English now. So I study before he comes home. (laughs)*

Similarly the example of Sangita, who, after getting married at a young age, convinced her husband and his family the importance of education and joined evening courses to complete her education in the UK, which illustrates that women negotiate their identities to achieve .

In traditional SLA studies it is assumed that learners will have unlimited interactional opportunities whereas Poststructuralist approaches to second language use look at the learning process as "intrinsically social" (Pavlenko, 2002:286). The language learning process is not simply a cognitive process, but a process of "socialization into specific communities of practice". Second language learning is negotiation between novices and more competent users in the language community. Moreover, Norton (2000) through her research has shown how access to these social opportunities is mediated by the learner's race, class, social status, gender, age, linguistic background. Thus, being socialized into a second language community is not always an easy task because learners struggle to develop social networks within the second language community. I turn my attention to my participants' access to the communities of practice. Heller (1999) illustrates how students' different and multiple identities contribute to difficulties creating social networks and finding access to the second language.



Through my research it became apparent that class structures operate to further marginalise these women by denying access to resources, which is further exacerbated by gendered status, by their class and caste origin or race. As a result, these groups of women, being triply disadvantaged are frequently at the bottom of the socio-economic scale, particularly if they are recent arrivals and direct migrants from rural parts. Even when they find work, it is always low-paying jobs where extensive oral interaction is not required. Devi, Naru, Urmi, Anshu and Meena have worked in low-paid jobs such as factories and shops express how their long working hours, childcare responsibilities made it impossible for them to practise English. It was also difficult for them to get their voice heard within the workplace because of their lack of fluency in English.

Collins (2006) argues that the lack of reference to social class in second language learning literature does not mean that class processes are absent from these studies, instead, they are omnipresent, but referred as power relations' or transformative practices' indirectly (p. 4). From a poststructuralist perspective, Kubota (2003) suggests that social class should not be treated as a fixed category, as class gets constructed by social practices and discourses, and people with certain socioeconomic status get positioned or position themselves in learning and using a second language. The structural constraints working against many women of South Asian origin are powerful forces within which we should assess their language learning progress. A number of participants, in spite of being highly motivated, were not able to attend English language courses because they had to engage themselves in low-paid jobs to support their families. Devi, Hira, Champa, Naru illustrate how they struggled to manage responsibilities of household and work. There were other "impediments" - age, sex, having young children, having own transport or not. For some women, lower class status also implied having partners with lower levels of education who did not encourage education for wives. Collins (2006) also argues that social class, as a feature of identity, is a sense of self in relation to others, and thus should be explored as a process with ethnographic orientation. However, it is evident from the data that class plays a major role in gaining access to classes, affording childcare and access to social networks for practice of English.

#### 8.4 RACE: CREATION OF THE 'OTHER'

'English language is the cornerstone of integration' according to the Home Office (2012), a statement which encapsulates the contemporary hegemonic discourse of the benefits to all British society of immigrants learning English. The ideology underpinning the laws with which few residents or immigrants disagree: that learning the dominant language of a society assists immigrants to find employment, access services, support children at school and generally enter into social aspects of the community. In other words, linguistic capital is an essential prerequisite in accessing other forms of capital and therefore advancement within society (Bourdieu, 1991; McDonald, 2013). However, these policy documents evoke images of oppressed women by relying on racist stereotyping of gender relations in Asian households. My research foregrounds the accounts that women have shared about inequalities they experience arising from a range of issues including gender, race and poverty which leads to migration.

Yuval- Davis (1997) draws our attention to the specific and fundamentally different logics of social divisions and inequalities as a tool for theorizing identity to the detriment of social structures. In her work on gender and the nation- state, (1997) she argues that this is essential to an understanding of gendered practices within nationalist and citizenship discourses which position women as keepers and cultivators of the nation rather than its developers.

For participants in this research, race was experienced differentially, underpinning the power relations in Western societies as well as the racialisation of transnational migration. Since race is determined based on superficial anatomical characteristics such as skin colour, body shape, hair texture and facial features, people who look different and do not fit into the category of Caucasians remain as the "other." As newcomers to the existing culture migrants face being marginalised by identities that are imposed upon them due to essentialising or racialising. These assumptions, based on essentialising racial and/or cultural labels which deny the individual the right to personhood, result in what Gilroy (1987) refers to as "the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness" (1987:66), and operates according to inequalities of power between the migrant and the post-migration

society. Themes emerging from the data highlight the differential experience of race-based social exclusion, through racist abuse or social and linguistic invisibility, and the internalisation of the self as 'other'. For migrants from the earlier period being subjected to racial remarks was a routine experience. Being called 'Paki', hair being pulled, being spat at or just avoiding sitting next to 'bloody foreigners' are a few instances that are narrated repeatedly by the elderly cohort.

Naru narrates:

*"For social life, Uganda was good, but now I like here ... when we were new here.. we used to wear bindis<sup>51</sup>..( dot on the forehead) .. they used to call us Paki..when I used to go to work by bus.... in Wales, no one would sit next to you... only if the bus was full, they would come and sit next to you.. but it's not like that in London... in small towns it is a bit too much.."*

Social belonging is defined in terms of language use, as well as what it means to feel a part of a national community. The norms of both of these are challenged and navigated by my participants in their particular discursive space.

Rosenberg (2007) has shown how English has become an integral instrument in gatekeeping Britain's borders, but only in relation to non-Europeans and argued that it particularly affects South Asian women whose rate of immigration continues to remain high into the second and third generation. There are new rules; the Explanatory Memorandum to the Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules laid on 1 October 2010 (CM 7944) (Home Office 2010a) and Equality Impact Assessment: English Language Requirement for Spouses (Home Office 2010). These rules state that migrants from non-EEA countries, who come to stay in the UK, are required to pass the English language test and 'Life in the UK' test.

Under the Conservative-Liberal government, alongside the Life in the UK test, which is deemed to be a particularly difficult test (Home Office, 2010) even for native speakers, those seeking naturalisation as British citizens have to pass an Entry 3 level English language

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<sup>51</sup> A bindi (Sanskrit bindu, meaning "a drop, small particle, dot is a forehead decoration worn in South Asia, can be worn by unmarried and married women but not widowed.

test. Some of my participants have successfully passed these exams and they take pride in their British citizenship.

Leena says:

*"I remember the day...we all got dressed and went to the big hall in London...that day ..dream come real...I cry with happiness.. we bought pendas<sup>52</sup> for neighbours...I am so happy because I study too much for that.. three times I fail but pass fourth time.."*

Despite the flawed nature of this test the Home Office has continued to retain it as a filter for citizenship aspirants. According the Home Office:

The English language requirement for spouses and partners will help promote the economic well-being of the UK, for example by encouraging integration and protecting public services. The new rules will help ensure that migrant spouses and partners are equipped to play a full part in British life from the outset (Home Office Equality Impact Report, 2010).

These changing rules for non-European spouses have mostly impacted newcomers who are inadequately supported and criticised for failing to actively engage in society.

## 8.5 BECAUSE I AM NOT 'HEARD' , I AM NOT SEEN: CULTURAL DEFICIT MODEL

Eva Hoffman's (1990) novel 'Lost in Translation' provides an interesting examination of the role of language in cultural identity and the process of acculturation. In the following excerpts she very articulately explains the frustrations of communication in a new language and culture:

*"We want to be able to give voice accurately and fully to ourselves and our sense of the world....Linguistic dispossession is a sufficient motive for violence, for it is close to the dispossession of one's self....And if one is perpetually without words, if one exists in the entropy of inarticulates, that condition itself is bound to be an enraging frustration."* (Hoffman, 1990:124)

And later:

*Because I'm not heard, I feel I'm not seen....The mobility of my face comes from the mobility of the words coming to the surface and the feelings that drive them. Its*

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<sup>52</sup> Indian sweets made with boiled milk and sugar.

vividness is sparked by the locking of an answering gaze, by the quickness of understanding. But now I can't feel how my face lights up from inside; I don't receive from others the reflected movement of its expressions, its living speech. People look past me as we speak. What do I look like, here? Imperceptible, I think; impalpable, neutral, faceless. (Hoffman, 1990:147)

Although her experiences cannot be universalized, Hoffman's description of profound, intimate changes in perceiving and communicating ideas and emotions may well capture the feelings of frustration expressed by some of my research participants' experiences of the processes of language learning and acculturation. Although most of my participants were not able to express their emotions so eloquently in English, their simple descriptions share the same sense of subjectivities being getting lost in translation. In fact one of my participants said exactly the same words; "because I am not heard, I am not seen, without English what is my 'haisiyat'<sup>53</sup> (status)?" A number of participants expressed anguish at not being on par with other members of the society owing to their lack of knowledge of English by mentioning the word 'haisiyat' or a similar expression 'aukat'<sup>54</sup>.

