

T.R.
BOLU ABANT İZZET BAYSAL UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION



**EXAMINING THE EARLY TEACHER IDENTITY OF PRE-
SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS**

MASTER OF ARTS

GÜLÇİN ATEŞ

ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR
Prof. Dr. Abdullah COŞKUN

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APPROVAL OF THE THESIS

EXAMINING THE EARLY TEACHER IDENTITY OF PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS submitted by **Gülçin ATEŞ** and defended before the Examining Committee Members listed below in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Arts** in **Department of Foreign Language Education, Institute of Graduate Studies of Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University** in **7.10.2024** by

Examining Committee Members

Signature

Supervisor

Prof. Dr. Abdullah COŞKUN

Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University

.....

Member

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kadir Vefa TEZEL

Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University

.....

Member

Assist. Prof. Dr. Yusuf ŞEN

Düzce University

.....

Prof. Dr. İbrahim KÜRTÜL

Director of Institute of Graduate Studies

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Gülçin ATEŞ

ABSTRACT

EXAMINING THE EARLY TEACHER IDENTITY OF PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

MA THESIS

GÜLÇİN ATEŞ

BOLU ABANT İZZET BAYSAL UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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(SUPERVISOR: PROF. DR. ABDULLAH COŞKUN)

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XI + 99

Identifying the pre-professional teacher identities of education faculty students is essential for fostering higher education programs. Therefore, this mixed-method study examines the early teacher identity levels of pre-service English teachers. Additionally, the relationship between early teacher identity perceptions and demographic characteristics, namely, gender and year of study, is investigated. To obtain quantitative data, 206 pre-service English teachers were reached at a public university in Türkiye. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with 15 pre-service teachers. The quantitative data were gathered through the personal information form designed by the researcher and the Early Teacher Identity Measure scale developed by Friesen and Besley (2013) and adapted into Turkish by Arpacı and Bardakçı (2015). The findings of the study indicated that the early teacher identity level of English teacher candidates was high. It was found that gender has shown no significant effect on early teacher identity. However, it was revealed that early teacher identity levels are higher among junior and senior students compared to sophomore and freshman students. The findings revealed that experience and initial teacher training play a significant role in shaping early teacher identity. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of early exposure to practical teaching experiences and methodology courses for supporting early teacher identity development within teacher education programs.

KEYWORDS: Teacher Identity in ELT, Teacher Education, Pre-service EFL Teachers, Early Teacher Identity

ÖZET

İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENİ ADAYLARININ MESLEK ÖNCESİ

ÖĞRETMEN KİMLİĞİ ALGILARININ İNCELENMESİ

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

GÜLÇİN ATEŞ

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LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ

YABANCI DİLLER EĞİTİMİ ANABİLİM DALI

İNGİLİZ DİLİ EĞİTİMİ BİLİM DALI

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Eğitim fakültesi öğrencilerinin meslek öncesi öğretmen kimliklerinin belirlenmesi, yükseköğretim programlarının geliştirilmesi açısından önemlidir. Bu nedenle karma yöntemli bu çalışma, İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının meslek öncesi öğretmen kimliği düzeylerini incelemektedir. Ayrıca meslek öncesi öğretmen kimliği algıları ile demografik özellikler, yani cinsiyet ve sınıf düzeyi arasındaki ilişki de araştırılmaktadır. Nicel verilerin elde edilmesi amacıyla, Türkiye’deki bir devlet üniversitesinde öğrenim gören 206 İngilizce öğretmeni adayına ulaşılmıştır. Ayrıca 15 öğretmen adayıyla da yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Nicel veriler, araştırmacı tarafından hazırlanan kişisel bilgi formu ve Friesen ve Besley (2013) tarafından geliştirilen ve Arpacı ve Bardakçı (2015) tarafından Türkçeye uyarlanan Meslek Öncesi Öğretmen Kimliği Ölçeği aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Araştırmanın bulguları İngilizce öğretmeni adaylarının meslek öncesi öğretmen kimliği düzeyinin yüksek olduğunu göstermiştir. Cinsiyetin meslek öncesi öğretmen kimliği üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisinin olmadığı bulunmuştur. Ancak, meslek öncesi öğretmen kimliği düzeylerinin 3. ve 4. sınıf öğrencilerinde, 1. ve 2. sınıf öğrencilerine kıyasla daha yüksek olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bulgular, deneyim ve hizmet öncesi öğretmen eğitiminin, erken öğretmen kimliğinin şekillenmesinde önemli bir rol oynadığını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Genel olarak, bu çalışma öğretmen eğitim programlarında erken öğretmen kimliği gelişimini desteklemek için erken dönemde uygulamalı öğretim deneyimlerine ve öğretim yöntemleri derslerine maruz kalmanın önemini vurgulamaktadır.

ANAHTAR KELİMELER: İngilizce Öğretiminde Öğretmen Kimliği, Öğretmen Eğitimi, İngilizce Öğretmen Adayları, Meslek Öncesi Öğretmen Kimliği

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

EFL	: English as a Foreign Language
ELT	: English Language Teaching
ETIM	: English Teacher Identity Measure
PTs	: Pre-service Teachers



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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as a comprehensive guide to acquaint readers with the study's focal points. It commences by providing a contextual background, followed by elucidating the study's objectives and research questions. Subsequently, the chapter delves into the study's significance, showcasing its contribution to existing literature. Furthermore, it addresses the study's limitations. Additionally, key terms utilized throughout the study are defined to facilitate comprehension.

1.1 Background of the Study

In today's fast-changing world, one thing remains unchanged: education remains one of the most vital necessities in life (Bano, 2015). Contemporary human civilization's progress significantly depends on enhancing its educational system (Fan et al., 2018; Faragher et al., 2014). Education is vital for enriching both human lives and the development of countries (Öztürk, 2008; Shavkidinova et al., 2023; Upadhyay, 2022; Wagner, 2010). Advancing in education not only empowers individuals to lead fulfilling lives but also fosters innovation, economic growth, and social growth within nations (Pal, 2023). Jahantab (2021) also states that the education system plays a vital role in advancing the country by fostering human development, generating capital, and nurturing law-abiding citizens. Moreover, education aims to give people the information and abilities they need to broaden their perspectives and gain a deeper understanding of the world (Fan et al., 2018). This viewpoint clarifies why education is the subject of extensive global research, development, and modification.

The main elements of educational institutions are the administrators, curriculum, students, teachers, parents, school atmosphere, equipment, and physical conditions (Deniz, 2022). Teachers hold a paramount and valuable role beyond these elements for quality education as they directly engage with and influence students (Deniz, 2022; Dirsä et al., 2022; Haan & Arifianto, 2022; Karatepe & Akay, 2020; Permatasari & Arianto, 2022; Pradhan, 2016). Hence, it is widely recognized that the quality of teachers is a significant sign of the quality of education (Burroughs et al., 2019; Deniz, 2022).

Aslan (2011) emphasizes that teachers undertake a multifaceted role in the educational field that involves designing, supervising, and evaluating the learning process; moreover, their influence extends to shaping the environment in which students are involved. She argues that when students step into the education field, they encounter learning environments carefully prepared by their teachers. As seen above, numerous studies have been conducted on teacher education, highlighting its significance and impact on the field of education.

Traditionally, teacher education requires candidates to complete practical and theoretical coursework that aligns with the program's objectives, and they apply the skills and knowledge they have gained in real-world school settings (Ceylan, 2019). Saharan and Sethi (2009) argue that a country's development depends significantly on the presence of skilled teachers. Furthermore, they state that establishing a robust teacher-education system necessitates dedicated and effective teacher-educators.

According to Kasemsap (2016), teacher education aims to foster pedagogically expert teachers equipped with robust theoretical fundamentals and a reflective, critical approach towards the challenges inherent in the teaching profession. He asserts that initial teacher training is the opening phase of professional advancement for teachers, encompassing in-service and ongoing education. Namely, many individuals first understand what is required to become a teacher during their education (Kirchner & London, 2022; Thomas & Mockler, 2018). Moreover, pre-service teachers (PTs) change as they learn and teach, taking on new roles in today's classrooms (Tran & Dee, 2023).

Teacher identity is a concept stemming from teachers' unique qualities, what they teach, how they fit into the school they work in, and how they teach in different situations (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Thus, it can be stated that a crucial element in preparing teachers is the improvement of teacher identities that enable them to better communicate with their students' different needs and support them more effectively (Lauwo & Norton, 2023).

Teacher identity affects many different aspects of teaching, including how language teachers learn to carry out their work, apply theory and theorize it, instruct their students, and interact and work together with other teachers in a social context (Yazan, 2023). Teacher identity is crucial in determining how teachers will conduct their teaching and what attitudes they will adopt toward changes in the educational

field (Yaşar et al., 2009). The early teacher identity serves as a moderator in the connection between the objectives of teacher candidates to reach professional objectives and their beliefs regarding the possibility of these objectives (Görkaş Kayabaşı & Koç, 2024). Moreover, PTs can only facilitate an effective learning-teaching process and maintain the necessary motivation for teaching when they possess a positive professional identity (Aykaç et al., 2017). In short, it can be suggested that creating a professional identity is indispensable.

By following a specific plan in the university curriculum, it is crucial that initial teacher training seeks to urge PTs to specialize in their field and ensure preparation and suitability for the profession (O'Neill, 2017). Çelik and Kalkan (2019) emphasize that teacher training programs not only inform about the importance of developing identity but also act as an ideal first step in introducing the factors that will reveal this identity. In their study, Anspal et al. (2012) argue that following the completion of teacher education, students are expected to develop a solid professional identity immediately, increasing their confidence and motivation to pursue careers in teaching. From their perspective, it is also crucial to determine the specific types of support required at various stages of the educational journey to enable teacher educators to foster student teachers' identity and professional growth effectively. Their study emphasizes that positive experiences are essential for students to promote their identity development. From this perspective, undergraduate education plays a crucial role in shaping a teacher's identity (Yaşar et al., 2009).

It may be possible for teacher educators to get an understanding of the evolving identities of PTs better to prepare them for their future professions in education, support the growth of professional teacher identity, and eventually produce talented teachers who will succeed in the classroom (Beltman et al., 2015). Gaining a deeper understanding of teacher identity might potentially boost teacher education programs' improvement (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). That is why it is important to compare how future teachers see teaching before they start training and how their views change as they go through the training programs (Çelik & Kalkan, 2019).

Consequently, in current research on teacher education, there has been a focus on prioritizing teacher identity to gain insights into the context of teaching and learning (Kaya, 2023). In their study, Görkaş Kayabaşı and Koç (2024)

investigated the studies related to teacher identity in Türkiye. Their research findings indicate that, between 2005 and 2022, 104 papers on teacher identity were published. According to their study, most of the studies on teacher identity were conducted in 2020, and they concluded that the early periods of the teacher profession and the pre-service teacher education program are the main subjects of the studies because they are believed to be important in creating a teacher's identity. However, as they pointed out, only 24 out of 104 studies are on early teacher identity perception of PTs. It can be concluded that while the number of studies in Türkiye has been on the rise in parallel with international literature, there remains a continual need for current research in this field.

Recognizing PTs' identities within teacher training programs can provide valuable insights into teacher development (Arpacı & Bardakçı, 2015). Therefore, the present research has the capacity to shed light on how undergraduate pre-service English teachers perceive their pre-professional teacher identity, marking the initial stages of teacher professional identity formation. This study seeks to add to the national body of research on this topic by gathering essential data regarding the early teacher identity perceptions of PTs studying in an English teacher training program at a university, where it is thought that teacher identity development begins (Buchanan & Olsen, 2018; Casanova-Fernández et al., 2022; Seward, 2018; Yazan & Lindahl, 2020). The purpose of gathering data from teacher candidates at all years of study is to examine the factors that play an active role in the identity development of English teacher candidates and to determine whether there are differences in the teacher identities of PTs across years of study.

