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Research Article

Becoming an Entrepreneur: The Journey of an EFL Teacher

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Abstract: Teacher entrepreneurship is an increasingly popular field of research that has attracted considerable attention over the past 15 years (Keyhani & Kim, 2020b). While prior studies focused on the outcomes, qualifications, and institutional contexts of teacher entrepreneurship, there is limited research addressing the personal motivations and decision-making processes that lead to entrepreneurial actions (Ho & Lee, 2023; Keyhani & Kim, 2020a; Oplatka, 2014). Thus, this article aims to explore these underlying reasons in the decision-making process through a qualitative single case study of an 8-year experienced Turkish EFL teacher in Türkiye who is a novice entrepreneur in the teaching field. The qualitative data were collected through a semi-structured online interview and analyzed employing thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework. The results were analyzed through Krueger, Reilly, and Carsrud's (2000) Model of the Entrepreneurial Event and Sarasvathy's (2008) effectuation theory. Two main themes emerged: Decision-Making and Accidental Piloting. The results suggest that entrepreneurial attempts emerged gradually from identity-based motivations, professional dissatisfaction, and contextual limitations rather than deliberate business planning. Despite changes in perceived feasibility, perceived desirability remained high, while entrepreneurial behaviors reflected effective principles such as bird-in-hand and lemonade, but not as purposeful plans. The study reveals that deliberate entrepreneurial planning is not required for teacher entrepreneurship; instead, entrepreneurial engagement might develop through professional identity motivations and experiential learning. Even though limited to a single case, the study enriches the literature by providing a contextualized perspective of teacher entrepreneurship in the Turkish EFL context.

Keywords: Teacher Entrepreneurship, Novice Entrepreneur, EFL Teacher, Case Study

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving world, the ability to innovate and take initiative is becoming increasingly important. In line with this, Tülüce and Yurtkur (2015) report that the importance of entrepreneurial strategies is growing for both new and established businesses. Considering the growing importance of entrepreneurship, it is crucial to comprehend the traits of entrepreneurs. According to Berry (2013a), entrepreneurs are risk-takers, self-sufficient individuals, and facilitators who initiate projects and accept complete accountability for the outcomes. Moreover, Bygrave (2009) suggests that the entrepreneurial process is both accessible and open to systematic instruction, implying that entrepreneurial skills may be developed rather than being solely inherent characteristics.

In recent decades, the notion of entrepreneurship has expanded into the field of education. Teacher entrepreneurship is an emerging and growing field of research that has received significant attention in the past 15 years (Keyhani & Kim, 2020b). Despite the increasing scholarly attention in recent years, Omer Attali and Yemini (2017) note that there is no universally accepted definition of what educational entrepreneurship entails. For example, they define teacher entrepreneurship as a vision-oriented process that recognizes educational needs and challenges, creates new solutions, and seeks to accomplish objectives in ways that enhance value and influence both local settings and the larger system. Over the last 15 years, research has focused mostly on entrepreneurship's outcomes, obstacles, and institutional frameworks (Ho & Lee, 2023; Keyhani & Kim, 2020a; Oplatka, 2014). However, far less attention has been paid to the underlying reasons that drive teachers to pursue entrepreneurial activities.

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Addressing this gap is essential, as it allows a more profound comprehension of the human aspects of entrepreneurial journeys. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the underlying reasons and decision-making processes of a Turkish EFL teacher with eight years of experience, who has recently embarked on an entrepreneurial journey by establishing an English-speaking club. Demydovych and Holik (2020) identify speaking clubs as interactive extracurricular settings designed to promote communication, social interaction, and language development. This concept aligns with the participant's venture, which similarly provides adult learners with an informal communicative setting outside traditional classroom boundaries.

This research aims to address the following question: How does a Turkish EFL teacher choose to go on an entrepreneurial path? Through a qualitative single case study, this research explores this subject and offers insights into the hows and whys of entrepreneurial decision-making in a teacher's career path.

2. Literature Review

Bygrave (2009) defines an entrepreneur as an individual who identifies an opportunity and establishes an organization to capitalize on it. This process is influenced by essential traits, such as a self-sufficient, optimistic, and risk-taking nature, and is frequently initiated by specific events or a quest for autonomy (Berry, 2013a; Bygrave, 2009). Initial theories aimed to define a distinct set of behavioral traits for entrepreneurs; however, Bygrave (2009) has shown that no universal set exists. Therefore, the emphasis has shifted from characterizing entrepreneurial qualities to studying the processes of conception, implementation, and the establishment of a profitable business, which are now considered to be the fundamental elements of entrepreneurship (Bygrave, 2009).

