



| Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi |

## The EFL Teachers' Self-perceptions of Professional Teacher Identity in Turkey

Türkiye'deki Yabancı Dil olarak İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Mesleki Öğretmen Kimliğine Yönelik Öz-Algıları<sup>1</sup>

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### Keywords

1. EFL
2. Emoji
3. Metaphor
4. Professional identity
5. Teacher identity

### Anahtar Kelimeler

1. Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce
2. Emoji
3. Metafor
4. Mesleki kimlik
5. Öğretmen kimliği

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### Abstract

*Purpose:* This study aims to investigate the professional identity of EFL teachers through metaphor and emoji elicitations.

*Methodology:* 40 teachers teaching EFL at different education institutions throughout Turkey voluntarily participated in the study. As the core point of the investigation, teachers were asked to frame their professional identity with representative metaphors besides explaining the main reason for selecting the related metaphor to represent their teacher identity and to type top four emoji that stand for their emotion and identity as an EFL teacher. Content analysis and descriptive analysis were employed for the analyses of the data.

*Findings:* According to the analysis, the metaphors were distributed to 8 distinct categories. As indicated by the findings related to the groups of metaphors, the labels appeared as 'a new identity', 'challenger', 'craftsperson', 'inspirer', 'nurturer', 'problem solver', 'traveller' and 'vitality'. Moreover, the most frequently typed top 4 emoji that participants associated with their professional identity commonly appeared to be positive illustrations that symbolize professional satisfaction with smiling face icons.

*Conclusion:* The conclusive evidence of the study suggested important implications for how these teachers regard themselves as professionals.

### Öz

*Amaç:* Bu çalışma yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğreten öğretmenlerin mesleki kimlik algılarını metafor ve emoji çıkarımları üzerinden araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır.

*Metod:* Çalışmaya Türkiye'deki farklı eğitim kurumlarında 40 yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğreten öğretmen gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. Araştırmanın esas noktası olarak, öğretmenlerden mesleki kimliklerini temsil etmek adına ilgili metaforları seçmedeki temel nedeni açıklamalarının yanı sıra, temsili metaforlarla mesleki kimliklerini ifade etmeleri ve yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretmeni olarak duygularını ve kimliklerini temsil eden ilk 4 emojiyi yazmaları istenmiştir. Verilerin analizi için içerik analizi ve tanımlayıcı analiz kullanılmıştır.

*Bulgular:* Analizlere göre metaforlar 8 farklı kategoriye ayrılmıştır. Metafor gruplarıyla ilgili olarak, etiketler 'yeni bir kimlik', 'meydan okuyucu', 'zanaatkar', 'ilham verici', 'besleyici', 'problem çözücü', 'gezgin' ve 'canlılık' olarak belirmiştir. Ayrıca, katılımcıların mesleki kimlikleriyle özdeşleştirdiği en çok yazılan emojiiler genellikle gülen yüz ikonlarıyla mesleki memnuniyeti simgeleyen olumlu görseller olarak karşımıza çıkmıştır.

*Sonuç:* Çalışmanın nihai kanıtı bu öğretmenlerin kendilerini mesleki olarak nasıl düşündüklerine yönelik önemli çıkarımları ortaya koymuştur.

