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Understanding Teacher Professional Identity: Voices from Pre-Service English Language Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The present qualitative case study aimed to explore Turkish pre-service English language teachers' perspectives on the elements of teacher professional identity and their understandings of their own professional identity development during practice teaching. The data was collected through reflective response journals, pre-practice teaching and post-practice teaching focus group interviews with thirty-one pre-service teachers enrolled in practice teaching course at a public university in Turkey. An in-depth analysis of interviews and journal entries showed that it was a continuous process for pre-service teachers to consolidate language-related, personal, and pedagogical elements of their teacher professional identities. The findings revealed that pre-service teachers' identities are grounded on language proficiency, disciplinary and context-relative skills, and awareness of themselves and their students. For pre-service teachers, being an English language teacher meant encompassing language-focused, teacher-focused, and learner-focused skills and characteristics. It was further found that there was a transition from individual to institutional perspectives for pre-service teachers in understanding their professional identity development. Their initial comments on their own teacher identities at the beginning of practice teaching mostly elaborated on their characteristics and role models, whereas their final remarks at the end of practice teaching were on the teacher authority and responsibilities. This study suggests that understanding pre-service teacher identities would guide necessary actions in initial teacher education.

Keywords: teacher professional identity, English language teachers, pre-service teachers

Öğretmen Mesleki Kimliğini Anlamak: İngilizce Öğretmen Adaylarının Görüşleri

ÖZ

Bu nitel vaka çalışması, Türk İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının öğretmen mesleki kimliğinin bileşenlerine ilişkin bakış açılarını ve öğretmenlik uygulaması sırasında kendi mesleki kimlik gelişimine ilişkin anlayışlarını araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Veriler yansıtıcı yanıt günceleri, öğretmenlik uygulaması başında ve sonunda yapılan odak grup görüşmeleri ile Türkiye'de bir devlet üniversitesinde öğretmenlik uygulaması dersini alan otuz-bir öğretmen adayının katılımıyla toplanmıştır. Sözlü görüşmelerin ve tutulan güncelerin analizi, öğretmen adaylarının öğretmen mesleki kimliklerinin dille ilgili, kişisel ve pedagojik bileşenleri pekiştirmelerinin sürekli bir süreç olduğunu göstermiştir. Bulgular, öğretmen adaylarının kimliklerinin dil yeterliliğine, mesleki ve bağlamla ilgili becerilere ve kendileri ve öğrencilerle ilgili farkındalıklarına dayandığını ortaya koymuştur. Öğretmen adayları için İngilizce öğretmeni olmak, dil odaklı, öğretmen odaklı ve öğrenci odaklı beceri ve özellikleri kapsamak anlamına gelmektedir. Ayrıca öğretmen adaylarının mesleki kimlik gelişimlerini anlamada bireysel bakış açısından kurumsal bakış açısına geçiş olduğu bulunmuştur. Öğretmen kimlikleri ile ilgili öğretmenlik uygulaması başlangıcında yorumlar çoğunlukla kendi özellikleri ve rol modelleri üzerinde dururken, öğretmenlik uygulaması sonunda yorumlar öğretmen yetki ve sorumlulukları üzerine olmuştur. Bu çalışma, hizmet öncesi öğretmen kimliklerinin anlaşılmasının, başlangıç öğretmen eğitiminde gerekli eylemlere rehberlik edeceğini ileri sürmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Öğretmen mesleki kimliği, İngilizce öğretmenleri, öğretmen adayları

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Language teacher identity has been a well-established field of research in the literature (Barkhuizen, 2017; De Costa & Norton, 2017; Yazan & Lindahl, 2020) with various views and discussions on the nature and the extent of it. The relevant research aims to explore the sociocultural contexts of education, pedagogy, issues of agency and power. There has been a shift from traditional, cognitive to critical and sociocultural accounts in understanding language teacher identity such as neo-Vygotskian sociocultural theory, language socialization, post-structuralism, critical applied linguistics (Miller, 2009) or Foucauldian discourse and Bordieuan capital (Morgan & Clarke, 2011). Initial teacher education, in all these, is an active process that pre-service English language teachers construct their professional identities.

Pre-service teacher education, practice teaching in particular is a milestone for prospective language teachers to engage in broader social, cultural, and historical macro structures impacting the second/foreign language teaching profession, and to grasp how their identities are shaped in response to such factors. The professional identity that pre-service English language teachers develop during teacher education programs is continuously constructed due to the ongoing interaction between one's self and identity, cultural context, and professional environment. The extent to which previous learning experiences of prospective teachers affect their identity formation before the actual profession is contentious (Chong et al., 2011). That is to say, they have a set of former conceptions and opinions regarding teaching (Lee, 2008), which means the construction of professional identity begins even earlier than teacher education and continues all through professional life (Lopes & Tormenta, 2010). However, pre-service English language teachers may experience remarkable professional development during teacher education as they engage with different elements and actors in teacher education programs to shape their professional identities. Thus, teacher education programs make a valid starting point, both for developing and sustaining the development of teacher professional identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