When it comes to the education context, Oplatka (2014) points out that the focus shifts from commercial purposes to social value. In this context, Keyhani and Kim (2021) conclude that the teacher entrepreneur is identified as a distinct category of social entrepreneur. The term "teacherpreneur," as defined by Berry (2013b), refers to an amazing teacher who continues to teach while simultaneously developing and implementing innovative policies and pedagogical strategies. Moreover, Berry (2013b) identifies teacherpreneurs as not only innovators but also educational leaders who tackle the isolation of conventional classrooms by collaborating with peers and sharing their knowledge. In their systematic review study, Keyhani and Kim (2021) identify crucial skills for teacherpreneurs. They are mainly driven by social motivations, seeking to meet student needs and contribute to greater social change. Furthermore, they exhibit innovation, collaboration, proactivity, resourcefulness, and a readiness to undertake calculated risks. The influence of these teachers is significant. Ho et al. (2020) state that their initiatives can foster greater collaboration among teachers, encourage innovative practices, enhance the school culture, and improve the appeal of the institution. However, the path is not without challenges. Ho and Lee (2023) suggest that teachers may encounter an innovation cliff upon transitioning to formal leadership positions, as administrative responsibilities can briefly hinder their entrepreneurial motivation. This indicates that the relationship between teachers' entrepreneurial identity and organizational structure is complicated and developing.

The decision-making process of teacher entrepreneurs is characterized by proactivity and a drive towards opportunities. Problems are frequently perceived not as obstacles but as opportunities for innovation (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010; van der Heijden et al., 2015). Borasi and Finnigan (2010, p.5) explain that decisions are typically made rapidly to capitalize on a "window of opportunity" and are often influenced by "gut instincts" developed through substantial professional experience. This matches with the "regret-minimization framework" articulated by Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon.com, who decided to initiate his business in order to prevent future regret related to not trying (as cited in Harper, 2012, p.12). These perspectives collectively demonstrate that entrepreneurial decisions often arise from intuitive judgments and a need to act before opportunities disappear. While such mechanisms are widely documented in the mainstream entrepreneurship literature, there is a lack of studies investigating the underlying reasons for starting businesses like a speaking club.

While the features of teacher entrepreneurs are becoming better identified, Al Kharusi et al. (2023) emphasize the need for a more contextualized understanding of how entrepreneurship is perceived and conducted outside of Western perspectives. While the majority of the current studies do not particularly address the Turkish EFL setting, studies from similar state-controlled educational

institutions, such as Oman, offer significant parallels. In their ethnographic study, Al Kharusi et al. (2023) elaborate on the impact of the state education system, government policy, and cultural values on entrepreneurial activity. Consequently, this study offers a critical perspective on a Turkish teacher's journey. The research conducted by Al Kharusi et al. (2023) on entrepreneurship education in Oman emphasizes various contextual elements pertinent to this study. First, in Oman, the government promotes entrepreneurship as a mechanism for economic development, narrowly defining it as the establishment of organizations. This leads to a possible disconnect with the socially driven, value-oriented essence of teacher entrepreneurship. Secondly, cultural influences, including a societal tendency toward stable government jobs, may significantly discourage entrepreneurship. These findings indicate that similar structural and cultural variables may also be relevant in other centralized education systems, including Türkiye, and affect how teachers perceive the potential of entrepreneurship.

This study utilizes Krueger, Reilly, and Carsrud's (2000) adaptation of Shapero's Model of the Entrepreneurial Event (SEE) to look into the formation of entrepreneurial intent. The model defines entrepreneurship as a deliberate process influenced by perceptions of desirability, feasibility, and an individual's propensity to act. Furthermore, it prioritizes personal motivations, contextual cues, and perceived abilities over simply logical decision-making in business development, illustrating how they interact in initiating entrepreneurial activity. In the SEE model, perceived desirability is related to the individual attraction of entrepreneurship, including both intrinsic and external influences. On the other hand, perceived feasibility indicates the extent to which an individual believes in their capability to start a venture; and propensity to act means the personal tendency to execute one's decisions, representing the motivational aspect of entrepreneurial intention (Krueger et al., 2000).

Although intention-based models explain the reasons individuals consider entrepreneurship, they provide little understanding of how entrepreneurial actions occur under uncertainty. Sarasvathy's (2008) theory of effectuation offers an additional process-oriented framework to address this issue. Effectuation defines entrepreneurship as an emergent, action-oriented process wherein individuals begin with their accessible resources, which are "who they are, what they know, and whom they know," and allow goals to develop through interaction (Sarasvathy, 2008, p. 101). The theory includes five principles. The first one is the bird-in-hand principle which argues initiating new ventures using available resources instead of chasing fixed objectives. The second principle is the affordable-loss which suggests investing in only what one can afford to lose rather than estimating potential gains. Third, the crazy-quilt principle involves collaborating with voluntarily engaged stakeholders who commit to the venture. Fourth, the lemonade principle encourages capitalizing on unforeseen events rather than disregarding them. The last principle is the pilot-in-the-plane emphasizing human agency as the main catalyst for opportunity (Sarasvathy, 2008).