It can be pointed out that there is a need to investigate the early teacher identity formation of English teachers based on years of study since many studies instead focus on in-service teacher identity or other disciplines in undergraduate education such as physical education (Çalı, 2021), music (Ramsey et al., 2024), social sciences (Karalı, 2018), science (Zhai et al., 2024), and preschool English instruction (Wardhani et al., 2021). Some research has explored English teacher identity within university settings (Herreño-Contreras & Salamanca González, 2023), conducted overall literature reviews on language teacher identity (Liu, 2022), or examined the potential self-concepts of pre-service English teachers (Babanoğlu, 2017).

Limited studies examine in detail the early teacher identity of pre-service EFL teachers, especially the effect of gender and years of study on teacher identity. Furthermore, it is assumed that examining the early teacher identity development of PTs is important, as the English language itself represents a different culture (Babanoğlu, 2017; Yazan, 2016).

In his study, Karalı (2018) emphasizes that teachers can be highly negative examples to students when they cannot reflect their teaching profession identity. Consequently, a deeper comprehension of the factors impacting the building of the teacher identity of PTs will be advantageous for the teaching program in universities (Arpacı & Bardakçı, 2015; Görkaş Kayabaşı & Koç, 2024). Regarding the related literature, it is believed that early forming and development of PTs' professional identity perceptions can be accomplished when the teacher training programs are designed with these aspects in mind.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to analyze the early teacher identity level of pre-service EFL teachers by examining their development across all years of study in the ELT program at a state university. Thus, the relationship between different years of study and the formation of early teacher identity will be explored by gaining insights into the identity perceptions of PTs at all years of study in English teaching. Additionally, the study will examine whether gender significantly impacts early teacher identity in teacher training programs.

1.3 Research Questions of the Study

Following the aforementioned objectives, the present study tackled the following research questions:

1. What is the early teacher identity level of pre-service EFL teachers?
2. Do the early teacher identity levels of pre-service EFL teachers differ in terms of demographic variables?
 - a. Does gender significantly affect the teacher identities of pre-service EFL teachers?
 - b. Does year of study significantly affect the teacher identities of pre-service EFL teachers?

In this study, the first question was addressed using quantitative and qualitative methods, while the second was investigated only quantitatively.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The first step in reaching a quality teacher is teacher training and education (Alptekin Yolcu, 2018). In forming “teacher identity”, the courses and practices of undergraduate education are of great importance (Yazan, 2016). English language teachers are a crucial part of education, employing teaching methods that align with their personality traits to create a compelling and engaging learning environment (Shammari, 2022). It can be argued that teaching English has a different importance in every sense in the field of education due to the nature of the language and its own distinct culture (Babanoğlu, 2017). Research has been carried out not only to develop measurement tools to assess the professional identities of teachers and student teachers but also to identify the factors influencing pre-service teacher identity in the context of Türkiye (Arpacı, 2015; Babanoğlu & Ağçam, 2019; Çalı, 2021). After searching relevant research conducted in Türkiye, it becomes apparent that most studies revolve around either in-service teachers or teacher candidates registered in all programs in undergraduate education (Arpacı, 2015). Thus, due to the limited studies in the literature explicitly focusing on examining early teacher identity perceptions of pre-service English teachers, the thesis aims to make a contribution to the field literature.

The justification for including PTs in this study is based on the assertion by Ceylan (2019) that the formation of a teacher’s identity begins during the early phases of teacher training. She also claimed that PTs continue to elaborate on their teacher identities in the situations they encounter within the education program. Therefore, the population of the present study consists of PTs, and the study aims to investigate the factors influencing the development of early teacher identity by studying with PTs across four different years of study and determining whether there are differences in perceptions among teacher candidates at various years of study and genders. Ceylan (2019) emphasizes that teacher identity development continues evolving throughout the journey to become a teacher. The perception of professional identity among PTs can be significantly influenced by factors such as the quality of education in faculties of education and schools, their interactions with students, the educational perspectives of instructors and mentors, as well as positive

and negative personality traits (Aykaç et al., 2017). Aykaç et al. (2017) also highlight in their study that the type of teacher individuals become is primarily shaped by the teacher identity they construct during their educational journey. As they point out, understanding how teacher candidates form their teacher identity is crucial for improving the standard of the teaching profession and, consequently, improving the overall quality of education. Moreover, understanding this formation and development process is vital for teacher training programs to contribute effectively to the healthy formation and growth of teachers' professional identities. This study is estimated to provide valuable insights into teacher education and improve teaching quality.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The study is confined to volunteers from all four academic years of the ELT Department in the Faculty of Education at a state university. Therefore, the study is limited to the experiences of candidates enrolled in this department during the fall semester of the 2022-2023 academic year.

Due to the earthquake on February 6th, universities transitioned to online education, which led to reaching only 206 teacher candidates. Consequently, the study is limited to the responses of these 206 pre-service English teachers.

1.6 Definitions of the Key Terms

Identity refers to how individuals perceive themselves in relation to the world, how that perception is shaped throughout space and time, and how individuals perceive their prospects for the future (Norton, 1997).

Teacher Identity refers to the way teachers describe themselves to others and to themselves (Lasky, 2005).

Language Teacher Identity (LTI) refers to the complex blend of cognitive, social, emotional, and historical elements that shape how teachers view themselves and are seen by others, influencing their roles, interactions, and ongoing development within educational settings (Barkhuizen, 2017).

Pre-service Teacher Identity is PTs' self-understanding and involves inquiries such as "How do I see myself as a teacher today, and what kind of teacher do I wish to become?" (Kelchtermans, 2005).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is divided into two parts. The first part lays the groundwork with a comprehensive theoretical framework. It begins with the definitions of identity, professional identity, teacher, and early teacher identity. The identity of the English language teacher is delved into, followed by a detailed exploration of the formation of teacher identity. Finally, the significance of teacher training programs in shaping teacher professional identity is underlined. The second part provides a comprehensive review and summary of related studies in both international and Turkish contexts, further enriching the understanding of the subject.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This section of the thesis examines the concept of identity in detail. It is divided into subheadings, such as professional identity, teacher and early teacher identity, English language teacher identity, and relevant theoretical foundations provided under each heading.

2.1.1 Identity

One of the most complicated and highly debated subjects in social studies is the concept of identity because of its multifaceted nature and the involvement of numerous scientific fields (Alptekin Yolcu, 2018). Sharma (2014), in his study, stresses the complication of the notion of identity, which is interconnected with multiple fields of study, such as philosophy (Noonan, 2007), as well as social sciences such as psychology, sociology (Bernstein & Olsen, 2009), and anthropology (Holland et al., 1998). The concept of identity has emerged as a significant focal point in recent studies on teaching and teacher education (Lauwo & Norton, 2023; Olsen, 2008; Sachs, 2005).

According to the Collins Student's Dictionary (2005), in terms of its origin, the term "identity" originates from the Latin word "idem," signifying "the same". It is defined as the condition of being a particular individual or object characterized by the distinctive features through which an individual or object is classified. There has been no exact definition of "identity" in the literature. From the literature, it is obvious that numerous scholars have provided definitions of identity over time. Sharma (2014) explains "identity" as a comprehensive concept utilized across the

social sciences to illustrate individuals' perception and expression of their distinctiveness. He argues that the term "identity" can be construed as an individual's "capacity for self-reflection and self-awareness." According to Sachs (2005), identity describes how individuals perceive their unique experiences and relationships with different groups, shaping their self-concept and behaviors. At its core, Jenkins (2014) defines identity as signifying humans' ability to determine "who is who".

It is noticeable that identity, which is derived from the relationship among individuals, institutions, and organizations, is complex (Sachs, 2005). In contrast, in Noonan's (2007) view, identity is inherently simple and uncomplicated. According to Horn et al. (2008), identity is an external reflection of one's self-perception and perspective, which is the process of individuals defining themselves and forming their identities. Moghal et al. (2020) define identity as one's sense of self as a professional, and they argue that it is becoming increasingly evident that educators at all levels must establish a distinct sense of self that aligns with their personal values and inner sense of self.

Alptekin Yolcu (2018) asserts that identity contains an individual's perception and self-awareness; it includes one's unique illustration and sense of identity, as well as values and beliefs about how to conduct one's life and interact with others. She states in her study that because of identity's individualized nature, the characteristics of identity differ from one individual to another and become unique.

As stated by Olsen (2008), in the early 20th century, the term "identity" was predominantly used within the field of psychoanalysis to refer to an individual's personalized self-image. During this period, identity was generally perceived as a concept where individuals self-directed and autonomously controlled their sense of self. However, Olsen (2008) emphasizes that in the latter half of the 20th century, the term "identity" gained prominence in sociology and anthropology, with concepts such as "cultural identity" emerging. He argues that, during this time, identity began to be understood broader, encompassing how individuals associated themselves with or were impacted by various cultural or ethnic/racial groups. He highlights that this shift led to a perception of identity as a phenomenon primarily shaped or constructed through cultural markers and social positioning.

Consequently, he argues that identity became increasingly viewed as a product of cultural influences and social interactions.

The concept of identity undergoes a developmental process (Mead & Morris, 1934); it does not exist inherently at birth but emerges through social experiences and interactions (Özdemir, 2010). Moreover, Mead and Morris (1934) add that it develops within individuals based on their connections to the broader social context and others involved. Beijaard et al. (2004) and Woodward (2004) also state that identity can only develop within a social setting characterized by social communication.

On the other hand, Gee (2000) defines the concept of “identity” as the perception of an individual as a specific “certain kind of person” within a particular environment. In his study, he explores the concept of “identity” from four perspectives to understand what it means. These perspectives include:

The Natural Perspective (N-Identities) refers to an individual’s innate characteristics, including gender, race, and ethnicity. These characteristics are believed to develop naturally and are beyond the child’s or society’s control.

The Institutional Perspective (I-Identities), conversely, refers to the role or status of an individual’s identity that an organization assigns.

The Discursive Perspective (D-Identities) regards identity as a personal attribute shaped by social interactions and dialogues.

The Affinity Group Perspective (A-Identities) relates to aspects of one’s identity that are defined through dialogue or social interaction.

Gee (2000) suggests that examining identity within its context can offer valuable perspectives for educational research. Consequently, it could be argued that considering these various perspectives is crucial for understanding identity.

In broad terms, when considering the role of identity, Alptekin Yolcu (2018) emphasizes that it holds significant importance for both prospective and novice teachers, aiding them in adjusting to diverse teaching environments, defining objectives, and fostering personal growth. She indicates that identity serves as a compass, guiding people toward their goals and delineating the path they should pursue. Izadinia (2013) also points out that if someone does not have a profound understanding of their identity, they might find themselves drifting without a clear sense of direction, which can hinder their ability to achieve their aspirations effectively.

Izadinia (2013) also states that exploring student teachers' identities offers valuable insights for teacher educators into the mechanisms through which identities are shaped during teacher education programs. She suggests that comprehending student teachers' identities enables educators to discern the factors influencing their professional identity positively or negatively. Moreover, she highlights that this understanding allows stakeholders who design and implement teacher education programs to make informed decisions aimed at offering a conducive environment to the productive development of prospective teachers' identities.