It is crucial to research the ways to support language teacher identity development in initial teacher education (Riyanti, 2017). Teacher identity affects the quality of education, teacher preferences (Olsen, 2016) and teacher behavior management (Dugas, 2016); informs a teacher's decisions on instruction, content and their relationships with students (Beijaard et al., 2004) and mediates a teacher's actions (Chong et al., 2011). Additionally, providing opportunities for reflection might promote prospective language teachers' critical attitudes toward curriculum and language teaching strategies and their agency (Banegas et al., 2022). Although the literature focuses mostly on pre-service teachers (Henry, 2016; Varghese & Snyder, 2018), language teacher identity in non-Western contexts such as Turkey remains under-researched with scarce qualitative designs (Taşdemir, 2021).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the social theory of learning, identity is defined as "not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming—to become a certain person or, conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person" (Wenger, 1998, p. 215). The sociocultural view also emphasizes the dynamic nature of identity as both individually and socially constructed with the main concern around the groups of individuals in communities. From a sociocultural view, Wenger (1998) defines identity that it "is not an object, but a constant becoming ... always going on" (p. 153-154). This theory of identity emphasizes "a profound connection between identity and practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 149). The "experience of identity in practice is a way of being in the world", involving constant negotiation of membership of communities, and "the interplay of participation and reification" of experience (ibid., p. 151). Furthermore, Wenger (1998) discusses five dimensions of identity: as negotiated experiences where one defines who she/he is by interaction with others, as a community membership where an identity is based upon familiarity and belonging to a group, as a learning trajectory with future concern in mind, as a nexus of multi membership through various forms of our identities, and as a relation between local and global with the negotiation of broader discourses. According to him learning happens as experiencing, doing, belonging, and as becoming someone, respectively consisting of meaning, practice, community and identity. Learning, likewise, in this case learning how to teach, is active social participation in communities and forming identities regarding them. Belonging in communities of practice operates in three modes consisting of engagement, imagination and alignment. Engagement occurs during the process an individual gains actual experience by interacting with other

people. Imagination occurs when an individual creates a broader image of his/her community across time and space, and alignment is linked to internalizing the identity of the larger community to the identity of its participants (Wenger, 1998).

From such a theoretical understanding, practice teaching was relevant since "identification takes place in the doing" (Wenger, 1998, p.193) via legitimate participation in a community of practice. Practice teaching is a main component in teacher education programs, and it is when pre-service teachers get the chance to observe real classroom settings. It involves "supervised teaching, experience with systematic observation, and gaining familiarity with a particular teaching context" (Gebhard, 2009, p. 250). Reflection (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983), as a means of delving into professional identities of pre-service teachers was further a crucial part of the practice teaching process. Reflection is described by Dewey (1933) as "an active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and further conclusions to which it tends" (p.9). It is classified in various ways, such as, reflection in action and reflection on action by Schön (1983). Reflection in action refers to making decisions through the action whereas reflection on action refers to reflection after the action. Both forms of reflection form a vital part of teachers' professional growth and identity development. Teacher professional identity is realized by experiencing as foreseen by Wenger (1998) and as learning-in-practice where practice is the main aim when pre-service teachers aim at achieving goals in class and when they also reflect on the process of being a teacher. Under the light of such theoretical understandings, pre-service English language teachers were asked for their reflections via response journals and focus group interviews in this study.

LANGUAGE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

The seminal work of Norton (1995) initiated the early discussions on identity in language education. She (2000) describes identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p.5). In order to specify fundamental characteristics of identity, Rodgers and Scott (2008) note:

> *(1) that identity is dependent upon and formed within multiple contexts which bring social, cultural, political, and historical forces to bear upon that formation, (2) that identity is formed in relationship with other and involves emotions, (3) that identity is shifting, unstable and multiple and (4) that identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time. (p. 733)*

Although teacher professional identity has not been precisely described, its significance is agreed upon. It informs how one mediates her/his teaching to present her/his professional self in specific ways and understands "complex, situated, and fluid attributes that individuals bring with them to the study and practice of teaching" (Sexton, 2008, p.75). It is an ongoing process rather than an endpoint for teachers to construct their self-images and their professional identity of "beliefs, values, and emotions about many aspects of teaching and being a teacher" (Farrell, 2011, p.54) as well as an interactive process to interpret values and experiences (Flores & Day, 2006).

In relation to the nature and features of teacher identity, there have been several classifications. According to Day and Kington (2008), identity is composed of three sub-identities: (i) professional identity: educational ideals of the teacher; (ii) situated or socially located identity: in a certain educational context; (iii) personal identity: social roles outside the school, which all influence teacher professional resource kits and classroom practices. In line with Wenger (1998), Xu (2012, 2013) classifies a professional identity as rule, cue-, exemplar-, and schema-based ones consecutively grounding on concrete rules, characteristics of social entities, representative examples, and responses to dynamic contexts. Another classification for identity is made between identity-in-practice and identity-in-discourse (Varghese et al, 2005, p.39). On the one hand, identity-in-practice demands an action-oriented point of view and sees identity formation as a social process of tasks and on the other, identity-in-discourse proposes that identity is formed, sustained and reshaped through language and engaging in different discourses (Danielewicz, 2001; Zembylas, 2003). Likewise, Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermont (2000) discuss teacher identity under three headings: (i) teacher as a subject matter expert grounding on subject matter knowledge, (ii) teacher as a didactical expert based on skills necessary for teaching and learning, and (iii) teacher as a pedagogical expert relying on students' needs and development. Pennington and Richard (2016) conceptualize language teacher identity consisting of foundational and advanced competences. The first group covers language-related,

disciplinary, context-related, student-related identities, and self- knowledge and awareness. The latter group encompasses applying knowledge into practice, theorizing from practice, and membership in communities of practice. Every teacher combines these (funds of) identities uniquely; influenced by work context, experience, and learning history.