In combination, Krueger et al.'s (2000) intention-based model and Sarasvathy's (2008) effectuation framework provide a thorough framework for exploring teacher entrepreneurship. Krueger's model describes the cognitive construction of entrepreneurial goals via desirability, feasibility, and propensity to act, whereas effectuation defines the transformation of these intentions into action through experimentation, resource bricolage, and learning through experience. In this study, these frameworks were not utilized as deductive coding categories before analysis; instead, they functioned as interpretive lenses during the concluding phase of thematic analysis, enabling the participant's narrative to be conceptualized within established entrepreneurship frameworks while remaining grounded in the data. The combination of both frameworks enables this study to highlight the EFL teacher-led entrepreneurial journey, including motivational factors and developing practices.

3. Method

3.1. Research design

This study employed a qualitative single-case study design. As Creswell (2009) states, case study research is a qualitative methodology that involves the researcher examining a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case), utilizing comprehensive in-depth data collection from various sources of information, which results in a case description and themes. This design is especially appropriate for the research, as the participant's entrepreneurial journey provides a confined system, bounded by her job, experience, and the particular environment of her English-speaking club.

A case study helps to understand what it is, how it functions, and how it interacts with its real-world contextual setting (Yin, 2018). As a result, this design proved appropriate for learning in-depth details about the hows and whys of making entrepreneurial decisions within the participant's particular work setting.

3.2. Participant

To have an in-depth understanding of a novice teacher entrepreneur's decision-making process, this study is based on the self-report of a participant with eight-year experience as a Turkish EFL teacher employed by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). As shown in Figure 1, she recently initiated a speaking club while maintaining her teaching job at a state school. The participant's educational and professional history can be observed within the figure below.

Figure 1

Participant's Educational and Professional History

Period	*Milestone*
2012–2017	*Graduated from a state university, ELT department*
2017–2025	*Gained teaching experience and got appointed as EFL teacher*
August 2025	*Cofounded English Speaking Club as a novice teacher entrepreneur*

This particular case was selected due to its representation of an exclusive and under-explored phenomenon: A public school teacher engaging in an entrepreneurial journey. Consequently, the participant, whose pseudonym will be Leyla in this study to ensure anonymity, is an exceptional and crucial source of information for this study. The participant was selected using purposeful sampling, a method that enables researchers to select information-rich cases that provide comprehensive insights into the subject being studied (Patton, 2014). Leyla was discovered by researchers' professional networks, as her business initiative was already familiar to them. While this may create a potential bias, the selection was justified due to the participant's serving as an information-rich example that might explain the research question. Moreover, the participant was selected as a single unique example because her entrepreneurial path had the potential to shed light on previously underexplored aspects of decision-making among EFL teachers in Türkiye. It also aligns with the principles of qualitative inquiry, which prioritizes depth of insight over scope of representation. Patton (2014) states that while quantitative methods rely on large, randomly selected samples for generalization, qualitative research typically focuses on in-depth analysis of relatively small samples, including single cases (n = 1), selected for specific purposes. It is essential to acknowledge that limited generalizability is a characteristic of single-case studies (Patton, 2014). However, the validity, meaningfulness, and insights obtained through qualitative inquiry are more dependent on the information richness of the selected cases and the researcher's analytical and observational abilities than on sample size (Patton, 2014).

3.3. Data collection

The data was collected via an online semi-structured interview. Yin (2018) points out that case studies aim to uncover participants' interpretations, insights, explanations, and meanings related to specific occurrences, which is essential for understanding their decision-making processes. That is why the participant serves as a key informant, offering valuable insights. An online interview was conducted due to its ease of access and convenience. Creswell (2009) highlights that internet-based qualitative data collection offers advantages in cost and time efficiency by minimizing expenses related to travel and data transcription. This way, the participant could tell her story from a place that was comfortable and familiar to her. The interview was conducted mostly in Turkish so that the participant could fully and naturally express herself and to avoid any gaps that might have been caused by translation. However, the participant was allowed to use English and switch between languages if she thought it would be easier to say certain terms in English.