In her study, Özdemir (2010) states that identity is like a mirror that expresses a person's unique characteristics and place in society, as well as reflecting a person's status and value. She argues that identity is shaped by both social and individual elements in the individual's self-definition process. In her opinion, this process includes internal conflicts and external influences arising from the individual's formation of his own identity. Moreover, she argues that this situation brings diversity and change in identity formation.

Consequently, the literature review on identity has presented numerous definitions and interpretations. The concept of identity is confusing, and even a brief overview of the literature suggests that understanding identity is necessary to appreciating its importance in teacher development (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

2.1.2 Professional Identity

Since the 1980s, professional identity has garnered increasing consideration as an independent subject of literature research, evolving over the years (Deniz, 2022) and many researchers have explored the issue of professional identity (Nghia & Tai, 2017). Today, the importance of professional identity, which encompasses educators' professional development, growth, and practices, is becoming more apparent (Deniz, 2022).

Professional identity is a remarkably challenging issue to tackle due to the numerous vital actors and influences involved (Amorim & Ribeiro-Silva, 2022). Marcean and Alexandru (2022) indicate that professional identity encompasses individuals' perceptions of themselves within their respective professions and the way this perception is expressed to external parties. They state that the definition of professional identity varies among practitioners and remains dynamic rather than

static. From their perspective, the development of professional identity is shaped by internal factors, such as self-perception, and external factors, including perceptions of others and societal norms and expectations. Professional identity is a dynamic concept that encompasses the acquisition of professional skills and the development of professional attitudes and values (Lovkov, 2023).

Pietsch and Williamson (2005) emphasize that professional identity can be seen as the attributes that delineate a teacher and simultaneously distinguish them from individuals in other professions. From their perspective, professional identity development is a complicated procedure characterized by various personal, professional, environmental, and social factors that interact and synchronize instantly.

Alptekin Yolcu (2018) notes that professional identity acquired through interaction and socialization with colleagues develops within the profession's knowledge, skills, norms, values, and professional culture. She also argues that professional identity indicates what an individual does for a living and how others perceive them; it reveals how individuals reflect their roles, needs, and values in their behaviors.

On the other hand, Sachs (2005) refers to two types of teacher professional identity: entrepreneurial and activist. In her view, despite having quite different ideas about what it means to be a teacher, these identities do not conflict; it cannot be stated that teachers embrace one and disregard the other. She adds that these two types of teacher identities mean the following:

- The “entrepreneurial identity” refers to teachers approaching their role in education based on business logic and focusing on managing education more efficiently. According to Sachs (2005), this identity reflects an individualistic, competitive, controlling, and regulatory approach. She states that it is formed under the influence of the competitive educational environment and adds that this identity may subject teachers to individual work and competitive pressures. However, she claims it may also resist values crucial in democratic discourse, such as collaboration and mutual respect, and may support traditional practices.
- The “activist identity” refers to teachers embracing democratic principles in education to enhance student learning and improve educational conditions. According to Sachs (2005), rooted in the tradition of democratic education, this identity is founded on equality, social justice, and inclusivity

principles. She argues that activist teachers advocate for establishing democratic schools and encourage the participation of all stakeholders in decision-making processes. Furthermore, she points out that they endeavor to redefine their professional identities, strive for societal change, and offer a critical perspective on educational policies and practices.

As stated by Christopher (2005), acting professionally entails various elements. Firstly, he states that it requires demonstrating levels of dedication and commitment. According to him, this involves accepting long hours of work as a common occurrence and acknowledging the flexible nature of the job, which often impacts home and personal life. Additionally, he states that it necessitates exerting maximum effort and being in constant pursuit of improving performance. He claims that it is crucial to develop appropriate and compassionate relationships with students, prioritizing their preferences and well-being, as well as maintaining “professional” associations with coworkers, parents, and other relevant external agencies. Finally, he points out that high-level skills are necessary to intelligently respond to multiple demands in the complexity of the teaching task and the evolving environment. In other words, as many other studies suggest, teaching goes beyond being merely a job (Christopher, 2005; Herreño-Contreras & Salamanca González, 2023; Tateo, 2012).

Casanova-Fernández et al. (2022) state that professional identity is a multifaceted term because it is dynamic and influenced by social and personal relationships. From their perspective, teachers’ professional identities are shaped by their own experiences as well as the influences of society, and they arise from the interaction of these two factors. They point out that teachers are acknowledged in professional and other groups as well as via their social interactions with others. Moreover, they emphasize that teachers continue creating professional identities throughout their teaching careers. They state that teachers must manage administrative duties in addition to offering students emotional assistance, so it can be argued that professional identity for teachers is more complicated.

As maintained by Moghal et al. (2020), it is becoming more apparent that it is essential for educators at all stages to develop a clear understanding of their professional identity, which resonates with their internal beliefs and individual values. Studies indicate that forming a robust professional identity leads to enhanced teaching methodologies and a more vital dedication to the teaching

profession (Berberyan et al., 2019; Casanova-Fernández et al., 2022; Hanna et al., 2019; Kirchner & London, 2022).

2.1.3 Teacher and Early Teacher Identity

Teacher identity is unstable, ever-changing (Maclean & White, 2007), complex, and a multidimensional concept (Suarez & McGrath, 2022). Defining teacher identity poses challenges due to its complexity, susceptibility to misinterpretation, and its inherently subjective nature, allowing for multiple interpretations (Olsen, 2008). Teacher identity involves determining a teacher's role in their profession and the teaching approach they idealize while also encompassing the process of creating a list of values that includes the fundamental qualities, behaviors, and understanding of teaching, and this process provides guidance on how a teacher should act and what they should understand (Karatepe & Akay, 2020). Teacher identity also includes aspects such as the growth of teachers concerning their students, their expertise in delivering subject material, and their pedagogical understanding (Tran & Dee, 2023).

Teacher identity is complicatedly tied to teachers' self-assurance in their abilities, dedication to their profession, and the fulfillment they derive from ongoing teaching practice (Maclean & White, 2007). A teacher's sense of identity is shaped by their beliefs about the act of teaching and the significance of the teaching profession, which evolves through their experiences (Sayar, 2014).

According to Weran and Kuswandono (2021), teacher identity is connected to teachers' lives, involving their professional activities, continuous learning, growth, errors, barriers, difficulties, and introspection. They define "teacher professional identity" as the values, beliefs, and responsibilities held by an individual in their aspirations to become a teacher and adopt a specific type of teaching role. As they state, this "teacher identity" concept has been utilized in research studies to demonstrate how teachers perceive themselves in their professional roles. They argue that teacher identity encompasses the lived experiences, personal and professional beliefs, and attitudes that impact an individual's identity as a teacher. They point out that identity is complex, residing concurrently within individuals, where the teacher role constitutes just one facet. From their perspective, teaching encompasses emotional dimensions that influence educators' interactions with students and how they tackle professional challenges.

Moreover, they emphasize that teacher identity goes beyond the boundaries of the classroom, influencing how teachers see themselves within their professional and social environments. They assert that teacher identity profoundly influences teachers' comprehension of their societal role and position, directing their teaching methods and decision-making. They also argue that this becomes apparent as educators acquire knowledge, interact with students and parents, and contemplate their professional identities, principles, and priorities.

Beijaard et al. (2004) conducted an extensive literature review on teacher identity and identified four key characteristics of professional teacher identity as follows:

1) Teacher identity is a dynamic structure based on experiences that are constantly being reinterpreted.

2) Teacher identity encompasses both the teacher's personal characteristics and the contextual elements in which they exist. Therefore, the cultural influence of educational environments plays a significant role in shaping teacher identities.

3) Professional teacher identity consists of harmonious sub-identities that vary depending on teachers' diverse relationships and contexts. These sub-identities have a balanced and harmonious nature, which is crucial for preventing conflicts within teacher identity.

4) To develop teacher identity, it is important for teachers to engage in professional development and communities, be active participants, and continue their learning process.

Moreover, Beijaard et al. (2004) emphasize that studies examined in their research on teachers' professional identities are conducted into three categories: (1) studies on how teachers' professional identities are formed, (2) studies focusing on the identification of characteristics of teachers' professional identity, and (3) studies in which teachers' stories are used to (re)present professional identity. They also point out that professional identities are shaped by (a) one's family members, (b) mates or relatives, (c) observational learning experience, (d) unexpected teaching situations, (e) the context of the policy, teaching customs, and cultural norms, and (f) implicitly acquired awareness.

Additionally, Saban (2000) summarizes the essential qualities for developing a professional teacher identity as follows: Teachers are required to possess a robust command of subject matter, a diverse repertoire of teaching methods to employ

effective instructional techniques tailored to different subjects, a comprehensive grasp of learning theories and child development to accommodate students' learning preferences, self-awareness regarding their strengths and weaknesses, and the capability to engage in productive communication and collaboration with fellow teachers.

According to Erdem (2020), teachers' professional identities are complex and can change as time goes by. He points out that many things affect how these identities develop, like how teachers see themselves, their emotions, the stories they hear, how they think about things and their situations. According to Çengelci (2021), understanding professional identity well and the factors affecting teacher identity is a massive part of what it means to be a teacher, and it is essential for teachers to guide a teacher's career decisions throughout their professional life.

The teacher identity formed at an early stage serves as a bridge in the relationship between teacher candidates' desire to achieve their professional goals and their belief that they can achieve these goals (Görkaş Kayabaşı & Koç, 2024). As stated by Huang and Wang (2024) in their study, previous studies have categorized the background of pre-service teacher identities into two main categories: personal and professional. They state that individual characteristics such as age and gender, life history including past learning experiences and early teacher role models, as well as personal psychological states such as self-efficacy and emotion can significantly impact their identities. From their perspective, educational training is considered the most crucial professional factor, with university studies and teaching practicum serving as two fundamental forces for pre-service teacher identity transformation. As they state, most studies have focused on interpreting the challenges and dilemmas PTs encounter during identity transformation.

In summary, an essential component of a teacher's professional development is early teacher identity, which has a significant influence on career choices and teaching methods. Early teacher identity is a complex construct that changes over time because of a variety of internal and external influences. To effectively support the growth and development of teachers in the early stages of their careers, teacher education programs and mentorship programs must have a complete understanding of the construction of teacher identity.

2.1.4 English Language Teacher Identity

The professional identity of language teachers often becomes more distinctive and closely linked with their teaching approaches as they refine their techniques and gain confidence (Sherman & Teemant, 2023). As Tsui (2011) emphasizes, the identity of a second language teacher has recently begun to attract researchers' attention. She claims that, in the literature, identity is generally defined as a relational and questioned construct, recognized as a significant component within the sociocultural and sociopolitical landscape of second language classrooms. In her view, Wenger's theory of identity formation posits that identity is relational, experiential, social, and personal, serving as a powerful tool in explaining how teachers' modes of participation can shape their identities. Furthermore, she mentions that research on teacher identity in the field of teacher education literature tends to revolve around three main themes:

- The first theme concerns the multidimensional nature of professional identity and the relationships among these dimensions. While it is a commonly held view that professional identities are multidimensional, there are differing perspectives regarding whether the endeavor to achieve coherence and integrity among these several identities should be included in teacher education.
- The second theme relates to identity formation's personal and social dimensions. While most studies focus on the individual dimension of identity formation, some researchers emphasize the significance of the broader sociocultural and sociopolitical context in shaping professional identity.
- The third theme centers on the relationship between the subject and structure in identity formation. While some researchers highlight the importance of the subject, others argue that teachers' active positions can be constrained by social structures, and the interaction between these two factors shapes teachers' identities.