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## INTRODUCTION

There has been a wide range of studies addressing the scope of professional identity in educational research. Bearing multifaceted concepts, identity as a professional term commonly involves similar keywords to be described. According to Varghese, et. al., (2005; p. 21) identity “is transformational, transformative, context-bound and constructed, maintained and negotiated via language and discourse”. In its general sense, the conceptualization of identity is explicated as our understanding of ourselves and other people around us (Norton, 2000). It is imposed by how we see others, how they see us (Johnson, 2003; Varghese, 2006), and ‘how we associate with the world’ (Pennycook, 2001, p. 149) through our constant negotiated interactions. On the other hand, as asserted by Flores & Day (2006), improving professional identity is described as a continual and dynamic process that entails interpretation and explanation of personal experiences and values that can be affected by individual, collective, and cognitive factors. Within this issue, studies revolving around teacher identity occupy a large area of research. As one of the circles of contemporary pedagogical research, teacher identity has been an area of interest to identify and shed light on the modern teacher-self and the other social (Varghese, et. al., 2005), emotional (Song, 2016), or individual elements that shape it (Danielewicz, 2001). As an outstanding branch that merits investigation, research on language teacher identity has long since drawn interest on conflicting and demanding factors affecting the identity of language teachers (Farrell, 2011; Song, 2016; Varghese, et. Al. 2005). In this sense, whether the language teachers are native or not has a great influence on their sense of professional identity. Looking through the prism with a holistic approach, it is possible to discern that a great bulk of English teachers are non-native (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2001) and the largest scale of these teachers practice in primary and secondary schools in various levels, while some of them teach at universities (Braine, 2014; Moussu & Llorca, 2008). Moreover, those non-native English as a second language (ESL) teachers commonly work under demanding conditions to maintain a more effective language teaching process that postulates them to build up innovations and curriculum reforms in teaching (Yuan, 2019) by struggling to improve learners’ target language performance. Once they settle on innovations, they are demotivated due to lack of institutional support along with exam-based education mechanisms (Lee, 2016). The long working hours and heavy workload can turn out to be a source of mental stress and burnout that also affects their personal accomplishment, emotional wellbeing, and professional development (Kimsesiz, 2019; Mann and Tang 2012). In a similar context, Varghese, et.al. (2005, 22) claim that noticing the factors that form a classroom as a whole is essential as it is the teacher who is “at play in the classroom” to moderate the way “language teaching is played out”. On a constantly transferring mechanism of education, teachers are expected to run off in all directions to keep up with the augmentation of knowledge and nonstop changes in society and education (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). The research in this area commonly involves narrative studies (Göktepe & Kunt, 2021; Güngör, 2016) and metaphorical analysis (Seferoğlu, et.al, (2009); Saban, et.al., (2007) to investigate the professional identity of teachers. In addition to utilizing metaphors, this study also employs emoji for the description of the professional identity of language teachers to elucidate their reflections as EFL teachers.

### Theoretical background

As the basic attempt in current research, the review intends to label and interpret the professional identities of language teachers to build a detailed and integral understanding of EFL teachers’ professional reflection. Several authors have drawn on the definition of identity to refer to its role as a reflection of the self in the profession (Norton, 2000; Vargese, et. al., 2005). In its general sense, identity refers to our understanding of the relationship to the world and the construction of this relationship across time and space (Norton, 2000). Due to teachers’ indisputable role in education, teacher identity also constitutes a great deal of interest in educational research (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Beijaard, et.al., 2004; Danielewicz, 2001, Zembylas, 2003). As an autonomous individual, a teacher is assumed to possess a consistent identity that “serves as the repository of particular experiences in classrooms and schools, the site of thoughts, attitudes, emotions, beliefs, and values” (Zembylas, 2003, p. 107), to keep in touch with the colleagues and to realize themselves since the extensive and deep process of teaching involves the self (Danielewicz, 2001). As a complicated and exquisite process, teaching requires arduous work to consider the variables of learners and teaching conditions to keep pace with ‘the ever-shifting context of the classroom’ (Danielewicz, 2001, p.9). Empathy for students, field knowledge, learning sensibility, managing the practicability of the tasks or activities, adaptation to the culture of the workplace, and controlling the teaching process are required for teaching (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). Moreover, the teacher is the leader who directs the activities and manages the time effectively, hence the teachers need to adopt a professional identity (Danielewicz, 2001).