Participants voiced concern about the perception of South Asian culture from a Western perspective. Cultural difference has never been accepted as merely different but has always been judged and evaluated in relation to the Western "norm." Historically, Western culture was regarded as the norm because of colonialism. Culture has been defined as the values, traditions, and beliefs mediating the behaviours of a particular social group. Thus cultural deficit model portrays minority cultures as deficient and inferior compared to Western or mainstream cultural values and ways of knowing. The diasporic clothing practices prompt an examination of clothing as a vehicle for the performance of ethnic identity. (Puwar and Raghuram, 2003). The dot on a forehead, embroidered shawls, ethnic gear or so-called 'native costumes' are read as acts of resistance. The Muslim women's dress code such as

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<sup>53</sup> Haisiyat : capacity, ability, qualification etc. Here the apt meaning is status.

<sup>54</sup> Aukat : Ability, status,

the hijab<sup>55</sup> and the niqab<sup>56</sup> are considered to be “oppressive” and against women’s rights for independence, hence culturally inferior and “medieval.” Although none of the Muslim participants I interviewed followed these practices, there was a passing reference to these clothing practices can work as a reminder of ‘difference’.

For some Gujarati women there is pride in wearing ethnic gear but for some the cultural deficit model and cultural discontinuity were both cited as visible marks of difference that carry a heavy affective weight. Joshna who spoke limited English when she came to England almost 40 years ago and who is now a fluent speaker of English says:

*Joshna: I became aware that I am not one of them because....the first thing you see are my clothes. I am wearing a sari. Now in London, you see a lot people wearing different clothes but when we came here, you didn’t see many women in sari. People stared at you. You automatically become a second class citizen. It doesn’t have to be like that. I decided to change because you don’t want them to think of us as different when you are at work. So you know how do, right? Our wardrobe changes, no? Good, I buy so many clothes when I visit India. I love to shop for my daughters and granddaughters. But now you get everything here, no? But in my family they were very understanding.*

Clothing choices of South Asian women are also performances of ethnic identity. I find myself pondering on appropriate choices of clothes for different occasions in the UK. For some South Asian women, the choice of what to wear varies directly in relation to the Indianness of a given event, ceremony or gathering. Selecting appropriately Indian clothes is a routine feature of life for South Asian women abroad and provides a powerful example of how South Asian women are required to constantly negotiate the performativity of an ethnic identity which varies widely dependent upon the conventions governing the specific context/event. However, when these women became parents, especially as mothers to adolescent daughters, the values and practices of the dominant culture as mediated

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<sup>55</sup> The word hijab describes the act of covering up generally but is often used to describe the headscarves worn by Muslim women. These scarves come in many styles and colours. The type most commonly worn in the West covers the head and neck but leaves the face clear.

<sup>56</sup> The niqab is a veil for the face that leaves the area around the eyes clear. However, it may be worn with a separate eye veil. It is worn with an accompanying headscarf.

through school micro-cultures, incited a deep questioning of traditional South Asian beliefs and customs (Mani, 2003). The dissonance between traditional custom and practice and more conventional approaches to dress generated family tension which manifested through daily interactions with their children. This is reflected in the responses of many mothers who lack the confidence to attend school meetings for fear of being judged negatively against the Western norm and further compounded by their inability to speak English. Most participants stressed that relationships with their children were generally positive; nevertheless, young mothers expressed shame and guilt as they considered themselves maternally deficient because of linguistic inabilities or pronounced cultural difference.

*Meena: I am always shy to meet his (her son's) teacher. I think they think...so backward...not because of my sari only but...You don't know how bad it makes me feel when I cannot help him (son) with his homework or when I don't understand...you know...when is teacher is saying something important about his studies..*

Or as another participant desires,

*Anshu: Oh I wish there was a magic pill, if you take it, you can speak fluent English. Sometimes it hurts ...when they (the children) don't understand what you are saying...your own kids...(sighs)*

Child rearing practices and parenting decisions about raising children 'caught between two cultures' was a source of great consternation. Although there is a body of literature on South Asian families caught between two cultures (Ghuman, 1994; Modood et al., 1996) there is very little SLA literature, particularly in the domain of socio-linguistics, which pertains to this specific situation; the intersection of maternal and linguistic identities as experienced through the language learning experiences of adult immigrants.

Barnes (2013:116) reflects thus:

*"You feel sharply the loss of shared vocabulary, of tropes, teases, short cuts, jokes, sillinesses, faux rebukes, amatory footnotes- all those obscure references rich in memory but valueless if explained to an outsider."*

These views are vocalised by my participants when they reflect upon impact the cultural deficit model has on their lives. The cultural deficit model can also be related to colonialism.

Pennycook (1994) argued that the “long term conjunction between English and colonial discourses has produced a range of linguistic-discursive connections between English and colonialism (p. 4). Norton (1995) and later Pavlenko (2004) argue that this construction of the “Other” robs language learners from having real or true communication with the mainstream population. Brah argues (1996) that racism is neither reducible to social class or gender nor wholly autonomous. Racisms have variable historical origins but they articulate with patriarchal class structures in specific ways. The data reveals how the intersections of class and race work in favour of white women’s privileged position even when they may share a lower class position with South Asian women.

*“Even when we go to our children’s school for parent’s meeting...you see the difference...because your English is not perfect...they think what is she going to say.. I mean you can feel it...sometimes it makes me angry! Lekin kya kare? ( What to do ?)”*

Rupa expressed how she felt when she had something important to add at a Parents Teachers Association meeting but was not heard, and in fact another parent, who happened to be a white woman was given more attention by the teacher.

#### 8.6 INVISIBILITY/HYPER VISIBILITY

Blackledge’s (2005) study of language and power from a critical discourse analysis perspective discusses, among other things, the centrality of nation-state language policies to national identity in defining “‘who is in’ and ‘who is out’” (p. 42). These understandings are particularly relevant in the UK where the “monolingual mindset” continues to be tied to discourses of national belonging and exclusion.

The focus on the role of language in producing and reproducing national identity becomes relevant in relation to who can claim ownership of that language in the migration and L2 context. According to Pavlenko and Norton (2007:671) ultimately what remains of utmost relevance is that “in the modern era, nations are no longer created in blood but imagined in language”.



Invisibility to members of the established community is one of the ways that newcomers experience social exclusion, and language as an important mechanism for performing this. Language based exclusion and invisibility were reported separately by Devi, Hira, Rani, Rekha in their routine experiences at work, their children's schooling, when they go shopping. An incident narrated by Rani, who is separated from her husband illustrates the exclusionary practices she encounters on the basis of her linguistic capital and ethnic identity:

*Rani: You know when the person came to fix the boiler, he come to do some work at home, they say, when is your husband coming home? We will discuss this with him..(laughs)...I say....go to India to discuss this with my husband as I live alone here.*

This experience resonates with some similar incidents I faced during the process of my settlement in the UK. When I visited a solicitor firm in Central London for consultation, I noticed that the person, a middle-aged South Asian gentleman, assumed that my husband was the main applicant and made him the centre of the discussion. I intervened and made it clear to him that I was the main applicant in this process. Although he understood my point, the conversation continued to be directed towards my married partner. When we went to another firm for consultation, we met with a young white female solicitor, whose initial assumption was similar to the earlier gentleman, however, when I stressed that I was the main applicant, I then became central to the discussion.

This incident highlights the significance of intersectionality in the perception and performance of multiple identities. For a South Asian male, in spite of his highly educated professional status, his cultural 'understanding' limits his interpretation of the situation so that the information provided by a woman is 'additive or 'supplementary' to the 'real' information provided by a man. Whereas from the perception of a white female, the initially perceived marginalised, routine status of a South Asian woman was more malleable.

When the culture is hyper-visible because of particular performances and customs including such as saris, hijabs, bindis, women can become targets of verbal abuse. Many women

stressed that one of the biggest motivations for them to learn to drive was to avoid public transport, especially for those who worked antisocial shifts.

To sum up, race impacted differentially on the participants' sense of self in negotiating social interactions, with social exclusion being experienced predominantly by the participants.

#### 8.7 THIS IS HOME NOW, WHERE ELSE WILL I GO?: HOME AND BELONGING

Hole (2005), in her research on Gujarati women in Sweden, argues that "the homeland" conjures up nostalgic memories of the "better past" to which they long to return. She states that "Their shared experiences and backgrounds also make a sharable desire of return.....they are longing to return" (p. 324).

Ramji's (2003) research on Gujarati women, however, argues homeland is an important variable in creating a distinct ethnic identity and in understanding the Gujarati Hindus relative success in the diaspora. My findings reveal that the majority of these women do not hold this 'neither here nor there' modality of mind. Most respondents do not reveal any strong attachment to their home land or their place of birth. They have now made Britain their home and they are proud and happy with life here.

