

Women's Identity-related Participation and Engagement in Literacy Courses in Turkey

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Declaration

This thesis has been composed solely by me. The work contained within this thesis is my own. The thesis does not exceed 100,000 words including the main text, preface material, footnotes and references. No part of this thesis has been submitted to any other university in application for any other degree, postgraduate diploma or professional qualification.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the women involved in my study for their time and spirit. Their stories, insights and warmth towards me were truly inspiring. This work would not have been possible without their contribution. I also thank the teachers who have accepted me into their classrooms and talked with me for my research.

My supervisors Professor Morwenna Griffiths and Dr Shereen Benjamin made my doctoral studies a rewarding learning experience for me. Their insightful feedback, sometimes really difficult but always relevant questions and emotional support enabled me to solve many intellectual and personal quandaries. I would like to thank them for their unwavering support and confidence in me.

I wish to express my gratitude to University of Edinburgh for supporting me in my studies at Edinburgh with the Overseas Students Research Scholarship and College of Humanities and Social Sciences Postgraduate Research Scholarship.

I have been extraordinarily lucky to have my husband Blake Alcott by my side throughout my doctoral journey. He has always trusted my capacity to carry out my project with success and supported me in a million ways. He has been a critical ear for my research and provided valuable intellectual support. He even managed to live in the same house with me when I was immersed in writing and became neglectful of him. Thank you very much Blakecim!

My close friends in Turkey have provided me with support and love through Skype and emails. Dr Ayşe Caner and Köpüş the wonderful doggy opened their home to me and provided me with friendship and support during my fieldwork in Istanbul. My parents Sevinç Yazlık and Kerim Yazlık put up with living apart from me for over four years. Maybe that is why my mother kept reminding me that I could always quit my studies and go back to Turkey when the going got tough! My office mate Ling Meng has been a true friend to me in many ways. I would like to thank all of them as well as all others who have supported me throughout my doctoral studies.

Abstract

This dissertation explores women's participation and engagement in literacy courses from an identity perspective within the broader context of women's life stories and the socio-cultural, economic and institutional contexts within which the courses take place. The approach I develop rests on a combination of literacy, discourse and identity theories. It draws on the social theory of literacy to show how women's valuations of literacy and education contributed to the construction of the subject positions they attempted to enter through their participation in literacy courses. Drawing on Norman Fairclough's understanding of discourse, I focus on the link between identity processes and the discourses and socio-political structures which are understood to be in a dialectical relationship with each other. I draw on feminist theories of self and subjectivity to understand how women attempted to change aspects of their selves created by the interplay of their social and material circumstances, their agency, and specific life trajectories.

In Turkey, the majority of the participants in the literacy courses are women. The state-funded People's Education Centres (PEC), with their extended network, attract the majority of the participants. Adult literacy programmes are organised as Level 1 and Level 2 by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and these two levels of adult literacy and basic education courses in Turkey are offered under the monitoring and inspection of said Ministry. I chose for the sites of my research two PEC literacy courses in disadvantaged areas of Istanbul where the occasional shanty house co-exists with haphazardly-built apartment buildings. Methodologically, my study has an ethnographic approach to feminist discourse analysis. I observed one Level 2 literacy course at each centre over the course of four months. I had repeated interviews and conversations with seven women participants at Akasya PEC and four women participants at Lale PEC. Fieldnotes and interview transcriptions of more structured interviews constituted the major body of my data.

The study shows that women's accounts of their participation in the courses were underlined by discourses of formal education and literacy. These discourses have a prominent role in the official policy documents. However, the dissertation argues that

the significance of the discourses of formal education and literacy was equally rooted in women's attempts to redress, through their participation in the courses, some of the structural and institutional injustices they experienced as girl-children. These injustices made it difficult for my participants to access most of the prestigious literacy practices, knowledge and associated identities.

The study highlights the meanings of the subject position of the schooled person which women attempted to take on through their participation. It also brings to the fore ways in which the discourses of formal education and literacy and the subject position of the schooled person were underpinned by socio-political structures such as gender, social class, ethnicity, rural-urban migration and the extent of poverty individual women lived in. It reveals women's persistent attempts to access and continue the courses within the constraints of bureaucratic hurdles and socio-economic hardship and responsibilities. The study demonstrates how women "took hold" of the dominant literacy practices and power relations they found in the literacy classrooms. It shows the ways in which women aligned themselves with the schooled literacy practices and at times challenged the dominant literacy practices and power relations they found in the classroom. The study shows that women's understanding of the value they found in education changed as a result of their educational experiences. It shows that women found joy in learning things they found both challenging and important.

These findings contribute to discussions on the symbolic value of education and school literacy practices for literacy learners by exploring the roots of this symbolic importance in women's life stories. The study demonstrates the importance of both schooled literacy practices and the broader value of education and the emerging specific uses of literacy in everyday life. The findings challenge the portrayal of literacy learners in policy documents and most of the literature in Turkey which assume that their most important literacy need is access to school literacy practices. The findings also challenge the deficit view of literacy learners in policy documents which undermines their social and economic capabilities. Thus the study extends understanding of what is considered as literacy that has the potential to improve one's material and social conditions by exploring the perspectives of different

women who lived in differing levels of poverty and socio-economic obligations. It also contributes to arguments on the reasons of finding value in education by showing the ways in which women found joy in learning in formal literacy classrooms as a result of their educational experiences.

Abbreviations

BERA	British Educational Research Association
DfID	Department for International Development
DİSA	Diyarbakır Siyasal ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Enstitüsü – Diyarbakır Institute for Political and Social Research
ERG	Eğitim Reformu Girişimi – Education Reform Initiative
EU	European Union
FCDA	Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis
FPDA	Feminist Post-structuralist Discourse Analysis
GDSW	General Directorate on the Status of Women
KAGİDER	Kadın Girişimciler Derneği - Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey
KEDV	Kadın Emeğini Destekleme Vakfı - Foundation for Support for Women's Work
KOYE	Kolaylaştırılmış Okuma Yazma Eğitimi – Simplified Literacy Education
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
MRG	Minority Rights Group International
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NLS	New Literacy Studies
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEC	People's Education Centres
PHA	People's Houses Association
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan - The Kurdistan Workers' Party
REFLECT	Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques
SPO	State Planning Organisation
TTB	Türk Tabipleri Birliği - Turkish Medical Association

TÜİK

Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu - Turkish Statistical Institute

TÜSİAD

Türkiye Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği - Turkish Industry
and Business Association

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Identity-related participation and engagement

This dissertation explores women's participation and engagement in literacy courses in Turkey from an identity perspective within the broader context of women's life stories and the socio-cultural, economic and institutional contexts within which the courses take place. Much of the literature on women's literacy in developing countries is concerned with the measurement of pre-determined outcomes and focuses on the barriers to women's literacy learning (Robinson-Pant, 2000a, 2004). Most of the little research there is on adult literacy programmes in Turkey has adopted a similar focus such as Bilir (2004, 2005), Kağıtçıbaşı, Gökşen, and Gülgöz (2005) and Yıldız (2008b). The studies that discussed women's participation in the courses highlighted individual goals that brought women to the literacy courses (Durgunoğlu, 2000; Durgunoğlu, Öney, & Kuşçul, 2003; G. İnce, 2008; Yıldız, 2006, 2008a, 2008b).¹ However, this thesis explores a different terrain. It explores women's identity-related participation in and engagement with the literacy courses within their life stories and experiences of learning in the actual classroom settings. It investigates women's accounts of their lives to explore the roots of the identities that women attempted to take on through their participation in the courses. In exploring these areas, the thesis understands identity construction as a fluid process in which multiple identities overlap and interact both with each other and the broader socio-political context. It thus places the focus on the dialectic between accounts of selves and the effects of the wider structures of power (Griffiths, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c).

The available research on women's literacy courses in Turkey seems to assume that what women need most is access to school literacy practices (Durgunoğlu et al., 2003; Nohl & Sayılan, 2004; Yıldız, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2011). School literacy mostly involves being taught by a teacher how to read the pages of a textbook in a

¹ Yıldız's (2006) PhD study on a People's Education Centre's Level 1 literacy course, which he himself taught in Ankara – the capital of Turkey –, was an important contribution to the field. While it drew on women participants' life stories, the study aimed to evaluate the course content and approach and focused on the individual reasons that brought women to the literacy course.

classroom setting, carry out writing activities on the pages of a literacy textbook and memorise textbook knowledge (A. Rogers et al., 1999, p. 80). Furthermore, school literacy expects this particular set of skills to be relevant in differing texts and contexts. There are no studies in Turkey that adopt a research approach starting with women's own valuations and perspectives of literacy and learning to investigate their engagement with the literacy approach, content and power relations in the literacy classrooms. Thus drawing on the social theory of literacy (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984, 1993a), this thesis acknowledges that people value and use written language in different ways in different social contexts. Their engagement with reading and writing tasks is embedded in relations of social power, knowledge and identity. Thus it explores the ways in which women adopted and re-crafted the literacy practices and developed responses to the power relations they found in the literacy classrooms. In exploring women's negotiations of identity, literacy and classroom practices, the thesis focuses on women's perspectives of literacy and the value of learning in the literacy classrooms within the broader socio-cultural, economic and institutional context.

This is a small-scale qualitative study which has an ethnographic approach to feminist discourse analysis. I chose for my study two state-organised literacy courses at People's Education Centres (PEC) in two disadvantaged areas of Istanbul. I observed one Level 2 literacy course at each centre over the course of four months. I had repeated interviews and conversations with seven women participants at Akasya PEC and four women participants at Lale (pronounced lahleh) PEC. Fieldnotes and interview transcriptions of more structured interviews constituted the major body of my data. Although a significant part of the study is located in the two classrooms of Akasya and Lale PECs, it is important to state that this study is not about how women learn to read and write in the PEC literacy classrooms. It is not a policy analysis or an evaluation of the literacy teaching and learning I found in the PEC literacy classrooms. The focus is instead placed on the women's identity-related participation and engagement in the classes within their life stories and the broader socio-political and economic context. The study considers women's attempts to take on certain subject positions through their participation and engagement in the literacy

courses at Akasya and Lale PECs as a fluid, partial, situated and complex process. Thus the intention is not generalisation. However, the results of the study might provide insights into women's understanding of literacy and education, their understandings of desirable subject positions associated with their participation in the literacy courses, and experiences of engaging in literacy classes which are characterised by similar policy, socio-political and economic contexts.

1.2 Background and context

State involvement in adult literacy in Turkey dates from the late 19th century when the Ottoman state started to expand literacy and schooling, placing hopes in them for nation formation, modernisation and social and economic progress (Alkan, 2000; Fortna, 2011). Building on and expanding earlier Ottoman initiatives, the Republic of Turkey, which was established out of the remains of the Ottoman Empire in 1923, has organised many literacy campaigns and activities following the first nationwide literacy campaign in 1928 (in 1960, 1971, 1981, 2001) (Nohl & Sayılan, 2004). More recent campaigns include the campaign bearing the slogan "Turkey is Literate" initiated in early 2008, and the latest literacy campaign launched in September 2008 by the wife of the current Prime Minister with the slogan "Mother-Daughter to School" (Ünlühisarcıklı, 2009).

After 1980, the existing adult literacy programmes were reorganised as Level 1 and Level 2 by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). These two levels of adult literacy and basic education courses are offered under the monitoring and inspection of MoNE. The state-funded People's Education Centres (PEC), with their extended network of over 970 centres (Yıldırım, 2013), attract the majority of the participants; the majority of the participants in the courses are women although the courses do not specifically target them. Thus the PEC courses constitute a wide network of centralised adult literacy education which is equivalent to primary schooling.

A number of studies have criticised the Level 1 literacy courses for being too short to develop literacy skills adequately (Durgunoğlu et al., 2003; Güngör, 2006; Yıldız, 2006; Ünlühisarcıklı, 2009). The literacy approach and textbooks of the PEC literacy programmes have been criticised for being replete with teacher-centred and

mechanistic learning activities irrelevant to women's real-life experiences and for portraying them as overwhelmingly at home whereas men are pictured in important public roles (Nohl & Sayılan, 2004; Sayılan, 2009). However, there has not been widespread critique of the formalised approach of the courses which seem to teach a specific set of literacy practices in a specific social context that mostly involve being taught by a teacher how to read the pages of a literacy textbook, write to fill in spaces on a textbook and memorise the knowledge in a particular unit - variously named "school-based literacies" (A. Rogers et al., 1999, p. 80), "school literacy" (Papen, 2002, p. 222) and "the schooling of literacy" (Street & Street, 1991, p. 144).

The Turkish word for literacy is "reading and writing" – *okuma yazma*. Individuals who were denied the right to attend primary school and achieve educational qualifications due to structural and institutional injustice commonly talk about their lack of formal qualifications and associated economic and social benefits with the statement: "I couldn't read" - *Okuyamadım*. Similarly, women involved in my study often expressed their aspirations to gain educational qualifications and access social and economic resources through their participation in the PEC literacy course with the utterance: "I would like to read" – *Okumak istiyorum*.

Further, there are three major non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Turkey – the Rotary Club, the Association for Supporting Contemporary Life, and the Mother-Child Education Foundation – which provide Level 1 literacy courses and offer officially-sanctioned certificates to their participants, almost all of whom are women (Nohl & Sayılan, 2004). Similar to the state-organised PEC literacy courses, these courses deliver a classroom- and largely textbook-based literacy education, equivalent to the 3rd grade of primary school education (Nohl & Sayılan, 2004). A fourth organisation which provides literacy education, the People's Houses Association (PHA), but which is not authorised to offer an officially-sanctioned literacy certificate, was also reported to work with a textbook with detailed lesson plans (Nohl & Sayılan, 2004).

Thus I acknowledge the prominence of the discourse of school-based literacy in Turkey. School literacy is promoted by a powerful network of government-funded

institutions - People's Education Centres - as well as the major NGOs delivering literacy courses. It can be suggested that the strong link between literacy and school education, involving prestigious jobs, identities and knowledge associated, lends school literacy a significant part of its prominence. However, working with a social approach to literacy, the focus of this thesis is placed on women's own understandings and valuations of literacy. Thus while exploring women's participation in and engagement with the courses I take into consideration both the effects of the dominant discourse of formal schooling and literacy and women's potentially different valuations of literacy and schooling.

Drawing on Norman Fairclough's understanding of discourse (Fairclough, 1992, 2001, 2003), my thesis focuses on the dialectic relationship between the identities that are made available by the discourses and the broader socio-political context. This focus helps me explore the ways in which the women in my study developed their unique responses to the constraints and potential benefits of bureaucratic, socio-political and economic contexts in which their experiences of literacy and participation in the courses took place. Thus this thesis extends understandings of what counts as literacy that has the potential to improve one's social and economic conditions by exploring the valuations of literacy and education among women who lived in differing levels of poverty and who had different mother tongues – Turkish for six out of seven women participants at Akasya PEC and Kurdish for all of the four women participants at Lale PEC and one participant at Akasya PEC.

The thesis draws on some aspects of feminist theories of self and subjectivity in order to understand and explain how women's expectations and perceptions of literacy and education are created within the particular trajectory of their lives and the discourses and identities, underpinned by socio-political structures such as gender, ethnicity, social class and migration status. I draw on some feminist work that identified a post-structuralist feminism and showed how women positioned themselves into subject positions they found more empowering in different public settings (Baxter, 2008; Kamada, 2008). Similar studies in classroom settings (Baxter, 2003; Davies, 2000) showed how girls shifted between positions of power and powerlessness within multiple discourses in the classrooms. These studies helped me

think of the classroom setting as the scene of multiple discourses and focus on particular moments when women attempted to take on certain subject positions and distance themselves from others. In order to think about women's attempts to take on certain subject positions within multiple discourses, I draw on the idea of a patchwork self where different patches or selves stay connected in the process of construction over a lifetime (Griffiths, 1995a, 2007). Thus I conceptualised identity work as women's processes of attempting to take on certain subject positions/patches of identity/aspects of identities which stayed in connection with their understanding of themselves in the past and in the future. This understanding helped me think about women's valuations of literacy and education and the connection of these with the subject positions they raised in their accounts within their life stories and dreams for their future. In Chapter Three, I explore the ways I draw on certain theoretical insights on identity and the aspects of feminist theories of self and subjectivity I found useful for my analytical framework. In Chapter Three, I also discuss how my research questions were underpinned by a social theory of literacy and how I draw on Fairclough's understanding of discourse in order to construct my analytical framework. Next I introduce my research questions.

1.3 Research questions

In exploring women's identity-related participation and engagement in literacy courses at two different People's Education Centres in Istanbul, my first overarching research questions is:

1. What is the identity work that brings women to Level 2 literacy classes?

The sub-questions that I ask in order to answer this question are:

- a. What are the subject positions/aspects of identities/identities that women attempt to take on through their participation in the classes?
- b. What are the discourses that make these subject positions available?

c. What are the socio-political structures such as gender, ethnicity, social class and migration status that interact with these discourses and subject positions?

My second research question explores the relationship between the subject positions that drive women's participation in the courses and their engagement in them:

2. How does this identity work relate to women's engagement in the classes?

I answer this question by considering:

- a. What are the discourses of literacy and learning that women find in the literacy classrooms at Akasya and Lale PECs?
- b. What are the power relations that women find in the literacy classrooms at Akasya and Lale PECs?
- c. What are the ways in which the subject positions that women attempt to take on through their participation in the classes influence their understandings and experiences of the literacy practices in the literacy classrooms?
- d. What are the ways in which the subject positions that women attempt to take on through their participation in the classes influence their understandings of the content of the literacy teaching in the literacy classrooms?
- e. What are the ways in which the subject positions women attempt to take on through their participation in the classes influence their understandings and experiences of the power relations in the literacy classrooms?

1.4 Structure of the thesis

Chapter Two begins with a historical overview of the key issues influencing women's social, economic and educational positions and conditions in Turkey. It then provides a brief overview of the implications of some major educational policies

for women's participation in schooling and literacy education. Following this, the chapter presents an overview of the official language policies in Turkey. The chapter concludes by providing an overview of literacy programmes for women in Turkey.

Chapter Three introduces the ways in which specific theoretical and ethnographic insights into identity formation informed my research questions. This is followed by a discussion of the aspects of the theories of self and subjectivity in feminist theory that I draw on to build my analytical framework. There follows a discussion of previous research underlined by a social theory of literacy which I drew on to develop the idea of identity-related participation and engagement in literacy classes. Finally, I discuss the understanding of the concept of discourse that underpins my research and its relevance to my study. The chapter shows how I draw on aspects of these theories and studies on literacy programmes to construct my own analytical framework that explores women's identity-related participation and engagement in two state-organised literacy courses in two disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Istanbul.

Chapter Four begins by discussing the value of an ethnographic approach for my study in exploring women's participation and engagement in the courses. The chapter then discusses how I combined an ethnographic approach with feminist discourse analysis. It explores the ontological and epistemological influences on my research. Next the chapter discusses the issues of validity and ethics in a small scale qualitative study informed by a feminist methodology. The chapter then introduces the research sites and participants. This is followed by methods of data collection, including interviews, observations, fieldnotes and document analysis. The chapter then explains the process of data analysis and interpretation. Lastly the chapter examines the role of my personal background and socio-political positions throughout the research process. It explores the issue of reciprocity and the influences of gender, economic status, and ethnicity and educational status - largely recognised by my speaking only standard Turkish among the languages and dialects of Turkey - on the research process.

Chapter Five is the first of the two data analysis chapters. It explores the discourses that the women in my study drew on in explaining their participation in literacy courses at Akasya and Lale PECs. The chapter begins with introducing the official discourses of literacy in government policy documents, statements and curricula documents of People's Education Centres' literacy courses. The chapter then explores the two different strands of the overarching discourse of formal education and literacy – the symbolic importance of school and literacy and the social status associated with school and literacy – which seemed to bring the women involved in this study to literacy courses at Lale and Akasya PECs. It identifies schooled-person identities as the subject positions that women in my study attempted to take on through their participation in the courses. The chapter then explores the symbolic importance of school and literacy for the women within their life stories. Next the chapter introduces different markers of being schooled discussed by the women as part of their accounts of participation. The chapter concludes by discussing women's ways of extending the meanings of the schooled-person identities identified in the official literacy discourses.

Chapter Six is the second data analysis chapter. It explores the discourses of literacy and learning and power relations in the literacy classrooms at Akasya and Lale PECs and women's own understandings of and responses to these discourses and relations of power. It explores women's ways of adopting, appropriating and challenging the discourses and power relations they found in the Akasya and Lale literacy classrooms. Thus the chapter teases out the relationship between different meanings of schooled-person identities that drove women's participation in the courses and their ways of engaging in the classes, which is further explored in the following chapter.

Chapter Seven discusses the connections between different meanings of the subject position of the schooled person that seemed to drive women's participation in the courses and socio-political structures such as gender, social class, migration status, e.g. migration to Istanbul in the 1990s or earlier, ethnicity, and the extent of poverty in which individual women lived. The chapter highlights women's perspectives on their changing circumstances and the constraints of their social and economic

circumstances and how these might influence their attempts to take on the schooled-person identities and the symbolic, social and economic resources associated with these identities. The chapter then explores the links between the schooled-person identities that the women attempted to take on through their participation and their engagement with the discourses and power relations in the Akasya and Lale literacy classrooms. The chapter presents these discussions in relation to the existing literature on literacy and women's participation in literacy courses in Turkey, highlighting the contribution of the study to existing knowledge.

Chapter Eight summarises the main findings of the study. It then discusses its theoretical implications and makes suggestions for further research. The chapter also briefly examines methodological questions which have relevance for further work on women's literacy in Turkey. Lastly the chapter discusses implications of my results for educational policy and practice in Turkey regarding women's literacy education.

Chapter 2 An overview of key issues in women's lives in Turkey

2.0 Introduction

An overview of the key socio-political and economic issues that influence women's lives in Turkey is important for the reader to understand and assess the value of the specific interpretations and results that are derived from this study. This chapter is comprised of four sections. It first provides a historical overview of the key issues influencing women's life conditions and social, political, economic and educational positions in Turkey. In doing this, I place the focus on the feminist critique of the contradictions and ambivalences of the modernising reforms. Next the chapter provides a brief review of major educational policies influencing women and their implications for women's participation in schooling and literacy education. This is followed by a historical overview of Turkey's official language policy. Lastly, the chapter provides an overview of literacy programmes for women in Turkey.

2.1 The modernisation project and its feminist critics

Turkey was established as a nation-state out of the remains of the Ottoman Empire in 1923. The Ottoman government fought on the losing side in the First World War, which brought the end of the Empire with the Treaty of Sevres in 1920 (Özoğlu, 2011). Sevres was unilaterally annulled soon after 1920 when Mustafa Kemal and other generals of the dismantled Ottoman army led the Anatolia-based War of Independence (1919-1922), resulting in the establishment of the Republic of Turkey (Ergil, 2000; Özoğlu, 2011). Mustafa Kemal later took the surname of Atatürk – “father of Turks” – and remained as the first president of Turkey until his death in 1938.

Once the boundaries of Republic of Turkey were officially recognised by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, the political elite launched a nationalisation and modernisation project aimed at creating a modern nation-state based on Turkish nationalism in a country with ethno-religious minorities such as Armenians, Greeks and Jews and predominantly Muslim ethnic and linguistic minorities such as Kurds, Arabs, Lazes, Circassians and Romas (Altınay, 2004; B. İnce, 2012; Kirişçi, 2000). The ideological

basis of the reforms of the new nation-state came to be called Kemalism, taking its name from Mustafa Kemal (İlkkaracan, 2008).

The new state introduced reforms in virtually every aspect of life, including women's roles in the new nation-state, continuing and amplifying state-led modernisation projects that started with the institutional reforms of the late Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century (Bozdoğan & Kasaba, 1997; Kasaba, 1997; Keyder, 1997). It has been pointed out that the modernising male elite in Turkey considered women's emancipation and education as preconditions for and symbols of modernity (Z. Arat, 1998; İlkkaracan, 2008; Kandiyoti, 1997). The reformists of the Republican era introduced reforms such as the abolition of the Sultanate, the office of the Caliph and the Shari'a law;² the encouragement of Western attire for men and women (İlkkaracan, 2008); changes in calendar and measurement to promote integration with Western economies (Parla & Davison, 2004); and the change of the alphabet from Arabic to Latin followed by compulsory nation-wide literacy campaigns (Çolak, 2004). The early Republican reforms which targeted women's social, political and educational positions included compulsory five year primary-school education, the right to vote in local elections in 1930, full enfranchisement at the national level in 1934, the introduction of a Civil Code adapted from the Swiss Code in 1926 introducing equal rights in terms of marriage, divorce, custody, inheritance and property ownership, and job opportunities in the public sphere (Z. Arat, 1998; Gök, 2007a; Kandiyoti, 1987; Kırkpınar, 1998).

A number of critics noted that these reforms were intended to change not only the state institutions but also social life, entailing important effects on people's identities and everyday life (Gök, 2007a; Göle, 1997; Kandiyoti, 1997; Kasaba, 1997; Özbek, 1997; Özgüven, 2010). These critics discussed how the meanings attached to being modern influenced people's everyday lives in such intimate ways that things such as preferences in grooming one's hair or facial hair, clothes, food, music, items of

² The Caliph was the representative of the Prophet Mohammed and the last Caliph was the last Ottoman Sultan (Kandiyoti, 1987). Shari'a is the body of Islamic moral code and law.

furniture, ways of eating, notions of appropriate behaviour in public, the ability to access schooling, the type of schooling, and wearing a headscarf or not became markers of identity.

Feminist critics in Turkey have made important contributions to the systematic analysis of the reforms introduced in the early years of the nation-state as it influenced women's lives and identities. This body of work "traced women's problems to the way women were conceived of in the making of the new republic," revealing how the modernising reforms constructed women as the symbols of modernity rather than as individuals undergoing a liberating process (Y. Arat, 1997, p. 104). These scholars pointed out that the reforms benefited mainly women from the higher socio-economic classes, failing to reach a large number of women, especially in rural Turkey (Z. Arat, 1998; Durakbaşı, 1998; Kandiyoti, 1997; Toska, 1998). The women who had the privilege of benefitting from the reforms were faced with the "contradictions and ambivalences" in the attitude of the reformers towards women's gender roles in the new nation-state (Altınay, 2004, p. 55). A number of critics pointed out that on the one hand women were encouraged to be active in their new public roles and professions (Z. Arat, 1998; Durakbaşı, 1998; Kadioğlu, 1998), but on the other hand this opening up of public space and professional jobs was undertaken with strict codes of conduct for women's sexuality and behaviour in public, requiring them to conceal their femininity and to never forget that their most important role was as mothers and wives of the nation.³

³ Arat (1998) discussed Mustafa Kemal's admonitory remarks on women's allegedly immodest Western attire. In such remarks Mustafa Kemal explained that he found Western clothes necessary to be modern, but also reprimanded some women for wearing clothes more daring than what one would find in the most "loose" formal dances in Europe (p. 55). Durakbaşı (1998) drew on the memoirs and letters of Semiha Berksoy, the leading opera singer of the early Republican era, to show the anxiety of her father that her career aspirations were compromising her eligibility as a wife and her ensuing reassurance that she was maintaining high moral standards in her personal and professional life. Kadioğlu (1998, p. 96) pointed out that the male reformers were insistent on their emphasis that women had to be modest in their appearance and could be sexually active only within a marriage, unlike their Western counterparts whose "extreme" modernity led them to resist control over their bodies and sexuality.

As İlkaracan (2008) succinctly put it, the modernist male cadres imagined the “modern” Turkish woman to be “emancipated and active in the founding of the new republic as mother, teacher and political activist, yet also modest and chaste” (p. 44). Here it is important to note that male reformers were forming new roles, expectations and restrictions for “Turkish” women in a country with various ethno-religious and ethnic and linguistic minorities. Therefore, it is very important to pay attention to Ayşe Gül Altınay’s (2004) call to look into the stories of women who are not Turks as well as into the issues of women who are not among the small number of privileged urban women with access to education and jobs in the formal sector. As discussed in Chapter Four, the socio-political, economic and educational positions of the women in my study differed from those of the “new” Turkish woman that the reformers of the nation-state imagined. One participant at Akasya PEC and all of my four participants and the majority of the women at Lale PEC were Kurdish. Most of them had migrated to Istanbul from various villages and towns in Anatolia – the Asian part of Turkey. As explored in Chapter Five, seven out of 11 participants in my study had never been to school due to the interaction of structural injustices and socio-cultural norms on the appropriate conduct of girl-children. Thus my study may be seen as a contribution to the exploration of the stories of women that can provide insights into the influences of the above-mentioned reforms on women who were not born in major urban centres and did not come from higher socio-economic backgrounds.

It can be suggested that the failure of the early reforms of the nation-state to support women in achieving positions of authority in the public sphere can be seen in women’s present employment patterns in Turkey. The major characteristics of women’s employment in Turkey are their low participation in paid work, high numbers in jobs in the informal sector with poor work conditions and no social security, and lower wages in comparison with those of men (Dedeoğlu, 2004; İlkaracan & Selim, 2007). Recent studies on women’s employment in Turkey have problematised women’s low and declining levels of participation in the labour force (Buğra, 2010; Dayıoğlu & Kırdar, 2010; Turkish Industry and Business Association [TÜSİAD] & Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey [KAGİDER], 2008; Uraz,

Aran, Hüsamoglu, Sanalmiş Okkalı, & Çapar, 2010; World Bank, 2009). Whilst the labour participation rate for women was 50.9% in 1980 (Buğra, 2010), it declined to 28.8% in 2011 as opposed to 70.3% for men (Turkish Statistical Institute [TÜİK], 2011). The above critics pointed out that the decrease in women's employment rates was parallel to urbanisation and the decline in women's employment in agriculture which has not been absorbed by other sectors. Furthermore, the agriculture sector in Turkey is dominated by small family establishments in which women predominantly work as unpaid family members (Dayioğlu & Kırdar, 2010).

A number of studies explored the socio-economic and cultural factors that have hindered women's participation in the labour market in Turkey (Buğra, 2010; Eyüboğlu, Özar, & Tanrıöver, 2000; TÜSİAD & KAGİDER, 2008; World Bank, 2009). These studies pointed to the following as the major barriers constraining women's participation in paid work: (1) allocation of women, especially women with lower educational qualifications in the cities, to jobs in the informal sector with low pay, long working hours, no job contract and social security; (2) lack of day care centres in the work places; (3) the double work burden of married life; (4) patriarchal values that place the roles of women in the domestic sphere; and (5) sexual harassment in the workplace and fear of it.

As for unemployed women's perception of paid work, they were reported to want to acquire jobs because work outside the house meant increased opportunities for socialisation as well as greater family income, self-confidence and respect from men (Eyüboğlu et al., 2000; World Bank, 2009). For the unemployed women in Eyüboğlu et al.'s study and domestic workers in Kalaycıoğlu and Rittsberger's study (2001), the main goal was to find a job with social security which accompanied their demand for broader opportunities for formal education. Although formal educational qualifications taken alone are not the solution to increasing women's employment in the formal sector, a number of studies have shown that women's participation in the labour force in Turkey indeed increases with education (Dayioğlu & Kırdar, 2010; Eyüboğlu et al., 2000; Gündüz-Hoşgör & Smits, 2006; TÜSİAD & KAGİDER,

2008).⁴ While 70% of women with tertiary education participated in the labour force in 2006, only 13% of women with primary education, 15% of women with secondary education and 6% of “illiterate” women in the cities participated in the labour force (Dayıoğlu & Kırdar, 2010).⁵

Women’s education in general, and literacy education in particular, can offer a lot more than increasing women’s participation in paid employment or educating them for the benefit of the nation. It can contribute to their gaining increased authority in the family and community and to challenging their issues within the particular constraints and potential resources of their settings (Luttrell, 1997; Thompson, 2000; Sayılan, 2009). The next section will provide a brief overview of major policies on women’s education in Turkey, their implications for women’s participation in education and social, economic and structural issues hindering women’s access to and remaining in schooling. This is followed by a historical overview of the official language policy in Turkey.

2.2 Women’s education

A number of critics have noted that literacy and schooling was of key importance for the modernising image of the Republic of Turkey (Altınay, 2004; Gök, 2007b; Göğüş Tan, 2007). Following its establishment in 1923 the new nation-state introduced the Law of Unification of Education in 1924 which made five-year primary schools compulsory for both girls and boys and provided the framework for

⁴ World Bank (2009) noted that even if all urban women in Turkey were to receive university education, the female labour participation rate would only go up to 47%, still below the EU benchmark of 60%. Thus it was suggested that the Turkish state create job opportunities in the formal sector, especially for women with lower levels of formal education, provide affordable childcare and show a stronger commitment to women’s education (Buğra, 2010; Worldbank, 2009).

⁵ Here it is important to note that the findings of some studies showed that women with low levels of education who engaged in paid work with low pay and low social status tended to declare themselves as unemployed, considering only jobs in the formal sector as the legitimate ones (İlkkaracan, 1998; Özbay, 1995). Furthermore, TÜİK itself has been criticised for the methodology and criteria it uses to generate data on unemployment, for instance not representing people who have not looked for a job in the last three months as unemployed (Dura, 2013; Sönmez, 2006). This criticism lead Dura to note that not representing people who have given up hopes of finding a job as unemployed has conveniently decreased the rate of unemployment, creating a false image of the employment situation in Turkey.

the current highly centralised and nationalised educational system (Altınay, 2004; Gök, 2007b; Rutz & Balkan, 2009). Critics who focused on policies on women's education pointed out that these policies did not perceive education as a liberating practice that could challenge the unjust power relations between men and women, with the result that the educational environment of schools and classrooms, curricula and quantitative changes in women's education have fallen far short of improving women's status and conditions in significant ways (Z. Arat, 1998; Göğüş Tan, 2007; Gök, 1999, 2007a).

Gök (2007a) suggested that educational policies regarding women's education in Turkey have three major characteristics. Firstly, a small group of women, urban and especially from higher socio-economic backgrounds, have been encouraged to take part in all levels of education to get into well-paid professions with high social status.⁶ Secondly, major policies on women's education underpinned the goal of educating women to be better in their roles as wives and mothers. Gök argued that the Girls' Institutes, which were secondary-level vocational schools founded in every city in the early Republican years and transformed into technical high schools in the 1960s, reflected the policy of educating women to be modern mothers and housewives.⁷ Likewise, a number of studies have criticised the current formal and informal vocational courses for women for allocating them to sectors with low-paid jobs without social security or sufficient links with the labour market (Göğüş Tan, 2007; Gökşen, Yüksek, Alınışık, & Zenginobuz, 2011; Okçabol, 1999, 2005; TÜSİAD & KAGİDER, 2008).

⁶ Looking at the relatively high ratios of women as university teachers and in medicine and law, it can be suggested that this goal has been realised to a certain degree. In the 2010-2011 academic year, 41% of all academics, 53% of primary school teachers and 43% of secondary school teachers were women (TÜİK, 2011). The ratio of women among those doing their residency in medicine was 45% in 2011 (Student Selection and Placement Centre [ÖSYM], 2013). 37% of all practicing lawyers were women in 2010 (Uçan Süpürge, 2013) and the current ratio of practicing female doctors is estimated to be 25-30% (Turkish Medical Association [TTB], 2013).

⁷ Gök (2007a) explained that the Girls' Institutes gave less importance to academic subjects and focused on subject matter such as food preparation, childcare and interior decoration and their diplomas did not qualify young women to attend university.

As for the third aspect of women's education policy, Gök (2007a) suggested that educational policies encouraged rural women and poor women to attend only compulsory primary education and to focus mainly on their work in the fields and the house. It can be suggested that indicators of women's formal educational status and enrolment in schooling confirm these three aspects of educational policies regarding women's education. In the 2010-2011 education year, for people above the age of twenty five, the official illiteracy rate, which is based on self-declaration, was 14 for women and 3% for men; 40% of women and 33% of men only completed five years of education; 12% of women and 20% of men completed eight years of education; 14% of women and 21% men completed twelve years of education, and 8% of women and 12% men completed higher education (TÜİK, 2011).⁸ The enrolment ratios in the 2010 – 2011 educational year indicated that women lagged behind men at all levels of formal education: In 2010, 98% of the female and 99% of the male student population at the eight-year compulsory primary education age level attended mandatory eight-year schools; after this compulsory education, 66% of females and 72% of males in the secondary school age group attended secondary schools; finally, at the tertiary education level 33% of both females and males attended (TÜİK, 2011).⁹

As for recent studies that have highlighted the major factors constraining the enrolment and attendance of girls in compulsory schooling, these factors were first and foremost poverty, exacerbated by the environment of insecurity in south-eastern Turkey; (forced) migration that drove people into deeper poverty and made

⁸ Here it is important to note that the sources of the statistics that are used by the Turkish Statistical Institute [TÜİK] seem at times shaky since it was noted that population registration systems at the Directorate of Population offices and the statistical capacity of the schools to generate data were neither sufficient nor efficient (Gökşen, Cemalcılar, & Gürlesel, 2008). Furthermore, the literacy statistics in general raise important questions: (1) The sources of literacy statistics are extremely uncertain since some of them are based on self-declaration, some on tests and others on years of schooling; (2) The frequently-cited figures of "illiterates" do not take into consideration a number of crucial factors such as the type of literacy upon which literacy assessment was based; the number of people that use other literacies and the number of people who engage in literacy practices through literacy mediators (A. Rogers, Patkar, & Saraswathi, 2004).

⁹ The unrounded figures for participation in tertiary education in 2011 were 32.7 % of females and 33.4% of males (TÜİK, 2011).

children's paid work crucial for survival (Gökşen et al., 2008); demands by school administrations for payments for various school-related expenses; fewer services of lower quality in rural areas and poorer neighbourhoods in the cities; patriarchal values that placed girls' and women's roles in the house (Bakış, Levent, İnel, & Polat, 2009; Göğüş Tan, 2007; Gök, 2007b; Sayan, 2007); sexism in the school and classroom environment which involved humiliating remarks about girls' intelligence as well as physical violence by teachers and male students towards girls (Sayan, 2007; Şahin, 2007); unwillingness of parents to use bussed education or boarding schools for girls in rural areas; unfavourable conditions of schools such as crowded classrooms; and official policies that do not allow the use of Kurdish at school (Göğüş Tan, 2007; Gökşen et al., 2008).

The use of the mother tongue in schooling (Derince 2012a, Gök, 2012) and in adult literacy courses (Coşkun, Derince, & Uçarlar, 2010; Eğitim Sen, 2010) has only recently become an issue of educational debate in Turkey because the use of Kurdish – the second most-spoken language in Turkey - in public places and communications was strictly treated as a security issue until the 2000s.¹⁰ The next section will present a historical overview of the origins of the official language policy in Turkey. Its implications for women's education will be explored in Chapter Seven in relation to

¹⁰ Based on the 1965 population census, the last census that contained data on population by mother tongue, and on the 1993 and 1998 Turkish Demographic Health Survey, it was estimated that people who have Kurdish as their mother tongue constitute somewhere between 12 and 16 percent of the population in Turkey and that two-thirds of the Kurdish population live in the socio-economically least developed eastern and south-eastern parts of Turkey (Gündüz-Hoşgör & Smits, 2002; İçduygu, Romano, & Sirkeci, 1999; Mutlu, 1996). An estimated 2 percent of the population in Turkey are Arabic-speakers, the majority of whom live in eastern and south-eastern towns and villages (Gündüz-Hoşgör & Smits, 2002). A report by Minority Rights Group International (MRG) in 2007 provided estimated numbers of the major minority groups in Turkey with mother tongues different than Turkish. They cautioned that the numbers did not depend on academic research and mostly came from minority groups themselves. Thus this report put the estimated numbers of Kurds between 7,5 to 17 million (10 to 23 percent of the population), Lazes between 750,000 to 1,5 million (1 to 2 percent), Circassians about 2,7 million (3,5 percent), Armenians around 60,000 (0.08 percent), Jews around 23,000 (0.03 percent), Assyrians around 15,000 (0.02 percent) and Greeks around 4,300 (0.005 percent).

the accounts of Kurdish-Turkish bilingual Kurdish women in my study which raised the question of the links between different literacies, languages and domains such as home, school, economic and bureaucratic contexts.

2.3 Language and education

In Turkey, Turkish is the official language and the only recognised language for civil service and state schooling, except for the schools of Greek, Armenian and Jewish communities – the minorities officially recognised by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 (Coşkun et al., 2010). Only since 2002 has the use of languages other than Turkish on state radio and TV channels and their teaching in private courses been allowed (B. İnce, 2012). The mother tongues of ethno-linguistic minorities such as Kurds, Arabs, Laz and Circassians can be used in the 2-hour-a-week elective language courses within the state education system since September 2012, considered by some critics as extremely inadequate as opposed to the realisation of the right to schooling in the mother tongue (Derince 2012a; Gök, 2012). The latest “democratisation packet,” announced by the current Prime Minister on 30 September 2013, allowed the use of mother tongues and dialects different than Turkish in private schools (European Commission, 2013). The same reforms allowed the changing of place names back to their original names in languages different than Turkish and the use of the letters q, w and x in personal names.

The origins of the Turkish state language policy go back to the early years of the Republic in the 1920s and 1930s when a state-led language project rendered the Turkish language and the Latin alphabet a signifier of national unity and modernity (Çolak, 2004; Fortna, 2011; Parla, 2008). The Turkish language reform of this era included not only changing the alphabet from Arabic to Latin but also substituting many Arabic and Persian words and grammatical features with Turkish ones (Belge, 1982; Lewis, 1999; Yücel, 1982), collecting words from old Turkish texts and everyday life to bolster the Turkish vocabulary (Çolak, 2004), and changing personal and place names into Turkish ones (Coşkun et al., 2010; Çolak, 2004; van Bruinessen, 1989).

The adoption of the Latin alphabet for Turkish, which consists of 29 letters (21 consonants and 8 vowels), meant all citizens of the new nation-state became illiterate: they did not know the new Turkish/Latin alphabet (Duman & Williamson, 1996), including 10% of the population who constituted the literate citizens of the country and were able to read and write Turkish in the Arabic alphabet (Fortna, 2011). The replacement of the Arabic script with the Latin alphabet was undertaken quite swiftly. After the parliament passed the law on the change of the alphabet on 1 November 1928, the school children started learning the new alphabet in the following school term; *Millet Mektepleri* (Nation Schools) started their compulsory adult literacy classes within the first nationwide literacy campaign, and the use of the new alphabet in public communications was made compulsory as of 1 January 1929 (Çolak, 2004; Poulton, 1997).

It has been pointed out that the state primarily used compulsory education and military service to spread Turkish and create a sense of unity around a Turkish national identity (Altınay, 2004; Aslan, 2011; B. İnce, 2012; Poulton, 1997). A number of critics have discussed the effects of the rigid nationalisation and language policy of the state on the Kurds.¹¹ Since 1984 the armed conflict between the PKK (The Kurdistan Workers' Party, *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*), defined a terrorist organization by the Turkish government and the European Union (EU), and the Turkish security forces caused the issue of education in the mother tongue to be seen as a security issue (Ayan Ceyhan & Koçbaş, 2009).

The use of the Kurdish language was officially permitted in 1991 with a bill that allowed Turkish citizens to speak local languages, without referring to Kurdish (B. İnce, 2012; Poulton, 1997). Thus, studies that have discussed the issue of bilingual education and the right to education in the mother tongue in the state schooling

¹¹ These included the changing of village names as well as personal and family names into Turkish (Coşkun et al., 2010; van Bruinessen, 1989) and forceful migration of a significant number of Kurds to Turkish-speaking areas in the early years of the Republic (Aslan, 2011; Ergil, 2000; van Bruinessen, 1989). Similar methods of suppression took place in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup, including the criminalisation of Kurdish music cassettes and banning family members from speaking Kurdish during prison visits, beating them when they spoke Kurdish or forcing them to use sign language with their relatives (Coşkun et al., 2010, p. 34).

system have emerged only very recently (Ayan Ceyhan & Koçbaş, 2009; Coşkun et al., 2010; Derince, 2012a, 2012b; Eğitim Sen, 2010; Gök, 2012). An important study in this field showed that Kurdish children were beaten by some teachers for speaking in their mother tongue; they developed feelings of embarrassment about their mother tongue and their parents who spoke Kurdish, and found it very difficult to achieve academic success and self-confidence in schooling in Turkish (Coşkun et al., 2010). Thus the above-mentioned critics called for the removal of the barriers against the use of mother tongues other than Turkish in civic services, the informal educational activities of local providers, schooling and literacy courses. Although the most recent democratisation reforms can be seen as a positive step towards realising the linguistic and cultural rights of minority groups, they are unable to answer the above-mentioned demands, not allowing mother-tongue based bilingual education in state schooling and the use of mother tongues different than Turkish in civic services. The implications of the official language policy for women's lives and education are discussed in Chapter Seven in relation to the accounts of Kurdish women involved in my study. Following this brief discussion of the official language policy in Turkey, I turn to literacy courses for women in Turkey.

2.4 An overview of literacy programmes for women in Turkey

Adult literacy education is a major task in Turkey, with on-going literacy campaigns and activities (in 1960, 1971, 1981, 2001, 2008), starting with the first nation-wide literacy campaign in 1928 which followed the change of the alphabet from Arabic to Latin (Nohl & Sayılan, 2004). Since it was used to spread the use of Turkish and the new Latin alphabet adopted in 1928, literacy education played a central role in the efforts of the new nation-state to create a sense of national unity around a common language and new alphabet, as well as to tackle what was seen as backwardness and ignorance among rural populations (Taşçı Günlü, 2008; Ünlühisarcıklı, 2008). Taşçı Günlü noted that the literacy materials used in the major literacy campaigns between 1928 and 2001 invited people to learn to read and write in order to be “modern,” using bluntly didactic messages and representing illiterate individuals as otherwise “incomplete and ignorant” (2008, p. 192).

In contrast to Taşçı-Günlü's focus on the brusque messages of modernisation and nationalism in the content of the literacy campaigns, especially the earlier ones, a number of critiques (Kirazoğlu, 2003; Sayılan & Yıldız, 2009) pointed out that the mobilisation of extensive financial and community resources was an important positive characteristic of the literacy activities between 1928 and 1950. These critiques noted that after the first three decades of the new nation-state, education in general and adult literacy education in particular was no longer seen as requiring collective action and extensive financial resources, attracting less state funding and commitment.

After 1980 adult literacy programmes were reorganised as Level 1 and Level 2 by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and these two levels of adult literacy and basic education courses in Turkey are offered under the monitoring and inspection of MoNE. The objectives of Level 1 courses include reading, writing, basic mathematics and knowledge and skills deemed necessary in daily life (MoNE, 2007). This course is considered equivalent to the third grade of the twelve-year compulsory education system; it is planned as 90 class hours and can be extended to 120 hours (Ünlühisarcıklı, 2009).

In addition to state-funded People's Education Centres (PECs), in order to deliver the Level 1 literacy course MoNE cooperates with three NGOs – the Rotary Club, the Association for Supporting Contemporary Life, and the Mother-Child Education Foundation – which work with volunteers to deliver a classroom- and textbook-based literacy education; almost all of the participants in the courses organised by these NGOs are women (Nohl & Sayılan, 2004).¹² Although MoNE has given permission to these three NGOs to develop their own curricula, it retains the right to monitor

¹² The Rotary approach to literacy education seems more flexible than the others in terms of being based on a textbook. It is based on carrying out three activities such as making tea or handicrafts in the classroom and creating a booklet on the steps involved in each activity (KOYE, 2006/2007). Furthermore, the approach encourages the teachers to use activities rooted in the local settings. However, based on their observation of the classes and interviews with Rotary literacy teachers who are recruited from primary school teachers, Nohl & Sayılan (2004) noted that the teachers used the same activities such as making a fruit salad, tea or a sandwich in the classes and felt the lack of a teacher's resource book and training.

their literacy classes and provide certificates upon successful completion of the course. The fourth organization that provides literacy courses for women is the People's Houses Association, which works to help initiate social action among the poor and disenfranchised groups but cannot offer certificates approved by MoNE (Nohl & Sayılan, 2004). These courses were also reported to use their own literacy textbook and at times draw on the literacy materials of the Mother-Child Education Foundation and the Rotary Club (Nohl & Sayılan, 2004).

Level 2 literacy courses are offered only by PECs and state primary school teachers appointed by MoNE (Ünlühisarcıklı, 2009). The courses aim to educate adults towards a primary school education which is the equivalent of the fourth and fifth years of the compulsory basic education system, consisting of 180 class hours organised around four different courses: Turkish (75 hours), Mathematics (45 hours), Social Studies (30 hours), and Science and Technology (30 hours) (MoNE, 2007).

The majority of the participants in the literacy courses are women although the courses do not explicitly identify women as their target group. The state PECs, with their extended network, attract about fourteen times as many participants to the Level 1 courses as the three NGOs together that can offer officially-sanctioned certificates - in 2002, for example, 189,500 as opposed to 14,500 (Nohl & Sayılan, 2004). In the 2010-2011 education year, 378,800 people completed Level 1 literacy courses which took place as part of literacy campaigns, largely organised by PECs, women making up 85% of the participants, and 54,400 people completed Level 2 literacy courses, 66% of whom were women (TÜİK, 2010/2011).

Despite the lack of comprehensive research on literacy programmes in Turkey, a number of recent studies have discussed the major issues affecting these literacy programmes. The studies that dealt with participation in adult literacy programmes described individual goals that brought women to the literacy classes, particularly Level 1 literacy courses, and identified barriers that kept women from participating in literacy classes. Women's goals in participating in literacy programmes were described as (1) taking care of literacy tasks on their own (Yıldız, 2006); (2) gaining increased familiarity with the social world in order to have increased authority in

community life; (3) helping children with schoolwork; (4) finding paid work; (5) achieving the literacy certificate in order to continue formal education; (6) getting a driver's licence (Durgunoğlu, 2000; Durgunoğlu et al., 2003); and (7) attending an official Koran course which required a Level 1 literacy course certificate (G. İnce, 2008).

As for the barriers that kept women from participating in the literacy courses, the major barriers were the same barriers that made participation in schooling as girls impossible, mainly poverty and family members' (especially husbands' in later life) resistance (Bilir, 2004, 2005; Durgunoğlu, 2000; Durgunoğlu et al., 2003; Yıldız, 2006). Other barriers included (1) women's social and economic obligations; (2) the association of schooling and book-reading with children and young people; (3) fear and anxiety about learning in a classroom environment; and (4) not needing school-based literacy practices since some women had developed their own strategies to deal with their everyday literacy tasks (Bilir, 2004, 2005; Yıldız, 2006, 2008a).