As stated by Thomas & Beauchamp (2011, p.762/763), “the process of envisioning the self as a professional is a crucial stage in the development of an effective teacher identity”. Teachers are strongly affected by their teaching environments (Flores & Day, 2006). For a teacher, the notions “who am I?” and “who am I as a teacher?” are closely related and endorse the complex nature of identity development. In this respect, how to analyze professional identity is of equal importance. In particular, the use of metaphors is one of the most suitable approaches in examining the aspects of identity (Knowles, 1994; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). Widely considered to be a key driver in identifications, metaphor is described as “analogic devices that lie beneath the service of a person’s awareness and serve as a cognitive device as a means for framing and defining experience to achieve meaning about one’s life” (Massengil, Shaw, & Mahlios, 2008, p. 35). On the same description, Yob (2003) previously stated that “a

metaphor is employed when one wants to explore and understand something esoteric, abstract, novel or highly speculative” (p.134). In this sense, metaphors carry instrumental value for self-reflection and interaction as well as mind-setting that impacts their cognition of the self and the world (Moser, 2000). To unearth this complication, Oxford et al. (1998, 4) suggested that metaphor “involves employing a familiar object or event as a conceptual tool to elucidate features of a more complex subject or situation”. As metaphors involve the educational values, beliefs, and principles of teachers, they also reveal evidence for professional growth (Gillis & Johnson, 2002). Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) noted that they found eliciting teachers’ notions of their professional identity through metaphors highly acceptable as they enable vivid descriptions through the poetic nature of metaphors allowing them to describe themselves in simple and descriptive ways.

Moreover, as one of the most prominent figures in the field of computer-mediated communication, emoji are widely accepted as vivid and symbolic non-verbal elements as an alternative to the reflection of ideas, moods, and emotions (Bai, et. al., 2019; Troiano & Nante, 2018). To put it in simple terms, the word ‘emoji’ is a combination of ‘e’ (picture) and ‘moji’ (character) in Japanese with predefined codes that represent emotions, feelings, facial expression, gestures, objects, etc. (Rodrigues et al., 2017). Hence, what is demonstrated here is that an emoji enables users to express their emotions, moods, and feelings to the interlocutor through symbolic non-verbal elements in computer-mediated communication (Troiano & Nante, 2018) particularly for online text-based communication on smartphones (Novak, et. al., 2015). What is more, they are meaningful and emotional characteristics frequently used in online communication (Bai, et.al., 2019). Although there may be some varieties in the tendency of using emoji by males and females (Chen Z. et al., 2018; Prada et al., 2018; Rodrigues et al., 2017; Tossell et al., 2012), the selection of emoji can depend on individual and demographic influences (Bai, et.al., 2019).

The growing amount of literature shows that, among all other branches of teaching, foreign language teachers also attract the attention of many researchers for the configuration of their professional identity (Flores & Day, 2006; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). Referring to the issue, several studies emerged to validate evidence and disseminate major insights for the configuration of EFL teachers’ identity associated with their professional identification. Upon the same issue, studies on language teacher identity in Turkey yielded promising results in terms of teachers expressing themselves (Akcan, 2016; Güngör, 2016; Keskin & Zaimoğlu, 2021) and equating themselves with metaphors (Saban et. Al., 2007; Seferoğlu, et.al., 2009; Yeşilbursa, 2012). These studies on language teachers’ perceptions for self-reflecting on their identities highlight repository results relating to their self-perception, emotions, language skills, and competencies as an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher. A comparatively recent reference can be attributed to Keskin & Zaimoğlu (2021) who found out that with a stable professional identity, Turkish EFL teachers were mostly committed to their personal growth and development, in addition to considering students’ needs and issues related to the school they work. In a narrative study that investigated two EFL teachers’ reflections on their environment, behaviors, beliefs, competencies, and missions entitled as teacher identity concept, Güngör (2016) found that teachers demand supporting community for practice and reconciled system for mentoring that enables them for self-reflection in the teaching context. To enable teachers’ identification with their teaching profession, some of the studies were directed to associate their identity with metaphors (Saban, et. Al. 2006; Yeşilbursa, 2012). In another study conducted by Saban, et. al. (2006), research results implicated that teachers’ conceptualization about teaching and learning is liable to depend on some cultural and demographic factors such as gender and their particular experiences once as a learner. Also, the findings of the study strongly suggested that prospective teachers have a system of metaphors to conceptualize their understanding of teaching and learning. In her study investigating perceptions of English language instructors about relating their professional identities, Yeşilbursa (2012) unearthed that patterns of metaphors fit into distinct groups based on the frequency of metaphors and that her findings shared similar results with the international literature on metaphor. Additionally, as inferred from the study by Atay & Ece (2009); Turkish prospective teachers felt conscious of their multiple identities and attached priority to their Turkish and Muslim identities. They also regarded learning English as a means to help them gain some distinct personal traits to become a more ideal language teacher. These prospective teachers also felt that they play a role as the transmitters of Western values and foreign cultures to the students in language courses.