In second language teacher education, there has been a shift from looking for better ways to educate teachers to focus on how teachers learn to teach through reflection and self-awareness (Richards, 2008). In line with this, Izadinia (2013) states that research on student teachers' professional identity investigated the contribution of reflective activities, learning communities, context, and prior experiences. Overall, there are several issues under focus regarding teacher identity research such as: teacher selves through qualities of a (good) teacher (Korthagen, 2004), teacher roles (Farrell, 2011), teacher identity construction and factors affecting it (Trent, 2014), identity metaphors (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011), agency (Varghese & Snyder, 2018), narrative construction of LTI (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013), the native-nonnative dichotomy and nonnative speaker teachers (Aneja, 2016) and emotions (Song, 2016).

It is widely argued that teacher identity development is not smooth, and full of "self-doubt and questioning" (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011, p.767). Teachers are found to have difficulty in internalizing their teacher identity, and it takes time and effort to improve their understanding of what it means to be a language teacher and to identify them with that understanding (Kanno & Stuart, 2011). Clearly, identification with teaching as a profession is an important first step for prospective teachers to grasp the complicated set of professional, cultural, political and individual identities teachers enact (Varghese et al., 2005). Hence, this study adopts the view that pre-service English language teachers need to understand their professional identities to enhance their sense of belonging to teaching as a profession and reflect on their teacher identity development.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In line with these aims, we explore the following research questions:

1. What constitutes teacher professional identity according to pre-service English language teachers?
2. How do pre-service English language teachers understand their teacher professional identity development in practice teaching?

2 | METHOD

To provide an in-depth description of the participants' construction of teacher professional identity, this study employed a qualitative case study method (Creswell, 2013). As such, qualitative research necessitates a naturalistic and an interpretive perspective examining the multiplicity of reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), multiple data collection tools were used for a thorough bottom-up analysis of the case of Turkish pre-service English language teachers. To this end, the data were collected during practice teaching when pre-service teachers get the chance to observe real classroom settings and are familiarized with the authentic nature of classrooms. As this study aims to explore pre-service teachers' professional identity, a case study method- an established research design in social sciences- is employed since it is used to generate an in-depth understanding of an issue in its real-life context (Crowe et al., 2011).

CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

The study was conducted with voluntary participation of thirty-one pre-service English language teachers enrolled in the practice teaching course at a public university in Turkey. Following purposeful sampling strategies; typical sampling strategy has been adopted because the participants represented what is normal or average of their group to understand the issue being examined (Creswell, 2013). The participants formerly took courses in the English language, methodology of language teaching, linguistics, English literature, and educational sciences before practice teaching in their last semester in the initial teacher education program. They were familiar with reflection tasks and had observed classes at public and private schools in the preceding school experience course. At the beginning of the term, the course instructor arranged practice teaching schools and assigned pre-service

teachers to three different schools (13 student teachers, henceforth STs): public middle school, 12 STs: private middle school, 6 STs: private high school) for their practice teaching. They also attended a 3-hour seminar at the university held by the course instructor every week. In these sessions, they discussed assigned articles, commented on their relation to their teaching experience and what they observed in their mentor's classes. The articles and reflection tasks varied in their specific foci. The course seminar functioned as a platform for pre-service teachers to develop their own arguments regarding education and teaching English.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The data were collected through two reflective response journals and pre- and post-practice teaching focus group interviews. Journal writing was a means to organize thoughts and to analyze more consciously than usual with the growing ability to adjust to the unexpectedness of the classroom (Farrell, 2013; Larrivee, 2000) during practice teaching. Reflective journals were used as a means of altering one's existing beliefs, assumptions and practices through a critical lens as teaching is not just a solid accumulation of teaching skills and strategies (Larrivee, 2000). In this regard, the participants wrote reflections as a response to the articles, in-class discussions, and observations at schools. Both journals and interviews allowed for reflection which influences the shaping of identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009) since teachers are bound to unchallenged beliefs and practices in class, if unable to reflect critically on their teaching. For the article reflection response journals, the participants were given general and article-specific guiding questions. General questions asked whether they felt the article seemed central to the field or were a part of the target audience, and about the influences on their understanding of teaching. Article-specific questions were either built on the quotes from the articles or in the form of analysis or synthesis conceptual questions. Although guiding questions were provided, these reflective entries were semi-structured: the participants could add any further ideas, and choose which questions to ponder on. The main goal was to get the participants to demonstrate their understanding of the issue by connecting the articles to their knowledge, experience, recent learning, and possible future practice. Additionally, semi-structured (Brinkmann, 2018) focus-group interviews were conducted. These lasted approximately one and a half hours each, were conducted in groups of 4 or 5 and transcribed verbatim. The focus group interview questions elaborated on the participants' motivations to become teachers, classroom teaching experiences, perspectives and beliefs on teaching and learning, approaches to those, characteristics and responsibilities as prospective teachers, and future aspirations. We used focus group interviews as using an authentic group (as members of already existing practice teaching class) might promote discussion, idea sharing and debate, and they provide a breadth of shared experiences from people with similar characteristics (as pre-service teachers in the practicum stage) (GOV.UK, 2020).

