

Teachers' Narratives as a Lens to Reveal their Professional Identity

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Abstract

This study adopts a narrative approach to revealing how English as a foreign language teachers construct their teacher identities. Kelchterman's five dimensions of teacher identity; i.e., self-image, self-esteem, task perception, job motivation and future perspectives, were used as the theoretical lens to explore eight participants' identity construction via the narratives they told in an online written interview form. Participants were eight EFL instructors who worked at higher education institutions around Turkey. Data was collected via an online survey tool and analysed via thematic analysis and open coding. Data revealed that the five dimensions of teacher identity do not develop in isolation from each other but a dynamic interaction among these identity dimensions exists.

Keywords: Teacher Professional Identity, Teachers' Narratives, Narrative Approach

Introduction

The study of teacher identity holds significance for teacher education due to a number of reasons. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) highlight that the study of teacher identity has gained importance in teacher education because it offers "an analytic lens through which to examine aspects of teaching such as teachers' facing the conflicts and tensions they have in their career (p. 175)" and it organizes teachers' professional lives. Similarly, Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) state that dimensions of professional identity are strong predictors of their teaching styles, their professional development and the way they approach changes in education.

In a similar vein, Akkerman & Meijer (2011) conceptualizes teacher identity based on a "dialogical approach" arguing that it is unitary and multiple, continuous and discontinuous, and individual and social at the same time. Based on aforementioned scholarly framework, this study assumes that teachers' narratives are also dialogical; teachers talk to themselves when they reflect on their practices as a teacher, which may refer to "inner speech", and they also interact with colleagues, students, parents, administrators, etc. as they construct their personal narratives or 'stories' as teachers. Therefore, this study aims to reveal how EFL teachers in Turkey construct their teacher identities through the elicitation of narratives related to their lives as teachers.

However, the complex, multi-faceted and dynamic nature of teacher identity (Nias, 1996; Akkerman & Meijer, 2011) makes it relatively difficult to bring out a comprehensive and conclusive proposal of its construction process. Therefore, it can be argued that the theoretical lens through which this study views teacher identity is solely limited to the five dimensions of teacher identity proposed by Kelchterman (2009); i.e., self-image, self-esteem, task perception, job motivation and future perspectives. However, using other models; e.g., Huberman's seven stages of teachers' professional lives (as cited in Mockler, 2011) or Mockler's three key dimensions of teacher professional identity: "personal experience, professional context, and the external political

environment” (2011) as the theoretical lens to explore teacher identity may reveal other complex and multiple dimensions of teacher identity, which can be focus of future studies on EFL teachers’ identity construction.

Another limitation of this study is related to data collection procedures as there had to be some changes in the type of research instruments to be used. Originally, the researcher aimed to conduct face to face semi-structured interviews with purposefully selected participants- who were also the researcher’s colleagues who she knew well enough- who enjoyed reflecting on their identity as a teacher. However, due to Covid19 pandemic outbreak which resulted in strict restrictions, the researcher had to switch to collecting data through an online written interview form which was created on GoogleForms.

This study used teachers’ narratives, which are defined as “a story or a description of a series of events” or “a particular way of explaining or understanding events” in Cambridge online dictionary. Teachers’ narratives or ‘stories’ naturally make their identity construction process transparent for the researcher because narratives “tell about our past lives” and also “enable us to make sense of the present (Watson, 2009)”. Within this framework proposed above, this study aims to explore the answers to the following research questions:

- How do EFL teachers in Turkey construct their professional identity?
- What are the factors that shape EFL teachers’ professional identity?

Theoretical Framework

Teacher Identity and Foreign Language Teacher Education

How has identity become the focus of second language teacher education (SLTE)? The answer to this question lies in the paradigm shift from the behaviourist approach, which is concerned with teaching observable competencies and views the teacher as the technician, to a more holistic view of teacher education inspired by sociocultural approaches to teacher education. In truth, the earliest approach that emphasized the teacher as a person/human is humanistic-based teacher education (Korthagen, 2004) which was “largely absent from

the theory on how to best educate teachers (McLean as cited in Korthagen, 2004)”. As a result of research (Allwright; Nunan as cited in Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & Johnson, 2005), it was understood that classroom was a complex environment and there was more than methodology that had impact on learning and teaching; and the language teacher played a significant role in this process, which made it the focus of research in SLTE (Varghese et al., 2005). It may be argued that this broader perspective of teacher education has triggered the study of teacher beliefs, identity and mission, which are the inner levels of change in the onion model suggested by Korthagen (2004).

The complex and multi-dimensional nature of teacher identity may account for the diversity of terms used in defining teacher identity which results in different meanings of identity in the literature (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). However, Beijaard et al. (2004) state that these different definitions agree on “the idea that identity is not a fixed attribute of a person, but a relational phenomenon.” Supporting Beijaard et al.’s ideas, Varghese et al. also claim that identity is not “stable, fixed or unitary”; on the contrary, it is “multiple, shifting, transformational and transformative”. By the same token, Nichols, Schutz, Rodgers and Bilica (2017) argue that despite the differences in the definitions and measurement of teacher identity, the literature agrees that identity is not fixed but fluid, based on negotiation. However, criticising this agreement among some researchers on the notion that teacher identity is not fixed and unitary but fluid and multiple, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) argue that teacher identity is both fixed/unitary and fluid/multiple, “continuous and discontinuous, and individual and social” and it depends on teachers’ capability of managing “the influencing factors at different levels (Ye & Zhao, 2018).”