## METHOD

Aiming to clarify EFL teachers’ description of their teacher identity through metaphors and emoji, the following research questions were employed:

1. What is revealed by the metaphors relating to EFL teachers’ sense of their professional identities?
2. What reasons lay behind EFL teachers’ selections of metaphors for the description of their professional identity?
3. What are the most frequently selected emoji by the EFL teachers to describe their identity as professionals and how can they be evaluated in terms of their professional satisfaction?

## Participants

Through the course of the study, 40 EFL teachers voluntarily participated with a gender distribution of 6 males (15%) and 34 females (85%). Their teaching experience ranged between 5-23 years and they held degrees in ELT (English Language Teaching) (N=18), ELL (English Language and Literature) (N=3), and other departments (N=1). The participants were all non-native English speaking teachers with a Turkish language background and they were employed at state-run universities (N=7; 17,5%) and public

schools (N= 33; 82,5%) affiliated to the Ministry of National Education in Turkey. The questions were asked in English with the agreement of the participants.

### Data Collection

The data was collected through the completion of an online form that asked participants to fill in the blanks related to their demographic information and the research prompts about metaphor elicitation and emoji representation concerning their professional identity as EFL teachers.

### Procedure

The data were collected employing an online form involving two parts. The first part required participants to fill in their demographic information and, following the study by Thomas & Beauchamp (2011), in the second part participants were asked to complete three descriptive prompts as 'Being an English teacher is like...'; 'I preferred that metaphor because...'; and 'I can illustrate my self-identity as an English teacher with the following top four emoji:...'. In this way, teachers were asked to frame their professional identity with denotative metaphors and illustrative emoji and to provide a straightforward reason for selecting the related metaphor to represent their teacher identity. All of the participants (N=40) that were sent invitation links for participation consent replied to the form back through e-mails and a social media communication program. Ethical approval was granted from the University Ethics Committee before data collection began. The replies from the participants were later transcribed and coded by the researcher and a colleague who was blind to the process with digital codenames for ensuring anonymity. To facilitate the analysis, each participant was coded by sequential digits. The data was later transmitted to a statistical package program and for the analysis of the data, content analysis was employed to ensure the reliability of the results. Emojis were defined by their explanation taken from the official site of emoji [www.emojiopedia.org](http://www.emojiopedia.org).

### Data Analysis

To analyze the data, content analysis was used, and the data were coded by hand on the computer database. Related to the first research question, all metaphors by each participant were identified and categorized based on the frequency of the answers given by the participants. The metaphors from each participant were separately identified and were grouped according to their themes about professional identity that emerged as possible categories. For the analysis of the metaphors, conventional content analysis was employed. This type of design is preferred when preconceived categories are avoided (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002) and when categories are allowed to flow from the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In addition, participants' explanations related with the second question were rendered within each category of metaphors in a narrative approach.

For the analysis of the emoji elicitations, summative content analysis was generated to quantify certain words or items in a text to understand the contextual use of the words or content and to focus on the frequency of specific content (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002). Hence, in this step, descriptive analysis was employed for the definition of their frequency at <https://www.online-utility.org/text/analyzer.jsp> that calculates the most frequent phrases, frequencies of words and their lexical density. Both the interrater reliability and descriptive analysis were done through SPSS 21., a statistical package program. For the analysis of the emoji elicitations, descriptive analysis was employed for the definition of their frequency. Both the interrater reliability and descriptive analysis were done through SPSS 21., a statistical package program.