Many participants visit India on occasions to visit family members or just as tourists. Young women feel that British society provides them with equal opportunity and a sense of purpose. Elderly women feel that the health and social services make their life much easier than they could have imagined anywhere else in the world.

Naru says:

*Now what is there for me in India? All my children are here in...very good position...if I need help they are near...my other son and daughter is close by...so we are happy here...we have our groups, we are very busy every week doing this or that...*

Hira says:

*No, I don't want to go back to India now .. Now I have seen what freedom is... you live for your family.. you work hard.. you are not answerable to any one... this is a*

*very equal society .. you are valued as a person... for what you to do.. not like India..  
because you are always somebody's wife, daughter , sister...*

Conceptions of ideal female behaviour as dedicated daughters and wives were often reinforced through family relations (Brah, 1996). Many of the women discussed pressures associated with attempting to meet sometimes impossible ideals as daughters, wives, and daughters-in-law. Accommodating these expectations became an important way in which they made homes for themselves both in their own families and the new ones they joined after marriage. However, Soni, Madhu and Rani described a sense of suffocation and felt oppressed in their marital home from which they sought independence. This shows that although patriarchal relations define the way of life in South Asian society, given opportunities to define their identities differently women are offered opportunities to break free from stifling, culturally prescribed roles.

Soni and Rashmi feel that now that their parents are no more, visits to Gujarat lack the same significance for them. Their views dispel the notion that the South Asian women are 'helpless creatures' and lack agency. These women are aware of the oppression of public and private patriarchy, it is just that as they say 'we do things differently', does not mean that they do not 'do things' i.e. perform agency.

The narratives reveal how *their place of origin*, played an important role in constructing their ethnic identity, in defining group consciousness, solidarity, their work ethic and their relative success in the Diaspora. Most women feel a sense of gratitude for the place where they come from and a sense of belonging to the place that they have now made their permanent home.

This overview of Gujarati women's migration and settlement trajectories has offered an analyses of the ways that learning and using English in the British context shaped their identity constructions and sense of self in three broad interactional domains: family, white society, and in work contexts. I have tried to underline that class origin and social mobility through migration has an important impact upon English language learning experiences, job opportunities and social status in the UK. Accounts of migrants' lives in the country of origin

have sometimes neglected the significance of social class position in those societies, suggesting greater homogeneity than actually exists. I have challenged the underestimations of the part played by South Asian women in the process of language learning and upgrading skills to join the workforce. In the next, concluding chapter I will draw together my findings and revisit the research question. I will also address the implications of this research for work in English language learning.

## CHAPTER NINE

### CONCLUSION

This final chapter summarises the findings concerning the experiences of Gujarati women learning English language upon migration, and the interplay of their gendered, 'raced' and classed identities. I initiated this study in response to an awareness of migrant women's material and structural challenges to learning English; challenges that are further exacerbated by public and private expectations for 'South Asian woman' to perform and embody narrow femininities, and be carriers of culture within broader patriarchal structures. This qualitative research included semi-structured interviews with 20 women, two focus groups (with a further 13 women), observation and analyses of the identity construction of Gujarati women in London.

In the previous four chapters (chapters four to eight) I have discussed, in relation to family, society and work, the issues of gender, race and class that affected the process of language learning, through the trajectories of Gujarati women's settlement in the UK and within their everyday lives lived in London. In this concluding chapter by revisiting the original research questions, I offer a synthesis of the main findings and discuss their implications for transnational migrant women in the UK and for settlement processes through language learning. I do not purport to generalise from the experiences of these women to all immigrant or even all South Asian immigrant women in Britain. I have examined agency, motivation and investments in language learning and echoed Roberts and Baynham's (2006:4) concern to adopt:

"an ideological stance that critiques the positioning of learners as 'needy' and 'lacking in agency' but also recognises that they are subject to social, political and economic pressures that produce a marginalised identity for them in the UK".

Although England is a developed country where women have equal rights in law and various employment opportunities, this does not translate for many migrant women to equal status upon arrival. On the contrary, I discovered that many women had to struggle to rise above the traditional role of a mother and home-maker. More than personal factors such as anxiety, attitude or motivation, obstacles such as transportation, childcare, nature of work, family commitments and support emerged as key factors to play a significant role in processes of

language learning. This study established that these barriers to learning, such as a lack of social or cultural capital are ignored or downplayed, and 'The lifelong learner is therefore constructed as a compliant employable subject, able to fit into the existing gendered, classed and racialized social order, rather than a critical thinker and citizen' (Leathwood, 2006:49).

The research focused on the following questions:

1. What are the obstacles and challenges faced by immigrant Gujarati women who are not proficient in English? What are the factors that help them gain proficiency in English or prevent them from learning English?
2. What impact do learner identity, subject positioning and agency have on their ability to access and develop and maintain social networks essential to learn a language? How have these challenges and obstacles been addressed by the individuals and the available support systems?

In asking these questions, I was primarily interested in the ways that a woman's prior subjectivity might be affected by transnational migration involving language change and also by the nature of the post-migration society. My feminist poststructuralist position (Brah, 1996; Pavlenko, 2001; Norton, 1997; Osgood, 2012) throughout the research allowed me to pay attention to the interplay of power and inequity in identity constructions. It was apparent that migration dramatically altered gendered subjectivities leading to shifting identities. Because of the imperialist history of the English language and the association of racist features developed through it, (Shain, 2013) it imposes assumptions of long term inferiority on the women. The dominance of English language has a strong social impact over migrant women who are at a disadvantage not only because they do not speak English, but because the existing deficit model rejects the linguistic and other skills that they possess. This study illustrated that immigrant Gujarati women negotiate English language acquisition through multiple social identities, i.e. race, gender, class, religion and culture (Pavlenko, 2001). Through this research I have challenged the stereotypical construction of South Asian women's identity and instead projected Gujarati women's agency, by

highlighting how they respond and resist and own the 'third space' (Spivak, 1988). The major contribution of this study is that by studying a group of South Asian women, it has established that language learning for migrant women is dependent on access to social networks. The motivation for wanting to do this research, was derived from a concern with the ways that identity is used in some sociolinguistic research to individualize and thereby pathologize particular groups of learners. By questioning the SLA theories through a feminist poststructuralist lens, and exploring the intersections of gender, race and class to a group of South Asian woman, this study has offered a fresh perspective to identity construction. This study confirms that language learning is not simply a cognitive process, but a process of "socialization into specific communities of practice" (Pavlenko, 2004:286). It has also shown that second language learning is a constant negotiation and re-negotiation of access, agencies, subject positions and identities between learners (i.e. participants in this research) and more experienced users in the society (native speakers of English).

As mentioned in the introduction, following the feminist post-structuralist theoretical framework I heavily drew upon the discourses surrounding power and inequality through which I was able to identify how gender identities are constructed, resisted and (re)negotiated. The aims of this study were concerned to investigate multiple subjectivities within the intersections of gender, 'race' and class in the process of language learning. The findings indicate that when the subjective experiences rest upon the wider discourses in which agency plays an important part i.e. the means by which individuals construct the self. It has also demonstrated that identities are constructed through everyday social interaction. I have considered the participants highlighted here as people with histories, stories, goals and motives for the language learning experience. The Poststructuralist perspective taken here has allowed me to show that "languages delineate and constitute identities of the speakers. ... [Post structuralism] allows us to account for ambiguities and complexities in the learning process" (p.296).

To understand the nature of this complexity, I explored the lived experiences of two cohorts of Gujarati women, i.e. direct migrants and twice migrants. I demonstrated how Gujarati women challenge their marginalised status and perform identities through English language learning, and how the process has an impact on the construction of identity. By investigating

the parameters of power structures of public and private patriarchy, I tried to uncover gendered agency in second language learning and foregrounded the role of English language learning in constituting identities. I illustrated how one of the important salient aspects of identity is that of gender, and it may have mediated my participants' access to different social practices involving communication and have had an impact their identities. This study is unique in a sense that it attempted to obtain subjective accounts of the personal language learning and settlement experiences from the perspectives of South Asian women.