Garner and Kaplan (2018) argue that vague treatment of conceptualization of teacher identity is a challenge in the literature. Another criticism on defining teacher identity is that it is not the teacher identity being defined but the characteristics of teacher identity (Han, 2017). Despite these challenges in conceptualization of teacher identity, it is still an area of research that receives worldwide attention

(Bukor, 2015; Han, 2017; Garner & Kaplan, 2018) as Beijaard et al. (2004) also argue that despite being poorly defined, many researchers are still curious about teacher identity.

Personal Self and Professional Identity

A distinction between personal self and professional identity is made in the teacher identity literature (O'Connor, 2006; Day et al., 2006). However, they are not considered to be distant from each other; in truth, the boundaries between them may even be eradicated when teachers invest their personal identity in their work (Nias, 1996). It is agreed that teachers' self-knowledge, personal identity or personal lives and life experiences are related with their professional identity development (Day et al., 2006). It is not only the technical aspects of teaching and emotions that shape teachers' professional identity but also the interaction between teachers' personal self and "cultural, and institutional environment in which they function on a daily basis (Slegers&Kelchtermans, p. 579, as cited in Day et al., 2006)".

Kelchtermans (2009) argues that professional identity is evolutionary and transformational just as personal identity is. Mockler (2011) also suggests that "teacher professional identity, formed and re-formed constantly over the course of a career and mediated by a complex interplay of personal, professional and political dimensions of teachers' lives (p. 518)". Within this discussion of dimensions of teachers' personal lives that have impact on professional identity development, it might be useful to refer to Kelchtermans' (2009) framework for professional identity that is used as the theoretical lens to explore the dimension of teacher identity in this study. In this model, five interwoven dimensions that constitute professional identity; i.e., self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception and future perspective, are suggested. Self-image is about how teachers define their self through their job-related narratives while self-esteem refers to how teachers view and value themselves. Job motivation is concerned with teachers' willingness to continue teaching or their commitment to their job and task perception refers to teachers' definition of their jobs or how they perceive their jobs. Future perspective

is about what teachers expect from the future job developments.

Huberman also (as cited in Mockler, 2011) proposed seven stages of teachers' professional lives based on his study with Swiss teachers: survival and discovery, stabilisation, experimentation/activism, taking stock, self-doubts, serenity, conservatism and disengagement. Mockler (2011) argues that Huberman's model views professional identity formation as a process that lasts throughout the entire teaching career of a teacher; however, he also states that his own model is less linear compared to Huberman's, but cyclical, allowing the "drift" among these stages. Mockler (2011) proposes three key dimensions of teacher professional identity: "personal experience, professional context, and the external political environment within and through which significant aspects of their work are constituted (p. 520)."

Day et al. (2006) also list a number of factors that may have influence on teachers' sense of professional identity. Drawing on the Beijaard's 1995 study, they argue that the subject matter, other colleagues' perceptions of the subject matter they teach, relationships with teachers who teach the same subject as them, relationships with students which involve distance and intimacy, students' behaviours/attitudes and school culture have strong influences on teachers' professional identity development.

Narrative Approach to Teacher Identity

Research that adopts the narrative approach to the study of teacher identity is common in teacher identity literature (Watson, 2006; Watson, 2009; Anspal, Eisenschmidt&Löfström, 2012; Schaefer, 2013, Bukor, 2015; Sisson, 2016; Yuan & Lee, 2016; Han, 2017; Ye & Zhao, 2018). These studies differ in terms of participants, the aspect of teacher identity they focus on; however, their commonality is that they all include narratives as either the main data collection tool or as one of the methodological triangulation tools. To illustrate, Watson (2006, 2009) focused on how purposively selected- teachers whom the researchers knew in advance- individual teachers' identity construction is revealed in their narratives and counter-narratives, which refers to teachers' untold stories or stories that stand against

the main narrative that composes the cultural and social norms (Watson, 2009). However, Anspal et al. (2012) employed teachers' narratives as the lens to explore pre-service teachers' professional identity development process and found that the practicum experiences appeared to be highly influential on identity development. Similar to Anspal et al. (2012) Yuan and Lee (2016) also used narratives to explore pre-service teachers' identity development via negotiation of emotions and revealed a link between pre-service teachers' professional learning and hidden rules about emotions in the practicum. Schaefer (2013) also used narratives to reveal the reasons for early-career teacher attrition, which turned out to be "not as a personal or a contextual problem frame, but a problem of teacher identity making and identity shifting (Schaefer, 2013)".

Similarly, Bukor (2015) explored the impact of personal and professional experiences on teacher identity development via teachers' narratives told in their reflexive autobiographical journals. Data uncovered that teachers' beliefs and meanings rooted in their families have impact on their school experiences, career choice, instructional practice, teaching philosophy, and teacher identity. On the other hand, Sisson (2016) used teachers' narratives to explore identity, agency and professional practice based on cultural models theory and concluded that teachers' voice should receive greater attention in discussion of teacher agency because teachers have the power both to marginalize and empower others.