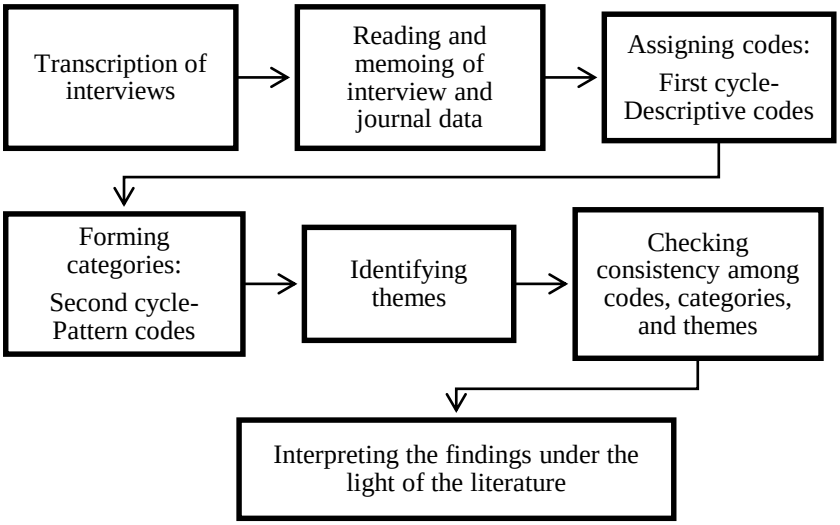

Figure 1. *Data Analysis*

The data collection process started with the pre-practice teaching focus group interviews, continued with reflective response journals and ended with post-practice teaching focus group interviews. During the analysis of the data, a cyclical - reiterative analysis process was adopted. We utilized an analytical software tool (MaxQDA) to assign codes and understand relations among codes or themes (Kuckartz, 2014). The qualitative data analysis

process was grounded on data condensation techniques and coding types (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Thematic analysis method was utilized in analyzing the data from different tools to identify themes and patterns based on the detailed description of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The data was anonymized before the analysis process started; the participants were assigned numbers such as *ST1*. We utilized data triangulation and peer checking as validation strategies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For peer checking - "the stability of responses to multiple coders of data sets" (Creswell, 2013, p. 253)-, we asked an international adjunct professor in an ELT department in Turkey; having expertise in qualitative research to analyze some data. In line with the literature that suggests the second coder analyze at least ten percent of the whole data (Lombard, Snyder-Duch & Bracken, 2003), the external coder analyzed around fifteen percent of the data set. On her feedback, we revised some of the coded segments and categories.

RESEARCH ETHICS

The participants were given the opportunity to consider and discuss the study and their involvement in the study with the researchers. They were also informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving any reason and without any consequences. The data were stored and analyzed strictly confidentially and reported anonymously. The study was carried out in accordance with the codes of ethics along with the approval from the institutional ethical review board.

3 | FINDINGS

After an interpretative data analysis, we found that the pre-service teachers' understandings of teacher professional identity and their own identity construction were shaped around two main themes: constituents of language teacher professional identity and a transition from individual to institutional perspectives in understanding their identity (Table 1).

Table 1. Language Teacher Professional Identity

Language teacher professional identity			**Codes (n)**
Language-focused	Subject experts:		
	Language-related	English knowledge	38
Teacher-focused	Didactical experts:		
	Disciplinary identity	Skills	46
	Self-knowledge and awareness	Characteristics	142
		Roles	28
Learner-focused	Pedagogical experts:		
	Disciplinary identity	Instructional design	50
	Student-related identity	Learner-centeredness	52
Understanding teacher professional identity			**Codes (n)**
Individual perspectives	Cue-based	Characteristics	22
	Exemplar-based	Role models	24
Institutional perspectives	Rule-based	Teacher authority	19
		Responsibilities	12
	Schema-based	Contextual awareness	11

SUBJECT-FOCUSED ELEMENTS IN LANGUAGE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

First and foremost, "being an expert in the field" (ST15) and "competent in language use" (ST20) and having "knowledge of the language" (ST13) were stated to be indispensable for a language teacher. ST15 stated: "All

good teachers are knowledgeable and experts in their areas. I also try to be so", like ST18 noting: "teachers have this vast language knowledge, and they should be really good at transmitting that knowledge, I guess I am one of these". However, it was not enough to have subject knowledge as: "a teacher should know how to teach as well as the language. A teacher should be an expert regarding the content, yet this is not enough on its own." (ST6).