### 9.1 POSITIVE IMPACT OF LANGUAGE LEARNING ON SELF

An analysis of the recurrent themes in my interview data suggests some important concepts for the better delivery of language support. As witnessed in the lives of my research participants, gender roles constrain these women from performing better in learning English. The data indicate that women's choices in regard to balancing work, family life and learning English are shaped by a number of factors, including their negotiation of dual roles, the role of the partner, the role of the workplace, and the interplay between their everyday reality and their shifting subjectivities. The impact of family plays a huge role in helping the women in practical aspects of learning. Where participants belonged to a joint family, women were able to take some time out from childcare responsibilities to attend English classes. However, in some families, especially in the older generation, owing to the patriarchal family system, they faced resistance to attending English classes. As witnessed in the lives of my research participants, the socio-cultural norms of their ethnic community dictate the traditional female roles of child-rearing and house-keeping. However, in recent years, the family system has become increasingly nuclear allowing women to take greater control of their lives. But it also means that their lives revolve more around childcare as there is no one else to share the household chores. The practical implications of this mean that the need for more childcare facilities, convenient locations and times convenient for women who have small children or children attending schools. To challenge the structural inequalities, the policies that operate under a male model of work need to reinforce gender roles where women are framed as principal caregivers who must juggle work and family.



It also emerged that a number of participants were not aware of the programmes when they arrived in the UK. The information about such programmes, soon after arrival, would have made things a lot easier for these women in all aspects of their social lives. Women with a lack of formal education have difficulties entering into the institutional system of language training provided by the government as they lack linguistic tools as well as confidence. Women like Devi, Naru, Anshu find it difficult to pick up literacy skills because of their lack of literacy in the first language. They require additional time and guidance to improve their overall learning. The situation is intensely magnified for women who have been socialized in a gender segregated milieu and as such find it difficult to adjust to the changes and require additional support. At the same time, as mentioned in the Dumper report on skills audit about missed opportunities in nursing, teaching and medical professions, it was frustrating for women who were already qualified but felt restricted because of their inability to speak fluent English. Their vocational skills such as nursing and caring, which are easily transferable, were not being utilised. This loss of human capital for a country where a number of professionals have to be brought in from abroad, is important to consider. (Dumper, 2002)

Research showed that the women were highly motivated to improve their linguistic skills and were willing to work hard to achieve their goals. The women who were able to speak English were more positive and confident about their sense of self because of their communicative skills in English. During the period of collecting data, I was able to witness Fatima and Maya entering employment for the first time after successfully acquiring the required English language level. I was also able to see Rani, who had been redundant at the time of her interview, investing in improving her literacy and oracy in English, was successful in getting her dream job of being a 'red bus' driver. It was evident that the participants' relationships with the children, husbands and other members of the family changed by the introduction of English and by the participants' differing levels of investment in the importance of English to the performance and maintenance of that relationship. The narratives of Maya, Devi, Rekha illustrate that it brought them closer to their children and drove away their fears of being alienated from their own children. It gave them an improved status in the eyes of other family members e.g. Sangita, Charita, Fatima. In some cases, such as Anshu and Meena, it caused friction as some of the partners became uncomfortable by

the achievement of learning English by their spouses but even then, the material gains of learning English were taken into consideration.

This research has foregrounded the accounts that women have shared about inequalities they experience, arising from the differences of gender, race and class and the impact it has on their language learning, which in turn reflects on their emotional lives and material reality. This inquiry developed a critical feminist approach through an intersectional lens of gender, class and race and highlighted structural and symbolic inequalities.

## 9.2 AGENCY AND 'THIRD SPACE'

Following Bourdieu (1991) Norton (2000) this study further confirms that social interactions are constructed by power relations, making participants stressed, feeling devalued and deskilled. However, the participants exercised agency in multiple ways. Participants move *across* cultures, inhabit places *in-between* and claim a third space. The research showed that 'agency' "is never a property of a particular individual; rather, it is a relationship that is constantly co-constructed and renegotiated with those around the individual and with the society at large" (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001:148). Examining the everyday lives of Gujarati women revealed how they challenge marginalisation and actively rework and shape their identities. The narratives reveal how some of them suffered in silence initially but did not halt difficult journeys towards realising alternative subjectivities. Anshu speaks of humiliation, embarrassment, fear, oppression from private and public patriarchy, but that does not prevent her from learning English without letting her husband know what she is doing. There are a number of other participants who have overcome initial hurdles, gained fluency in English and now occupy spaces in the public domain with confidence (Puwar, 2004). And some of them are in a better position, almost elite, empowered and privileged. Their performance of agency dispels the myth of the 'passive', 'docile' South Asian women, lacking autonomy in their lives.

Through a critical feminist perspective this research has contributed to the debates of 'South Asian women's agency' by highlighting language learning through diasporic trajectories. The traditional roles as child carers and house keepers are shifting as women

make progress in learning English and participating in various sorts of economic activities. The male members of the family or the traditionally authoritarian figures such as mothers-in-law are also shifting traditional ways of thinking and behaving. It is now more usual for South Asian men to look after their children while their wives are at work or attending English lessons. In the families where these role changes were not happening, women have resisted in a variety of ways to construct alternative identities. Some, like Rani and Madhu, revolted against domestic injustice and found a way out of their situation to make their lives more liveable on their own terms by learning English and gaining employment.

Parenting practices and child rearing within South Asian families have also altered considerably. For parents from traditional strict family contexts, although initially difficult to understand the relaxed education system in the UK, seeing their children enjoy schooling they have come to recognise the importance of the English education system. Although some mothers complained about the lack of school discipline and the impact of it on their child's behaviour, most seemed happy about the fair treatment received by their children and felt they learnt a great deal about other ways of being from their children every day. As a result there are multiple cultures, languages and values within the family.

From a Poststructuralist perspective, second language learners are treated as people, which means "we need to appreciate their human agency. As agents, learners actively engage in constructing the terms and conditions of their own learning" (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001:145). Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) state that their view of human agency is about more than just "performance, or doing; it is intimately linked to significance....things and events matter to people—their actions have meanings and interpretations" (p.146). Human agency, in fact, "links motivation, more recently conceptualized as investment by Norton Peirce (1995), to action and defines a myriad of paths taken by learners. Agency, in turn, is socially and historically constructed..." (p.146). This research has established the various ways in which participants exercised agency in different contexts and relationships.

### 9.3 MOBILITY: FROM MARGINS TO CENTRE

As a result of constantly renegotiating and repositioning subjectivities through daily struggles to acquire and use linguistic resources, the research participants opened up

possibilities to create new identities for 'South Asian women'. They consciously choose to present and represent themselves within family and community and to the outside world in particular ways, ways that challenged entrenched ideas. At the same time, however, they move and act within spaces where race, gender and class "relations of ruling" intersect in particular ways. For this group of women the societal structures and processes impinge upon identity construction and the lived experiences in specific ways. Since private and public patriarchy, classism and racism set boundaries to their inclusion, and subjectivities they must constantly mediate and rework their identities in that newly created space. Giampapa's (2004) work is useful to address issues of hybridity with regard to national identities. In her study of Italian-Canadians she takes a poststructuralist approach to analyse identities and discovers that regardless of the particular spatial metaphor one chooses to adopt (e.g. position, location, inside-out, global-local, third space) in the discussion of place, politics, and identity, spatial metaphors not only express relations of power and domination, but capture the potential for agency, that is, the possibility of moving from the "margins" (exclusion) to the "centre" (inclusion) or the reconfiguration and/or establishment of other centres. (Giampapa, 2004:193)

Poststructuralist researchers consider language learners to be "agents in charge of their own learning" (Pavlenko, 2002). Their agency is:

"... the key factor in their learning: in many cases they may decide to learn the second, or any additional, language only to the extent that it allows them to be proficient, without the consequences of losing the old and adopting the new ways of being in the world" (Pavlenko, 2002:293).

Participants in this research fit into this description as they negotiate to retain those parts of their identities that they value whilst being open to take up multiple other subjectivities as they rework subjectivities in different social contexts. One of the advantages of the Poststructuralist-Language Socialization approach taken in this thesis is that it considers the language learning process to be a social one. That is, language learning is not simply a cognitive process, but a process of "socialization into specific communities of practice" (Pavlenko, 2002:286). The present study has shown that second language learning is a

constant negotiation and re-negotiation of access, agencies, subject positions and identities between learners (ie.my participants) and more experienced users of English. Rani, Hira, Maya and Fatima provide prominent examples of how their 'othered' self does not forget their 'imagined' identity and these women strive to claim this third space (Spivak, 1988). The denial of their selfhood and resistance to a narrow grouping of them into stereotype is a valid justification for the first person narrative trajectories undertaken in this research.

#### 9.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

An analysis of the themes recurring in this research data suggests some important concepts for the design and delivery of English language training programmes for immigrants in order to successfully achieve their settlement goals. First of all, gender role constraints of women should be taken into consideration. The socio-cultural norms of the ethnic community dictate the roles for women belonging to these communities mainly as child-minders and housekeepers and changes in these roles are slow to come. So the practical implications of these gender role restrictions indicate the need for language training classes to be held in convenient locations, with good quality day care facilities. There is also very little specific provision for learners who have basic literacy needs.