Han (2017) also used narratives in addition to other data collections tools; i.e., interviews, questionnaires and metaphors, to understand the characteristics and dynamics of teacher professional identity "by investigating teachers' cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses to their national English curriculum and related policies (Han, 2017)". Based on her study, she suggested that policy-makers or curriculum designers can better understand the reasons for policy success or failure in terms of teacher roles and values if they have a deeper insight into English teachers' professional identity development process. Ye and Zhao (2018) also used narratives to explore teachers' professional identity development in educational reform context and their study revealed that teacher

agency is "embedded in the institutional context (Ye & Zhao, 2018)" and relationships with others can help to alleviate the tension between the institution and individual teachers.

Similar to the studies on teacher identity in the literature, this study also adopts a narrative approach to the study of how teachers construct their identity because "identity is that which emerges in and through narrative (Hinchman & Hinchman, as cited in Watson, 2006)". The narratives teachers tell about their lives naturally help them construct their identities and reveal "how we externalize ourselves to ourselves and to others (Watson, 2006)". It is a dual process in which teachers construct their narratives related to their professional lives and experiences and these narratives construct their identities as teachers (Watson, 2006).

Method

Participants and Setting

Participants were eight EFL instructors who work at higher education and high school level at various institutions around Turkey. Sampling was based on a combination of purposive and convenience sampling because the participants were both researchers' colleagues whom she knew and chose purposefully as they enjoyed reflecting on their identity as a teacher and also participants who could be reached online.

As to the demographics of the participants, seven of them were female and one of them was male. While seven of them worked at higher education institutions around Turkey, one of them worked at a high school. Six of the participants held a position as an EFL instructor in their institutions while one of them also held a position in curriculum and materials development office and one of them stated to have had other administrative roles in their institution. The great majority of the participants were teachers who were concerned about their professional development as indicated by the fact that six of them were PhD candidates in their fields. This has also been interpreted to be a major influence on the participants' high self-esteem reflected in their responses which are discussed in detail in the discussion part.

The researcher failed to access direct information

as to the research context for each participant because they work in various institutions around Turkey, which makes it impossible for the researcher to obtain first-hand information about each participant's context. However, based on the researchers' general knowledge as also an EFL instructor who works and has worked at similar contexts to the participants, a brief description of the participants' context may be provided. They worked at state universities around Turkey teaching general English or ESP courses either at Colleges of Foreign Languages or at faculties or vocational high schools of different universities. As for instructors teaching at Colleges of Foreign Languages, they may have better working conditions because they work at institutions the sole focus of which is to teach foreign languages. It may be assumed that they have relatively more motivated students and colleagues and get more professional support in terms of the curriculum and materials development and testing and assessment. However, EFL instructors who teach compulsory Basic English courses at various faculties and vocational high schools may not be as lucky as their colleagues who work at Colleges of Foreign Languages in terms of the professional support they get and the classroom conditions. In addition, they may also have to deal with less motivated students and administrators who may not value foreign language teaching as much.

Participants' oral or written consent were received prior to sending them the written interview form online. The data was collected from April to May, 2020, throughout a period of two months.

Research Design & Instrument

This research was based on qualitative research paradigm, namely narrative approach. Adopting a qualitative research lens offers "flexibility, authenticity, richness and candour (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007)" in exploring the phenomena in question and revealing its idiosyncrasies. Therefore, the complex, dynamic and multi-dimensional nature of teacher identity (Nias, 1996; Akkerman & Meijer, 2011) requires the use qualitative research design that helps create an "authentic and rich (Cohen et al., 2007)" picture of the phenomenon that is being explored.

Similarly, it is agreed that teachers' self-

knowledge, personal identity or personal lives and life experiences are related with their professional identity development (Day et al., 2006). Therefore, this study was specifically based on narrative approach because teachers' professional identities are revealed in their narratives; in other words, "teachers' talking about their professional lives and practices is very often spontaneously framed in narrative form" (Kelchterman, 2009).

Although the the concept of identity has been labelled as elusive, intangible and highly idiosyncratic in the literature because it is abstract and cannot be directly revealed or observed; however, it can be still defined in the form of beliefs, assumptions, values, actions, self-concepts and other's concepts (Bukor, 2015). Teachers' narratives naturally yield information about their "beliefs, assumptions, values, actions, self-concepts and other's concepts" (Bukor, 2015) that are indicators of their identities as teachers. Therefore, in order to elicit teachers' narratives; e.g., personal stories about their day to day experiences, past experiences as a teacher and learner, online written interview forms that were created and disseminated via GoogleForms were used. As stated as a limitation earlier, the study originally aimed to facilitate methodological triangulation via observations and stimulated recalls, which had to be abandoned due to Covid19 pandemic that resulted in the halt of face to face education during the time the study was conducted.

The questions on the online written interview form were adopted from Kelchterman's (2009) five dimensions of teacher identity; i.e., self-image, self-esteem, task perception, job motivation and future perspectives. The wording of the questions was kept original as they were suggested by Kelchterman. The interview form consisted of 14 questions which were themed under the aforementioned five dimensions of teacher identity. You can find the interview questions and the themes they are categorized under in Appendix A.