### FINDINGS

The results of the content analysis suggested that 40 metaphors could be grouped into 8 clusters. The degree of interrater agreement was found highly satisfactory (The Cohen's Kappa  $\kappa = .91$ ) as the agreement among raters was strong (McHough, 2012) which also shows that metaphors could be well represented by these clusters. As indicated by the findings related to the groups of metaphors, the labels are as follows: 'a new identity', 'challenger', 'craftsperson', 'inspirer', 'nurturer', 'problem solver', 'traveller' and 'vitality'. With regard to the second research question, participants' reasons of why they chose the related metaphors are also clarified within each category.

Within the 'a new identity' category, one participant marked that he felt 'like two people in one body' because he felt himself with two distinct identities (P.2). Another participant (P.7) stated that being an English teacher is like 'having a twin' because she could also express herself in another language. Similarly, another participant (P.9) described herself as 'having a second personality' causing her to feel that whenever she taught English, she felt as if she was someone else, not herself. Within the same category, two other participants (P.5; P.8) conveyed that they felt two distinct personalities in their existence, as P.8 noted that she could teach a new and advantageous language to the learners. P.14 compared being an English teacher to acting the main character of a story and added that she chose this metaphor because they have the chance to educate people like the main character of a story.

In the cluster of 'craftsperson', participants rendered divergent associations for becoming an EFL teacher. Some of the participants regarded being an English teacher as acting on the stage as an actor/actress (P.29; P.31) to take students' attention through the lesson. In this category, one of the participants (P.32) associated herself with 'an ambulance driver' that is called in

case of emergency when they need any help in English, another participant (35) resembled herself to 'a bee that makes honeycomb' through hard work to be beneficial for the students. Yet, another participant (38) chose the metaphor 'farmer' as she believed that teachers make a great effort for their students as farmers do for their cultivation. Similarly, P. 23 used the metaphor 'gardener' to describe her identity as an EFL teacher. Further, she explained that as they plant a little seed, they see a huge tree by time through patience and effort. Distinctively, another participant (P. 3) noted that it is just like working as 'a cultural ambassador' emphasizing that language and culture are closely integrated, and the teachers are the weavers of this interrelation.

In the nominative case, the metaphors in the 'nurturer' category included 'parent' and 'mother'. Within this category, two of the participants (P.1; P.26) associated being an English teacher with being a 'parent' who teaches the native language, and also who helps, guides, reflects, and builds a better understanding for the students to lead them to build their autonomy as a learner. Two of the participants (P.36; P.40) chose the metaphor 'mother' giving the reason that they feel an endless love and empathy for each student as that of a mother and they approach each child as if they were their mother because they have time together, learn new things, and understand each other.

Viewing the matter from a different angle, some of the participants associated being an English teacher with a 'traveller'. One of the participants noted that it just reminded her of a journey (P. 11). The other participants stated that it was just like being a traveller in their hometown (P. 22), flying to unknown places (P.17), and being a world traveller who could discover new things each day (P.39).

Another mostly associated metaphor was the English teacher as a 'problem solver'. Mainly two of the participants (P.16; P.21) assumed a role as a 'problem solver' defining that both learning and teaching a foreign language is a long-term process to be resolved. One of the participants (P. 6) elicited 'being a key' as a metaphor for being an EFL teacher giving the reason that they open doors of a new world for the students. Some of the participants stated that they regarded themselves as a 'social witch' (P.28), and a 'magician' (P.20) whom people expect wonders, and two of the participants (P. 30; P.34) stated that an English teacher is like a hero because when people need any help in English, they call them.