The study also discovered that many learners did not have any avenues after achieving a specific level of English and had no other option but to return to domestic duties rather than achieving any further vocational qualifications. This was not helpful for they soon relapsed into the basic level of English owing to lack of practice. Those who gained the linguistic capital, at times struggled to gain the employability skills. All preparation of migrant English learners for entry to the labour market assumes the learner to be variably deficient in a number of key areas such as language, qualifications, work experience, intelligibility, physical grooming, and knowledge of workplace interactional pragmatics (SKOPE, 2004). Although most women in this research were resourceful and self-taught in a these aspects, there is a need for a focused support system that would support migrant women's systematic participation in the employment market. The current model assumes that with English language competency, will come the labour market success and social inclusion.

Systemic racism towards non-European migrants has a long history in the UK (Brah, 1996). The current UK legislation (Equality Act, 2010) places a duty on all public sector organisations to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation in the workplace;
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups; and
- foster good relations between people of different groups.

In spite of such policy advances, my study shows that racism towards non-EEA migrants continues to persist and linguistic capital or a lack thereof accounts for cases of racial discrimination in the labour market (Strategy Unit Report, 2003) which must be addressed overtly because without these attempts, language provision will not facilitate positive social outcomes. However, the study also showed the impact that learning English has on identity performance and selfhood in the settlement trajectories of migrant women which implied an improved understanding of the British way of life and a smoother journey towards harmonious co-existence within communities. Participants in this research were acutely invested in learning English because of the demonstrable impact it would have upon their abilities to effectively parent and support their children. However, more generally, shifts in gendered subjectivities came from living and functioning in British society rather than solely the acquisition of linguistic tools. The word 'haisiyat' and 'aukat' occurring in the data support this argument.

Many participants were not aware that ESOL courses are run for their benefit, they had no knowledge that these courses could be accessed free, and they were not certain of the nature of the childcare facilities provided at the places of studies. The term childcare acts as an umbrella term for issues of affordability, availability and location. Moreover, they felt that their existing vocational skills were not an asset for further career development in the same field. Women's language learning is not directed towards their private educational or career goals but rather welfare of the family. Highly qualified professionals with degrees from abroad in the field of nursing, caring which are crucial to British society, were not being integrated into the right profession. It also highlighted on the concerns of Gujarati women as parents, which is an area for further research. It also calls for a professional

advice centre for women who are interested in understanding the cultural differences and incorporate some aspects into their lives but do not know where to look for help. It is obvious that there is a need for a deeper cultural understanding by policy makers and education providers, leading towards by adult education providers to encourage the attendance of working-class students, and providing differentiated approaches with new methods (place/times/enrolment methods/fees) and improved outreach.

I suggest that policy makers, providers acknowledge and address the fact that majority of migrant women are motivated but face structural and social barriers, and plan accordingly. The narratives of participants suggest that there is a need to understand immigrant women's language learning needs in relation to motherhood. The discourse analysis in this research provides a framework for future wider research in this field to explore other women's lives. My work calls for research to consider more closely the complex practices of identity negotiation in the context of migration and second language learning (Pavlenko, 2004; Norton, 1997, 1998, 2000).

To conclude, my research shows that gender, race and class interplay with the processes of language learning and have a significant impact on identity performances and selfhood in the settlement trajectories of migrant women. The social context is more important in the process of language learning, therefore it is essential, that we continue to understand the problematic and challenging nature of second language socialization. This small sample demonstrates the need for more research to find out what kinds of experiences different groups of migrant women face, how they negotiate hybrid identities and make places of belonging for themselves and their families through learning English.

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H)

Smita Ray, Research Degree Student, IPSE London Metropolitan University, Holloway Road, 25/10/12

Hello,

I am here to invite you to take part in a research study to understand Gujarati women's experiences of learning English as an additional language. I would like to interview you about your experiences of learning English. The questions I ask will try to find out your views and feelings about the process of English language learning.

The study will involve up to 20 Gujarati women. I will interview you separately. The interview will take up to 30 minutes. I will record this interview on a digital recorder. Your responses will be confidential and your name will not be used anywhere. I am happy to speak Hindi or Gujarati with you for the interview.

Please sign up for my research if you wish to participate.

If you would like to get more information, my contact number is 07886025898 and my email is [smitaray.uk@gmail.com](mailto:smitaray.uk@gmail.com).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Smita Ray

l)

Smita Ray, Research Degree Student, IPSE London Metropolitan University, Holloway Road, 25/10/12

#### INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS:

You are invited to take part in a research study to understand Gujarati women's experiences of learning English as an additional language. I would like to interview you to ask you about your experiences of learning English. This research is part of my PhD thesis.

Before you decide whether to take part in the study, it is important that you understand what the research is for and what you will be asked to do. Please take time to read the following information and discuss it with others if you wish. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep. You will also be asked to sign a consent form. You can change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study without giving a reason. You are welcome to phone me if you would like any further information.

The purpose of the research study is to examine / explore your views and feelings about various aspects of the process of learning English as a second language in the UK. I would like to ask you questions about what it is/was like for you, your thoughts on the provision of language support, your feelings, your strategies in various situations and other relevant topics.

The study will involve up to 20 Gujarati women, who will all be interviewed separately. The interview will take 30-40 minutes. If you choose to take part, I will organise a location for the interview convenient to you. It will also involve two focus groups with 6 Gujarati women in each group.

The information gained from this research will be used to make recommendations for best practices and will offer insights into the experiences. The results of the study may also lead onto further studies into the field of ESOL provision, which may result in improving the service area.

If you feel that talking about your experiences of learning English is unsettling, you are free to stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue. If the interview upsets you and you feel you would like some additional help after the interview, I will be able to advise you whom to contact for formal or informal support.

The interview will be recorded on a digital device and then transcribed onto a computer. The digital device will be stored in a locked secure place at all times and the computer data will be protected from intrusion also. Your response will be treated with full confidentiality and anyone who takes part in the research will be identified only by code numbers or false names. You can request a copy of the interview transcript if you wish.

The interviews will be analysed by me and at the end of the research I will write a report. The results may be published in peer reviewed journals and conference presentations. No research participant will be identifiable from any publications. This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at London Metropolitan University.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours sincerely,

Smita Ray

## J) Invitation in Hindi:

आपको एक अतिरिक्त भाषा के रूप में अंग्रेजी सीखने का गुजराती महिलाओं के अनुभव को समझने के लिए एक शोध अध्ययन में भाग लेने के लिए आमंत्रित कर रहे हैं। अंग्रेजी सीखने के अपने अनुभव के बारे में पूछने के लिए आप से साक्षात्कार करना चाहती हूँ। यह शोध मेरी पीएचडी थीसिस का हिस्सा है।

इस अध्ययन में भाग लेने का निष्पत्ति लेने से पहले, यह अनुसंधान सफा है और आप का इसमें शामिल होना पूरी तरह से वैध है। यह बताना चाहती हूँ। इसलिये आप निम्नलिखित जानकारी पढ़ सकते हैं और यदि आप चाहें तो हम एक दूसरे के साथ चर्चा करने के लिए समय निकाल सकते हैं। इसमें हिस्सा लिया जाए या नहीं तय करना आप पर निर्भर है। यदि आप भाग लेने के लिए राजी हैं तो आप के पास रखने के लिए यह सूचना पत्र दिया जाएगा। आप एक सहमति पत्र पर हस्ताक्षर करने के लिए कहा जाएगा। आप किसी भी समय अपना मन बदलने के लिए और कारण दिये बिना अध्ययन से पीछे हट सकते हैं। आप किसी भी अधिक जानकारी चाहते हैं तो आप मुझे फोन कर सकती हैं।

शोध अध्ययन का उद्देश्य पिटैन में एक दूसरी भाषा के रूप में अंग्रेजी सीखने की प्रक्रिया के विभिन्न पहलुओं के बारे में आपके विचार और भावनाओं का पता लगाना है। मैं आपसे इस विषय के बारे में सवाल पूछना चाहूँगी। आप, भाषा का समर्थन, अपनी भावनाओं, विभिन्न स्थितियों और अन्य संबंधित विषयों में अपनी रणनीति के आवधान पर अपने विचार मुझे बता सकती हैं।

अध्ययन में सभी से अलग से बातचीत की जाएगी, जिसमें 20 से ऊपर गुजराती महिलाएँ, शामिल होगी। साक्षात्कार 30-40 मिनट का समय लगेगा। आप भाग लेने के लिए तैयार हैं तो मैं आपसे आपके सुविधाजनक स्थान का साक्षात्कार के लिए एक आयोजन कर लूँगी। इसमें आप समूह में 6 गुजराती महिलाओं के साथ दो फोकस समूहों में शामिल हो सकती हैं।