Although these researchers stressed the importance of understanding women's uses of literacy in different social and economic contexts, their focus on the barriers to participation and suggestions for the practice of adult literacy education seemed to assume that what women needed access to most was school literacy. In his evaluation of a Level 1 course at a PEC in Ankara, Yıldız (2006) emphasised the importance of thinking of literacy as a socially-embedded practice and suggested that the content of PEC literacy education be based on the life experiences and socio-economic issues of the participants. Furthermore, he suggested that the courses be also offered in the participants' homes and workplaces in addition to the PEC classrooms. However, the literacy practices Yıldız considered as most important, e.g. reading books, newspapers and magazines, and his assumption that the use of written language was most limited in the villages and shanty towns in the urban centres, seemed to regard school literacy as paramount:

For example, the practices such as reading newspapers daily, following magazines, reading books during travel, reading story books to children, writing letters and the use of writing in the communication in the house are encountered less in the shanty towns and villages. (Yıldız, 2006, p. 65)

Furthermore, Yıldız (2008a) characterised women's ways of using written language, such as recognising the first syllable or letters of personal names and bus destinations to make telephone calls and use public transportation, as "primitive use of writing" (p. 78). His suggestions for the practice of literacy education in the PECs were mostly related with improving attendance in the existing courses:

...a rise in the attendance at literacy courses can be achieved only through a raised awareness of the significance attached to literacy in the society. In turn, this can be realized through the establishment of a relationship between literacy education and the social problems of the illiterate – through organizing this relationship – so much so that literacy education may serve a starting point to fight problems like poverty, discrimination, housing, unemployment, hunger, lack of health care and education for children. (p. 82)

Establishing links between literacy and the social issues of people who are deemed to be prospective participants in the literacy courses carries the potential to help people talk, read and write about social issues that matter to them in order to engage in individual or collective action to influence these issues. This is an approach commonly associated with the philosophy of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Freire's conception of literacy considered literacy practices as radical cultural actions that would give voice to the oppressed to read their words and world in order to attempt to change it (Freire, 1972). Since Freire thought that reading words was more than a process of decoding the signs, his critical pedagogy challenged literacy educators to become immersed in the everyday lives of people to discover "generative words and themes" which were derived from their familiar conditions (Freire, 1974, p. 96). Freire's thought has influenced people all over the world who have a commitment to radical educational and social change. For example, Purcell-Gates and Waterman (2000), Martin and Rahman (2001), Souto-Manning (2005-2006) and Bartlett (2001, 2005) described Freirean-based adult literacy programmes in El-Salvador, Bangladesh and Brazil where students decided on the curriculum and literacy activities and were encouraged to talk, read and write about social issues that

mattered to them in order to engage in collective action about them.¹³ A number of studies have discussed the Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT) methodology based on Freire's philosophy (Archer, 2005; Attwood, Castle, & Smythe, 2004; Lopez, 2005). REFLECT literacy courses investigated in these studies aimed to encourage individuals and groups to identify social actions they could take and reading and writing activities that would support such action, used in different settings such as rural Africa and cities in the UK and Canada.

In Turkey, the People's Houses Association (PHA), founded in 1932, targets poor people and adopts Freire's concepts such as the discussion of key words and pictures, with an emphasis on social awareness leading to collective action (Nohl & Sayılan, 2004). Some branches of the organization seem to build literacy into the activities of their Shelter Rights Bureaus. They aim to organize the social action of poor people against the demolition of their houses as part of the gentrification of central neighbourhoods in the big cities (Halkevleri, 2013). However, Nohl and Sayılan noted that the Freirean approach is not implemented in all of the PHA's 62 branches due to the lack of teacher training. Since there is no research on the practice of literacy teaching in the PHAs, it is not known to what extent the political goals of the programme in terms of initiating social action among the poor relate to a gender perspective (Robinson-Pant, 2000a). It is also unclear whether the programmes are implemented in a way that define literacy as a process rather than a cure for a disease that is to be eradicated, given that a newspaper report on a PHA programme for migrant women in Istanbul noted the following words from the coordinator of the

¹³ The feminist critics of Freire's pedagogy questioned the role and authority of the teacher and the contradictions between the collective goals and hierarchies of knowledge and asked for a vision of multiple and contradictory experiences and feelings as guides to knowledge and political actions (Ellsworth, 1989; hooks, 1993; Weiler, 1991). Bartlett (2005) criticised Freire's initial conceptualisation of a singular student "reality" determined by a shared class position and the dichotomy between teachers' schooled, dominant knowledge and students' subordinated, experiential knowledge. A number of researchers have (A. Rogers et al., 1999; Robinson-Pant, 2000a; Street, 2005) noted that the label "Freirean" for a literacy programme should be approached carefully since some approaches to Freirean pedagogy have been incorporated into the autonomous model of literacy, employing more top-down approaches to choosing literacy and development activities and claiming that literacy alone can empower people.

programme: “The existence of people who do not know how to read and write is a source of shame for the state. In our school, we are clearing this shame” (Saymaz, 2004, March 6. para. 11). Thus even the “alternative” approaches to literacy education in Turkey seem to be underpinned by the dominance of school literacy, seeing people who lack it as deficient (Crowther, Hamilton, & Tett, 2001).

As for the effectiveness of the literacy courses of People’s Education Centres, which have the widest network and attract the highest number of participants, a number of studies noted that both participants and teachers found Level 1 literacy courses too short to develop literacy skills adequately (Durgunoğlu et al., 2003; Güngör, 2006; Ünlühisarcıklı, 2009; Yıldız, 2006). At both Levels some teachers supported or replaced the textbooks with teaching materials they themselves bought or developed, and left out parts of the curriculum they found too difficult for their students, regarding the duration of the programme as too short for a curriculum they considered overloaded (Güngör, 2006; G. İnce, 2008; Ünlühisarcıklı, 2009). The literacy approach and textbooks of the PEC literacy programmes have also been criticised for being replete with teacher-centred and mechanistic learning activities which were irrelevant to women’s real-life experiences and portrayed them overwhelmingly in the house (Sayılan, 2009).

To sum up this review of studies on women’s literacy in Turkey, the focus has mostly been on the individual goals that brought women to the literacy courses and the barriers to their participation. The critique of the courses did not highlight the formalised nature of the courses or their focus on the teaching of school literacy practices in an unambiguous manner, although some studies very usefully suggested that literacy education should not be seen limited to adult literacy classrooms and should be also offered in the homes and workplaces of the participants (Sayılan & Yıldız, 2009; Yıldız, 2006). Drawing on a social theory of literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984, 1993a), this thesis adopts a research approach that starts with women’s own valuations and perspectives of literacy and learning to investigate their participation in and engagement with the literacy approach, content and power relations in the literacy classrooms. Furthermore, it investigates the roots of the identities that women attempted to acquire through their

participation in the courses in women's accounts of their lives. Thus its intention is not limited to the identification of the influences of dominant discourses of literacy and education on women's attempts to take on certain subject positions through their participation. The thesis also explores the ways in which women extend the meanings of the subject positions created within dominant discourses and the interaction of these with socio-political structures and material conditions in women's particular settings. The next chapter explores the thinking on identity and feminist theories of self and subjectivity as well as the thinking on literacy and discourse that I draw on to build my analytical framework.

Chapter 3 Literature review and theoretical framework

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is divided into four sections. (1) It first discusses how the particular insights I drew from theoretical and ethnographic studies of identity formation underpinned my research questions. (2) It then discusses the aspects of feminist theories of self and subjectivity that I found useful for exploring women's attempts to take on certain subject positions underpinned by the discourses and material and social circumstances in their particular settings. (3) The following section discusses how I drew on the studies underlined by a social theory of literacy. This section discusses how I drew on the studies on literacy programmes in various developing and developed country contexts to develop the idea of women's identity-related participation and engagement in the literacy courses. (4) Lastly, the chapter discusses aspects of Norman Fairclough's understanding of discourse that I have found useful for my analytical framework

3.1 Theoretical considerations

The main theoretical fields in which my research is grounded are first the concepts of self and subjectivity, second social theories of literacy and third the understanding of discourse developed by Norman Fairclough within the field of critical discourse studies. I put forward the argument that women's participation in and engagement with literacy classes needs to be understood as an identity-related process that takes place within the context of discourses and the particular institutional, socio-political, cultural and economic contexts in which the literacy courses and women's lives are situated. The approach I develop rests on a combination of identity, literacy and discourse theories. Methodologically, my study has an ethnographic approach to feminist discourse analysis.

In this chapter I will first discuss the ways in which specific theoretical and ethnographic insights into identity formation informed my research questions. This is followed by a discussion of theories of self and subjectivity in feminist theory that helped me think about the role of agency in women's engagement with the classes

(Davies & Banks, 1992; Weedon, 1987). There follows a discussion of how my theoretical framework benefitted from Griffiths' conception of identity processes whereby women's particular material and social circumstances, agency and changes over time constituted their identities, influencing their negotiation of dominant discourses and variously desirable subject positions (Griffiths, 1995a, 2007). I will then discuss previous research underlined by a social theory of literacy which I drew on to develop the idea of identity-related participation and engagement in literacy classes. Finally, I will discuss the understanding of the concept of discourse that underpins my research and its relevance to my study. The chapter shows how I draw on aspects of these theories and studies on literacy programmes to construct my own analytical framework that explores women's identity-related participation and engagement in two state-organised literacy courses in two disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Istanbul.

3.1.1 How did I develop my research questions?

In the first seven months of my PhD studies, I worked on a research project that aimed to explore the ways in which Turkish-speaking women in the UK make sense of themselves as immigrant women participating in the educational projects of community organisations. This research interest had emerged out of my experiences as a Turkish-speaking woman who had suddenly found herself as a member of a minority ethnic group upon moving to England for my postgraduate studies in 2005. During my one year in England, I was faced with institutional and everyday discrimination due to dominant perceptions of immigrant women from "Third World" Muslim countries. In the beginning of my PhD research, I explored the literature on migration and women, which pointed to the construction of immigrant women in the dominant discourses as victims of oppressive cultural practices, as abjectly submissive and as unwilling to adapt their life styles to their new settings (Álund, 1999; Brah, 1996; Buijs, 1993; Erel, 2009; Inowlocki & Lutz, 2000; Thapan, 2005). At the same time these studies revealed ways in which immigrant women actively negotiated the cultural values and life styles they adopted, setting their own agendas and challenging their specific oppressions in their own ways.

While working on my research questions around the issues of migration, gender and identity, I initially became acquainted with Stuart Hall's (1995, 1996) theoretical work on identity which I found useful because he thought of social structures and human agency as existing in a symbiotic relationship with each other. He conceived of identity as "points of suture, points of *temporary* attachment" to discursively constructed subject positions" (1995, p. 65). He pointed out that the theory of how individuals were "summoned" to subject positions in discursive structures had been elaborated extensively. Yet he found that this theoretical work could not be fully accomplished without complementing the discursive control with an account of how the subjects constituted themselves. So the subject was not only "called" to subject positions but also actively invested in these positions. He explained that as the subjects manoeuvre through available discursively constructed subject positions they engage in a constant process of resisting and negotiating power relations. Thus while the subjects "fashion, stylize, produce and 'perform' these positions," they never do so "completely, for once and all time" (1996, p. 14).

Furthermore, I gained important insights from the ethnographic studies of identity formation by Benjamin (2002), Hewamanne (2008) and Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) which revealed how discourses and the micropolitical contexts in which these discourses were locally interpreted produced subject positions for women of different ages. Their work showed how women were always positioned in multiple discourses at any particular time, which not only created cultural meanings about them but also had material implications for the extent to which they could have fulfilling and materially comfortable lives. I found these ethnographic studies useful because they revealed the intricate ways in which discourses made conflicting and multiple demands on women's everyday practices and identities. At the same time, they highlighted how women strategically moved back and forth between subject positions, negotiating the demands of dominant discourses and the institutional and social structures they were embedded in.

Since I could not find community-level organisations engaged in educational activities with Turkish-speaking women in the vicinity of Edinburgh, I decided in March, 2009, to do my pilot work in the Turkish-speaking women's community

organizations in London. This work revealed a distressing reality: my research project was not feasible. Some of the organisations worked with Kurdish political refugees from Turkey. It became clear that the constraints of my position as a privileged Turkish woman with no background of Kurdish human rights activism caused the gatekeepers in these organizations a great deal of suspicion, making it impossible for me to undertake my project in these organizations. Furthermore, all of the organizations were dependant on fluctuating sources of funding for their educational activities. They could not guarantee that they would have educational activities in the following year, although some of them were willing to work with me.

The ensuing period of anxiety was ended when I started to work on a literacy-related project I had developed during the time of my pilot work in March. Having stumbled across literacy studies which were informed by Holland et al.'s (1998) reading of identities and agency (Bartlett, 2001, 2005, 2007; Bartlett & Holland, 2002) and by the social theory of literacy (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984), I decided to write a paper on the kind of identities that women participants in my Masters project in 2006 at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul were trying to form through their literate identity. After my encounter with the social theory of literacy, I realised that my Masters research saw literacy as a set of technical skills and behaviours that women either possessed or did not possess, drawing upon the idea of literacy as an autonomous skill to be taught sequentially and applied across variant texts, contexts and cultures (Barton, 1994; Crowther & Tett, 2001). My assumptions led me to assume that literacy alone would lead to significant changes in the lives of previously "illiterate" women (Street, 2005). Thus my Masters project aimed to explore the effect of participation in Level 1 literacy courses on women's lives from their own perspectives. It asked women about their life stories, their expectations in participating in the course and their perceptions of the changes in their lives that they attributed to their participation. Based on analysis of the interviews I suggested that all seven women in the study challenged economic constraints, patriarchal power structures and dominant gender roles in order to attend and continue the literacy course which gave them an increased sense of

independence and self-reliance. I also suggested that as a result of participation in the course all the women were able to travel and read and write to carry out their literacy-related tasks without having to rely on others.

After encountering insights from the social theory of literacy which situated the meanings and uses of literacy in social contexts, emphasising the importance of understanding each particular context and taking account of the fact that people use different literacies in different domains of life such as home, workplace, school and community settings (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984, 1993a), I could understand why I had felt frustrated during my data analysis. The understanding of literacy as a situated social practice is also often identified as the social theory of literacy and the social practice approach to literacy; the body of literacy research that is underpinned by the social theory of literacy is also referred as the New Literacy Studies. In this thesis I use the term social theory of literacy. Thus the insights from the social theory of literacy helped me realise that the interview transcripts and voice recordings of my Masters research displayed numerous instances of women talking about their sense of feeling “educated,” “cultured,” “modern,” and not “ignorant” in response to my insistent questions on what they were able to do after the course that they could not do before the course.

The work of Bartlett and Holland (2002) and Bartlett (2001, 2005, 2007) was also important in my formation of new research questions. Drawing on the social theory of literacy, their work explored the meaning and valuation of literacy among adult literacy participants in Brazil and showed that for poor, black Brazilians literacy meant more than the skills of reading and writing; it meant education when the lack of it was a social stigma, causing feelings of shame. Thus their work showed the intimate linkage between the lack of literacy and the concept of an educated person. “Education” here signified both book knowledge gained through formal schooling and manners which indicated socially appropriate forms of address and conversation, ways of eating and behaviour in different social settings. These studies discussed how people’s participation in adult literacy programmes enabled them to claim the subject position of an educated person in particular social contexts and thus counter

their negative social positioning within the socio-political structures of gender, race and social class.

Synthesizing these insights on the meaning and valuation of literacy and education in particular cultural contexts with theoretical insights of identity and agency from Hall (1995, 1996) and the ethnographic studies of women's negotiation of different identities by Benjamin (2002), Hewamanne (2008) and Holland et al. (1998) I formulated my new research questions. My research came to be aimed at exploring (1) the identity work that brings women to literacy courses in Turkey and (2) the relationship between this identity work and women's engagement in the classes.¹⁴ I try to answer the first research question by identifying and explaining the meaning of the subject positions that women attempt to take on through their participation in literacy classes and the discourses that make these subject positions available. My second research question aims to look into the ways in which the identity work that brings women to literacy classes relates to their engagement with the literacy approach, content and classroom practices in the literacy classrooms. These research questions were introduced in Chapter One.

Due to the focus of my study, my framework needs to help explain how women's expectations and perceptions of literacy and education are created within the particular trajectory of their lives as well as the discourses and identities underpinned by socio-political structures such as gender, ethnicity, social class, age and migration status. Thus in order to explore how women attempted to change aspects of their

¹⁴ I find the concept of "identity work" useful because it connotes a process of identity formation rather than a stable state, providing conceptual room for understanding change and contestation. Some conceptual terms that were used to explain identity work were "points of *temporary* attachment" to discursively constructed subject positions by Hall (1995, p. 65), "the space of authoring" by Holland et al. (1998, p. 169) where "The world must be answered—authorship is not a choice—but the form of the answer is not predetermined" (p. 272), " 'identity work' as a version of 'politics in action'" by Benjamin (2002, p. 12), "the theory of a patchwork self" by Griffiths (2007), conceptualising a self which "has agency and connection, which implies that there is a sense in which there is a self, persisting over a lifetime, although that self need not be the single, unitary subject of standard philosophy. It is always under construction" (p. 125), and "situational identification" by Hewamanne (2008, p. 5).

selves, my theoretical framework draws on feminist theories on self and subjectivity discussed in the next section.

3.1.2 Feminist theories of self and subjectivity

My initial encounter with Stuart Hall's (1995, 1996) theoretical work on identity was instrumental in the formulation of my research questions. I found that his focus on the subjects' active resistance to or acceptance of subject positions within discourses indicated a clear position on the agency of the subjects to constitute themselves. His concept of identity processes indicated the interdependency between social structures and agency. In order to conceptualise how women constituted themselves within the constraints of dominant discourses and social structures, I incorporated some strands of feminist thinking on "subjectivity" which identified a feminist post-structuralism (Davies & Banks, 1992; Walkerdine, 1990; Weedon, 1987). I complemented their notion of identity construction as a fluid process involving multiple subjectivities with Griffiths' theory of "a patchwork self," which is a socially-constructed self in which new patches (subject positions/aspects of identities) join existing ones, changing them in this identity construction process and creating a connected self with agency (Griffiths, 1995a; 2007, p. 123). The theory of a patchwork self enabled me to focus on how women gave meaning to the subject positions revealed in their accounts of participation in the courses, taking into account the material and social-political bases of different kinds of oppressions, their interconnectedness and specificity within the women's lives.

As noted by Griffiths (2007), feminist theorists have disparate positions on the relation between the construction of the self and the agency of individuals in the identity construction processes within the socio-political structures and circumstances of their particular contexts. Griffiths (1995a, 1995b, 2007) noted that some feminist theorists prefer to use the term "subjectivity" because they find that the term "self" is associated with a unitary conception of identity in humanist theory. Her work employs the term self in an effort to help use the term without implying the transparent and unitary subject of a particular body of thought. I will use the term self and subjectivity/subject positions alternately according to the theorist whose

work I draw on whilst trying to make it clear what aspects of the theories are useful for my analytical framework. In this thesis, I refer to the subject positions that women attempted to take on through their participation in the literacy courses with the terms subject positions, aspects of identities or identities.

Before I discuss how I draw on the feminist work on subjectivity that identified a feminist post-structuralism, I will discuss the extent of my interest in post-structuralism and the aspects of it I found useful for my framework. There are disparate perspectives and deep disagreements on the meanings of post-modernism, its relation to post-structuralism and value for feminisms (Griffiths, 1995b). As I conceived my research questions, I was certain that I wanted my research project to focus on women who constituted the majority of the participants in literacy courses in Turkey since their schooling and access to the privileges of formal education had been rendered impossible within the structures of injustice. Thus, post-modernist/post-structuralist influences in my theoretical framework “are refracted through the lens of feminism” and my interest in these bodies of work depends on their relevance to my commitment to feminism as a theory and movement for social justice developed as a response to the oppression and silencing of women and girls (Griffiths, 1995b, p. 231).

Griffiths (1995b, p. 226) suggested that since post-modernism refers to disparate positions in different fields of thought such as literary theory, political theory and philosophy, post-structuralism can be best thought of “as a variant of ‘post-modernism’”; it questioned the idea of universal structures in producing and explaining bodies of knowledge and events and was developed in reaction against a tradition starting with Descartes who had a notion of the rational human subject as the source and builder of knowledge. Griffiths pointed to the influence of Foucault and Derrida on post-structuralist feminist work, although Foucault himself did not accept being identified as post-structuralist. She thus identified the key ideas in post-modernism as (1) the focus on a suspicion of grand narratives or “foundational positions” since human ideas are considered to be firmly situated in their particular contexts and influenced by the political positions of the knower (Griffiths, 1995b, p. 231; Griffiths, 1998), (2) the focus on the power of discourses to create subjectivity,

and (3) the rejection of the notion of a unitary self that can be observed (Griffiths, 1995b). The post-structuralist feminist studies that I engaged with have drawn on the work of Foucault and the key ideas in post-modernism as identified by Griffiths (1995b, 1998), which helped me focus my attention on the specific contexts within which women's identity work was taking place and on the possibilities and constraints of discourses on the subject positions women found themselves in.

Some strands of feminist thinking on "subjectivity" which identified a feminist post-structuralism (Davies & Banks, 1992; Walkerdine, 1990; Weedon, 1987) were useful for my research because I found their position clear on the agency of subjects to constitute themselves, seeing the subject "as a thinking, feeling subject and social agent, capable of resistance and innovations produced out of the clash between contradictory subject positions and practices" (Weedon, 1997, p. 121). What I found useful was that these theories conceptualised a subject that is constituted in competing discourses but can move back and forth between different subject positions. This thinking was useful for focusing my attention on how women attempted to create new aspects for their identities while rejecting some others.

Drawing on Foucault, a number of feminist post-structuralists conceptualised power as a complex and shifting network that created diverse relations of dominance, negotiation and resistance in social relations (Baxter, 2003; Davies, 2000). A number of studies showed how girls shifted between positions of power and powerlessness in educational settings (Baxter, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Castañeda-Pena, 2008; Davies & Hunt, 2000; Davies & Laws, 2000; Davies et al., 2001). Baxter (2008) and Kamada (2008) showed how women moved towards more empowering discourses and subject positions underpinned by gender, ethnicity and leadership in public settings. These studies helped me focus my attention on highlighting the contexts and the moments in which women resisted certain dominant discourses and subject positions and tried to enter into others. Their focus on the local context and particular instances of agency was useful in attracting my attention to how women took what they wanted from the literacy classes in their particular settings.

However, I became aware of the difficult partnership of post-modernism/post-structuralism and feminism since the former's focus on the local workings of power was seen to be limiting for the feminist work towards justice and liberation, which starts "by challenging some of the 'grand circulations of domination'," in the case of feminism the effects of sexism and its interplay with the effects of race, social class, sexuality, postcolonialism and so on (Griffiths, 1998, p. 61). A number of feminists (Hartsock, 1990; Hills Collins, 2000; Maccannell & Maccannell, 1993; Ramazanoglu, 1993; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 1993; Soper, 1993) argued that if we overemphasise the point that the oppressive uses of power and violence are constituted in a network of power relations in discourses, this would make it look as if we are all equal in our participation in this network of power relations. Furthermore, they pointed out that we might end up overlooking the role of social institutions with authority such as the police, the military, the courts and religious institutions in backing particular gendered power relations in everyday life. Thus while I highlight the local contexts and moments in which women shift between positions of relative power and powerlessness, I find it equally important to take into consideration the effects of broader structures of injustice and powerful social institutions that influence the discourses, power relations and social and material circumstances women find in their everyday life and literacy classrooms.

In thinking about women's attempts to take on certain subject positions and distance themselves from some others, I draw on Griffiths' theory of a patchwork self which takes into consideration the material circumstances of the places and bodies people grow up in, the specific trajectory of a person, change involved in the identity construction processes and membership in the structures of a society which can be described in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, age and so on (1995a, 2007). Griffiths identified her theory of a patchwork self as a kind of web as in tapestry or weaving:

Just as webs are made in context, an ever-changing context to which the new web contributes, so selves are always in a process of becoming. Just as webs are creations of particular makers, so selves are constructed; a self has agency. Just as making a web that expresses the wishes of the maker is a creation, even though she is working in previously fixed patterns, so 'being me' means creating a self as well as living

within the patterns of a particular time and place....(1995a, p. 178-179)

The idea of different patches of identity or selves staying connected in a process of construction over a lifetime helped me think about how women's statements and actions regarding the subject positions that they wanted to make part of themselves were rooted in what happened in the women's pasts and in what they expected of their future (Griffiths, 1995a, p. 173-181; 2007, p. 113). Furthermore, the theory of a patchwork self highlights the importance of the material conditions of the places and the bodies in which the individuals live, their changing circumstances and the specific trajectory of their lives in the identity construction processes. This aspect helped me focus on the role of social networks and women's changing material and social circumstances in the construction of their agency and identity processes. I explore women's understandings of their changing circumstances and socio-economic obligations and the influence of these on their attempts to embrace certain subject positions through their participation in Chapter Seven.

In the next section I discuss understandings of literacy within the social theory of literacy that helped me think about the linkages between literacy, power and identity. I also discuss studies on literacy programmes which helped me focus my thinking on the role of discourses, socio-political structures and identity processes in women's participation and engagement in the courses.

3.1.3 Literacy, power, identity, participation

My further exploration of literacy studies underpinned by a social theory of literacy helped me better understand the ways in which participation and engagement in literacy programmes can be explored from an identity perspective within the broader socio-economic, cultural and institutional contexts rather than focusing on individual goals or motivations. In the editorial article for a volume of the academic journal *Literacy* dedicated to the topic of *Literacy and Identity*, Merchant and Carrington (2009) noted that the relationship between literacy and identity has become a key theme in literacy studies – especially among the ones underpinned by a socio-cultural approach to literacy. They suggested that these studies saw the process of becoming

literate as well as the use and adaptation of literacy practices as a site for constructing and negotiating identities.

It can be suggested that earlier work in the field had established a firm conceptual ground to think about the linkages between literacy, power and identity. Street (1993b) summarised the characteristics that were shared by studies underpinned by a social theory of literacy, albeit in different degrees, as follows: (1) They challenge the conception of literacy that puts the focus on discrete reading and writing skills and treats literacy as if it is independent of social context; (2) They recognise the richness and variety of literacy practices in different areas of life; (3) They adopt an ethnographic approach to the study of the uses and meanings of literacy in different cultural contexts; (4) They recognise the ways in which people transform literacy to suit their own purposes and interests; and (5) They recognise the role of power relations and structures of power in literacy practices. Furthermore, Street (2001a) noted that he preferred to use the term ideological rather than a social theory of literacy to emphasize the fact that literacy was always embedded in power relations and that how one social group's literacy was made and maintained involved struggles over social and economic power.

In order to depict the linkages between literacy and power in particular social contexts, the term “dominant literacy” was used in the work of Prinsloo and Breier (1996) and Barton and Hamilton (1998). Barton and Hamilton explained that these dominant types of literacy were associated with formal organisations within such domains as law, education and the workplace. While pointing to the dominance of certain types of literacy their work also pointed to the importance of identifying “vernacular literacies” which “are not regulated by the formal rules and procedures of dominant social institutions and which have their origins in everyday life” and the ways people used them to challenge the literacies that were given more social value (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 247).

In their comprehensive discussion of the debates about literacy and its interrelationships with the questions of power and identity, Collins and Blot (2003) attempted to explore why the model of literacy that sees it as a uniform set of

technical skills is powerful in educational policies on literacy and schooling. They drew on Foucault's conception of power as both regulatory and enabling in order to explore how "...impersonal procedures of knowledge – Foucault's power-truth – often enter into the most intimate sense of self. Practices of reading and writing often become acts of self-making: identifications made and potentials sensed through books..." (p. 97). They discussed how schooling and education have been important in the struggles of various oppressed groups such as Native Americans and African Americans and women in the history of the United States whereas "... schooling is also where lessons are learned about class, gender, and race, where one's self or one's literacy are deemed adequate or inadequate (p. 98)".

In an article that was dedicated to "the schooling of literacy," Street and Street (1991) observed that many accounts of literacy tend to link it with schooling and pedagogy, with literacies in other domains seen "as inferior attempts at the real thing, to be compensated for by enhanced schooling" (p. 143). They identified the characteristics of school literacy as (1) the treatment of reading and writing as intrinsically superior to oral uses of language; (2) the focus on the skills in moving around a written text through its layout; and (3) the consideration of language as an overpowering force with rules and requirements to be mastered. Furthermore, they argued that school literacy derived its importance not only from school as an institution but also from wider socio-political forces. They noted that these broader socio-political influences led literacy to act as a means of avoiding issues of structural inequality by turning them into questions about individual failure to learn literacy and perform academically.

As discussed above, the earlier work in the social theory of literacy questioned the naturalisation of the use of a particular form of language and literacy as the legitimate one, problematised the authority of particular users such as teachers, middle classes or grammarians and pointed to the importance of using people's existing cultural knowledge and literacy practices as positive resources of learning rather than inappropriate and deficient entities to be corrected (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Crowther et al., 2001; Street, 1984, 1993a).

A number of studies in the developed countries have discussed literacy programmes underlined by a social theory of literacy within the context of family literacy work. Auerbach (1989), Addison (2001) and Tett (2005) described programmes in the US and Scotland that based literacy education on people's everyday literacy concerns and practices and what they knew and did rather than seeing the home and community contexts as inadequate for literacy development. They described how the programmes built on people's existing literacy practices and encouraged them to problematise their understanding of educational failure and assumptions regarding the homogeneity of language forms. Hamilton (1999) discussed various initiatives within primary schools, family literacy programmes, adult education and higher education in England and Scotland that encouraged people to study their literacy practices in various settings and the meanings and roles of these different literacies in their lives.

Literacy programmes which were underlined by the social theory of literacy were implemented in developing countries ranging from Nepal to India and South Africa (A. Rogers, 2005). These programmes included "work-based literacies" in Botswana and Namibia (A. Rogers et al., 1999); the "Literacy comes second" model (A. Rogers, 2000, 2001); "The Literacy Shop" project in Nigeria (Aderinoye & Rogers, 2005); the SoUL (Social Uses of Literacy) project in South Africa (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996); the Community Literacy Project in Nepal (CLPN) (Chitrakar, 2005); and Nirantar - a resource centre for gender and education in New Delhi, India (Ghose, 2005). These programmes explored the ways in which people with little or no schooling used reading, writing and numeracy in their social and economic activities. They built links between literacy and development activities that the participants wanted to engage in. Furthermore, they encouraged literacy learners to produce their own literacy materials.

As for the studies on adult literacy courses that studied participation and engagement from an identity perspective within the broader context of people's life stories and the socio-cultural and institutional context, a number of these studies took place in developed country settings (Barton, Ivanic, Appleby, Hodge, & Tusting, 2007; Crowther, Maclachlan, & Tett, 2010; Fingeret & Drennon, 1997; Maclachlan, Hall,

Tett, Crowther, & Edwards, 2008; Rockhill, 1993). This work revealed that adult literacy learners came to the classes for goals related to their perceptions of themselves and their life chances. The ways in which they reinterpreted the literacy approach and pedagogical practices were rooted in these goals. In their study of persistence and achievement in Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) classes in Scotland, Maclachlan et al. (2008, p. 41) called these “life-goals,” which constituted people’s struggle to negotiate their life transitions and come closer to the sort of people they wanted to become. Rockhill (1993) provided poignant accounts of how poor Hispanic women in the United States yearned for schooling and literacy in the English language in order “to be ‘somebody’” who can set up a life free of male violence, economic exploitation and social exclusion (p. 171). She explained that the women in her study experienced literacy as “a threat and a desire: to learn English means to go to school, to enter a world that holds the promise of change and, because of this, threatens all they know” (p. 171). In a study that explored adults’ literacy learning in England, Barton et al. (2007) succinctly described how their participation and engagement in the classes took place within the broader context of their lives, with aspects that both enhanced and impeded their engagement in the classes:¹⁵

In any learning situation involving different individuals, each person will bring their own unique pattern of life history, identities and practice, circumstances and imagined future, and actively draw upon these resources differently in the learning setting, whether in positive or negative ways. Therefore, they will engage with what is going on in their own way, and potentially take something different away from that engagement. (p. 26)

Working with a social theory of literacy, researchers have also explored adults’ uses and valuations of literacy in different “developing country” contexts ranging from everyday life to literacy courses organised by governments and non-governmental

¹⁵ For example, Barton et al. (2007) described an English as a Second Language (ESOL) class where the teacher used a text as a tool for learning grammar, with an emphasis on verb patterns and new vocabulary, rather than as an interesting story with different meanings for each individual. However, the students explained that they enjoyed this activity because they liked the characters and the adventure in the story.

organisations. A number of these studies investigated women's literacy programmes and showed how women's uses and valuations of literacy were embedded in power relations framed by such dominant discourses as formal schooling, development and literacy within socio-political structures such as gender, race, age, ethnicity, caste and social class (Attwood et al., 2004; Friedrich, 2004; Kendrick & Hissani, 2007; Khandekar, 2004; Millican, 2004; Robinson-Pant, 2000a, 2004; Walter, 2004).¹⁶ I drew on the insights of these studies regarding the link between identity, literacy and power relations within socio-political structures to develop my analytical framework that studies women's identity-related participation and engagement in literacy classes as a social and discursive practice.

A number of studies underpinned by social theory of literacy pointed to women's own valuations of literacy and its role in their lives which were different from the dominant representations in policy and media discourses (Betts, 2004; Chopra, 2004; A. Rogers, Patkar, & Saraswathi, 2004). They provided case studies that challenged the stereotypical portrayal of the "illiterate" woman as lacking confidence and being oppressed because of her lack of literacy practices deemed as inevitable requirements of a modern and fulfilling life. These case studies showed how women who were confident and active members of their communities used everyday literacy skills such as signing one's name or reading the names of bus destinations as one of their numerous survival strategies.

I found that the studies conducted in government-funded literacy courses in Namibia and Botswana provided particularly useful insights for my research since they showed how particular valuations of literacy contributed to the construction of the subject positions people attempted to enter through their participation in adult literacy courses (Papen 2001, 2002; Riemer, 2008). The symbolic value of literacy

¹⁶ For studies that focused on programmes that did not target women and showed the links between power, identity and literacy in people's valuation of literacy and education, see Papen (2001, 2002); Riemer (2008); A. Rogers, Patkar, and Saraswathi (2004); Street (2001b); and Trudell and Klaas, (2010).

deriving from its association with formal schooling and the social status and prospects of better material circumstances linked with being educated was found to be the main rationale bringing men and women to these formal literacy classes in Namibia and Botswana. The aforementioned studies pointed to the role of the government's conception of modernisation in the assignment of a high social value to schooling and schoolbook knowledge. They explained that in their research contexts the dominant policy discourse equated modernisation with social and economic development, emphasizing the latter and linking schooling and education to economic growth with literacy as a major tool to create a modern society and increased economic activity. School attendance for the men and women in these studies had been made impossible because of structures of injustice such as race, gender and social class in these particular contexts. Through their participation in the state-organised formal literacy programmes as adults, the subjects of these studies appropriated the powerful literacy practices of government institutions and new economic contexts, nurturing measured hopes of becoming educated people with more prestigious and secure jobs. Likewise, Dyer and Choksi (2001) showed that the Rabaris of India – a nomadic pastoralist group – did not show interest in a community-based adult literacy programme because they associated being educated, with its prospects of social status and economic options, with formal schooling.

It can be suggested that studies from rural Ecuador and Mexico pointed to the similarities between people's expectations from literacy learning in a state-organised formal literacy programme and in formal schooling, highlighted by the link between being "schooled" and thus "educated" and "modern" (Rival, 1996; Rockwell, 1996). Rival noted that in the Ecuadorian Amazon, learning literacy through schooling involved taking on a new lifestyle and its new identities, which manifested themselves through changes such as starting to eat manufactured food and wearing clean clothes near a school building in a context where clothing was otherwise considered a nuisance. In rural Mexico people were reported to resist the authorities' notion of an educated villager which involved the teaching of agricultural and manual skills in village schools (Rockwell, 1996). The villagers in rural Mexico wanted access to the more prestigious urban version of the subject position of

educated person, which involved the mastery of beautiful handwriting necessary for governmental jobs, high reading scores and playing band instruments. Skinner and Holland (1996) discussed a similar resistance to dominant discourses of schooling whereby women appropriated the dominant discourse of development and national unity underpinning the formal schooling system in rural Nepal. They discussed how young women's understanding of the educated person and schooling intersected with their gender identity, leading them to consider education as a way of avoiding or postponing marriage and accessing an independent income.

The studies that focused on women's literacy programs in the developing world pointed to the symbolic value of literacy in driving women's participation in the courses, enabling them to feel and be seen as "educated" in an attempt to have increased control over their position in the social and economic structures in their context (Robinson-Pant, 2000a, 2000b; Friedrich, 2004; Millican, 2004; Walter, 2004). Unlike much of the literature on women's literacy in developing countries, which are concerned with the measurement of pre-determined outcomes and focus on the barriers to women's literacy learning, these studies were based on research approaches that started with women's questions and perspectives of literacy and learning and adopted an ethnographic approach (Robinson-Pant, 2000a).

The majority of the aforementioned studies on women's literacy programmes gave examples of women "taking hold of" (Kulick & Stroud, 1993, p. 55) what they were offered by the programmes. Some of these studies highlighted the ways in which women used literacy classes as safe public spaces to reflect on gendered power relations in their communities rather than focusing on becoming proficient readers and writers (Attwood et al., 2004; Khandekar, 2004). Attwood et al. described how women used the REFLECT literacy circles to discuss gender roles where literacy became a "by-product" rather than a central learning focus (p. 156). Khandekar described another similar community-based literacy programme in India, organised by CORO, a Mumbai-based NGO, out of which emerged a process of collective activism against the alcoholic habits of men and illegal liquor dens in the community. The CORO classes were described as providing women with social and mental spaces to get together for reasons not related to their familial responsibilities.

Khandekar noted that it was not literacy in itself that resulted in women's anti-alcohol activism but literacy as a collective process, which subsequently motivated women to develop reading and writing skills as one of their various survival strategies.

Other studies similarly showed how women engaged with and transformed the new literacy and pedagogical practices they encountered in the classrooms which were rooted in the programme planners' perceptions of literacy learning (Friedrich, 2004; Kendrick & Hissani, 2007; Millican, 2004; Papen 2001, 2002; Robinson-Pant, 2000a, 2000b; Walter, 2004;). Robinson-Pant (2000a, 2000b) explored adult women's experiences of literacy and literacy classes organized by a Western aid agency in a remote area of Western Nepal. She explained that women contested the dominant model of literacy and gender held by the aid agency staff – that written forms such as book keeping and minute keeping were privileged over oral practices and that writing and reading would help them in their roles as mothers and wives and were useful for income-generating activities. Women in this study did the minimum in terms of participating in new literacy practices such as minute- and record-keeping in order to preserve their image as a women's group in the eyes of the Western development agency, which made them eligible to apply for funding for projects. In reality, they did not see these new practices as a substitute for their existing ways of keeping track of finance or social gatherings, which were performed orally and/or by memory.

Robinson-Pant (2000b) also showed that women disputed the classroom practices by resisting individual questions and answering in unison or by helping each other in exams against the teachers' warnings. She also demonstrated how women distanced themselves from the health messages in the texts they read in the classes: they treated the reading passages as technical exercises in decoding the letters rather than as a communicative act involving meaning and discussion when they did not agree with the health messages in the texts such as the overriding importance of building latrines (Robinson-Pant, 2000a).

Another example of how participants reinterpreted the literacy approach and activities of a literacy programme for their own purposes came from the analysis by Papen (2001) of the Namibian National Literacy Programme. Papen explained that the Namibian literacy programme was informed by a technical approach to literacy, focusing on skills and the conveyance of formal school knowledge. Her observations of classroom practices suggested that the pedagogical practices reflected the dominant concept of literacy underlying the programme – teacher-guided question-answer sessions characterised by focus on correct repetition and full retention. However, when she talked with the learners about the content of the Primary Health Care book, she realised a particular way in which they took what they wanted from the courses. The participants explained to her that they did not learn any new information from the book, but they appreciated learning the content in English, which would give them a higher social status and chances of more gainful employment.

The study of Friedrich (2004) on the REFLECT literacy circles in Uganda showed that participants came to literacy circles to be recognised as educated and referred to them as school. Friedrich explained that rather than attempting to become proficient readers and writers as the planners would have wished, the participants in this locality used the content of the REFLECT sessions to demonstrate the prestigious school knowledge they learned there. Thus they took pride in parading their knowledge of the health messages from the circles such as the importance of eating a varied diet, boiling drinking water, or planting one's crops in orderly lines although their actions suggested that they did not carry out the practices they professed.

Millican (2004) showed that the older women in the Muthande Literacy Programme in South Africa chose what to take from the literacy programmes in various ways. Women turned sessions that aimed to help them read their letters and bank statements in the privacy of a one-to-one session into social gatherings attended by close friends where personal problems were talked about. They rejected new literacy practices such as producing booklets on matters such as health care, pensions and the rights of the elderly women, which the planners found particularly relevant to their lives. On the other hand, women embraced some other new practices involving the

telling and writing of stories and personal histories which validated their individual memories and voice. The older women in this study found that the literacy programme gave them an identity as an educated person, which they wanted to pass on to their grandchildren.

Walter (2004) likewise showed how women in rural Thailand took what they wanted from the literacy classes: women welcomed the aspects of the literacy programme that provided them with new income-generating opportunities and enhanced their leadership roles in the community rather than the aspects that reinforced their roles as mothers and homemakers. He explained that the women in his study considered literacy classes as a symbolic return to school and used the literacy programme as a platform to promote their collective demands for more desirable programmes. Furthermore, Walter gave similar examples of women's transformation of the pedagogical practices in the classroom where women insistently answered individual questions in unison and worked together and invited the help of their children during the exams. When the women in Walter's study got bored with the literacy textbook, which he observed to be a frequent event, they coaxed their teacher into writing down a song or a tongue twister on the board. An individual woman first read this out loud and they then sang through it with improvised dancing and lyrics about the superior competence and everyday survival skills of Thai women over Thai men.

Kendrick and Hissani (2007) aimed to explore women's reasons for participation and continued engagement in UPLIFT (Ugandan Programme of Literacy for Transformation) which was undertaken in more than one hundred communities in north-western Uganda. They described a programme that was based on oral and performance traditions of the communities such as dance, story and songs, which were accepted by the women enthusiastically. The programme seemed to see literacy as a key to improved health practices and income-generating opportunities, with literacy texts containing information on combating malaria and HIV/AIDS, basic hygiene, making compost, achieving better nutrition and forming women's groups to start small businesses (Kendrick & Hissani, 2007; One Country Online Newsletter, 2004). Women in Kendrick and Hissani's study, however, explained that they came to the classes to be able to read and write letters rather than to learn health

information, although they seemed to receive only two or three letters a year. When explored in detail it became apparent that reading and writing letters gave women an increased social status in their community – their emerging literate identity made them eligible to get involved in political meetings or Bible study groups. Women were also described as enjoying the sense of independence in reading and writing their letters on their own and thus keeping the private issues in them to themselves.

Drawing on the insights of the studies discussed above, this study focuses on the relationship of literacy with the discourses and power relations that underpin it, influencing the sort of identities women wanted to take on through their participation in the courses and their engagement with the literacy and pedagogic practices in the courses. In doing so, the study aims to broaden the insights into women's identity-related participation into literacy courses, such as the symbolic value of literacy and the concept of educated person. It furthermore investigates the roots of the identities that women involved in my study attempted to take on through their participation in the courses within their life stories, focusing on the dialectic between accounts of selves and the effects of the wider structures of power (Griffiths, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c). Another contribution of the thesis is that it explicitly focuses on the interaction of the different meanings of the subject positions driving women's participation with socio-political structures such as gender, ethnicity, social class, migration status and the extent of poverty individual women lived in. Such a focus helps highlight the role of literacy in the creation and maintenance of certain discourses and structures of injustice which regulate access to prestigious forms of knowledge, identities and economic resources in the women's particular contexts. Furthermore, the study is a first of its kind in Turkey since it does not assume that what women need most is access to school literacy practices. As discussed on pages 22- 28, this seems to be the assumption of several of the paucity of studies in Turkey on women's literacy (Durgunoğlu et al., 2003; Nohl & Sayılan, 2004; Yıldız, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2011).

Before I move on to the concept of discourse adopted in my study role in my analytical framework, I will discuss four theoretical concerns that need to be identified to explain how I draw on the social theory of literacy.¹⁷ Firstly, my idea of women's identity-related participation in and engagement with literacy classes emerged out of my exploration of literacy studies that highlighted people's attempts to appropriate dominant literacy practices in educational and everyday settings, influencing their negotiation of their identities and their participation in the courses (Bartlett, 2001, 2005; Fingeret & Drennon, 1997; Papen 2001, 2002; Robinson-Pant, 2000a, 2000b). Since my focus is women's identity-related participation and engagement in literacy courses, literacy practices outside of the classes were important for my research only to the extent that the discourses that seemed to bring women to the literacy classes were related with literacy practices in various institutional and everyday settings and their associated forms of knowledge and identities. I did not attempt to observe women's uses of literacy in everyday settings or collect texts and items they used in everyday literacy practices in a systematic way. However, I tried to understand women's uses and valuations of literacy in everyday contexts through their references to them in the interviews.

The second theoretical concern related to my use of the social theory of literacy is concerned with the technical skills involved in literacy learning. While I highlight the identity processes and the discourses that underpin the subject positions that women negotiate, I do not disregard the technical aspect of reading and writing which involves the coding and decoding of letters (Street, 2003). It can be suggested that my focus on discourses and subject positions has the potential to identify the sort of literacy skills that women try to improve and the relation of these skills with dominant discourses as well as their embeddedness in specific social contexts.

The third theoretical concern has to do with my choice of the term literacy practices and my focus on how women used written texts made up of letters and words as their

¹⁷ I gained valuable insights from Papen (2002) in thinking about how I draw on the social theory of literacy in my study.

major medium of communication. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) and Jewitt (2008) discussed written texts as one mode of communication used alongside gestures, images, layout, sounds and colour. The New London Group (1996) used the concept of “multiliteracies” to broaden the definition of literacy to include texts associated with multimedia technologies and their visual images. Thus I find it important to recognise the importance of the increasing use of other modes of making and distributing knowledge along with and in addition to written texts. However, I focus on the use of written texts since they were what women mostly sought to have an increased control over in literacy classes.

The fourth theoretical concern is about how I approached the use of numeracy in the classrooms. Since the uses of literacy and numeracy were fused in women’s engagement with numeracy learning in the literacy courses in my study, I adopted a socially-situated notion of numeracy (Maddox, 2001). Thus I did not consider the uses of numeracy as separate practices and focused on their merging with reading, writing and talking. After the discussion of the ways in which my study was underpinned by a social theory of literacy, in the next section I will discuss the concept of discourse employed in my theoretical framework and its relevance for my study.

3.1.4 The concept of discourse

The work of Michel Foucault has been a major influence in discourse analysis studies (Baxter, 2003; Cameron, 2001; Fairclough, 1992, 2003). The understanding of discourse in my study rests on Norman Fairclough’s analysis of discourse which conceptualises discourses in a symbiotic relationship with social structures, describing them as “different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice” (1992, p. 3). Fairclough suggested that social life can be seen as a network of practices or ways of interacting with others with the potential to transform the social structures within which they take place (2001, p. 122). He noted that the focus on social practices makes it possible to highlight their intermediary role between structures and agency, which manifests itself in social events carried out by people in everyday life (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2001, 2003). Fairclough

(2003) considered texts as elements in social practices, including written and printed texts such as newspaper articles, shopping lists or transcripts of interviews. Building on Foucault's work, he located linguistic features of texts which realise and manifest themselves in discourses in their particular context and suggested that discourses not only represent social relationships and entities but constitute these and position people differently as social subjects (Fairclough, 1992).

In Fairclough's work, discourses have three major aspects which merge into each other in different ways whilst they can be analytically separated (Fairclough, 2003). He drew parallels between these three aspects and Foucault's work on the role of discourses in meaning-making in social life. He thus suggested that (1) Discourses represent the world through different perspectives and thus they produce bodies of knowledge and their attendant values, norms and concepts; (2) They are "part of the action" in social interactions, mainly referring to the power of discourses produced by dominant institutions and social structures which influence people's lives and identities; (3) Likewise, discourses have an identity-forming aspect since "... discourse figures alongside bodily behaviour in constituting particular ways of being, particular social and personal identities" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 28).

As I explained in the previous section, my research questions grew out of my initial engagement with the work of Bartlett and Holland (2002) and Bartlett (2001, 2005, 2007) that drew on social theories of literacy to show how people attempted to feel and be seen as educated through their participation in literacy classes in Brazil. This participation was driven by discourses of formal schooling and literacy within the socio-political structures of gender, race and social class in people's particular settings. Thus I found that the most useful way to approach my research questions was by considering the subject positions within particular discourses that women literacy participants draw on when they explain their participation and engagement in the courses. I found it equally important to pay attention to the broader institutional and socio-economic and cultural structures within which the literacy courses and women's participation in and engagement with them took place. Thus Fairclough's ideas on discourse, developed through his engagement with the work of Foucault, were useful for my research because they pointed to the identity processes created by

discourses and located these processes within a broader context, as well as seeing discourses and the identities created by them in a dialectical relationship with social structures.

The next chapter is concerned with the methodology and methods of my study. It discusses how my study adopted an ethnographic approach to feminist discourse analysis. It explores the ontological and epistemological influences on my research. Next it introduces the research sites and participants, followed by methods of data collection, including interviews, observations, fieldnotes and document analysis. The chapter then explains the process of data analysis and interpretation. It goes on to discuss the issues of validity and ethics in a small scale qualitative study informed by feminist methodologies. The chapter ends with an examination of the role of my personal background and socio-political positions throughout the research process.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.0 Introduction

This chapter explores my ontological and epistemological positions and how they have influenced the methodological decisions taken in the research process. It discusses how my study adopted an ethnographic approach to feminist discourse analysis. It then discusses the adopted methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. Throughout the chapter I do this in a reflexive way to help the reader to understand why I have taken the decisions that influenced the research process and to evaluate the truthfulness and value of the research. The chapter ends with a discussion that highlights the issue of reciprocity and the socio-political positions and values of the researcher and women's perceptions of these that influenced the research process.

4.1 An ethnographic approach

In a conventional sense, ethnography has been understood to involve studying a small number of communities, mostly a single community for a prolonged period, often over a year or more, to document and understand its life and the values embedded in it (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). Judged against these criteria, my study was not a full-fledged ethnography, but had only "an ethnographic approach" to the study of women's identity-related participation in and engagement with literacy courses (Baxter, 2003, p. 85). I thus used multiple research methods, including participant observation in the classrooms and creating fieldnotes and strived to make detailed descriptions of my observations and conversations in the classrooms, administrators' rooms and the neighbourhoods in which the PECs are located. An important reason to choose an ethnographic approach to feminist discourse analysis was my realisation before starting my fieldwork in Istanbul that I had a limited knowledge of the provision of the Level 2 literacy courses I wanted to focus on. My attempts to reach the centres from the UK and the initial months of frustration in Istanbul helped me realise that Level 2 literacy courses did not seem to be as readily available to potential participants as the policy documents and government statements presented them. Thus I found that an ethnographic approach

would help me gain important insights into the social and institutional conditions within which women attempted to find courses to attend.

Furthermore, I found that an ethnographic approach had a good potential to study women's engagement with the classes and the ways in which they interpreted the content of the classes and their pedagogical practices. I was aware that People's Education Centres were powerful institutions due to their wide network and official authority to provide literacy certificates that enabled adults to start or continue with their formal education. The available research on the literacy courses in People's Education Centres is not comprehensive. However, as discussed in Chapter Two on pages 24-28, the research did point out that the highly centralised literacy curriculum and official requirements of attendance were modified by individual teachers in line with the needs of their participants (Güngör, 2006; G. İnce, 2008; Ünlühisarcıklı, 2008). These studies were based on interviews with classroom teachers and described how teachers left out parts of the curriculum they found too difficult for their students, regarding the duration of the programmes as too short for a curriculum that considered overloaded. Thus I found that an ethnographic approach to women's engagement with the classes would have a good potential to identify and understand how women negotiated their own priorities faced with a centralised curriculum based on primary school curricula and the discourses of literacy and teacher-student relationship they found in the literacy classroom.

4.2 Combining an ethnographic approach with feminist discourse analysis

I drew on insights from a number of studies that had a feminist approach to critical discourse analysis, which rested on Norman Fairclough's understanding of discourse (Holmes, 2005; Lazar 2005a; Magalhães, 2005; Remlinger, 2005; Wodak, 2005). Drawing on Foucault, Fairclough (2003, p. 124-129) noted that the analysis of discourse was the analysis of the linguistic features of texts with a view to identifying how certain features contributed to the formation and presentation of a particular perspective from which the world was represented. Thus he focused on the dialectical relationship between linguistic features, realising and manifesting

themselves in discourses, and social practices, institutions, relationships and contexts. The framework Fairclough & Cheorelaki (1999, p. 62) proposed for discourse analysis asked for (1) “the analysis of the conjuncture” which included providing information on the political, socio-economic and cultural context in which discourses were located, (2) analysis of the ways in which discourses were both located in and constituted particular social practices, and (3) the role of discourses as resources to enable some social actions and constrain others. Combining an ethnographic approach with an understanding of discourse analysis as discussed above allowed me to adopt a holistic and dynamic view of the identity processes involved in women’s participation and engagement in the literacy classes. This holistic approach has been possible because I considered discourses as historically, institutionally and socially located and thus combined textual analysis with socio-cultural understandings of the relationship between discourses, people, institutions and the broader socio-cultural, economic and political contexts (Papen, 2002).