In their study, Yazan and Lindahl (2020) state that while identity is inherent to every language teacher, the concept of language teacher identity has only been established and extensively researched in the last two decades. They argue that the role of language teacher identity is pivotal in both the professional and personal aspects of language teachers' lives, as it illustrates their self-perception and how they are perceived by others, including colleagues, students, and fellow professionals, within their field and professional endeavors. They claim that language teacher identity can facilitate the transition of language teachers into the

desired teaching professionals, and the concept of language teacher identity offers a complex framework for theorizing and analyzing how teachers acquire the necessary skills or develop as educators and enact their practices within socio-historical, cultural as well as political contexts.

Considering the results of the study in which Coşgun and Savaş (2023) aimed to investigate how English teachers' professional identities evolved under the lens of the Possible Selves Theory, they suggest a data-driven model for English Teacher Professional Identity Development (Figure 2-1):

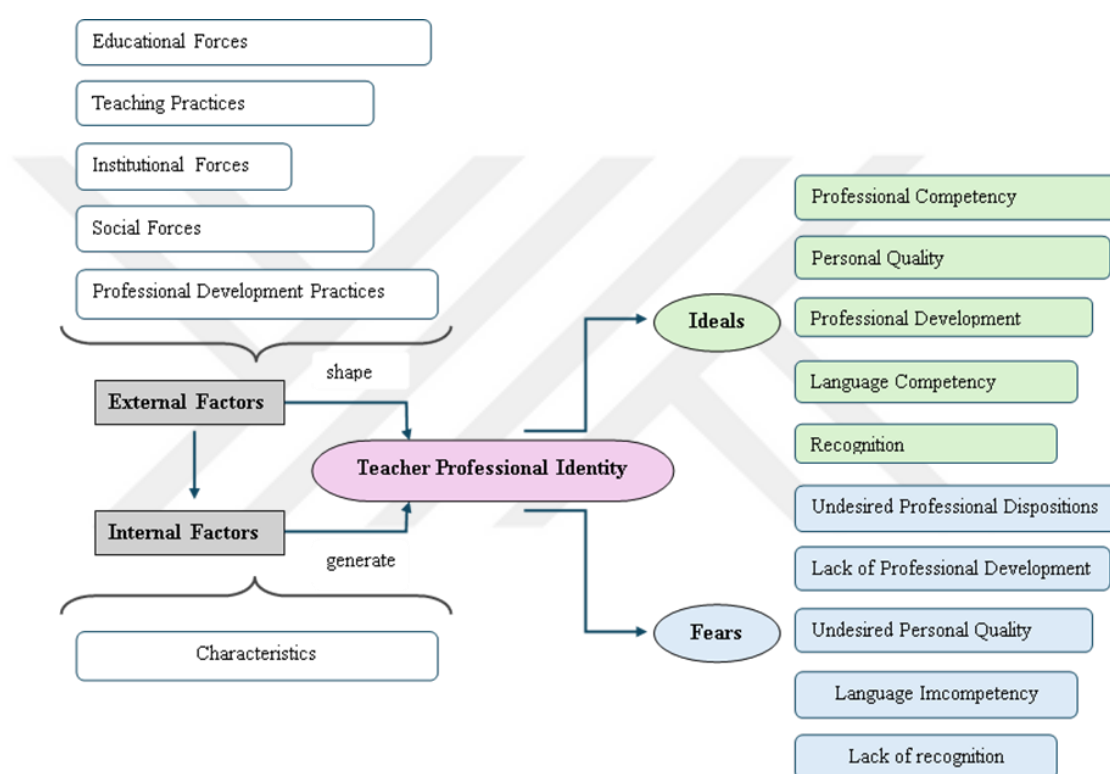


Figure 2-1 A data-driven EFL teacher professional identity development model (Coşgun & Savaş, 2023).

As can be realized from Figure 2-1 by Coşgun and Savaş (2023), both internal elements and external circumstances contribute to shaping teachers' professional identities. This figure shows that while internal factors initially play a pivotal role, external influences gradually become more significant over time. This suggests that external factors considerably impact the formation of teachers' professional identities. The findings from the literature review highlight the dynamic nature of English language teacher identity, emphasizing the interplay between internal and external influences in its development (Barkhuizen, 2017; Chen, 2023; Mulu et al., 2022; Yazan, 2023).

Furthermore, the model Coşgun and Savaş (2023) proposed reveals the complex interrelation between the fears and values that constitute an English language teacher's professional identity. They identify various components, such as professional skills, character traits, language proficiency, and recognition, contributing to the ideal self of an English language teacher. From their point of view, among these components, professional competency emerges as particularly crucial, encompassing essential skills such as teaching enthusiasm and effective pedagogical methods.

Moreover, the study conducted by Sayar (2014) underscores the complex nature of teacher identity, noting the absence of harmony in its precise definition and the utilization of diverse theoretical frameworks to explore its facets. She emphasizes the parallels between the process of understanding teacher identity and learning a new language, highlighting its profound connection to personal identity and the broader societal context.

Overall, the synthesis of findings underscores the significance of comprehending teacher identity in the domain of language pedagogy, recognizing it as a pivotal factor in delineating the role of English language teachers and informing effective pedagogical practices.

2.1.5 Teacher Identity Construction

As Tran and Dee (2023) point out, aspiring teachers undergo a profound transformation in their identities as they prepare to attempt their teaching careers. From their point of view, metamorphosis occurs as they navigate through academic coursework, engage in practical teaching experiences, and eventually assume new roles within the challenging dynamics of today's classroom environments. They also indicate that while developing their professional identity, novice teachers draw upon their past experiences both as students and as teachers. Sachs (2005) states that teachers use their own life experiences and what they have learned in school and outside of it to help their students learn. She claims that teachers are also affected by how teachers are shown in movies, books, and other media. As she underlines, while teacher candidates gain professional knowledge and skills through the courses, practicums, and pedagogical practices they take during their education, they also shape their attitudes and values towards the teaching profession and students.

According to Samuel and Stephens (2000), student teachers' distinct identities undergo a process of deconstruction, reconstruction, and subsequent development during the pre-service teacher preparation program. They highlight that, on the one hand, the personal development and identity of the student teacher are crucial, while on the other hand, the cultural dynamics of society and the professional environment are also significant. Moreover, they point out that these two relationships play a vital role in the educational journey and professional career of the student teacher. Their study suggests that as people grow personally and professionally, they build their identity and understand their role by carefully thinking about and accepting different values, behaviors, and attitudes. They express that these come from their life experiences and sometimes conflict with each other. They associate the development of concepts regarding teacher candidates' identities with three primary forces: (1) inertial forces stemming from teaching and learning biographical experiences and formed in home and school environments; (2) programmatic forces originating from the curriculum and program of teacher education institutions, including the influences of teacher candidate teams and mentor teachers during school-based teaching practices; and (3) contextual forces arising from the changing educational environment of policy and the changing school culture at the macro and micro-teaching environment level. Moreover, they argue that in a rapidly changing social context, it is expected for a student teacher to assume multiple roles simultaneously to become a professional teacher. Samuel and Stephens (2000) describe these roles as follows:

- Acting as the biographer of their own past educational experiences.
- Serving as a critical observer of their previous teaching and learning experiences.
- Being a student of alternative theoretical concepts, approaches, methodologies, strategies, and practices.
- Taking on the role of self-reconstructor of new and different teaching and learning experiences, ideally developed from a perspective that enables critical reflection on their previous educational experiences.
- Serving as an agent of educational reconstruction to facilitate qualitatively better educational experiences for their students.

In their study, Samuel and Stephens (2000) state that PTs are expected to deal with multiple roles simultaneously, yet the limited time setting in teacher education pre-service programs often prevents the full development of these roles. As they emphasize, as a result, lots of PTs do not feel totally ready for these roles when they finish their training. Moreover, they argue that the personal life journeys of the student teachers also affect their professional teacher identity, and the educational experience of future generations is shaped by what teachers bring with them into the classroom; thus, researchers and policymakers adopt a methodology that confidently prioritizes the experiences and voices of teachers in teacher identity construction process.

In summary, teacher identity construction is a flexible process that evolves through the interplay of personal experiences, educational training, and professional development. It is crucial for teachers to reflect on their individual life journeys and experiences, as these form their perceptions and approaches to teaching. By prioritizing teachers' voices and experiences during the construction process, academics and policymakers can gain a better understanding of the details of teacher identity creation and develop more effective measures to promote novice teachers' professional development.

2.1.6 The Significance of Teacher Training Programs on Teacher Identity Construction

As Beltman et al. (2015) maintain, forming a professional teacher identity is complicated for PTs as they navigate a journey influenced by their past encounters with teachers and education, their academic training, practical experiences in the field, and societal norms. They emphasize that teaching presents complexities at all levels, which may increase as PTs interact with their course material and gain practical experience during their school field placements.

As students enter professional or disciplinary communities, they undergo considerable shifts in identity, adjusting their perception of their role within these communities and in society at large (Tucker & Simmons, 2021). According to Tucker and Simmons (2021), this transition is particularly profound for aspiring teachers as they grapple with integrating essential concepts, attitudes, and methods into their personal and professional personas. These changes can occur dramatically within a single day, transitioning from attending campus lectures in the morning to

leading classroom lessons during practicums in the afternoon. Erdem (2020) argues that the pre-service teacher education period is crucial for the development of teacher identity because it is during this time that prospective teachers encounter their profession for the first time, laying the foundations of their professional identities.

Casanova-Fernández et al. (2022) argue that teachers' professional identities are formed because of the combination of social, cultural, and educational environments, stages of teacher career development, and interactions within the academic community. They state that this process mostly begins in early education, especially in professional development programs, and it plays a crucial part in defining the dimensions of the teaching identity. From their perspective, since teaching efficacy and student achievement are experimentally demonstrated to be correlated, there has been a growing interest in strengthening initial teacher training regulations both domestically and internationally in recent years. As they indicated, the goals of these policies are to support initial teacher training programs and provide aspiring teachers with chances for experiential learning in contextual and systemic areas related to pedagogical knowledge, skills, and reflective practice.

2.2 Related Studies

This section presents studies related to teacher professional identity and early teacher professional identity conducted both domestically and internationally. Studies related to the specified subject area are listed, starting from the most recent ones.

2.2.1 International Studies

International research on teacher identity and professional development provides important details regarding the way teachers create their identities and the factors affecting this process (Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Mhedizadeh et al., 2024; Najihah et al., 2023; Titu, 2019; Wu, 2023). Studies in different countries reveal the effects of teachers' career stories, biographical elements, emotional and cognitive factors, contextual conditions, and professional communities on teacher identity. In particular, early teacher identity formation illuminates the role of difficulties and experiences encountered in this process, showing that teacher identity is a dynamic and constantly changing structure (Christensson, 2021; Flores, 2020; Hanna et al., 2020; Torees-Cladera et al., 2021). Studies conducted abroad on teacher identity

are grouped under two headings: (1) Studies on Teacher Identity and (2) Studies on Early Teacher Identity.

2.2.1.1 Studies on Teacher Identity

Mhedizadeh et al. (2024) conducted a study on teacher identity development of an in-service English teacher. They examined that teacher's career story throughout eight years. They collected the data through classroom observations and interviews with this teacher in the first year, fourth year, and eighth years of the teacher's career. The narratives of an Iranian English teacher's first eight years in the profession were gathered to observe precisely the process of identity formation. The researchers concluded that changes occurred in the teacher's identity over time and that the communities the teacher engaged with significantly influenced the process of professional identity development and change.