The metaphor categorized under the heading of 'inspirer' involved evocative metaphors. Within this category, P.12 wrote that it's just like inspiring and breaking the prejudice of the learners and it's possible. P. 13 noted that being an EFL teacher is like 'creating question marks in brains' to make the little brains start to question. Moreover, being an EFL teacher resembled a 'shining star' (P. 15) and a light lantern (P. 25) symbolizing the bright side of teaching various things related to a foreign language and reflecting them to the students.




















Another category was 'challenger' pinning on various struggles of EFL teachers. P.4 stated that her duty is just like that of a little bird carrying heavy things by trying more yet achieving less. P. 10 noted that being an EFL teacher is like pushing the limits as a human being, yet it was possible when they struggled. Two of the participants (P.24, P.27) reflected that being an English teacher is like an 'ugly duckling' depending on the reason that their role may change over time (P.24) and that they weren't valued and appreciated by society though the potential that could lead the innovation and improvement not only mentally but also socially (P.27). Another participant (P.33) noted that it was like swimming backward in the middle of the ocean due to the wayward but exciting process of teaching. Another metaphor in this category was figured by P. 19 defining that being an English teacher was like flowing on water sometimes diving to find the shells that have pearls. In this scenario, the participant also explained that pearls represented only the gifted ones who can grab the core meaning in learning a foreign language.







The last category 'vitality' included two distinct metaphors. As explained by P. 37 being an English teacher was like feeling a never-ending passion because she felt that teaching a foreign language was charming. The other participant (P. 18) noted that it was like a 'blooming flower' stating that 'we go further from where we start teaching. While teaching, we learn a lot'.

Moreover, participants propounded consistent and rational explanations for their choice of metaphors in identification with their professional identity as EFL teachers. To give an illustration, in the category of 'a new identity', participants stated that they felt that they took on a different identity as an English teacher and they mentioned their struggle in teaching English in the category of 'challenging'. They identified their professional identities with different occupational groups such as 'ambulance driver' or 'actor' in the category of 'craftsman' and emphasized the inspiring aspects of their professions in the 'inspiring' category. In the 'nurturing' category, teaching was identified with 'motherhood', and in the 'problem solver' category, the aspect of the profession was emphasized on producing solutions to problems. In the category of 'traveller' the advantageous aspect of traveling as an English teacher was conveyed and last but not least 'vitality' category symbolized their passion and improvement as a foreign language teacher.

In response to the third research question, participants aligned their feelings for being an EFL teacher with representative emojis. Some of the emojis are omitted since they didn't convey any frequency as they were preferred only once (N=50). For the total length of emoji (N=25), their frequency averaged between 2-9 (Std.= 2,21). Table 1 displays most frequently typed emoji for the representation of professional identity of EFL teachers.

Table 1. The Most Frequently Typed Emoji for The Representation of Professional Identity of EFL Teachers

Emoji	Frequency	Name	Official Definition
	10	Smiling face with hearts	a range of happy, affectionate feelings, especially being in love
	9	Star-struck	amazing, fascinating, impressive, or exciting.
	9	Smiling face with smiling eyes	genuine happiness and warm, positive feelings
	8	Partying face	celebrating joyous occasions and enjoying good times.
	8	Smiling face with sunglasses	confident, carefree attitude or that something is excellent
	7	Nerd face	People calling themselves nerds in a self-deprecating way
	6	Smiling face with open hands	love and care, or warm, positive feelings.
	5	Thinking face	pondering or deep in thought
	5	Face with monocle	pondering, considering, or questioning something, sometimes with a sense of skeptical or ironic observation
	4	Smiling face with heart-eyes	enthusiastic feelings of love, infatuation, and adoration
	4	Globe showing Europe-Africa	used to represent Earth and international affairs more generally.
	3	Grinning face with smiling eyes	general happiness and good-natured amusement.
	3	Smiling face with halo	angels, prayers, and blessings
	3	Woman running	Runner
	3	Grinning face with sweat	Intended to depict nerves or discomfort but commonly used to express a close call, as if saying <i>Whew!</i> and wiping sweat from the forehead.
	3	Smiling face	Conveys a wide range of warm, positive feelings, including love, happiness, and gratitude
	3	Face with tears of joy	something is funny or pleasing
	3	Thumbs up	approval
	2	Face with raised eyebrow	suspicion, skepticism, concern, consideration, disbelief, and disapproval