This thesis attends to the institutional, social, economic, historical and political contexts which have emerged as important forces in influencing women’s participation and engagement in the classes. However, it cannot claim to provide an in-depth analysis of each context. I acknowledge that each woman will be influenced by multiple and overlapping contexts in explaining their participation and engagement in the classes. For this reason in Chapter Five I have dedicated a section to exploring the importance of the symbolic value of literacy courses within women’s life stories. This section provides insights into the interactions of structural forces and socio-political norms that have played an important role in women’s giving meaning to the subject positions that drove their participation in the course. Furthermore, in order to provide as much insight as possible into the contextual factors in women’s participation and engagement in the courses, in Chapter Seven I highlight the interactions between different meanings of subject positions and the socio-political structures that influence them.

The aim of this study is not generalisation. The study acknowledges the individuality of women’s experiences of literacy and identities and the role of these in driving their participation in the literacy courses. However, it is possible to recognise the

overlaps and commonalities between the meanings women involved in this study gave to the identities they want to take on through their participation in the literacy courses. All of my participants are women who live in various degrees of economic and social hardship and attend the literacy courses organised by People's Education Centres as individuals who were denied the right to basic education. The majority of them migrated to Istanbul from small towns and villages in Anatolia. Thus there are likely to be commonalities between their experiences and valuations of literacy and education and the identities that they attempt to take on through their participation in the courses. I expand on this when I introduce the participants and the People's Education Centres as sites of my study on page 69-78.

However, while thinking about the identities of women in relation to their participation in the literacy courses in two disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Istanbul and the possible commonalities in their perspectives, the thesis does not see the participants as representative of women literacy participants who constitute a homogenous group. It acknowledges that it is impossible to define for once and all what it means to be a woman, a rural-urban migrant woman or a literacy course participant and the consequences of being a member of multiple and overlapping identity categories (Griffiths, 1998, 2003). Thus the thesis recognises the importance of striving to take into consideration identity categories such as gender, social class, ethnicity, migration status and age that intersect and fuse with each other within the particular trajectory of women's lives.

Here it is important to state that I do not consider the similarities that the readers of this study can establish between the research contexts of this study and other contexts as generalisations that can be extended to other situations without considering the features of particular contexts and period of time. I see the findings and results derived from my study as "...knowledge of particulars and specifics, rather than on the one hand, knowledge of universalisable theories and timeless truths, or on the other, knowledge of techniques and skills to turn out certain products" (Griffiths & Macleod, 2008, p. 129).

I find that it is of key importance to understand the specific socio-political, economic, historical and policy contexts in which women's accounts of participation and engagement in literacy courses took place in order to decide on the relevance of the findings of this study for other contexts. It is also important to acknowledge that when the readers decide on the extent of similarities between the contexts described in this study and other contexts they engage in an interpretative task. What is in question is "the interpreted context" (Larsson, 2009, p. 35). Furthermore, as the research contexts described in this study change and evolve, so do the ways in which the readers make sense of the interpretations of this study as they encounter new perspectives. As Griffiths and Macleod (2008) explain by drawing on Hannah Arendt's concept of natality: "New perspectives in themselves can change what we know and do as we make practical judgements and decisions – what we perceive, what we judge to be at issue, and what we take our role to be" (p. 130).

It was instructive for me to find out that in an article that was dedicated to generalization in qualitative research, Payne and Williams (2005) discussed the parallels that the readers of a qualitative research study can draw between the contexts and findings described in the original study and their own contexts in terms of "moderatum generalizations" (p. 296). They then moved on to explaining that these generalizations "are not attempts to produce sweeping sociological statements that hold good over long periods of time, or across ranges of cultures. Second, they are moderately held, in the sense of a political or aesthetic view that is open to change" (p. 297). Thus I find that the commonalities in women's perspectives that are discussed within the findings of this study are better described as "heuristic devices intended to sharpen perception so that our patterns of seeking and seeing are more acute" (Eisner, 2001, p. 141). In order to help the reader to assess the value and truthfulness of the specific interpretations and results derived from the study, I provide as much contextual detail as possible. I also write about the role of my personal and intellectual positions in the research process and attempt to be clear about the analytical processes involved in my data analysis and interpretation.

From the very beginning I was certain that I wanted my research to focus on women who constituted the majority of the participants in adult literacy courses in Turkey.

What is known about their reasons for coming to the classes could only be defined as “vague” (Sayılan & Yıldız, 2009, p. 745). I conducted this research as part of my commitment to feminism as a theory and movement for social justice developed as a response to the oppression and silencing of women and girls (Griffiths, 1995b). I found feminist methodologies useful for my research because they were underpinned by their commonalities in challenging traditional epistemologies that found the subjective in the sense of the personal and anecdotal as obstructing ways of producing reliable knowledge (Griffiths, 1995a). Griffiths identified the commonalities among the feminist challenges to traditional epistemologies as (1) their concern with the self of an individual; (2) their having a moral and political stance since they have been developed in response to the oppression of women and girls; (3) their finding theorising as an indispensable endeavour; and (4) the acknowledgment that there could be no possibility of the acquisition and production of unchanging knowledge since all knowledge was to be subjected to critique from different viewpoints that would bring current ways of thinking into question. Based on these epistemological commonalities, Griffiths (1995a) produced four methodological principles: (1) The experience of different individuals must be included in any endeavour to produce knowledge; (2) power relations are fundamental in our attempt to understand each other because power affects the language that we use and that is used about us, and social inequalities affect communication; (3) theorising is “a communal endeavour to understand each other... a way of comparing and discussing different subjectivities and learning from each other – a process of abstracting and ordering one’s own understanding” (p. 67); (4) since there is no possibility of unchanging knowledge, we must constantly seek different perspectives that will enable us to see our current knowledge with new perceptions so that we can apply this new synthesis to the new perceptions.

Adopting a feminist methodology as explained above, I drew on Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) (Lazar, 2005b; Wodak, 2008) and Feminist Post-structuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA) (Baxter, 2003, 2008) in the following ways. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) as discussed by Lazar (2005a) is mainly concerned with identifying and critiquing discourses which contribute to the

sustenance of power relations that privilege men and exclude and subordinate women. Lazar noted that FCDA recognised the differences among women due to the interaction of gender with other categories of identity and power relations based on race, ethnicity, age, social class, sexual orientation and so forth. She argued that FCDA attempted to recognise and study difference among women whilst finding the focus on difference as reconcilable with the wider feminist political project of social justice for women. Thus I found Lazar's understanding of feminism and its role in Critical Discourse Analysis clear and useful for my methodology.

As for Wodak's (2008) specification of the principles of FCDA, she pointed to the importance of taking into consideration the links between gender and other identities related with social class, ethnicity and so on in an attempt to become clear about when and how gender came into play in a text. This point helped me become more reflexive about when to highlight gender and its interaction with other discourses and identity categories in my analysis of women's interviews and my fieldnotes from classroom observations and informal conversations. To repeat, my methodology was informed by Baxter's Feminist Post-structuralist Discourse Analysis (2003, 2008) in its approach to studying women's engagement with the discourses of literacy and teacher-student relationship they found in the classrooms. Baxter (2002a, 2002b, 2003) developed her methodology in the context of studying gender and classroom talk and focused on how girls shifted between positions of power and powerlessness in educational settings within multiple and sometimes conflicting discourses. Her approach to discourse analysis helped me consider the classroom as the scene of multiple discourses within which women positioned themselves differently at different times. Her conception of power as a changing feature of social relations helped me focus on the moments women moved towards more powerful subject positions in the classroom and their ways of doing this. While focusing on local contexts and moments of agency, I found it equally important to keep in mind the wider structures of injustice that contributed to the networks of power women found themselves in.

In Chapter Three I explored the extent of my interest in post-structuralism and the aspects of it I found useful for my analytical framework. To repeat briefly, I consider

post-structuralism “as a variant of ‘post-modernism’” (Griffiths, 1995b, p. 226), which questioned the idea of universal structures in producing and explaining bodies of knowledge and events. The influence of postmodern thinking that underpins my assumptions about the nature of knowledge can be summarised as follows. Firstly, my conception of discourse and the subject positions/patches of identity/identities made available by them acknowledge the influence of both the material consequences of structures of injustice and the role of networks of social power in conferring differing levels of recognition to particular subject positions (Griffiths, 1998, p. 79; Griffiths, 2003, p. 53-54). Secondly, postmodernist thinking helped me focus on local contexts, socio-political positions and agency in understanding women’s ways of negotiating subject positions in their participation and engagement with the classes. Thirdly, all bodies of knowledge are seen as provisional and open to critique and revision. Thus, my framework acknowledges it is “very helpful to lose undue optimism about the possibilities of finding any utopian solution, or of finding a framework which will explain everything for once and for all” (Griffiths, 1998, p. 79).

While acknowledging all bodies of knowledge as provisional, drawing on Griffiths (1998, p. 75), I find the question of purpose of social and educational research central to my framework since my view of social research and knowledge production acknowledges that feminist social research can espouse a “a guarded optimism” about its contribution to theory and practice of educational research. Thus while my research attempts to understand the discourses and subject positions that seem to drive women’s participation and engagement in literacy courses in Turkey, my aim is not limited to identifying these discourses. This research aims to reframe the issue of women’s participation and engagement in literacy courses in Turkey by providing a different perspective than what is found in the policy documents and most of the available literature on adult literacy courses in Turkey (Griffiths & Macleod, 2008). It aims to explore women’s own perspectives of literacy and education within their particular contexts in order to explore the subject positions that bring them to the literacy courses and the relationship of this identity work with their engagement with the classes.

I acknowledge the complexity of contexts and the overlaps between socio-political structures involved in women's accounts of participation and engagement. As a researcher it has been my responsibility to decide on the type of contexts and stories to include in women's accounts of their participation and engagement in the courses. I consider women involved in my study as co-producers of knowledge and understandings, as participants I am researching with (Griffiths, 1998, p. 40). Through the contexts and stories they raised in their accounts, the women contributed to the decisions regarding the discourses and socio-political structures highlighted in this thesis as the ones that underpin their participation in the courses. To some extent, they were involved in the methods adopted, details of which are explained on pages 78-82. Furthermore, in my interviews, especially in the first in-depth interview, I tried to encourage women to guide the topics and focus of the interview. However, I am aware that I decided on the research agenda to a great extent and the outcome of this study will enable *me* to gain an academic title. Furthermore, although I wanted to share my initial analysis with women soon after the end of the course and the last interviews with them, time restrictions did not allow this. I was able to share my emerging analysis and interpretations with them throughout the course. I did this by discussing the topics emerging in the initial interviews and classroom observations and my changing understandings with women in the subsequent interviews and conversations. Thus I cannot claim that this study employed a full-fledged collaborative and participatory design. What I do in this research is to provide as much contextual detail as possible that is relevant to the participation and engagement of my participants in the literacy courses. This will give insights into the complexity of women's identity-related participation and engagement in literacy classes, which took place in contexts which will exhibit different degrees of familiarity to different readers. Furthermore, I discuss the role of my values, socio-political positions, personal history and assumptions in the research process which I explore on pages 88-93. Next I discuss my understanding of validity and ethical considerations of my research.

4.3 Validity and ethical considerations

A number of scholars have noted that the standards for judging the value of

quantitative research projects should be conceptualised differently for qualitative research projects (Elliott, 2005; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). As alternative criteria Elliott suggested “the stability, trustworthiness, and scope of findings” (p. 22) whereas Rossman and Rallis put forward “the rigour, credibility or truth value, and usefulness” (p. 67). The strategies to help fulfil these criteria were described as providing rich descriptions of the theoretical and methodological orientation of the study; gathering data over a period of time or intensively; drawing from multiple data sources, methods, or investigators; sharing interpretations of the emergent findings with participants; using a critical friend to discuss interpretations; the researcher’s reflecting on and writing about the role of her personal biography – her interests, values and insights – in shaping her project; and documenting the process of gathering, analysing, and interpreting the data (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

The question of validity of social research is central to my research since my framework acknowledges that no endeavour of knowledge production and representation involving human beings can be independent of the human beings involved in this act (Griffiths, 1998, 2003). Validity is a contested concept and I present a brief overview of the understanding of validity that underpins this research to allow the reader to evaluate its worth. I draw on Griffith and Macleod’s (2008) discussion of validity in relation to the use of auto/biographical research. This is particularly relevant to my research since I draw on women’s life stories to an important extent in exploring the subject positions that drove their participation in the courses. Griffiths and Macleod (2008) discussed the “soundness” of auto/biographical research in relation to policy decisions. They noted that they “have chosen to use the term “sound” because in logic it distinguishes truth from validity: that is, validity is a property of a logical argument, while truth is the property of a premise” (p. 125). Furthermore, they noted that the humanities and the social sciences should not develop their concepts of validity in reaction to the definitions of validity in the natural sciences. Thus they identified the following meanings to evaluate the validity of research that uses auto/biographical accounts. First, they discussed the validity of a research project in terms of its being “well grounded or

justifiable: being at once relevant and meaningful” (p. 134). They noted that auto/biographies may be relevant and significant because they are ordinary: “That is, they show something of the lived experience of ordinary life in all its complexity and everyday differences between contexts” (p. 134). It can be suggested that the women in my study were ordinary individuals who lived at differing levels of poverty and were denied the right to education and prestigious identities and literacy practices. These aspects of their accounts might be seen as typical of those of women living in similar socio-political and economic conditions in Turkey. However, in another sense, the policy discourses in Turkey do not represent women’s own valuations of literacy and education and the social injustices that influence their life chances. As explored on pages 95-99, the official language policy aims to teach only school literacy and ignores the role of bilingualism in education. Thus my study is relevant and significant because it explores the life stories and accounts of participation and engagement in literacy courses by women who were marginalised for reasons such as gender, ethnicity, different degrees of poverty and rural-urban migration.

Secondly, Griffiths & Macleod (2008) discussed validity in terms of the extent to which a research study has conclusions “correctly derived from premises” (p. 135). The key issues alluded to were representation, genre and literary quality. In relation to genre and literary quality, Griffiths and Macleod noted that the genres available to the original tellers of a story and the researcher who re-tells it - such as a happy or tragic ending or no definitive ending - influence any story in question. Throughout Chapter Seven, particularly on page 210, I explore how I considered women’s accounts of participation and engagement in literacy courses in terms of the examples of genres discussed by Griffiths & Macleod. The literary quality of the stories I tell is a fraught subject for me because I am not a native speaker of English. I have to work hard to be able to produce the nuances and multiple layers of meaning that I hope to convey through my writing. I would suggest the women in my study whose mother tongue was not Turkish experienced similar difficulties in telling me their accounts of their life stories and participation in the courses.

As for the issue of representation, that is, how I interpret and represent the women’s stories in this dissertation, it requires me to be reflexive about the role of socio-

political positions, women's perceptions of me as a researcher belonging to various identity categories and the immediate research situations in the type of accounts women told me. Representation is also concerned with choices and judgments I have made about the stories that I have included in women's accounts of participation and engagement in the literacy courses. This point brings the discussion to the third meaning identified by Griffiths and Macleod (2008) to evaluate the validity of a research project that uses autobiographic accounts: reflexivity. In this thesis I provide as much contextual detail as possible and try to be reflexive about the role of my assumptions, values and socio-political positions in the research process. Thus I show how I took into consideration the effects of my own and the participants' positionings in various identity categories such as gender, ethnicity and social class on the processes of knowledge production and presentation; I also write about my ethical views and politics as a researcher (Griffiths, 1998). Throughout pages 88-93, I discuss how my personal histories as a teacher, researcher, relatively economically privileged position as a highly educated woman, speaker of standard Turkish and a prestigious foreign language – English, and my familiarity with the academic research on literacy influence any interpretation I make. On pages 89-90 in my account of the research process and participants I describe how my relationship with the women in this study started and evolved throughout the research process. As part of my view of social research as a revisable endeavour that is open to critique, I write about how I arrive at the analytical points that I make and the role of the perspectives of the researcher and the participants in this joint process of meaning making.

To think through ethical considerations relevant to my research, I have used the British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines (BERA, 2004). Before providing the participants with a consent form and information sheet about my research, I had individual conversations with and gave a short presentation to the participants in Lale and Akasya classrooms about the purpose of my research and what their involvement in my research meant. Then with individual women who expressed an interest in my study, I discussed issues pertaining to the voluntary informed consent and anonymity and confidentiality of the research processes. I discussed with them the right to control the recording and handling of the data.

Women were also informed that they would be able to withdraw from the study at any time and not answer questions they felt uneasy about. I chose to provide the information sheets and consent forms after these discussions in order to not impose written texts on women whose reasons for coming to literacy courses involved learning to deal with similar official-looking texts (See Appendix A for the information sheet). I use pseudonyms for the names of the People's Education Centres, and women and teachers involved in this study. I do not provide details about the neighbourhoods and People's Education Centres which might lead to their identification. I have also omitted the names of some of the places from women's life stories.

The ethical considerations of my research were not limited to the processes of informed consent and confidentiality. Drawing on Griffiths (1998, p. 38-40), I was careful that women did not feel compelled to participate in my research due to the power ascribed to research and thus to my status as a researcher and highly educated woman. For this reason, I was careful that the classroom teachers did not talk about me and my research to the women before I presented myself to them. I did not want the women to feel that their participation in my research would please the teachers and the reverse would displease them. On page 82, I discuss how I dealt with this issue at Akasya PEC. Furthermore, at Akasya PEC, the conditions of violence created by the teacher Ali made it necessary that I attempt to discuss these conditions sensitively with women. However, as I was involved in the interviews and observations of the classrooms, I had a difficult time understanding women's ways of challenging these conditions, partly due to my discomfort and distress in finding conditions of violence in this classroom. I explore my changing perspective as a result of the data and my encounter with new concepts relevant to this issue in Chapter Seven. Although I was able to discuss with the women involved in my study the conditions of violence created by the classroom teacher I could not discuss my perspective on conditions of violence with Ali, the teacher. I see it as my ethical responsibility to do this in a reasonable, open and confidential manner at the earliest

opportunity.¹⁸ Furthermore, I consider it my ethical responsibility to explore the influences of my positionality, e.g. gender, educational status, wealth, standard Turkish and English-speaking woman, and assumptions on the kind of knowledge this study produces. During the research process, I also considered the issue of reciprocity as part of my ethical responsibility and explore this on page 92-93. Next I introduce the process through which I chose the research sites for my study and introduce the women who participated in my study.

4.4 Research sites and participants

Initially, I had decided to conduct my study at the Akasya People's Education Centre due to my familiarity with the course administration, hoping that this would give me a good chance of having access to one of the Level 2 literacy courses at this centre. The website of the centre made it appear very easy to get in touch with them through telephone or e-mail. However, my initial calls to the centre from the UK were left unanswered, causing me a considerable amount of anxiety. Thus I telephoned three other People's Education Centres in Istanbul which would potentially have several and frequent Level 2 literacy courses since about a quarter of the population in these districts were made up of individuals who reported in the 2000 census that they were illiterate or they were literate but they did not have a primary school diploma, making them potential Level 2 literacy course participants (Güngör, 2006).

One of the three centres was not certain that they would organise Level 2 literacy courses in 2011, whereas the other two told me that instead of second-level literacy courses, they offered a written examination to people who had basic literacy and numeracy skills. They assured me that someone who had basic literacy skills could easily pass this examination and get the second-level course diploma. This information was unsettling for me since it suggested that the focus of my PhD project - the Level 2 basic education and literacy courses - did not seem to be as available as they were made to seem in the policy documents and literacy campaign publicity

¹⁸ I intend to do this after I complete my PhD studies in the UK by getting in touch with the classroom teacher Ali and sharing women's perceptions of the teacher-student relationship in the Akasya literacy classroom and my interpretation of their perceptions.

materials. When I finally managed to talk with an administrator from Akasya PEC on the phone, he told me that there were two second-level literacy courses going on at their centre. He added that both courses took place at the weekends - one in the morning and the other one in the afternoon - and that the centre was going to start new weekend courses in February 2011. Having gained this reassuring bit of information, I arrived in Istanbul in late 2010 and immediately visited the Akasya PEC and introduced myself to the centre administration and course teachers. During the month of January 2011, which was the last month of the second-level literacy courses at the time, I observed most of the morning and afternoon classes, getting familiar with the centre and introducing my research to the teachers, both of whom agreed to let me conduct my research project in their classrooms.

My first visits to Akasya Education Centre re-introduced me to the hardships of life in a *gecekondu* (shanty house) neighbourhood after my moving away from Istanbul. After my undergraduate studies in Istanbul, I worked in the educational projects of international NGOs for women and girls in the earthquake-stricken regions of Iran and Pakistani Kashmir. This was followed by my teaching English at a primary school in my relatively wealthy home town on the southern coast of Turkey and postgraduate studies in the UK.

The *gecekondu* neighbourhood where Akasya PEC was located was formed as a result of waves of rural-urban migration since the 1950s¹⁹. *Gecekondu*, which in Turkish literally means settled/perched on overnight, is “in essence a legal definition that describes a makeshift, uncomfortable hut erected overnight on land owned by the state, municipality or individuals in defiance of the building codes and property rights” (Karpas, 2004, paragraph 20). The state has been consistent in its lack of

¹⁹ The reasons for the first major wave of urban-rural migration in Turkey, which took place from the late 1940s to the early 1980s, were noted as the mechanisation of agriculture, overpopulation, the lack of arable land and the opening up of the Turkish economy to the capitalist markets (Karpas, 1976, 2004). Thus the rate of urban population, which was 25 percent of the total population in 1950, increased to 59 percent in 1990 (Işık, 2005). In 2011, the rate of urban population was 76,8% (TÜİK, 2013).

ability and willingness to provide planned urbanisation and socio-economic support to rural migrants coming to Istanbul from different regions in Anatolia (Işık & Pınarcıoğlu, 2001). Thus the migrants built their single-storey, makeshift *gecekondu* houses on public land with their own labour and resources.

Starting in the early 1980s political parties seeking electoral success have promised to grant title deeds to the *gecekondu* land and provide infrastructure and basic services in return for votes (Işık & Pınarcıoğlu, 2001; Karpaz, 2004). The major wave of *gecekondu* legalisation in the 1980s prompted the transformation of single-storey *gecekondus* into poorly-built, multiple-storey apartment buildings (Işık & Pınarcıoğlu, 2001). The transformation of *gecekondus* into multi-storey apartment buildings could be witnessed in the Akasya PEC neighbourhood where the occasional shanty house co-existed with haphazardly-built apartment buildings adjacent to each other in narrow streets which mostly had no pavements.

Akasya People's Education Centre was located in a neighbourhood which came into existence to provide a migrant workforce for the industrial areas in the vicinity. The only surviving industry at the time of my project was textiles, which had become or was still the source of income for about half of the participants in the course. The main street bustled with human and car traffic during the day, displaying some shiny-looking stores and pavements with young trees on them. However, these signs of wealth faded away starting with the first back street parallel to the main street – with dimly-lit, small textile workshops on the basements of apartment buildings and young women and men standing next to their carts full of recyclable rubbish that they could sell.

I had decided to focus on a Level 2 literacy course because it took 180 hours of classroom time - four to five months - in contrast to the 90 - 120 hour Level 1 basic literacy courses. This decision was based on my judgment that the longer duration of the Level 2 literacy course would provide me with enough time to have repeated interviews and conversations with the participants and make enough observations in the classrooms to understand how women engaged with the courses. However, since I wanted to make sure that my choice of a Level 2 literacy course as my research site

had a firm grounding, I visited the Level 1 literacy course at the Akasya PEC in the month of January and observed that several course participants seemed to attend the course several times. Furthermore, some women in the Level 1 literacy course started the course toward the end of the course date and some others did not attend the course some of the time since the classroom teacher considered them proficient enough to pass the end-of-the-course examination. Thus she registered them in the course and ensured that they got their literacy certificate. This process of circumventing the literacy regulations in order to adapt the courses to the needs of participants has been described as “surviving regulation” by Ünlühisarcıklı (2009, p. 247). Additionally, the classroom teacher was not certain that she would open a new course in the following months since she was considering moving to another city. Thus, my initial decision to focus on the Level 2 courses seemed to have justifiable grounds in terms of their potential to give me sufficient opportunities for building rapport with the participants and conducting repeated interviews and observations.

However, the start of the new Level 2 literacy courses at the Akasya PEC proved to be quite problematic, taking a month longer than the centre administration had promised. The postponement of the starting date for the Level 2 literacy courses seemed to be caused by the two examinations which took place within two weeks. These examinations aimed to enable people to get the Level 2 literacy diploma without attending the course. In order to take the examination one needed to pay an examination fee, something I first learned from a relative of an examination participant and later from women who participated in my study. The fact that the new courses at the Akasya PEC were not starting was unsettling for me. Thus I decided to look for another centre in a similar neighbourhood. I immediately got in touch with a teacher friend of mine who worked in a primary school in another migrant neighbourhood and knew an administrator at her local People’s Education Centre – Lale People’s Education Centre. I called my friend’s contact at this centre and got an appointment from him for the following Monday when he informed me that I could observe a course whose teacher was willing to have me in her classroom as a researcher. While I was starting to think that I had an alternative centre where I could conduct my project, I found out that Akasya PEC had decided to start a new Level 2

literacy course in early March. Thus I had two centres to conduct my study in - Akasya and Lale - and I had to choose between the morning and afternoon course at Akasya because both Akasya and Lale Level 2 literacy courses took place at the weekend.

4.4.1 How did I choose the afternoon course at Akasya PEC?

On 5 March 2011, Saturday, I started my day by attending the morning course at the Akasya PEC which started at 9:00. I had met the teacher of this course in January. He was a retired primary school teacher who had recently moved to Istanbul and had been teaching at this centre for only a year. When I arrived in his classroom at 9:00, I found him sitting alone at his desk. After some 15 minutes, with no participant turning up for the course, he started to complain about the centre administration's way of handling applications which did not let him phone the participants to invite them to the courses as he had done in the past.

In the next hour two participants - one man and one woman - came to the morning session. I learned from the female participant that in her first-level literacy course there were six participants who wanted to attend the second-level course. She thought that since she herself did not receive any communication from the centre, her classmates probably did not get phone calls from the centre about the starting date of the second-level course either. The lack of participants in the morning course was a worrying fact which I decided to discuss with the administrators. My conversation with one vice principal about how to facilitate communication with the course applicants did not seem to have any effect other than leading to his expression of displeasure at my note-taking from one of the bulletin boards in the centre later in the day. I took the remarks of this vice principal as a reminder that I needed to be more careful in the way I dealt with the administration regarding their decisions about the organisation of the literacy courses. These remarks pointed to the sometimes fraught power relations between me as a female researcher from a prestigious university and the male vice-principals and principals who could easily withdraw their approval of my project as well as impeding my access to information in more implicit ways.

4.4.2 The afternoon course at Akasya PEC and participants

In contrast to the two participants in the morning course, there were eight participants in the afternoon course on the first day. Thus I decided to focus on this course and observed it for its entire duration of four months. This course started with three male participants, one of whom dropped out of the course after about a month and another one after about two months. The third male participant was able to attend the course only very sporadically. A fourth male participant and two other female participants came to the course only a few times towards the middle of the course and another woman joined the course towards the very end. Thus, most of the time this was a women-only course taught by a male primary school teacher who had been working as an adult literacy course teacher for twelve years.

One woman whom I had interviewed about her life history and participation at the beginning of the course dropped out after two months due to health reasons. Another woman dropped out due to child care issues before I had any opportunity to interview her although she had agreed to participate in my research. Thus I had seven participants in this course who regularly attended it. Five of my participants attended the course from its beginning to its end and another two women attended the course for two thirds of the time, being allowed to start the course in late March and opting to take the final course examination in early June rather than early July.

The ages of women ranged from twenty-four to forty-eight. Three of my participants at Akasya PEC were born in Istanbul whilst their parents or grandparents had migrated to Turkey from the Balkans and Iran. The remaining four women migrated to Istanbul from different towns and villages in Anatolia in their teens. Except for one, Meryem, all of the women had children - some of them young -, requiring them to show an increased determination in order to attend the courses in the face of household responsibilities and the difficulties of arranging child care. Only three of the women had to use public transportation to reach the PEC whereas the other four women lived within walking distance of the PEC.

Only Hatice and Mine, forty-two and forty-eight years old respectively, were engaged in paid work at the time of the literacy course. Hatice worked in the textile

atelier owned by her husband and Mine engaged in salaried work, with social security, in the cafeteria of a company. The remaining women, except for the 27-year-old Mine who was recovering from a traffic accident which resulted in a seven-year-long treatment, had been engaged in paid work earlier. The jobs they had involved long working hours with neither social security nor minimum wage guarantee, forcing women to quit paid-work following their marriage and increased household responsibilities.

Hatice and Mine were also the only women who lived in a dwelling owned by their household. They had transformed their *gecekondus* into multi-storey apartment buildings in cooperation with other family members. The rest of the women lived in rented apartments in the neighbourhood. Thus, Hatice and Mine seemed to have relatively more financial comfort in their lives whereas the rest of the women, except for Meryem who lived on her meagre disability benefit and largesse from the relatives, depended on their partners' income which mostly came from jobs with low pay and long working hours.

Burcu and Meryem were the two participants at Akasya PEC who discussed the hardship of living with low and irregular income in the most explicit terms. In contrast to the rest of the women, they did not have husbands who provided the household with regular income, which seemed to create a deeper form of poverty. Burcu's account suggested that the abusive intimate relationships she had been through, the lack of familial and institutional support and the hardship of economic survival through low-paid jobs with difficult work conditions led her to seek emotional and financial support from her current partner. Meryem was the second participant for whom economic survival was a constant struggle since the traffic accident she suffered from changed the course of her life. This accident caused her to quit her studies in the unofficial, boarding Koran school she lived in and left her with

mobility problems, meagre disability benefits and some largesse from family members to live on.²⁰

4.4.3 Lale PEC and participants

This course was located in a primary school building in another migrant neighbourhood with poorly-built apartment buildings in irregular, narrow streets. The walls of the underpasses and the lampposts in the neighbourhood were covered with job advertisements looking for textile workers. Some of my participants and most of their relatives worked long hours in these textile workshops as part of an unregulated workforce with low wages and mostly without any social security. At the Lale PEC, 12 women attended the course which was taught by a primary school teacher who had been working as an adult literacy teacher for over a year. She was teaching a Level 2 literacy course for the first time.

I observed this course for four months, having missed the first two weeks since I focused on the Akasya PEC in the beginning. The majority of the women in this course were Kurdish and they had come to Istanbul in the late 1980s and 1990s, having been forced to leave their villages in south and south-eastern Anatolia due to the military conflict between the Turkish security forces and the PKK and/or economic hardship and found themselves at the bottom of the poverty ladder (Çelik, 2005; Işık & Pınarcıoğlu, 2001).²¹ As new migrants they were faced with fewer job opportunities and fierce competition over urban land with property developers, which forced them to rent the most affordable *gecekondu* (shanty house) they could find.

²⁰ In Turkey, there are state-funded and controlled Koran courses as well as unofficial private Koran courses and youth hostels on which there is no publicly available data regarding their exact number, student population, funding, management and the nature of education offered (Atasoy, 2003/2004).

²¹ Starting after 1985 and escalating in the early 1990s, the Kurdish people living in rural areas in the eastern and south-eastern Anatolia were compelled or forced to leave their homes due to feelings of insecurity and armed clashes between the Turkish security forces and the PKK (Ayata & Yüksek, 2005). While a parliamentary investigation report in 1994 put the number of internally displaced people at 378,335 (Ayata & Yüksek, 2005; Çelik, 2005), the 1995 edition of Human Rights Watch report put the number of forced migrants at around 2 million people (Human Rights Watch, 1995) and a number of researchers gave an estimate of 2 to 4 million displaced people (Nachmani, 2003; Taşpınar, 2005).

All of the women had taken the first-level literacy course from the same teacher either in the winter of the same year or the year before that. Seven of the twelve women in this course agreed to have repeated interviews with me whereas the other five stated that they either did not have the time or they were worried that their participation in the study would have negative consequences for them.²² Two of the women with whom I had the first in-depth interview – Nimet and Ayşe – dropped out of the course towards the middle of the course in order to go to their villages for the harvest. The third woman with whom I had the initial interview dropped out of the course which the course teacher attributed to her husband's resistance to her course attendance. Thus I had four participants in this course. However, I do draw on the interview data from Nimet and Ayşe in relation to their participation in the course to primarily improve their vocabulary and speaking in Turkish.

The women in this course seemed to lead financially more precarious lives than most of the women in the Akasya PEC. Most of them stated that they worked in textile workshops or did home-based textile work. Furthermore, they had their household responsibilities and had to fulfil the needs of their houseguests who seemed to be their relatives visiting Istanbul to look for work or for health and familial reasons. Complaints of ill health and explicit references to poverty were more common among the women in Lale PEC.

My four participants in Lale PEC were Kurdish women whose ages ranged between twenty-six and thirty-four. They had all migrated to Istanbul within the last fifteen years. At the time of the course, Leyla and Umut – twenty-six-year-old cousins - were engaged in paid work in textile workshops, earning less than the minimum

²² Some of the women were worried that their words would somehow find their way to the newspaper headlines. They seemed to be worried about this especially when they criticised the education and health system. One of the women, who did not want to have individual interviews with me, noted that her father-in-law would be furious if he learned that she made critical comments in the school: a state building. The reason behind their apparent fear might be that as poor Kurdish women most of them were trying to access the occasional in-kind or cash help from the local authorities. Thus it might be that they did not want to make their criticism of the authorities public. Furthermore, if I were a Kurdish speaker or someone with a Kurdish human rights activism background, they might have agreed to have individual interviews with me.

wage with no social security.²³ Sevim and Nalan's accounts suggested that they had worked in a vegetable wholesale market and textile ateliers respectively prior to their marriage and increased household responsibilities. They all lived within walking distance of the centre, similar to the rest of the women in this course.

All of my four participants at Lale PEC made frequent references to the poverty they lived in. Sevim and her husband, who worked six days a week in a textile workshop, had first moved to a big city in southern Turkey and then to Istanbul to find work, which was a decision they regretted. They considered moving back to the city in southern Turkey to escape the high cost of living in Istanbul. Umut and Leyla got permission from their textile workshop to come to the course on Saturday mornings, working long hours during the weekdays and the rest of Saturday. Nalan explained that the violence she experienced from her husband's first wife and her relatives in the polygynous marriage where she was the co-wife had taken a heavy toll on her health. Although she had worked in textile workshops in the past, at the time of the course she strived to contribute to the economic survival of her household with the occasional in-kind and in-cash assistance she received from the local government.

4.5 Methods of data collection: Interviews, observations, fieldnotes and other methods

I made use of interviews and participant observation in the classrooms as a means of understanding the discursively framed subject positions that drove women's participation in the courses and their engagement with the course content and pedagogic relationships in the classroom. Each course had its own set of research conditions, leading to different forms of interviews and participant observation. At Akasya PEC, I was able to make three repeated one-to-one interviews with six of my seven participants. With Hatice at Akasya PEC, I had one in-depth interview which focused on her life story and participation in the course as well as asking questions

²³ The net minimum wage in the summer of 2011 was 701 TL (Turkish Lira) (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2011). Women in the Lale PEC noted that the lowest rent for a flat in their neighbourhood was 400 to 450 TL.

on her engagement in the course and her dreams for her future. I asked her about various aspects of her engagement, such as what she found important to learn in the course and what she found difficult, in informal conversations. At Lale PEC I had individual interviews with my four participants only in the beginning because this course did not take place six weekends out of 18 weekends of the entire course length due to the mass distant education examinations and elections taking place in the primary school building as well as two national holidays coinciding with a weekend. Therefore my second and third interviews were group interviews in which the remaining five women participated as well. I seemed to have gained their trust although these five women wanted me to confirm several times that I was not a journalist and that they would not encounter their words and voice recording in the media. I do not use the words of these women in the extracts from the second and third interviews in Chapter 6. I also conducted individual interviews with the course teachers at the end of the course, which involved questions about working with adults and how they chose the learning activities in the adult literacy classroom. However, I include the teacher interview data only when I describe the learning activities in the classroom. I took this decision because my study focuses on women's own meanings and understandings of literacy, learning and participation in the classes. In my interview with the teachers I drew on questions from R. Rogers and Kramer's (2008) study with adult literacy teachers and my own work with women community teachers (Yazlık, 2008) (See Appendix B for the questions that guided my interviews with the teachers). Before I explain how I conducted each interview at these two centres, it is important to note that I do not treat interview data "as reality reports from a fixed repository" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, p. 156). I consider interviews as "negotiated accomplishments of both interviewers and respondents that are shaped by the contexts and situations in which they take place" (Fontana & Frey, 2003, p. 91).

In the first interview I asked women to tell me their life story, their account of their participation in the course, their feelings associated with participation, people's reactions to their course participation and their imagined future. I tried to encourage women to choose and guide the topics of the study as much as possible. My approach

to women's accounts of their life story could be defined as "critical auto/biography" whereby the accounts of experience were seen as much more than confessional anecdotes, placing the focus on the dialectic between accounts of selves and the effects of the wider structures of power (Griffiths, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c). This approach required me to pay attention to the perspective of gender, social class, ethnicity and so on, as well as particular discourses that constructed the subject positions women discussed in relation to their participation in the courses. I also paid attention to the effect of my socio-political positions on my own interpretation of women's accounts.

Before my second interview I tried to make a focussed observation of a single woman's engagement in a particular learning activity in the classroom although I could not achieve this goal with each participant. In the second interview I asked women about their interest in a certain activity, its relevance for their life, what they found to be important in the course content in general and what they did when they were not interested in a learning topic or activity. In the third interview I asked women what motivated them to continue the course; what made it difficult to carry on; what they thought they gained from the course and how they envisioned their future. The last question aimed to understand the relationship between the passage of time and educational experiences in the course and the subject positions that women discussed in relation to their imagined future in the first interview (See Appendix C for interview questions that guided my interviews with the participants).

In preparing my interview questions I drew on the questions used by Maclachlan et al. (2008) and Trawick (2007) in their research on participation in adult literacy courses in Scotland and the US. Although I had a list of questions and topics in the interviews, I formulated questions spontaneously as well as answering women's questions to me. My interview relations with participants changed depending on the course and the person. Some women and I found that we warmed to each other more quickly, although all of the participants showed a considerable amount of warmth and friendship to me. I had planned to have a separate final interview with the women involved in my study in which I shared my initial analysis with them and asked them to comment on it. Due to time restrictions, this was not possible.

However, there was a degree of respondent validation in my research since in later interviews and conversations I revisited themes raised in the previous interviews as well as topics and interpretations emerging from my classroom observations and conversations. Thus with women at Akasya PEC I was able to discuss their apparent nervousness during some literacy practices in the classroom and how they felt when the classroom teacher insisted that they go to the board to engage in a literacy practice they had difficulty in. I tried to be very sensitive in the way I discussed with women at Akasya PEC the conditions of violence created by Ali and their perceptions of these conditions. Similarly, at Lale PEC in later interviews, I discussed with women their perceptions of the literacy practices that the classroom teacher Serap insisted that they carry out individually.

At Lale PEC my contact with participants was more limited in general since the classes were cancelled one third of the course time. Furthermore, two participants in this classroom worked part of the weekend and on weekdays and the other two stated that they were busy with household responsibilities during the week. This limited my contact to them to the first in-depth interviews right after the classes which took place in one of the empty classrooms in the school building and the 20-30 minute group interview time for the second and third interviews which was allowed to us by the classroom teacher during the course time. At Akasya PEC the interview locations varied according to the participants' wishes and practicalities, including the classroom after the course time, cafeterias where some women preferred to meet, the backyard of the course centre and women's houses in the case of Meryem and Burcu.

In the transcription of my interviews, I became aware that transcription of speech data involved a certain degree of editing and organizing conversation into a series of sentences marked with punctuation and the textual devices of layout (Atkinson, 1992; Gee, 1999). I drew on Baxter's (2008, p. 200) transcription convention which adapted Joan Swann's method of presentation. This is not a detailed phonetic transcription but shows pauses, interruptions, laughter, volume and emphasised words in parentheses. I also tried not to edit out repetitions since they could serve as tools of reinforcing meaning (Cameron, 2001). Furthermore, in order to do justice to women's attempts to learn the school knowledge and language conventions in the

courses, I used standard spellings to represent both my speech and the participant's speech which occasionally involved non-standard pronunciations of individual Turkish words. I took most of my fieldnotes in English except for the examples of texts used in the literacy practices in the classrooms and the conversations and expressions which I found to convey a key meaning and emotion. I myself transcribed the interviews and translated the interview extracts and women's stories of schooling that were relevant to their discussions of identity-related participation and engagement in the courses.

My roles as a participant observer were defined by different degrees of participation and observation, as pointed out by Wind's concept of "negotiated interactive observation" (2008, p. 87). This concept aimed to make researchers reflect on and openly discuss how they took on different roles in the field. I mostly took notes of the course content, literacy approach and pedagogical relationships in the classrooms. However, at Lale PEC where the course atmosphere was conducive to open cooperation, the classroom teacher sometimes asked me to help some women with some learning tasks. Other times women themselves asked me questions about how to decode or write a word or sentence. At Akasya PEC, open cooperation was discouraged by the classroom teacher which made it necessary that when women wanted to ask me to explain something they did this in whispers or with gestures and as quickly as possible.

At both centres I presented myself as a research student in an effort to downplay the status differences between myself as a highly educated woman and the classroom teachers and participants. Both teachers saw me as their colleague and called me so. However, in two instances the way the classroom teacher at Akasya PEC addressed me as a "university lecturer" to show his respect for me created difficulties for me. First of all, I was still a doctoral student, which I immediately pointed out in the conversation. Furthermore, I did not want women to feel pressured to participate in my research because of the power ascribed to research or my status as a researcher. I tried to make this clear while explaining my research and what their consent to participating in it meant.

Fieldnotes and interview transcriptions of more structured interviews constituted the major body of my data. Fieldnotes included accounts of participant observation in the classes and accounts of conversations and unstructured interviews that took place before or after the classes in different locations within the course buildings and in the participants' houses. In these accounts I noted the physical contexts in which the conversations took place as well as the gestures and my interpretation of the feelings of the participants. Drawing on Delamont's (2002) work on recording participant observation in educational settings, I made sketches of the classrooms and the locations where women sat in each lesson; I noted the displays on the walls and bulletin boards and wrote down the material condition of the classroom including smell and noise. To help my memory, I dated each entry and recorded the time every ten minutes or so. I tried to record as much as possible during the classes whereas I sometimes scribbled notes using abbreviations which I turned into notes immediately after the classes in a café or on the bus on the way back home. I mostly typed up the fieldnotes in my notebooks in the evening or in the following couple of days after the classes.

My fieldnotes constituted a multifaceted record with accounts of observations, feelings, reflective comments, tentative interpretations and emerging concepts (Delamont, 2002). The fieldnotes were interwoven with writing and reading I encountered before and during the fieldwork and the influence of fieldwork on my perception of concepts and theories I had become familiar with earlier (Clifford, 1990). They included accounts of important research processes such as gaining access to the courses and working out my relationship to my participants, course teachers and administrators (Jackson, 1990). Thus fieldnotes acted as a link between me and the people whom I talked, laughed and worked with. This link was particularly important after I returned to Britain because the sights, smells, temperature, sounds and routines of life I was immersed in during data analysis and writing in Britain and those I experienced in Istanbul were quite different. As for the use of documents in my study, I analysed the discourses of literacy in the key government policy documents, statements and PEC curricula documents. In my analysis, I focused on the policy discourses' portrayal of women as potential

participants in the PEC literacy courses as well as their approach to literacy. Such official discourses are promoted by powerful networks such as government-run PECs and promote certain types of literacy practices, knowledge and identities. Thus exploring the official literacy in relation to their portrayal of women and literacy approaches was important for my study in discerning their influence on women's valuations of literacy and education.

4.6 Methods of data analysis and interpretation

My study has used two main approaches to the analysis of discourses and subject positions related to women's participation and engagement in the literacy courses: (a) narrative analysis of women's life stories and (b) analysis of discourses and subject positions based on lexical items and commonly emerging themes. These approaches were in line with the epistemological position and feminist approach adopted by my study. I employed narrative analysis of women's life stories in discussing the importance of the symbolic value of school and literacy. I could discuss the symbolic value of school and literacy solely through identification of lexical items that referred to women's longing for schooling and observation vignettes.²⁴ These observation vignettes involved my participants' determination to access the courses in a context of bureaucratic humiliation and social and economic obligations and some young women's visiting the Akasya PEC literacy classroom to talk with their previous literacy teacher, similar to a school reunion. However, I chose to analyse women's stories of schooling through one version of narrative analysis as described in Riessmann (2003), Elliott (2005), and Stanley and Temple (2008) in order to provide as much contextual information as possible about women's participation in the courses and valuations of school and literacy.

I employed narrative analysis of women's life stories for the following reasons. First of all, the narrative analysis approach I used gave me the opportunity to locate women's stories of schooling in a particular context in history. Secondly, through

²⁴ An observation vignette is a written description of a classroom event which also includes my emerging interpretation and reflective comments on the event.

narrative analysis I could take into account women's purposes in telling certain stories, taking into account concrete and imagined audiences. Thirdly, narrative analysis of women's life stories also kept me alert to my role as a socially positioned listener of stories and researcher in the interpretation of women's stories. Focusing on women's life history narratives in the first in-depth interviews enabled me to focus on the dialectic between unique life experiences and the structuring effect of wider worlds of power relations (Goodson & Sikes 2001; Griffiths, 1995a, 1995b; Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995; Personal Narratives Group, 1989). Furthermore, a narrative-analysis approach helped me to focus on how women told their stories of schooling by configuring the plot and characters, constructing dialogues with the key characters, and giving them positions and motives in the unfolding stories (Elliott, 2005; Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 2003). I considered the subject positions emerging from the stories as the product of an interaction between the discourses and the material circumstances within social structures of injustice which influenced the scope of lives and possibilities for narrating them (Elliott, 2005; Riessman, 2003). It is important to note that I highlighted the stories I found most relevant to illuminate the discourses and subject positions that drove women's participation in the courses. Thus I omitted certain stories such as Nalan's stories of familial conflict within a polygynous marriage, Mine's stories of finding work for herself and her husband in Istanbul and Burcu's story of her issues with her teenage daughter. (Appendix D provides an example of the thematic narrative analysis as well as coding created from the first in-depth interviews).

To repeat, I drew on discourse analysis work underlined by a Feminist Discourse Analysis (Lazar, 2005b) and Post-structuralist Feminist Discourse Analysis (Baxter, 2003) in identifying the discourses that drove women's participation in the courses and the discourses that they found in the literacy classrooms. This work draws on lexical items and overarching themes in identifying discourses in texts ranging from newspaper articles and interview transcripts (Lazar, 2005b) to transcripts of classroom talk and fieldnotes taken in classroom settings (Baxter, 2003). I approached the identification of the subject positions that drove women's participation in the literacy courses in a similar manner, focusing on the repeated

lexical items, especially noun phrases. However, it is important to point out that the identification and naming of a discourse through “its lexical traces” is a matter of interpretation which requires reflexive analytic work (Sunderland, 2004, p. 30). Discourses are produced in specific socio-political and educational contexts. Different analysts might be familiar with different discourses whose traces they encountered in different bodies of work. Thus the identification of discourses and subject positions is interpretative and provisional. This makes it necessary to provide as much contextual information as possible and be critically reflexive about the influence of the researcher’s assumptions and socio-political positions on the analysis process. Throughout Chapter Five, Six and Seven, I try to make the identification process as explicit as possible and write about the role of my own positionality, assumptions and changing perceptions on the data analysis.

The identification of discourses and subject positions by drawing on lexical items and overarching themes as described by Baxter (2003) and Lazar (2005b) is similar to a process of coding, categorizing and identifying themes emerging from a research process. For example, Baxter (2003) suggested four elements for discourse identification: (1) words and phrases commonly used by the participants, (2) commonly emerging themes, (3) commonalities between interactions between participants, and (4) contradictions or competing views in the interactions between participants (p. 138). Thus in identifying the discourses that brought women to the literacy classes I mainly drew on the interview transcripts of the first in-depth interviews. I started by focusing on the social situations, artefacts and people that women discussed when they talked about their participation in the classes. I then considered the institutions and socio-political contexts within which these situations related with literacy and education took place. Lastly, I considered the values, norms and meanings – the discourses – that underpinned the social situations that involved literacy and education.²⁵ This was a process where I first coded the individual

²⁵ This process was inspired by Barton’s framework for researching literacy practices, which starts with the visual environment, texts and artefacts and tries to establish their links with the particular domains and socio-cultural contexts (Barton, 2000).

interviews and then consolidated the codes to create categories and themes within individual women's interview transcripts. I also looked for inconsistencies and contradictions within each woman's interview transcript. As I got close to the data through repeated readings of the transcripts, common understandings and contradictions across women's interview transcripts emerged.

I named the discourses that drove women's participation in the literacy courses as (1) the discourse of the symbolic importance of literacy and schooling and (2) the discourse of social status associated with literacy and schooling. In naming the discourses I drew on my familiarity with the literature on women's participation in literacy courses. The discourse of the symbolic importance of literacy and school could also be named as "longing for literacy and school", since the majority of the women discussed their participation as "fulfilling their longing for school" and "fulfilling a dream". As for the different meanings of the subject position of schooled person – namely school knowledge, diploma, further formal education, jobs, specific literacy practices, speaking (standard) Turkish – I identified them through focusing on the repeated words women used in their accounts of participation in the course.

The analysis and interpretation process was a constant journey between interview transcripts, fieldnotes, emerging concepts, my existing knowledge of the literature on women's literacy and participation, cards that contained my emerging analysis, and new concepts that I encountered and their effect on my emerging analysis. Thus, in identifying the discourses that brought women to the literacy courses, I compared my analysis of the discourses and subject positions that drove women's participation in the literacy courses in the transcripts of the first in-depth interviews with my analysis of the fieldnotes. I incorporated observation vignettes from the fieldnotes that manifested the importance of the symbolic importance of literacy and school.

As explained above, I analysed the discourses that women found in the literacy classrooms at Akasya and Lale PECs through focusing on the lexical items and themes. In creating the codes to analyse my fieldnotes, I paid attention to the situations and artefacts that involved literacy and learning practices and teacher-student relationship. I then considered these in relation with the institutional context

and the values and meanings underlining these situations. For example, the codes created in relation to the discourses of literacy included the use of school texts, the focus on fluency and timed reading. Appendix E presents a stretch of fieldnotes from the same day at both centres, which I translated into English, whereas the original fieldnotes were taken in a combination of English and Turkish. It illustrates how the codes were created as I analysed my fieldnotes. Subsequently, Appendix F shows the process of analysis and interpretation through which themes/discourses, categories and codes were created from the fieldnotes.

In order to understand women's responses to the discourses and power relations they found in the classrooms, I drew not only on my fieldnotes but also on the transcripts of the second and third interviews in which I discussed the classroom interactions and practices with the women involved in my study. This way I could link my emerging analysis of women's responses to the discourses and power relations with my changing perceptions throughout the research process. For example, I explore how my perceptions of women's finding value in their learning and their responses to the conditions of violence changed on pages 166-171.

4.7 Positionality and reciprocity

In my contact with both the Istanbul Ministry of National Education Directorate and the principals and vice-principals at the two centres where I conducted my research, the officials in positions of authority were male, corroborating the statistics pointing to the underrepresentation of women in administrative positions at all levels of education (Göğüş Tan, 2007). It seemed that my position as a researcher who spoke English and was affiliated with a Western university and a prestigious university in Istanbul facilitated my contact with the administrators. I received the formal permission to conduct my research in the People's Education Centres quite easily although I had anticipated further questioning and formal requirements from the administrators about my request to observe the classes and talk to women about how they found the course content and atmosphere.