The study conducted by Najihah et al. (2023) in Indonesia aimed to explore how four inexperienced non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) develop their identities and gain insight into the extent of their endeavors in asserting their voices as NNESTs in the field of English language instruction. In the study, in which the researchers collected data through written reflection and semi-structured interviews, the participants were four novice NNESTs. The study presented that building their teacher identities as inexperienced English instructors is affected by factors such as teacher biographies, teacher emotions, contextual factors, teacher cognition, and teachers' participation in communities of practice. Among them, the factor that least influences teacher identity construction is cognition, while the factor that most affects it is teacher biography.

Wu (2023) in China, analyzing a longitudinal narrative case study of an English teacher at the university level, aimed to examine how this English teacher contributes to her own teacher identity construction. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Interviews were held three times. The initial interview took place when the participant successfully applied for a PhD scholarship. The second occurred immediately after she obtained her doctoral degree. After she returned to China five years later, the third was conducted. The findings highlighted that the individual contributions of an EFL teacher to the process of teacher identity construction are crucial. Additionally, the findings revealed that identity is not

something set in stone; it is more like a journey that is always changing and influenced by many things inside and outside us.

Another study by Alifia et al. (2022) examined how new teachers in Indonesia shape their professional identities, especially considering the impact of government policies. Over two years, researchers followed novice teachers' experiences through regular diary entries, uncovering five key themes: initial motivations, beliefs about teaching, job satisfaction, challenges faced, and commitment to their careers. The study revealed that while personal traits influence teachers' identities, government policies and working conditions also play significant roles. The findings indicated that new teachers struggle to balance their ideals with the realities of their profession without adequate support. The study suggests a need to redefine teaching by focusing on observable qualities of effective teaching and supporting government policies with these standards in the Indonesian education system.

In Fani's study (2022) in Indonesia, the aim was to investigate what identity an English language instructor constructs while teaching English and what factors affect this identity construction. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews completed by an English language teacher at a university level. The findings revealed various types of teacher identities in ELT, such as context-related identities, disciplinary identities, and language-related identities. Furthermore, the data indicated that the factors influencing the formation of teacher identities throughout their teaching careers are their experiences.

The study conducted by Irfiana et al. (2021) aimed to understand how teachers express themselves as educators in the classroom. The study involved a male English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher from a high school who was interviewed via Zoom. The research highlighted how teachers' religious beliefs and societal values significantly influence their teaching style. The findings indicated that teaching experience helps teachers navigate identity challenges, allowing them to define their roles more clearly. Moreover, it was concluded that recognizing and embracing their identities enables teachers to reflect on their experiences and beliefs, leading to professional growth.

The study conducted by Weran and Kuswandono (2021) aimed to explore the connection/disparity between personal and professional identities among elementary school teachers. To collect data, the researchers utilized a questionnaire

consisting of two sections: closed-ended Likert Scale statements and open-ended questions seeking the teachers' perspectives on their personal and professional identities. The questionnaire, comprising Likert scale items followed by open-ended inquiries, was supplemented by individual interviews to further review the teachers' beliefs regarding their personal and professional identities. The research findings indicated three areas of misalignment between personal and professional identities within teachers, including adapting to the school environment, striving to fulfill the role of a nurturing figure for students, and managing behavior within the school setting.

In the study conducted by Djoudir (2019) in Algeria, the aim was to examine the professional identity development process among novice English teachers, particularly regarding the influence of personal experiences and practicum. With the voluntary participation of 14 novice teachers from various high schools and middle schools, data collection was completed over a period of 12 weeks through interviews, written reflections from the teachers, and the researcher's journal. The findings of this study revealed that the personal experiences of novice teachers contributed to the development of a positive and robust professional identity. The research further underscored the significance of feeling connected to the teacher community as a critical factor influencing the professional identities of novice teachers. Additionally, it was found that emotional support from colleagues positively impacted their professional growth. Moreover, the findings indicated that the professional growth of novice teachers was impacted by recognition from both the administration and students.

In the study conducted by Titu (2019) in the USA, the aim was to explore the development of teacher identity by observing three science teachers in the initial phases of their profession over three years. The study investigated teachers' perceptions of their responsibilities and classroom roles, their cognitive approaches to identifying themselves as coworkers, and their practices and beliefs regarding student learning and classroom teaching. Data were gathered from various sources such as reflective journals, teacher interviews, and classroom observations. The results showed that novice teachers perceive their identities through three main themes: (a) teacher as role, (b) enhancing student learning, and (c) teaching practice. The findings revealed that as novice teachers struggle with classroom management in their initial three years, they frequently switch between "authoritative" and

“facilitative” teachers. Moreover, the findings indicated that teachers transition from primarily adopting an “authoritative” role to a “facilitative” role and ultimately to a “guide” role throughout their development.

The aim of the study conducted by Kanno and Stuart (2011) was to understand better how ESL teachers acquire their teaching skills and how these experiences shape their identities as educators. Two second-year MA TESOL students from an American state institution participated in this study. The study’s initial findings showed that although the participants behaved like teachers, they did not feel like teachers. It was discovered, however, that these emotions vanished after the study, and participants started to accept who they were as teachers. Considering these findings, the researchers stress the significance of emphasizing how a second language teacher education program should be built on a perspective that focuses on the acquisition of teacher identity.

The study by Flores and Day (2006) aimed to examine teachers’ professional identities in the initial stages of their careers. The participants were 18 early-career teachers. Data were gathered via semi-structured interviews conducted at the beginning and end of each academic year. The study’s findings demonstrated that instructors’ instructional approaches are influenced by their perceptions of themselves, the school culture in which they operate, and student opinions. Additionally, it was concluded that pre-service teacher identities, individual characteristics, and teaching contexts are influential in shaping teachers’ professional identity.

As can be realized from the above literature various studies have been conducted to understand how new and inexperienced teachers form their identities, the factors affecting this process, and the effects of identity formation on their professional development. The most commonly used data collection tools are semi-structured interviews and reflective diaries. Findings show that teachers are influenced by their personal experiences, emotional support, community involvement, and working conditions. These factors are decisive in shaping teacher identity, and it is emphasized that teacher education and professional support programs should take these factors into account.

2.2.1.2 Studies on Early Teacher Identity

The study conducted by Christensson (2021), focusing on how student-teachers' interactions support the creation of their professional identities, examined how they navigate institutional dynamics during the transition from student to teacher roles. This study comprises three separate studies investigating how Swedish teacher candidates construct their professional identities through interactions within various institutional and educational contexts. Based on mediated discourse theory, the study uses several components of discourse analysis and multimodal interaction analysis to build and analyze data. The data contains video, audio, observational field notes, and interviews. The second study, which focuses on the interactional formation of teacher identity in bachelor thesis seminars in history, emphasizes the role of multiple actors and institutions in the process. The third study, which focuses on a final practicum class, shows how earlier experiences are used in a narrative format. The findings stress that developing teacher identity is a collaborative and communicative endeavor, as evidenced by both previous experiences and anticipated viewpoints. Student teachers' identity building uses textual, embodied, and narrative resources, emphasizing the integration of academic, professional, and everyday discourses. Given institutional affordances and limits, the study implies that planning and implementing resources in teacher education can aid in forming a professional identity.

In the study conducted by Lutovac and Assunção Flores (2021), they aimed to find how PTs interpret failure in terms of their teacher identity. The study sample consisted of 45 Portuguese pre-service subject teachers, none of whom had yet completed their teaching practicum. The data were collected through teachers' written narratives. The study revealed that from both the student and teacher perspectives, prospective teachers perceive failure in different ways, and failure experiences shape how future teachers develop as individuals.

The study conducted by Torres-Cladera et al. (2021) investigated how university education and practicums can shape identity development. Data were collected from eight undergraduate physical education teacher candidates, their university instructors, and school tutors during the practicum. Data were collected by written student observations, individual interviews with school tutors, and field notes kept by university instructors. This study indicated that practicum helps the pre-service teacher bridge the gap between the theory that they learned in the

university courses and real class experiences. Additionally, this study pointed out that the cooperation between teacher candidates, school tutors, and university instructors is very crucial.

The objective of the study conducted by Hanna et al. (2020) in the Netherlands was to create and authenticate the Teacher Identity Measurement Scale (TIMS) to evaluate the teacher identity of pre-service primary teachers. Drawing upon identity theory and a comprehensive examination of quantitative tools concerning teacher identity, the researchers broke the concept of teacher identity down into four primary components: self-efficacy, self-image, motivation, and perception of tasks. The researchers collected the data twice; in the first data collection process, they collected data from 209 first and second-year students from three primary teacher education institutions. In the second data collection process, they obtained data from 419 first-year primary teacher candidates from four institutes. They completed the creation of the scale in three phases: cognitive interview, expert validation, and a small pilot. As a result, a 46-item measurement scale was developed, which was thought to contribute to understanding the professional development of prospective elementary school teachers and could be used as a resource to support the development process of an experienced teacher identity.

The study conducted by Flores (2020) aimed to investigate how teacher candidates perceive themselves as teachers and how their experiences in teacher education programs influence their journey to becoming teachers. The study involved 20 student teachers enrolled in a two-year master's degree program in teaching. During the first semester, they were asked to document their learning experiences and reflect on significant encounters. Data were collected through written narratives at the end of the semester. The findings indicated that teacher candidates could reflect on their experiences, clarify their views regarding teaching and the role of teachers, and begin to negotiate their identities as educators as they progressed in their journey to becoming teachers.

The study conducted by Ó Gallchóir et al. (2018) in Ireland aimed to examine how seven second-year PTs from different department fields construct the meaning of the teaching role in their journey to becoming educators. Researchers collected reflections through personal stories and pedagogical symbols, and these reflections were stimulated by video recordings of practical sessions throughout

practicum. The results suggest that PTs initially focus on the physical depiction of what a teacher looks like. According to the results, they started thinking differently about what it means to be a teacher after realizing that their earlier ideas did not match their actual experiences during practicum. Researchers stated that these differences hindered the PTs' ongoing teacher identity development.

The study conducted by Nghia and Tai (2017) in Vietnam investigated how the professional identity of the teacher was settled in the early period of the teaching career during the teaching practicum by analyzing the narratives of two teacher candidates. The research findings indicated that teacher identity development during the practicum followed a process involving the formation of expectations, their challenge in real teaching situations, and the emergence of a new identity version. Interactions with the environment and stakeholders significantly influenced teacher identity development during the practicum. Mentorship plays a crucial role in shaping the identities of PTs. The study indicated that teacher education programs should focus on making teacher candidates' expectations realistic, providing them with authentic knowledge and skills, promoting identity negotiations between mentors and teacher candidates, and empowering PTs to strengthen their professional identities.

The study conducted by Fajardo Castañeda (2014) in Colombia aimed to examine how teacher candidates build their teacher identities from the interplay of their knowledge, beliefs, and engagement with a teaching community. The study sample consisted of six teacher candidates in the final stage of their education program. Data were collected through stimulating recall, interviews, and online blogs. It was concluded that each teacher candidate shapes his/her own identity with his/her own experiences, but at the same time, social interactions also affect their teaching identity.

In conclusion, the above-mentioned studies on early teacher identity reveal that teacher candidates' identity construction is a complex and multidimensional process. Teacher identity is shaped under the influence of personal experiences, emotional support, community involvement, institutional dynamics, and teacher education programs. Studies highlight the challenges that prospective teachers face in establishing their professional identities, the importance of practical experiences, and the role of mentoring relationships. These findings indicate that teacher

education programs and professional development supports should include strategies to strengthen the identities of teacher candidates.

2.2.2 Studies in the Turkish Context

Professional identity research in Türkiye focuses on the identity formation and development of teacher candidates. These studies aim to understand the early professional identities of teacher candidates and use this information in teacher education and practice. Research on teacher identity conducted in the country is grouped under two headings: (1) Studies on Teacher Identity and (2) Studies on Early Teacher Identity. These studies enhance to the understanding of the dynamic and multidimensional structure of teacher identity.