The semi-structured interview questions were structured to collect specific information while also allowing for the emergence of unforeseen themes and perspectives not anticipated in the research design. The questions are primarily aimed at researchers to ensure focus on the lines of inquiry and the data to be collected. They also include substantive questions for gathering case study evidence

and outline general rules and procedures (Yin, 2018). The interview protocol includes three theme sections categorized according to the research question. The first section, Background and Context, collected data regarding the participant's professional background and her comprehension of teacher entrepreneurship (e.g., "How do you define teacher entrepreneurship?"). The second section, Decision-Making Process, focused on the motivations, social influences, and contextual factors that influenced the entrepreneurial journey (e.g., "What caused you to establish a speaking club when combined with your teaching role?"; "Was there a particular moment that forced you to act?"; "How did your close network react to your decision?"; "Did you perform any SWOT analysis before your initiation?"). The third phase, Reflection, encouraged the participant to assess her experience retrospectively and articulate her long-term objectives (e.g., "How would you metaphorically characterize your entrepreneurial journey?"). These forms provided theme focus and the necessary flexibility for comprehensive qualitative study.

A pilot interview was conducted prior to the full interview to evaluate the conciseness and structure of the questions. Due to the limited number of individuals who fit the participant description, the piloting was conducted with the assistance of AI-based tools, including ChatGPT, Gemini, and Co-Pilot. These tools modeled potential answers by role-playing as a Turkish EFL instructor employed by MoNE who had recently established an English-speaking club. This method facilitated the evaluation of the clarity, sequencing, and coherence of the semi-structured interview questions. The prompt used in AI-assisted piloting can be found in the appendix section (see Appendix A).

As noted by Patton (2014) and Yin (2018), this preparatory step was essential for refining data collection plans and developing relevant lines of questioning. It provided conceptual clarification for the research design and ensured that the questions were skillfully crafted and open-ended. To enhance the content validity of the tool, expert opinions were sought from academics specializing in English language education and qualitative research. The first set of interview questions was revised based on their feedback, which involved separating overly general or double-barreled items, rephrasing ambiguous prompts, incorporating a specific question regarding teacher entrepreneurship, modifying the metaphor question to avoid limiting responses, and adding a concluding question for additional comments. This procedure enhanced the link between the research aim and the data collection instrument. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the ethics committee of the researchers' home institution, ensuring respect for accepted norms of voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent and confidentiality, were prioritized. The participant received a comprehensive briefing on the study's purpose, and the participant's rights were explained before the interview. The semi-structured online interview was recorded with consent. The recording was transcribed verbatim, and the transcript was reviewed and cross-checked with the original audio to ensure accuracy. The iterative process of listening, transcribing, and revising ensured data quality and facilitated the researchers' familiarization with the data, a crucial initial step in the thematic analysis process.

3.4. Data analysis

The process of qualitative analysis is both interpretive and iterative, and it begins with the collection of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2014). Patton (2014) highlights that the researcher has an active role and plays as the instrument in qualitative studies.

The interview was analyzed using thematic analysis, a method that involves coding open-ended responses to identify recurring patterns and themes (Patton, 2014). Additionally, the analysis was conducted in accordance with the six-phase thematic analysis approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This analysis was selected for its capacity to facilitate inductive exploration and interpretive depth, thereby effectively addressing the hows and whys of the participant's entrepreneurial decision-making (Yin, 2018).

The six-phase framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used for analyzing the data thematically. The interview was transcribed and reviewed multiple times to enhance familiarity and identify initial concepts such as motivation, decision-making, and challenges. Subsequently, significant parts of the transcript were systematically coded, resulting in a set of initial codes, including job satisfaction, current struggles, and unforeseen problems. Third, related codes were organized into initial themes. Next, themes were evaluated for consistency with the data and then

refined into a thematic map. In the fifth phase, the final thematic structure was formed, comprising two main phases: Decision-Making (Motivation and Building) and Accidental Piloting (Struggling and Continuing). In the sixth step, the themes were elaborated into an interpretive narrative, supported by direct quotations, and explained through Krueger et al.'s (2000) Model of the Entrepreneurial Event (SEE) and Sarasvathy's (2008) Effectuation principles. It is crucial to emphasize that these theoretical frameworks did not influence the interview design or the coding process; instead, they were utilized solely at the final interpretive phase. The themes originated inductively from the data, and the constructs of both frameworks including perceived desirability, perceived feasibility, and propensity to act (Krueger et al., 2000), along with bird-in-hand, affordable loss, and lemonade (Sarasvathy, 2008) were subsequently employed to theorize and contextualize the emergent themes within the wider entrepreneurship literature. This methodology guaranteed transparency, analytical accuracy, and a unique connection between the research question and the emerging ideas.