इस शोध से प्राप्त जानकारी के सर्वोत्तम स्तरों के लिए सिफारिश करने के लिए इंतजार किया जाएगा और अनुभव में अंतर्दृष्टि की पेशकश करेगा। अध्ययन के परिणामों से भी सेवा में सुधार लाने में परिणाम हो सकता है जो ESOL आवधान के लिए मैं आगे के अध्ययन पर नेतृत्व कर सकते हैं।

यदि आपको अंग्रेजी सीखने के अपने अनुभव के बारे में बात करते समय ऐसा लगता है कि यदि आप को जारी रखने की इच्छा नहीं है, तो आप किसी भी समय साक्षात्कार को रोकने के लिए स्वतंत्र हैं। साक्षात्कार आपको विचलित कर देता है और आप साक्षात्कार के बाद कुछ अतिरिक्त मदद



करना चाहते हूँ महसूस हो रहा है, तो आप को औपचारिक या अनौपचारिक समर्थन के लिए संपर्क करने की सलाह के संबंध करने की कोशिश की जाएगी।

साक्षात्कार के लिए एक डिजिटल डिवाइस पर दर्ज की गई और फिर एक कंप्यूटर पर लिखित किया जाएगा। डिजिटल डिवाइस के लिए हर समय एक बंद सुरक्षित जगह में संग्रहीत किया जाएगा और कंप्यूटर डेटा की भी घुसपैठ से रक्षा की जाएगी। आपकी प्रतिष्ठा या पूर्ण गोपनीयता और केवल कोड नंबर या झूठे नाम से पहचाना जाएगा। यदि आप चाहें तो आप साक्षात्कार प्रतिलिपि की एक प्रतिका अनुरोध कर सकते हैं।

साक्षात्कार मेरे द्वारा विश्लेषण किया जाएगा और अनुसंधान के अंत में मुझे एक रिपोर्ट लिखना होगा। परिणाम को सहकर्म की समीक्षा की प्रतियों और सम्मेलन प्रतियों में प्रकाशित किया जा सकता है। कोई शोध प्रतिभागी किसी भी प्रकाशन से पहचाने जाने योग्य हो जाएगा। इस अध्ययन की समीक्षा की और लंदन मेट्रोपॉलिटन विवि विद्यालय मॉरिस चॉआचार समिति द्वारा अनुमोदित किया गया है।

यदि आप अधिक जानकारी चाहते हैं तो मुझसे संपर्क करने में संकोच नहीं करें।

प्रियता से

०७८६०२५९८

[smitaray.uk@gmail.com](mailto:smitaray.uk@gmail.com)

K) Invitation in Gujarati:

વધારાની ભાષા તરીકે ?ગલિશ શીખવાખાખત ગુજરાતી મહિલાઓના અનુભવો સમજવા માટે એક સંશોધન અ?યાસ માં ભાગ લેવા માટે તમે આમંત્રિત કરવામાં આવે છે. હું ?ગલિશ શીખવા તમારા અનુભવો વિશે તમે પૂછો તમે ઇન્ટરવ્યુ કરવા માંગો છો. આ સંશોધન મારા પીએચડી મહાનિબંધ ભાગ છે.

તમે અ?યાસ માં ભાગ લેવા માટે ન?ી કરો કે શું તે પહેલાં, તે તમે સંશોધન માટે શું છે અને તમે શું કરવા માટે કહેવામાં આવશે શું સમ? તે અગત્યનું છે. નીચેની ? ફાકારી વાંચી અને તમે ઈ?છો તો તેને અ?ય લોકો સાથે ચર્ચાકરવા માટે સમય ?ાત થશે. તે ભાગ લેવા માટે કે નહ? તે ન?ી કરવા માટે તમને છે. તમે ભાગ લેવા માટે ન?ી જો તમે રાખવામાટે આ માહિતી શીટ આપવામાં આવશે. તમે પણ સંમતિ ફોમ?સાઇન ઇન કરવા માટે કહેવામાં આવશે. તમે કોઈપણ સમયે તમારા મન બદલવા અને એક કારણ આ?યા વગર અ?યાસ પરથી પાછી ખસી શકો છો. જો તમે કોઈ વધુ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય તો તમે મને ફોન માટે આપનું ?વાગત છે છે.

સંશોધન અ?યાસ હેતુ / પરી?ણ યુકેમાં બી? ભાષા તરીકે ?ગલિશ શીખવા ?િયા વિવિધ પાસાં વિશે તમારા મંતવ્યો અને લાગણીઓ અ?વેષણ છે. હું તમને તે શું છે તે ? ગે ? ? પૂછવા માંગો છો તમે / ભાષા આધાર, તમારી લાગણીઓ, વિવિધ પરિસ્થિતિઓમાં અને અ?ય સંબંધિત મુ?ાઓ માં તમારા ?યૂઝરચના ની જોગવાઈ પર તમારા વિચારો માટે ? વી હતી.

આ અ?યાસમાં બધા અલગ ઇન્ટરવ્યુ આવશે, 20 ગુજરાતી ?ીઓ, સમાવેશ થશે. આ મુલાકાતમાં 30-40 મિનિટ લેશે. તમે ભાગ લેવા માટે પસંદ કરો તો, હું તમને અનુકૂળ ઇન્ટરવ્યુ માટે એક ?થાન આયોજન કરશે. તે પણ દરેક જૂથમાં 6 ગુજરાતી મહિલાઓ સાથે બે ?થાન કે?િત જૂથો સમાવેશ થશે.

આ સંશોધન ?ાત માહિતી ?ેઠ ? યાસો માટે ભલામણો કરવા માટે વપરાયેલ હશે અને તે અનુભવો ? તરસૂઝ આપશે. આ અ?યાસના પરિણામો પણ સેવા વિ?તાર સુધારવામાં પરિણમી શકે છે કે ? ESOL જોગવાઈ ?ે? માં વધુ અ?યાસ પર થઈ શકે છે.

તમે ?ગલિશ અનસેટલજ છે શીખવાની તમારા અનુભવો વિશે વાત લાગે છે કે જો તમે આ ચાલુ રાખવા માંગો છો નથી, તો તમે કોઈપણ સમયે મુલાકાત રોકવા માટે મુ?ત છે. ઇન્ટરવ્યુ તમને ગરબડ અને તમે ઇન્ટરવ્યુ પછી કેટલીક વધારાની મદદ ગમશે લાગે તો હું ઔપચારિક અથવા અનૌપચારિક આધાર માટે સંપર્કકરવા તમે ? ની સલાહ માટે સમથજશે.

આ મુલાકાતમાં ડિજિટલ ઉપકરણ પર રેકોર્ડ અને પછી કમ્પ્યુટર પર નકલ કરવામાં આવશે. ડિજિટલ ઉપકરણ બધા સમયે લોક સુરક્ષિત જાળવવા સંજોગોમાં આવશે અને કમ્પ્યુટર માહિતી પણ સુરક્ષિત રહેવામાં આવશે. તમારા વિભાવ સંપૂર્ણગુણવત્તા અને માત્ર કોડ નંબરો અથવા ખોટા નામો ધારા ઓળખવામાં આવશે સંશોધન ભાગ લે છે ? કોઈને સાથે કરવામાં આવશે. જો તમે ઇચ્છો તો તમે ઇન્ટરવ્યૂ ટ્રાંસક્રિપ્ટ એક નકલ વિનંતી કરી શકો છો.

મુલાકાતો મને ધારા વિશ્લેષણ કરવામાં આવશે અને સંશોધન ઓવરને ? તે હું એક અહેવાલ લખશે. પરિણામો પીઅર સમીક્ષા જનશ્રો અને કોફરેસ ? તુતિઓ ? કાશિત કરી શકાય છે. કોઈ સંશોધન સહભાગી કોઈપણ સાહિત્યમાંથી ઓળખી શકાય હશે. આ અધ્યાસ સમીક્ષા કરી છે અને લંડન મેગેપોલિટન યુનિવર્સિટી ખાતે સંશોધન એથિસ સમિતિ ધારા મંજૂર કરવામાં આવી છે.

તમે વધુ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય તો મને સંપર્ક અચકાવું નથી કૃપા કરીને.

શ્રિમતા રે

૦૭૮૮૬૦૨૫૮૮૮

L) Smita Ray, Research Degree Student, IPSE London Metropolitan University,  
Holloway Road, 25/10/12

## CONSENT FORM

I.....agree to participate in Smita's research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview with Smita to be tape-recorded.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications.

Signed.....

Date.....