For the participants, subject knowledge and lifelong learning complemented each other: "teachers should be open to development, follow new ways of teaching not to repeat themselves and lag behind" (ST4). It was essential to be able to address learners: "to meet learner needs and catch up with their curiosity, we should regenerate ourselves by criticizing our current state and looking for improvement" (ST5). Subject knowledge consisted of several subsets:

> *The main property of being a good teacher is being an expert in the field. We need to know the language properly to teach it. We should know grammar, vocabulary, and have reading, writing, and listening skills in a foreign language. Of course, knowing everything is impossible, but we can keep learning and be open to learning new things. (ST15)*

TEACHER-FOCUSED ELEMENTS IN LANGUAGE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

It was important "knowing one's ways around technology, being able to integrate it to the lessons to support student learning" (ST18). Several pre-service teachers mentioned various ways of adapting applications and instructional technologies. ST21 saw technology as an aid for teachers' relationship with students: "if teachers cannot integrate technology, then they cannot teach effectively or build a strong relationship with the learners". For ST13, being able to make use of technology was a way to be innovative language teaching:

> *being innovative by abstaining from traditional teaching methods … Now we are in the technological era … I should make use of technology in class; the computer, the mobile phones, PPT Presentation, etc. Teaching to the coursebook would not be enough to appeal to the students.*

ST2 evaluated herself in terms of technology skills: "I am not a technology native; I think it will be challenging to follow new games and applications all the time and adapt them to my lessons". Similarly, ST5 felt that "as a prospective English language teacher, I need to work hard and understand my learners' habits in order to bridge the gap and utilize technology for instruction". They planned and projected on future practices:

> *We adopt technology to learning. … Tons of activities, applications, games, videos, etc. on the Internet. … I have already planned some for my classes. Instead of taking technology away from students, we can make it fun and educational. (ST4)*

> *I can use "WhatsApp" to communicate with students and give audio feedback or "Flipped Classes". I can assign videos as homework; we can do different enjoyable activities. This will also address the kinesthetic learners since they can participate actively instead of listening to the teacher. (ST6)*

Similarly, material design skills were discussed, ST13 recommended: "a language teacher should prepare extraordinary activities for students. S/he should not use the same activities over the years but change them according to the students' needs and interests". ST11 commented that she was able to create some games or authentic activities so that students learn the language while using it, and further clarified that "teachers need to be creative to draw the attention and make the lesson enjoyable and interesting". ST2 argued: "when students just see drills, they miss the nature of language and see learning as a mechanic process" and remembered one experience: "I had a student who became excited about English when we took lyrics as reading materials because she had musical intelligence".

Affective characteristics such as being enthusiastic, caring and loving the job stood out as the features that the participants attribute to teacher professional identity most. Loving the profession was one of the primary constituents of teacher professional identity for ST18: "I believe all boil into one; loving the profession. If someone loves teaching, with enough practice, s/he can be a good teacher"; it was the starting point to be later combined with practice. On being caring, ST2 stated: "I know that if I can assure my students that I care about them and I am an open-minded teacher who empathizes with them, they will trust me" and similarly ST5 underscored: "We need to be in learners' shoes, care for them and do not forget about our own experiences as learners so that we can provide a better learning environment". The participants emphasized that some of these features are "inborn

abilities and related to the teacher's personality" (ST13). ST18 was also one to state this and related it to instruction as well: "the most important thing is being enthusiastic about the job. If you do not love teaching, it doesn't matter how well you know the subject". Enthusiasm was one of the reasons to choose teaching as a profession:

> *In my opinion, the most important thing is enthusiasm for teaching. This is the reason why I chose this job. I did not choose to be a teacher because it is easy, well paid or something else. The only reason was my passion for teaching. For me, even if someone carries all the other characteristics of a good teacher but enthusiasm for teaching, I wouldn't call him a good teacher. (ST4)*

LEARNER-FOCUSED ELEMENTS IN LANGUAGE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

In all cases, being student-centered was the driving force. The data revealing teachers as pedagogical experts were built on the requirements of teaching profession such as knowing about students, treating them fair, raising students' awareness, and adding to the intellectual side of them. Knowing about the general profile of the students and their needs was prioritized:

> *A teacher should know his or her students' profile, hobbies, experiences etc. (...) Crucial for me to draw students' attention to the activities and tasks (...) We used 'Minions' in our warmup activity and students loved that and participated in the lesson willingly. (...) Some magazines that our students follow and subscribe to, and they became very enthusiastic. It is the teacher's task to follow the interests and hobbies of students. (ST17)*

Creating a positive classroom environment, being adept at classroom management, and engaging students into the lesson were seen vital to "create a classroom culture and a positive atmosphere" (ST11), or to "foster a friendly and trustful classroom in which students can voice their opinions freely, make mistakes and share their knowledge with their friends" (ST2). In this sense, creating a positive classroom environment was one of teachers' priorities and among the areas that were a part of teacher professional identity; "a teacher should create a healthy learning environment in which students respect each other" (ST6). For ST12, a cozy classroom in line with disciplinary identity was necessary for language learning: "I have always thought any learning environment should be warm and intimate because language learning occurs best when the learners have the lowest anxiety". Aligning with this, ST4 stated:

> *What comes to mind when we hear classroom management is mostly a class in silence listening to the teacher. The teacher does this sometimes, sets some classroom rules with the class. For me, classroom management also means that the teacher sees and reaches each student whenever s/he wants.*