3.5. Trustworthiness and validity

The quality of this qualitative study is ensured through its implementation of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework of trustworthiness, which highlights credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The criteria offer alternatives to conventional measures of validity and reliability, ensuring that findings accurately represent participant's lived experiences.

Throughout the research process, credibility, also known as internal validity, was a main focus. Piloting and expert opinion established the credibility of the interview questions, enhancing their clarity and alignment with the research objectives. Using verbatim quotes during analysis helped to support interpretations directly in the participant's own words, making the results more credible. As Braun and Clarke (2006) note, verbatim quotations are crucial for this because they support interpretations in the participant's own words, thereby enhancing authenticity and credibility.

While the results of a single case study are not intended for statistical generalization, their usefulness can be assessed in terms of transferability (Yin, 2018). Lincoln and Guba (1985) define transferability as the ability to apply the findings effectively in similar contexts or circumstances. However, transferability is not the main goal of this study; rather, the aim is not to claim that all English teachers will inevitably face entrepreneurship, but to provide a comprehensive analysis of a particular case. The participant's professional experience as a teacher and her novice experience as an entrepreneur were described in detail and contextually. The detailed examination of her motivations and decision-making processes enables readers to assess the relevance of the findings in their respective professional or research contexts.

Dependability highlights the consistency of data across time and varying conditions, necessitating that the inquiry process is trackable and identifiable in its steps (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure dependability, the researchers meticulously documented each phase of the research process, encompassing data collection, coding, and theme development, thereby establishing a clear audit trail. To maintain clarity and prevent bias, the authors periodically reviewed analytical choices, even though formal peer debriefing was not conducted.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), confirmability is the process of ensuring that the participant's experiences, rather than the researchers' bias, shape the results. This is done through reflexivity; the findings were supported by detailed, verbatim extracts that illustrated what was included in the data. Confirmability was further strengthened through partial member checking. Rather than providing the complete transcript, only particular comments requiring clarification were sent back to the participant for accuracy confirmation. The participant confirmed the intended meaning of these points, reducing misinterpretation and guaranteeing that the analysis was based on the participant's genuine experiences rather than the researcher's assumptions.

4. Results and Discussion

An analysis of the participant's interview data uncovers two main themes: the decision-making phase and the accidental piloting phase. The participant's narratives in the decision-making process centered on her initial motivation for initiating the project and the factors that influenced the building phase. The accidental piloting theme, on the other hand, highlights the challenges she faced post-launch and the factors that sustained her motivation to continue. Upon examining these themes together, it

is apparent that the participant's entrepreneurial path is in line with Krueger et al. (2000) Shapero-Krueger's Model of the Entrepreneurial Event (SEE) and Sarasvathy's (2008) Effectuation principles, specifically Perceived Desirability, Perceived Feasibility, and Propensity to act, alongside Sarasvathy's (2008) principles of effectuation, which include Bird-in-hand, Affordable Loss, Crazy Quilt, Lemonade, and Pilot-in-the-plane.

4.1. Decision-making in starting an entrepreneurship journey

Dew et al. (2009) show that when novice entrepreneurs start on their journeys, they promptly decide to walk in that arena; however, data gathered from our participant indicates that Leyla did not promptly decide to establish a speaking club; instead, her drive developed progressively as various personal, professional, and contextual elements combined.

Despite eight years of experience in teaching English, she expressed dissatisfaction with her work environment, particularly due to the limitations imposed by a uniform curriculum that restricted her capacity to tailor classes. This finding aligns with Skaalvik and Skaalvik's (2017) research, which indicates that, in environments with a national curriculum, the primary aim framework of the school is influenced by nationally required standards, potentially limiting teachers' autonomy. Furthermore, their findings demonstrate that stressful or restrictive work environments can reduce job satisfaction and prompt teachers to reevaluate their professional roles. Under these circumstances, Leyla's discontent functioned not just as a source of dissatisfaction but also as an influence that affected her professional aims. This discontent, along with her goal to motivate English learners, encouraged her to explore an alternative path. As she noted: "Missing speaking English was the driving force," and she "wanted to show EFL learners that they can speak without knowing all the grammar." These reflections correspond with Krueger et al.'s (2000) definition of Perceived Desirability, which indicates the degree to which an activity is personally significant and consistent with one's identity. Although Keyhani and Kim (2021) highlight socially driven motivations in teacherpreneurs, Leyla's case shows that entrepreneurial involvement may also stem from self-oriented professional goals, including job satisfaction and willingness to use the language.