However, at both of the centres, the two male administrators I had most contact with referred to my social position as an unmarried woman - which would be easy to tell

since I did not wear a wedding ring which is a practice carried out by the overwhelming majority of the married people in Turkey - in ways that made me feel that I was verbally harassed by their sexist remarks. My only conversation with the administrator at Lale PEC, in which I asked his help to find a second-level literacy course for my research, was rife with his sexist comments. He uttered these sexist remarks as part of his chat about his diligence and honesty in his position while he was dealing with the requests of various young women participants of distance schooling programs.

At Akasya PEC I had more frequent contact with the PEC administrators since the literacy course was located in the PEC building itself rather than a primary school. The administrator I contacted most was the one who was at the centre during the weekends. He seemed to find ways to refer to my unmarried status in most of our conversations. My position as an unmarried woman was something that younger women – Burcu, Meryem, Sibel and Filiz at Akasya PEC and Umut and Leyla at Lale PEC – discussed as part of our interview conversations. In such conversations, some of them formulated sensitive questions that sought to confirm my marital status whereas some others discussed the familial and societal pressure to get married. These younger women also wanted to know more about my educational background as well as how I had decided to study my topic and the duration and requirements of a doctorate degree. In such exchanges we wished each other luck in our studies and the end-of-the-term examination they were to take, drawing on the parallels between our lives as students. However, the discussions in which women wanted to learn more about my social position were not without their complications due to my position as a highly educated woman and the privileges associated with it. When the differences in our educational backgrounds came to the fore women tended make it clear that they were pointing to the differences in our social positions rather than making a personal judgement. This was crucial in both reminding me of my privileged position as a highly educated woman in Turkey and in showing their willingness to maintain our relationship on a friendly basis throughout the research process.

The accounts of Burcu and Meryem at Akasya PEC pointed to the differences in our educational status in the most explicit terms in my first interviews with them. This seemed to lead them to highlight their resilience in the face of hardships they faced in their lives and their confidence in themselves in everything other than school knowledge, explored in detail on pages 130-132. However, it seemed that we built rapport throughout the course. Thus in the later interviews they felt it appropriate to share with me the difficulties they had with some literacy practices in everyday life. I also went to their houses to help them prepare for the final course examination. Furthermore, in the second interview Burcu described how she tried to learn the use of different punctuation marks from the novel that she was reading at the time, the topic of which she explained animatedly.

Similarly, in the first interview Mine pointed out her hesitation as to whether she could improve her writing sufficiently to catch up with the classroom teacher's instructions as a person who did not have a basic education background. As explored on page 205, in the third interview both her sense of progress and our rapport seemed to lead her to talk about various literacy practices she carried out with joy and success in everyday life. Furthermore, in the third interview she asked me about the Roman numbers, which she explained to have encountered frequently in the books of history that she liked to read. Likewise, the participants at the Lale PEC mostly pointed to the difficulties they had in engaging in bureaucratic literacy practices in the first interviews. However, in the last interview, their focus was on how they had found it difficult to ask for help in engaging in bureaucratic literacy practices as some people blamed them for the difficulties they had in these literacy tasks. They explained that this was caused by the widespread perception that younger people in Turkey have better educational access compared with the past. The implication here was that their difficulties in bureaucratic literacy practices signalled their lack of education, which must have been the fault of their families.

My position as a female researcher was identified by the participants at Lale People's Education Centre as a positive factor. They appreciated having a female literacy teacher, being a women-only classroom and talking to a female researcher. In response to my question whether they had known the literacy course teacher before

they started the course, the younger participants at Lale PEC – Umut and Leyla – responded that they did not know that their teacher would be female, which they were pleased to find out upon starting the course. My question asking Umut to compare her previous experience of schooling and the literacy course led her to explain that her experience of her male primary school teacher’s physical violence during her only year in primary school in the first grade had an important role in her preference for women as teachers. Here it is useful to note that I explore violence in the schools in Turkey in Chapter Seven.

The material privileges associated with my social position involved the neighbourhood where I rented a room in a nice apartment in a largely “uptown” neighbourhood near the green campus of Boğaziçi University. Reaching both PECs involved lengthy and tiring bus trips. Some of these trips required me to walk part of the way and wait on busy motorways for buses which operated without timetables and were invariably packed. The starting and ending location of my bus trips made me more conscious of the inequalities between the neighbourhoods where my participants lived and worked and my neighbourhood. In my neighbourhood rich-looking apartments and stores which were part of international chains co-existed with poorly-built apartments transformed from *gecekondus*.

At Lale PEC, my position as a Turkish person speaking only standard Turkish emerged as a factor in my interviews with the participants who were bilingual Kurdish women. While Umut and Leyla at Lale PEC made statements that expressed their discontent with their level of proficiency in Turkish, Sevim stated that she was satisfied with her Turkish since she did not have an identifiable accent in spoken Turkish. Thus being aware of the power differences created by my position as a Turkish person speaking standard Turkish, I tried to assure women that they were fluent and competent in Turkish. I openly lamented only being able to speak Turkish among the languages spoken in Turkey where multilingualism is the norm for a significant number of people. I tried to learn some Kurdish expressions from Ayşe and Nimet who had come to the Lale literacy course primarily to improve their Turkish speaking and vocabulary skills. Seeing that I was having a hard time imitating the words they were trying to teach me in Kurdish, they noted that it was

equally difficult for them to produce some Turkish sounds. At the time I felt that these were inadequate attempts of acknowledging women's bilingualism and trying to show my perception of it a source of cultural richness and heritage since the use of the Kurdish language was officially permitted only in 1991 (B. İnce, 2012; Poulton, 1997). Furthermore, mother-tongue based bilingual education in the state school system is still not allowed. However, due to my friendly relationship with the classroom teacher at Lale PEC and her willingness to hear my emerging analysis of women's engagement in the literacy classroom, I was able to talk with her about the role of the mother tongue – Kurdish – in women's learning literacy. I also see it as my ethical responsibility to disseminate my research in ways that I hope will be meaningful for the women involved in my study. In an attempt to do this, I have published a book chapter on the adult basic education and literacy policy in Turkey, with a focus on the international influences on the policy context (Yazlık, 2013). In June 2013, I presented a paper at the Birkbeck College Applied Linguistics Society (BCALS) Conference on the bilingual Kurdish women's language use in different domains, including the literacy courses in Turkey.

At both centres I expressed my willingness to help women with their studies and visited two women at Akasya PEC - Meryem and Burcu – in their houses to study for topics they needed help with. With other women, there were times during the interviews when they asked for explanation of a certain topic. In these instances I took up the position of someone more knowledgeable on school subjects. However, I found that I sometimes became the student in my conversations with women when it came to topics different from school knowledge. With Meryem, for example, I took up the position of a student in relation to Koran studies and religious matters in Islam. From Mine I learned about the intricacies of the social security system and one's rights as a female worker. I learned about the responsibilities of different employees working in a textile atelier from Ebru and about different carpet-weaving towns in Turkey from Hatice.

Since I was more involved in the lives of Burcu and Meryem, I talked with them on the phone outside classroom time. When Meryem had to take time off the course for physiotherapy I called her regularly to update her on the topics covered in the course

which she tried to follow from a primary school textbook she had with her. Upon learning about Meryem's intention to go to court for insurance claims in relation to the traffic accident that left her with mobility problems and need for legal assistance, I offered to put her in touch with a close friend in Istanbul who practiced law. My friend offered to give her time to Meryem for legal advice but Meryem seemed not to have followed up her intention to go to court, leaving it to a later date. Since Burcu was looking for a job at the time of the interviews, I informed her of a job advertisement I saw around Boğaziçi University. Burcu and I went together to the job interview for the position of assistant cook at a restaurant. Burcu was very articulate and clear about her requirements from her employer. However, the long working hours of this job meant that Burcu could not use any public transportation to go back home late at night, making it impossible for her to take up this job.

This chapter has explored the ontological and epistemological influences on my research. It has discussed how my study adopted an ethnographic approach to feminist discourse analysis. It introduced the research sites and participants and the methods of data collection and analysis and interpretation the study adopted. It has discussed the issues of validity and ethics in a small-scale qualitative study underlined by a feminist methodology. Throughout the chapter I attempted to discuss issues of methodology and methods in a reflexive manner, exploring the issue of reciprocity and the effects of the socio-political positions and values of the researcher and women's perceptions of these on the research process.

The next chapter is the first data-analysis chapter. It explores the discourses that women in my study drew on in explaining their participation in literacy courses at Akasya and Lale PECs. The chapter begins with introducing the discussion of the official discourses of literacy in government policy documents, statements and curricula documents of People's Education Centres' literacy courses. The chapter then explores the symbolic importance of school and literacy and the social status associated with them – which seemed to bring the women in this study to the literacy courses. The chapter discusses different meanings of the schooled-person identity that seemed to drive women's participation in the courses. It also shows women's

ways of extending the meanings of the schooled-person identity identified in official literacy discourses.

Chapter 5 Which discourses did women draw on in explaining their participation?

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter I first introduce the official discourses of literacy in key government policy documents, statements and curricula documents of People's Education Centres' literacy courses. I place the focus on the portrayal of women in the official discourses and the approaches to literacy identified in these documents. I then introduce the different strands of the overarching discourse of the formal education and literacy that drove women's participation to literacy courses at Akasya and Lale PECs in Istanbul. The first strand I discuss concerns women's stories of their schooling as girls which manifested the discourse of the symbolic importance of school and literacy for them. I then introduce vignettes of my observations in the literacy classrooms and administrators' offices at Akasya and Lale PECs and extracts from the first in-depth interviews in order to discuss differing manifestations of the discourse of the symbolic importance of school and literacy.

The second strand of the discourse of formal education and literacy I introduce in this chapter is the discourse of social status that underlined women's accounts of their participation in the courses in the first in-depth interviews. The major social markers that were associated with the social status of formal education and literacy were school knowledge, formal education diplomas, job opportunities, context-specific literacy practices - particularly bureaucratic literacy practices - and speaking (standard) Turkish.

5.1 Official discourses of literacy

This section will discuss approaches to literacy evident in the key government statements, curricula documents and policy documents related to People's Education Centre literacy courses. The focus on the portrayal of women in the official discourses and approaches to literacy and education will help understand their influences on the subject positions that drove women's participation in the courses and their ways of extending the meanings identified in the official discourses. As highlighted by the discussion of the existing literature on literacy courses for women

in Chapter Two, the government statements were similarly replete with concerns regarding women's low participation in the courses. The Ministry of National Education provincial offices' websites, which reported on the progress of the literacy courses within the "Mother and Daughter to School" campaign, focused on the "canvassing" they needed to undertake to convince women to participate in the courses and the number of women who were provided with the literacy certificate (Hatay MoNE, 2013; Kahramanmaraş MoNE, 2013; Yapraklı MoNE, 2013).

Furthermore, People's Education Centres are obliged to conduct a survey to "identify the illiterate" in their neighbourhoods with the cooperation of other state authorities (Nohl & Sayılan, 2004, p. 7) and "report the illiterate they have identified to the Ministry of National Education directorates" (Ankara Governorship, 2013). I argue that such statements depict potential literacy course participants as a group with literacy-induced social problems that needs the intervention of relevant state authorities. Furthermore, the government statements and policy documents depict women who are considered to be illiterate as failing to take up the opportunity provided by the state to attain the desired level of literacy. This renders learning to read and write in the literacy courses of PECs a matter of personal effort and determination, concealing the structural and social forces that underpin poverty and the type of literacy practices found important by women themselves.

It is important to note that MoNE regulations presume that people who have attended school for less than three years do not possess basic reading and writing skills (MoNE, 2007). To be regarded as literate in the eyes of the regulations, people are obliged to attend a Level 1 literacy course to gain a course certificate. One who has attended school for less than three years is not allowed to attend a Level 2 literacy course without a Level 1 certificate. Furthermore, women's assumed lack of literacy is considered to turn them into an undifferentiated group with deficiencies that needs to be convinced to come to the courses. The *Adult Literacy and Basic Education Programme (1. and 2. Level)* (MoNE, 2007) for instance refers to the goal of the programme as "rectifying adults' reading, writing and basic education deficiencies..." aiming in general at "people who do not know how to read and write" (preface). Furthermore, *Basic Education in Turkey: Background Report*

(MoNE, 2005b) identifies one of the goals of non-formal education, which includes the PEC literacy courses and other educational programmes outside of the compulsory school system, as “to organise short, medium and long term course programmes for those who do not have any skills or competencies, especially the unqualified female workforce” (p. 41). It is striking that this document characterises women without educational qualifications as possessing no skills or competencies at all. Such a deficit view of potential participants undermines their social and economic capabilities. As explored later in this chapter through the accounts of women involved in my study, these capabilities are rooted in their life experiences and struggle for a better life in various degrees of socio-economic hardship and lack of institutional support.

A major discourse underlying the literacy programmes is the link between literacy and development whereby literacy is defined as a motor of social and economic development, with the latter being emphasized. The government policy context is dominated by the assumption that levels of literacy and education are “the most significant impetus of socio-economic development” (General Directorate on the Status of Women [GDSW], 2008, p. 5). In the Ninth Development Plan 2007-2013, literacy and numeracy were identified as “preconditions for lifelong learning” by “...increasing the employment skills of individuals in line with the requirements of a changing and developing economy and labour market” (State Planning Organisation [SPO], 2006, p. 98). The skills-based understanding presumes that engagement in the economic activities requires the level of literacy deemed appropriate by the governmental vision of literacy and education. This understanding frames literacy as a discrete, employment-related technical skill to be learned in literacy classrooms and used the same way across different texts and contexts; this is also the dominant view in the EU and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) thinking in the area of adult literacy and basic education (Hamilton, Macrae, & Tett, 2001). However, PEC literacy courses for women are not integrated with vocational skills training or development projects except for a limited number of projects in eastern and south-eastern Turkey. These projects were moreover criticised for establishing poor links with labour markets (Göğüş Tan, 2007; TÜSİAD &

KAGİDER, 2008) and offering activities to Kurdish-speaking women only in the Turkish language (Çağlayan, 2013). Thus it can be suggested that this discourse mostly remains at the level of rhetoric since it seems to expect literacy on its own to lead to engagement in paid employment.

A smaller discursive strand that frames the government vision of literacy is the link between literacy and modernisation. The policy document on *Women and Education* (GDSW, 2008) conflated schooling of girls and women's literacy (Robinson-Pant, 2005) and expected women to be more "modern" by learning literacy:

Education for girls may also decrease the interregional disparities. With the increase of the literacy rate, women will have a more conscious attitude against backward practices (honour killings, second wife, etc.) and they will contribute to the modernisation of society. (p.10)

It is striking that in relation to women "modernisation" was not equated with the contents and practices of modern material culture and scientific progress associated with the Western world, which was found to be the theme in literacy materials used in the major literacy campaigns between 1928 and 2001 (Taşçı Günlü, 2008). Modernisation in relation to women was equated with practices such as polygynous marriages and "honour" killings which are underpinned by a complex interaction of structural and institutional injustices and socio-cultural norms on women's sexuality. Thus the government vision of literacy seems to attribute literacy alone the potential to transform the forms of injustice that oppress women, obscuring the role of structural and institutional forces and male-dominated socio-cultural norms in perpetuating the oppression and silencing of women. Furthermore, the responsibility of modernising the society through attaining the desired level of literacy is placed on women.

Another discursive strand in the governmental statements on literacy is the link between literacy and the personal development of women. The policy documents and government statements seem to expect literacy to have some specific effects on women's lives. In various ceremonies that distributed literacy certificates to women participants of PECs' literacy courses, both the wife of the current Prime Minister,

who launched the latest “Mother-Daughter to School” literacy campaign, and then female Minister of National Education Literacy discussed women’s literacy by evoking its “enlightening” effects on women’s lives, helping them “increase their self-confidence” and engage in income-generating activities (Ankara Governorship, 2013; Hemfest, 2013). Thus it is assumed that women who take up the opportunity provided by the state to learn basic literacy in PEC courses will gain social, cultural and economic capital.

Compared with the above-mentioned discursive strands on literacy, the discourse of formal education and literacy seems to be the overarching discourse that underpins official understandings of literacy. This can be seen in the name of the latest literacy campaign “Mother-Daughter to School” and government statements in relation to the significance of literacy courses such as “The importance and priority that should be given to education in today’s world...” (Hatay MoNE, 2013, para. 2). Discourses of formal education and school can also be seen in the PECs’ curricula documents: the programme aims to provide education that is equivalent with formal primary schools and the curricula are based on the syllabi of the corresponding primary school grades, taught by primary school teachers without any training in adult literacy education (MoNE, 2005a; MoNE, 2007). Adults who have a Level 2 certificate can enrol in open primary education conducted through distance education methods - TV and radio broadcasting, access to course notes via Internet, and the distribution of textbooks to learners (MoNE, 2011).

Thus the governmental model of literacy in Turkey presumes that what learners need most is access to dominant schooled-literacy practices and school knowledge. The focus is placed on the school knowledge taught in the first five grades of primary school education and formal qualifications. The policy discourses discussed above find their way into literacy classrooms through the textbooks, the places where literacy activities take place, the ways in which women are accepted into the courses and assessed, the type of learning and literacy practices found in the classrooms and the certificate distribution ceremonies that are routinely undertaken. Thus the governmental discourses of literacy promote certain types of literacies, types of prestigious knowledge and identities, and participants align themselves with these

differently. Next the thesis will explore the discourses that women in my study drew on in explaining their participation in the literacy courses at Akasya and Lale PECs.

5.2 The discourse of formal education and literacy

As discussed in the section above, the discourse of formal education and literacy has a prominent role in official literacy discourses. This powerful official discourse that associates literacy courses with school was an important feature of women's narratives of their participation in the literacy courses. However, it can be suggested that the overarching discourse of formal education and literacy derived a substantial part of its power from women's childhood experiences of having to forgo schooling. Seven of my 11 participants had never attended school. Leyla and Umut had attended primary school for only one year, Sibel had left school during the second grade and Filiz had dropped out during her fifth year. As women belonging to groups marked by their socio-political positions, e.g. gender, social class, rural origin and ethnicity, the "minimal equality" of the equality of access to schooling was lacking for them (Griffiths, 2003, p. 23). Women's accounts of their childhood experiences provided important insights into the ways in which the subject position of the schooled-person was constructed out of the relationship of their membership to various socio-political groupings with their individual selves - their personal experiences of and responses to the material and social circumstances created by systematic injustice (Griffiths, 2003, p. 53-54). Thus I start with women's stories of their schooling as manifesting the discourse of the symbolic importance of school and literacy, which I see as a strand of the discourse of formal education and literacy.

5.2.1 The discourse of the symbolic importance of school and literacy

When I started my first in-depth interview with asking women to tell me their life story, they mostly started with accounts of how their school attendance was disrupted or made impossible altogether. Thus I draw on the extracts from my first in-depth interviews to argue that the discourse of the symbolic importance of school and literacy was rooted in women's childhood experiences of structural injustices and their interaction with socio-cultural norms on the appropriate conduct for girl-children. I argue that through their participation in literacy courses women attempted

to redress some of the structural and institutional injustices which prevented them from accessing most of the symbolically and materially valuable benefits of formal education and literacy and associated subject positions.

5.2.1.1 Stories of girls' schooling

Women's stories of having to forgo schooling were characterized by the combinations of three main themes, which I name as structural injustice, caring for family members and female sexuality. Within each theme, I highlight a set of constraints and influences on which women elaborated when speaking of their schooling as girls. Although these three themes were analytically separable, the constraints and influences revealed by the women's stories of their schooling overlapped and fused with each other in complex ways. Within the theme of structural injustice, I highlight (1) women's accounts of poverty, a socio-economic factor that all of the women in my study discussed in varying degrees of explicitness as part of their stories of being denied schooling; (2) the financial cost of primary school education which the relevant legislation declares to be free; (3) the lack of teachers in rural areas; (4) children's lack of national identity documentation which led to their exclusion from schooling; and (5) the consequences of the environment of insecurity in eastern and south-eastern Turkey due to the war between the PKK and Turkish security forces.

The theme of caring for family members includes (1) women's accounts of looking after their family members, e.g. their grandparents and siblings; (2) helping with household responsibilities; and (3) engaging in unpaid and paid economic activities to contribute as girl-children to the survival of their family. I discuss these two themes together because poverty and other contributing forms of structural and institutional injustice made it impossible for the girls to either start school altogether or to continue their education. Their families enlisted the girls' care work - paid and unpaid labour inside and outside the house - for the survival of the household. Within the theme of female sexuality, I discuss women's accounts of a number of social consequences of their female sexuality, especially in their teenage years, which interacted with different forms of structural injustice, holding them back from school. Within this theme, I discuss (1) parents' privileging the schooling of boys over girls;

(2) three women's entering a marriage as teenage girls to which they felt compelled to consent; (3) community influence on parents' conception of the appropriateness of co-education of girls and boys in the same classroom; (4) discomfort with one's female body as an adolescent girl; and (5) the choice of an informal and unofficial educational institution for education due to its strict codes of conduct.

5.2.1.1.1 Stories of structural injustice and caring for the family

Women's stories of their childhood suggested that in the conditions of poverty and other forms of structural injustice, the families enlisted the girls' labour both in the care duties in the house and paid work inside and outside the house. Five women's stories of their childhood revealed that poverty interacted with their care and housework duties which started as looking after family members as young children. For four of these women, the care duties continued in the form of economic activities outside the house in their teen years, whereas Meryem's account suggested that her being sent to a boarding Koran school at the age of twelve meant that she did not have to engage in paid or unpaid work to contribute to her family's survival.

The care duties involving looking after family members and engaging in housework were less pronounced in the remaining six women's stories of their childhood. These six women emphasized their engagement in economic activities as primary school-age girls and teenagers as part of their indispensable contribution to the economic survival of their families. The economic activities they engaged in included unpaid and paid work in the fields and animal husbandry and paid work in the vegetable wholesale market, in textile workshops and carpet-weaving at home.

Sibel was one of the five women for whom household poverty interacted with their care duties towards their family members and housework responsibilities, making their school attendance impossible. Sibel started her life story with explaining how her father's joblessness left her family unable to shoulder the financial burden of her primary school education. She produced a poignant account of how she felt embarrassed at school because her financial problems were exposed by her classroom teacher.

I could not go to school. When I was in the second grade my father had a traffic accident. His leg was broken. He was not in a condition fit to work. I think in those days we had a lot of stuff like buying extra textbooks (*dergi*) at school. The teachers kept saying in the classrooms that we needed to buy these additional textbooks. (Özlem: Mmm) As I said, our economic condition was not good. My father had had an accident. We couldn't buy the additional textbooks. Because my teacher constantly made statements such as "Did you not buy the book yet?", "Do you not have it today as well?" I started to feel embarrassed and shy away from my friends. Since I could not buy the books, I gradually got alienated from school. As I felt like "Today I will go to school again, my teacher will ask me about the books again and I will feel embarrassed in front of my friends again," I became alienated from school. I started not going to school. And one day I realized that it had been years since I quit going to school. This is how it happened.

A number of scholars have noted that the neoliberal policies of marketisation and privatisation of education starting in the 1980s have led to insufficient and decreasing allocation of resources to education, causing the financial burden of education to be increasingly placed on parents (Ercan, 1998; Gök, 2010; Sayılan & Yıldız, 2009). Thus as pointed out by Sibel's account, although the right to free compulsory education is guaranteed by the Constitution and the relevant legislation in Turkey (Constitution of Turkish Republic, Art. 42), the reality is different. A large proportion of the resources for schools – in the form of cash, labour, materials and land – come from families or other non-governmental sources in the communities, creating vast inequalities in access to education as well as in terms of the quality of education between schools and between classrooms in the same school (Karapehlivan-Senel, 2009).

My question to Sibel about the activities she engaged in after she had to quit going to school revealed that she first looked after her ailing grandmother and then worked in various jobs outside the house. However, she did not seem to consider such short-term, low-status work in the informal sector as legitimate, hesitating to assert that she had a working life outside the house (İlkkaracan, 1998; Özbay, 1995).

I was at home. I had my grandmother. She passed away two years ago. Then I started living with her. She was alone and a bit sickly. I lived with her for a few years. After that, I spent all of my time at home. I didn't work. I didn't have a working life. I actually had it but they were all short-term jobs. (Özlem: Like what?) I cannot say that I worked. For example, I worked as a secretary for about two or three months. Sometimes you heard about some printing work, lasting from two to three months. I went to those places at times. (Özlem: Mmm) I didn't have a working life where I worked at the same place for many years. That is it.

Filiz was another woman for whom the financial difficulties of her family interacted with her care duties toward her grandparents and another form of structural injustice - the absence of teachers in her grandparents' village. She talked about the difficulties of moving back and forth between Istanbul, where her parents had migrated to find work, and the village where her grandparents lived in Anatolia. The interruptions to her education meant that she started to feel that her female body was more mature than her peers during her fifth grade in Istanbul. She then found work in a textile workshop rather than going to school where she did not feel comfortable.

My life story. OK. I got to know myself in (she says the name of a city in Anatolia) with my grandmother and grandfather. My parents were in Istanbul. I was the eldest child of the household. Since my grandfather liked me very much as his first grandchild, he wanted me to stay with them. I started school there. I attended school for two years. Then my mother could not stand the separation and brought me to Istanbul to be with her. I went to school for another two years here - the third and fourth grades. Then, since my grandfather passed away and my grandmother was left alone, they were forced to leave me with her and I could not attend school. That year the school had no teachers. So I could not go to the fifth grade there. When I got back (to Istanbul) I had already grown up. I could not attend school. I actually wanted to but my friends were not my peers anymore. I would have had to go to school with children younger than me. I didn't go. Then came work, I started working in textile...

Burcu was the third woman in the study for whom poverty interacted with labour-intensive childcare for her siblings, housework and cooking tasks, followed by her

working life in a factory to contribute to the household income, making her attendance to school impossible altogether.

My life story. Then it means from the beginning. It goes like this. We are seven siblings. We lived in such difficult conditions. My younger siblings went to school. My elder siblings went to school. I was the only middle daughter. I never had the chance to go to school. I looked after the siblings, cooked for them. My mother got sick for a while. She was hospitalised. After she was discharged from the hospital I took care of her. This took quite a while. (Özlem: Mmm) Because of all of this my school age was past. After the school age was past my parents wanted me to work. That meant that the dreams of school were finished for me...

Mine was the fourth woman who first cared for her family by helping with the intensive catering tasks for her carpenter father and his guests, followed by her work in her teenage years doing housework and farm work for her husband's family.

Our village is a not a backward village. There are women older than me who went to school. But because of my father's selfishness (SAYS THE LAST WORD WITH EMPHASIS) I didn't go to school. Only to make me serve himself. In this matter, since my father thought only about himself, I didn't go to school. The teacher kept registering me, my father took me away. He registered me, my father took me away...

Mine's life story suggested that she got married at the age of fifteen as her father needed to pay for his hospital expenses with the bride money: "I married early. At the age of fifteen (HESITATES), I don't want to put it as by being forced by my father, but because of economic hardship I got married...". Similar to the women in Tahire Erman's study who had migrated from the villages of Anatolia to Ankara (Erman, 1998), Mine associated the life in her husband's village with the hardships she had left behind by forcefully urging her husband to migrate to the city where she and her husband could start their own household as a couple.

...The village life is very difficult (SAYS THE LAST TWO WORDS WITH EMPHASIS). Really, you don't know how challenging village life is. It isn't like anything else. My father-in-law had a lot of land and wouldn't hire any

farmhands to do the farm work. Women had to do everything. There were three other women – the wives of the three other brothers. And there is me. The fact that there are four women means they are supposed to do all the work. As for my spouse, he could not count on himself. He wouldn't dare to start his own household and earn a living for it. Then I started to say constantly: "I don't want to live here. I don't want to live here."....

Similarly, Meryem recounted that household poverty and parental conflict had major implications for her chances of going to school as a girl-child.

Of course we had financial difficulties as well. We had problems about that but before that we already had familial problems. My parents did not get on. That is why none of my siblings could get an education. My older sister did distant schooling like me...

Meryem's account suggested that she and her older sister took care of their younger brother after the separation of their parents.

Since our parents separated, he was raised by the Child Protection Agency since the age of four or five. Of course, meanwhile my older sister didn't leave him alone. We took care of him from the outside. I mean we went to visit him and took care of him...

Thus the accounts of Sibel, Filiz, Burcu, Mine and Meryem brought to the fore their care duties towards their family members and housework duties as primary school-age girls, mostly followed by their engagement in economic activities outside the house as teenagers. On the other hand, the accounts of the remaining six women involved in my study highlighted their engagement in economic activities in both their primary school and teenage years. Their accounts pointed to the ways in which poverty interacted with other forms of structural and institutional injustice, making their school attendance impossible. Hatice recounted that she and her older sister weaved carpets at home to contribute to the family income whilst her brothers were sent to school.

We weaved carpets. (Özlem: Mmm) And mind you, they were very expensive. We would weave seven to eight carpets. We would finish one carpet a month. (Özlem: One carpet a

month, IN A PUZZLED TONE OF VOICE) One a month. When you consider the price of things in those times the carpets were expensive. We girls were like capital, in that sense better than boys. Everyone wanted to have four or five daughters. (SHE LAUGHS) That is because the girls earned money. A big part of the reason why they didn't send us to school was that the carpets were exported to foreign countries. They didn't send us (to school) because of carpets...

Leyla and Umut were two 26-year-old cousins who had worked in textile workshops since the age of 17 and 15 respectively after the migration of their families to Istanbul to relieve their poverty. Their account pointed to how poverty interacted with another form of structural injustice that stemmed from the environment of insecurity in south-eastern Turkey due to the war between the PKK and the Turkish armed forces. With some trepidation, Leyla and Umut recounted how their families had decided to take them away from school after the first grade due to an armed conflict in which the armed village guards killed and injured some of their family members.²⁶

Leyla: ...And then, should I tell this? (SHE LOOKS AT UMUT) The municipality, they had a fight over the municipality. A big incident happened. A big incident. We didn't have a school in our neighbourhood. We went to another neighbourhood. (Özlem: Mmm) Then, after this incident our families didn't let us go to the school there. We wouldn't go anyway. That side shot at us. They ambushed our villages, our neighbourhood one night. After that we could not go to school. That is why we couldn't go to school. Otherwise, our parents allowed us to go to school...

²⁶ The village guards are the armed security personnel that are employed by the Turkish state on a temporary basis to help the established armed forces in their fight against the PKK in eastern and south-eastern Turkey (Kurban, Yüksek, Çelik, Ünal, & Aker, 2008). A number of studies have pointed to the conflicts between villages and individual people who work as village guards and who do not, as well as the human rights abuses committed by the village guards (Çelik, 2005; Kurban et al., 2008).

Umut: Let's say we are talking here. Now we don't know about a thing. We don't have any guns. But we are just talking.

Leyla (INTERRUPTS): But we don't have guns. They do. They are village guards. Let's say we are sitting here. We are having a meeting. We don't have guns. We don't have a thing. We don't know about them coming either. So, they come. They knock on the door. They are wearing military uniforms. They ask for our mayoral candidate. And then we, you know.

Umut: (INTERRUPTS) They asked for our candidate. He went to the door. They killed him right there.

Thus, after their first and only year at school, Leyla and Umut helped their families take care of their animals until their families decided to migrate to Istanbul with hopes of finding work. Leyla: "What did I do in the village? We had animals. I helped my mother. We cleaned the animal sheds. (LAUGHS SOFTLY)..."

The following account by Umut of her family's migration to Istanbul and her siblings' education can be seen as an illuminating example of the implications of structural injustice for access to schooling.

Five boys and three girls. I am the eldest. The others are all younger than me....All of my siblings went to school. But they also only went to primary school. They say the fifth (grade) or something like that. They went to school until that level. We came here (to Istanbul) and could not go to school. We had to work. We had nobody. My father could not work. His leg has a condition. So they (the siblings) had to work. Now, two of my siblings are at school. The other siblings work. That is it.

Ebru's account similarly pointed to yet another combination of poverty with structural and institutional injustice which took the form of lack of teachers in her village in eastern Turkey due to the environment of armed conflict and remoteness of her village.

The school in the village was shut down because of terror incidents. Actually, it wasn't only related to that. It snowed a lot in the village. The road would be blocked. When the road was blocked for six months the teacher could not come. She

couldn't come by flying, could she? Since the municipality didn't clear the road, she couldn't come. She would come after six months. The children couldn't get anything from that sort of education anyway. In the end, the teacher went away and didn't come back.

Ebru helped her family in the fields in the village until migrating to Istanbul following her mother's death when she was 12: "How did the days go by there? The days passed with the work in the fields and the rest. We couldn't do many things there but there was a lot of work to do..." Compared with the poverty in her village, Ebru considered her life in Istanbul in more favourable terms: "My aunt said 'I will enable you to work. I will find you work' and arranged us work in textile. So we came here and worked. That was good. It was much better than our life in the village."

Sevim's account of her childhood revealed the interaction of poverty with yet another structural and institutional form of injustice: the school authorities did not register her at primary school because her parents did not have a civil marriage and therefore did not attempt to receive national identity documents for their children.²⁷

My mother didn't have an official marriage. How could I have an identity?²⁸....I was about thirteen when we got our identities. Who would accept me to school then? I mean, they

²⁷ When couples do not conduct officially recognised, civil marriages the women in unofficial partnerships cannot enjoy legally binding rights related to divorce, maintenance, inheritance and custody (İlkkaracan, 2001). Although only civil marriages are legally valid and having and conducting a religious marriage ceremony is deemed a punishable offence in Turkey, there is a significant number of couples who conduct only religious marriage ceremonies - 20% (120) of 599 women in İlkkaracan's study among women living in rural and urban areas in eastern Turkey. It can be suggested that because having a religious ceremony is deemed a punishable offence by the Criminal Code some parents hesitate to apply to the Directorate of Population offices to register their children's births and achieve national identity documentation for them.

²⁸ "Identity" is commonly used to refer to the national identity card in Turkey. The card is needed to conduct nearly all types of government-related and official procedures, e.g. opening a bank account, getting an appointment at a hospital and registering at a school. The Directorate of Population advises that it is necessary to carry the national identity card at all times (The Directorate of Population and Citizenship, 2013) and it is a common practice for people in Turkey to carry their national identity card with them. My parents' way of entrenching this practice in my life was through the expression: "Never leave the house without your identity and money."

didn't. I didn't have an identity. Then we had a neighbour and he liked me very much. When I was at school age he said "I will register you at the school." and I became so happy. I thought if he intervened, they might have registered me without an identity. (Özlem: Mmm) Thinking so, I became so overjoyed. He tried a lot but it didn't work. They didn't register me at the school without an identity...

A recent policy document entitled *Women and education* by the General Directorate on the Status of Women placed children who could not enjoy any of their social rights due to not being registered at the Directorate of Population bureaus under the category of "hidden population" (GDSW, 2008, p. 23). The document presented this injustice as a fairly uncomplicated issue because of which "...significant problems arise in this situation in the sense that unregistered children do not benefit from education and the [sic] other social rights" (p. 23). The document stated that these problems were to be solved with the law that obliged the school principals to inform the Directorate of Population when children applying for school registration did not have national identity documentation.

However, a comprehensive study published in the same year, based on a review of the existing legislation as well as interviews with children who dropped out of primary school, their parents and school personnel, produced a more nuanced picture of this complex form of social injustice (Gökşen et al., 2008). This study revealed the inefficient population registration systems at the Directorate of Population offices. It also pointed to the lack of statistical capacity and unpreparedness of the personnel at the schools to monitor children's attendance. The study also noted that poverty, which was exacerbated by the lack of social and institutional support mechanisms in the cities after (forced) migration, was the most significant cause of school drop-out.

Sevim's story corroborated the findings of the above-mentioned study where Sevim and her siblings worked at the vegetable wholesale market to contribute to the family income after they migrated to a big city in southern Turkey from their south-eastern village. Although she did not work outside the house after she got married at the age of nineteen, she had worked alongside her siblings as a child: "No, I didn't work, but when I was single, my family's economic condition wasn't good. Me and my other

sisters, we all worked at the vegetable wholesale market. We packed vegetables and things like that.”

Nalan started her life story with another account of the practice of unofficial marriages in which Nalan’s mother’s early death, poverty and the familial conflicts created by a polygynous marriage meant that she was forced to work in the cotton fields in order to send her younger brother to school.

Now, my life is something like this. My father had two wives. I also had a step mother. Since my step mother did not have a son, my father had taken my mother. My brother and I have the same mother. I have four sisters from my step mother. (Özlem: Mmm) So, after me and my brother, my mother died. I remember that but my brother doesn’t because I am the older one, my brother was young. He doesn’t remember that. Then my father took care of us. He became both a mother and father to us. Then we suffered quite a lot. We suffered quite a lot. Then I wanted my brother to go to school. I didn’t go to school so that he could go to school because we didn’t have any farm help. We didn’t have anybody.... I went to work in the cotton fields, hoed tobacco fields and picked cotton but I sent my brother to school...

Nalan herself entered an early marriage at the age of 13 within a polygynous arrangement. She explained that her marriage was a strategy of survival for herself and her younger brother which she devised within the concrete constraints of her material and social circumstances.

...My older sisters made me suffer a lot. Since I didn’t have a mother, they made me suffer a lot. No matter what I did it, it was not good enough for them. No matter what I did, I couldn’t win their favour. So one day, I received a marriage offer. My current spouse. (Özlem: Mmm) He came to buy cotton. He was buying cotton. He asked for my hand in marriage from them. I was about thirteen or hardly fourteen. I was thirteen.... My father said “You are still a child. What is more, you will become a co-wife. How can you go to become a co-wife? What is your age?” (Özlem: How old were you?) Thirteen. Then I said “Look father, excuse me, but if I stay with them, they won’t look after me.” My father was very old. He was like in his eighties, nineties. To be honest, he was close to death. (Özlem: Mmm) I said “If something happens to you in the near future, my brother and I would end

up on the street. No one cares about us.” No one cared about us. He also knew that no one cared about us....My aim was like this. I figured I could save my life and my brother’s life. By Allah, this was my true aim. But I didn’t know that I was throwing myself into fire...

Polygyny has been banned in Turkey since 1926 and does not provide women without an official marriage with any legally binding rights related to divorce, maintenance, inheritance and custody (İlkkaracan, 2001). Despite its legal shortcomings and potential for causing serious familial and emotional conflict, polygyny is practiced in Turkey - one out of ten marriages in İlkkaracan’s study was polygynous; half of the women in polygynous marriages stated that they had either arranged the marriage themselves or entered into it willingly (İlkkaracan, 2001). Thus based on her above-mentioned account, it can be suggested that Nalan was “bargaining with patriarchy” as she tried to create more materially secure life conditions for herself and her younger brother within the concrete constraints of male-domination and material circumstances in her particular social location (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 275). Nalan’s entering a polygynous marriage as a co-wife at the age of thirteen in the conditions of poverty and lack of institutional support can also be seen as a form of control over female sexuality through specific institutional, customary and religious mechanisms (İlkkaracan, 2001). In the next section, I will explore how women’s life stories highlighted the ways in which structural injustice fused with social norms on female sexuality, making the girls’ school attendance impossible.

5.2.1.1.2 Stories of structural injustice and female sexuality

Within the stories of structural injustice and female sexuality, I here highlight the ways in which women elaborated on the social constraints placed upon their female bodies when they were girls and the consequences of having female sexuality for their life options. In these accounts poverty and other forms of structural injustice such as the lack of teachers in rural schools intersected with socio-cultural norms about female sexuality, contributing to the shape of girls’ life choices. In addition to Nalan whose account of her childhood was introduced in the previous section, for another five women in my study the household survival strategies were coupled with

socio-cultural norms that privileged the formal education of boys over girls (Manion, 2008) and the social constraints and demands placed on the girls' female bodies.²⁹

Thus similar to Nalan's account of working in the fields to send her brother to primary school, another five women's accounts of their childhood suggested that when their families were forced to choose which children were to forgo schooling so that they could contribute to paid and unpaid work for the household, they chose girls. Thus Mine, Burcu, Hatice and Meryem did not go to primary school at all whereas Filiz's parents chose her brother when it came to supporting one of their four children to go beyond primary school. Women's accounts of their childhood suggested that the social consequences of their gender took a number of other forms, placing further expectations and demands on them, especially as they reached puberty.

As part of her childhood memories, Mine explained that whereas her father sent her three brothers to school, she and her older sister helped their mother serve their father who was a carpenter and his guests.

One of my brothers died in a traffic accident. We are two daughters and two sons....They (the boys) went to school. My older sister did not go to school either. The other siblings finished primary school....My father had a lot of people coming to visit him. He was a carpenter. He constantly had guests, people from other villages and since he was a master carpenter he was well-known and liked in the neighbouring villages. He was never without guests. We would brew tea for them and prepare meals with my mother. All these complicated meals. Complicated and all, he liked to eat well. He was fond of living well...

As discussed on page 105, Burcu started her life story with explaining that she was one of seven siblings and she was chosen to help with taking care of her younger

²⁹ It can be suggested that when families were forced to choose which children they were to support through primary as well as further schooling years they tended to choose boys because they considered boys' education as a more reliable investment in terms of men's greater earning potential and their awareness of the structural and socio-cultural barriers against women's participation in the labour market in Turkey explored in Chapter Two.

siblings and cook for the entire family while her other siblings were sent to school. Mine and Burcu recounted that after having to forgo schooling, they entered into their first marriage as teenage girls who felt forced to consent to the marriage, considering their fathers as responsible for arranging these marriages. Both women's memories of being forced into a marriage as teenage girls unfolded through emotional displays such as deep sighs, long pauses and halted speech. Mine's account of her marriage as a teenage girl exhibited ambivalent feelings toward her father who had arranged the marriage to use the bride money for his hospital expenses. In the beginning of my in-depth interview with her, Mine hesitated to define her marriage as forced.

I married early. At the age of fifteen (HESITATION), I don't want to put it as by being forced by my father, but because of economic hardship I got married....The way I saw it then, not his (referring to her prospective husband) character but his looks weren't as good as mine. But I was forced to get married because of my father's hospital expenses.

Toward the end of the interview, Mine returned to the way her marriage was arranged in relation to her memories of not being sent to school. She expressed a strong disapproval of the way his father shaped her life by forcing her to get married in an effort to deal with poverty that she attributed to her father's lavish and self-centred life style.

My father actually earned well but he spent his money with other women. Since my father thought of only himself, we were (HALTED SPEECH), so in the end after he got cancer he was no use even to his own self. Imagine, he (TRIES TO CHOOSE A WORD) sold (SAYS THE LAST WORD IN A LOWER TONE OF VOICE) his daughter. That is what it is called. I mean you cannot call this he gave her hand in marriage. This is not getting married to someone you don't want. This is selling your daughter for bride money for some reason. When you start thinking about the past (SHORT PAUSE), I don't reflect on it anymore (Özlem: Mmm). The past is in the past...

Similarly, Burcu presented her account of her marriage as a teenage girl as part of her father's cruelty to all the family members.³⁰ She was still struggling to give meaning to the reason behind her parents' marrying her off when she was thirteen.

How can I say this? My father drank. He tormented my mother a lot. He tormented us as well. When we were with him there would be mayhem. There would be fights. He sometimes beat us. He lined us up and beat us. Since my mother was beaten up a lot at home, she kept running away from home. What could the poor woman do? She was beaten up. My father would throw forks, knives at her. He didn't leave a single part of her body uninjured. That is why I don't like my father at all. Sometimes they say your parents are sacred. But for me my father is a big zero. (SILENCE FOR A SECOND) I think I did what I could because I sacrificed myself by working, by not going to school. But that didn't last long. They got the idea of marrying me off. I got married at the age of thirteen. (SILENCE FOR A SECOND) With family pressure. The reason? They would have one less mouth to feed. I am working, handing the money to your hand but that wasn't it. I don't know if they had a different purpose or if that was because of ignorance. I haven't been able to figure that out...

Hatice had started her life story by stating that both her husband and her three brothers had finished university and occupied high-status jobs whereas she was not sent to school as a girl.

³⁰ A major issue that limits women's life choices and threatens their bodily integrity and personal dignity is violence against women, which has been the focus of feminist activism in Turkey, starting to gain renewed force in the 1980s. The feminist movement challenged discriminatory laws and court verdicts, the use of sexuality for male dominance through virginity tests and the importance attached to women's virginity (Diner & Toktaş, 2010; İlkkaracan, 2000; Tekeli, 2006). The research and activism against "honour killings", which can be seen as an extreme form of domestic violence and entails any act of murder motivated by the perception that women blemish the honour of the male through their sexual behaviour (Altınay & Arat, 2008; İlkkaracan, 2008), has been an important area of struggle (Altınay, 2000; Düzkan & Koçali, 2000; Kardam, 2005; Yirmibeşoğlu, 2000). Economic violence against women has been targeted by organisations such as the Foundation for Support for Women's Work - Kadın Emekini Destekleme Vakfı (KEDV) and Türkiye Homenet (home-based workers' network). As for the initiatives against sexual violence by the state, The Legal Aid Office for the Victims of Sexual Harassment and Rape in Custody has been active since 1997 (Asan, Oflu, & Karakaş, 2011).

My life story, we are six siblings. Four boys and two girls. Although we lived in a town, my father sent the boys to school and didn't send us. One doesn't understand that when you are young. My brothers are educated, cultured people. It was my older sister and me who remained inferior. Of course sometimes with the fathers (DOESN'T FINISH THE SENTENCE) Since you live in a big city, have children, for example my spouse is a university graduate. He is cultured. You feel a sense of inferiority because of that...

In my in-depth interview with Hatice, my question regarding how she spent her days as a girl child revealed that she and her sister weaved carpets at home to be exported to foreign countries: "Since the carpets were exported they made good money. They must have figured, 'What will girls do with schooling anyway? So they should weave carpets'. The boys were to go to school and the girls were to weave carpets." Hatice's account of her childhood presented the girls' financial contribution to the household by weaving carpets at home as largely responsible for her being denied schooling. However, her account also pointed to the importance of the community influences on her father's decision as to how much and what type of education was appropriate for girls and boys (Chudgar, 2008).

It had turned into a custom in our neighbourhood. We are in a town. Girls don't go to school. They didn't send my peers and my elder sister's peers to school. It was a custom. They didn't send us and my father says "What could I do? Since they didn't send their daughters to school, I didn't either." The thinking was that girls shouldn't be educated along with boys. And also there was this feeling of jealousy. Actually, he wasn't that ignorant. He was a political party leader for fifteen years. Someone who is a party leader, someone who enters different social situations should know everything. He should know that one cannot do without reading and writing. When I went to visit them on holidays I would sometimes argue with him in a joking manner. But now that he is old I cannot bring myself to be tough with him...

Unlike the previous three women, Filiz had started primary school but quit going to school during the fifth grade. She had two sisters who had finished the fifth grade and all of the sisters started working in textile ateliers after primary school. She explained how the privileging of the education of her only brother worked in her family.

My brother, they wanted him to continue his schooling very much. I think he didn't have it in him that he didn't want to go to school....They (my sisters) finished the fifth grade. They all finished it. My brother quit going to secondary school. I mean he started it but he said "I won't be able to attend it. I cannot do it." and he quit. He said he would work. That was easier for him but of course he regrets it now.

Filiz's account below similarly pointed to the intersection of a number of structural injustices such as poverty and the lack of teachers in rural schools with the favouring of boys for education beyond primary school. Filiz's account also revealed that the discomfort she felt with her adolescent body led to her dropping out of school, which was met with the implicit approval of her parents.

When I went back (to the village) there was no teacher. (Özlem: No teacher again) Also, mmm, I developed all of a sudden. At that age, I was just like this (POINTING TO HERSELF). When I came back (to Istanbul) there was only me and a girl friend of mine. Only two girls. The others looked so young. We were much older. We had developed all of a sudden. When I came back the fifth grade was over, they were going to the sixth grade. I was to go to the fifth grade. I already looked older than them. I started to look even older than them. I didn't want to go. I didn't want that myself. I actually got sad but I said "I cannot go. No, I am too old. I mean they are so young. I am too old. I cannot go."...

My question regarding familial conversations about her dropping out of school led Filiz to state that she only remembered her parents' tacit approval of her quitting school due to her adolescent female body.

I don't remember (any conversations) but I said "I cannot go anymore. I don't want to go." and they understood that I was old now. They took a look at my appearance and didn't really insist. Maybe they thought "She is old already. She had better not go (to school)."

Similarly, Meryem recounted that household poverty, parental conflict and lack of institutional support for her mother's psychological problems had major implications for her chances for schooling as a girl-child.

My mother was (PAUSES FOR A SECOND) could not think properly. I mean I don't want to call her mentally ill but she

is someone who laughs at everything, who cannot tell right from wrong. I mean our conditions were not really good then. My father was very irresponsible. I mean our household was not in a good condition. So we couldn't go to school. Of course we had financial difficulties as well. We had problems about that but before that we already had familial problems...

While highlighting poverty and parental conflict in explaining her lack of schooling, Meryem's account also pointed to the interaction of structural injustice with social norms about the appropriate upbringing and conduct of a female child. Meryem's account described how her grandmother acted as the guardian of all of her siblings in the lack of sustained institutional support for her siblings after her parents' divorce. Meryem's grandmother chose an unofficial, boarding Koran school for her due to its strict rules of conduct. (See Footnote 20 on Koran courses in Turkey)

When I was about ten or eleven my parents got divorced. After that, my grandmother looked after us, raised us. So we couldn't go to school because of this. We couldn't get any school education. Then I had a period of Koran course for eight years....It took about eight years but it wasn't only about education. Since we didn't have a mother or father, we were under the authority of the hodja. As explained by the expression her flesh is yours, her bones are mine.³¹ (LAUGHS QUIETLY). Lessons in morality, cleanliness and for improvement in all senses, my grandmother gave this authority to the hodja. And so continued our lives.

The role of social norms about the appropriate upbringing of a girl-child in educational choices can be discerned more clearly when Meryem's grandmother's choice of care and schooling for her younger brother is taken into consideration. As discussed earlier on page 106, Meryem's younger brother had been raised by the Child Protection Agency since the age of four. Meryem explained that her grandmother's sending her younger brother to a state care home enabled him to attend school and eventually get a secure job at a government office since people

³¹ "Her/his flesh is yours, her/his bones are mine" is a figurative expression that means "Make her/him work hard and follow the rules and punish her/him harshly if necessary." The expression is uttered when parents and family members take a child to a teacher or a crafts master to become a student or apprentice under his/her authority.

who spend their childhood in governmental care homes are positively discriminated in their applications to government posts (State Personnel Legislation, 2009):

“Because he is from a care home. (Özlem: Mmm) He was given priority. The state gave him priority because he grew up in a care home. And he also passed the exam himself.”

The social consequences of being female not only prevented women from enjoying schooling as girls but also influenced their relation to their sexuality, their chances of occupying certain desirable physical and social places with their female bodies and their subsequent attempts to overcome the constraints they experienced as girls and young women. It can be suggested that one such important attempt was their attempt to access the subject position of schooled person through their participation in the literacy courses. The discourse of formal education and literacy, which created the highly desirable subject position of schooled person, owed a considerable degree of its power to the official institutions and their prestigious forms of knowledge and literacy practices. However, as women’s stories of their schooling as girls suggested, the discourse of formal education and school seemed to derive an equally significant degree of its power from women’s desires and attempt to redress some of the injustices they experienced as children which had made their school attendance impossible. Thus it can be suggested that formal education and literacy had a symbolic importance for women, which seemed to have its roots in women’s experiences of injustice as girl-children.