Emoji	Frequency	Name	Official Definition
	2	Beaming face with smiling eyes	expresses a radiant, gratified happiness
	2	Relieved face	contentment, calm, peace, and relief
	2	Folded hands	meaning <i>please</i> or <i>thank you</i>
	2	Clapping hands	used multiple times can be used as a round of applause.
	2	Woman technologist	working in the field of technology.
	2	Woman teacher	the intention of teaching a class

(Names and definitions were retrieved from [www.emojipedia.org](http://www.emojipedia.org))

As can be depicted from the table above, smiling face with hearts (N=10) has been typed with most frequently followed by smiling face with smiling eyes and star struck occurring 9 times and smiling face with sunglasses and partying face for 8 times. The other most frequent emoji appearing were nerd face (N=7), smiling face with open hands (N=6), thinking face (N=5), face with monocle (N=5), smiling face with heart eyes (N=4), and a globe showing Europe (N=4). Emojis with less frequency were arranged as grinning face with smiling eyes, smiling face with halo, a woman running, grinning face with sweat, smiling face, thumps up, and face with fears of joy each typed for 3 times by the participants. Emojis with the least frequency covered face with raised eyebrow, beaming face with smiling eyes, relieved face, folded and clapping hands, woman technologist and woman teacher all occurring for 2 times.

Based on the official name of the emojis, word frequency was calculated. Among 81 words, frequency of some top phrases containing 2 words is listed in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Frequency of some top phrases containing 2 words**

Some top phrases containing 2 words (without punctuation marks)	Occurrences	%
face with	12	14,8
smiling face	7	8,6
smiling eyes	3	3,7
with smiling	3	3,7
grinning face	2	2,4
face smiling	2	2,4
face face	2	2,4

For the evaluation of participants' satisfaction, the word frequency of emoji labels of smiling face (8,6%), smiling eyes and with smiling (3,7%) can be regarded as evidence for positive reflections. In other words, considering that these emojis were selected to mirror their professional identity, participants most frequently referred to positive representations described by smiling face moods followed by skeptical faces and positive approvals by 'smiling face' with extras such as 'hearts', 'open hands', 'sunglasses', 'halo'; 'thumps up'; 'clapping hands', and content face moods. Teachers also identified their moods as a woman 'running', 'technologist', and 'teacher' which describe their working field and desire. As a result, it is inferred that emojis selected by the participants generally evince positive, content, faithful, loving, and grateful moods for their professional identity as EFL teachers.