For Leyla, speaking English was linked with joy, confidence, and satisfaction. Fraga-Cañadas's (2010) research on foreign language teachers reveals that a decline in linguistic proficiency frequently occurs when teachers do not have the opportunity for continuous communicative interaction. Many teachers linked this decline to being restricted to lower-level classrooms (Fraga-Cañadas, 2010). Leyla expressed a similar feeling of language stagnation, indicating her failure to reach professional fulfillment in her current position.

> "I try to get the professional fulfillment there that I couldn't get at school. The moments when I actually feel fulfilled are very few… especially at the vocational high school."

Valmori and De Costa (2016) emphasize that language teachers frequently observe problems in the spoken component, listening, and direct communication, which aligns with Leyla's statement, "Maybe I just missed speaking English."

However, her current educational environment did not facilitate these feelings. She observed that during her time at a vocational high school, "the instances in which I truly felt satisfaction were almost absent," indicating that professional discontent heightened the attraction of entrepreneurship. This motivational process aligns with Sarasvathy's (2008) Bird-in-hand principle, as Leyla did not seek to create a fundamentally new institutional framework but rather utilized her identity as a skilled English speaker, her communication abilities, her pedagogical principles, and her established social network. Furthermore, Leyla's choice to establish the speaking club is in alignment with Borasi and Finnigan's (2010) findings. It was influenced by professional instinct gained through years of teaching experience rather than a formal and thorough opportunity analysis.

Struggles in maintaining her linguistic proficiency and job dissatisfaction reinforced Leyla's desire to re-engage with English as a lived, communicative practice. These sources of discontent, combined with the misalignment between her linguistic identity and her daily teaching methods, resulted in a specific moment of inspiration, further boosting her motivation to step into the entrepreneurship journey when she came across a different speaking club model.

> Leyla: I observed it and remarked, 'Yes, precisely this.' I long for the thrill. I want to see this (the joy) in myself too. I told my friend, 'Let's do it!'

This event highlights Krueger et al.'s (2000) concept of Propensity to act, demonstrating her intrinsic motivation to transition from intention to action. Moreover, Leyla's comments reflect "a regret-minimization" logic (as cited in Harper, 2012, p.12), in which action was chosen over inaction to avoid long-term professional dissatisfaction. Overall, these factors indicate that Leyla's motivation to establish the speaking club was influenced by her dissatisfaction with the existing conditions, the value she placed on communicative language utilization, and the resources built into her professional identity and social context.

4.2. Decision-making in building an entrepreneurship journey

Although Leyla did not promptly decide to establish a speaking club, when asked, she stated that she had never thought about conducting a structured SWOT analysis before embarking on this journey. However, the details she provided throughout the interview indicate that she had started establishing the speaking club by utilizing the tools already at her disposal when she was inspired to take action. Consistent with Sarasvathy's (2008, p. 101) Bird-in-hand theory, she utilized "who she is, what she knows, and whom she knows," using her eight years of expertise, strong communication skills, and growing teaching competencies as her foundational assets. Krueger et al. (2000) propose in their model that perceived feasibility is one of the effective factors in entrepreneurship. Similarly, Chen, Greene, and Crick (1998) explain that entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) is the fundamental psychological trait of entrepreneurs, and enhancing it can promote entrepreneurial activity. When it comes to Leyla's case, she did not conduct a formal SWOT analysis; instead, she informally discussed some factors with her close network. The high ESE initiated Leyla's quick active engagement in the entrepreneurial journey, explaining her focus on putting effort and taking action (Chen et al., 1998). While Keyhani and Kim (2021) define teacherpreneurs according to their deliberate risk-taking, Leyla's behavior indicates a more spontaneous approach to risk engagement, as decisions were made without formal analysis but were based on self-efficacy and accessible resources.

This action-oriented approach reduced the necessity for thorough formal planning. Thus, she employed an informal evaluation with her family and partner. This informal approach was enough since external factors enhanced her perceived feasibility to the point that she believed she was personally capable of starting the journey (Chen et al., 1998). Her close network provided powerful social support, agreeing that the project was "an excellent concept" and that "there is a necessity for such a program in town" considering the substantial population of white-collar workers and university students. This supportive environment enhanced her perspective of entrepreneurial feasibility, enabling her to decisively pursue the venture grounded on self-efficacy and recognized potential in the marketplace (Chen et al., 1998). Her familiarity with the Perceived Feasibility of entrepreneurship increased as she relied on her established abilities, familiarity with the local culture, and the support of her partner, whose native-level English ability further boosted her confidence (Krueger et al., 2000).