2.2.2.1 Studies on Teacher Identity in Türkiye

In their study, Aydın and Aslan (2024) applied a descriptive survey model to investigate how teachers perceive their identities as educators and how those identities vary based on demographic factors (e.g., gender, professional experience, educational attainment, subject, school level, and employment location). The study's sample comprised 8834 educators employed at kindergarten, elementary, middle, and high schools in a small city in Türkiye. Using the cluster sampling method, 875 teachers from each branch who were employed in provincial, district, and village schools made up the sample for this study. The Teacher Identity Scale is the instrument used in this study to collect data. The findings of this study indicated that teachers had highly positive evaluations of their identities as teachers. Furthermore, it was discovered that there was a high degree of motivation, professional dedication, sense of duty, and self-perception among teachers. The only views of teacher identity that were found to be at a moderate level were those of job satisfaction. The study revealed that while factors such as education level, school type, duty location, and branch demographics were examined for their impact on teacher identity perceptions, they did not significantly alter teacher identity. However, gender and professional experience variables significantly altered teacher identity. Regarding how instructors perceived the teacher identity task perception factor, the gender variable significantly favored female teachers. Teacher identity, self-efficacy, and work satisfaction views significantly differed according to the professional experience variable, favoring teachers with more

experience. Considering their research, Aydın and Aslan (2024) made suggestions to enhance educators' socio-economic circumstances and workloads.

The objective of the study conducted by Arslan (2023) was to investigate the development of teacher identity among novice middle school mathematics educators, specifically focusing on their emotional journey during their initial year of teaching. To achieve this goal, seven mathematics teachers, all graduates of the same mathematics education program but employed at various schools, recorded their emotional experiences in diaries. The investigation results showed that teachers' success in math teaching activities and their close relationships with their students were the main factors that elicited good emotions. Conversely, social situations, classroom management problems, and challenges with arithmetic teaching assignments were the leading causes of negative feelings. In conclusion, this study demonstrated how important emotions are in forming a teacher's identity in the case of inexperienced teachers.

The study conducted by Coşgun and Savaş (2023) concentrated on the experiences of three distinct teacher groups as they investigated English instructors' professional identity development from the viewpoint of the Possible Selves Theory. Their mixed-method research design included 194 participants, including students and inexperienced and experienced English teachers studying or working in different Turkish state schools. The results showed that teacher groups shared similar views on their goals and anxieties and that experienced, novice and student English teachers did not significantly differ in their potential selves. They also concluded that participants gave much weight to things such as professional growth, language ability, professional competence, personal qualities, and acknowledgment of their ideal selves as language teachers. Their main concerns about their professional identities were inadequate language, insufficient professional growth, unfavorable personal qualities, negative professional tendencies, and not being acknowledged. Considering these findings, the researchers proposed a model based on data for the development of Teacher Professional Identity in the context of English as a Foreign Language.

Kimsesiz (2023) investigated the professional identities of EFL teachers using metaphor and emoticon elicitations. Forty English language teachers from various educational institutions around Türkiye willingly took part in the research. As the central idea of the study, teachers were asked to identify the most commonly

used four emojis that best represent their feelings and identities as EFL teachers, as well as to frame their professional identities with representative metaphors and explain why they chose the metaphor to represent them. The study showed that the metaphors were divided into eight different categories. The results of the metaphor groups showed that the terms “vitality”, “traveler”, “problem solver”, “nurturer”, “inspirer”, “craftsperson”, “challenger”, and “a new identity” were present. Furthermore, positive images that represent professional happiness with smiling face icons were revealed to be the most regularly typed top four emojis that participants connected with their professional identity. The findings revealed that the goals and anxieties of English teachers were all a part of their professional identities. It was also uncovered that teachers are worried about specific professional characteristics, including reluctance and insufficiency in the classroom. The study concluded with a proposed model that incorporated the concerns and aspirations of EFL teachers and highlighted the internal and external elements influencing the formation of their professional identities.

Taşdemir and Seferoğlu (2022) also aimed to investigate pre-service English teachers’ viewpoints on the components of teacher professional identity and their comprehension of professional identity evolution during practical teaching. The participants were thirty-one teacher candidates who had a practicum at a state university. Data were collected from reflective journals and focus group interviews. The research outcomes highlighted that PTs’ identities are rooted in multiple factors, including their proficiency in language, competency in specific academic disciplines and contexts, and their self-awareness and understanding of their students. The study also discovered a shift in teacher candidates’ perspectives on professional identity development from a personal to an institutional lens. According to the results of this study, teachers, while considering their personal qualities and external factors, began to recognize the authority and responsibilities inherent in the teaching role throughout the practice period.

The study conducted by Girgin and Şahin (2019) aimed to examine the professional identity formation process of elementary school teachers. The study participants comprised 12 elementary school teachers. Data were collected through activities developed by the researcher. The findings revealed multiple themes and sub-themes showing various architectures of professional identity. It was discovered that elementary school teachers use lifelines to shape their professional

identities, such as family, school, occupation, and personal life. Furthermore, the study explored issues such as marriage and parenting in the process of professional identity creation, emphasizing parenthood as a crucial criterion influencing professional identity formation alongside marriage and having children. The study emphasized the impact of professional life and teaching processes on forming professional identities among elementary school teachers.

Mutlu and Ortaçtepe (2016) carried out a study to investigate how changing from a non-native English teacher to a native Turkish teacher affected their self-perception, confidence, and views on teaching and learning. The participants were five non-native English teachers who traveled to the United States for a year to teach their native language, Turkish, alongside native teachers. Data collection tools were interviews, a demographic questionnaire, and journals. The findings indicated that teaching the native language of participants affected how they saw themselves, and training in ELT influenced their perception of teaching ability. The findings indicated that participants believed that being a native speaker of a language was not sufficient for teaching it. Additionally, it was concluded that students, colleagues, and social interactions influenced teacher identity.

Another study conducted by Balban (2015) investigated how three inexperienced teachers perceived their teacher identity during their initial teaching experiences. Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed distinct themes for each teacher: The first teacher struggled with rejecting the teacher identity and fixating on authority, the second sought constant validation and underwent identity transition, and the third teacher grappled with issues of age and professionalism, along with feelings of despair and self-blame. Additionally, it was concluded that the teachers highlighted various external factors such as political influences, student demographics, workload, standardized testing, curriculum policies, and professional development opportunities as significant elements shaping their perceptions of teacher identity.

The purpose of the study conducted by Çulha Özbaş (2012) was to investigate how in-service social studies teachers perceive their professional identity. The participants were 63 in-service social studies teachers. Data were collected through metaphors. The findings uncovered that social studies teachers could not go beyond the common metaphors related to teaching while developing

metaphors for their profession, and these metaphors vary according to variables such as gender, faculty, department from which they graduated, and professional seniority.

The study conducted by Duru (2006) aimed to examine the factors contributing to the formation of teachers' professional identities. The research data were collected through a literature review method. According to the findings of the study, popular culture, teacher training programs, teachers' professional education experiences, and workplace factors were identified as significantly influential in the process of teachers' professional identity formation.

In short, these studies employ diverse methods such as surveys, mixed methods designs, metaphors, emojis, focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and literature reviews to investigate teacher identity formation. They analyze how variables such as teacher candidates' experiences, professional development, language proficiency, perception of teaching roles, gender, and professional background influence teacher identity. The research underscores the significant impact of personal traits and workplace conditions on shaping teacher identity, revealing its complex nature shaped by both internal and external factors.

2.2.2.2 Studies on Early Teacher Identity in Türkiye

In her study, Kızılet (2023) explores the intricate process of developing professional teacher identity among English teacher candidates, examining their cognitive, emotional, and social engagements during practicum. Seven participants enrolled in a teacher education program were selected based on their active involvement in teaching practicums across various schools. Data were collected through reflective journals, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, online discussions, and post-lesson meetings. The findings highlight initial preconceptions about teaching and the transformative effects of practicum experiences on beliefs and commitment levels. Additionally, the study identifies resilience factors such as self-efficacy, accomplishment, optimism, and emotion regulation, illustrating how these factors contribute to professional resilience. Establishing positive relationships and receiving recognition from school members are indicated as crucial in fostering a sense of belonging to the profession. This research underscores the complex interplay of cognitive, emotional, and social factors in professional identity development, advocating for a comprehensive

approach that integrates learning, resilience, commitment, and belonging in teacher education programs.

In Koşar's (2022) study, the aim was to investigate the impact of field experience on forming and developing early teacher identity. The researcher intended to examine whether any changes happened after field experience. The participants were ten pre-service English teachers. Data were collected from interviews, reflective diaries, and metaphors produced by participants. The results showed that after completing the field experience, pre-service English teachers' opinions about how English should be taught changed, and the experience had an impact on the development of their developing teacher identities and capacities.

The reasons behind pre-service EFL teachers' career choices and teacher identities, as well as the degree to which career objectives influenced these factors, were investigated by Ölmez-Çağlar (2022). Among the participants were 271 undergraduate students studying ELT at a Turkish state university. A statistical analysis was performed on the information gathered using a set of scales. The findings revealed that the three main self-reported career motivations were job transferability, a subset of personal utility values, and altruistic social utility values, such as influencing children's and adolescents' futures and contributing to society. It was concluded that, from the freshman to the senior year, there seems to be a consistent rise in teacher identity levels across all four years of study. After these, teacher identification was adversely predicted by family time and a backup career.

The study conducted by Alptekin and Kingır (2021) aimed to investigate the perceptions of professional identity among pre-service primary school teachers. This study also investigated whether various factors, including year of study, gender, university attendance, academic grade point average, parental education level, self-efficacy perceptions related to teaching, and influential factors in choosing the teaching profession, were effective on the teacher identity of elementary school teachers. The participants were 752 pre-service elementary school teachers from three different state universities. Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale, Early Teacher Identity Scale, and Demographic Information Form were used as the data collection tools. Findings showed that gender significantly influenced the teacher identity of elementary school teachers, but year of study and university attendance did not. It was concluded that there was a significant difference in teacher identity according to primary school teacher candidates' academic grade

point averages. Furthermore, an increase in self-efficacy perceptions related to teaching was associated with increased perceptions of professional identity among prospective primary school teachers. Finally, the study concluded that the year of study in the primary school teaching program from the first to the fourth year of study did not significantly influence the formation of prospective teachers' identities.

The study by Erdem (2020) examined PTs' early teacher identity and the anticipated and feared potential identities of PTs as predictors of early teacher identity. Participants were 350 first- and fourth-year PTs. Expected Teacher Possible Selves Scale, New Teacher Possible Questionnaire, Feared Teacher Possible Selves Scale, and Early Teacher Identity Measure scale were data collection tools of this study. Findings revealed that student teachers were uncovered to have a high level of early teacher identity. According to the findings, it was indicated that the expected professional selves of PTs have a moderately positive and significant impact on their early teacher identity. In contrast, their feared professional selves have a slightly negative and considerable influence on it.

In another study, Karatepe and Akay (2020) aimed to examine the pre-service teacher identity perspectives among teacher candidates pursuing a four-year undergraduate education in the faculty of education, as well as those enrolled in the same department's pedagogical formation program. The data, which was collected from 440 PTs in total, revealed that they had strong beliefs about their pre-service teacher identities. While there were no substantial differences between programs, female teacher applicants had far more positive perceptions of teacher identity than male counterparts. These findings suggest that both the pedagogical formation programs and the faculty of education are effective in building teacher identity.