Instructional design competencies informing pedagogy were grouped under disciplinary knowledge and together with student-related identities, as the overarching point was to adapt and adopt instructional paths tailored for students. Adjustment in teaching methods and good planning emerged as the two most frequent categories. Regarding making use of different strategies and methods, ST20 noted: "teaching is not having a fixed plan but being creative and flexible in order to adjust changing situations", and ST11 added: "I believe that I can adapt my teaching strategies according to my students as long as I know their needs". ST5 explained why it is important to adjust teaching methods: "teachers and students need to speak the same language to meet learners' academic needs". Some participants offered ideas for their future teaching:

> *Teachers may not set up strict rules for homework and activities. If students want to be free in their works, I should provide a basis by letting them apply their personal preferences following general regulations and necessities. (ST15)*

> *I learn a lot when I experience or see what I am supposed to learn, the outcome is much more permanent compared to traditional lectures. Why do I stick to traditions while I can make students learn using visual and kinesthetics methods? (ST19)*

INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVES ON LANGUAGE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

At the beginning of practice teaching, the focus was mainly on the admiration pre-service English language teachers had for their teachers: "I have always wanted to be a teacher since elementary school. My teachers' behaviors and attitudes led me to choose this profession. I admired them" (ST3), and this remained the same

throughout years: “When I met my first English teacher, I told myself that I will be an English teacher like him (…) enthusiastic about teaching and could manage to transfer that enthusiasm” (ST20). For ST1, it was a part of her nature as well:

> *It started with my love of language. I found the language like a secret code, I love to describe it, decode the meaning … When I was a child, I was a successful student. Our neighbors would send their kids to me to study not only language but also Maths or Turkish. I loved these two, language and teaching. I brought them together. (ST1)*

The participants mentioned some of their characteristics as teachers at the beginning of practice teaching:

> *I am a caring, friend-like teacher, but at the same time disciplined. I think students go international by learning languages. And I have no right to take this advantage away from anyone’s hand. Teaching a language is shaping someone’s life and I want to do that professionally. (ST2)*

Being “excited” (ST27), “motivated” (ST3), and friendly were initial feelings that the participants experienced in their practice teaching journey to become teachers. In ST20’s words; “I think I’m an enthusiastic teacher because I always prepare a lesson plan in a very detailed way. I always think about everything like if I do this, how do students respond to me”. Having control over the class, how students thought of the participant as a teacher, and being organized was mentioned by ST30 along with some other characteristics: “They treat me as if I’m their real teacher. I care for them, and I’m well organized”.

Regarding the fun and humor sides of a classroom, ST3 mentioned: “Once students are in my class, they don’t get bored. I want to be remembered as such”. The reason why teachers should add humor was that: “it lowers the affective filter, creates a positive atmosphere in the classroom” (ST11), ST17 could add “pace and humor to the class to draw the attention, make lessons more enjoyable and lessen the stress level”. Evaluating their teaching skills, the participants stated that they needed more experience to make more realistic judgments, and several of them made it clear that they were good in theory (ST3, ST27). However, it was noted that practice teaching would be a process to decide on their “behaviors towards students or improve their communication with them” (ST20). Only ST20 talked about being an authority in class at the beginning of practice teaching and commented: “you may lose your [face]. You can be friendly, but you need to show that you’re the teacher, the authority”.

INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON LANGUAGE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

At the end of practice teaching, developing teacher professional identity was seen as a process of transition as an individual too: “I wasn’t much patient, or I didn’t have much interest in teaching and students until school experience. Now, after seven months, I have become more caring and patient” (ST18). Regarding rule-based identities of the pre-service teachers, the final statements related to teacher authority were heterogeneous. ST22 said: “I am an authoritative person as a teacher, not in real life but in the classroom”. A few participants argued that the teacher and students in class should share the power such as ST10: “I think the students and the teacher should share the power in the class” and ST12:

> *In my classroom, everybody should have the power. There was very strict discipline in classrooms in the past. Students didn’t have the right to talk. I don’t think this is effective because the classroom is like a small community, and everybody has the right to talk.*

ST13 referred to discipline issues: “A teacher must have standards and put a limit. If s/he puts a rule, s/he has to make all students follow the rule every time because consistency is important in effective teaching”. ST6 similarly stated: “We should teach them the importance of rules and deadlines. If they understand the underlying reasons and are informed about relevant consequences, they will have to follow them”. The participants further argued about some of their responsibilities. These were “to create a relaxed atmosphere for students so that they can feel confident and they can do better” (ST10), to create “a classroom free from anxiety” (ST2), to be “planned and prepared” (ST6), “to create as many chances as possible to practice English in class” (ST27), or “to get prepared before the classroom and to guide the students not just to teach them but learn with them as well” (ST13). Finally, the participants stated that how they would react as teachers depended on the school, students, and contexts as well as seen in the following quotes:

I think it depends on the school. For example, the school that I visited last semester was like a dream school. It was a public school but there were 15 students in class. The classes were for visual learners; there were Smartboards and all. But this semester this state school is different, so how I behave changes. (ST3)