In the next section I draw on fieldnotes based on my observations in the literacy classrooms in Akasya and Lale PECs and in the administrators’ offices to discuss the hardships created by the administrators in accessing the courses and dealing with the bureaucratic tasks related with the courses. I argue that women’s determination to access and attend the courses in a context of bureaucratic hardship and humiliation and social and economic obligations can be seen as another manifestation of the symbolic importance of school and literacy. I now discuss extracts from the first in-depth interviews which provided linguistic traces of the discourse of the symbolic importance of school and literacy. In these extracts, women mostly talked about their

longing for schooling and described social practices and the physical artefacts involved with these practices that they associated with being schooled.

5.2.1.2 Determination to attend the courses and longing for schooling

In this section, I draw on observation vignettes and extracts from the first interviews to argue that women's resilience to redress some of the injustices they experienced as girl children through their participation in literacy courses can also be discerned in their persistence to access the courses. I introduce a poignant observation vignette which pointed to the symbolic importance of literacy course attendance for women. In this vignette a previous participant visited the literacy course in Akasya PEC to see her course teacher and inform him about her recent educational progress, which can be likened to a school reunion. As discussed in Chapter Four, I encountered difficulties in finding a Level 2 course at Akasya PEC as well as at other three PECS in neighbourhoods with a high number of potential literacy course participants. Likewise, the accounts of women in my study suggested that learning about the starting date of a course and accessing it was not a straightforward task although the courses were made to seem easily accessible in the websites of PECs, literacy campaign materials and policy documents.

In Akasya PEC, only three women – Hatice, Filiz and Mine - did not live within walking distance of the centre. Hatice had found out about the course through a close relative who lived near the centre whereas Filiz knew the classroom teacher from her children's primary school. Mine was the only participant who got in touch with the centre through telephone and Internet with the help of her colleagues. She recounted the difficulty of reaching information on the starting date of the course.

...The two of the girls got on the Internet immediately. One of them filled in the form, the other one called the centre. It turned out that it was the school term holidays then. We called and called and called and called the centre. They said to apply from the Internet and they would get back to us. Then later on I came here by chance and the course had started. (Özlem: Ohh) They said they would let us know with a text message but they didn't get back to us. (Özlem: And?) When I came here, the course had started on that very day. So I didn't miss anything.

The remaining four women at Akasya PEC - Ebru, Burcu, Sibel and Meryem - lived very close to the centre and thus could drop by the PEC several times to follow up on the course schedule. At Lale PEC, all of my four participants learned about the literacy course either through their children or relatives' children who attended the primary school in which the literacy course took place. Umut produced another account of bureaucratic disrespect to her and Leyla's attempts to access a literacy course earlier: "We applied somewhere else with Leyla in the past. They didn't call us. Then we waited a bit. This course was our fate, it seems. So we came here this year."

At Akasya and Lale PECs, the bureaucratic hurdles related with the adult literacy courses were not limited to the difficulties of accessing the course. My participant observation in the classrooms and administrators' offices also pointed to the difficulty of accessing one's records and certificate after the courses ended. During my initial visits to the administrative offices to learn about the starting dates of the courses my requests for information took place along with the requests of other women. Their accounts suggested that they were visiting the administrative offices for bureaucratic tasks such as learning about the records of their course grades or getting their diplomas. In these cases, the administrators explained that the delays in what seemed to be straightforward tasks were caused by the lack of documentation to be provided by the teachers or incompetence on the part of some other Ministry of National Education office.

In Akasya PEC a female participant from the previous Level 2 literacy course in the same year was forced to visit the course where I conducted my research several times in order to learn about which lessons she had failed in and when she could take a make-up examination.

Classroom teacher Ali tried to find the records on which courses Miss Fatma failed in the administrator's room but couldn't find anything. He told Miss Fatma that he would look at the files at his home and that she should come back the following week.... Miss Fatma explained to the teacher that she tried to take the make-up exam earlier but when she called the administration they didn't tell her anything and

then they didn't call her back about the exam date. I cannot understand why they didn't inform her about the exam date. Also why cannot the classroom teacher telephone her to inform her about the records? Why does she have to come to the course again just for this? What is all this humiliation and disrespect about? What about Miss Fatma's time, financial expenses and emotional work? Is that not important? (From researcher's fieldnotes, 19 March 2011, Akasya PEC)

Thus women's determination to overcome the difficulties of reaching a course and engage with the administrative tasks related with one's course attendance can be seen as pointing to the importance of the symbolic importance of course participation for them. One poignant illustration of the importance of the discourse of the symbolic importance of school and literacy was young women's visiting their previous course teacher and informing him of their educational progress at Akasya PEC.

A young woman knocked on the door and looked in shyly. Ali teacher told her to come in. They hugged and kissed each other on both cheeks. Everyone stopped writing and started to look at them and listen to them. After their brief chat, Ali teacher explained to the class that she was an old student of his. She had finished the course four years ago and was doing distance education now. She was attending the computer course at the Akasya PEC at the same time. (From researcher's fieldnotes, 12 March 2011, Akasya PEC)

Women's interview accounts similarly pointed to the role of the symbolic importance of school and literacy in their participation in the courses. Eight out of 11 women in my research discussed their participation in the literacy course with terms such as "fulfilling a dream" or "fulfilling a yearning" that they could not in their childhood, considering their participation in the literacy course as a return to school. In Akasya PEC five out of seven participants discussed their participation in the course in terms of fulfilling a longing. They described particular social practices and physical artefacts they associated with schooling in answering questions about their participation in the courses and feelings associated with it. These social practices and the physical artefacts involved in them included sitting at a desk, sitting in a classroom, having classmates, having a teacher, answering a question at the board and wearing a school uniform and colourful hair pins. Mine talked about the joy she felt when she started the course as follows:

I was so excited, so excited and so happy, so very happy. I went back home and it was as if I was walking in the air. As if this was what I had waited for all these years. To experience this day, it was so different. The feeling of being schooled. I suppose it is more special when you experience it as an adult. (HER TONE OF VOICE RAISES) I say to my colleagues “Folks, I was like this. I was like that. I had such a good day. I have classmates. I am like this. I am like that.” I experienced the childhood that I couldn’t live...

In response to what she thought of the classroom atmosphere, Hatice produced a similar account of fulfilling her longing for experiencing the social practices she associated with being schooled.

It was good. Fine. Just like young children. It is such a different thing. What we could not experience as children, we have experienced now. (LAUGHS) I even said to my spouse one day: “I will wear a school uniform and fluffy hair pins and go.” What we couldn’t taste in our childhood, now we have sat at the same desks and breathed the smell of that air although it is late.

Meryem’s account of the symbolic importance of school and literacy highlighted the practice of answering questions at the board and sitting at a desk rather than on a cushion on the floor as she had done in her years of Koran school.

...For example I liked sitting at separate desks like university students. That is a nice feeling. A very nice feeling. Learning something, being called to the board. I did things at the board at the Koran course as well but it is nice to be called to the board officially here. Learning something from the teacher, say doing the multiplication tables at the board, doing addition and subtraction...

Three other participants at Lale PEC discussed the discourse of the symbolic importance of school and literacy as underpinning their participation in the course in similar terms, identifying it as fulfilling a dream. Leyla put it as follows:

As I said I was always curious about going to school. I dreamt of it. Now I have reached my dream. (Özlem: Mmm) That is how I see myself. I have reached my dream. Umut and I always said this. We dreamt of it. We have reached our dream. We are coming to school now, you see.

Sevim's account referred to the social practices she associated with schooling when she talked about how she started the course.

...Serap teacher called me. I was a little bit nervous. Then I came. I was quite nervous that day. My nervousness went away in the following days. I found it good. I had always dreamt of sitting at these desks. Since I didn't go to school in childhood years, I had always wondered about sitting in a classroom, listening to the lesson, doing a maths problem, raising your hand to speak. I always wondered about the classroom environment. I mean I have at least lived my childhood now. I don't know how to tell you this. My longing has been fulfilled since I didn't go (to school) in my childhood...

The accounts of three women participants did not express the symbolic importance of participation in the literacy course for them with the expression "fulfilling a longing." Nalan's account pointed to the symbolic importance of the course for her in relation to her account of learning to read from her brother whom she had sent to school by working in the fields a girl-child.

As I told you my brother, my brother taught me. I sent him to school but I didn't go. For example we would come back from cotton picking in the evening. We would eat our meal. My brother would sit down and do his homework. I would ask him. What is this letter, for example? How does this fit with this other thing?...So he taught me. But I could read. I couldn't write. This time I can write as well. I said to myself: "I came last year. I will come this year as well."

The accounts of two other women at Akasya PEC who had attended primary school for two and four years respectively discussed the symbolic importance of course participation within their familial relations. Filiz's account suggested that her participation in a literacy course had a symbolic value since her children might have thought that formal education was irrelevant to their lives if she had not set an example for them. She also found that the school knowledge that she would gain from the course would help her support her children's education.

I have a son who goes to the sixth grade and a daughter at the second grade. The reason why I have come here is partly related with them, with my son. In order to be able to give

them better things. OK, I can catch up with my daughter, I can help her with her studies but I cannot help my son that much. I wanted to support him as well....I partly decided to come (to the course) so that my children wouldn't think "I go to school but my parents don't do anything. They didn't go to school and they aren't doing anything about it. Then it is fine to continue your life in this way," so that they would see that I am also doing something...

Sibel's account of her participation in the literacy course similarly pointed to the symbolic value of school and literacy for her as a mother of a small daughter and the wife of a person who was a university graduate.

...I first thought it wouldn't cause an issue between me and my spouse since he is a university graduate and I am not even a primary school graduate. And also we fell in love with each other and got married. But as years passed by and also as we had a child, when you have a child some things start to become clear to you. The things that you couldn't see before or the things that you already knew about start to create problems. For example when something is being discussed that I seem meek next to him, that I don't possess what he knows created some sense of being inferior for me...

Sibel's account of her participation in the literacy course pointed to the complex ways in which the difference strands of the discourse of formal education and literacy overlapped. Thus while Sibel discussed the symbolic value of school and literacy as a resource that she found particularly important after her marriage, her account also pointed to the social status associated with her course participation. Her account highlighted her attempt to gain an improved social status in relation to her husband by having an increased access to school knowledge. The value attached to school knowledge due to its association with improved social status was discussed by other participants as well. The next section will explore the discourse of social status by discussing women's accounts that highlighted school knowledge, course diploma, further formal education, job opportunities, context-specific literacy practices and speaking (standard) Turkish as ways of gaining an improved social status.

5.2.2 The discourse of social status associated with school and literacy

I draw on the first in-depth interviews with women to discuss how their accounts of participation in the literacy course were underlined by the discourse of social status associated with the benefits and value of formal education and school literacy.

Throughout this section my intention is to bring to the fore the participants' understandings of the social and material value of attending a PEC literacy course. The accounts of women involved in this study suggested that their experiences of social injustice and material deprivation due to their lack of school knowledge, diplomas and not speaking standard Turkish (fluently) informed how they constructed meaning about the benefits and value of participation in literacy courses. Thus dominant discourses of formal education and literacy influenced the meanings of the schooled-person identities women in my study attempted to take on through their participation in the courses.

However, the majority of women in this study – eight out of 11 - also discussed the benefits and value of their participation in the literacy courses in terms of feeling more competent in context-specific literacy practices - particularly bureaucratic and economic literacy practices - that are not part of the official goals of the literacy courses at PECs. Thus they aimed to re-appropriate what was offered by the literacy courses and find new functions for the elements of schooled literacy in their struggles for increased social status and materially more comfortable lives in an urban context. Furthermore, three women from Akasya PEC – Filiz, Meryem and Burcu – highlighted their wish to gain non-manual jobs through which they wanted to achieve financial self-sufficiency. This link between the schooled-person identity and structures of gender is not prominent in the official discourses of formal education and literacy discussed on pages 95-99. Another way of women's transforming the official purpose of the courses for their own projects was Kurdish-Turkish bilingual Kurdish women's perception of the literacy courses as an opportunity to improve their Turkish vocabulary and speaking skills.

5.2.2.1 School knowledge

The intention to gain school knowledge through literacy courses was highlighted not only in the aforementioned accounts of Filiz and Sibel but also by other participants at Akasya PEC. Five participants – Meryem, Mine, Sibel, Ebru and Hatice – had refused to take an examination that would provide them with the Level 2 literacy course diploma without attending the course. Hatice's account of how she decided to attend the Level 2 course in order to learn, not just to get a diploma, is an example of how these five women discussed the importance of school knowledge for themselves.

...We had an exam for the second term. So we have started the second term. The teacher then said: "You can take this exam to get the diploma." I said: "I don't have that much knowledge. Since I don't have enough knowledge I would like to improve myself. I would like to continue."

Burcu had joined the Akasya literacy course four weeks after the starting date. In response to my question about how she had imagined the course's content and learning activities, she discussed her worry about covering several school topics in 18 weeks plus some self-study.

I wondered what they had already covered. It had been a month. (Özlem: Yes) I asked them. I said: "Did you do the semi colons, Turkish and the like?" They said no. I was a bit puzzled thinking they had only done addition and subtraction. Then how will we do Turkish, social studies, mathematics and religious studies in these 18 weeks? How will we succeed at that? How are we supposed to keep all that in our minds? How should we study? We don't have a textbook. We come for only two days of the week. It all depends on what you do on those two days. You go home and don't have anyone to help you. You think about consulting the computer for help. Then you don't know which topic to look up on the computer. You don't know what will come up. Which one should I study? Shall I try to fill my head with information or shall I use my logic? I don't know about that. I am in a waiting mode now...

Mine described her confidence in herself as an avid reader who felt lacking in school knowledge which she could not achieve in her childhood.

I have read many books but it is not like (DOESN'T FINISH THE SENTENCE) Basic education is very important. (SAYS THE LAST SENTENCE WITH EMPHASIS) It is definitely very important to receive basic education as a child. I say this to everyone. Nothing compares to the basic education received in childhood. I mean what can I do in the two hours we spend here? (Özlem: Mmm) I have the sense of inferiority because of that. A sense of deficiency...

Meryem's response to my question about how she had imagined the course and its content similarly pointed to her expectation to have primary school education and school knowledge: "I didn't think about it, really. I wanted an education. I mean maybe reading and writing and a little mathematics. I was a bit afraid of mathematics." Similar to Meryem at Akasya PEC, Umut, Leyla and Nalan at Lale PEC discussed the value of primary school education and school knowledge for them as people who were denied the right to schooling. While discussing the new topics they learned in the Lale PEC classroom, Umut and Leyla discussed their coming to the literacy course to become educated against difficult odds, expressing their wish to be able to come to the course every day.

Umut: One finds it a bit difficult. If we already had some knowledge, maybe we wouldn't find it this difficult. (Özlem: Mmm) But since we don't have the knowledge we find it difficult. But with God's help, we will succeed in this. There is no other way. (SHE LAUGHS) We will become educated a bit. What else can we do? We say we wish we didn't work on weekdays and came to school everyday.

Leyla: If we could come on weekdays as well it would be great. We would learn more. Our reading and writing would become super.

Nalan described her participation in the literacy course, which she had learned of from the teacher of one of her children, as deciding to come to school to learn as much as she could. She found this difficult to do due to her health issues and complex familial and economic problems.

Yes, all four (of my children) go to school. In this reading and writing thing, how can I explain it to you? I didn't know a lot of the letters. I didn't know many letters. I really didn't. The teacher told us about this. I said "I will come." I came

last year....Last year we received a diploma. That document is now at home. I said I will come this year as well. How to explain this? Things don't stay in my mind. They don't stay in my mind. So I said I will go and learn.... I said I need to learn more. Also writing. I didn't know how to write. I knew how to read but I didn't know how to write. Now I can write and read.

Sevim at Lale PEC discussed school knowledge as vital to help her daughters' studies and to increase her social status in situations that concerned the education of her children. Sevim described several social situations where she felt the need to achieve school knowledge and familiarity with schooling practices in order to support her daughters' studies.

For example I had a hard time when the teacher gave subtractions, additions as homework. I couldn't do those. I sent my daughter to the neighbour below. (Özlem: Mmm) That is hard. It is bad not to be able to teach your child yourself and send her to the neighbour. Now my child has started the first grade. I am helping her with the subtractions. I am using my fingers to help her count...

When I asked Sevim about how she imagined the course and its content she discussed the school subjects that she expected to be taught: "I thought there would be the subjects of the third and fourth grades. I supposed that we would do the third and fourth grade topics. Maybe we would do more mathematics..." She explained that she had decided to participate in the Level 2 course because her increasing familiarity with school knowledge and routines provided her with an increased social status. She described a social situation where she interacted with the teacher of one of her daughters as a mother capable of getting involved in her daughter's education.

My child received her school report. If I hadn't known, I would have had to show it to someone who knew how to find out about her grades. If I can read it, then it gives me joy, it gives me happiness to read those high grades. It isn't the same thing when someone else says it to me, you know. (Özlem: Mmm) For example when my children get their school reports I look at all of them. The children give their reports to me as soon as they bring them from their teachers. The last term my daughter who is at the first grade got into the school garden. They formed a line. I said "It is my

daughter's turn. Let me go and get her school report. I am curious about her grades.” (Özlem: Mmm) And you know what the teacher said? “You'd better not get the report first. Let it be a surprise.” Our teacher is so nice. If I hadn't known, I couldn't have attempted to get that report being curious about it. But since you can read those grades you don't want to wait for even a minute. (Özlem: Mmm) One gets even more excited than the children when it is time to get the school reports. I am happy that I know these now.

As discussed above, some of the women involved in this study talked about their intention to gain school knowledge through the literacy course by mentioning different school subjects while others referred to school knowledge and education in general. Regardless of their knowledge of the content of a Level 2 literacy course, all of the women in my study associated the literacy course with the social status of school knowledge and discussed it as part of their participation in the course. The next section will explore women's accounts which linked their participation in the literacy courses with the course diploma, further formal education and jobs. These were discussed in relation to their perceived social status and the promise of an escape from low-paid jobs in the informal sector.

5.2.2.2 Diplomas, further formal education, jobs

All of the seven women participants at Akasya PEC discussed the importance of the course diploma for them both because of the social value attributed to it and its function of enabling them to continue their formal education. Meryem explained that she wanted to continue her schooling which she associated with a higher social status.

As I said, there are no problems about going to places. I go wherever I want to. I can go to the end of the world. (Özlem: Yes) What time the planes take off, what time they land on, which price category would be applied, things about that. I don't have problems in daily life anyway. I am already an individual. I am aware of everything. (Özlem: Mmm) But being educated, I don't know, a rank, a subject, I can do that. I can see that in my mind. I can see that light in myself. That is important too. I think I can do this. As I said I will hopefully continue my education as long as my health allows it. There are still some ongoing issues about it, you see.

Meryem's account referred to social situations that she associated with being a self-sufficient, urban person who wanted to realise her potential to reach a social status that she could not achieve due to the social injustices that had made school attendance impossible for her. Similar to Meryem's account of a concrete social situation associated with being schooled, Mine, Filiz, Burcu and Hatice described work situations where a school diploma would be required. Mine's account pointed to a situation in her workplace where she felt forced to make an untrue statement on an official form regarding her educational status.

There was this thing that influenced me a lot. My workplace got a quality assurance certificate. While writing the resumes it came out that I didn't have a diploma. So what would I write? I was forced to write primary school graduate. You have to lie. "So what did you do with your diploma? I lost it." I didn't know if they would ask to see it...

Furthermore, Filiz, Meryem and Burcu discussed the improved social status associated with their participation in the literacy course in terms of their attempt to gain a non-manual job with higher social status and, through the job, financial independence. For Filiz, this would be a job related with processing information and folders in an office unlike the textile and embroidery work she earned a living from in the past: "I like accounting very much, dealing with accountancy matters. Dealing with folders, I like that but I don't know if it would happen (Özlem: YES, DEFINITELY) (FİLİZ SMILES) Hopefully, we'll see."

Meryem's account of her desired occupation was related to her childhood experiences of her parents' separation as well as the higher social status of this job.

...If God allows it, I would like to become a pedagogue. Since I know that there are millions of people who experience what I did, who have a similar psychological state to mine. If millions of people are getting married, then millions of people are getting a divorce and it is the children who suffer...

Burcu's reply to my question regarding her participation in the course pointed to the interaction of the symbolic importance of course participation with her attempt to continue her formal education which she found vital for her employability.

How did it happen? As I said I always wanted to go to school. I wanted to reach a certain place, do something. (Özlem: Mmm) As I said, I have that longing in me. I would like to fulfil that longing. I say not only the fifth or the sixth grade, I will go as far as possible. I would like to reach the furthest point. When they ask me tomorrow, I don't want to say primary school. (Özlem: Yes) I want to say secondary or high school. I really got upset a couple of times. For example I am looking at a newspaper. I am looking for a job. It says high school graduate. I think about it and cannot see the relation. When you work in a canteen serving tea I guess it is for us to ask them what their guests will drink, I figure. Or is that because they want to say "A high school graduate girl is working for us." I couldn't figure that out yet...

In response to my question about her interest in vocational courses to qualify as a chef, Burcu explained that she sought a job with a higher social status and decent working conditions.

I don't want to move toward such jobs (manual jobs such as a cook). (Özlem: Is that so?) I have a different goal. If I succeed in this, I have different goals. (Özlem: Mmm) I would like to reach a better place.... Now I am looking for some office work, light work if I can find it. I would like to go for five days of the week. You say a vocational course to get a certificate. I am beyond that (Özlem: Mmm) because I have different plans. If I pass this course, then I will tell you about the rest. Right now this is it.

Burcu's previous account described a labour market situation where formal education diplomas were required for a low-paid and low status job irrespective of one's ability to carry out the responsibilities of the job without a diploma. The same point was raised by Hatice as well.

Both diploma and improving my reading and writing. If I can succeed here, I would like to continue. I would like to go to secondary school if I can. I would like to continue. Not only the diploma. In a way, you cannot do without a diploma. When you apply somewhere they ask for a diploma. No matter how skilful you are, the punch line is the diploma.

For Filiz, Burcu and Meryem, the social status they sought through non-manual jobs interacted with structures of gender in considerably explicit ways, leading them to

see their income through non-manual jobs as a means of financial self-sufficiency. Filiz's account suggested that her husband's bankruptcy in the car park business he had ventured into led her to focus on financially self-sufficiency.

He opened the car park but it doesn't exist anymore. It had a big impact on us financially. I worked for three months again. He quit work, he had to quit work. He went bankrupt, to be honest. He bankrupted twenty thousand Liras. It is maybe also because of this that if I can learn things, I want to have a job in a better place. I would like to work. Rather than being dependent on him, I mean my spouse, I would like to earn my living myself. In order to become an example to my children. That is it.

Burcu discussed the difficulties of life as a woman who was dependent at the time on her partner's financial support. She considered herself to be in a socially illegitimate relationship since her partner was officially married to another woman. She had experienced health problems due to the complex difficulties of her life, which had also prevented her from completing the Level 2 literacy course the first time she attended it. Her account explained that the low-paid jobs she could get were far from providing for basic living expenses, which at times led her to despair of her life as a woman.

When you go somewhere, you have the social security but then I don't have coal. What am I going to burn? Will I always be dependent on this man? OK, I live with this man but I don't have anything for my future. God forbid, if this man dies, for example, I will be struggling again. OK, now he looks after me, he does all he can. I received the biggest support (SAYS THE LAST TWO WORDS WITH EMPHASIS) from him. He never neglected his support to me (Özlem: Mmm), but I take all of this hard. Why could I not make a proper marriage like everyone else? Why are my children not with me? Why do I not work in a decent job? Why do I not feel that I am a woman?...

Meryem's account had suggested that she wanted to become a pedagogue if her health allowed her to continue her education. In her account of her imagined future, she explained that she had applied for a job at the Istanbul City Council through a relative who promised to help her get a job based on the positive discrimination

policy of the City Council regarding people with disabilities. She stated that she hoped to continue her education and be financially independent at the same time: “I would like to continue this (my education). I would like to work as well. I would like to have my own money in my pocket.”

At Lale PEC, the participants’ accounts suggested that their financially more precarious conditions led the three of them to focus on job opportunities that could help them increase their earnings, rather than focusing on the course diploma to continue formal education or jobs with higher social status. Sevim’s account pointed to her hopes of opening a small grocery store with the help of the literacy course certificate.

I have an idea but we cannot know what time will show, of course. When my children grow up their education costs will be heavier. My spouse is a worker in textile. We don’t have our own workplace. To bring extra income, I am thinking of opening something like a stationary or clothes store, just something that my budget would allow. I would then be supporting both my husband and my children’s education. If these literacy course documents give such an opportunity, if one can open something, that is very good...

Sevim’s response regarding my question that raised the prospect of doing distant formal schooling after the literacy course can be seen as illuminating the material and social constraints of the other three participants at Lale PEC.

I don’t really trust myself for that. I couldn’t afford that and also my children are young. (Özlem: Mmm) Both financially and personally, I mean. That is why I don’t aspire to such things. I would like to learn some things from here to help my children. I wish I had the resources so that I could do secondary school, high school and all that through distant education.

Umut and Leyla at Lale PEC talked about their hopes of finding better-paid jobs, including more senior jobs in the textile industry. The fourth participant at Lale PEC – Nalan – did not produce any job-related accounts in connection to her participation in the course. She explained that she depended on her brother’s income from textile work and the occasional in-kind and financial aid she received from the local

governmental authorities. Thus at Lale PEC, the social status and value attributed to the course largely manifested itself through either measured hopes of finding economic resources or developing and improving specific literacy practices. Next I turn to specific literacy practices that the women discussed in relation to their participation in literacy courses.

5.2.2.3 Context-specific literacy practices

Eight out of 11 women in my study highlighted the value of context-specific literacy practices that are not targeted by the PEC's official goal of teaching school literacy practices. As introduced on pages 128-129, at Lale PEC Nalan's account pointed to the significance of emerging uses of literacy, especially writing, in her participation in the course. The accounts of the other three participants at Lale similarly pointed to their attempt to improve specific literacy practices – particularly bureaucratic literacy practices – through their participation in the course. They explained that increased competence in these context-specific literacy practices would provide them with a higher social status in bureaucratic settings, one of which Sevim described as follows:

I would particularly like to be more practical in writing. I want to be able to write without my hands shaking when it is necessary. I experience this sometimes. Now I recognise all the letters. I can write a sentence. I can write a full stop. I know my punctuation marks. I know my commas but let's say you will fill in a form in a post office. I want to be able to write that properly, without my hands shaking. I want to be able to trust myself in that. Considering all this, I have decided to come to the second level.

Leyla's and Umut's account similarly described social situations involving literacy in which they started to feel more comfortable after their participation in the course. Discussing their ways of negotiating bureaucratic tasks involving literacy in hospitals, they stated:

Leyla: ...For example, you go to the hospital and struggle with registration and this and that. We didn't know that.
(Özlem: Mmm) We had to have someone with us.

Umut (INTERRUPTS): They wanted our phone number, our address.

Leyla (OVERLAPPING WITH THE LAST SENTENCE):
Phone number, address.

Umut: They want a lot of things. When you don't know you resent it a lot. You cannot ask anyone. Honestly, I resented it a lot....Her sister-in-law would take me. I would go with her but thankfully, now I can go on my own. I can give my address. I can give my telephone number. It is better than it was the past. It is quite better.

The accounts of four other women at Akasya PEC similarly pointed to their attempts to engage in certain bureaucratic literacy practices which they recounted as part of their participation in the course. Hatice from Akasya PEC discussed the difficulties of handling bureaucratic forms.

...Of course, nothing is as good as being educated. As I said when you go to a bank, when you fill in a form, when you want to only pay for a bill they ask for your address. You wonder whether to write here or there. You find it difficult. Where will you write the telephone number? Where will you write the address? There are little boxes. You find it hard. But if you knew about them you would write without any difficulties.

Mine's account of bureaucratic literacy practices similarly involved a social situation in a bank: "...For example when I do banking and they tell me to fill in a form I hate it. (Özlem: Mmm) My hands shake..." My question to Ebru regarding why she wanted to continue her formal education led her to describe a social situation in her previous workplace where she was singled out as not being able to write. In this account Ebru also discussed the difficulties of engaging in bureaucratic literacy practices in hospitals.

Why do I want it? I don't want to continue my life without knowing anything. We would read the newspaper in the morning where I worked and I had such a hard time reading, with a lot of pauses. Other people finished reading in five minutes and left. I saw that and that made me upset. Where I worked you noted down the work that you did. You wrote that. They sometimes singled us out saying "You cannot write anyway." When I wrote I couldn't write like them. It

was bad. We experienced the difficulty of that a lot, of course. You go to a hospital and fill in a form. I am ashamed to write because my writing is bad. I mean I have been ashamed of my bad handwriting many times. That is why I say I would like my writing to improve, that I would like to read better. To be honest, that is why I want distant schooling.

In response to my question about how her friends and relatives reacted to her participation in the course, Meryem discussed the difficulties she experienced with a certain numeracy practice and talked about the mathematics topics she was learning.

Of course, they wanted it as well. For example what did I have trouble with during the times I didn't go to school? For example I couldn't give phone numbers. (Özlem: Mmm) I had a problem with the zeros. It looks like a tiny thing, doesn't it? For example, I had a problem with that. I overcame that. I don't know, I don't have mathematics in my life. I learned about the four operations here. Like, what is mathematics? Addition, subtraction, division, sorry multiplication, we didn't do the division yet.

Mine and Hatice at Akasya PEC also discussed specific literacy practices not related to bureaucratic or work-related contexts in relation to their participation in the course. Mine presented being able to write a personal journal as part of being educated and part of what brought her to the course.

... I have drawn a path for myself now. Hopefully, if I am educated in the future or if I can express myself better, I will write about myself. (Özlem: Mmm) I will definitely fill many pages with my writing. I will write about everything, about my life, for example my past, my village life, my mother-in-law, everything that I suffered from. My purpose has also this aspect a bit...

Hatice discussed reading novels and doing mathematics problems as the specific literacy practices that she wanted to improve through her participation in the Level 2 literacy course.

...Of course it is not like the first term. The first term had its difficulty as well. We worked on syllables. We didn't know about the lower-case and upper-case letters. We didn't know about the full stops and commas. Now although it is not

perfect, we have learnt about them and I don't want to leave it at that. I will read novels in the summer holidays. I will read and write. I will continue to work on Maths...

Thus the majority of the women in my study – all of the four women participants at Lale PEC and another four women at Akasya PEC – highlighted specific literacy practices, e.g. bureaucratic, work-related and emerging new uses of literacy in their accounts of participation in the literacy courses. Except for Meryem all of these women had migrated to Istanbul from various villages and towns in Anatolia. Thus their contact with institutional structures and their need to find economic resources in the urban context of Istanbul made it necessary for them to engage in these context-specific literacy practices. Although the literacy courses officially did not aim to help women with these specific literacy practices, women seemed to reinterpret the official goals and consider the courses as an opportunity to develop and improve specific literacy practices embedded in the social situations involving the use of these practices. The four Kurdish women participants at Lale PEC had migrated to Istanbul in the 1990s and thus found themselves at the bottom of the ladder in the struggle for sharing urban land and informal jobs. The literacy course at Lale PEC was one of the few state-provided opportunities within their reach. Furthermore, for the Kurdish women in my study, an additional challenge in a predominantly Turkish city was that these bureaucratic and work-related texts and communication were in the Turkish language. The next section will thus discuss the role of the language of literacy education as part of the social status and access to economic resources women sought through their participation in literacy courses.

5.2.2.4 Speaking (standard) Turkish

At both Lale and Akasya PECs, literacy courses were conducted in standard Turkish – the only recognised language for state schooling and civil service in Turkey except for the schools of Greek, Armenian and Jewish communities – the minorities officially recognised by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 (Coşkun et al., 2010). At Lale PEC four women who participated in all of the three research interviews and three women who participated in the first interview and then dropped out of the course were Kurdish women who were bilingual Kurdish-Turkish speakers. Among the women who dropped out of the courses, I draw on data from my first in-depth

interview with Ayşe and Nimet in relation to their participation in the course for improving their Turkish vocabulary and speaking skills, which seemed to be their primary aim. At Akasya PEC Ebru was the only bilingual Kurdish-Turkish individual among my participants. Hatice at Akasya PEC was the only monolingual Turkish woman among my other six participants who associated standard Turkish with educational status. She discussed it as part of her account of the significance of school language in expressing yourself in the classroom.

... You need to read a lot of books to be able to comment on texts. Since we don't read much, we all, including my friends here, have a hard time commenting on texts. We cannot comment on texts. We stutter like children who have just started to speak. But children who go to school aren't like us. Isn't it so? (Özlem: Mmm?) Even speaking is very different. Since we didn't go to school, for example, my daughter finds my speech very (DOESN'T FINISH THE SENTENCE) "Mum, it isn't like that. It should be like this." That is because we heard what was spoken. Since we didn't go to school either, now if you go to school you speak based on what is written and your language remains so. You speak that way...

As for the bilingual Kurdish women in my study, following Derince's (2012c, p. 19-20) categorisation of levels of multilingualism in Turkish and Kurdish, four women at Lale PEC –Umut, Leyla, Sevim and Nalan - who participated in all three interviews – and Ebru at Akasya PEC could be described as Kurdish-Turkish balanced bilinguals who grew up speaking Kurdish with their parents, relatives and close friends but were exposed to Turkish as young children. Their accounts of the use of their mother tongue Kurdish in different domains suggested that they mostly used Turkish outside of their homes. Leyla at Lale PEC explained that she used Turkish both at home and outside home.

Özlem: Do you speak both Kurdish and Turkish at home or how does that work?

Leyla: Actually we speak Turkish at home but we speak Kurdish as well. Let's say there is someone called (says a female first name) from our village. For example, some of our relatives don't know Turkish at all. We speak Kurdish with them when necessary. But I speak Turkish with my

brother's wife. I speak Turkish with my nieces and nephews. I speak Turkish with my sister. (Özlem: Yeah) I speak in Kurdish when I sometimes don't know some things. Since I don't know some things in Turkish I talk about them in Kurdish. We constantly speak Turkish at home....

Özlem: At the workplace?

Leyla: We always speak Turkish at the workplace.

Özlem: Always Turkish. Do the people there know Turkish as well?

Leyla: We actually speak Kurdish too. But not much because some of the colleagues don't know Kurdish. We don't speak Kurdish because we don't want them to get us wrong. (Özlem: Hmm, OK) I mean we don't speak it just so that they don't have any misunderstandings. (Özlem: Mmm, Yes) When you speak (Kurdish) they don't understand and might say "What did she say about me now?" We don't speak (Kurdish) because of that.

The interview extract with Leyla's cousin Umut suggested a more balanced use of Kurdish and Turkish at home, with Umut referring to the durability of Kurdish as her mother tongue. However, she also explained that she refused to speak Kurdish at her workplace.

Umut: I don't speak Kurdish at the workplace. At home when I speak with my mother or my father we speak Kurdish. The rest of us speak Turkish with each other.

Özlem : Do your mother and father know (Turkish)?

Umut: They know it as well but they, how to say this, speak Kurdish. We too. Of course, you don't forget your mother tongue. We speak it, to be honest. We speak both. When our relatives come, we speak Kurdish and we speak Turkish too.

Özlem: At the workplace as well?

Umut: At the workplace, I don't speak any Kurdish. I don't know. Because I never speak it, they say "We are very curious how it would sound when you speak Kurdish." I say "I won't speak it just to spite you."

My questions to Umut and Leyla at Lale PEC about their bilingualism led them to make statements that downplayed their proficiency level in Turkish:

Özlem: So did you learn Turkish when you came here or did you know it in your village as well?

Leyla: We already knew it in the village. We knew Turkish more or less. Not much, but we knew it. We could at least give our answers (in Turkish). (Özlem: Mmm) But here we have really learned it. Still we don't know it that well. But it is good, enough for us. (LAUGHS)

At Lale PEC, in response to questions about her bilingualism, Sevim pointed to the discriminatory attitude whereby a perceived Kurdish accent in Turkish was seen as the sign of being of rural origin and rude, which she distanced herself from as a person who migrated to a big city with her family at a young age.

When I was in the village I didn't know Turkish. Now my Turkish isn't broken. I mean I don't speak some gibberish. Many friends sometimes say "You don't look like you come from (says the name of a predominantly Kurdish city)." I asked "Why? What is it about people from my hometown?" "You are a polite version of them." (Özlem: Mmm) Then I told them I left the village when I was a child. I don't remember the village. I haven't even been to my village since we left it. Always in (says the name of a big city in Turkey), Istanbul...

Nalan, in the same course, referred to the official language policies which allowed the speaking of Kurdish in public as a factor in her increased sense of self-sufficiency.

My spouse says: "What will you do with literacy at this age?" I said: "What is it with my age? I will at least know my address when I go somewhere".... Kurdish has also become free. I have some literacy too. I have it quite a bit, actually.

The only bilingual Kurdish woman at Akasya PEC – Ebru – explained that she had learned Turkish when she moved to Istanbul when she was eleven and started working in textile workshops. The following interview extract highlighted her increasing use of Turkish in daily life:

Özlem: When did you learn Turkish?

Ebru: When did I learn Turkish? When we came to Istanbul, I didn't speak Turkish. I spoke Kurdish then... When I was 10 or 11, I said to myself: "I will speak (Turkish)." I started speaking it, more or less. Anyway, when I came to Istanbul I removed Kurdish from my life. Where I worked, no one spoke (Kurdish). When you speak two languages you get confused a bit. You confuse the two. What did we do to not confuse them? We totally removed it (Kurdish) from our life so that we can speak Turkish. That is it.

In contrast to the other women in my study who were Kurdish-Turkish balanced individuals, two women at Lale PEC - Nimet and Ayşe -, with whom I could only have the first in-depth interview, can be described as Kurdish-dominant bilinguals who often spoke Kurdish with their family members and outside the house as much as possible. Although they learnt Turkish with the help of television and came to the PEC to improve their Turkish, they could express themselves best in Kurdish. They always sat together in the classroom and wanted to have the interview together, which revealed that they had come to the course to improve their Turkish vocabulary and speaking skills. This seemed to be a more urgent need than improving their literacy skills in the Turkish language. One of these two Kurdish women - Nimet - had more knowledge of Turkish and acted as a translator for her friend - Ayşe - who answered some of my questions in Turkish and then switched to Kurdish.

Nimet: I speak (Turkish) well. But I don't have any literacy.

Özlem: You have that too. Come on.

Nimet: I have that a little bit. Thank God I have that a bit now. Sometimes I read. I go to the hospital and read the letters. Then I know what is what. I didn't know that before. This is good too. (Özlem: It is good) I came to school. I learned this. This is good as well. For example, I go to the hospital. When they say something it goes into my head. They say this and that...

Nimet: (REFERRING TO HER FRIEND AYŞE WHO IS A KURDISH-DOMINANT BILINGUAL) She says if you don't go, I cannot go either. She says she cannot come (to the course) alone. She says "I cannot answer." Then she needs to speak with the teacher. Say, say it to the teacher. (Özlem:

Mmm) I say “Say it, say it.” Her tongue cannot do that (Turkish) because she cannot say it. But she will learn it too when she comes to school.

Ayşe: (IN TURKISH) Hopefully.

Nimet: Yeah. That is it. She will learn. She can say some words now. In the past, she couldn’t say those.

Özlem: She didn’t say any Turkish in the past?

Nimet: She didn’t say any.

Ayşe: (IN TURKISH) My sister goes to the courses all the time. Just like a lawyer.

Özlem: She talks like a lawyer?

Ayşe: (IN TURKISH) Believe me she does. (LAUGHTER FROM ALL OF US)

The accounts of Kurdish women introduced in this section highlighted their efforts to improve their Turkish language skills after migrating to predominantly Turkish areas. These accounts suggested that in their everyday lives in Istanbul they were faced with literacy and language practices in Turkish linked with job and bureaucratic contexts. Furthermore, the use of Kurdish in public places was officially permitted in only 1991 with a bill that allowed Turkish citizens to speak local languages, without naming Kurdish by name (B. İnce, 2012; Poulton, 1997). Thus women’s accounts attributed a high social status to Turkish literacy and the potential to provide access to economic resources, making it an important part of the identities that they tried to take on through their participation in literacy courses in Turkish.

This chapter introduced the two different strands of the overarching discourse of formal education and literacy – the symbolic importance of school and literacy and the social status associated with school and literacy – which seemed to bring the women involved in this study to literacy courses at Lale and Akasya PECs. It drew on women’s life stories to argue that the discourse of the symbolic importance of school and literacy was rooted in women’s childhood experiences of structural injustices and their interaction with socio-cultural norms on the appropriate conduct for girl-children. In order to discuss further manifestations of the significance of the

discourse of school and literacy, the chapter drew on vignettes based on my observations in the literacy classrooms in Akasya and Lale PECs and in the administrators' offices. It also drew on extracts from the first in-depth interviews which provided linguistic traces of the discourse of the symbolic importance of school and literacy. In these extracts, women defined their participation in literacy courses as "fulfilling a longing" or "fulfilling a dream," considering their participation in literacy courses as a return to school.

The chapter drew on the first in-depth interviews to explore the discourse of social status associated with school and literacy. Some markers of being schooled, e.g. school knowledge, diploma, further formal education, jobs and speaking standard Turkish, pointed to the influence of the dominant discourse of formal education and literacy on women's understandings of the meanings of schooled-person identity. However, the official power of the policy discourses was not the only influence on women's accounts of their participation in the courses. The majority of the women in this study seemed to consider specific literacy practices - bureaucratic, work-related and emerging new uses of literacy - as markers of being schooled. Thus they aimed to take what they wanted from the schooled literacy practices taught in the courses and use them for their own projects.

Furthermore, three women at Akasya PEC – Filiz, Meryem, Burcu established a link between the schooled-person identity and financial self-sufficiency through a non-manual job. Such a link does not exist in the official literacy discourses. As discussed on pages 95-99, on the one hand, these discourses trivialise women's intentions to become financially self-sufficient by referring to women's paid work as a financial contribution to the family. On the other hand, the official discourses treat engagement in economic activities through literacy courses at the level of rhetoric without linking the literacy courses with vocational courses, the needs of labour markets and additional support mechanisms for women. Thus Filiz, Meryem and Burcu re-interpreted the discourse of formal education and literacy and attempted to draw on their participation in the courses for their own projects of financial self-sufficiency through non-manual jobs. Similarly, their desire to achieve jobs that

would be intellectually stimulating is also not addressed in the official literacy discourses.

Another way of reinterpreting the dominant literacy discourses could be discerned more clearly in Lale PEC. Two Kurdish women in this course - Nimet and Ayşe participated only in my first interview and then dropped out of the course to go to their villages for the harvest although they made it clear that they would come to the course again upon their return. I thus included their interview data only to discuss their association of speaking Turkish with higher social status and participation in the social life of a predominantly Turkish city. These two women had primarily come to the Lale literacy course to improve their Turkish vocabulary and speaking skills. Similarly, the other four Kurdish-Turkish bilingual participants at Lale and the only Kurdish-Turkish bilingual woman at Akasya PEC associated speaking (fluent) Turkish with participation in the economic and bureaucratic structures in Istanbul and increased social status. Thus it can be suggested that these Kurdish-Turkish bilingual women took what they wanted from the literacy courses by transforming the purpose of the courses into an opportunity to improve their Turkish vocabulary and speaking.

In Chapter 7 I discuss the subject positions that women in my study attempted to embrace through their participation in the literacy courses in relation to the broader literature on women's participation in the literacy courses and the discourses and socio-political structures that underpin this participation. Chapter 6 will now explore the discourses that women in my study encountered in Akasya and Lale PEC literacy classrooms, and their responses to these. It will draw on fieldnotes and the transcriptions of the second and third interviews in order to explore the literacy approach, content and power relations present in the literacy classrooms.

Chapter 6 Which discourses did women find in the literacy classrooms?

6.0 Introduction

My intention in this chapter is to explore the discourses of literacy and learning in the literacy classrooms at Lale and Akasya People's Education Centres and women's understandings of and responses to these discourses. Since my study adopts a social theory of literacy, the chapter discusses the literacy practices in the classrooms as part of classroom discourses and practices. It shows how these discourses and classroom practices are embedded in the relations of power framed by the dominant discourses of literacy and education and membership to different categories of identity such as gender, ethnicity, social class, age, the extent of poverty and migration status.

In exploring women's responses to the literacy approach, content and power relations they found in the classrooms, I highlight women's own understandings of the dominant discourses they found and responses to them. Thus I not only focus on the aspects of the dominant discourses they seemed to adopt, but also show the ways in which women in my study attempted to challenge the literacy practices and power relations they found in the classroom which were underpinned by dominant discourses of literacy and learning. I discuss how women appropriated the dominant discourses in their struggles for finding new economic resources and social status. In exploring women's adoption and appropriation of the discourses they found in the literacy classes, I tease out the relationship between different meanings of schooled-person identities that drove women's participation in the courses and their ways of engagement in the classes. In Chapter 7 I move on to exploring the relationship between the women's engagement in the classes and schooled-person identities.

6.1 Discourses at Akasya PEC and women's responses to them

This section shows that the discourse of literacy as schooling and the discourse of individual learning were prominent in the Akasya literacy classroom. The classroom teacher Ali's understanding of school literacy practices and individual learning

created a considerable degree of nervousness and discomfort among the women in my study. This section on Akasya PEC shows the ways in which women embraced, challenged and attempted to transform the school literacy practices that constrained their control of their own learning and perception of themselves as capable learners. It discusses the conditions of violence created by Ali including the threat of physical violence and instances of it, the normalisation of corporal punishment in education and the use of a loud voice and humiliating remarks when women did not show the academic competence expected of them by Ali. The section also discusses my own discomfort in finding instances of teacher violence in this classroom and women's ways of challenging these degrading conditions and supporting each other. It reveals women's changing understanding of the value of education as a result of their educational experiences. It shows how women's accounts highlighted the joy they found in learning significant and challenging things. This section draws on observation vignettes from fieldnotes and interview extracts from the second and third interviews.

6.1.1 The discourse of literacy as schooling at Akasya PEC

At Akasya PEC the course teacher Ali followed a number of school routines throughout the course which were reminiscent of primary school practices in Turkey. Starting from the first day of the course, he took attendance seated at his desk by reading the names of the participants from the attendance notebook. On the first day, he asked the participants to buy different notebooks for different subjects and explained that they would need a black pencil as well as a red one. About half of the course duration at Akasya PEC was spent on mathematics and the remaining time was reserved for Turkish, social and science studies. The classroom teacher Ali held a position of authority in determining the learning topics for which he drew on various primary school textbooks. He initiated questions, evaluated answers and assigned tasks and homework. He came to the classroom between 13:30 and 13:45, decided if there would be any breaks that day and when, as well as what time the course would end - usually at 16:30. In clear contrast, some of the participants came to the class at 13:00, which was the official starting time of the course, and most of the time everyone would be ready in the classroom by 13:30. However, the

classroom teacher expressed his understanding that social circumstances and responsibilities might have meant that women could not attend the course or would have to leave early on some days.

The classroom in which the course took place reinforced the schooling orientation of the course. There were three rows of desks facing the board and the teacher's desk. As specified in the MoNE regulations for primary schools (MoNE, 2003, item 145), hanging above the blackboard was a portrait of Atatürk – the founder of the Turkish Republic. One could see the Turkish flag above the portrait; on the right of the portrait was the National Anthem and to its left Atatürk's Speech to the Youth. To the left of the board was an administrative map of Turkey, showing the boundaries of the provinces in the country and the seas and neighbouring countries around it. There was a small cupboard in the back of the room, with a globe on it.

There were routine classroom learning activities that the teacher Ali emphasized as the requirements of being a schooled person. The reading activity that he carried out in the first lesson of the course, identified by him as “the reading race” and repeated every two to three weeks in order to monitor the progress of each participant in literacy, was one of them. The first “reading race” was carried out during the third week of the course.

Ali: “I’ll call you one by one. We’ll do reading. What was your name?”

Sibel: “Sibel.” She goes to his desk. He is sitting and the book is open on his desk. Sibel needs to bend over the book to read the text that he has chosen. He chooses the text and the book.

Ali: “Are you ready? Tell me when you are ready.” Sibel takes a deep breath and says she is ready. She reads fluently. At the end of a minute, Ali says OK. The text is about the game *cirit*...³²

³² Cirit is pronounced jeered. It is a traditional Turkish equestrian game that is played on horseback in an open field. The objective is to score points by throwing a wooden javelin at the opposing team's riders.

The window is open and there is the noise of men talking loudly, traffic, honking.

Ali says: “Are you ready? We are starting. Start from here and you can sit down at the end of a minute.” to each person. Meryem uses crutches and has a hard time standing but she has to go to Ali’s desk too. Before the lesson started she was complaining about a pain in her back for the last two days.

Hatice wears her reading glasses and gets really close to the book, bends over. In clear contrast, Ali leans back, sitting comfortably in his chair. Hatice keeps saying *çitir* instead of *cirit*. She reads with a lot of difficulty. When she has difficulty sounding out some syllables, Ali only says: “No, no. OK. You can sit down.”

When Mine reads she is very nervous. Her voice trembles a bit. She doesn’t tell Ali that she left her reading glasses at home that day. To me she had pointed that out as a reason that made her even more nervous about reading out loud that day. When she is back at her desk, I point at my own glasses and say quietly: “You didn’t have your glasses.” She shrugs her shoulders a bit to say what can I do about it?...

Then Ali reads out loud how many words each person read in a minute: “Sibel: 74, Ebru: 47, Meryem: 67, Hatice: 21, Mine: 36....I’m very disappointed. I had hoped that a few people would read more than 80 words in a minute.”

One of the two men in the classroom: “For example, I read the newspaper. My friends time it. There they help as well. I read 95 words.”

Ali: “That is something we hear a lot. Then you get nervous a bit. But you will get over it. The reading that you do silently isn’t reading. Your homework is reading. Everyone will do reading for at least an hour a day. You will read something you have never read before, each time a different thing. Your eyes would get used to it. So don’t read the same thing every day. The ones who read less than 80 words should never say somewhere that they are literate. No one has a magic stick in his hands. I don’t believe in miracles in this area. I believe in hard work.”

Mine: “I didn’t have my reading glasses with me. Otherwise, I would have read much better.”

Ali: “I don’t know about that. We’ll look at that when you read with your glasses on. The notebook knows. I wrote it down in the notebook.”

Hatice is encouraged by Mine’s defending her performance: “I work during the week. We also have a sick family member these days. I couldn’t study....But I can read beautifully to my spouse at home.” (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 19 March 2011)

As the observation vignette above showed, the “reading race” created a significant amount of discomfort for the participants. It was an example of “literacy as schooling/education” adopted by the classroom teacher, presuming that once-learned literacy skills could be applied in all contexts in dealing with different texts, and that they formed a pre-requisite for further learning (A. Rogers et al., 1999). However, the participants used “the reading race” as an opportunity to point out that each literacy practice was embedded in its social context. Furthermore, they pointed out that there were several personal factors that would influence one’s performance in reading a school book text out loud in a public setting.

A significant part of the course at Akasya PEC— at least half of the course duration – was spent on learning about four basic mathematics operations - addition, subtraction, multiplication and division -, solving arithmetic problems involving these operations, reading the multiplication tables at the board, calculating the perimeter and area of a square and rectangle and calculating the perimeter of a triangle. The learning practices involved in these tasks were similarly underpinned by the discourse of literacy as schooling. The classroom teacher Ali focused on school knowledge and practices associated with primary schooling in Turkey, dictating the definitions and explanations of topics before working on them.

16:00 “Write down operation of multiplication with red pencil,” Ali says. “It is the scaling of one number by another. It is repeated addition. The numbers that are scaled are called factors and the result is called product. In multiplication, when the order of the factors changes the product does not change.” He repeats the words and sentences several times. Some women look at each other’s notebook and get help from each other to write this definition. They do it quietly, though. (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 2 April 2011)

Another school practice employed by Ali was explaining the mathematical operations on the board and asking the participants to do the related examples he provided on the board. While doing this, the participants were to use the school language Ali used in explaining the topic. They found this particularly difficult since it required them to grasp new concepts as well as explaining them using a novel language. However, Ali seemed to expect them to master the school language used in explaining school subjects considerably fast.