Data Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data was two-fold. The first step involved a thematic analysis based on the pre-determined themes that come from Kelchterman's (2009) five dimensions of

teacher identity; i.e., self-image, self-esteem, task perception, job motivation and future perspectives. The second step was mainly about bringing out some emergent codes from the data collected under the aforementioned pre-determined themes. Initial/open coding was used in the second step; however, axial/selective coding that aims to explore any possible vertical or horizontal connections among the codes (Creswell, 2014) was excluded because exploring possible relationships that can be based on a theoretical framework are beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, this can be the scope of any further research on exploring foreign language teachers' identity using narrative approach.

Trustworthiness of the Study

In qualitative research, trustworthiness or authenticity is the equivalent term for reliability and validity in quantitative research (Alsup, 2006). Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Cohen et al., 2007) suggest four aspects of trustworthiness; i.e., credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability. While credibility refers to internal validity, transferability refers to external validity in quantitative research paradigm. In addition, dependability refers to reliability and confirmability refers to objectivity. Thick description of research site and participants facilitates the transferability of research findings because it makes it possible for readers to understand if the results are applicable to their context (Alsup, 2006). The detailed descriptions about participants and their working conditions in this study aim to contribute the transferability of research findings.

Similarly, Maxwell (1992) also suggests five broad categories of understanding that are relevant to qualitative research: "descriptive validity, interpretive validity, theoretical validity, generalizability, and evaluative validity", which are not separated by very clear boundaries but "ambiguous and fuzzy boundaries" (Maxwell, 1992). Descriptive validity very briefly refers to the "factual accuracy" (Maxwell, 1992) of the account/description. In this sense, presenting direct quotes from the participants without making any changes on them in the discussion part aims to contribute to descriptive validity. Interpretive validity is facilitated

through merging the researcher's perspective with the participants' perspective. Different from descriptive validity, it does not merely refer to an accurate description with facts and minute details but involvement of "participants' perspective, as well as communicative meaning in a narrower sense" (Maxwell, 1992). To facilitate interpretive validity, the researcher adopted the process of respondent validation in which the participants were kindly requested to check if their meanings were appropriately conveyed in the interpretation of their responses. The participants were e-mailed the data analyzed and interpreted by the researcher and asked to check if there were any misinterpretations of their responses. Four of the participants responded the e-mail and expressed that the researcher's interpretation of their responses were appropriate and right.

Theoretical and evaluative validity are other categories of Maxwell' (1992) qualitative validity framework as stated above. Theoretical validity "goes beyond concrete description and interpretation, and explicitly addresses the theoretical constructions that the researcher brings to, or develops during, the study(Maxwell, 1992)". As repeatedly discussed before, this study uses Kelcherman's (2009) five dimensions of teacher identity as the theoretical lens to explore EFL teachers' identity construction process and; thus, possesses theoretical validity. As for evaluative validity, Maxwell (1992) states that it is not as essential as other categories of qualitative validity; i.e., descriptive, interpretive, and theoretical validity because "many researchers make no claim to evaluate the things they study (Maxwell, 1992)" which is also the case in this study. When we focus on generalizability aspect; however, Maxwell (1992) values internal generalizability over external generalizability in qualitative research because "qualitative researchers rarely make explicit claims about the external generalizability of their accounts". Therefore, it can be suggested that the study possess internal generalizability that is the norm for qualitative studies rather than external validity.

Findings and Discussion

In the following sections, thematic analysis and

open coding of the data under these pre-determined themes are presented. Analysis is supported by some direct quotes from the participants' responses to the questions on the written interview form

Self-Image

The first theme of the thematic analysis is 'self-image' which briefly refers to others' opinions of oneself (Kelchterman, 2009). Participants' responses to the first two questions that try to elicit language teachers' self-concept of themselves and others'; e.g., parents' colleagues', students', perception of their self as a teacher were analyzed. On the whole, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers who participated in this study have a positive image of their self as language teachers. The comments that these EFL teachers stated to have received from their students, parents and colleagues included mainly positive adjectives; e.g., "enjoyable, sympathetic-and-empathetic, successful, affectionate, energetic, committed, enthusiastic". However, their self-image is also determined by the contextual factors such as the size of the classroom, and the number of course hours they teach, as shown in the following quote in which the teacher's response reveals that her positive self-image is defined by her efforts to do her best despite adverse EFL teaching conditions such as teaching "very long hours in very crowded classrooms":

"...My students always state that I am very enthusiastic while teaching and they say that it is so obvious that I love my job. They wonder the secret behind my high energy to teach despite teaching very long hours in very crowded classrooms." (Participant 7, May, 21st, 2020, online written interview form)

On the other hand, negative others' perceptions have also been stated by two EFL teachers such as "panicky teacher", sometimes "rude" or "too strict", "control-freak", "boring" and someone that "requires a lot of responsibilities". The participant who stated to have received comments such as "boring" and someone who "requires a lot of responsibilities" also define themselves as a teacher who has "a moderate passion to teach for now", which might have been influenced by their present teaching context as implied by the time phrase 'for now'. However,

the teacher who stated to have received negative comments such as being "panicky", sometimes "rude" or "too strict" also defined themselves as a teacher who is not a "perfect one":