If the teacher cannot manage the students, it does not matter how knowledgeable, understanding, talented s/he is. … Classroom management is so challenging in one class that the lesson is interrupted. In one class, I tend to be more disciplined. (ST6)

… Asking their opinions … Communicating with them. I search for games for young learners … In one classroom students like it, but in the other, of the same age, they don't want to play the game. It's different not only from age to age from class to class. (ST12)

4 | DISCUSSION

The findings confirmed the four basic assumptions of identity that it depends on multiple contexts such as different school and classroom cultures, encompasses emotions, is multiple as triggered by different teacher roles, and transforms over time with necessary shifts (Rodgers & Scott, 2008), from the beginning of practice teaching to the end of it in this study's case. The findings pointed out the importance of assuring the quality of instruction by a good command of subject knowledge and being student-centered. A combination of various skills, roles, and personality traits was essential to teacher professional identity as subject-matter, didactical, and pedagogical experts (Beijaard et al., 2000). Teacher professional identity for the pre-service teachers meant expertise in the subject, which presented their language-related identities (Pennington & Richards, 2016). The participants commented on disciplinary skills, several teacher roles (an actor, a facilitator, an inspirer, a role model, and a leader) and characteristic features that they attribute to themselves, teachers, or language teachers. According to them, didactical expertise covered disciplinary identity and self-knowledge and awareness (Pennington & Richards, 2016). The skills were technology-related, classroom management, communication, and materials design through the ability to engage students to the lesson by building rapport and creating a positive classroom atmosphere. In the self-knowledge and awareness part, affective characteristics and teacher roles were discussed. Specifically, being enthusiastic, caring, humorous, patient, creative, encouraging, passionate, or fun was vital in language teacher identity. Among a variety of skills, technological skills were emphasized most as in the Zare-ee and Ghasedi (2014) study. Pre-service teachers also mentioned several teacher roles under their self-knowledge and awareness. They were actors, facilitators, inspirers, leaders, and role models or "the engine of a class that the motion of the class depends on. (…) or the facilitator, helper, incentive mechanism" (ST23).

In sum, language teacher identity for the pre-service teachers required didactical expertise in relation to their disciplinary identity and self-knowledge and awareness; pedagogical expertise in relation to disciplinary identity and student-related identities (Beijaard et al., 2000; Pennington & Richards, 2016). Additionally, the findings suggested that identity is composed of "beliefs, values, and emotions" (Farrell, 2011, p.54) about teaching with the participants' views on the constituents of teacher identity, such as having a good command of the subject, developing continuously, being student-centered in instruction, combining different skills while teaching, having certain roles and affective characteristics as teachers. In terms of the participants' characteristics as teachers during practice teaching, the findings reported that being caring (O'Connor, 2008) and friendly (Furlong, 2013; Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2012) were the most prevalent attributes. The participant pre-service teachers were aware of utilizing roles within different contexts (Burns & Richards, 2009) with their comments on the need of harmony of various roles of teachers and references to some common roles of teachers as "language expert, friend, joke teller, material developer, and disciplinarian" (Farrell, 2011, p.55).

Building on Xu (2013) on cue-based and exemplar-based identities, the discussion of the participant pre-service teachers' own characteristics and roles as the most frequent topics in the pre-practice teaching phase signaled cue-based identities as these types of identities build on the different characteristics of social entities. The participants associated the characteristics that a teacher should possess with their previous teachers, which supported exemplar-based identities depending on representative examples of social entities or individuals' role models. Building on rule-based and schema-based identities (Xu, 2013), the most frequent topic in post-practice teaching interviews was teacher authority in class and responsibilities designated by the rules. These could be directly linked to rule-

based identities of teachers. Teacher authority was the least frequent topic in pre-practice teaching interviews. However, it turned out to be the most frequent one in post-practice teaching interviews. Likewise, schema-based identities as behaviors in response to dynamic contexts were hinted at through the participants' changing practices in public and private schools, though not abundant in the data. The focus on cue-based and exemplar-based identities to rule-based and schema-based ones could be interpreted as moving from an individual to an institutional perspective in understanding teacher professional identity.

Furthermore, practice teaching was reported crucial that the participants had the chance to observe real classroom settings, learn from their mentors, improved their teaching and language skills, and question their own or common practices in language classrooms. Teacher professional identity consists of experiencing, doing, belonging, and finally becoming someone (Wenger, 1998; Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2010), and practice teaching made these possible for the participants. It was to observe real classrooms of different language proficiency levels and backgrounds (Armutçu & Yaman, 2010), learn from mentoring through building and maintaining strong relationships, receiving support, encouragement and ongoing feedback, reflective activities, a positive environment and raised self -awareness (Izadinia, 2018). Reflection was appreciated that it gave the participants time to digest knowledge and associating it with real classrooms. It was also suggested that reflection was an opportunity to critically evaluate what the participants had experienced:

> *I think reflection provides us a framework to combine theory and practice. We observe the classroom and get the sense of the reality of practice. I will also have the practical background so we can explain the behavior, and what works based on theory. It helps us to understand the dynamics of the classroom. (ST18)*

In line with Farrell's (2013) arguments on reflection, the participants stated that reflection was a way to understand their classroom practices, gave them new ideas on teaching and possible solutions to problems that they might face in their professional lives. In conclusion, the findings were aligned with Yazan (2015) that pre-service teachers learned "how to navigate in the school context; about the nature of establishing relationships with the other members of the teaching community"; received support of mentors and supervisors; developed understanding of the relationship between theory and practice; and an improved understanding of students (p.181).