For Filiz the side length of the square is 173 cm. She draws a square on the board and writes 173 cm on one length. She writes the formula, multiplies 173 by 173 on the board correctly, writes cm^2 and gets a well done from Ali.... For Mine, the length of the square is 7 m. She draws the square and writes down 7 m on one side but doesn't know how to write the formula. Ali: "How do we write square, Mine?" Mine: "I got nervous." Ali: "How did we write it, Mine? We just said it a minute ago. We write a small 2 on top of 7." For Burcu, the side length of the square is 69 cm. She draws the square, writes 69 cm on one side and the formula. When she is doing the multiplication, she says "9 times 9 is 81," writes down 1 where it belongs to but gets stuck at 6 times 9. Ali goes up to her and says: "What was 6 times 9?" loudly. Ali: "What was it?" Burcu says: "I got confused." Ali: "We are doing multiplication. What does it have to do with confusion? What was 6 times 9?" Burcu says "My head stopped working." and goes back to her desk. Ali looks very angry and the classroom atmosphere is very tense. I feel very nervous and upset. I got disturbed by this incident. (From researcher's fieldnotes, 22 May 2011)

During the classroom interactions and in my conversations and interviews with women immediately after the "reading races," reading the multiplication tables and solving mathematics problems at the board, women stated that these practices made them nervous. They were being put on the spot in front of others in order to fulfil a novel learning task in a limited amount of time. Furthermore, they were required to use the school language in carrying out these novel tasks. Despite their remarks indicating their nervousness and apparent discomfort, Ali insisted on the importance of these practices for improving one's self-confidence about speaking in public and expressing herself. The following exchange between Hatice and Ali about reading

the multiplication tables at the board can be considered as a precise example among various similar exchanges.

At 14:50 Ali says: “Let’s read the multiplication tables.” and summons Meryem to the board....Hatice: “Can we do it sitting?” Ali: “No. You will get over your nervousness by doing this several times at the board.” (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 19 March 2011)

In addition to expressing their distress at carrying out school practices at the board, women involved in this study sometimes attempted to modify the way the school practices were carried out at the board. In the observation vignette below, Burcu tried to resist using the school language in order to carry out a mathematics operation at the board.

The board looks like:

365	516	648	5047
4	5	3	3
X_____	X_____	X_____	X_____

Ali: “Well done to Burcu who finished the first and bravo to Filiz who finished the second.” Burcu doesn’t want to do the operation out loud on the board. She says: “I’d like to do it silently.” Ali insists that she does it out loud and she does so involuntarily. (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 3 April 2011).

However, in the interviews that did not take place immediately after the learning practices that put them on the spot, women seemed to try to give meaning to their experiences of discomfort and nervousness within a framework that highlighted the times when they fulfilled difficult learning tasks at the board. My question to Sibel about her feelings about being called to the board led her to produce an account which associated the learning practices at Akasya PEC with her experience of primary school. She highlighted the sense of accomplishment she felt when she could fulfil a learning task at the board.

I got nervous very much in the beginning. Earlier, I attended primary school until the second grade. Since then, up until now, I haven’t had a school life, anything related with a

classroom for fifteen years. It has been a long time. I was very young when I felt those feelings, that nervousness. Maybe I was at an age where I couldn't differentiate that feeling. To be honest, it was exciting to experience the same things after that period of time. Now you are an adult and you think that if you cannot do it, there are students with you in a similar situation to yours. You get shy a bit. The nervousness, it is a weird thing. There was a lot of nervousness. But after I was able to grasp some things, after I got the feeling that I can do this, I actually liked being called to the board very much.

My following question to Sibel about being called to the board for a learning task she had difficulty in led her to contrast the discomfort she felt then with the joy she experienced when she succeeded in accomplishing a difficult learning task.

You don't have a lot of alternatives there. You cannot say you won't go to the board. You'll go and do it if you can. If you cannot, then you will sit down with a broken heart. You cannot feel much. Maybe because you don't know that thing you would go up to the board with fear and nervousness. Then if you can succeed, you would sit back on your seat in delight. But then if you get up with fear and nervousness and cannot succeed, then again you would sit down with a broken heart.

Mine's account pointed to a similar feeling of fear when she was called to the board for a mathematics task she felt incompetent in: "I started to tremble then. (SHE IMITATES A SCARED TONE OF VOICE) Where to start? Ohhhh. Where will I start? How will I do it? And doing it at the board. (LAUGHS) It really takes courage, especially for me." However, when I asked Mine about reading the multiplication tables and "the reading race," she highlighted her moments of accomplishment at the board.

It was good that we went to the board for the multiplication tables. We progressed very much in terms of overcoming our nervousness. (Özlem: Mmm) I mean when you compare the first time we got up to the board and now. We go there with an increased self-confidence. For example when I got to do the times table 8 I read it just like a bird. I mean it was good that we went up to the board. I have no doubts about it. I was good.

Likewise, Hatice's account pointed to the compulsory nature of the school practices that she found difficult to perform at the board. At the same time, she complemented this account of discomfort with her accomplishment of certain tasks.

...Our teacher generally made us go to the board although we didn't want to. (LAUGHS) Even if we didn't want to we were made to go. He helped us when we got stuck. (Özlem: Mmm) Of course at times that set our hearts aflutter, wishing he wouldn't call us to the board. Of course, our teacher had to get everyone to the board one by one. (Özlem: Mmm) About the things that I couldn't do I felt that I wouldn't succeed and felt (DOESN'T FINISH THE SENTENCE). We did accomplish some things. And when we made mistakes he helped.

As discussed in Chapter Five, women's participation in the courses was underpinned by the discourses of formal education and literacy which associated the literacy courses with the symbolic importance and social status of school literacy and knowledge. Through their participation in the literacy courses, women in my study attempted to embrace the subject position of schooled person and school literacy and education whose lack they associated with the structural injustices in their lives. They attributed a great deal of importance to their accomplishment of learning tasks that involved school literacy practices. Thus they were persistent in their attempts to engage in school literacy practices in the Akasya PEC classroom although at times these practices caused a significant amount of nervousness for them. Women's positive orientation to school literacy practices could also be seen in their responses to my questions regarding what they found important in the course and what they gained from it. In my second and third interviews with them, all of the seven women in Akasya PEC stressed the importance of the school knowledge and practices for them. Meryem listed a number of school topics in response to what she found important in the classes.

...As we got into the topics, studied lessons I realized that I had never done mathematics. I had never done it and did it for the first time here. I calculated things from my mind. And also the things I didn't know, for example the mountains, forests, this and that. (Özlem: Mmm) Let me add the borders

of Turkey. There were so many things that I didn't know. I didn't know any of them.

Ebru gave a precise answer in which she expressed the importance of all of the school subjects she learned in the course: "I think all of it is important. I cannot differentiate them as very important, less important, not important. I think it is all important." Furthermore, all of the seven women pointed out that they did not think that this school knowledge would have a direct application in their daily lives. Meryem had pointed out the vowel harmony rule in the Turkish language as an important thing she learned that day. My question about how the vowel harmony would help in her life pointed to its symbolic importance: "It wouldn't help, I guess. It is something you can use when you are teaching someone something. Isn't it? How could it help otherwise?" Filiz's answer to why she found learning divisions important provided a powerful account of the symbolic importance of school knowledge for her.

It is important because I have to do it. That topic is important for me. There shouldn't be anything that I don't know about because those are simple things. If a primary school child can do it, I have to do it too. It is important.

Likewise, Hatice described a social situation in which she could express her knowledge on the mountain and rivers of Turkey to explain the connection of the classroom learning with her daily life.

I cannot really imagine how I would use it, to be honest. Of course, if they ask about the geographical regions, history and things like that in a social environment, rather than staying meek in a corner, (HER TONE OF VOICE RAISES) I would go up and say what I know. (Özlem: Mmm) I would become happy then. But if I don't know about those, I wouldn't make any sound and sit in a corner.

The symbolic importance that women attributed to school knowledge and practices they found in the literacy classroom could also be discerned in women's replies to my question regarding what they did not find interesting in the classes. Six out of seven women at Akasya PEC explained that they tried to remain focused on all of the learning activities even when they had difficulties in grasping some of the topics.

Only Sibel pointed out that she felt forced to listen to topics she did not find interesting.

Even if there is something that you aren't interested in at that moment, there is not much you can do. Even if there is something that really bores you, you cannot open the door and leave. Even if we get bored a bit, we have to listen, I mean...

On the other hand, Ebru explained how she tried to make sense out of things that did not seem entirely relevant to her at that moment.

Recently, there hasn't been anything that I didn't find interesting. In the beginning, I didn't listen to some things carefully thinking I would never encounter them again. I haven't been doing that recently. What would I do when something didn't attract my attention? I would think about something else. I would look at somewhere else. But recently I have been trying not to do that. I have been trying to show interest in every subject. I have been trying to understand it. In the beginning, I didn't listen to some things carefully, especially when the teacher was explaining something at length. I wasn't listening to him that much. I don't do that anymore. I try to listen carefully and understand what he tried to mean, what he said. If you are coming here, then you'd better understand it. Why do you keep coming without understanding things? That doesn't mean anything...

Likewise, Meryem explained how she continued to listen to the teacher in order to find a contextual clue to help her comprehension of a topic she did not understand completely.

Of course, I listen to it even if I cannot understand it in the beginning. The teacher notices that too. For example, I couldn't understand the stuff about the square but I kept listening. (Özlem: Mmm) I waited to catch up with it from somewhere I understood.

Mine's response to what she did not find interesting in the classes pointed not only to her competence in taking charge of her learning but also some of the classroom teacher's feedback which amounted to humiliation of women's attempts to learn.

Something that I didn't find interesting? There hasn't been any lesson that didn't seem interesting to me. It isn't a matter of whether I could do it or not (Özlem: Mmm), but I tried to show interest in each lesson, although the teacher says "You don't understand. You don't understand and look blankly." Each lesson has something. In a short amount of time, we can only do this. I don't say anything about that. The teacher is right too. He wants us to learn, to not lose time. I look at it from that point of view too. We are adults and he sees it as "Why wouldn't you work more, try better?" He is right. We are right too. A lot of responsibility, both as a working person and as a woman your responsibilities are heavy. My husband's family, my own family, my children, my work life...

Thus I argue that women's attempts to give meaning to the learning tasks and negative feedback that caused them feelings of discomfort can be thought of as attempts to take on schooled-person identities. These identities seemed to carry symbolic importance and the promise of a better social and material status, leading women to align themselves with the discourses of literacy they found in the classroom. Both to the classroom teacher Ali and in my conversations and interviews with them immediately after the learning activities, the women involved in this study expressed their discomfort and nervousness about the learning practices that demanded that they use the school language in carrying out these novel practices in a limited amount of time. At times they attempted to modify the classroom practices in ways that would give them greater control over their learning. However, in the interviews that did not take place immediately after such discomforting learning practices, my participants highlighted both their accomplishment of some difficult and significant learning tasks and feelings of nervousness during certain challenging school literacy practices.

Furthermore, three of the four women who in the first interviews had highlighted the importance of specific literacy practices for them produced accounts that suggested that they took what they wanted from the school literacy practices and used them for context-specific literacy practices in their daily lives. These three women - Mine, Hatice and Meryem - suggested that they considered themselves as having achieved progress in engaging in specific literacy practices through their participation in the

course. In discussing her difficulty in writing what the classroom teacher Ali dictated in the classroom, Mine referred to writing her own shopping lists and handing them to the administration at her work place to remind herself of her achievements.

... One from here, one from there. Each one had a different title. Each one had a different topic. I couldn't write. I couldn't catch up. That made me very upset.... Now I have started to write my list at the work place. It has been a while. For example, I started the school. The girls said "We won't write it. You will write it." I said: "OK, I understand you. I need to write it myself now." Also it was a pleasure. I started it with enjoyment. I started to write. (Özlem: How nice) Now I write it myself and hand it in. So I don't know.

Discussing her participation in the course and what she gained from it, Hatice mentioned specific literacy practices that she considered herself as more proficient in.

... For example my spouse would call from the work place and ask for a mobile phone number. I would have a hard time with that. My spouse wouldn't say: "My spouse doesn't have literacy so she finds that hard." I found it easy to give the landline numbers but found the mobile numbers difficult. But now, thank God, I can write, take and give those.

In response to what she found important to learn in the course, Meryem mentioned a specific numeracy practice to which she had referred in the first in-depth interview. She explained that she started to consider herself more proficient in engaging in this practice.

Özlem: So from what we learned, what we did in the class, what did you find the most important? What is the most important thing for you?

Meryem: In the class (Özlem: Mmm) Mathematics. That is important.

Özlem: Why is that?

Meryem: That is very important in daily life. For example, to call somewhere, to give phone numbers. These are things that are necessary.

Özlem: Are these new for you? Before?

Meryem: These existed for me in the past but I wasn't very good at them. I knew about them. I didn't have any problems with reading and writing anyway.

Thus it can be suggested that the broader value of literacy within the discourse of school and literacy and the schooled-person identities related with it led all of the seven women at Akasya PEC to have a positive orientation to school literacy practices. However, Mine, Hatice, Meryem seemed to add to the meaning of schooled-person identities by including their progress in specific literacy practices outside of the classroom in their evaluation of themselves as learners. As was the case with some other women in my study, these three women had heard from the classroom teacher Ali several times that they would not be recognised as a literate person because they could not read 80 words or more in a minute. Ali had even told them that they were the “weakest” group he had ever taught. However, Mine, Hatice and Meryem were able to take what they wanted from the school literacy practices and use them as resources in their engagement in context-specific literacy practices in everyday life. Similarly, the remaining women participants at Akasya established a link between the school knowledge they learned and everyday life by referring to its symbolic importance and the social status it would provide them. Thus it can be suggested all of the women involved in my study at Akasya PEC evaluated themselves according to their own criteria, which enabled them to recognise themselves “as able to know differently from the teacher” (Davies et al., 2001, p. 180). Next I will explore the discourse of individual learning which the women in my study found in the Akasya PEC literacy classroom, and their understandings of and responses to the effects of this discourse on classroom practices.

6.1.2 The discourse of individual learning at Akasya PEC

At Akasya PEC, the classroom teacher Ali strongly disapproved of open cooperation among learners, except for the two older women participants, Mine and Hatice, and a young man who dropped out after two months into the course. With these three participants, he found that their reading and writing levels of these three participants were not in line with those of others in the classroom. When he realised that one of

them needed help in a task he sometimes asked them to sit with someone who could help them. With the other participants, however, and at times with these three participants as well, he insisted that they carry out their learning tasks at their desks on their own. Women's response to Ali's understanding of the discourse of individual learning was verbal cooperation in a hurried way and in whispers or exchanging their notebooks quickly.

Ali says "Title, with red pencil: Triangle." and defines it: "The geometric shape that has three sides and three corners is called a triangle." Mine asks: "How do we write geometric?" Meryem, Filiz and I help her by saying "First g and then e and o." But we are talking in whispers. But for Ali, Mine should know this. So we are treated as cheating, not helping each other. When she cannot catch up with writing at one point Mine asks Meryem who is sitting next to her: "Perimeter what?" Meryem replies quietly: "The length of the perimeter." Mine is feeling bad because of what she doesn't know and is trying to hide this from the teacher. She falls behind in writing what is dictated during the entire lesson. When Ali asks: "Are you finished?" she admits that she couldn't with a nervous no because Ali already saw that she couldn't catch up with the dictations when he walked around between the desks. Ali looks at her notebook and says: "It is the end of the course and no one has brought me a stick yet." Mine produces a tense smile. (From researcher's fieldnotes, 19 June 2011).

Ali's understanding of individual learning meant that none of the participants should help each other with the learning tasks at the board. When a participant was having a difficult time with a learning task at the board it sometimes became very difficult to not say something that would help her. However, in the beginning of the course Ali made it clear that this type of cooperation equalled cheating.

When Hatice was reading the multiplication tables at the board she got stuck. Someone couldn't help herself and whispered the number she got stuck at. I [Özlem] also wanted to say that number to help Hatice get out of her quandary. I found it very difficult to remain silent.

Ali: "When your friend is at the board you are not doing something good for her by letting her copy from you. If I had wanted her to read it sloppily, I wouldn't have asked her at

all. You will see it like: ‘Everyone here is like me. I have come here to learn.’ If someone makes fun of someone else I will do the same to them.” (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 19 March 2011)

However, in various instances women helped a classmate who was stuck with a learning task at the board, risking a serious bout of reprimanding and sometimes a threat of violence from the teacher Ali. In some occasions I helped some of the women who seemed to need help at a task at the board, although I did not want to lose the trust of the teacher Ali and his approval of my research in his classroom. One such occasion took place after Ali explained a type of vowel harmony in Turkish, in which the front vowels (e, i, ü, ö) are followed by front vowels and the back vowels (a, ı, u, o) are followed by back vowels. Most of the Turkish words follow this rule whereas most of the words of foreign origin do not.

Ali: “Now everyone will come to the board. I will give you a word and you will see if it follows the front-back vowel harmony or not.” Meryem gets nervous and starts shuffling her notebook to see which vowels are back and which are front. “I’ll mix them up,” she says to me. I say “The vowels with dots and e are front vowels. Try to remember it that way. The ones with dots and e.” She says OK and looks a little calmer. For Sibel, the word on the board is *otomobil*. For Hatice, *İstanbul*, for Mine, *bayrak* and for Meryem, it is *baba*. Mine asks me with her eyes if she got it right. I nod and she looks relieved. I do the same with Meryem. She seems relieved too. (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 18 June 2011)

This section has used the observation vignettes and interview transcripts introduced above to show the women’s understandings of and responses to the discourses of school learning and individual learning that they encountered in the classroom. The section also showed how women responded to the power relations created by these discourses. Some of the vignettes pointed to classroom teacher’s Ali’s highly demanding expectations from women which required that they grasp the new concepts quickly and explain them in school language. What is more, these expectations were at times couched in derogatory ways that diminished women’s efforts to control and enjoy their learning. Next I will discuss how the conditions of

violence created by the classroom teacher Ali manifested themselves at Akasya PEC and women's responses to these conditions.

6.1.3 Conditions of violence

At Akasya PEC, the classroom teacher Ali focused on school knowledge and practices which were reminiscent of primary schooling in Turkey, dictating the definitions and explanations of learning topics before providing examples and initiating questions on them. He made it clear in the beginning of the course that he was very strict about having total silence in the classroom while he was providing explanations, initiating questions and evaluating answers.

A new woman comes in, sits next to Mine and asks her: "What are you doing? What have you just written?" Ali is at the board. He stops talking about addition, raises his voice and says: "While I am talking, you aren't talking. If you are going to write something, do it after I finish my explanation. I cannot just tell a few people at a time." (From researcher's fieldnotes, 12 March 2011)

Furthermore, he wanted the participants to raise their hands and wait to be called on by him before they made any contributions in the question and answer activities:

Ali: "Mine bought a pencil for 225 *kuruş*, an eraser for 190 *kuruş* and a notebook for 550 *kuruş*. How much should she pay?... Who would like to do this?"

Sibel raises her hand and says: "Me."

Ali: "There is no such thing as 'Me.' Raising your hand means me."

Then he tells one of the men to come to the board. (From researcher's fieldnotes, 13 March 2011)

The learning activities that Ali employed for Turkish, social and science studies were mostly in the form of whole class discussions. He generally signalled the time during which he would welcome such spontaneous contributions, calling it a "chat." These learning activities tended to be pleasant discussions accompanied with laughter.

15:25 Ali starts a discussion on the common features of all living organisms.

Participants: “They eat. They breathe.”

Ali: “They take in nourishment. They engage in respiration.”

Burcu: “Carnivore, herbivore.”

Ali: “What you say is living organisms based on their types of nutrition.”

While pointing to the plant that one of the men has brought to the classroom, Ali says to Filiz: “What do you and this plant have in common?” Then, to the whole class: “This will be a chat. There will be no asking for a turn.” They talk about the common features of living organisms in a relaxed manner, in the manner of a chat. There is laughter. (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 17 April 2011).

However, the learning activities in which women could make contributions freely were not exempt from Ali’s use of threat of physical violence when he was not satisfied with the academic performance of the participants.

15:30 Ali says: “We will review social and science studies. It will be in the form of a chat. How are day and night formed?”

A newcomer woman: “A day is formed by the rotation of the earth around the sun once.”

Ali: “What rotates? Where?”

The newcomer: “When the earth rotates on its axis once a day is formed”...

Ali: “How were the seasons formed? Why is a month 30 days? What if it were 10 days? What if we received a salary every ten days?” No response.

Ali: “I don’t have a good student who has brought me a good stick. One that will make a sound when it hits.”

Newcomer woman: “I can bring one.”

Ali: “Would you?”

Hatice says in a way everyone can hear: “In the past there was respect to the teacher. Now the students stage a mutiny if the teacher does something.”

Meryem looks at me when Ali talks about beating. She says quietly: “Why would beating be necessary?”

Ali: “So I shouldn’t beat you,” in response to Hatice’s comment. She nods. (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 21 May 2011)

This vignette revealed Hatice’s explicit challenge to Ali’s threat of physical violence and Meryem’s verbal disapproval of the teacher’s allusion to corporal punishment in her comment to me. It seemed that Hatice and Mine’s older age caused the teacher Ali to be generally more careful in his formulation of his feedback to them. He also reserved most of his instructional support for the learning tasks carried out at the board for these two participants.

Ali: “She (Mine) did something I hadn’t explained yet: multiplication with borrowing. Well done. It is like in addition. She said ‘5 times 2 is 10’. She wrote the zero and regrouped 1. Do this as well so that I can say well done.” and writes down another multiplication. Mine gets nervous and cannot remember 3 times 3. Ali helps her do the 3 times table saying one by one: “3 times 1, 3 times 2, 3 times 3, 3 times 4...” Mine remembers them all in this way. Ali says: “Well done.” (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 3 April 2011)

However, Ali used negative feedback more frequently than the positive ones in his instructional support and evaluation of answers for the rest of the participants. At times his formulation of negative feedback amounted to creating conditions of violence. Such formulations included his use of humiliating names for the participants as a class or for individual participants, except for the older participants Hatice and Mine.

He writes another sentence and asks everyone one by one what the subject of the sentence is. They hesitate. Then Mine responds: “early” and everyone follows her example and says “early” is the subject of the sentence. Ali says: “You dowdy tortoises” and starts to explain in a loud voice: “What did I do?” Participants: “Got up”. Ali: “What was that?” Participants: “The verb.”... (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 5 June 2011)

Ali’s evaluations of answers were at times delivered in a loud voice and in ways that degraded the efforts and capabilities of individual learners.

He asks Meryem a question. She needs to divide a measurement in half. When she cannot answer his questions he gets very angry and starts to shout: "I cannot grasp it. I cannot understand it. I cannot do it. That is what you have been saying since last week. You are somewhere else. This doesn't have to do with not being able to come to the course for a month. If you had listened to what I just said you could have done it. Children at the 3rd grade do this. Children at the 2nd grade do this." Meryem looks very upset and teary. Soon Ali asks her to calculate the half of another number. This time he crouches next to her desk and looks helpful. When he gets the answer he says "Look, you have done it." (From researcher's fieldnotes, 29 May 2011)

The conditions of violence created by Ali were not limited to the negative instructional feedback and allusion to the use of physical violence. On a number of occasions, he made remarks which normalised the use of physical violence in schooling:

15:07 Everyone is still working on the Maths problem. Ali is walking around the class and saying: "Who would bring me a birch rod? Do you know any carpenters?" One of the women says her husband is a carpenter. Another woman says: "We wouldn't bring it." Ali asks: "Why?" The answer: "You would use it on us." Ali laughs softly and says "Our teacher would beat the kid who brought the stick to test it." Right after making this remark, he walks towards Burcu's desk and checks her notebook. To say you are doing well, he taps on her shoulder, Burcu jolts back. (From researchers' fieldnotes, 10 April 2011)

Ali employed physical violence on two participants who were among the younger women in the classroom. His use of physical violence included hitting these two women's heads with his board marker and hitting their heads with his index and middle finger to attract their attention to a mistake they were making in a learning task. I found Ali's use of verbal and physical violence in the classroom deeply distressing and disturbing. At times I used only mnemonics and jotted down some key words to write about the conditions of violence and wrote at length immediately after the course. I could not bring myself to write about this course for a long time.

Today when he had turned his back to me I took a few notes. Last time I chose not to take any notes. In the previous lesson

when he was hitting women's heads and when I was writing about that at the same time and even when I was thinking about it I got worried and scared that he could read my critical thoughts. I think that is why I found myself not to be able to take any notes this week. Last week I found myself smiling as if to say "Everything is all right. I don't judge what it is going on here." (From researcher's fieldnotes, 9 April 2011).

While I was making observations of conditions of violence in the Akasya PEC literacy classroom I had a major difficulty. I largely perceived resistance as explicit verbal challenge to Ali's statements and behaviours that created discomfort among women and at times amounted to verbal and physical violence. Thus I had a difficult time giving meaning to the women's responses to behaviours of Ali that created the conditions of violence. After immersing myself in my fieldnotes and interviews, I realised that my perception of resistance as verbal confrontation could be likened to the understanding of political action as action taken through public institutions where men are assigned to (Griffiths, 1995a, p. 150). Griffiths argued that this understanding obscured women's ways of taking political action through small scale local networks or institutions seen as private, such as family. Such public actions involved women bringing children to the meetings, using songs, jokes and cartoons and attaching the photographs of their family members at military bases. Griffiths (1995a) explained that such political actions did not resemble political actions taken through institutions that are traditionally considered as public such as the political parties, the military, or parliaments. Thus it was not easy to recognise them as political actions that attempted to contribute to the shape of public life. The verbal confrontation I expected to see from women in Akasya PEC can be likened to political action through mainstream public institutions. This insight helped me better identify women's less explicit resistance to the negative feedback that amounted to verbal violence and humiliation and the threat of physical violence. Hatice's verbal challenge to the threat of physical violence, given in the vignette on page 158, was an example of explicit resistance, which did not take place often. Another example of explicit resistance to the conditions of violence was Meryem's verbal challenge to teacher Ali's humiliating remark.

Ali says: "Let's read the multiplication tables," and summons Meryem to the board.

Meryem gets nervous and says she'll try later. She is supposed to go like 1 times 2 equals 2, 2 times 2 equals 4, 3 times 2 equals 6 but she gets that mixed up and says: "I can count 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 but..."

Ali: "Even my grandma can count like that."

Meryem: "Right now I am just like your grandmother."

Ali doesn't answer. Hatice volunteers... (From researcher's fieldnotes, 19 March 2011)

More often, the response to the conditions of violence took the less explicit form of women's collective support of each other in the classroom. For example, on the same day when Meryem was confronted with the teacher Ali's degrading remark regarding her failure to carry out what he considered a routine 3rd grade task, Mine and I provided her with reassurance that she possessed the capability to achieve her goals.

After the class Meryem says: "I saw this for the first time. When he said 'You aren't listening', I got demoralised. The comparison with the 3rd grade was unnecessary." She is very upset. I tell her that anyone would feel the same way in her situation when she says she is a sensitive person and that might be why she felt upset by Ali's remarks. Mine says: "I felt this way for a while too. I almost cried. He said to me 'You aren't listening' too..." Meryem: "I have made up my mind. I want this. This isn't for the exam anyway. It is OK if I cannot pass it. I will study." Mine: "Sure." Meryem cries a bit and I hug her. Mine provides her with morale: "I felt this way too. When you don't give up things improve." (From researcher's fieldnotes, 29 May 2011)

Furthermore, women's ways of responding to Ali's feedback that created conditions of violence involved sharing with each other their ways of challenging the power relations that constrained their control of their learning.

I come to the class at 13:40. Burcu and Mine are looking at the maps on the wall as Ali suggested that they do the previous day. They talk about the neighbouring countries. Before the lesson, Meryem says she didn't feel nervous in teacher Ahmet's first level class in the first term: "He was a

calm person. He smiled a lot and calmed the students down. Our teacher (Ali) shouts.” She says, smiling: “When I was doing the multiplication table, I said, for example, ‘My teacher (meaning Ali), don’t shout. I get really confused then,’ and he walked to the back of the classroom and said ‘Is it OK if I stand here?’” Mine: “Well, I don’t know Ahmet teacher.” Burcu: “When he (Ali) comes near me I sometimes say ‘Don’t look towards here. When you look I get nervous.’” (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 15 May 2011)

Apart from these collective ways of negotiating the power relations that positioned them as unable to take control of their learning and achieve the academic goals of the course, some women produced individual responses to the demands put on them by Ali. Mine and Ebru talked to Ali in break time during the course and at the primary school he worked on weekdays respectively to explain to him further that they were doing their best within the constraints of their social circumstances and responsibilities.

Break at about 15:00. Burcu, Ali, Mine and I are sitting in the backyard. Mine tells Ali that she has never been to school. She never did any writing in the past either. Even at work, she asked her colleagues to make shopping lists for her. So she feels she has improved a lot since the course started. She makes her own shopping lists now but it is still hard for her. She is doing her best. Burcu asks Ali if he really thinks she is a better student now, unlike the last time she attended his class. Ali had said so during the class before the break. Ali says: “Then you looked like you wanted to go as soon as possible. You didn’t look interested. There is a lot of difference now.” Burcu is made very happy by these remarks. (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 15 May 2011)

It seemed that Sibel employed a different way of attempting to make Ali appreciate the role of her social circumstances in her academic performance. As the following vignette shows, her calm and reasonable response to Ali’s allusion to the use of physical violence in the case of an unsatisfactory answer can be seen as forcing him to make reasonable demands in a measured manner.

Ali says “Example four. Calculate the periphery and area of a garden in the shape of a square whose length of one side is 7 metres.” Ali stands in front of Sibel’s desk and raises his fist and says “No pressure, say the answer?” That is supposed to

be a joke. What a sick joke. Sibel, very calmly: “I don’t know. I wasn’t here last week when you explained this.” Ali: “I just said it. What was the area?” Sibel: “14 metres?” Ali: “14?” To the whole class: “You make me question my teaching, explaining ability. I explained this last week.” Sibel just said she wasn’t here last week and in the beginning of the class she said she couldn’t come because her mom had an operation and she was taking care of her. (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 28 May 2011)

As for women’s understandings of the classroom atmosphere and power relations they found in it, during in-depth interviews all of the seven highlighted their achievements in the learning tasks they found difficult and discussed what they liked about their classroom teacher as well as referring to his loud voice and angry manner in giving instructional feedback. Just like Meryem, whose account on page 163 drew a favourable picture of the Level 1 literacy teacher Ahmet, in response to my question about how she had imagined the teacher in the Level 2 course before she joined the course, Sibel contrasted Ali with the Level 1 literacy teacher Ahmet.

Sibel: The teacher Ahmet was very nice. He approached us in a very caring and good way. (Özlem: Mmm) I mean I would have liked our teacher to be like him from the beginning because he (Ahmet) never got tired of explaining things to us, talking to us. Now for example the teacher Ali can sometimes be very impetuous, to some people he is (TRAILS OFF) but Ahmet teacher wasn’t like that. He never got tired of saying things like “You will understand. You will do it. You can do it,” if you know what I mean. Compared with him Ali can be quite impetuous, to be honest. If Ali repeated the same act after he became impetuous I might have thought badly of him. (Özlem: Mmm) But after displaying a bad behaviour he immediately becomes (TRAILS OFF), I could see that too. So I am fine. Ali teacher is a good teacher. I am glad about that. I can understand what he explains.

Sibel ended her account which criticized Ali’s way of providing teaching and feedback which created discomfort among the participants with the statement that pointed to her sense of achievement in understanding the course content as explained by Ali. Similarly, when I asked Mine what she felt when the Ali insisted she go to the board to solve a mathematics problem she found highly challenging, she

highlighted her achievement in the face of difficult learning tasks as well as the negative feedback that created discomfort for her.

That feeling? I mean I won't be able to do it. I will get back to my seat with my tail between my legs. You get scared that you won't be able to do it. (Özlem: Mmm) Nothing else, but the teacher's tough looks. That influenced me, for example. That happened a few times. I don't think there was anything else apart from that.... I was in an awful state. I said that is the end. (Özlem: Yes) But it didn't happen again. I mean I did things although they were hard. I did the multiplication. I added if addition was necessary. I mean I did it. (Özlem: Yes) I can say that there wasn't anything I didn't do.

Later on, Mine explained why she found the classroom learning and Ali's teaching important in comparison to the help she received from her family members.

It is because every single word I learn here is very important for me. Learning at school is very important for me. When the teacher explains something I understand it better. Outside even if everyone else explains it a hundred thousand times the teacher's explanation makes more sense. The daughter of my husband's sister is also a university graduate. She helps me with arithmetic problems but I understand something the teacher explains so much better at once, whereas she would have to explain the same thing ten times.

Only two women participants at Akasya PEC whom I interviewed in their houses discussed the use of physical violence in their literacy classroom. Meryem was highly critical of Ali's use of physical violence and seemed to be happy with the prospect that he would quit working at Akasya PEC:

Meryem says: "Our teacher is a bully. They say he will be assigned to somewhere else. Wouldn't it be good if Ahmet teacher became our teacher? He is friendly. I wasn't scared when I did the multiplication tables in his class. He was a calm person. He would say: 'Calm down,' smile and help you relax." At first, she was willing to go to the board to do things. She found it nice because she memorised the multiplication tables and could follow the lesson. Now she is hesitant because she has fallen behind. She likes going to the board for reading. She read 90 words in a minute and the teacher Ali said it was good. (From researchers' fieldnotes, 21 May 2011)

In contrast to Meryem, Burcu seemed to think that the teacher Ali's shouting and hitting some women's heads with his board marker was part of his struggle to compel them to use their potential as learners.

The way we had the lessons? (SHE LAUGHS) This time our teacher focused on me. I am his student from a former course. I knew him. I requested him to pay attention to me so that I understand well, that I learn well. We agreed that I would like to succeed this time, that I won't quit. With his help it became a super environment. Even if he shouted a bit in the lesson we solved that.... As I say he is trying to teach us something. If he didn't care, he would be like: "I don't care if they can do it or not. I will fail them or let them pass as I wish." But our teacher was such that for us to learn he sometimes did this with the pen to our head so that (SHAKES HER HAND AS IF HOLDING A PEN AND HITTING WITH IT) we learn. Or his saying "Burcu, Burcu" repeatedly, then I immediately corrected my mistake when I made one. But if he didn't make a fuss over us then it wouldn't have occurred to me or it wouldn't have attracted my attention. I would be a little devil-may-care and learn sloppily. But I experienced and learned nice things. With the help of our teacher.

It was difficult for me to acknowledge the positive aspects of Ali's teaching in Akasya PEC given the fact that while observing the classes I was finding instances of physical and verbal violence. However, as I reflected on my own experiences of violence during my education in Turkey and the broader social and political context, I was able to acknowledge women's less explicit ways of resistance to the conditions of violence in the Akasya PEC classroom. I provide a broader discussion of the role of socio-political context and violence in the school system in Turkey in Chapter Seven.

Moreover, as I now show my later re-readings of the fieldnotes and interview transcripts helped me acknowledge that Ali used very engaging ways of explaining concepts and related them to the lives of the participants.

Ali: "Let's say I have a living room in the shape of a square. I'll have wall borders. You all know this actually. One side of my living room is 5 metres. How many metres of wall border paper do I need?"

Sibel: “20”

Ali: “How did you get that number?”

Sibel: “4 times 5 is 20, 5 times 4 is twenty.”

Ali: “Look, you all know this.”

Then he writes down the formula on the board.

P: $a \times 4$

Ali: “What is P? Perimeter. The small a is the length of one side.” (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 7 May 2013)

As I re-read the transcript of my interview with Ali I could understand better how he was closely interested in the socio-economic conditions of the participants. This interview helped me discern the ways in which the teacher Ali familiarised himself with the socio-economic conditions and challenges of each course participant. He had devised learning activities through which he could understand the broader context within which their participation in the course took place. During the first lesson of the course he asked all of the participants to talk and write about these. In my interview with him, he explained that he collected this writing from the course participants and subsequently destroyed it since he considered the content in it confidential. Ali also asked the participants to write about five things they regretted having done in their lives as well as five things they would change if they had a magic wand or if they were the Prime Minister of the country. These were learning activities that he himself had developed over the years to gain a better insight into the reasons that brought each woman to the literacy course and the broader socio-economic context within which women attempted to reach their life goals.

Furthermore, my re-reading of the fieldnotes helped me realise that Ali regularly talked about his trust in the participants’ capability to succeed in the course and urged them to do their own research and ask questions about things they wanted to learn. Starting from the first day of the course, when he talked about the importance of education and various reasons for participating in the course, he highlighted more instrumental reasons such as wanting to get a driving licence or applying for job as well as wanting to learn for personal fulfilment. Furthermore, Ali told anecdotes

from his family life which prompted women to share similar anecdotes in a spontaneous manner. He talked about his previous students in the course who had completed the course successfully against all odds, such as the resistance of and humiliation by their husbands. He also told his life story to talk about the importance that his father gave to formal education.

My father was a construction worker. I helped him on school holidays. I was at secondary school and he got a contract in Kayseri and the two of us went there. At the Kayseri bus station, with our bed bundles on our back, while walking past the office of a bus company, my father stopped. He looked at me and said “My father took me here 35 years ago. And now I have taken you here. You won’t bring your son here 35 years later. You will go to school.” We were told that we didn’t have any other alternatives other than going to school. When I was at secondary school I had failed in four subjects. My father said that if I had failed at school for 30 years he would still send me to school for the 31st time. (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 12 March 2011)

Women’s accounts of classroom interactions included not only their criticism of Ali’s imposition of certain learning tasks in a denigrating way but also their appreciation of Ali’s teaching ability and their sense of pleasure in accomplishing a difficult task. When I was making notes of classroom interactions which I described as conditions of violence I found it hard to give meaning to women’s remarks on their pleasure of learning tasks such as reading the multiplication tables at the board successfully. I considered such learning tasks as highly discomforting largely because of the way Ali placed difficult learning demands on women and did this in ways that amounted to violence at times. My observations of women’s nervousness as well as Ali’s use of a humiliating language and physical violence during some learning activities made it difficult for me to understand women’s descriptions of the joy they found in their learning. However, as explored above, I realised that women’s resistance to the conditions of violence did not only involve verbal confrontation but also their less explicit ways of responding to the conditions of violence in the classroom. In addition, the concept of the “integral” value of education helped me better understand the meanings of women’s statements that highlighted the pleasure of accomplishing challenging and significant learning tasks in the classroom

(Griffiths, 2012). Next I turn to women's accounts of their educational experiences where they highlighted the joy they found in learning difficult and important things.

6.1.4 Joy of learning

Griffiths (2012) noted that people find value in education due to three linked reasons: (1) instrumental reasons that provide access to some desired job, high status, social or financial power, (2) inherent reasons that aim to cultivate critical thinking, autonomy and imagination, and (3) "integral" reasons that are about present educational experiences in formal education. She argued that the focus on lived experiences as "part of the good life" was missing in the usual account of social justice in formal education (Griffiths, 2012, p. 665). She then provided examples of educational experiences that brought "joy" to learners as part of an intense pedagogic relationship where the learning and teaching of difficult and important things happened. She suggested that such learning was likely not to be purely fun.

I was able to see women's engagement in learning in literacy classrooms from a different perspective with the help of a focus on the joy they found in their educational experiences. This focus helped me understand why I sometimes had a difficult time giving meaning to women's accounts of classroom interactions. I seemed to expect them to criticise Ali at length whereas their critique of the power relations they found in the classroom was balanced and at times surpassed by their lengthy accounts of certain learning tasks that they had accomplished. In my second interview with Burcu, she described a division she did successfully at the board in detail.

It was a division. Although I didn't know how to do it I said I would do it....He said "OK, do it. Let's see how you will do it." I put a comma and brought down a zero. Then I divided that again. The teacher said: "That is it!" (SAID THE LAST SENTENCE WITH EMPHASIS) I enjoyed that. (Özlem: Why did you want to go up to the board if you didn't know about it?) Because it was difficult. I said "I will accomplish this. I would like to overcome this." (Özlem: Mmm) Then I went up and thought I would try it even if I got it wrong. Then he said "That is it!" (WE ARE BOTH LAUGHING)

When I asked Mine about the way the lessons were held she similarly highlighted in a very engaging way the learning tasks that gave her joy, accompanied with laughter:

Güneş balçıkla sıvanmaz. (She says a proverb that means you cannot hide the truth) (Özlem: Writing a proverb?) Proverb. Yes. (SHE LAUGHS) For example that was one of the lessons I took delight in. There was humour too. The environment was good. (Özlem: Mmm) Everyone said something, their own opinion. Some of us said an expression. Others said a proverb. I enjoyed that...

Likewise, Meryem discussed accomplishing a particular task that gave her joy.

I learned the vowel harmony, for example. It is something I didn't know. Otherwise we had a normal question and answer. I learned something I didn't know. It did me good to write it there and do it on my own. I said: "OK, I know this." (Özlem: Mmm) For example, lamp and whatever, writing them down and answering gave me joy. It was nice.

When I asked her about something important that she learned in the course Hatice described how she found divisions difficult at first and enjoyed learning it with the help of her family members.

Sure, when we first started doing this, since we didn't do any divisions in the first term the second term it looked very difficult. I tried to put that in my mind and said: "I want to go home immediately and learn how to do this".... Division looked very different in the second term since we didn't see it before. How will I do it? I wish I could learn to do this soon. I enjoyed that, to be honest.

Sibel, Ebru and Filiz talked about taking delight in the tasks that they could accomplish without describing particular experiences in the classroom. Ebru explained: "If I could understand a topic and do it, I enjoyed that. When I couldn't do it I got demoralised and upset of course. I didn't like that. I enjoyed all of the topics I understood."

The following observation vignette is illustrative of women's joy in accomplishing tasks they found challenging and significant. Ebru attempted to read the

multiplication table in way that facilitated her memorisation of it, but with Ali's urging she accomplished remembering it in a faster manner.

Ali: "When I work with my son, he repeats '5 times 8' after me. That is to gain time. Well done (says the name of a male participant). You may sit down. OK, is there a brave woman?" Ebru raises her hand and goes to the board. Ali is sitting at his desk. Ebru is in front of the board, facing him, her hands clasped in the front. Ali starts: "5 times 6, 2 times 6, 9 times 3, 9 times 6, 8 times 2, 8 times 8, 8 times 9." Ebru repeats each item after him. Ali says: "5 times 6" and she says "5 times 6" before giving the answer. Ali says "6 times 8" and she says "6 times 8" as well. Ali says: "Don't repeat after me." Ebru smiles and says "It is better that way." Ali: "Still, don't say it that way." Then he goes on: "7 times 5, 7 times 8, 6 times 3, 6 times 9, 5 times 6, 5 times 2, 5 times 8, 4 times 9, 9 times 2, 9 times 7." Ebru tries to do it his way and succeeds. Ali: "Well done." Ebru is so happy, beaming. (From researcher's fieldnotes, 15 May 2011)

As a result of their experiences in the PEC course the women at Akasya PEC displayed a changing understanding of the value of education. Whilst in my first interview with them they focused on the symbolic importance and social status associated with literacy and education, the second and third interviews and my fieldnotes indicated examples of finding joy in learning difficult and significant things in the literacy classroom. These accounts highlighted "integral reasons" for finding value in their present educational experiences (Griffiths, 2012, p. 665). Next I turn to Lale PEC and the discourses my participants found in the Level 2 literacy classroom at this centre and their responses to them.

6.2 Discourses at Lale PEC and women's responses to them

This section introduces the discourses of literacy and learning in the Lale literacy classroom. I had originally intended to conduct my study in only Akasya PEC, but the initial difficulty of finding a course at Akasya led me to seek another site for my study. Through a process discussed in Chapter Four, I conducted my study in two different Level 2 literacy courses in different PECs although my original intention was to focus on a single course. I found that the Level 2 literacy course at Lale PEC

was a women-only course. It worked more as an extension of the Level 1 literacy course where women worked on their decoding and encoding skills, improving their reading fluency and writing according to basic conventions such as using commas, full stops and capital letters. This section shows that the discourse of literacy as schooling and the discourse of individual learning were as prominent at Lale as at Akasya. However, the section shows that the classroom teacher Serap was more flexible in her approach to the application of schooled literacy and individual learning by individual women.

This section explores the trusting learning environment in this classroom where women could help each other and talk with Serap in a friendly manner. In contrast to the literacy classroom at Akasya, I myself felt comfortable and at ease in the Lale classroom. This section also explores an issue that was not in play at Akasya PEC, namely that the majority of the women in the Lale PEC literacy course and all of my participants were Kurdish women who were Kurdish-Turkish bilingual individuals. Two of the women seemed to come to the course to improve their Turkish speaking and vocabulary skills. The section thus explores the classroom teacher's attitude to the fact that she was working with women whose mother tongue was Kurdish and the influence of the official language policy on the classroom interactions.

6.2.1 The discourse of literacy as schooling at Lale PEC

The course organised by Lale People's Education Centre was located in a primary school building in another disadvantaged neighbourhood in Istanbul. The classroom where this course was located was originally used by 7-year-old first graders who were learning to read and write. There were two framed Turkish alphabets on each side of the blackboard, one with capital letters and the other with lower-case letters. The walls displayed writings and drawings by pupils and number posters as well as posters with the movement of the earth around the sun, the number of months, weeks and days in a year and the names and typical scenes of the four seasons.

The small desks, which forced women to bend forward uncomfortably to be able to read and write on them, were arranged in a horseshoe with a row of four desks in the middle of the room facing the teacher's desk and the blackboard. In the corner next

to the teacher's desk was a cupboard that functioned as the classroom library from which the classroom teacher chose stories to use as learning activities for the women. As in the Akasya literacy course, this classroom also had the portrait of Atatürk above the blackboard. The Turkish flag was above the portrait; on the right of the portrait was the National Anthem and on the left of it was Atatürk's Speech to the Youth. There was also a separate bulletin board to display work prepared by pupils on Atatürk's life and political principles.

The physical environment within which the literacy course took place accentuated its school orientation. Furthermore, the routine classroom practices were underlined by the discourse of literacy as schooling. All of the women at Lale PEC had taken the first-level literacy course from the same teacher either in the winter of the same year or the year before that. The course at Lale was another Level 2 literacy course that officially aimed to provide education that was the equivalent of the fourth and fifth years of the eight-year compulsory basic education. However, it worked more as the continuation of the first-level literacy course. The women mostly worked on improving their proficiency in recognising and decoding letters and syllables, combining syllables in different orders in order to create new words to be used in sentences, improving reading fluency and writing according to spelling and punctuation conventions.³³

A number of studies have determined that the classroom teachers found the 90-hour first-level courses too short for effectively teaching basic literacy skills (Durgunoğlu et al., 2003; Güngör, 2006; Ünlühisarcıklı, 2009). The teacher of this course, Serap, also found the length of the first-level course too short for teaching basic literacy skills. In order to adapt the Level 2 literacy textbook to the needs of her participants,

³³ Turkish has a transparent writing system in which there is a systematic correspondence between letters and sounds. Syllables are very salient units which can be combined in different orders to produce new words (Durgunoğlu et al., 2003). The Turkish alphabet is a slightly modified Latin alphabet which does not have the letters Q, W and X. It consists of 29 letters (8 vowels and 21 consonants), six of which (Ç, Ğ, İ, Ö, Ş, and Ü) were modified from their Latin originals to meet the phonetic requirements of Turkish. The capitalised İ in the Turkish alphabet can be seen as a thirtieth letter.

Serap mostly used texts from the second-level course book that she found close to the overall literacy skills of her participants and used stories from story books she kept in the classroom library.

This course took place from 9:00 to 12:00 at the weekends. When I went to the class at about 9:00 in the morning I found Serap in the classroom with her book in her hands, writing the paragraphs for the reading activity on the board. She welcomed the women individually and talked about everyday issues with them. Smiles, jokes and laughter accompanied this social talk at the beginning of the lesson. All of the participants did the same reading and writing activities in the first half to two thirds of the class time which were decided by Serap. When all the women finished writing the paragraphs on their notebooks the whole class started reading the text together. Serap went to the board and read the text out loud along with the participants, underlining each syllable with her red board marker. Then the class read the text for a second and sometimes third time collectively. Following this, Serap called on individual women to read the text out loud on their own.

9:56 Serap underlines the syllables of the poem on the right of the board with a red board marker. Everyone, including Serap herself, reads this text out loud together. Then Serap says: "Once more" and points at each syllable and they read it out loud together. Serap: "Now, one by one. Let's start from Leyla." Leyla does not want to read, so Serap calls on Umut, who is Leyla's cousin, as I find out later. To Umut: "If you can, read it without stuttering." She can read some of the text that way and some of it she cannot, which is OK. Serap helps her with the sounds and syllables she has difficulty in sounding out in a nice way with a smile on her face. Then Umut's desk mate is called upon to read and she starts reading out loud. Serap: "With a loud voice." She helps her identify the sounds and some syllables. Meanwhile, women read out aloud individually in a quiet voice. Eyes are on the board and lips are moving all the time.

10:03 Serap calls on Leyla again. She does not refuse reading out loud this time. Serap says: "Don't stutter" and when Leyla reads more fluently Serap says with a smile on her face: "Very nice."

10:06 Leyla's desk mate reads. Serap helps her with a lot of the sounds and says "Well done" when she gets them right. Leyla has extreme difficulty in sounding out the word *çiçekler*. Serap, with a smile on her face: "You are almost there. Hold on." and then "She deserves a round of applause." Then a few women clap for their friend. (From researcher's fieldnotes, 6 March 2011)

In the following excerpt from my fieldnotes, Serap explained how she chose the reading passages from the course textbook. She also talked about the role of women's differing levels of fluency in reading and not having lessons during one third of the class time.

11:30 The women and Serap decide to go back home and Serap says they will meet again next week because she has a duty at a centralised test for primary school pupils tomorrow. I ask her about how she decided which topic to teach from the course textbook. She explains that she first tried to cover things in the order they were presented in the book but when the texts got difficult she started to choose amongst them. She finds some of the passages very difficult. We review the texts together. They wrote and read the texts on the urinary system, the respiratory system, first aid, Atatürk's childhood, the water cycle, non-governmental organisations and democracy. When she realises that she did not skip much from the course book except for some of the texts on Atatürk she says: "I did quite a bit. Good. Atatürk and Atatürk again. Maybe I could have summarised the topics on Atatürk and our national holidays. I feel sorry for Leyla because she wants to learn but the levels are different." I say: "There is also Sevim." Serap: "Yes, there is her too. And also we had so many breaks. I forgot where I left off, what I was doing." (From researcher's fieldnotes, 18 June 2011)

The classroom teacher Serap treated most of the reading passages as a technical exercise in decoding letters rather than a communicative act involving meaning and discussion. There was no discussion following the reading of the reading passages. When Serap asked questions on the texts these were factual questions on some of the stories and poems. She mostly explained what she considered as the key messages of the remaining texts.

9:49: Serap goes to the board and they start reading the text out loud together. Serap underlines each syllable with her

board marker. She asks questions to make sure that women understand what they read syllable by syllable: “How did Ali wake up? When? What was in the garden?” Women: “Feeling excited, early in the morning, sheep and lambs.” (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 13 March 2011)

Most of the learning activities at Lale PEC were underpinned by the discourse of literacy as schooling: they focused on fluency and the exclusive use of passages from the course textbook and story books. The writing activities that followed the reading of the passages included Serap’s moving around the classroom to help women individually with their writing. Such instructional support involved helping the individual woman to sound out the syllables and reminding her of the letters that she was having a difficult time remembering by pointing to the association between the letters and the onomatopoeic sounds and accompanying pictures drawn by Serap on the board. Serap’s focus on conventions in writing was mostly limited to her reminding women collectively of basic rules such as starting a sentence with a capital letter and using a full stop after a sentence.

10:42 Serap: “Now, I am going to say a sentence. Attention. What are we going to start a sentence with?”