As a teacher, I have never found myself a perfect one. I would like to explain it in diving it into two parts. During the lesson and out of the lesson. For the former, especially for grammar teaching, I evaluate myself not a good one. When I see that students are bored of my grammar explanation, I switch to another point or an issue. I don't like also presenting grammar. However, I am patient enough to explain some rules a number of times. For group or pair work activities in my lesson, possibly because my age is not so far to theirs, they may not take me seriously sometimes and not do the activity or switch to Turkish to interact. (Especially the students who are obligatory to take English preparatory course) Also, sometimes I find it difficult to adjust my pace of speech that is appropriate for the level of students possibly because of my having difficulty in time management. I don't know the reason :) I am good at explaining rules of a game / instruction and also in the warm-up section of the lesson to make students interested in the lesson and I am good at using my body language for students' understanding. I never sit in the lesson if my students are willing to learn. I think I am more relaxed out of the lesson. I may be angry with some lazy students and I can utter some sentences that demotivate them, but mostly I can make up for it and guide them in a way that they are satisfied. I like students who are giving a lot of effort even if they are not successful. I believe they will be one day with some adjectives to define myself, I am ambitious, disciplined, cheerful, merciful, and a panic teacher, I guess. (Participant 6, May 15th, 2020, online written interview form)

EFL teachers' descriptions of their self as a teacher seem to be in agreement with the comments they stated to have received from their students and colleagues as revealed by data presented above. Therefore, it can be argued that the participants had a balanced self-image that is shaped by their colleagues', students' perceptions and the factors

related to the teaching context such as class size and the number of hours they teach and other contextual factors that may not have been elicited due to the limited nature of the online interview form that does not allow simultaneous interaction.

In truth, originally the researcher aimed to conduct solely a thematic analysis on the data. However, qualitative research is naturalistic and based on an emergent research design (Creswell, 2014) which can be redesigned along the way,

which was the case in this study. Therefore, when the data related to EFL teachers' self-image theme was subject to open coding, it was understood that the participants defined their teacher identity in four emergent themes: positive personal qualities, negative personal qualities, positive instructional skills and negative instructional skills. In Table 1 below, data related to EFL teachers' self-image are categorized according to these four emergent themes.

Table 1: EFL Teachers' Self-Image: Self-Concepts and Others' Perceptions

	Personal Qualities	Instructional Skills
Positive	enjoyable, sympathetic-and-empathetic, successful, affectionate, energetic, committed, enthusiastic, ambitious, disciplined, cheerful, merciful, enjoying learning new things, like a friend, mother-like	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being good at using body language • being good at explaining rules of a game • explaining some rules a number of times • never sitting in the lesson if my students are willing to learn • knowledgeable in one's field • using the warm-up section of the lesson to make students interested in the lesson • good grammar teaching skills • guiding students • being a motivator, facilitator & leader
Negative	panicky, too strict, rude, control-freak, boring, angry,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requiring a lot of responsibilities • finding it difficult to adjust pace of speech • having difficulty in time management

It can be claimed that EFL teachers who participated in this study tended to define their self-image mainly based on their personal qualities, either negative or positive and an evaluation of their instructional skills which covers their time-management skills, pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, etc. Further research that involves a greater variety of data collection instruments such as observations, semi-structured longitudinal interviews may yield more dimensions in which teachers define their self-image as a teacher.

Self-Esteem

The second theme for thematic analysis is the self-esteem which is "the evaluative component of self-understanding" (Kelcherman, 2009). The following questions in the written interview form aimed to elicit data on this component: "How well do you think you are doing your job as a teacher?, What are your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher?,

What do your students like about your teaching?". Data reveals that EFL teachers who participated in this study mainly have a high positive self-esteem indicated in their expressions such as "It's difficult to say for yourself, I am doing well...(Participant 1, April 25th, 2020, online written interview)", "I think I do pretty well because... (Participant 2, April 26th, 2020)", "I generally feel satisfaction after the lessons I have just finished....(Participant 8, May 27th, 2020)", "I try to do my best while teaching.....(Participant 4, May 5th, 2020)". On the whole, they have justified their high self-esteem by giving examples of their strengths as a teacher such as having a "humanist approach", facilitating student "participation", "guiding" students, etc. :

It's difficult to say for yourself, I am doing well but every student is important for me and also their participation so this can be a part of how well I try to do my job. (Participant 1, April, 25th, 2020, online written interview form)

I think I do pretty well because I have a humanist approach towards my students, value their personalities, try different methods and techniques, try to make the process fun for both myself and my students, try to guide them as well. (Participant 2, April, 26th, 2020, online written interview form)

However, they have also associated their self-esteem with a number of contextual factors related to students; e.g., student attitudes, effort, motivation and their proficiency level, or the institution in which they work; e.g., number of students in their classrooms, the course they teach:

I try to do my best while teaching, but it depends on the students, their attitudes and effort. I love teaching and I do not see it only as a profession. (Participant 4, May, 5th, 2020, online written interview form)