The research conducted by Çelik and Kalkan (2019) aimed to determine and examine the perceptions of early teacher identity among student teachers enrolled in the Pedagogical Formation Certificate program and the Faculty of Education. The participants were a total of 1079 student teachers, 502 of whom were in the pedagogical formation certificate program and 577 of whom were from the Faculty of Education. The findings of the study revealed that every teacher candidate had a strong sense of identity as a pre-service teacher. Within the Faculty of Education, class levels, department, faculty, and gender significantly influenced teacher candidates' identities as PTs.

The aim of the study conducted by Bacakoğlu (2018) was to identify the factors influencing the teacher identity development of PTs and their perception of the teacher identity. The participants were 142 fourth-year student teachers in the departments of primary and preschool education for the qualitative phase and 36 student teachers for the quantitative phase. Focus group interviews, the scale, and the personal information form were utilized to collect the data. The research indicated that the factors influencing teacher identity development of student teachers did not significantly differ based on gender or the department of study. It was concluded that the personal characteristics of student teachers had the highest impact on teacher identity development, while the effect of family and social environment was comparatively lower. She found that school experience, cultural and social activities, instructors, theoretical courses, immediate environment, social media, pre-higher education period, and KPSS are effective factors in developing PTs' teacher identity. It was uncovered that these factors also shaped PTs' perception of teacher identity.

In another study on teacher identity, Karalı (2018) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between the possible selves of student teachers and their early teacher identity. The sample consisted of 290 pre-service social studies teachers from different state universities. The data collection tools used in the study were the Early Teachers Identity Scale, The New Teacher Possible Selves Questionnaire Scale, and the demographic features form. The findings revealed that the feared possible selves of pre-service social studies teachers were at a low level. At the same time, they exhibited high levels of professional teacher identity and expected possible selves. It was found that there was a positive, direct, reasonable relationship between professional teacher identity levels of PTs and expected possible selves and a negative, linear, moderate relationship between their feared possible selves.

Arpacı (2015) examined whether there was a relationship between the need for cognition of PTs and their professional identities by collecting data from a sample of 449 students enrolled in various departments of a state university. The correlation between PTs' identities, the need for cognition, teaching experience, year of study, high school graduation, department, Grade Point Average (GPA), and gender was another goal of the study. Data collection tools were the Need for Cognition Scale, Attitude Towards Teaching Profession Scale, and Early Teacher

Identity Measure scale. The study found that PTs' need for cognition rose parallel with their levels of identity. The findings showed that teaching experience, department, and study year have a significant effect on early teacher identity, while gender, schooling background, and GPA do not. Additionally, it was concluded that GPA, gender, study year, schooling background, and department are not efficient in terms of the need for cognition, while teaching experience is a distinctive factor.

In her research, Arpacı-Somuncu (2016) sought to examine the impact of personality traits and early teacher identity on teacher self-efficacy by also considering the interrelationships between each variable. The participants were 155 English teacher candidates studying in a state university. Data collection tools were personal traits, pre-service teacher identity, teacher self-efficacy, and demographic variables scales. The findings showed that early teacher identity exhibited a stronger correlation with teacher self-efficacy compared to the five personality traits. According to the findings, individual differences may facilitate the development of teacher self-efficacy, one of the most crucial aspects of teaching. Additionally, the findings revealed that early teacher identity plays a crucial role in fostering self-efficacy development among PTs for their future professions.

In summary, domestic studies use both quantitative and qualitative research methods, focusing on emotional experiences and perceptions to develop the professional identities of teacher candidates. These studies examine emotional experiences, professional expectations, and factors affecting the identity formation of prospective teachers. These studies, which emphasize the importance of positive perceptions about teaching, reveal how factors such as gender, academic success, and teaching experience affect professional identity. It also focuses on the role of educational programs and personal characteristics in shaping the professional identities of teacher candidates.

Consequently, the literature review reveals a wealth of domestic and international studies focusing on teacher identity. These studies offer insights into shaping teacher identity and the factors influencing this process. The findings have implications for the enhancement of teacher education programs and policies, as well as for the identification of effective strategies to strengthen teachers' professional identities. However, despite the breadth of research in this area, a gap is identified regarding thoroughly examining gender and year of study differences in early teacher identity using a mixed-method approach, particularly within the

context of English PTs. Thus, there is a need for studies that delve deeper into these aspects, and it is anticipated that the present study will fill this gap and contribute to the existing literature.



3. METHODOLOGY

In this section, the methodological details of the study will be presented. Firstly, the research design of the study is illustrated. Next, the research sampling and population are mentioned. Later, instruments are presented, and the data collection process is followed by the data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This study, which employed a mixed methods design, examines the early teacher identity of pre-service EFL teachers and investigates whether the early teacher identity differs significantly in terms of demographic variables such as gender and year of study.

Creswell and Creswell (2023) define mixed methods research as a methodology that involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating these data using a specific procedure or design, and drawing conclusions based on the combined insights, focusing on how data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted. This approach enables researchers to achieve a comprehensive understanding of research issues by leveraging the strengths of both data types and addressing the limitations of using only one method (Creswell, 2014; Almeida, 2018). As highlighted by Ginossar (2022) and Almeida (2018), this methodology provides a more detailed and enriched understanding of the issue by overcoming the limitations inherent in both quantitative and qualitative procedures and integrating their respective strengths.

This study utilized a convergent mixed methods design. This approach combines insights from semi-structured interviews and the Early Teacher Identity Measure (ETIM) (Arpacı & Bardakçı, 2015), thereby enriching the overall data analysis and interpretation. According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), a convergent mixed methods design is a fundamental kind of mixed methods approach. They state that the goal of this design is to integrate both quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a comprehensive study of the research subject, and integration occurs during the interpretation phase, where the data are combined to form a comprehensive understanding. Any conflicting findings are addressed or further explored within this design framework.

The quantitative data were obtained through the ETIM scale and the personal information form. On the other hand, the qualitative data were gathered using semi-structured interview questions with PTs who participated in the quantitative data collection phase and willingly agreed to be included in the qualitative data-gathering process.

3.2 Research Setting

The research context is the ELT department of a public university in Türkiye, and the aim of such departments is to train English language teachers. These departments are equipped with contemporary teaching approaches and innovative teaching technologies. Students are provided with comprehensive training in topics such as grammar, communication skills, language acquisition theories, and teaching methodologies. These departments contribute to the academic and professional development of students by organizing various events and conferences at national and international levels. They also prepare students for their careers after graduation by providing them with real-world experience through practicum and teaching practices. In this way, these departments contribute to language education by training qualified and competent English language teachers (Asmalı, 2023).

3.3 Participants

The participants of this study were 206 pre-service English teachers at a state university in the Western Black Sea region of Türkiye during the 2022-2023 academic year. The participants were selected through convenience sampling, a non-probability technique where individuals are chosen from those who are readily available until the required sample size is reached (Cohen et al., 2018; Golzar et al., 2022). This method can save time and resources while typically providing willing participants, which is essential for obtaining a rich dataset (Dornyei, 2007).

An unevenness in the distribution of participants was discovered based on gender. The number of male participants was 58 (28.16%) and the number of female participants was 148 (71.84 %). The gender of the participants is illustrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Participant gender information

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	58	28.16
Female	148	71.84
Total	206	100.0

The sample of this study involves PTs from all four years of study, allowing for comparisons between the beginning and end points within the faculty. Year of study distribution is as follows: the number of first year students was 32 (15.53%), followed by 61 (29.6%) second year students. The number of third year students was 47 (22.8%), and there were 66 (32.04%) fourth year students. The year of study of the participants is illustrated in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Participant numbers per year of study

Year of Study	Frequency	Percent
1 st year	32	15.53
2 nd year	61	29.6
3 rd year	47	22.8
4 th year	66	32.04
Total	206	100.0

Following the collection of quantitative data, the participants were asked whether they wanted to participate in the qualitative phase of the study. 15 students volunteered in total; four were 1st year, four were 2nd year, four were 3rd year, and three were 4th year students. Those participants were then interviewed. Table 3.3 shows the overall distribution of the participants who attended the interviews.

Table 3.3 Participant numbers for the semi-structured interviews

Year of Study	Frequency	Percent
1 st year	4	26.7
2 nd year	4	26.7
3 rd year	4	26.7
4 th year	3	20.1
Total	15	

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative data for this study were obtained through the Early Teacher Identity Measure (Arpacı & Bardakçı, 2015) and the personal information form (Appendix 1). Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews (Appendix 2) with teacher candidates who voluntarily agreed to be involved in the qualitative data collection process.

3.4.1 Personal Information Form

The personal information form is a document created by the researcher to obtain information about the gender and year of study of the teacher candidates participating in the research. It consists of two items: gender and year of study.

3.4.2 Early Teacher Identity Measure (ETIM) Scale

This study utilized the ETIM scale developed by Friesen and Besley (2013) and adapted to the Turkish context by Arpacı and Bardakçı (2015) to examine the pre-service teacher identity levels of English teacher candidates and uncover the factors influencing this development. As Arpacı and Bardakçı (2015) noted, Friesen and Besley (2013) utilized self-categorization theory in formulating the concept of teacher identity, characterizing professional teacher identity as a growth-oriented and socio-psychological process. They developed the scale to determine the participants' perceptions of their early teacher identity development. The scale is a 5-point Likert-type questionnaire with 17 statements with response options including *Strongly disagree*, *Disagree*, *Uncertain*, *Agree*, and *Strongly agree*.

The ETIM consists of three dimensions. These are “Self-categorization as a teacher”, “Confidence in becoming a teacher”, and “Participation as a teacher”. These dimensions are summarized by Friesen and Besley (2013) as follows:

Self-categorization as a teacher: This dimension pertains to how prospective teachers perceive themselves as educators and develop their professional identity. It includes accepting the role of teaching, seeing oneself as a leader in education, and sustaining motivation toward the profession. Items related to this dimension are 5, 8, 9, 10, and 17 (e.g., I see myself as a teacher.).

Confidence in becoming a teacher: This dimension focuses on a prospective teacher's confidence in their educational skills, knowledge, and abilities. Confidence manifests in effective classroom teaching, assisting students, and demonstrating belief in one's professional development. Items related to this

dimension are 1, 3, 7, 11, 12, and 16 (e.g., I often doubt if I am the right person to become a teacher.).

Participation as a teacher: This dimension involves a prospective teacher's active engagement in the educational process. Participation encompasses having a natural inclination toward children, a willingness to interact with them, and being actively involved in teaching. Items related to this dimension are 2, 4, 6, 13, 14, and 15 (e.g., If I had more time to volunteer my services, I would choose to work with children.).

Arpacı (2015) found the Cronbach's alpha coefficient to be 0.93 in her analysis when she adapted this scale to Turkish. A value of 0.70 or above for the measure is considered sufficient regarding test reliability (Kurnaz & Yiğit, 2010). This result indicates that the scale can be used to determine pre-service English teachers' perceptions of their teaching identities.

3.4.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are well-suited for exploring complex and sometimes sensitive topics related to participants' perceptions and opinions (Barriball & White, 1994). Therefore, following the quantitative data collection stage, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data. The Zoom software was utilized for these interviews with the volunteer participants. The views and feelings of the participants regarding the teaching profession were assessed. The interview consisted of eleven questions developed by the researcher, all related to the dimensions of the ETIM (Arpacı & Bardakçı, 2015).

A total of 15 interviews were conducted, consisting of four PTs from 1st year, four from 2nd year, four from 3rd year, and three from 4th year.

The interviews were recorded in audio with the participants' permission. The researcher methodically transcribed them, translated them into English, and analyzed them.