Women: “With a capital letter.”

Serap: “How are we going to stop it in case it runs away?”

Women: “With a full stop.”

Serap: “I am saying it: The first letter is capital, *Zeki*, *Zeki*”³⁴ ... (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 6 March 2011)

However, Serap was more flexible in her expectations of applying writing conventions when she corrected women’s writing individually.

10:10 Serap says she will say sentences and they will write them down. The sentence is *Dayım Ankara’dan dün geldi*. (My uncle came from Ankara yesterday). Serap says each syllable several times and checks women’s notebooks. She says: “We start the sentence with a capital letter. No one can

³⁴ *Zeki* is a male name and was the first word of the sentence Serap was dictating.

get close to Ankara. So we write – dan separately with an apostrophe.” and writes it on the board....I am sitting next to Nalan. I attract her attention to the full stops at the end of the sentences in her book. She says she hadn’t noticed that. She writes the full stop on the top right corner of the last word in the sentence. I say it is at the bottom. I also say, like Serap, that the letter a should be capital because Ankara is, like our names, a proper name. Nalan doesn’t correct that mistake in her notebook and Serap doesn’t comment on it. She is walking around the class and checking notebooks. (22 May 2011)

Similarly, Serap drew attention to the pronunciation of words that are commonly pronounced and sometimes written differently than their standard spellings.

However, she did not insist that women change their vernacular and pronounce these words as they are spelled in standard Turkish:

Serap is still at the board. She underlines each syllable and they read out loud together syllable by syllable. She says: “What do we say? *Pisküvit*, *bisküvit*. What is correct? *Bisküvi*.” There are still women who say *bisküvit* but Serap doesn’t comment on that. (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 12 March 2011)

Although she did not use real-life literacy texts or highlight different uses of literacy in different domains of life such as economic, home or bureaucratic contexts Serap adopted a relatively flexible attitude to the use of rules of school literacy. This attitude manifested itself in her awareness of the difficulty of learning these conventions that have been devised by grammarians and institutions with authority (Street, 2005), as in the case of the Turkish Language Society. This Society played a major role in the 1930s in coming up with new vocabulary and determining the spelling and punctuation conventions following the change of the alphabet from Arabic to Turkish (Çolak, 2004; Fortna, 2011). Thus at times Serap laughed at her own difficulty in reading words of foreign origin. When she shared her own difficulty in learning when to write a full stop in primary school most of the women enthusiastically expressed that they experienced the same problem:

While one of the women was at the board writing the sentence Serap had dictated Serap says: “When I was at primary school, I always mixed up these full stops.” Most of

the women say: “Me too, me too.” Serap: “I would mix them up all the time too.” (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 26 March 2011).

It is possible that Serap did not overemphasise the prominence of schooled literacy because she was aware that women in her classroom found school literacy important not only because of its symbolic importance. She explained her understanding that women also wanted to carry out specific literacy-related tasks through their participation in the course as follows.

I ask Serap what she thinks about women’s uses of literacy in their lives. She says: “It might be the subtitles on TV, what is written on the buses or headlines in the newspaper. But actually, they come because of longing. They weren’t sent to school. They have a longing for that.” (From researcher’s fieldnotes, 2 July 2011)

My four participants at this course highlighted both the importance of school knowledge and specific literacy practices for them. In the last interview, I asked these four participants what they gained from the course. The rest of the women in the class agreed to participate in the group interview. However, I omit their contributions since they were wary of their comments being identified and had declined to participate in the individual interviews.

Özlem: I am sorry to take your time while you are having your lessons. Now we have come to the end of the course. When you look at what we have learned in the course, what do you think you have gained from it? What did this course give to you?

(Another woman comments)

Nalan: I am glad we have come. We read now. I am glad we have come. For example, in the past we didn’t know. I mean I knew a bit but not a lot. Now I know it fully. I mean I can read.

Özlem: Sevim, what would you say? What did you gain?

Sevim: The best of all is that when we go somewhere, where it is necessary, we can write our name and surname. This is very important. It is important for me.

(Another woman comments)

Özlem: Leyla, what did you gain?

Leyla: What did we gain? We learned things we didn't know. For example Lake Van. The largest lake in Turkey is Van. At least we learned that. I mean we learned things we didn't know. We learned about Lake Tuz. We had heard about Lake Van but we didn't know Lake Tuz. We didn't know such things. At least we learnt those.

Sevim: I have also heard about those for the first time. I knew about Lake Van. (Özlem: Mmm) But like Mount Ararat, Lake Tuz is a first time thing too.³⁵ We didn't know that our salt came from there. Now we know.

It seemed that Sevim and Leyla highlighted the importance of school textbook knowledge in more explicit terms than Umut and Nalan. The latter acknowledged the importance of school knowledge while focusing more on the specific literacy-related tasks that they felt themselves more competent in through their participation in the course. Umut expressed the importance of school knowledge in general as follows: "Even learning a single word is very valuable for us. Even learning a single letter is valuable I mean." Later in the interview she discussed the relevance of what she learnt in the classroom to her life by providing examples of literacy-related tasks from everyday life.

Umut: You go the supermarket and things are written on stuff. But if you don't know but since we read a bit now, if it is two hundred and fifty, you know that.

Özlem: How was that before?

Umut: We didn't know that before. Now I know it.

(Another woman comments)

Özlem: Mmm. How did you know about the prices before then?

³⁵ Tuz means salt in Turkish and Lake Tuz is the second largest lake in Turkey, with several salt mines operating in the lake.

Umut: We either asked people or just bought things. I don't know. We did it by asking, I mean.

At Lale PEC all of my four participants highlighted such particular literacy-related tasks. These emerging uses of literacy seemed to be their resources for increasing their chances of gaining income in conditions of poverty as well as providing them with more social status, especially in bureaucratic situations. The interview extract below pointed to the significance of specific literacy practices for Sevim and Leyla and the ways in which numeracy practices fused with them (Maddox, 2001):

Sevim: I wish we had done more mathematics.

Özlem: Mmm?

Nalan: Mathematics is very hard though.

Leyla: Mathematics is difficult.

Nalan: I find it difficult.

Özlem: Why more Maths? Why is that important?

Sevim: Whether you like it or not you need it in certain places.

Özlem: Where, for example?

Sevim: Where? When necessary you write your mobile phone number and give it to someone. If you open some small business for yourself, it is good that you can do the calculations. (Özlem: Mmm) Why shouldn't one open something small like a clothes store or a stationary store if one has literacy? (Özlem: Yes) I say for one to take care of her own business mathematics is important. Isn't it so?

(Another woman comments)

Leyla: I would also like to have mathematics. Let's say when I get a different job it is good to know something different, something better. Not textile but something else. Like a secretary or something else, isn't it so? At least you can answer the phone and write things.

This section has discussed the ways in which the discourse of literacy as schooling worked in the Lale literacy classroom. It showed that there was a trusting learning

environment in the Lale literacy classroom and the classroom teacher Serap did not overemphasise the prominence of the importance of schooled literacy. Next I will introduce the second major discourse that women found in the Lale literacy classroom, namely individual learning, which manifested itself mostly during the school literacy practices chosen by the classroom teacher. However, in contrast to Akasya PEC women helped each other in learning tasks carried out both at the board and at their desks.

6.2.2 The discourse of individual learning at Lale PEC

As already said, the first half to two-thirds of the classroom time at Lale was spent on reading a passage or poem, first collectively and then individually. The classroom teacher Serap chose the texts, called on individual women to read the text out loud and evaluated their reading. She did this in a sensitive language, first suggesting that a particular woman read. If the woman she called on did not feel ready, she either moved on to another woman or asked for a volunteer. Sometimes some other woman volunteered to read out loud. Some women liked to go to the board and use Serap's board marker while they were doing their individual reading. Some preferred to stay seated and read the paragraphs from the board, whereas some others liked to read from their notebooks or the textbook. Serap accepted their preferences without any questioning. In the observation vignette below I report on Emine, one of the three participants who agreed to have individual interviews but dropped out of the course.

Serap and the women are talking about the text on digestion. Meanwhile Nalan goes out to smoke after asking for permission from Serap, who says OK. Women can move freely and Nalan comes back soon. They read the text out loud together again. Serap underlines the syllables. Then at 10:20 Serap calls on Leyla to read the text. Leyla reads the whole text pretty fluently. She says *zebze* - a vernacular pronunciation - instead of the standard pronunciation *sebze* but Serap doesn't correct her. Serap calls on Emine but after reading about five words, Emine stops reading, saying she is nervous. Umut says she gets nervous when the teacher calls on her. To Serap: "Honestly, I actually know it but forget it when you call on me."

Nalan: "Until they are ready, let me read." Nalan reads from her book at her desk. Serap helps her quite a bit and at the

end congratulates her. She tells me [Özlem] that she can read the short words but not the long, multi-syllable ones. Like Serap, I tell her to read what she sees, syllable by syllable. She says she'll try to do that....Then Serap calls on Emine, who this time agrees and says she'll read from her book. She reads fluently and Serap pronounces some of the syllables to help her and then she says "Nice." Other women read out loud on their own from their books. Umut agrees to read out loud this time and does pretty well. (From researcher's fieldnotes, 26 March 2011)

As this vignette suggests, when the individual reading activity was going on the other women read the text quietly, creating a low hum in the classroom. Some of the women moved on to reading different texts in their textbooks. There was a high level of engagement in the activities in this classroom, with women's lips and fingers moving and their eyes looking at the board or textbooks carefully. When necessary, Serap guided and helped the woman reading out loud individually by reminding her of the shape of the lips when producing the sound for a particular letter or by reminding her of the drawing that accompanied certain onomatopoeic sounds. Even with women who decoded letters and syllables labouredly, she produced the sounds herself only when a participant was having a particularly hard time. She praised and congratulated women for every achievement, using positive reinforcements from her big repertoire.

However, Serap insisted that women read out the passages individually except for two women - Nimet and Ayşe who had agreed to participate in my research but dropped out of the course in May to go to their village for the harvest. Thus although Serap called on women to read individually in a sensitive way and provided instructional support in a careful language all of my four participants found that the individual learning activities made them nervous.

Nalan: Yes. It (individual reading at the board) makes me nervous very much. Especially when Serap teacher comes up to me. Normally, I can read. (Özlem: Yes) But when I am facing Serap teacher I get nervous and confuse the words. (LAUGHS) (Özlem: Mmm) Really, this sense of nervousness descends on me. For example, I can read beautifully at home, one by one. But I get nervous when I face the teacher. I couldn't figure out why this is so.

Özlem (To Sevim): Does this happen to you as well?

Sevim: A little bit. Even if you don't want it to.

Nalan (OVERLAPPING): It is like this. You feel a little (TRAILS OFF), you know?

Sevim: She is right. For example I read without stuttering at home. Sometimes my line ends here and for a moment I cannot see where I left off.

Nalan: Exactly.

Sevim: This nervousness descends on you...

Leyla: For example when she asked me to go to the board. I knew what to write here (meaning at her desk). When I was summoned to the board I forgot everything. I didn't know what to write at all.

This exchange about feeling nervous when summoned to the board was followed by my participants' spontaneous remarks on their contentment with Serap as a teacher. Women's remarks also revealed the specific literacy practices developed or improved through their participation in the course and how these provided them with increased social status in the context of bureaucratic situations.

Sevim: I learned the apostrophe thanks to our teacher. I thank her very, very much.

Leyla: We are really very pleased with our teacher. Very, very pleased. We love Serap teacher very much. (LAUGHS) You may let her listen to this.

Nalan: We are very pleased with our teacher.

Özlem: OK. I don't let anyone listen to this. Not even the teacher Serap. Only I listen to it and erase it, really.

Nalan: May God be pleased with her. We learned here what we didn't know.

Sevim: For example when they say somewhere: "Write your name, surname and ID number." we will write that easily. But we could never do that before. We asked someone else to write. And not everyone would write. There are people who say: "There are literacy courses. Why don't you go?" and don't write for you, isn't it so?

Nalan: For example when we went somewhere I was requesting them. They said: "Write your name and surname and sign." For example a friend.

Sevim (INTERRUPTS): OK, some people don't know because they are old. One feels ashamed because she is young. (Nalan: Of course) You cannot dare say to the person next to you: "I don't have literacy. Can you write my name and surname on this piece of paper?"

Leyla: Sure, if one is old then no one would be uncharitable towards her. But when you are young you feel shy. You cannot say: "I don't have literacy." Or you think that they would humiliate you.

Sevim: You think they would humiliate you.

Nalan: For example when I went somewhere: "If it is no trouble for you, can you please write this?" One says it in a shy manner. But now it is free. They say to me: "Can you write your name and surname?" I write my name and surname and I sign my name too. I mean I wouldn't be dependent on anybody. As she says, let God be pleased with her. We learned what we didn't know.

There seemed to be a number of reasons for the women's contentment with Serap's pedagogical approach and support for their learning. Although she insisted they carry out reading and writing activities individually, she herself and other women helped the woman who was engaged in a learning activity at the board or at her desk. Furthermore, in the second half of the lesson when Serap facilitated the revision of the social studies and science topics they had covered, they did this in a collective question and answer manner. This practice did not put any woman on the spot and minimised the risk of feelings of failure due to giving a wrong answer.

11:17 Serap defines the skeleton and women say its name.

Serap: "Which bone protects our head?" Women: "The skull." Serap: "What is it that protects our heart and lung?" Women: "The rib cage."

Serap: "What did we call the family that is formed of the father, the mother and the children?"

Women: "The nuclear family."

Serap: "If there are grandparents too?"

Women: "The extended family."

Serap draws the picture of a bone on the board and writes next to it tendon: "It connects the bones to the skeleton. What else did we study? The vein that gathers the dirty blood?"

Women: "The vena."

Serap: "What was it that takes clean blood?"

Women: "The artery." (From researcher's fieldnotes, 19 March 2011)

In the second half of the lesson the remaining class time was usually spent on writing and occasional mathematics activities, including writing and reading numbers and additions and Serap's explaining topics from the course textbook. In the beginning of the course Serap asked women what they would like to do in the second part of the course and tried to choose learning activities from the textbook according to their preferences.

10:30: "What shall we do? Shall we do something from the book? Shall we write and read like this? Dictation?"

No response from women.

Serap: "Tell me what we should do."

Emine: "You say and we write that."

Serap: "Shall we do dictation?"

Women: "OK. Let's do it."

Serap: "Let's write then. Take your pencils, open the notebooks." (From researcher's fieldnotes, 13 March 2011)

However, this course did not take place six out of the 18 weekends of the entire course length due to the mass distant education exams, elections taking place in the primary school building as well as two national holidays coinciding with a weekend. These interruptions seemed to have prevented Serap from attempting to involve women more in choosing what they wanted to learn. Thus after the missed weekends the focus was placed on reading passages from story books and the course textbook

and writing exercises. All of my participants commented on the negative effect of the cancelled lessons on their progress. The following extract from my last interview at Lale PEC pointed to the effect of the cancelled lessons. It also showed the participants' strong determination to attend the courses within the constraints of their social and economic obligations.

Özlem: What made it difficult to come to the course?

Sevim: There were times when we found it hard to come to the course but we still attended.

Leyla: You go to work during the week and to the school at the weekend. It is difficult but we are still content despite everything. We would do anything to get educated, to learn how to read and write.

Sevim: For example, there were a lot of us in the classroom in the beginning. (Özlem: Yes) Because we had a lot of breaks the number has gone down. That makes one upset. I wish we were more crowded so that the teacher's work wouldn't be in vain.

Özlem: So would you say this is because of a lot of breaks?

Sevim: I think that is because of that. There has been a little bit of alienation.

Özlem: Mmm.

Leyla: We have been given quite a few breaks. We come one week and don't come the next week.

Another woman comments.

Leyla: We have forgotten what we knew. That is because of the exams.

Sevim: I used to write two or three pages at the weekends. Since there have been too many breaks for the last months I haven't really touched the books.

Despite the negative effect of the cancelled lessons, the classroom atmosphere at Lale allowed women to help each other in the learning activities openly, talk to Serap spontaneously and move around the classroom freely. At the Lale literacy course generally everyone was present during the three hours from beginning to end without

taking any breaks. The only exceptions were Nalan, who took smoking breaks halfway through, and Sevim, whose reading fluency was more improved than the class average which enabled her to leave earlier if that day's lesson focused mostly on reading. Women left the classroom to go to the toilet or to get important phone calls on their mobile phones without asking for permission from Serap, although this did not happen often.

Serap had a keen awareness of the participants' life circumstances and the complexities involved in them and was closely interested in women's progress. She explained that most of the women came to the course despite being tired from the long hours at the textile workshops or in home-based work, in addition to their household and care responsibilities. She was very flexible with timing, making it clear that she did not need an explanation when some of the women occasionally came to the class half an hour late or wanted to leave a bit early because of familial or work-related responsibilities. In contrast to the Akasya PEC classroom, I myself felt at ease in this classroom.

9:57 An hour has passed and I am surprised. Time flew. Unlike in Ali's class, especially last Sunday, when he shouted at Sibel and talked about physical violence and the birch rod all the time. (From researcher's fieldnotes, 16 April 2011)

In addition to the negative effect of the cancelled lessons, the issue of mother tongue was another major factor that influenced the learning and teaching at the Lale PEC. Next I will introduce the classroom teacher's attitude to the fact that the majority of the women at Lale were Kurdish-Turkish bilingual individuals.

6.2.3 The use of mother tongue in literacy learning

The majority of the women in this course were Kurdish. Four women who took part in all of the three interviews could be defined as Kurdish-Turkish balanced bilinguals who grew up speaking Kurdish with their parents, relatives and close friends but were exposed to Turkish before starting school (Derince, 2012c, p. 19-20). However, two women who dropped out of the course to go to the harvest in their villages after my first interview with them – Nimet and Ayşe – were Kurdish-dominant bilinguals.

As explored in Chapter Five, my in-depth interview with them revealed that they had come to the course mainly to improve their Turkish speaking and vocabulary skills. However, the classroom teacher Serap did not seem to be aware that Nimet and Ayşe came to the course primarily to improve their Turkish speaking skills.

Serap says to Nimet and Ayşe: “Read together, but nicely.” When Nimet says they cannot do that she says: “Let me have you read in the end then, dear. Otherwise, it takes too much time. It is good that way. Is that OK?” Nimet and Ayşe agree. Serap writes down the rest of the text on the board. As she underlines the syllables, all the women read out loud the text syllable by syllable. The second time they read it in the same manner, but a bit more fluently. The third time, they read the text quite fluently. We have a short recess. Referring to Nimet and Ayşe, Serap says: “They come every day. I don’t understand them. They sometimes read but cannot do it other times.”

Özlem: “Ms Ayşe’s Turkish is weak. She is coming (to the course) for Turkish as well. Ms Nimet comes although she has a disabled child”.

Serap: “They are great. I am glad I let them pass (Level 1 and move on to Level 2) I see that Ms Ayşe sometimes reads the words”.

Özlem: “They progress well in their circumstances. They see the difference the course makes. That should be the reason they come. They say they will come to the course despite all odds”. (Extract from researcher’s fieldnotes.)

(From researcher’s fieldnotes, 16 April 2011)

As shown in this exchange, although I raised the fact that Ms Ayşe came to the course to improve her Turkish Serap chose not to comment on this aspect but seemed to appreciate Nimet and Ayşe’s coming to the course within the constraints of their social and familial obligations. On the other hand, Ms Nimet was the only participant in my study who mentioned the importance of teaching Kurdish in schools and asked for multilingual education, with Turkish, Kurdish and English as the languages she found important in schooling. The following extract is from my in-depth interview with her:

Özlem: Do your children know Kurdish?

Nimet: My children don't know it. They don't know Kurdish.

Özlem: Why is that?

Nimet: They don't know it. They don't know Kurdish. I talk and talk and talk. They understand but cannot translate.

Özlem: They understand it but cannot speak it?

Nimet: They cannot speak it. They cannot speak it because it doesn't exist in their surrounding. I go to the village and my mother doesn't know it (Turkish). My children say "Mom, what do we say to her (their grandmother)?... (SAYS A SENTENCE IN KURDISH RELATING HER MOTHER'S COMPLAINT ABOUT HER GRANDCHILDREN'S NOT KNOWING KURDISH AND TRANSLATES IT INTO TURKISH) "My daughter, Why are your children so? (SHE THEN REPORTS HER ANSWER TO HER MOTHER) "Mother, what can we do? They grew up in Istanbul. There is no Kurdish in Istanbul. They don't give lessons in Kurdish." Actually, there are lessons in Kurdish. They exist. I mean, it is absolutely necessary. There are Kurdish lessons. Teachers should teach children Kurdish. I mean that exists. I mean that is also important for children.

....

Özlem: Were all your children born in Istanbul?

Nimet: They were born here. They were all born here. But they don't know. They don't know Kurdish. I speak. They cannot answer. What if I didn't know (Kurdish)? Isn't that so? How was I going to give answers to my mother? It is important. Each language is important. English. Turkish. Kurdish. All of them are important. What more can I say?

Considering the importance of Kurdish for Nimet as her mother tongue and part of her heritage, her call for multilingual education in schools could be extended to literacy education. Mother tongue-based bilingual education in literacy courses could help women gain basic literacy skills more effectively while helping them improve their fluency and vocabulary in the Turkish language. The calls for the use of mother tongues other than Turkish in schooling and literacy education have been made by some critics along with their calls for the removal of the barriers against the use of

different mother tongues in civic services and informal educational activities of local providers (Çağlayan, 2013 & Derince, 2012b). In making these calls, the aforementioned critics have pointed to the drawbacks experienced by Kurdish women who did not speak Turkish (fluently), described as (1) not being able to access information and health services without the mediation of family members; (2) not being able to benefit from the literacy and income-generating skills courses in a meaningful way; and (3) not being able to achieve jobs with social security in the formal sector. The same critics have noted that the learning of Turkish by Kurdish women is a gender issue since Kurdish men learn Turkish in schooling, compulsory military service or employment outside the house whereas some Kurdish women only speak Kurdish, as exemplified by Nimet and Ayşe at Lale PEC. Thus it is vital to ensure that women who can express themselves best in Kurdish can access public services and exercise their basic rights as the citizens of the Turkish state through the use of Kurdish in the provision of these services. At the same time, considering the fact that Nimet and Ayşe came to the literacy course primarily to improve their Turkish, it is also important to create formal and informal educational and social opportunities through which women who want to improve their Turkish can do so.

However, a social atmosphere in which Kurdish and Turkish could co-exist and be improved at the same time did not exist in the Lale PEC literacy classroom. When I asked the classroom teacher Serap to describe the social positions and status of the women she worked with, she started her answer with describing her participants as “mostly of East origin.” I found it striking that she never used the word “Kurdish” anywhere in my interview or conversations with her. The following extract from my interview with Serap is part of our discussion of several women’s difficulties in decoding and encoding sounds in Turkish where I raised the issue of women’s mother tongue not being Turkish. The extract highlights Serap’s ambivalent attitude to a particular Kurdish-dominant bilingual woman’s difficulties in producing Turkish sounds.

Özlem: Yes, I was going to say Ms Rukiye. Ms Rukiye’s Turkish is not great.

Serap: They (the sounds) come out different. I sometimes understand what she means and count that as correct.

Özlem: The sounds come out different. For example, she will say *güzeli*. That last – i doesn't come out. (Serap: Yes) I mean I think her mother tongue is Kurdish.

Serap: Could be. But sometimes she reads out loud, along with the others. (Özlem: Yes) Then she produces (the sounds) correctly. (Özlem: Mmm?) It is just up to her mood.

After re-reading the transcription of my interview with Serap, I found it striking that I raised the issue of Kurdish as a mother tongue in a quite hesitant manner, which might be seen as my latent awareness that I was raising a politically charged issue. I also found it striking that Serap dismissed Rukiye's difficulties in producing Turkish sounds because of having a different mother tongue - Kurdish - as a fairly insignificant issue. She was otherwise very sympathetic to women's difficulties in learning and the social, economic or familial obligations that led to these difficulties. Serap's attitude to the existence and use of Kurdish in her classroom can be likened to the difficulties experienced by the teachers involved in the study of Can, Gök and Şimsek (2013). The primary school teachers in this study worked with Kurdish-speaking pupils in three cities of Turkey: Muş, Van and Istanbul. Some of the Kurdish-Turkish bilingual teachers interviewed for the study noted that they witnessed that their teaching and the satisfaction of their students improved immensely when they occasionally used Kurdish in the classroom. However, they added that they tried not to do so because Kurdish wasn't allowed in schooling.

The majority of the teachers involved in the study of Can, Gök and Şimsek (2013), both monolingual Turkish teachers and Kurdish-Turkish bilingual teachers, found it vital that the language and heritage of Kurdish students be respected and drawn on in schooling. However, they all felt underprepared in offering multilingual education in a multicultural classroom environment. They also felt that they could not lead critical discussions on difficult political issues since the official language and literacy policy in Turkey recognises only Turkish as the language of state schooling and civil service (Coşkun et al., 2010). Furthermore, the issue of the right to education in the mother tongue is treated as a security issue that would eventually lead to the partition

of the country along ethnic lines (Gök, 2012). Thus it can be suggested that the official language policy underpinned Serap's avoidance of the fact that she worked with bilingual Kurdish women, preventing her even from defining them as Kurdish.

This chapter has explored the discourses that women involved in this study found in the Akasya and Lale literacy classrooms. It discussed women's understanding of these discourses and their responses to the effects of them on literacy and classroom practices. It showed that in the Akasya PEC classroom the discourse of literacy as schooling was prominent. It showed the ways women in my study adopted, challenged and attempted to transform these school literacy practices, arguing at the same time that the women had a positive orientation to schooled-person identities and school literacy practices and school knowledge associated with these identities. The chapter also showed that three women at Akasya PEC – Mine, Hatice and Meryem – seemed to take what they wanted from the school literacy practices and use them as resources in their engagement in specific literacy practices in everyday life.

The chapter then explored the discourse of individual learning women found in the Akasya Level 2 literacy classroom. It discussed the ways in which women in my study challenged this discourse and found ways of helping each other in learning tasks, risking reprimands and sometimes a threat of teacher violence. Next the chapter explored the conditions of violence created by the teacher Ali. It showed that whilst verbal confrontation to Ali's verbal and physical violence was relatively seldom, women supported each other in the classroom and outside of the class time. The chapter also discussed women's individual ways of attempting to force Ali to make reasonable instructional demands on them in a measured manner. The chapter then discussed Ali's ways of teaching in an engaging way that related the learning concepts to women's everyday life. It also discussed his efforts to understand the broader context within which the participants attended the course. Lastly, the chapter discussed women's accounts which highlighted the joy they found in learning things they considered difficult and significant. Thus the chapter argued that women's understanding of the value they found in education changed as a result of their educational experiences in the literacy classroom.

In the second part, the chapter introduced the discourses of literacy and learning at the Lale PEC. It showed that the discourse of literacy as schooling was prominent in this literacy classroom as well. The classroom practices focused on fluency and the exclusive use of passages from the course textbook and story books. However, the section on the Lale PEC argued that the classroom teacher Serap had adapted some elements of the school literacy practices to the needs of her participants. The chapter argued that this adaptation was based on Serap's awareness that the women in her classroom came to the literacy course both to fulfil their longing for education and to engage in context-specific literacy practices in everyday life. The chapter argued that similar to the participants at Akasya, the women in the Lale classroom had a positive orientation to schooled-person identities associated with school practices and knowledge. It also suggested that all of the women involved in my study at Lale seemed to be living in a deeper form of poverty compared with the majority of the participants at Akasya. Thus the participants at Lale PEC emphasised the importance of specific literacy practices in bureaucratic and economic contexts, rather than focusing on the importance of diplomas for continuing their formal education.

The chapter then introduced the discourse of individual learning in the Lale literacy classroom which took place in a trusting and friendly learning environment. The chapter showed that women in my study found the school literacy practises carried out at the board discomfoting although cooperation among learners was a routine part of the classroom practices in Lale literacy classroom in contrast to the Akasya PEC where the classroom teacher strictly discouraged cooperation. The chapter then showed that the cancellation of one third of the classes at Lale literacy course due to official holidays and the use of the school building for official reasons negatively affected the learning and teaching. Lastly, the chapter showed that the official language policy seemed to influence the classroom teacher Serap's attitude to the fact that she worked with many women who were Kurdish-Turkish bilingual individuals with differing levels of proficiency in each language. She did not seem to be aware that two participants – Ayşe and Nimet – came to the course primarily to improve their Turkish speaking and vocabulary skills. The chapter argued that Serap avoided using the word Kurdish in describing the social positions and conditions of

her participants due to the official policies and the widespread popular attitude that treated the issue of bilingual education in Kurdish and Turkish as a security issue (Derince, 2012c; Gök, 2012).

The next chapter, Discussion, discusses the connections between different meanings of the subject position schooled person and socio-political structures such as gender, ethnicity, social class, poverty and migration status, e.g. migration to Istanbul in the 1990s or earlier. It highlights women's perspectives on their changing circumstances and socio-economic obligations, focusing on how these might influence their attempts to take on the schooled-person identities. Finally, the discussion chapter highlights the links between the schooled-person identities that women in my study attempted to take on through their participation in the literacy courses and their engagement with the classes.

Chapter 7 Discussion

7.0 Introduction

This chapter is comprised of three sections. In the first section, I discuss the connection between different meanings of the subject position of schooled person that seemed to drive women's participation in the courses and socio-political structures that emerged as important forces in their accounts. In exploring these links, I highlight how women's meanings of literacy and schooled-person identity exceeded the meanings identified in the official discourses. Furthermore, I highlight the distinctive contribution of this study to the existing knowledge on women's literacy and participation in literacy courses in Turkey. In doing so, I discuss how the social theory of literacy enabled my study to make these contributions.

In the second section of the chapter, I bring to the fore women's perspectives on their changing circumstances and how these might influence their attempts to take on the schooled-person identities and the symbolic and material benefits associated with them.

The third section highlights the links between the schooled-person identities that women in my study attempted to take on through their participation in the literacy courses and their engagement with the discourses and power relations they found in literacy classrooms. Throughout the chapter I discuss these issues by exploring how the data relates to the literature on women's literacy, participation, identity and engagement in the literacy courses. I also highlight the contribution of my study to the existing knowledge on women's literacy and participation in literacy courses in Turkey.

7.1 Schooled person identities and socio-political structures

This thesis has found that women's accounts of their participation in the courses at Lale and Akasya PECs in Istanbul were underpinned by the discourse of formal education and literacy which had two main strands: the discourse of the symbolic importance of school and literacy and the discourse of social status associated with

school and literacy. A number of studies have identified the symbolic value of literacy for literacy course participants. Studies on literacy courses in countries ranging from Brazil to Namibia and Botswana revealed that literacy meant a lot more than the skills of reading and writing for the participants because it was associated with the social status of schooling and prospects of better material circumstances (Bartlett, 2001, 2005; Papen, 2001, 2002; Riemer, 2008). Studies on women's literacy in differing developing country contexts including South Africa, Nepal and Thailand similarly pointed to the symbolic value of literacy for women (Millican, 2004, Robinson-Pant; 2000a, 2000b Walter; 2004).

This study has broadened the insights into the symbolic value of literacy and participation in a literacy course for women by drawing on women's life stories. It showed that the official discourses of formal education and literacy, which aim to provide literacy education and certificates equivalent with primary school grades, were not the only influence on women's accounts of their participation in the literacy courses. Women's life stories showed that social and institutional injustices made it impossible for them to access schooling and the attendant prestigious identities and knowledge. Thus, through their participation in the literacy courses, women in my study attempted to redress some of the injustices they experienced as girl-children.

A further contribution of the study to the literature on the symbolic value of literacy courses for women was that it provided different manifestations of the symbolic importance of school and literacy. In addition to women's life histories, the study drew on interview extracts and fieldnotes which revealed women's persistent attempts to access the courses and carry out bureaucratic tasks at Akasya and Lale PECs. The study suggested that women's resilience in their attempts to find literacy courses and attend them within the social and economic constraints of their particular contexts revealed the symbolic significance of participation. A poignant vignette based on observations at Akasya PEC showed how a young woman came back to the course to visit her course teacher and literacy classroom, similar to a school reunion. The interview extracts revealed that the majority of women involved in this study identified participation in the literacy course as fulfilling their longing for schooling which they could not experience as children.

The thesis has identified the discourse of social status associated with school and literacy as the second strand of the discourse of formal education and literacy that underpinned women's accounts of participation in literacy courses at Lale and Akasya PECs. In order to explore the social status that women sought through their participation in literacy courses, I discussed interview extracts that highlighted school knowledge, diplomas, further formal education, jobs, context-specific literacy practices and speaking standard Turkish (fluently) as markers of being schooled. As explored on pages 95-99, school knowledge, diplomas and further formal education through literacy courses are emphasised by the official discourses of literacy as well.

However, being underpinned by a social theory of literacy, this study was able to identify the ways that women's accounts of participation in the literacy courses both echoed and exceeded the meanings of literacy and schooled-person identity in official discourses. Thus drawing on a social theory of literacy, this thesis has contributed to the existing knowledge on the meanings of literacy and participation in literacy courses for women in Turkey in the following ways. First of all, although women's accounts showed that they all considered school knowledge as an important marker of being schooled, their accounts also revealed the meanings of being schooled that were not identified in the official discourses of literacy. Sibel, Hatice and Mine expanded the meanings of schooled person in the official discourses by establishing links between having school knowledge and the structures of gender. Their accounts associated access to greater school knowledge with higher social status in relation to their husbands and brothers.

Filiz, Sibel and Sevim added to the meanings of being schooled as identified in the official discourses by forming links between increased school knowledge and familiarity with school practices and supporting their children's education. Their accounts also complement and challenge the studies that suggested that as of the mid-1980s middle-class women in Turkey have started to spend a considerable amount of time inside and outside the house to take care of their children's education (Özbay, 1995; Rutz & Balkan, 2009). However, these studies restrained their analysis to middle-class women, ignoring the aspirations of low-income women for their children's education. The accounts of Filiz, Sibel and Sevim suggested that as

women living on low-incomes, who described the hardship of living in poverty in varying degrees of explicitness, they also showed a keen interest in supporting their children's educational success.

Another way of expanding the meanings of being schooled in the official discourses was linking it with non-manual jobs and financial sufficiency as a woman. The accounts of For Filiz, Meryem and Burcu suggested that the further formal education and diplomas carried the potential to help them gain non-manual jobs and financial self-sufficiency.³⁶ As discussed in Chapter Five, the link between schooled-person identities and women's access to non-manual jobs, which have a much larger chance of being in the formal sector with social security, does not exist in official literacy discourses. Furthermore, by associating the subject position of schooled person with financial sufficiency as a woman, these three women's accounts established a link between schooled-person identities and structures of gender.

In addition to bringing to the fore women's ways of thinking about literacy that were different than the official versions, the social theory of literacy also enabled this study to identify the value of context-specific literacy practices that are not targeted by the PEC's. The accounts of Hatice, Mine, Ebru, and Meryem at Akasya PEC pointed to their attempts to engage in certain bureaucratic and work place-related literacy practices which they recounted as part of their participation in the course. Hatice and Mine described bureaucratic settings involving literacy tasks in the post offices and banks. Furthermore, Ebru and Mine described situations in their workplaces - a textile workshop and the kitchen of a company respectively - where they felt excluded due to their perceived lack of experience in certain literacy practices.

³⁶ These women's accounts should be considered within the particular labour market context in Turkey where women with lower educational qualifications in the cities are allocated into jobs in the informal sector with low pay, long working hours, no job contract and social security (Buğra, 2010; Eyüboğlu et al., 2000; TÜSİAD & KAGİDER, 2008). Only a small group of women, urban and especially from higher socio-economic backgrounds, have been able to take part in all levels of education to get well-paid professions with higher social status (Gök, 2007a).

At Lale PEC, in the first in-depth interviews, all of my participants emphasised the importance of specific literacy practices in bureaucratic contexts. Furthermore, these Kurdish women's accounts revealed their economically more precarious conditions compared with the majority of the women participants at Akasya PEC. Burcu and Meryem were the two women at Akasya PEC who highlighted the difficulties of living in economic hardship in the most explicit terms. However, similar to the other five participants at Akasya PEC, they possessed home computers or laptops and referred to consulting the Internet in searching for information on learning topics and homework. They talked about the trips they made within and outside of Istanbul for leisure. None of the participants at Lale PEC had computers or talked about travelling within the city for leisure. They made frequent references to the economic hardship they lived in such as the difficulty of paying for rent and utility bills, buying fruit for their children or paying for the fees demanded by the state schools their children attended. They seemed to be living in a deeper form of poverty. Their other accounts pointed to their attempts to engage in bureaucratic literacy practices more comfortably in official settings such as post offices and hospitals. Furthermore, Sevim and Leyla hoped to engage in literacy tasks required for economic activities such as opening a small stationary store or having a better-paid job through their participation in the literacy course. Thus the thesis contributed to the existing knowledge on women's expectations of literacy courses in Turkey by showing the importance of literacy practices other than school literacy.

Another contribution of this study was that, in contrast to the majority of the literature on literacy in Turkey discussed on pages 22-29, it was underpinned by a social theory of literacy that emphasised the importance of understanding literacy as a practice carried out for different purposes within different tasks involved in different domains of life (Barton, 1994; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Heath, 1983; Street, 1984, 1993a). Thus it was able to identify women's involvement in literacy practices in different domains of life including the work place, school, home, religious, economic and bureaucratic settings.

The study did not observe women's uses of literacy in everyday settings or interview them systematically about their literacy practices in everyday life. However,

although the aim was not to document women's uses and meanings of literacy in different domains of life, the interview transcriptions and fieldnotes were replete with women's engagement in literacy practices in different domains. These literacy practices included engaging in written chats on online forums that were routinely used by Burcu, Sibel and Filiz at Akasya PEC, who discussed their mastery of the shortened forms of common expressions in online chatting. Furthermore, all of the women at Akasya PEC used online search engines and the younger ones used popular online social networking sites. Women's engagement in literacy tasks in different domains also included their use of literacy for personal reasons. This was exemplified by Mine's buying two national newspapers every day and reading other newspapers online, her interest in various books on the history and faith of the *Alevi* religious minority, of which she was a member, and shared with me in the last interview.³⁷ Similar to Mine, in my interview with Hatice towards the end of the course, she talked about her previous attendance of Koran courses and her ability to read the Koran in the Arabic language and alphabet. Also at Akasya PEC, Meryem had extensive experience in engaging in religious literacy practices in Arabic as well. She had attended a Koran course for many years and was able to read the Koran in Arabic and write a certain degree of Arabic. Similar to Hatice and Meryem at Akasya PEC, Umut at Lale PEC also used Arabic for religious purposes.

The social theory of literacy enabled this study to identify not only the links between different literacies and domains – economic, bureaucratic, home – but also the link between these and different languages (Herbert & Robinson, 2001). The literature on literacy in Turkey has been largely silent about the issue of the language of literacy education. The limited number of studies that acknowledged the issue has mainly criticised the exclusive use of standard Turkish in adult literacy textbooks and classes (Sayılan, 2009; Yıldız, 2006). These studies pointed out that the participants in

³⁷ *Alevi*s are a religious group in Turkey with their origin in Shia Islam which combines Anatolian folk elements with Sufi teachings. They are a religious minority and have been the target of attacks from extremist Sunni Islamists, which led them to focus on documenting their faith and history and demand recognition, equal treatment and respect for their faith (Poulton, 1997). This fact might have led Mine to talk about her extensive reading in her faith only in the last interview after we had established a considerable degree of trust and conviviality.

literacy programmes in Turkey speak a number of different mother tongues as well as Turkish dialects.

However, the social theory of literacy enabled my study to acknowledge that each time a literacy task is performed in a different language it meant a different literacy not only on language grounds but also because of the symbolic and cultural meanings associated with a language (Herbert & Robinson, 2001). Thus I was able to acknowledge that engaging in economic and bureaucratic literacy tasks in the Turkish language meant increased access to economic resources and social status for my Kurdish participants. For them, the added difficulty was carrying out the novel literacy practices in a language different from their mother tongue after their migration to the Turkish-majority big cities. Furthermore, I was also able to acknowledge that when Nimet at Lale PEC uttered a sentence in Kurdish to refer to something her monolingual Kurdish mother said to her and translated it into Turkish for me she was confirming her point that Kurdish was her mother tongue and was a vital part of her cultural heritage. Similarly, when I asked Sevim whether she spoke the Zazaki Kurdish dialect in my first interview with her, she gave me a defiant answer which revealed the significance of her mother tongue for her: “No, I speak Kurmanji. For example, my mother doesn’t know Turkish. A person is what her language is. There is nothing to discuss about that.”³⁸ Thus the social theory of literacy enabled my study to acknowledge the importance of addressing the issue of the language of literacy education in its particular socio-political and economic context. As Herbert and Robinson (2001) noted:

...if the social and symbolic practices associated with different languages are what give them salience for their users, then developers cannot simply prescribe beforehand which languages a literacy programme should be conducted

³⁸ Mehmet Şerif Derince (2012c) noted that various sources agree that Kurdish has mainly four dialects: Kurmanji, spoken in Turkey, Iraqi Kurdistan, Syria, and Iran; Zazaki (Dimilkî, Kirmanchî), spoken only in Turkey; Soranî, spoken in Iran, Iraqi Kurdistan, and Iran’s Kermanshahi region; and Hewrami (Gorani), spoken only in Iran and belonging to the Zazaki family. In the Turkish context and in this study, the term Kurdish-speaking refers to Kurmanji and/or Zazaki (also known as Dimilkî or Kirmanchî).

in or simply translate primers written in one language into another for different users. (p. 98)

My study therefore acknowledges the importance of understanding the meaning of literacy in its particular context and the links between different literacies and languages. Rather than advocating the use of literacy textbooks and classroom language in a particular language, it argues that the literacy activities in a programme would be relevant for the participants in so far as they are related with a broad range of symbolic and more practical communication needs, including the language of literacy.

This section has discussed the links between different meanings of the subject positions of schooled person and socio-political structures such as gender, ethnicity and migration status. It has highlighted the ways in which women expanded the meanings of schooled-person identity identified in the official discourses. It also has highlighted the contribution of the study to the existing knowledge on women's literacy and participation in literacy courses in Turkey. The next section turns to the constraints and influences of women's material circumstances and socio-political positions on their attempts to take on the different meanings of the schooled-person identity.

7.2 “Guarded optimism”

In Chapter Five, I argued that both the women's accounts and my observation vignettes highlighted the women's agency in accessing the courses and attending them within the concrete constraints of bureaucratic hurdles, humiliation, poverty and social obligations. I discussed different meanings of the schooled-person identity that women in my study attempted to take on through their participation in literacy courses at Akasya and Lale PECs. The different meanings of the subject position of the schooled person can be seen as different patches that women attempted to add to their identities. It can be suggested that women's accounts of their life stories and participation in literacy courses showed:

...the complexities of what is felt as injustice and its mitigation. They also give some idea of the many ways in which large-scale, systematic injustice is constructed out of

particular differences – and equally, how some people can find ways to deal with it. (Griffiths, 2003, p. 16)

I argued that it is vital to recognise women's accounts of their agency to negotiate entry into the subject position of the schooled person and thus redress some of the injustices in their lives through their participation in literacy courses. It is also important to show the constraints and influences of women's material circumstances and socio-political affiliations to particular identity categories since the idea of a patchwork self understands identity work as a process marked by such competing influences and constraints (Griffiths, 1995a; 2003). Thus in this section, I bring to the fore women's accounts which highlighted the material and social constraints of their particular circumstances.

Many of my participants stated that financial difficulties and conditions of poverty would either make it impossible for them to continue their education after the Level 2 literacy course or have a significant potential to thwart their attempts to do so. Sevim, Nalan, Umut and Leyla at Lale PEC, who participated in all of the three research interviews, explained that their lack of material riches and familial responsibilities prevented them from pursuing their dreams of continuing their formal education. Burcu and Meryem at Akasya PEC explained that their conditions of poverty and financially insecure futures had a significant potential to thwart their determination to continue their formal education. As discussed in Chapter Five, their accounts also pointed to their recurring health problems which could potentially get in the way of pursuing their attempts to reach prestigious identities, formal qualifications and decent jobs.

The difficulty of attending the course and finding time to focus on their studies due to social and economic obligations was discussed by all of the women in different degrees of explicitness. Women with young children – Sevim, Filiz, Sibel and Ebru highlighted the difficulty of arranging childcare. Their accounts of the difficulty of arranging child care pointed to the ways in which the lack of institutional support in this area could thwart women's attempts to pursue their identity-related goals. Ebru provided another account that pointed to the role of women's changing circumstances in their attempts to seek access to social status and material riches.

She explained that a second child would hold her back from attending an educational course and seeking work outside the house in a context with no institutional support for child care. Similarly, Leyla at Lale PEC explained that a potential marriage, which she seemed to want to actualise in the near future, would add to her responsibilities as an adult woman and could affect her dreams for her future.

As explored in Chapter Five, the accounts of all of my participants pointed to the influence of women's responsibilities in the household on their judgement of themselves as capable of satisfying the requirements of the literacy course. The last factor that women highlighted as having a potential to thwart their intention to pursue their identity-related goals had its roots in women's prior schooling experiences and the fact that the courses taught school literacy practices and knowledge. All of the women in my study expressed their hesitation regarding their ability to satisfy the academic requirements of the Level 2 literacy course because they considered themselves as lacking in school knowledge.

Women's accounts of the role of past learning experiences and complex health, family and economic circumstances provide significant insights into the difficulties they experienced in engaging in the literacy courses. Some of the women were certain that these complex life circumstances would make it impossible for them to attend a further literacy course. These accounts point to the importance of providing a holistic provision that would integrate literacy learning with the services of various organisations and professionals, e.g. in housing, employment and health, to help adult literacy learners reach their life and learning goals (Barton et al., 2007; Maclachlan et al., 2008). I discuss the implications of the social and economic constraints discussed by women for the practice of women's literacy education in Turkey in the section 8.3.

Furthermore, I argue that women's accounts displayed a "guarded optimism" regarding the potential of their attempts to add different patches of the subject position of the schooled person to their existing identities within the changing circumstances and material constraints of their lives (Griffiths, 1998, p.75). Thus it can be suggested that women told their life stories and participation in the courses

not as stories of overcoming structural constraints by a combination of determination and luck. Each story revealed a continuing struggle where:

...Nobody lives happily ever after – but then again, neither is any tragedy final. Each story is a tale of neither triumph nor ruin, but of an in-between. This seems to me to be not only closer to experience but also more hopeful. You never win, but then again you never lose either. (Griffiths, 2003, p. 119)

It can be suggested that the metaphor of “neither triumph nor ruin” could also be used to discuss women’s engagement with the discourses and power relations they found in the literacy classrooms at Akasya and Lale PECs. The third section of this chapter highlights the links between different meanings of the schooled-person identity that women in my study attempted to take on through their participation in the literacy courses and their engagement with the literacy and classroom practices.

7.3 Subject positions and engagement in the courses

Chapter Six showed that in both Akasya and Lale PEC classrooms the discourse of literacy as schooling and the discourse of individual learning were prominent. In both classrooms, it was assumed that once learned literacy skills could be applied in all contexts in dealing with different texts and they formed a pre-requisite for further learning (Rogers et al., 1999). Also, the focus was placed on using school texts, reading out loud, reading fluency and individual reading in both literacy classrooms. Chapter Six also showed that women had a positive orientation to the discourse of literacy as schooling.

However, the fact that it was underpinned by the social theory of literacy enabled my study to focus on women’s own understandings of literacy and thus identify how their understandings of the dominant discourses of literacy and learning sometimes differed from those of the programme planners.³⁹ Thus Chapter Six showed the ways in which my participants at both Akasya and Lale PEC challenged and attempted to

³⁹ For studies that discuss how the goals of the literacy learners and programme planners differed in various developing country settings see Friedrich, 2004; Kendrick & Hissani, 2007; Millican, 2004; Robinson-Pant, 2000a.

transform the school literacy practises they found too distressing to engage in. At Akasya PEC, women attempted to modify the classroom practices in ways that would give them greater control over their learning. These attempts included their constant reminder to the teacher Ahmet that literacy practices were socially-embedded, their resisting his instruction that they use a school language in explaining new concepts and their expressing their wish to carry out learning activities at their desks instead of going to the board. Similarly, at Lale PEC women expressed their discomfort in engaging in school literacy practices at the board although the classroom teacher Serap adapted some elements of the school literacy practices according to the needs of her participants. They constantly told their teacher Serap that they found engaging in a school literacy practice at her wish in front of others difficult. However, they added that they could judge their progress based on their increasing comfort in engaging in literacy practices in different domains in daily life.

The thesis did not only show women's challenges to the discourse of school literacy. It also highlighted the ways in which women challenged the discourse of individual learning in both Akasya and Lale Level 2 literacy classroom. At Akasya PEC, these challenges included finding different ways of helping each other in learning tasks, risking reprimands and sometimes a threat of teacher violence. My strong disapproval of the use of any form of violence in education and discomfort in finding examples of it in Akasya PEC classroom made it difficult for me to acknowledge the role of the broader socio-political context and formal education system in women's perception of violence in educational processes. My own primary school teacher occasionally lined us up and hit our palms with a ruler when she found that the majority of the students did not show an adequate academic performance in a learning task. She slapped me once because I had misunderstood the way I should have made my homework as a student who had recently transferred from a different school. During my secondary and high school education, I had several inspiring teachers who created a trusting classroom environment free of violence. However, I was also forced to watch teachers inflict physical violence on other students as a punishment. During my undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Istanbul, the majority of my professors were very careful in the formulation of their feedback and

instructional support. However, I encountered the occasional professor who used a denigrating language for students they did not consider academically successful or engaged enough.

In order to deepen my understanding of women's responses to the conditions of violence they found in Akasya PEC, I not only critically reflected on my own experiences of violence during my education in Turkey. I also engaged in a brief overview of the literature on teachers' violence against students in Turkey, which was similarly useful. I learned that teachers' violence against students in Turkey and its extent has not been researched adequately. Based on the review of national newspapers in the 1980s and in the early 1990s, Tan (1990) and Hatipoğlu Sümer and Aydın (1999) suggested that corporal punishment used by teachers sometimes took severe forms, resulting in serious injuries such as broken noses and legs. Although they warned against the sensational reporting of newspapers, a number of studies have agreed that corporal punishment used by teachers is the most prominent type of violence at all levels of education in Turkey (Değirmencioğlu, 2006; Gözütok, Er, & Karacaoğlu, 2006; Hatipoğlu Sümer & Aydın, 1999; Tan, 1990). These studies pointed to the growing disapproval of the use of corporal punishment by teachers and parents as an acceptable part of children's education. However, they also pointed to the gap between the regulations that ban the use of corporal punishment and humiliation and the students' lived experience of violence in schools.

Based on surveys and interviews with primary school students, Gözütok et al. (2006) and Değirmencioğlu (2006) suggested that the use of corporal punishment was widespread in schools, although it seemed to have taken less severe forms in recent years. Hatipoğlu Sümer and Aydın (1999) noted that using nicknames, sarcasm and focusing on the failure of students appeared to be the most common forms of "emotional abuse" (p. 339). Değirmencioğlu's interviews revealed how physically

less threatening forms of corporal punishment worked in a number of primary schools in Ankara and Istanbul (2006).⁴⁰

All of the above-mentioned studies considered the socio- political context within which formal education takes place as an important factor in influencing the pedagogic relationships in the classrooms. Değirmencioğlu (2006), İnal (2006) and Kurul Tural (2006) pointed to the relationship between the ongoing issue of human rights abuses and violence perpetrated by the state security forces and violence in schools. They pointed to the difficulty of creating pedagogic relationships free of violence in a socio-political environment where the perpetrators of human rights abuses and the systematic torture after the military coupe in 1980 were not brought to justice.