I am not teaching under ideal circumstances. I usually teach elementary level general English courses, which are compulsory. Students do not have intrinsic motivation to learn English and the classes are very crowded, generally

more than 50 students in a classroom. Despite the circumstances, I use all my energy to teach whatever I can so I can say that I am doing quite a good job. (Participant 7, May, 21st, 2020, online written interview form)

...I can sometimes be bad at time management as my school urges us to complete the pre-planned syllabus in planned time. (Participant 6, May 15th, 2020, online written interview form)

In contrast to the way they have defined their “self-images as teachers” based on both their personal qualities and their instructional skills, EFL teachers who participated in this study mainly associated their self-esteem with their professional skills and the characteristics of their teaching context that also involve students’ characteristics. Therefore, as open coding of data related to “self-esteem” theme reveals, EFL teachers’ self-esteem is influenced by their professional/instructional skills and a number of contextual factors that shape their teaching context. In Table 2 below, categorization of these codes under two themes; i.e., professional skills and characteristics of teaching context are presented.

Table 2: EFL teachers’ Self-Esteem

Professional Skills	Characteristics of Teaching Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having a humanist approach • trying different methods and techniques • trying to make the process fun for both themselves and their students • guiding students • caring about students • valuing how to teach to whom • guiding them on how to learn more • making students use the language for meaningful tasks • personalizing the learning environment for the individuals • choosing the right words to motivate students • addressing all language skills • contextualizing the grammar topic • creating a smooth link between the situation and the grammatical form • motivating learners to actively attend tasks • observing students closely and deciphering their next act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the pressure from the institution to complete a pre-planned syllabus in planned time • class size • students’ attitudes, effort, proficiency level and motivation

It can be argued that teachers’ self-esteem is mainly shaped by their professional skills as all the teachers tended to expound on their professional/

teaching skills when answering questions related to their self-esteem. As seen in Table 2, teachers have more often mentioned their professional skills while

explaining why they think they teach well. While some EFL teachers referred to only their teaching skills to give reasons for why they think they teach well, some of them also mentioned the characteristics of their teaching context:

I feel myself good enough to contextualize the grammar topic and I create a smooth link between the situation and the grammatical form. I am also well enough to motivate the learners to actively attend the tasks in the classroom thanks to my ability to observe them closely and decipher their next act. (Participant 8, May, 27th, 2020, online written interview form)

My biggest weakness is explaining grammar because I don't like grammar. I like the communicative and functional aspect of the language. So knowing exact rules and explaining their whys are not my type. My strength is pedagogy. I value how to teach to whom. I try to make my students use the language for meaningful tasks. I guide them how to learn more, how to improve themselves by role modeling and how to broaden their minds. (Participant 2, April, 26th, 2020, online written interview form)

I can make lessons interactively. I am disciplined enough. I can manage classroom. I choose right words to motivate my students. I can easily find something to attract the students' attention to the lesson. For weaknesses I never take responsibility for students who are lazy. If the student is willing to learn, I can help a lot. I feel motivated to help him/her. If they are unwilling to learn, I never take responsibility. I can sometimes be bad at time management as my school urges us to complete the pre-planned syllabus in planned time. I may sometimes not be patient enough in the lesson. I can't wait for long student answers. (Participant 6, May 15th, 2020, online written interview form)

Task Perception

The third theme and another dimension of teacher identity in Kelchterman's (2009) proposal

is "task description" which refers to "teacher's idea of what constitutes their professional schedule". The following questions in the written interview form aimed at revealing EFL teachers' perceptions of what constitutes the core tasks they have to perform as an essential part of their profession and also what they refuse to do as a teacher: "What are your main responsibilities as a teacher?", "What must you do to be a proper teacher?", "What are the essential tasks you need to perform to have the justified feeling that you are doing well?" "What do you consider legitimate duties to perform?" and "What do you refuse as a part of your job?".

Data reveals that punctuality, well-preparedness to teach, being open to professional development, having good instructional practices; e.g., being flexible, valuing learners' needs, considering individual differences, and having other responsible teacher behaviors; e.g., "not wasting learners' time" and goals; e.g., "raising their awareness about their lives, identities, environmental issues, equality and etc.", "to make them aware of their environment drawing attention on social duties", were perceived to be the essential tasks EFL teachers needed to perform as a legitimate part of their job. However, doing paperwork during or outside class hours, "translating what students do not understand" or "serving as a dictionary" for students, "allowing a student to pass when they do not deserve" which was labelled as an 'unethical act' by the participant, "doing translation of articles that their school / administrator send them" and "responding to students' excuses about attendance problems" were among the tasks that EFL teachers did not consider to be a legitimate part of their job and refused to do so.