M) Protocol for Interviews with Gujarati women:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview #: \_\_\_\_\_

Country of origin: \_\_\_\_\_

Year of entry: \_\_\_\_\_

Age (or approx.) \_\_\_\_\_

Marital status: \_\_\_\_\_

Educational background: \_\_\_\_\_

Present employment: \_\_\_\_\_

Number, sex, and ages of children: \_\_\_\_\_

Family status: Joint/Nuclear: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Tell me about your migration to England? What prompted the move? How did you feel about it?

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2. How did you feel about the level of English you had upon arrival to the UK? What do you feel enabled you to become more fluent?

- were you able to read, write, or speak it? How well, do you think?
- How long did it take you to become fluent?
- What was/is the experience of studying English like for you? (love/hate; why?)

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3. How did you come to know about classes? How did you feel about attending them?

Can you remember your first class? Tell me about that....Did you have any informal support to help you become fluent in English?

- Were you eligible for ESOL classes? If yes, how many years did you study there? If not, how did you manage to learn English?

- Can you tell me more about your English language learning experience in the UK.

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4. Tell about your personal circumstances and learning English?' Did you have to balance caring responsibilities with classes? How was that?

Were there any financial implications to learning English? probe - cost of classes, commuting, giving up work....

How did you negotiate these?

- Were there other kinds of domestic/ social issues you had to deal with?

What value does your family/husband/community place on women learning English? How do you feel about this?

- Was there, for example, an expectation that you would stay home and look after the family, the home, your husband, or children (or your in-laws)?
- If this was true in your case, how did you manage to learn English anyway?
- Did any of your friends experience opposition to their learning English? What was it like, and how did they deal with that?

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5. How did/do you feel when speaking English? What opportunities did you have to practise speaking English? What were your positive experiences ?

- Were/are you afraid of making errors while speaking English and how do you think people will react if you make mistakes? (children, neighbour?)
- What are your thoughts when you speak English with native speakers? Do you worry about accent or being ridiculed?
- What do/did you do to overcome your anxiety?

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6. Did you start working after arriving here? Did your job require you to speak /use English? If you didn't know much English, how did you manage?

- What strategies did/do you use to communicate in situations where others only speak English? e.g. - an emergency medical situation, talking to your children's teacher, buying something at a store.

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7. What (other) difficulties do you think Gujarati women have while learning English as an additional language?

Does it matter while learning English, whether you are:

- rich or poor;
- from an upper or (so called) lower caste;
- a homemaker or a working woman;
- literate in your first language;
- young or old ?

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8. Tell me about the ways in which the process of learning English has changed you. (at home, work, neighbourhood)



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9. Is there anything else you would like to say about your English language learning experience in general?

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N) Sample of translation/transcript of a semi-structured interview:

S: Your name won't appear anywhere on this document...

D: No problem, I am legal

S: What's your name?

D: Deviben .. D E V I B E N

S: Country of origin?

D : I am born in Kenya, when I was three and half .. I went to India.

S: When did you come to the UK?

D: in 1979..end of February

S: How old are you ?

D: I am 54 now.

S: Are you married?

D: yes I am married.

S: What's your education background?

D: No, I just took tuition

S: Can you read and write Gujarati ?

D: Yes

S: So you never went to school ?

D: Never..only tuition.. only two hours..

S: were you in a village?

D: I live in a city, but my father, brothers, his wife.. didn't like girls going out.. sent to school.. that's why I can't go to school.

S: Have you worked after coming here before?

D: Yes I work 29 years.. all time

S: What did you work as?

D: Before I work as operator, gas bottle.

S: Was it hard work?

D: Yes that's hard work, after two years I (worked on a) sewing machine.

S: What did you sew then?

D: Already cut cloth, we sew. Then 8 years, I am cleaner.

S: After 1979 you have worked quite a lot...in different fields.

D: Then I worked in a medicine company for 12 years. Now I am last year, redundant.

S: So, are you ok now? You don't want to work?

D: No, I am looking for job... I am getting bored at home...very difficult now..

S: Do you have children?

D: Yes, I got three daughters. One daughter is 30 years old, second 27...Two are married...I have a grandchild..

S: Is it a joint family over here?

D: No it's my husband and me... He coming after me. My mother here, my father passed away... my in laws are in India.

S: So were you married when you came here in 1979?

D: No, no, just myself. I came, then in 81 I got married.. and 82 I got a baby.

S: So you went back to India to get married?

D: It all got arranged here.

S: So what prompted the move?

D: My father said no, we are happy here in India. But my cousin aunty, my father's cousin sister, she said, no brother come here. You don't want then don't come but send the daughter. Then we came, whole family.

S: So how did you find it then?

D: That's very difficult.(smiles) Very difficult...Too much missing...India.. now I am well settled.. but then we crying all the time...no educated.. that's difficult..

S: You didn't know any English then?

D: No

S: So how did you manage then?

D: Today I am arrive here, next day I am go to work... very easy to find job... now it is very difficult..

S: So you didn't have to speak English at your workplace?

D: No, everyone was Gujarati... everywhere I worked... every workplace.. there were Gujaratis.. that's why I can't speak English very well...before.. I writing down little little spellings, words..but now after 25 years.. no writing.. no...nothing.. When I worked at the medicine company.. I write down the medicine name...milligram and expiry date looking...and packing...

S: So it was difficult for you? Like commuting and all..

D: No, not difficult... because I know a little bit..

S: So what did you do? Did you write things down, like shopping list etc?

D: No, no, no.. I do it myself.. not writing down...

S: So is this your first time learning English?

D: Yes, this is first time... my job centre send me here first time.. I understand when they speak...I can read .. but I can't write.. And sometimes I read.. but I don't know what it means...

S: Why do you think were you not able to learn English for so many years?

D: Because I got a job.. no time.. ....but now my three daughters... I am very happy about my daughters...I am not educated, my husband is not educated, but my three daughters educated, first one is HR, second one is data IT, the third one is a lawyer...Three of them.. good.. Master(MA)

S: So how your day used to be like? Morning, evening?

D: Everything you finish...work, housework...outside work...when I had my first daughter.. my father looked after. When I got my second daughter, I left the job...two years I stayed home. Then found a part time job as a cleaner. There I... my daughter going to school , my neighbour picked up my children and drop at home...played with daughter..

S: Did you ever feel the need to learn English?

D: Yes, yes, when my first daughter was in nursery, that time was very difficult. I simply couldn't do anything for her ( *her voice tembles*)...no reading.. when she went to nursery, primary school, she all the time played.. teacher complained all the time..

S: How did you communicate with the teacher?

D: I could speak a little bit..

S: How did you manage with GP and all?

D: There was a Gujarati doctor, first time I took someone else, then second time I am going..

S: Did you ever use interpreters?

D: I am speaking little little, so I have no problem, I am doing all my things myself...when the first time, my younger sister come with, when filling the form and all... the rest I do

myself...That's why me and my husband thinking.. we don't know... no education... but our children must learn..

S: How do you feel nervous when you have to face a fluent speaker of English?

D: No, no, I don't know but I speak as much as I know, I don't get nervous.

S: Do you think people differentiate you because of your language?

D: yes, everyone doing that.... They bully you...a lot...That's why I am learning here because I can't read and write.

S: Do people take advantage?

D: No, not at school , but at workplace, there is a lot of bullying... colleagues, managers. Because I am working here for 12 years, I am redundant... in this country, no record for sick or day off and no late time.. I am the regular time.. but then they kick out to us... honest people thrown out..

S: What do you think are other problems?

D: I think why people sitting at home not learning English? Why, why?

S: Does it matter if you are rich or poor?

D: No, no, I don't bother about that...not in this country.. teachers are fair enough here.. everybody is equal.. not like workplace...teachers are very nice here... they teach everybody same here.. I think our brain is the problem.. we forget...before I can keep everything in my brain.. first time someone told me their name... it goes inside.. but now I don't know why...

S: So how learning English can change your life?

D: when people know English suddenly they think we are something.. but I don't care about them.. I am here about me and my children... I teach my children if someone asks for help, help them...every people is same...

I know how workplaces are. .. too much business, people come, then they have affairs, give food, give presents, malpractice... I worked in a glass factory, sewing machine...third is

cleaning... I don't mind.. any job is job.. the medicine company job was very nice.. but the people there not nice...

S: How is your English learning going on ?

D: Because I never studied in India, I have a problem now... I forget a lot..

S: Now what do you think is your main problem when you study English?

D: I find spelling difficult to remember ...the spellings...they are not like in Gujarati.. you say the same thing.. you write the same thing... not English like that. Last week I write 'laf' I.. a ..f ..then teacher say.. laugh... also Gujarati people have problem with accent... s sound... I said one time... in my factory...I want a sheet.... but when I speaking.. seat....so much confusion...