## DISCUSSION

Teaching identity has been an issue with several clusters around it. Relatedly, the aim of the current study was to investigate the professional identity of EFL teachers. On a constantly transferring mechanism of education, teachers are expected to run off in all directions to keep up with the augmentation of knowledge and nonstop changes in society (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). As it is clear from the literature, teachers are also expected to modulate their conformity to the shifting contexts in the education system (Danielewicz, 2001). Relatedly, schools are also expected to satisfy these needs concordantly. As metaphors involve the educational values, beliefs, and principles of teachers, they also reveal evidence for professional growth (Gillis & Johnson, 2002). Moreover, emojis permit users to illustrate their emotions, moods, feelings, etc. in computer mediated communication (Troiano & Nante, 2018). According to the findings, participants generally described themselves as having different roles as EFL teachers. To give an illustration, they noted that they regard themselves as having another identity, as a problem solver, as a traveller, a nurturer, a challenger, and an inspirer. What is demonstrated by the variety of metaphors here is that teachers individually carry a broad range of perspectives for the reflection of their professional identities. Similarly, this diversity draws a parallel line between what has been expressed in the preceding literature and what has been conveyed through the metaphor elicitation in that identity is a continual and dynamic process of personal interpretation and explanation of experiences and the values that can be attributed to an individual or collective thinking mechanism of the self (Flores & Day, 2006). On the other side, identity is clarified as the understanding of ourselves and the people around us (Norton, 2000), and these metaphors reflect how participants see themselves and how they associate with the world (Johnson, 2003; Pennycook, 2001). Moreover, professional identity necessitates interpretation of individual experiences and values that are open to influence by a personal or collective factor that feeds it on the way of improvement (Flores & Day, 2006). Relatedly, the findings in the area commonly ascertained positive and favorable labels (Saban, et. Al, 2006; Yeşilbursa, 2021) with also bright, stable, and delighted views for the professional identity of EFL teachers in Turkey (Atay & Ece, 2009; Keskin & Zaimoğlu, 2021). The distribution of metaphors in this study also revealed that teachers ideal themselves with positive and faithful roles in common. The findings from the metaphor analysis of the current study are also in line with the findings from the literature (Saban, et.al., 2006; Seferoğlu, et. al., 2009; Yeşilbursa, 2021). Scrutinizing through a wide-angle, it is possible to generalize that some notable examples are common in all distributions in the aforementioned studies such as teacher as a 'nurturer', 'guide', representing a 'craftsperson', and teacher with 'facilitative' and 'leader' roles (Saban, et. Al, 2006; Seferoğlu, et. al. 2009; Yeşilbursa, 2021).

On the other hand, as revealed by the findings from the emoji associations, participants generally mirrored positive and satisfied moods as their sense of being an EFL teacher. The emojis are meaningful and emotional characteristics used in online communication (Bai, et.al., 2019). To our knowledge, no study to date has examined the definition of professional identity of EFL teachers by using emoji elicitation. Thus, it is possible to assume that emojis, as indicators of individual reflections of moods and emotions mainly showed constructive and positive symbols for the representation of how participants felt as an EFL teacher. This shows that almost all of the participants reflected that they feel content, grateful, and affectionate to become an EFL teacher.

## CONCLUSION

There has been a number of studies looking into the professional and pedagogical issues regarding EFL teachers' identities in Turkey. Based on this background, the key contribution of this work was to describe how EFL teachers identify their professional identities through the metaphor and emoji they choose to reflect their teaching selves. The results pervade important insight into how these teachers see themselves as professionals. As the main focus of the study, teachers were asked to render their professional identity with metaphors with a straightforward reason for selecting the pertinent metaphor to represent their teacher identity and to type the top four emojis that stand for their emotion and identity as an EFL teacher. The primary findings of the research revealed positive and favourable descriptions with metaphors. Besides all these findings, consistent results indicated that teachers also associated themselves with positive emojis, particularly the ones with smiling face expressions with particular extras such as hearts, heart eyes, halo, and more that show their delight and gratitude to become an EFL teacher. In retrospect, the conclusive evidence of this current study suggests that EFL teachers are commonly satisfied with their profession. Accordingly, the metaphor and emoji analyses can be used to aid prospective teachers to reconsider their values, ideas, identity construction, and emotional reflection about teaching EFL.

As a last note, the study was limited in terms of the number of the sample believing that with a larger sample the study would suggest more categories of metaphors and more illustrative emoji. As reported by Morse & Field (1995), to keep the groups broad enough, it is better to form clusters between 10-15. Yet the categories in the current study were limited to 8 groups to form meaningful clusters depending on the data. Relatedly, further research in this field would provide brighter insight into the professional identity of EFL teachers in Turkey and the contributions made would be of wide interest.



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### Statements of publication ethics

I hereby declare that the study has not unethical issues and that research and publication ethics have been observed carefully.

### Ethics Committee Approval Information

The ethics committee approval was obtained from Kırşehir Ahi Evran University with a document number of 2021/9/16 on 23/12/2021. All participants provided written informed consent prior to enrolment and data collection in this study.

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