I therefore acknowledge that women's less explicit ways of resistance to the conditions of violence in Akasya PEC took place in the broader socio-political environment in which the use of violence by those in positions of power has not been deterred. Furthermore, although it seems to be taking place less and in less physically damaging ways the teachers' violence against students in formal education still exists. Thus it may be suggested that women involved in my study perceived the forms of violence they encountered in the Akasya PEC literacy classroom as part of schooling. They seemed to challenge it in ways that did not risk their possibility of attending the course and completing it successfully since they witnessed that the classroom teacher Ali had the authority to bypass some official regulations by being more flexible in terms of requirements of attendance. What is more, the classroom teacher Ali presented himself as having the authority to enable them to succeed or

⁴⁰ Such examples in Değirmencioğlu's study (2006) included the account of one 8th grade student in Ankara who explained how the students in his classroom attempted to stop a particular teacher's physical violence: "When our teacher wants to hit us, we shout: 'Beating is forbidden.' Then our teacher opens our friend's palm and spits on his hand" (p. 171). A 7th grade student in Istanbul provided another account of teacher violence: "Our teacher calls us to the board and makes us solve a problem. If we cannot solve the problem, he makes a cross on our faces with a piece of chalk" (p. 171). The examples of violence I encountered in the Akasya PEC literacy classroom can be likened to the ones provided in this study.

cause them to fail in the final course examination by being flexible in his marking of the exam. Borrowing Kandiyoti's term of "bargaining with patriarchy" (1988, p. 275), it can be suggested that women in my study were bargaining with the constraints of the conditions created by Ali with their resilience, their ways of judging their progress according to their own criteria, their less explicit ways of challenging teacher violence and supporting each other during and outside of the class time. Thus the thesis contributed to the limited literature on the use of violence in the education system in Turkey by exposing its existence in an adult literacy course and women's struggles to challenge it in their own ways.

Another contribution of the thesis was that it showed how women at both PECs started to take what they wanted from the school literacy practices and use them as resources in their engagement in context-specific literacy practices in bureaucratic, economic and home settings. Some of these practices were being able to sign your name in a government office in order to apply for the occasional in-kind or cash assistance and hopes of opening a stationary store with the help of learning how to record expenditures. These benefits were small yet significant for the well-being of the women involved in this study, not captured by standard measurements of literacy attainment in Turkey such as course completion and literacy rates (Maddox, 2010). Thus the study contributed to the literature on the debates on educational benefits in contexts with multiple social and economic constraints by showing the importance of non-standard yet significant benefits of adult literacy for women in Turkey.

A further contribution of the thesis was in the field of language policy and education in Turkey. Education in the mother tongue is still largely considered within separatist claims associated with the PKK which is defined as a terrorist organization by the Turkish government and the EU (Derince, 2012a; 2012b; Gök, 2012). Furthermore, the use of Kurdish in state schools was disapproved of in the strictest terms by the official language policies until very recently. As explored on pages 22-29, most of the recent limited literature on the use of mother tongues different than Turkish in education focuses on compulsory education settings. Thus this study showed that official language policies hampered education in an adult literacy setting at Lale PEC as well. The classroom teacher Serap avoided the issue of mother tongue in literacy

education although she was otherwise sympathetic to women's needs and difficulties of their socio-economic conditions. She was well-liked by the women in the Lale literacy classroom because she created a friendly and trusting classroom atmosphere. Furthermore, the Kurdish women involved in my study referred to their use of Kurdish and Turkish in different domains of life only when I raised this issue in the first interviews. It may be suggested that both the women themselves and the classroom teacher were wary of raising the issue of Kurdish in an official setting – the primary school where the literacy course took place. I thus considered the avoidance of the issue of Kurdish as a mother tongue as a strong reminder of the lingering association of Kurdish and Kurdish people's demands for their social and language rights with security concerns.

A final contribution of the thesis was its discussion of the joy women found in their learning as a result of their educational experiences (Griffiths, 2012). At both Akasya and Lale PECs, this pointed to their changing understanding of the value they found in their learning in addition to the symbolic value and social status associated with learning school literacy and knowledge discussed in the first interviews. Thus it can be suggested that the delight the women involved in my study took in accomplishing difficult and significant learning practices was an important factor in their positive orientation to classroom literacy practices. However, the fact that one third of the lessons in the Lale PEC course were cancelled seemed to interrupt women's joy of learning. Thus their accounts highlighted the negative effects of the cancellations of the courses on their engagement in learning and the joy they derived from it.

This chapter has discussed the results of my study, which have provided insights into the subject positions that brought women in my study to literacy courses, the discourses that make these subject positions available and their interaction with socio-political structures prominent in women's particular contexts. The chapter has also discussed women's perspectives on and experiences of the literacy practices, content and power relations they found in the literacy classrooms at Akasya and Lale PECs. It showed women's ways of adopting some of these practices and attempting to transform and challenge some others. It discussed as well the findings of my study in relation to the broader literature of literacy, participation and engagement with the

literacy courses and the literature on violence in schools in Turkey. Furthermore, the chapter highlighted the distinctive contribution of the thesis to the existing literature on women's literacy and participation in literacy courses in Turkey. The following, concluding chapter examines the theoretical insights of the results of my study and suggests some further research on women's literacy in Turkey. It also discusses the limitations of my study, methodological issues raised by it and its implications for the policy and practice of women's literacy in Turkey.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.0 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore women's participation and engagement in the literacy courses in Turkey through a lens of identity, discourse and social theory of literacy. The study explored the subject positions that women attempted to take on through their participation and the links between these subject positions and their engagement in the classes within the broader context of women's life stories and the institutional, socio-political and economic context within which their participation took place. The aim was not generalisation and I was careful that I did not oversimplify or overstate the issues raised. However, there were commonalities among women's valuations of literacy and education raised as part of their accounts of their life stories, participation and engagement in the literacy classes. These commonalities constituted partial, situated and complex understandings into the discourses and subject positions that underpinned the participation and engagement of women in this study. These findings might provide a window into women's understandings of literacy and education and experiences of engaging in the courses in other settings which are characterized by similar policy, socio-political and economic contexts.⁴¹

The thesis showed that women in my study attempted to take on the different meanings of the subject position of schooled person through their participation in the courses. It explored how these schooled-person identities were underpinned by discourses of formal education and literacy within socio-political structures such as gender, social class, ethnicity, migration status and the extent of poverty individual women lived in. It then explored the links between these subject positions and women's engagement in the literacy approach, content and power relations in the Akasya and Lale PEC classrooms. The thesis showed the ways in which women

⁴¹ For further discussion on generalisation and its limits, see pages 58-60.

attempted to take on some of the identities and school literacy practices underpinned by the dominant literacy and education discourses whereas they re-crafted some others to use them in their projects for gaining social status in different areas of life and accessing economic resources.

This chapter has three sections. The first section summarises the main findings of this study, discusses its theoretical implications and makes suggestions for further research. The second section briefly examines the methodological questions which have relevance for further work on women's literacy in Turkey. The third section discusses the implications of my results for educational policy and practice in Turkey regarding women's literacy education.

8.1 Theoretical implications

The interview data from the first in-depth interviews with women in my study revealed that the symbolic importance of formal education and school literacy was rooted in women's life stories as much as it was underlined by the official discourses of literacy discussed in Chapter Five. Women's accounts of their lives suggested that the complex interaction and overlap of structural injustices with socio-cultural norms on the appropriate conduct of girl-children made their schooling impossible. Thus akin to the findings of Friedrich (2004), Millican, (2004), Robinson-Pant (2000a, 2000b) and Walter (2004) discussed in Chapter Three, women in my study considered participation in literacy courses in Akasya and Lale PECs as a return to school – significant both for its symbolic importance and promise of providing access to economic and cultural resources. However, my study has broadened the theoretical insights into the significance of school literacy and its pre-eminence in the educational and social contexts by exploring the different meanings and social markers associated with the subject position of schooled person within women's life stories as well as interview accounts and fieldnotes.

Furthermore, my study brought to the fore the interaction of the different meanings of schooled-person identity with socio-political structures such as gender, ethnicity, social class, migration status and the extent of poverty individual women lived in. Thus it has showed that some of the ways women gave meaning to literacy and

schooled-person identity were different than the meanings identified in the official discourses. The lens of identity, discourse and social theory of literacy enabled my research to explore the context-specific literacy practices in bureaucratic, economic and home contexts which the majority of women in my study hoped to engage in more satisfactory ways through their participation in the literacy courses at Akasya and Lale PECs. These findings challenge the portrayal of potential literacy course participants in policy documents and most of the literature in Turkey which consider school literacy as the most important literacy need.

Furthermore, the study showed women's ways of appropriating the school literacy practices to use them as resources in their context-specific literacy practices. Their accounts pointed to the importance of focusing on the relationship between the local and distant/global context in order to understand the influences of broader socio-economic and political forces on their literacy practices (Brandt & Clinton, 2002, p. 339; Street, 2003, p. 79). It can be suggested that Street's (2003) understanding of literacy practices within the New Literacy Studies (NLS), referred to as the social theory of literacy in this study, was helpful to think about women's accounts of drawing on their school literacy to engage in context-specific literacy practices.

The result of local-global encounters around literacy is always a new hybrid rather than a single essentialized version of either. It is these hybrid literacy practices that NLS focuses upon rather than either romanticizing the local or conceding the dominant privileging of the supposed "global". (Street, 2003, p. 80)

However, it is also important not to conceive of the local and the global as singular entities (Reder & Davila, 2005). Recognising the multiplicity of contexts within the local and the global would be helpful in understanding the types of contexts women perceive as local and as distant/global/dominant and the role of different forms of social relationships and interactions in facilitating women's engagement in context-specific literacy practices. It is equally important to understand which aspects of the school literacy practices some women re-craft to use in context-specific literacy practices. This would help policy makers, programmers and teachers to support women's engagement in context-specific literacy practices they found important.

Since the focus of my study was women's identity-related participation and engagement in literacy courses, I did not attempt to observe women's use of literacy in everyday settings or collect texts and items they used in everyday literacy practices in a systematic way. However, being underpinned by a social theory of literacy enabled my study to illustrate women's engagement in a wide range of literacy practices in different domains. These findings challenge the deficit view of literacy learners in policy documents. They also reveal the need for further research on literacy practices in different domains in Turkey.

Another contribution of my study was that it extended the understanding of literacy as having the potential to improve one's material and social conditions in contexts of deep poverty and multiple constraints. As discussed in Chapter Four on pages 76-78, women who participated in my study at Lale PEC seemed to live in a deeper form of poverty than most of the women at Akasya PEC. Neither of the women participants at Lale PEC found the prospect of continuing their formal education viable in the constraints of their social and material circumstances. Thus their focus was more on specific literacy practices in bureaucratic and economic contexts. Their accounts in the second and third interviews described how they engaged in bureaucratic literacy tasks more confidently. Furthermore, Sevim and Leyla noted that they felt capable of engaging in potential literacy tasks in economic contexts. Thus akin to the two ethnographic examples of Maddox (2008) involving two individuals, Kamrul and Halime from Bangladesh, it seemed that for women at Lale PEC "... adult literacy learning can improve people's ability to lead a good life, and expand their capabilities, even in contexts of chronic poverty" (p. 201). However, such small benefits of literacy cannot be captured by standard measurements of attainment used in Turkey such as literacy rates and primary school and literacy course completion. Thus these findings suggest that it is vital "to conceptualise, identify and design programmes in a way that can effectively enable such benefits, and to recognise them when they are achieved" (Maddox, 2010, p. 220).

However, the thesis also showed that all of the seven women participants at Akasya PEC emphasised the significance of school literacy and knowledge for them not only for their economic improvement, but also both for its symbolic importance and

function for continuing formal education. The literacy practices that they described themselves as engaging in or intending to improve, such as reading a novel, learning writing conventions by paying attention to them while reading a novel, or writing a personal journal, had a bigger potential to qualify them as “literate” according to the criteria for counting as officially successful in a Level 2 Literacy course: receiving an education equivalent to the fourth and fifth grades of primary education. It seemed that as Street (2011, p. 585) noted “...different literacies may involve different thresholds”; thus it is important to bridge the gap between dominant approaches in policy, which do not take into consideration the different meanings and uses of literacy, and the socio-cultural view of literacy with examples of different understandings and thresholds of literacy in differing socio-economic contexts.

As for the theoretical insights provided by a focus on women’s engagement in the literacy classes, these can be discussed within three groupings. Firstly, the study showed women’s attempts to transform the ways the classroom teachers required them to engage in school literacy practices. The study also explored the conditions of violence created by the classroom teacher Ali at Akasya PEC and women’s ways of challenging these conditions by supporting each other, by attempting to take control of their learning and by defining their success according to their own criteria. The conditions of violence in the Akasya literacy classroom at times undermined women’s conceptions of themselves as capable of engaging in school literacy practices successfully and pursuing their identity-related goals. Thus the study showed the significance of work to raise awareness about different forms of violence in different realms of life in Turkey and the unacceptability of all forms of violence.

As discussed in Chapter Seven, at the time of my study I found it difficult to give meaning to women’s responses to the conditions of violence and could not start the analysis of this aspect of the Akasya course for a long time. Therefore I did not know how to discuss women’s understandings of these violent conditions with the classroom teacher Ali. My intention for the future is to confidentially share my analysis of the classroom interactions with the classroom teacher Ali, which involved both women’s acknowledgment of his professional teaching ability and criticism of his behaviours that amounted to creating conditions of violence.

Secondly, Kurdish women in this study discussed the issue of the use of Kurdish and Turkish in different domains of life and the higher status of Turkish literacy only in the first interview when I raised the issue. These findings were significant in that they identified the links between different languages and domains as well as the symbolic importance of the mother tongue for Kurdish women in my study. However, the classroom teacher at Lale PEC was even wary of using the word Kurdish to describe the women she worked with. As discussed in Chapter Seven, the official conception of literacy ignores literacies in languages different from Turkish. Furthermore, the issue of education in the mother-tongue is treated as a security issue that would potentially lead to the separation of the country along ethnic lines (Gök 2012). These ethnocentric and restrictive conceptions ignored the issue of mother tongues different from Turkish and negatively influenced the classroom practices in the Lale classroom.

Finally, the study showed that especially at Akasya PEC, where education was not disrupted as it was at Lale PEC, women's accounts of their engagement in the classroom practices pointed to the joy they found in their learning as a result of their educational experiences. This finding can be seen as "a contribution to affirming how and why education is valuable in its own right"; thus similar to the accounts of social justice in formal education, discussions of social justice in literacy education should also be concerned with "joy and justice *in*, as well as *from* education..." (Griffiths, 2012, p. 669).

8.2 Implications for methodology

During my research I have found value in an ethnographic approach because it helped me gain rich insights into the social and institutional conditions within which women attempted to gain information about the courses and attend them.

Ethnographic insights revealed bureaucratic hardship and humiliation as well as women's social and economic obligations. They challenged the official presentation of the courses as widely and readily available. I found that an ethnographic approach also helped me understand how the official literacy and education discourses influenced and were transformed by the particular classroom interactions in Lale and

Akasya PECs. Using repeated interviews, informal conversations and participant observation, I was able to reflect on the data and my emerging interpretations of it and discuss with my participants issues raised in previous interviews and conversations. Thus I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the role of my socio-political positions in my perspectives of classroom interactions and practices and the participants' understanding of them.

My study focused on women's identity-related participation and engagement in the literacy courses and studied the literacy practices in the classrooms in detail. My insights into the literacy practices outside of the classroom were limited to my interviews with women in which they referred to the different domains of life where they engaged in literacy practices. An ethnographic approach to women's uses and understandings of literacy in everyday settings would provide a deeper understanding of the diversity of literacy practices in women's lives and the influence of broader forces on these practices. However, in Turkey there is no research into women's literacy practices in everyday life which employs a social theory of literacy. Thus my research provides some significant initial insights into women's literacy practices in different domains of life.

My study adopted a feminist methodology which kept me alert to the effects of my own and the participants' socio-political positions on the processes of knowledge production and presentation (Griffiths, 1998). In adopting a feminist methodology, I furthermore constantly sought new perspectives that enabled me to see my knowledge and understandings at the time with new perceptions which I applied to my existing synthesis (Griffiths, 1995a). For example, during my observations I considered some of the school literacy practices women engaged in at Akasya PEC as discomforting and irrelevant to women's everyday needs. However, I was aware of my status as a highly educated person who can take her knowledge of the school topics taught in compulsory basic schooling in Turkey - and the associated social status - for granted. Furthermore, I am acquainted with theories which are critical of a skills-based model of literacy, which might have led me to see school literacy practices in a negative light. Thus being aware of the issues of positionality and reflexivity, I was able to identify the ways in which women found school practices

symbolically important for them and transformed them for context-specific literacy practices. Furthermore, the concept of the “integral” value of education related with educational experiences helped me understand the ways women involved in my study at Akasya found joy in their learning. Similarly, as explored on page 166, my understanding of women’s ways of challenging the conditions of violence at Akasya PEC evolved as a result of my encounter with the concept of women’s political action being seen as action through mainstream public institutions. Thus I was able to acknowledge women’s less explicit ways of challenging conditions amounting to violence and taking control of their learning.

Being aware of the issues of positionality, as a Turkish researcher I tried to behave and talk in ways that would make the Kurdish women in my study feel comfortable to talk about their experiences of the use of Kurdish and Turkish in different domains. As discussed on page 215 I became aware that Kurdish women did not raise the issue of Kurdish and the difficulties they faced due to having to use Turkish literacy in virtually all communication outside the house without my raising the issue. The responses of Sevim and Nimet to my question about their uses of Kurdish and Turkish could be defined as defiant, expressing the significance of their mother tongue as part of their cultural and familial heritage. If I were a Kurdish speaker or someone they knew for her Kurdish human rights work, they might have produced more detailed answers about the bureaucratic and everyday discrimination they faced as Kurdish speakers.

Furthermore, as a result of adopting a feminist methodology that required me to think about the issue of reciprocity, I realised that as the women and I built rapport they felt more comfortable about talking about the reasons for the difficulties they experienced in engaging in certain literacy tasks, especially in bureaucratic contexts. As discussed on page 135, in my first interviews with them the women at Lale PEC focused on the difficulties they had in engaging in bureaucratic contexts. In the last interview towards the end of the course, they explained that in bureaucratic contexts they were blamed for their difficulties and some people looked down on their efforts to carry out bureaucratic literacy practices with difficulty when they asked for help.

At Akasya PEC, I helped Burcu and Meryem while they prepared for the final course examination. In a way this strengthened my status as someone with more school knowledge. However, they seemed to have realised that I was serious when I told them that I wanted to reciprocate their time and effort, which made my research possible. In the first interviews they had made explicit remarks about the differences between our educational statuses and their confidence in themselves in all areas of life apart from school knowledge. However, while we worked on the topics they had difficulty with in their houses and in the subsequent interviews, they did not only refer to the school literacy practices they needed support in. They also talked about context-specific practices they considered themselves as more capable in, e.g. giving telephone numbers for Meryem and understanding punctuation marks in her novel and enjoying its topic for Burcu. Similarly, at Akasya PEC, in my last interview with them Mine and Hatice talked about the value of various context-specific literacy practices for them rather than highlighting their lack of a primary school education as a source of worry as they did in the first interview. The context-specific literacy practices they discussed included reading daily newspapers and books on her faith *Alevilik* and writing her life story for Mine and reading the Koran and being able to write down mobile phone numbers for Hatice.

As discussed in Chapter 4, I tried to help women with the learning topics they needed help in to reciprocate their invaluable contribution to my research. As I did my best to develop rapport and a relationship of reciprocity with my participants I strived to acknowledge their difficulties in engaging in school literacy practices and be sensitive in the way I helped them. I did not see school literacy as having a potential to change women's lives regardless of their socio-political and cultural contexts. As explored in Chapter Seven, the social theory of literacy enabled me to identify the value and uses of literacy practices in different domains of life. Furthermore, it seemed that women took what they wanted from the literacy practices in the classroom and used them for their own projects in different areas of everyday life. It can be suggested reciprocity was also an important factor which helped women feel more comfortable to talk about the value of literacy for reasons other than those underpinned by the discourse of formal education and literacy.

8.3 Implications for policy and practice

My thesis showed that the majority of the women in my study highlighted specific literacy practices in bureaucratic, work-related and home contexts within their accounts of participation and engagement in the classes. As discussed in Chapter Five, official policy context in Turkey, however, focuses on teaching only school literacy practices. Furthermore, in both Lale and Akasya literacy classrooms the discourse of literacy as schooling was prominent although in the Akasya literacy classroom the teacher Serap was more flexible in her requirements from women regarding school literacy practices. She did not insist that they follow writing conventions or pronounce and spell certain words according to the conventions of standard Turkish. Thus it is important that the policy context in Turkey start to recognise women's literacy practices in different domains of life and support them. Although my study did not aim for generalisations and was carried out in only two literacy classrooms, it showed that the classroom teachers adapted the requirements of the curriculum and school literacy practices taught in them according to their perceptions of the needs of their participants. Thus akin to Papen's (2001, 2002) findings from her study on the government-run literacy programmes for adults in Namibia, the PEC courses in Turkey might be more flexible than the official policy statements present them as. Thus, the initiatives for introducing support for women's context-specific literacy practices might build on this flexibility.

One suggestion would be to first study women's uses of literacy in everyday-life contexts and build programmes that support the literacy practices they wanted to engage in, using real literacy materials that are involved in the literacy practices (A. Rogers, 2001). These courses could encourage learners to develop their own learning materials as well as bringing authentic literacy materials from everyday life with which they wanted to gain more confidence. Such programmes would start with exploring the ways in which people with little or no schooling used reading, writing and numeracy in their social and economic activities. They could then build links between literacy and social and economic activities that the participants wanted to engage in rather than focusing on only school literacy.

However, it is also important to realise that for women in my study formal education and school literacy practices carried a symbolic importance. Thus introducing alternative programmes that focus on only context-specific literacy practices might not be the answer to the needs of women who consider literacy courses as a return to school. Some women, though, similar to the participants at Lale who did not see the prospect of continuing their formal education viable, might indeed find flexible approaches such as the Literacy Shop in Nigeria discussed by Aderinoye and Rogers (2005) useful. The Literacy Shop was set up in a market place and provided information on formal literacy courses as well as supporting adults to engage in specific literacy tasks if they did not want to or could not attend formal courses.

Taking into account the symbolic importance of formal education and school literacy, it seems that “the issue of 'schooled' versus informal approaches may not be a question of either/or, but a matter of degree and dialogue” (Papen, 2002, p. 326). Breier, Taetsane and Lait (1996, p. 232) expressed this as “a dual approach to education and training” within the context of the taxi industry in South Africa. On the one hand they suggested a range of courses such as record keeping, vehicle maintenance, marketing and communication, and called for literacy and numeracy education where appropriate “...in so far as it would assist any of these skills” (p. 230). On the other hand, they asked for initiatives to support access to more formal literacy education for those taxi drivers who wanted it. They also noted that an extensive negotiation with the taxi associations was vital before engaging in an education initiative. They noted that adult educators would have to be very flexible in their delivery of literacy support, potentially conducting literacy classes at the ranks of the drivers during quiet times and making arrangements for long-distance drivers who would sometimes be away for weeks.

There were several women in my study who had experience of working in textile ateliers for long hours. Meryem at Akasya PEC had to take a one-month break for physiotherapy as an in-patient during the courses. Ayşe and Nimet at Lale PEC had to drop out of the course for the harvest in their villages although they made it clear that they would come to the course again in the following year. Thus it seems that flexible arrangements and exploration of the particular economic and social context

would be necessary for any alternative literacy initiative in Turkey. Such flexible arrangements should make returning to courses easy and guilt-free as well as recognising women's determination to learn in the face of many challenges that sometimes meant inevitable periods of absence from the course (Maclachlan et al., 2008). Furthermore, considering women's attempts to find courses to attend and the bureaucratic humiliation they faced in the PECs, it is vital that the courses have extensive publicity, a higher visibility and an effective and respectful administrative system.

Women's complex economic, family and life conditions, discussed on pages 207-210, show that adult literacy education should be part of a holistic provision that requires the cooperation of multiple organisations and professionals such as municipalities, health professionals, Ministry of Family and Social Policy workers, Turkish Employment Agency and voluntary organisations that work on women's rights and (forced) migrants' rights and challenges. In my study, women who had schooling provided accounts of their negative experiences of primary schooling. All of the women talked about their worries about meeting the academic requirements of the courses. These accounts show that such women need "the lead in time" before the course so that literacy course workers can work with them informally and help them feel ready to attend a structured course (Maclachlan et al., 2008, p. 10). Furthermore, some of the women in my study mentioned their family members' implicitly or explicitly hostile attitude to their course participation. Thus it seems important that for these women their family members are given the chance to see what goes on in a literacy classroom and meet the literacy course workers which might help alleviate their potential resistance and worries. This can be done in the format of an open-day where anyone who is interested in the literacy course can drop in and see the workings of an adult literacy course (Fingeret & Drennon, 1997).

Another important issue about supporting women's engagement in literacy practices in different domains concerns their difficulties in feeling comfortable in engaging in literacy around people they did not know and trust. Thus many of the women in my study provided poignant accounts of discomfort when they wanted to engage in literacy practices in bureaucratic and economic contexts. As Fingeret and Drennon

(1997) noted such bureaucratic literacy practices seemed to follow rigid norms, causing high degrees of stress especially because women felt that their performance was exposed to the scrutiny of unknown others. Thus drawing on insights from Fingeret and Drennon, I suggest pairing literacy learners who are less experienced in certain literacy practices in public settings with more experienced ones, akin to apprenticeship in other areas of learning, is relevant for the practice of adult literacy education in Turkey.

As for the issue of the language of literacy education, the findings in Chapter Six showed that researchers, policy makers and teachers Turkey need to galvanise the work toward policies and practices that will help create institutions and social interactions that are free from any humiliating and demeaning attitude toward languages and dialects different from standard Turkish. Both teacher education in Turkey and the official policies need to acknowledge the role of bilingualism and multilingualism in formal and literacy education. Institutions and social interactions should also be free from discrimination based on people's ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. In this quest, the media, the state and educational institutions should lead public opinion in giving all languages and dialects spoken in Turkey the respect, value, and institutional and legal support they deserve (Derince 2012a; Eğitim Sen, 2010; Gök, 2012; Sayılan, 2009; Yıldız, 2006). In the contexts where the participants call for literacy education in their mother tongue, this should be provided without any reservations.

To recap briefly, research on literacy in Turkey is very limited. Furthermore, there has not been widespread critique of the formalised approach of the courses which aim to teach only school literacy and teach it in standard Turkish. Thus research underlined by the social theory of literacy would challenge the stereotypical portrayal of the "illiterate" or "unschooled" woman as "ignorant" by showing the diversity and richness of literacy practices in women's lives and the role of schooled literacy in understandings of "ignorance". First of all, this would bring to the fore the structural and institutional injustice that made schooling impossible for women when they were girl-children. It would also raise questions about the type and adequacy of social, economic and educational support to women with few or no educational

qualifications. Lastly, exploring the diversity of literacy practices in different domains of life would provide support for policies and literacy courses that draw on women's own cultural knowledge and mother tongue and support the literacy practices that they want to engage in.

It is vital that in Turkey as many different groups and individuals as possible, including teachers, students, researchers, policy makers, people in the education world and beyond, become familiar with the social theory of literacy (Hamilton, 1999). As Hamilton noted, this would enable us to find out about the literacy practices in different areas of life, realise their creativity and variety, start to question the dominance of school literacy and think about educational responses to support the literacy practices in contexts other than the school. I would therefore argue that the social approach to literacy should be made part of teacher education in Turkey. This would enable teachers to help their pupils in compulsory education and adult learners in PEC literacy programmes "...develop a sense of their own expertise and authorship, to take control of available literacies, and put them to work to benefit themselves and their communities" (Hamilton, 1999, p. 441).

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Appendix A Information sheet given to participants summarising research aims and methods

Information Sheet for Research with Women Participating in the Level 2 Adult

Literacy and Basic Education Course

Contact Details

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Background Information

I would like to have interviews with you and carry out observations of your classroom activities for my PhD research project in the University of Edinburgh. My research project aims to explore the meaning of participation in adult literacy classes for women in Turkey and their understandings of the role of these classes in their lives. I am inviting you to participate in this research because you are a woman participating in an adult literacy course and you have important ideas and experiences to share about what participation in this course means to you and what role it has in your life.

My research is funded by the University of Edinburgh College of Humanities and Social Sciences and Scottish Overseas Students Research Award. I am carrying out this research with the approval of the Turkish Ministry of Education.

What participation involves

Observations

I intend to observe the classes and your engagement in classroom activities. I would like to observe the classes in order to understand what kind of learning and teaching activities take place in your class and how important this learning is to you. During the observations, depending on the expectations of the students and the classroom teacher I may sometimes participate in the classroom activities. At other times, I will be making notes about the classroom atmosphere and activities. On three occasions throughout the course I will focus on a learning activity you are engaged in and then I will talk with you about what you liked and did not like about that activity and what you learnt from it. These talks might be in the form of interviews where I use a tape recorder if you agree. If you decide that the circumstances are not right for an interview that day, we might have more informal conversations about what you did in class that day.

Interviews

The research involves three other occasions on which I would like to interview you. I intend to take notes and use a voice recorder during the interviews if you agree that this is OK. The interviews will take place at times and places that we mutually agree on. In the beginning of the course I would like to have an interview with you about your life story and how you decided to attend the course. Towards the end of the course, I would like to have a second interview about your attendance and engagement in the course throughout the course period. The third interview will take place soon after the end of the course. In this last interview I would like to discuss with you my emerging analysis of my observations of your engagement in the classroom and interview accounts. You might find that you would like to clarify some points and thus help me better understand the meaning of participation in the course for you.

Appendix B Questions that led the interviews with the classroom teachers

Teacher as a Professional

1. School where you teach?
2. Level?
3. How did you decide to work as an adult literacy teacher in PEC?
4. What are the differences between teaching adults and teaching children?
5. How long have you been teaching adults?
6. Are there key people, readings, and theories that influence your teaching? In what ways?

Topics to discuss about the courses

7. Duration of the literacy programmes

Extending them might be effective?

8. Attendance

The balance between what is appropriate for the learner and the regulations? How do the teachers accommodate the needs of the students?

9. Assessment

Does s/he prepare questions according to the objectives in the curriculum?
Standardised test vs teacher autonomy in the assessment? Questions according to the level of the students?

10. Views of the curriculum

Too difficult and loaded to cover in course duration

11. Teacher guidebooks useful, enough examples, instructions for the teachers, parallel to the curriculum?

Teaching literacy

12. What made it difficult to teach as you wanted to?
13. What sort of problems have you encountered? How did you solve them?
14. What are the things you want to improve as a teacher?

15. Professional training/learning activities already attended/would like to attend?
16. Have you changed as a teacher over the years? What do you think has led to this?

Classroom activities

17. How do you decide what is learnt and when?
18. Please think about a participant having difficulty with a learning topic. Why do you think she is having difficulty? What are her strong points as a learner?
19. How do you try to help the participants who are having difficulty in learning topics?
20. What are the things your participants should definitely learn by end of the course?
21. How do you decide on the writing activities in the classroom?
22. What types of reading activities are done in the classroom? How do you decide?
23. How do you document the literacy progress of your participants?

Discourses on the participants

24. How would you describe the conditions and position of women you teach?
25. What brings them to the literacy courses?
26. What do you think about the idea that children are less successful at school or have other problems because their mothers don't know how to develop right relationships with them?
27. Some people think that women and men are different and so women should stay at home and take care of their family. What do you think about this?

Appendix C Questions that led the interviews with the participants

The first life history interview questions

Life history

1. Can you tell me a bit about your life? When necessary, probe for key life events, e.g. migration to Istanbul, house moves, family events, family health, friends, relatives, neighbours, experience of prior formal education, work.

Participation in the course

2. Please try to remember what you were thinking before you entered the class.
3. What was going on in your life when you decided to join in the class?
4. How did people respond to your decision to participate in the programme? Family, friends, relatives, neighbours.
5. How did it feel to start?
6. What happened on your first arrival in the centre? Assessment, registration, talk with the teacher/other students. How did it feel?
7. How is it the same or different from what she expected? – what to do during class, topics to learn, materials to use, the teacher, other students.
8. How is it the same or different from previous school or literacy course experiences?

Imagined future

9. How do you envision your future?

The second interview after the focused observation of a learning activity

1. What was the most important thing you learned from today's activities?
2. (Pick one or two activities): How interested were you in the material? How interested were you in the activity? Why? What went through your mind when you were given the assignment?
3. Did you get stuck at any time during the assignment? What did you do? Why?
4. How will your learning today help you in your life?

5. What do you wish had happened differently in today's class?

Now I'd like to talk a little bit about not just today, but what you usually experience in the class.

6. Can you think of a lesson or an experience in this program where you learned something important? What was it? How did you learn it? Why was it important to you?
7. What do you tend to do when you are not interested in an activity? What do you feel then?

The third interview on the links between what brought women to the class and their engagement

1. What motivated you to carry on?
2. What have you gained from this course?
3. What made it difficult to attend? Travel, getting permission from the employer, familial responsibilities, other life events, the resistance/reluctance of family/relatives/friends.
4. What made it difficult to concentrate on the course? familial responsibilities, other life events, the resistance of family/relatives/friends, noise, ways of teaching, other students, relationships with tutors, worries about the exam.
5. Their learning of the subject matter in the class - The way the lessons were taught, any difficulties, degree of importance to them and why, any difference it has made to them.
6. What changes would you like to see in this course? Other things to learn? Why?
7. How do you envision your future?
8. What will help you most in getting to your imagined situation in the future?
9. What might stand in your way?

**Appendix D Sample thematic narrative analysis and coding prepared
from the first interview data**

The first part of the first interview with Sibel at Akasya People's Education Centre	My comments regarding the stories of schooling and coding for the discourse and subject positions
Ö: First of all, can you tell me a bit about your life? S: Where to start? (BRIEF PAUSE) OK, let me start like this. We are two siblings. (Ö: Hmm) I have an older sister. She is 29 and married. She has three children. My parents raised her first child. Her husband was in the army when my sister was pregnant. She gave birth at our place. And we don't have any brothers. Since my parents are a bit fond of boys and he was the first grandchild, we raised him. <i>My father is a primary school graduate. He earned his living as a minibus driver. My mother is a housewife. She isn't schooled. She quit school at the second or third grade.</i> So we have a small family. As I said, we are two siblings. My mother raised her son. He is 11 now. He lives with my parents. I am 24. I got married at the age of 21. I have a one and a half-year-old daughter. I got to know my spouse through her sister. I	School status of family members an important feature in introducing her family.

liked her sister very much. She was very gregarious. She was good fun. I liked being with her. I met my spouse at his sister's house. (BRIEF PAUSE) So our relationship started that way. He is a university graduate. He is a technician. (Ö: Mmm) He works at the airport now. I could not go to school. When I was at the second grade my father had a traffic accident. His leg was broken. He was not in a condition fit to work. I think in those days we had a lot of stuff like buying extra textbooks (<i>dergi</i>) at school. The teachers kept saying in the classrooms that we needed to buy these additional textbooks. (Özlem: Mmm) As I said, our economic condition was not good. My father had had an accident. We couldn't buy the additional textbooks. Because my teacher constantly made statements such as "Did you not buy the book yet?", "Do you not have it today as well?" I started to feel embarrassed and shy away from my friends. Since I could not buy the books, I gradually got alienated from	The first thing she mentions about her spouse - after where she met him - is his educational status, which is a lot higher than that of hers. This is followed by contrasting her husband's university graduate status with her story of not being able to go to school. Poverty : Structural injustice – the story of having to forgo schooling The school charges for learning materials: Structural injustice Poverty is exposed.
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school. As I felt like “Today I will go to school again, my teacher will ask me about the books again and I will feel embarrassed in front of my friends again” I became alienated from school. I started not going to school. And one day I realized that it had been years since I quit going to school. This is how it happened. I first thought it wouldn’t cause an issue between me and my spouse since he is a university graduate and I am not even a primary school graduate. And also we fell in love with each other and got married. But as years passed by and also as we had a child, when you have a child some things start to become clear to you. The things that you couldn’t see before or the things that you already knew about start to create problems. For example when something is being discussed I seem meek next to him, that I don’t possess what he knows created some sense of being inferior for me. Then I thought about it and I heard about things like there is this People’s Education Centre. After going for this and this long you get a diploma. Then you go to the secondary school. That is a short	Her schooling story concerns not being able to go to school because of her poverty and this being exposed at school. School status leading to perceived social status differences between spouses. Wants school knowledge as a mother Wants school knowledge as a wife of a university graduate
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amount of time, actually. My spouse has put pressure on me a lot as well. He influenced me in this for example. For example he was trying to influence me by saying things like: “When our daughter grows up and goes to school, when she asks you something related with her homework and you cannot answer, won’t that upset you?” He investigated this. I have to thank him. Where is this available, how, what are the times? He said “Let’s investigate, look into this and ask if it is possible. If it is, you could go.” I thought this is possible. I don’t have a lot of social things going on anyway. I’m at home, raising my child. I said I thought I would go if the times are appropriate. (Ö: Mmm) That is how I started. My spouse has supported me very much about this, by investigating and all. Now I go (to the course). I am glad. A lot of things that I didn’t know for years, it has been almost three, three and a half, four months since I came here. I have learned a lot of things that I didn’t know. I am happy to be learning these. I would like to be schooled. I would like to continue (my education) after this. For example there was this thing.	Husband points out educational status differences. Support of husband for studies School knowledge appreciated. Schooled person, symbolic importance
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Since there was a majority for the driving licence, they organised an exam. (Ö: Mmm) I had the opportunity to take that. I was able to take that exam after paying a certain amount. I might have wanted to take that exam. I had the means to do it. (Ö: Mmm) But I preferred the second level as well to gain more knowledge. Driving licence isn't important for me. As I said, I am trying to learn things. Hopefully, God willing, with my spouse's support as well. Thankfully, he helps me. How is that? What is that? (Ö: Mmm) He helps me when I ask him. He investigates and finds things if I am not available then. For example: "Can you investigate this until I feed(says the name of her daughter)? Ö: What for example? S: For example what? Things like "Güneş balçıkla sıvanmaz" (a proverb) For example if I have work to do, I say "Can you look into this until I feed(says the name of her daughter)? You investigate it and I will do it when she is asleep. Or if I couldn't find time or do something because of the daughter, if it is a last-	Didn't take the exam to get the diploma without attending the course School knowledge is important Support of husband for studies Care responsibilities makes it hard to attend to studies
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minute thing, he helps me. He says: “Let me say it and you can write it.” We help each other like that. (Ö: Mmm) So it is this way. I am glad I did this. It is a good thing. I can help my child in the future as well. Anything else you wanted to ask? Ö: You came to the First Level (literacy course) here as well? S: I came to the First Level here as well. Our teacher at the first level, the teacher Ahmet, helped us a lot. I came to the first level too. Yes. Ö: When was that? S: I didn’t come when it first started because Ahmet teacher said “You can read and write. There are those who cannot read, who cannot write among us. Until I teach them, you will remain (DOESN’T FINISH THE SENTENCE) So you come after 15 to 20 days”. (Ö: Mmm) So that is what happened. I came after 15-20 days. Ö: Last year? S: I applied before the religious festival. About 10 to 15 days before it. They told me to come after the festival. I thought I would go a little	Support of husband for her studies School knowledge important as a mother
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late. So I started after about a week after the festival. Ö: Was that November? S: I don't know. What was the latest festival? Ö: So it was in this year. S: Yes, it was this last festival. Has it been three months? Ö: Maybe. S: About that. Ö: So, when you started not going to school when you were small how did your time pass? S: How did the time pass? Ö: Were you at home? S: I was at home. I had my grandmother. She passed away two years ago. Then I started living with her. She was alone and a bit sickly. I lived with her for a few years. After that, I spent all of my time at home. I didn't work. I didn't have a working life. I actually had it but they were all short-term jobs. (Ö: Like what?) I cannot say that I worked. For example, I worked as a secretary for	I raised the question of her daily activities during childhood. The discourse of work that devalues women's and girls' work inside the house: she might have not mentioned her care duties as a girl child at primary school-age. Her story of work as a teenager and young woman is underpinned by the discourse of work that sees intermittent work in the informal sector as having low social status and thus not legitimate like the
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about two or three months. Sometimes you heard about some printing work, lasting from two to three months. I went to those places at times. (Ö: Mmm) I didn't have a working life where I worked at the same place for many years. That is it.	jobs in the formal labour market. This leads her even to say she didn't work in the past at all.
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Appendix E Sample analysis of the fieldnotes for discourses that women found in the Lale and Akasya People's Education Centre classrooms

Lale PEC, 19 March 2011 morning

9:00 Serap is writing part of a text from the pink book (course textbook) on the board. All of the women have their books open. Some are reading the text from their books out loud. Some are reading silently. [School literacy: reading out loud from the textbook](#)

9:25 Serap says: "OK, are we ready? Let's read." They all look at the board and read the text syllable by syllable together. S. underlines every syllable with a red board marker. [Collective reading first](#) F. reads out loud with them as she underlines the syllables on the board. After each sentence, she wants them to reread the sentence out loud together. The words in this text have many syllables. S. explains the words they may not know. She says *rüştiye* (An Arabic word rarely used in modern Turkish) means high school.

The text on the board is about the schools Mustafa Kemal attended. [School literacy: school text on Mustafa Kemal](#)

Mustafa Kemal'in askerlik mesleğine ilgisi çocukluk yıllarında başladı. Bu ilgi hiçbir zaman azalmadığı için ilköğrenimini tamamladıktan sonra askeri okul sınavına girdi. Böylece Mustafa Kemal'in askerlik hayatı başlamış oldu. Askeri Rüştiye'den sonra Manastır Askeri İdadisi ile İstanbul'daki Harp Okulu ve Harp Akademisini bitirdi. Bu okullar ona askerlikle ilgili bilgi ve yeteneğini geliştirme olanağı verdi. Kurmay Yüzbaşı rütbesiyle Türk ordusunun subayları arasına katıldığı zaman, kendisini zor görevler bekliyordu.

First, S. says *rüştiye* is high school, then she realises she might be wrong and asks me if it is actually secondary school. I say it is probably so. [I am seen as a fellow teacher, consulted for an opinion](#) Then she says that she is wrong, she made a mistake, *rüştiye* is secondary school, *idadi* (another Arabic word rarely used in modern Turkish) is high school.

She asks some questions to check understanding. When did his interest in the military begin? Women: When he was a child. [Factual questions on the text](#)

S. gives a summary of the text in simpler sentences without old Turkish/Arabic words.

9:35

S: "Let's read again."

They read out loud the text together again, this time faster. S. points at each syllable. [Collective reading](#)

9:37

S: "Yes, let's take this from Sevim." [Individual reading. Difficult text assigned to more fluent reader first.](#)

Sevim: All of it?

S: Yes, all of it, fast, without stuttering. [School literacy, focus on fluency.](#)

Sevim reads out loud fluently. Other women's lips are moving, reading quietly.

S: You haven't lost anything. [Positive feedback](#)

Sevim: My daughter started 1st grade. I read with her.

S: Who is her teacher?

Sevim: Miss Gül.

S: Very nice. [Interest in women's lives, friendly talk.](#)

S. calls on Emine to read out loud. [Individual reading](#)

Emine has a few difficulties sometimes. S. waits patiently, points at the syllable she is having a hard time sounding out. She says “Come on” in a nice way to encourage her. [Acknowledges difficulty](#)

S: I congratulate you. [Positive feedback](#)

Other women are reading the text quietly.

9:42:

S: Come on Leyla. [Individual reading](#)

Leyla has difficulty only with foreign words like *idadi*. S. points at the syllables on the board as she reads them.

S: I congratulate you. [Positive feedback](#)

9:45: Another woman reads out and F. says: “I congratulate you as well.” [Individual reading. Positive feedback](#)

S: “Yes, there are three people remaining,” and calls the names of these three women in turn and waits patiently until they attempt to sound out the syllables and when they have difficulty, then she helps them. It is amazing how patient she is. [Individual reading. Acknowledges difficulty](#)

10:01 S. says she will write the remaining part of the page from the book on the board and asks them to read it from their books as she is writing. [Decides the next learning activity. School literacy: reading school text](#)

Emine and Leyla are talking among each other a bit, then they get back to reading the text quietly. [It is OK to talk about non-lesson stuff](#) Other women are reading out loud syllable by syllable, labouredly.

Akasya PEC Classroom, 19 March 2011 afternoon

14:40 Sibels says she wants to read what she prepared on the Battle of Gallipoli during the First World War from her notebook. Ali says "Just talk about it." She says: "I cannot just talk but it is similar to what you talked about." When she says she cannot talk about it spontaneously, Ali resumes talking himself. *Forced public speaking, does not acknowledge difficulty*

14:46: "A price was paid for this country. It wasn't with Dollars or Euro, it was with blood. If anyone wants to take it, if they can shed that amount of blood, then they can take it. *Patriotic, militaristic outlook on near history* Is there anyone who wants to add something?" *Exerting authority: He decides when participants will talk.*

Hatice: Without raising her hand, she says: "During the war a doctor died along with his son", referring to a heroic story. *Hatice is older, Ali is more flexible to her although she didn't raise her hand for a turn. He doesn't yell at Hatice.*

Ali tells the story of a doctor who was attending to the wounded during the war and when he realised that the heavily wounded patient beyond any hopes of saving was his son he continued to pay attention to the other patients. *Exerting authority, he does the talking himself.*

He says: "Let's read the multiplication tables," and summons Meryem to the board. *Exerting authority: decides what to do next. School literacy: reading multiplication tables by heart at the board. Individual learning activity at the board (reading the multiplication tables by heart) No help from others.*

Meryem gets nervous and says she'll try later. She is supposed to go like 1 times 2 equals 2, 2 times 2 equals 4, 3 times 2 equals 6 but she gets that mixed up and says: "I can count 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 but..."

Ali: Even my grandma can count like that. *Insult, verbal*

Meryem: Right now I am just like your grandmother. *Resistance, explicit: verbal response to the insult* Ali doesn't answer.

Hatice volunteers. She makes a few mistakes but she is good. She gets nervous and says she is nervous. Ali says “Do it again.” [Curt order](#) Sibel volunteers and does it without any pauses in between.

14:53: Ali: “When your friend is at the board you are not doing something good for her by letting her copy from you. If I had wanted her to read it sloppily, I wouldn’t have asked her at all. You will see it like: ‘Everyone here is like me. I have come here to learn’. If someone makes fun of someone else I will do the same to them.” When Hatice was reading the multiplication tables at the board she got stuck. Someone couldn’t help herself and whispered the number she got stuck at. I also wanted to say that number to help Hatice get out of her quandary. I found it very difficult to remain silent. [No tolerance for cooperation. Threat of violence by saying he would humiliate the participant who helps someone at the board.](#)

Ali calls another woman to the board and says well done to her. Ebru gets very nervous. She puts her hands in her coat pocket and Ali goes to her and gets them out of her pocket. [Bodily threat: getting one’s hands out of her pocket while reading the multiplication table.](#) Ali takes one of Meryem’s crutches and suggestively shakes it towards Ebru. [Threat of physical violence by shaking crutches toward a woman engaged in a learning activity.](#) Ebru clasps two hands together and this time gets multiplication table right this time. Ali laughs and says: “Look how great the stick is. It has worked.” [Verbal violence. Normalisation of violence](#)

No comment from the participants. I feel very uncomfortable.

Hatice: “Can we do it sitting?” [Resistance: Hatice requests a change in classroom practices](#)

Ali: “No. You will get over your nervousness by doing this several times at the board.” [Does not acknowledge difficulty](#)

Ali says he can give Meryem a second change but she doesn’t want it. [Resistance: Does not take the second chance given to her by the teacher.](#)

15:03 – break time. During the recess, Mine reads the national anthem at the board. [School literacy: Reading the national anthem by heart](#) She reads the first five stanzas. Then Ebru does the same. We laugh, saying this is rehearsal. Everyone complains about how nervous they get at the board. [Individual learning activity at the board is like speaking in public: hard. Earnest effort to carry out school practice.](#)

Classroom teacher Ali tried to find the records on which courses Miss Fatma failed in the administrator's room but couldn't find anything. He told Miss Fatma that he would look at the files at his home and that she should come back the following week.... Miss Fatma explained to the teacher that she tried to take the make-up exam earlier but when she called the administration they didn't tell her anything and then they didn't call her back about the exam date. I cannot understand why they didn't inform her about the exam date. Also why cannot the classroom teacher telephone her to inform her about the records? Why does she have to come to the course again just for this? What is all this humiliation and disrespect about? What about Miss Fatma's time, financial expenses and emotional work? Is that not important? [Disrespect to participants by centre administration and teacher, bureaucratic sloppiness](#)

15:27 Ali: I'll call one by one. We'll do reading. What was your name? [School literacy: timed reading of a text at the board. Exerting authority: I'll call on you and you'll read. It is not OK to say no to the teacher](#)

Sibel: "Sibel."

She goes to his desk. He is sitting and the book is open on his desk. Sibel needs to bend over the book to read the text that he has chosen. He chooses the text and the book. [School literacy: He chooses the text. He sits at his desk. Sibel bends over the book. Exerting authority.](#)

Ali: Are you ready? Say so when you are. [Curt order](#)

Sibel takes a deep breath and says she is ready. She reads very fluently. At the end of a minute, Ali says OK...[School literacy, reading fluently in a minute](#)

Appendix F Themes/discourses, categories and codes from sample analysis of the fieldnotes from Lale and Akasya PEC classroom

Themes/Discourses, Categories and Codes from Sample Analysis of Fieldnotes from Lale PEC Classroom, 19 March 2011 morning

Broader themes/Discourses	Categories	Codes
Discourses of literacy	School literacy	School literacy: reading out loud from the textbook School literacy: school text on Mustafa Kemal Factual questions on the text School literacy, focus on fluency School literacy: reading school text
Discourses of learning	Individual learning	Individual reading. Difficult text assigned to more fluent reader first. Individual reading Individual reading

		Individual reading. Individual reading.
Pedagogic/power relations	Largely teacher-led activities Trusting and friendly	Positive feedback Interest in women's lives, friendly talk. Acknowledges difficulty Positive feedback Positive feedback Positive feedback Acknowledges difficulty Decides the next learning activity. It is OK to talk about non-lesson stuff

Themes/Discourses, Categories and Codes from Sample Analysis of Fieldnotes from
Akasya PEC Classroom, 19 March 2011 afternoon

Broader themes/Discourses	Categories	Codes
Discourses of literacy	School literacy	• School literacy: reading multiplication tables by heart at the board. • School literacy: Reading the national anthem by heart • Earnest effort to carry out school practice (rehearsing reading the national anthem during recess) • School literacy: timed reading of a text chosen by the teacher at the board. • School literacy, reading fluently in a minute
Discourses of learning	Individual learning	• Individual learning activity at the board (reading the multiplication tables by heart) No help from others. • No tolerance for cooperation. • Individual learning activity (reading the anthem) at the board is like speaking in public: hard.
Pedagogic/power relations	Conditions of violence and resistance	• Forced public speaking • Does not acknowledge difficulty

		• Exerting authority: He decides when participants will talk. • Hatice is older, Ali is more flexible to her although she didn't raise her hand for a turn. He doesn't yell at Hatice • Exerting authority, interrupts and does the talking himself. • Exerting authority: decides what to do next • Insult, verbal • Resistance: explicit, verbal response to the insult • Curt order • Threat of violence by saying he would humiliate one who helps someone at the board. • Bodily threat: getting one's hands out of her pocket while reading the multiplication table. • Threat of physical violence by shaking crutches toward a woman engaged in a learning activity. • Verbal violence. Normalisation of violence • Resistance: Hatice requests a change in classroom practices • Does not acknowledge difficulty • Disrespect to participants by centre administration and
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		teacher, bureaucratic sloppiness • Exerting authority: I'll call on you and you'll read. It is not OK to say no to the teacher • School literacy: He chooses the text. He sits at his desk. Sibel bends over the book. Exerting authority • Curt order
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