Open coding of data from the task perception theme revealed three categories related EFL teachers' task perception: responsible teacher behaviors and goals, good instructional practices and professional development. In Table 3 below, coding and categorization of data are presented:

Table 3: EFL Teachers' Task Perceptions

Responsible teacher behaviors and goals	Good instructional practices	Involvement in professional development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • punctuality, • well-preparedness for the lesson, • not wasting learners' time or institution's or country's resources, • not underestimating one's job, • checking student output and performance for teacher's evaluation of their own teaching • toraise their awareness about their lives, identities, environmental issues, equality and etc...., • to help their personal development by presenting ideas about different ways of living and thinking, • to extend their general knowledge • to make students independent learners • to make them aware of their environment drawing attention on social duties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • guiding students • teaching well in every skill • motivating students • managing teaching time effectively • valuing and understanding learners' needs • recognizing individual differences and acting accordingly • being flexible with students and lesson plan • checking student output • giving homework • checking understanding • giving feedback and • answering students' questions • doing pre and post listening and reading activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having MA/PhD • attending seminars and conferences • catching up with the new methods in teaching • keeping one's teaching skills up-to-date

As discussed above, being punctual and well-prepared for the lessons were among what EFL teachers think they should do as an essential part of their job. These two were among the most commonly stated teacher behaviors by the participants. Similarly, valuing and understanding learners' needs, being flexible with students considering their individual learner differences were also mentioned a number of times by the participants as the essential tasks they think they need to perform to have the justified feeling that they do their job well. Participants also referred to some very specific instructional practices as the essential tasks they have to perform: doing pre and post activities for listening and reading activities, or checking up on student output to evaluate how well they teach, being prepared to deviate from the original lesson plan when it does not go as planned in class, giving homework, checking understanding, giving feedback and answering students' questions. In addition, data also revealed that teachers thought ensuring their professional development and keeping

their teaching skills up to date via attending seminars of conferences or doing PhD or MA was an essential part of what they had to do as a teacher. It can be argued that this might be linked with participant teachers' high self-esteem- as indicated in the responses to the questions related to the self-esteem dimension- which may make them consider professional development not optional but a must for them.

Job Motivation

The fourth dimension of teacher identity in Kelcherman's (2009) proposal is job motivation which can be briefly defined as "motives and drives that make people choose to become a teacher". The following questions in the online written interview form aimed to reveal participant EFL teachers' job motivations: "What's the main motive behind your choice to be a teacher?" and "Which people, experiences or events in your past influenced your decision to be a teacher?". Data revealed that experiences with good English teachers in their years

as students, family members who set good examples for them as teachers or parents, love of teaching and learning, choice of a teacher-training high school or job opportunities available for teachers were among the motives of participant EFL teachers in this study. The most commonly stated motive was having a very good English teacher as a student who inspired them to be an English teacher:

I always loved and respected my teachers. I found reasons to idealize almost all of my teachers when I was a student. I adored my first English teachers and this might have led me towards being an English teacher. (Participant 7, May, 21st, 2020, online written interview form)

In fact, I really liked my first teacher at primary school who was very kind, patient and lovely. When I was twelve years old (at the 8th grade at primary school), we met an English teacher at the first time in my life after two years of English instruction by a teacher whose major was religious education. I wanted to be an English teacher after her. I really liked her. She was very different from the people in my little hometown so she attracted my attention too much. Another reason was that, the best school in Kastamonu was the GÖL Anatolian Teacher High School, so I chose to study there after I had had a good score from the exam of course. At this school, I met two handsome and intelligent English teachers, so I decided my major (ELT). (Participant 8, May, 27th, 2020, online written interview form)

I decided to be an English teacher while I was 12. Until the age of 12, we were taught by the ones whose actual professions are not teaching English, but an engineer, an art teacher, or the other ones. My first point from exam was 45 when I was 9. The worst experience of my life. My worst grade. Then, a real English teacher came and I realized that I could do well when I studied for it. (Participant 6, May 15th, 2020, online written interview form)

The above stories reveal that teachers' experiences as students in their earlier life have a profound influence on their career choices. In contrast to the case of good teacher role models being the motive behind their students to choose to also be a teacher, one participant referred to a 'bad teacher role model'

that made them decide to be an EFL teacher:

I did not like the manner of my high school math teacher and then I choose foreign language branch at the high school... (Participant 5, May 7th, 2020, online written interview form)

A parent who set a good example as a teacher in one's family can also be a strong motive for their children to choose this profession as narrated in Participant 2's story:

My father was a primary school teacher and he was a respected person among the people with whom he worked. He used to have phonecalls from his students so many years later from even abroad. All of them used to tell good memories with him. He affected his students' lives in an amazing way. So, it was a nice example. I was always proud of him. (Participant 2, April, 26th, 2020, online written interview form)

Participant 2 was probably inspired by the respect their father received from his students and his commitment to his job, which made him a "nice example" for her and also the motive to decide to be a teacher, too. However, possible job opportunities for teachers and attending a teacher-training high school were also among participant teachers' motives to be teachers:

...And because of the high chance of finding a working position, I choose to study at the faculty of education (Participant 5, May 7th, 2020, online written interview form)

I am a graduate of a teacher training high school so it was an early choice. (Participant 7, May, 21st, 2020, online written interview form)

On the whole, data reveals that EFL teachers who participated in the study were mainly inspired by their English teachers they had during schooling experience and their family members who were teachers while making their career choices to also be English teachers.