5 | CONCLUSION

Language teacher professional identity is argued to be constructing new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and activities via social interaction rather than the sole translation of theory and knowledge into practice (Burns & Richards, 2009). According to Johnson (2009), teacher identity is socially constructed and built through experiences in multiple contexts as former learners and participants in teacher education programs and different communities of practice. In this vein, we aimed to explore Turkish pre-service EFL teachers' opinions on the elements of teacher professional identity and their own identity construction in practice teaching. The findings revealed that the participant pre-service teachers' identities are grounded on language proficiency, disciplinary and context-relative skills, and awareness about self and students. The findings revealed a transition from individual to institutional perspectives in understanding their own teacher identities. For pre-service teachers, being an English language teacher meant encompassing language-focused, teacher-focused and learner-focused skills and characteristics. First and foremost, a language teacher should have a good command of the language with an open mind to learn continuously, which viewed teachers as subject-matter experts (Beijaard et al., 2000) having language-related identity (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Additionally, being a teacher meant mastering skills in certain areas such as instructional technology, classroom management, materials development, and instructional design. These sets of skills formed disciplinary identities of teachers (Pennington & Richards, 2016). For pre-service teachers, teacher identity also indicated the knowledge of self and students (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Regarding their self-knowledge and awareness, they mentioned several characteristics (e.g., being enthusiastic, caring, humorous, creative) and roles (e.g., an actor, inspirer, a facilitator, role model, leader). In terms of their student-related identities, the focus was on being learner-centered. This necessitated knowledge of students and their needs, inclusive and positive classrooms, and efforts to add to students' growth and awareness.

At the beginning of practice teaching, the focus in the pre-service teachers' comments regarding their own teacher identities was on their characteristics and role models. In line with Xu (2013), these suggested their cue-

based identities since they associated certain features with good teachers and exemplar-based identities since they referred to their former teachers while doing this. Pre-service teachers' initial state demonstrated an individualistic perspective in understanding their teacher identities. However, teacher authority and responsibilities turned out as the most frequent topics in post-practice teaching comments. This was linked to the growth of rule-based identities as teachers since they took responsibilities and management as reference points. Though a bit scarce in the data, pre-service teachers stated the influence of classroom and school contexts on their teaching practices. This was linked to the emergence of schema-based identities implying contextual and institutional knowledge and awareness. There was a clear transition for pre-service teachers from an individualistic to an institutional perspective in their conceptualization of teacher professional identities.

We argue that none of these identities are separate but rather interwoven in complex and complicated ways. By reporting the opinions of the student teachers on what identity is and how they believe the course contributed to their identity construction process, this study adds to the literature on teacher professional identity by a qualitative examination of an international context. It aims to provide implications for foreign language teacher education programs such as providing room for prospective language teachers to contemplate on who they are as teachers in identity-oriented teacher education. As Yazan (2014) suggests, teacher identity development and negotiation need to be set as an explicit goal in teacher education programs. Then, teacher education could also focus on the kind of teacher it is possible to be, in addition to teaching methodology. Mentoring and supervising, specifically in practice teaching, could be shaped in a way to create mediational spaces for pre-service teachers to probe identity tensions, solve possible crises, and designate an action agenda with a critical mindset regarding self, context, and pedagogy. To bring forward the identity construction processes of prospective teachers in different cultural contexts will make a valuable contribution to teacher education research since teacher identity is a vital component and the desired starting point of teacher education. Such studies will bear insights to utilize practice teaching as a meaningful process to construct and maintain positively stable teacher professional identities. Since teachers being able to identify with the profession are argued to have an ineluctable impact on students (Bullough, 2015), studies with a focus on teacher identity might as well improve the understanding of teachers' continuous development to foster student learning.

To conclude, this study is not without limitations. It should be noted that this qualitative study aims to present a case in its natural setting to interpret the meaning ascribed to the specific research phenomenon under focus rather than reach generalizable results. The number of the participants was limited due to the single case of a teaching practicum at a public university in Turkey. Further research with pre-service teachers from other countries and educational environments is needed before reaching any generalizations about the findings of the study. As self-reported data are too prone to social desirability bias; participants' desire to meet expectations (Dörnyei, 2007) and this study relied on reflective journals and interviews, further research utilizing different data collection tools—especially observations—are needed to fully justify research findings. We suggest longitudinal studies with different teachers and in different teacher education contexts as robust attention needs to be directed to the nature of identity, complexity and importance of context, critical reflection, and identity and pedagogy (Miller, 2009). Negotiating challenges about these areas could inform the dynamic development of teacher identities not just in terms of who they are, but instead who they are capable of becoming.

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STATEMENTS OF PUBLICATION ETHICS

The authors declare that this research does not have any ethical conflicts or problems that may limit the publication of the article.

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The authors contributed equally to this article.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest is reported by the authors.

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