> Leyla: The lack of such a thing in this city might be the reason, the density of the white-collar population due to this city being an industrial city, and the density of university students due to it being a university city, and I guess the other plus is my partner being a Canadian citizen…

This statement also shows her rationale, highlighting a significant Perceived Opportunity (Krueger et al., 2000) based on an evident market gap within the white-collar and university student populations. Leyla's case also demonstrates a significant inclination towards perceived opportunities directly associated with her personal and professional needs instead of exhibiting proactive entrepreneurial leadership (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010; van der Heijden et al., 2015). Her partner also played an important role in accordance with the Crazy-Quilt principle (Sarasvathy, 2008), as her linguistic competence and materials gave early credibility and resources, particularly for the adult learners the group initially targeted. Leyla implemented the Affordable Loss principle while organizing the initial phases of the venture, reducing risk by initiating a workshop-based format, performing informal SWOT analyses with her close network, and making economical choices regarding the venue. Her customer base was shaped by immediate needs and available resources, prioritizing adults initially, while also considering future child-oriented activities with her partner. Overall, these factors demonstrate that Leyla's building process emerged not from typical business planning but from a self-efficacy-driven

process centered on the strategic use of her personal resources, contextual knowledge, and supportive partnerships.

4.3. Accidental piloting in an entrepreneurship journey

Although Leyla initially became involved in the speaking club project, she was not aware of her early actions as entrepreneurial; instead, she explicitly stated during the member-checking, "I did not enter it calling it entrepreneurship," emphasizing that her motivation arose from personal needs such as "a longing to speak English, professional fulfillment." Her emphasis on achieving personal goals rather than developing a business strategy means that the actions she took were exploratory rather than deliberate and strategic. Her initial actions were characterized by spontaneous experimentation with immediate assets, which is consistent with effectual logic emphasizing the utilization of accessible resources, also known as bird-in-hand. Furthermore, the understanding of a genuine market gap and perception of feasibility arose retrospectively, mostly driven by supportive external feedback, only after she committed to action.

During the development of the speaking club, Leyla accidentally entered a phase that was considered a pilot stage. Similarly, Fisher (2012, p. 1225) states that early-stage entrepreneurship activities occur through "experimental and iterative learning techniques aimed at discovering the future". This aligns with the view that in certain situations people do not follow a firm plan; rather, "goals change, are shaped and constructed over time, and are sometimes formed by chance." (Fisher, 2012, p. 1024).

During this phase, Leyla faced numerous unexpected challenges that tested her willingness to maintain the speaking club. These problems lead to a decrease in the perceived feasibility, which is consistent with Krueger et al.'s (2000) claim that feasibility evaluations can change when people encounter practical struggles.

Although she was following a careful risk management, which aligns with Affordable Loss, unforeseen expenses arose, which is evident in Leyla's statement, "We needed to run ads every week, and we hadn't fully planned for that".

It was combined with the significant institutional workload at the beginning of the academic year, which resulted in a reduced Perceived Feasibility (Krueger et al., 2000). This experience is also consistent with Ho and Lee's (2023) concept of an innovation cliff, in which institutional and administrative responsibilities temporarily limit entrepreneurial activity. Although these unpleasant surprises led to a decrease in Perceived Feasibility, Leyla's reactions suggest a process of adaptation rather than detachment that aligns with Sarasvathy (2008)'s lemonade principle involving learning from challenges. She expresses: "In the summer, everything seemed easy, but now I struggle adapting myself to my new life." Nevertheless, she expressed a strong desire to return to the project later: "We had to take a break, but I want to start it back as soon as possible. I prefer not to take an extended break." This sense of agency indicates that she perceived future outcomes as influenced by her actions, a perspective that can be analyzed retrospectively through the Pilot-in-the-Plane principle (Sarasvathy, 2008).

Despite the brief pause, Leyla's entrepreneurial goals remain active and forward-thinking. Her ongoing engagement indicates that a high Perceived Desirability, as she continues to recognize personal satisfaction and social significance in maintaining the initiative in line with Krueger et al.'s (2000) framework. She characterized the venture as something truly enjoyable instead of a burden, as evident in her statement in the interview "For me, it's like coffee. There is a process, but ultimately, it's something that brings pleasure." This metaphor illustrates both intrinsic satisfaction and an understanding that significant work demands patience and progressive growth. Also, this metaphor is consistent with the Lemonade principle (Sarasvathy, 2008). Her concluding comments highlighted her pride in being part of the study as a pathway to reclaiming her identity. Thus, the entrepreneurial adventure continues to develop slowly, much like the coffee she describes.