Future Perspectives

The fifth and final dimension of Kelchtermann's (2009) teacher identity refers to dynamic character of self-concept and teacher's expectations of their future in the profession. The following questions aimed to elicit participant teachers' future perspectives on their position in their jobs: "Where do you see

yourself as a teacher in 10 years' time?" and "In what ways do you think you will change in 10 years' time?". Data reveals that participant teachers' future goals and expectations mainly revolved around completing their present academic degrees, which is PhD for most of them, and getting promoted to a higher position; e.g., being a teacher-trainer or teaching specific courses as a faculty member. This might have resulted from the fact that a great number of participants were PhD candidates who understandably hoped to complete their degrees. The results could have been different with a more diverse sample of participants; e.g., primary school teachers without academic pursuits, English teachers with more than 20 years of experience, etc. However, some participants also indicated their willingness to challenge themselves with different tasks in their institutions or exploring different areas of English language teaching such as teaching English to young learners or English medium instruction.

When it comes to the aspects of changes they expected to go through in 10 years' time, they mainly could not predict very specific changes although they all agreed that there would definitely be many changes either good or bad. One participant wrote that they expected "a huge change" in terms of "perspective, understanding, tolerance, teaching, ideas and personality" because one even changes in one-week time or after reading just a book. Additionally, another participant expected to be better at classroom management, have difficulty with keeping up with young adults because there will be a bigger age gap and have less enthusiasm to teach depending on what they hear from experienced teachers. One participant expected a change in "teaching and learning systems" due to technological advances which would consequently require them to change and "update themselves both as an individual and a teacher to meet the needs of their future students."

Overall, it can be claimed that EFL teachers' who participated in this study have high self-esteem which may have also influenced their task perception which also involved professional development as a must. This high self-esteem and their commitment to professional development is also reflected in their future perspectives which mainly revolve around

completing their current academic degrees and getting promoted or trying out different tasks and positions in their institutions. Similarly, the change they project for themselves are usually for the positive aspect; in other words, they expect to become teachers with better professional skills and personal qualities, e.g. more mature, tolerant, understanding, equipped with better ICT skills, etc... There is only one negative expectation of change and this one is not the participants' personal opinion but what they have heard from more experienced colleagues which is that their motivation to teach may decrease with age. On the whole, these five dimensions of teacher identity are not separate but dynamically interact as can be understood from the thematic analysis and open coding of data presented above.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative research based on narrative approach was to explore EFL language teachers' professional identity construction process and the factors that influence this process. The study of teacher identity is considered to be elusive and intangible because it is not directly observable; however, identity can still be revealed through teachers' beliefs, assumptions, values, actions, self-concepts and other's concepts (Bukor, 2015). Teachers' narratives about their lives actually disclose valuable information about the aspects of their identities. Therefore, this study employed Kelchterman's proposal of five dimensions of teacher identity as the theoretical lens to explore different dimensions of teachers' professional identity construction process.

Data revealed that EFL teachers' identity construction was a continuous process that emerged as a result of interaction among different dimensions of their identity. In other words, teachers' identity construction does not show any contradictions in different dimensions; on the contrary, it is a holistic process based on a balance among different dimensions. For example, EFL teachers who participated in this study had high self-esteem that they reasoned by their professional skills and characteristics of the teaching context and they also considered professional development a legitimate and essential part of their tasks as a teacher. However,

data also revealed that EFL teachers' self-image is defined by their personal qualities and instructional skills but not the characteristics of their teaching context while their self-esteem is defined by their professional skills and the contextual factors but not their personal qualities.

Not surprisingly, EFL teachers who participated in this study all had a positive future perspective on their future selves as teachers; most of them hope to complete their PhD degrees in ten years' time and hold better positions in their institutions. Similarly, EFL teachers who participated in this study perceived responsible teacher behaviors; e.g., punctuality, well-preparedness to teach, being open to professional development and having good instructional practices; e.g., being flexible, valuing learners' needs, considering individual differences, as essential duties to perform to be a proper teacher. The fact that they consider these positive behaviors and attitudes a must for themselves is also in agreement with their positive high self-esteem and self-image. Therefore, it can be concluded that EFL teachers' identity construction is a holistic process based on a balance among different dimensions and shaped by different factors such as personal qualities, instructional and professional skills, characteristics of the teaching context and having good English teachers or teacher role models in early schooling experience or in the family.

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Appendix. Questions on the Online Written Interview Form

Self-image

This dimension briefly refers to others' opinions of oneself.

1. What comments do you usually receive from students, parents, colleagues about your teacher, your role as a teacher?
2. How do you define /describe yourself as a teacher?

Self-esteem

This dimension is "the evaluative component of self-understanding".

3. How well do you think you are doing your job as a teacher?
4. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher?
5. What do your students like about your teaching?

Task Perception

It refers to teacher's idea of what constitutes their professional schedule.

6. What are your main responsibilities as a teacher?
7. What must you do to be a proper teacher?
8. What are the essential tasks you need to perform to have the justified feeling that you are doing well?
9. What do you consider legitimate duties to perform?
10. What do you refuse as a part of your job?

Job Motivation

This dimension of teacher identity can be briefly defined as motives and drives that make people choose to become a teacher.

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11. What's the main motive behind your choice to be a teacher?
 12. Which people, experiences or events in your past influenced your decision to be a teacher?
 13. Where do you see yourself as a teacher in 10 years' time?
 14. In what ways do you think you will change in 10 years' time?

Future Perspectives

It refers to dynamic character of self-concept and teacher's expectations of their future in the

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