O) Glossary of Hindi/Gujarati words

1. Apna	our own
2. Baalkati	short-haired
3. Bahar	outside
4. Baniya	trader
5. Bepari	merchant
6. Bhasha	language
7. Dharm	religion
8. Durr	fear
9. Gaam	village
10. Ghar	home
11. Ghair	stranger
12. Haisiyat	status
13. Izzat	honour
14. Jugaad	hack
15. Kaam	work
16. Kurti	upper garment
17. Lok	people
18. Nanad	sister-in-law
19. Pehchan	identity
20. Sanskar	good values
21. Tadka	food tampering with oil



P) Appendix 1.

1. Anshu , who is Meena's friend, comes from a similar rural background. They both try to identify suitable work from home, so that they can be with their young children at the same time support the family income.
2. Champa was sent to England to get married when she was 16. For me it was unimaginable that after coming here she has never left the country or visited any of her family members except on one occasion when her sister was in transit at Heathrow airport. Champa has four daughters and she was a grandmother at the age of 43. She has worked part-time as her daughters were growing up. She now works more hours.
3. Deepa, is an enterprising woman who runs her own beauty parlour in West London. She has set up and flourished her business within a decade after coming to London. She is aware that her English language skills are not perfect but she is focused on her business and feels that although it would be good for her to speak better English, in terms of her business, she cannot currently afford that time. She wants to prove her abilities by opening up new branches at other places in London soon.
4. Fatima, who is a direct migrant from India, has lived a relatively privileged life but did not study English much during her school days. After coming to the UK, she decided to improve her English by enrolling on ESOL course. She was able to move levels very fast with the help of her daughters. Soon after completing her ESOL level 1, she got a job as a schoolmeals assistant. She is now highly motivated by this achievement and has decided to make further progress in her career by joining a cookery course. After she got the job, she also introduced her friend Maya to her employers and helped Maya get a similar position at her workplace. This is just an example of networking within the Gujarati community.
5. Hira, is a young nurse from India who is currently working at a fast food restaurant. At the time of my meeting with her, she had resumed work after her maternity leave. The work schedules of Hira and her husband are organised in such a way that one of them is at home to look after their daughter. Hira works in the evenings after

her husband returns from work or during weekends when he is at home. She aspires to work as a nurse in the UK and raise bring her daughter as a British citizen.

6. Leena who is a fairly recent direct migrant, has learnt English after coming to the UK, and now works at a supermarket. She is happy being in the UK as it allows her flexible working hours while her husband looks after the children.
7. Madhu who is from rural part of Gujarat, came to England after getting married in 2008. To come to London and settle here with her new family, was a dream come true situation for her. However, soon she realised that her place in the family was principally a housekeeper. The frustration and unhappiness of her marriage drove her to leave her marital home and seek refuge at a friend's place. After a long struggle for settlement and efforts to learn English, Madhu now works in a local factory and hopes to rebuild her life in the UK.
8. Mamta was born in India but spent a major part of her childhood in Uganda. She went back to India for a few years and then came to England to settle down. She is cheerful, humorous character popular in her community. She came to England with no knowledge of written or spoken English but made quick progress by attending ESOL classes, found a job and worked for many years, and brought her children up. She is a very active member of various community activities that take place in and around her area.
9. Meena is someone whose laughter I will always remember. Her choice of words in Hindi and Gujarati was so impressive that I could not believe that she did not have more than 5 years of schooling. She described how has learnt to deal with her difficulties by keeping her sense of humour alive. She is concerned about not being able to bring the children up properly because she cannot contribute to their educational development.
10. Rani was one of the candidates I interviewed in the pilot stage. Rani is separated from her husband who has taken their children to India. Rani appears a strong and independent character who speaks English fluently but with lots of grammatical errors. She is certain that her confidence will help her achieve her goal in life, which is to drive the 'red London bus'. She is one of the candidates who I have seen achieve her dream job during the period of my research.

11. Rupa belongs to a slightly affluent family whose husband's family were settled in Yemen before coming to the UK. Her social status gives her the confidence to express her views without fear. She is very vocal about the discrimination women face because of their inability to speak fluent English. At the same time she expresses her shame, fear, anxiety and awkwardness in social situations frankly. She gets all the required support in learning English from her family and is confident that she can find a suitable career once she is free from her childcare responsibilities. She is focusing on improving her English skills to improve her employability.
12. Soni is a divorced jobless person who was brought here by forced marriage and whose life is a story of endless sufferings since her childhood. She is an example of how public and private patriarchy can affect a person's life to the extent of causing psychological problems. However, she is still struggling to be on her own and find her own place in her life and in the society.
13. Urmi, is tall and has a towering personality, retired after working in a warehouse for many years. She is a quiet person, who can speak English very well but mainly prefers to speak Gujarati. She is happy that all her children are professionals and all her hard work for all these years has paid off. At the age of 75, she actively engages in various religious and cultural activities within her community.
14. Zahra is a young, optimistic Muslim who is concerned about the Islamophobia she has to face in Britain, in spite being her modern outlook towards life. She is hopeful that she can change this view of others with time and patience.
15. Charita made an impact with her outspoken personality and her strong views on various aspects of South Asian culture and British ways of life. Her religion is Jain and she has dedicated herself to community work, especially in the field of imparting Gujarati language to the younger generation. Although she is from Singapore, English was the third language for her and she feels that she had to get used to the British version of English. She quickly adjusted to 'the British way of life' and now lives in an affluent and largely white neighbourhood in her affluent West London home.
16. Devi's views on educating girls almost match with Maya's. Devi lacked opportunity, to educate herself in her first language, Gujarati. She worked upon coming to the UK, and has done several low-paid factory jobs. Her life revolved around her work and

family until recently. It was only when she was made redundant at the age of fifty four that she found some time to join English courses to improve her literacy, with a view that upgrading her skills would put her in a slightly better position in terms of finding a better job .

17. Joshna, is a soft-spoken elderly person who is very popular in the Gujarati community. When I interviewed her at the yoga centre, our session being interrupted by lots of women who wanted to speak with her and ask for some advice about community affairs. Joshna came to the UK to get married when she was young. In the beginning she felt lonely being the only woman in the family of all men that included her husband, father-in-law, brother-in-law and an Indian nephew. Soon she acquired the language and British ways of life. She feels that women can transform their lives with openness and acceptance of 'good aspects' of British culture.
18. Kunju is the oldest member of my research cohort, who at the age of 82 enjoys her economic independence by sewing clothes for local women. After the interview she offered to sew me a blouse <sup>57</sup> free of charge and offer homemade Indian laddoos. <sup>58</sup> She loves her independence and loves travelling to India and Canada to visit her family members every year.
19. Maya, who initiated the move of her family from Portugal to England, has three daughters and she is very keen on giving them the best education that she can because her parents did not allow her to study. She is highly motivated to improve her English and get on with her life in England. She is one of those whose progress I was able to observe during the period of this research project. I met her at a school I was visiting to meet a friend. Maya had started working as a school meals assistant (see Fatima's reference above). Maya was both and very proud of her achievement.
20. Naru, came to UK following the Ugandan crisis, spent a few years in remote places in the North, worked long hours in a factory, educated her children very well and is enjoying a quiet but active life in West London.

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<sup>57</sup> The upper garment, to be worn with Indian sari.

<sup>58</sup> Indian sweets made with semolina, sugar and clarified butter (ghee)

21. Rashmi is a middleclass shop assistant who has weight issues because a major accident in 2008, has left her with restricted movements. She has difficulties walking and has to undergo some kind of surgery, almost every year. She continues to work in spite of her disabilities. She expressed her satisfaction that her son has become a pharmacist and her husband is very supportive. She works in a fashion store where she has assists customers in fitting rooms. Her job requires her to stand for 6 hours in the store. Long after all my interviews were over, I met Rashmi at a local Indian store with her husband who had unfortunately had a hip fracture. Rashmi had to look after him now and work even longer hours for extra income to keep things going. She mentioned that she would be visiting India for her hip replacement operation. In spite of all these practical difficulties in her life, I found Rashmi optimistic and positive. What surprised me most was that she remembered to enquire about the progress of my PhD which made me realise how important that interview must have been for her.
22. Rekha was born in Mozambique in a Gujarati speaking family and had four siblings. She had to give up her education to look after her younger siblings when she was 12. She was married off at a young age and moved to Spain with her husband. She motivated her husband to come to the UK for a bright future for their children. She has been working as a nursery assistant for the past eight years.
23. Sangita is a civil servant and attributes her success to hard work. She feels fully integrated into the 'British way of life' and cannot imagine a life anywhere else. She sees herself as a rational person and feels that South Asian community should make efforts to 'bridge the gap' by learning English and actively participating in wider community life.

Apart from these participants, the names of Abha, Lochana, Radha and Leena, participants from focus groups, are mentioned in the analysis. Their names and stories are known to me but they were not interviewed in detail.