Overall, the accidental-piloting period shows how Leyla's entrepreneurial journey was impacted by a conflict between declining Perceived Feasibility and Perceived Desirability. Despite unforeseen expenses, workload challenges, and scheduling issues, her identity-based motivation and effective solutions helped her continue the speaking club. When analyzed through the lens of effectuation-based Sarasvathy's (2008) principles like Affordable Loss, Lemonade, and Pilot-in-the-plane and Krueger et al.'s (2000) framework, Leyla's reactions to these issues can be understood as emergent and

reflexive rather than intentionally planned. Thus, the piloting phase demonstrates both the fragility and resilience of her project as it adapted in response to real-world restrictions, showing its gradual adaptation to real-world challenges through unintentional experimentation.

5. Conclusion

This qualitative single-case study explored how a Turkish EFL teacher chose to go on an entrepreneurial journey. Leyla's case illustrates how entrepreneurial activity can arise from identity-driven motivations, personal and professional experiences, and contextual limitations rather than deliberate business planning. Findings were examined through the lenses of Krueger, Reilly, and Carsrud's (2000) Shapero-Krueger's Model of the Entrepreneurial Event (SEE) and Sarasvathy's (2008) effectuation principles. The study used these frameworks to investigate how entrepreneurial intentions and activities arose, evolved, and were sustained over time within a teacher-led initiative.

Furthermore, the findings were categorized into two main themes: Decision-Making (Motivation and Building) and Accidental Piloting (Struggling and Continuing), reflecting the development of an entrepreneurial venture over time. In the Decision-Making phase, Leyla's motivation was deeply connected to job satisfaction, a commitment to maintaining communicative language use, and identity-related demands. Moreover, Leyla's building process was self-efficacy-driven and focused on strategic use of her personal resources, contextual knowledge, and supportive partnerships. The Piloting phase occurred as a case of unintentional piloting, with the first steps happening without intentional entrepreneurial purpose. As real-world restrictions, like workload and financial obstacles, became significant, perceived feasibility diminished; however, perceived desirability mainly persisted, which allowed for ongoing involvement with the venture. These results imply that entrepreneurial action might occur without prior intentional planning or explicit self-identification as an entrepreneur. Although models like SEE prioritize intention and feasibility assessments, Leyla's case demonstrates that these evaluations can evolve retroactively through action and social feedback rather than before the commitment. From an effectuation point of view, her activities reflect principles such as bird-in-hand and lemonade not as intentional techniques but as patterns that emerged through practice. These patterns occurred in a situation where entrepreneurial actions were motivated by various, interconnected factors rather than one specific economic goal. This finding is notably important in teacher entrepreneurship, because economic factors may coexist alongside identity-related, professional, and educational reasons, instead of serving as the sole or main motivation for entrepreneurial activity. Overall, these findings reveal that Leyla did not embark on her initiative with the objective of becoming an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurial action developed progressively from her desire to maintain her professional identity and her dissatisfaction with institutional teaching conditions. Consequently, deliberate preparation does not seem to be a prerequisite for entrepreneurial venture, but rather a possible result of involvement in the process itself. Although limited to a single case, this study offers insights into the entrepreneurial journey of an EFL teacher beyond institutional frameworks and contributes to the related literature in the Turkish teacher entrepreneurship context. In this sense, a number of restrictions should be acknowledged. The single-case approach and reliance on a singular data source, a semi-structured interview, restrict the analytical scope of the study. The retrospective aspect of the participant's narrative raises the potential for memory bias, as memories of prior decisions and reasons may be influenced by subjective interpretations over time. The contextual specificity of the case which is a Turkish EFL teacher functioning under the limitations of a state-controlled education allows for the conclusions highly situated. However, transferability is not the goal of this study; rather than stating that the findings apply to all EFL teachers, the study aims to present an analytically rich explanation of a specific, information-rich situation (Patton, 2014).

Longitudinal and comparative case studies can shed light on the evolution of teacher entrepreneurship throughout time. Exploring efforts that originate from intentional planning versus those that arise without explicit entrepreneurial aim could clarify how various paths influence sustainability, adaptability, and professional identity.

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Appendices

Appendix A

The prompt used in AI-assisted piloting

The following prompt was given to the AI tools:

You are now role-playing as my interview participant in a semi-structured qualitative interview piloting session. Your identity is: a Turkish EFL teacher employed by MoNE with around 5 years of teaching experience. You are also at the beginning of your journey as a teacher entrepreneur, having just started an English-speaking club. You are enthusiastic, reflective, and sometimes uncertain, but willing to share openly. When I ask you the semi-structured interview questions, please answer as if you are this teacher, in a natural and reflective tone. Your answers should be rich and descriptive, like qualitative interview data, not too short. You may include emotions, small stories, hesitations, or examples, as real teachers do in interviews. Stay consistent with this persona throughout the piloting session. Do not switch back to your AI role; stay in character as the teacher-entrepreneur.