3.5 Piloting of the Interview Questions

A pre-service English teacher took part in the piloting stage to increase the validity and reliability of the interview questions. This piloting interview was excluded from the study. The pilot study was carried out in a session. The participant was asked to answer the semi-structured interview questions individually, and he gave feedback on each question. Additionally, the interview

questions were reviewed with an expert holding a PhD in ELT, an expert with a master's degree in ELT, and an English teacher actively working in a state school. The questions were developed and revised after these expert consultations and the pilot study.

3.6 Data Collection

After obtaining the necessary permissions and ethical approval, student teachers studying in the ELT program were invited to fill out the ETIM online via e-mail. Interviews were also conducted online with participating candidates.

3.7 Data Analysis

After the data collection ended, the data obtained from the ETIM were analyzed using SPSS version 29 for the quantitative data. Items 1, 3, 7, and 10 were reverse-coded in the analysis because they included negative statements. Then, the mean was calculated for each item to be able to interpret the early teacher identity level of pre-service EFL teachers.

Levene's test was applied to examine variance equality (Can, 2020). It was noticeable that female and male participants did not have nearly the same variance on the dependent variable in this current dataset. Normality distribution of the quantitative data was examined via the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test since the number of data was over 50 (Kilmen, 2022). It was observed that the distribution of data was normal. The Independent Samples t-test was utilized to reveal whether gender significantly affected the participants' early teacher identity levels because the data from two gender groups, which have no relationship with each other, showed a normal distribution (Kilmen, 2022).

To find pre-service English teachers' early teacher identity perceptions according to their level of year of study and reveal which parametric or non-parametric tests should be performed, the descriptive statistics and the normality of the data were first examined. In this process of analysis, the data from the participants were examined under two groups, Group A and Group B, according to their years of study because, in teacher training, general English courses are generally taught in the 1st and 2nd years, and professional courses are taught in the 3rd and 4th-years (The Council of Higher Education, 2018). Group A included 1st and 2nd-year students, while Group B included 3rd and 4th-year students. The aim was to investigate whether teacher training programs significantly affect the early

teacher identity. The Kolmogorov- Smirnov test was utilized to examine the normality between Group A and Group B. It was seen that the data were not normally distributed, so the Mann-Whitney U test was used to assess whether there was a meaningful difference between the rows of measurement results of two independent groups (Can, 2020; Kilmen, 2022).

For the qualitative analysis of the study, the data from semi-structured interviews was first transcribed. To ensure anonymity in interviews, some codes were used, such as ST1.2 (Student teacher, 1st year of study, 2nd participant) and ST4.3 (Student teacher, 4th year of study, 3rd participant). Then, this transcription was translated into English, and relevant comments by the participants were illustrated in the Results. The interview questions were prepared to collect data to account for the results obtained through statistical analysis. The questions were, thus, prepared in line with the dimensions of the ETIM scale.

4. RESULTS

This section presents the results of the data analyses. The findings are presented in the order of the research questions. The first research question was sought quantitatively and qualitatively, while the second was examined quantitatively.

4.1 Early Teacher Identity Perception Level of Pre-Service English Teachers

To answer the first question, the mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage calculations were carried out for each item in ETIM. Additionally, PTs were asked questions during the interviews that would help reveal their perceptions of their early teacher identity.

As shown in Table 4.1 below, the highest mean ($\bar{X}=4.56$) was item 14 (*Helping a child learn something new is very rewarding*). This suggests that PTs generally find fulfillment in contributing to children's learning experiences. Conversely, the item with the lowest mean ($\bar{X}=3.27$) was item 13 (*I look for opportunities to work with children/adolescents in my own time*). This indicates that PTs may not prioritize seeking opportunities to engage with both children and adolescents during their free time.

Upon examining items 1, 3, 7, 11, 12, and 16 in Table 4.1, it is evident that pre-service English teachers exhibit high levels of self-confidence in their ability to be good teachers. Likewise, it can be inferred that pre-service English teachers have a high level of professional identity perception in terms of seeing and qualifying themselves as teachers (Items 5, 8, 9, 10, and 17). When the results are examined, it is observed that most pre-service English teachers have ideas about what qualities make a teacher effective. When Item 1 is examined, it can be inferred that they have no doubts about whether they are the right person to be a teacher. It is also evident that pre-service English teachers are very willing to teach English to children and adolescents (Items 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 14 and 15). Furthermore, it is noticed that pre-service English teachers believe they possess the qualifications necessary to be effective teachers and have a high level of confidence in their capability to advance the required skills and methods related to these qualifications. It is worth noting that pre-service English teachers have high beliefs that they will be good teachers in the

future and are satisfied with the progress they have made in their teacher education in their university. It can be inferred from the results that most participants enjoy working with children and adolescents and are pleased to teach them something new. In summary, considering these findings, the early teacher identity perception levels among pre-service English teachers can be described as “high.” The results are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics for ETIM scale items

Items	$\bar{X}$	SS	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Uncertain		Agree		Strongly Agree	
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. I often doubt if I am the right person to become a teacher.	2.40	1.264	62	30.1	60	29.1	39	18.9	29	14.1	16	7.8
2. If I had more time to volunteer my services. I would choose to work with children.	3.69	1.176	15	7.3	17	8.3	42	20.4	74	35.9	58	28.2
3. I have no idea what it means to be a good teacher.	1.71	1.082	123	59.7	45	21.8	21	10.2	8	3.9	9	4.4
4. Family and friends often look to me when it comes to caring for or working with children/adolescents.	3.38	1.145	14	6.8	33	16.0	53	25.7	71	34.5	35	17.0
5. I see myself as a teacher.	3.85	1.014	5	2.4	14	6.8	50	24.3	73	35.4	64	31.1
6. I enjoy helping children discover and learn.	4.41	.808	2	1.0	5	2.4	15	7.3	68	33.0	116	56.3
7. I often doubt my ability to be a good teacher.	2.52	1.248	49	23.8	68	33.0	38	18.4	34	16.5	17	8.3
8. I can easily see myself working with children/adolescents and helping them to learn and develop.	4.15	.911	4	1.9	6	2.9	30	14.6	81	39.3	85	41.3
9. I feel comfortable identifying myself as a teacher.	3.72	1.033	5	2.4	15	7.3	70	34.0	57	27.7	59	28.6
10. I find it difficult to see myself in charge of teaching a group of children/adolescents.	2.39	1.363	73	35.4	52	25.2	26	12.6	36	17.5	19	9.2
11. I am confident that I will develop the resources and strategies necessary to be a good teacher.	4.22	.941	3	1.5	9	4.4	28	13.6	65	31.6	101	49.0
12. I have confidence in my ability to one day be a good teacher.	3.92	1.361	23	11.2	11	5.3	27	13.1	42	20.4	103	50.0
13. I look for opportunities to work with children/adolescents in my own time.	3.27	1.191	17	8.3	33	16.0	73	35.4	42	20.4	41	19.9
14. Helping a child learn something new is very rewarding	4.56	.767	3	1.5	3	1.5	8	3.9	53	25.7	139	67.5
15. I enjoy helping with children's activities.	4.30	.950	4	1.9	9	4.4	20	9.7	61	29.6	112	54.4
16. I am satisfied with the progress I am making in my teacher education	3.75	1.164	11	5.3	20	9.7	44	21.4	64	31.1	67	32.5
17. I am a natural teacher.	3.75	1.194	11	5.3	20	9.7	52	25.2	49	23.8	74	35.9

In the interviews, questions prepared based on the ETIM dimensions were asked to support the qualitative data.

For the first dimension of ETIM, “self-categorization as a teacher,” the following questions were asked:

“Do you see yourself as a teacher? Why?”

“Do you think you were born with teaching talent? Why?”

When asked if they considered themselves teachers, seven of eight PTs in 1st and 2nd-year students reported that they did not see themselves as teachers due to lack of experience and insufficient knowledge about the teaching profession.

The pre-service teacher ST1.3, highlighting her lack of readiness to teach, remarked:

I have to answer “no” to this question because I am in my first year of study and do not feel ready to teach... (ST1.3)

The pre-service teacher ST2.4, highlighting her low level of classroom management and her approach to children, stated:

Unfortunately... I feel like I still have a long way to go. I feel inadequate in classroom management or approach to children... (ST2.4)

However, only one of the participants from 2nd year noted that he saw himself as a teacher, which stems from prior personal teaching experience for a short period. Describing the development of his teaching identity by linking it to practical experiences, he remarked:

Yes, I see myself as a teacher. Last year, I worked as a Japanese language teacher on a project at the Ministry of Youth. I taught children voluntarily during the second term of my first year. These experiences helped me realize my proficiency in teaching.... (ST2.1)

On the other hand, only two of seven PTs in the 3rd and 4th years stated that they could not see themselves as teachers. Addressing the impact of not having experience on defining oneself as a teacher, a third-year student remarked:

Frankly, I do not see myself as a teacher right now... I have not had any experience yet. (ST3.4)

A fourth-year student stated that the practicum experience led her to realize that teaching is not a suitable career path for her, saying:

I currently do not see myself as a teacher... the practicum has convinced me that teaching may not be right for me. (ST4.3)

This statement may suggest that the practicum provides a space for teacher candidates to evaluate their ability to pursue this profession.

All other five PTs from the 3rd and 4th years of study indicated that they see themselves as fully qualified teachers, attributing this self-perception to the field education courses, practicum experiences, and volunteer teaching received at the university.

The student ST3.1 noted a significant shift in her self-perception over the past year. Emphasizing the impact of the courses taken at university, she remarked:

I did not see myself as a teacher until about one year ago because I never thought I would be enough for my students...I am better now because we have more courses in teaching.... Teaching Foreign Languages to Young Learners changed my perspective. (ST3.1)

The pre-service teacher ST4.1, highlighting that courses in teaching and the practicum training she underwent have significantly contributed to her self-perception as a teacher, remarked:

The practicum training we received this year has added a lot to my experience... After taking courses in teaching, my perspective on teaching began to change, and now I can say I am a teacher. (ST4.1)

The participant's acknowledgment of the evolution of her self-perception from feeling inadequate to seeing herself as a teacher shows the significant role of professional courses and practical training in shaping her teacher identity.

The pre-service teacher ST4.3, noting volunteer teaching to relatives has provided him with personal insight into the teaching profession, remarked:

I currently consider myself a teacher because I volunteer to teach my relatives. These experiences offered the opportunity to try and understand the teaching profession personally... (ST4.3)

When asked if they thought they had the ability to teach from birth, five of seven 3rd and 4th-year students emphasized that they thought they were not born with teaching ability. For instance, pre-service teacher ST3.1, emphasizing that teaching ability is not innate but rather a skill that can be developed over time through education and practical experience, stated:

I do not believe that I was born with teaching ability... I think that through the courses we have taken and our microteaching sessions at university, we have gained this ability... (ST3.1)

Pre-service teacher ST3.4, acknowledging his enjoyment of teaching and his efforts to impart knowledge and noting that the lack of real classroom experience prevents him from definitively stating whether teaching talent is innate or not, remarked:

I do not know if I was born with a talent for teaching...I still have a lot to improve, but I am not unqualified... I generally like to teach and make an effort to do so, but since I lack real classroom experience, I cannot definitively say if teaching talent is innate.... (ST3.4)

Two of seven 3rd and 4th-year students emphasized that they thought they were born with teaching ability. These two PTs associated teaching ability with certain inherent personality traits. One of them, acknowledging her patience as a key trait for effective teaching and emphasizing the importance of patience in classroom management, remarked:

Yes, because I am a patient person, one of the most important qualities a teacher should have is patience. This is very important, especially regarding classroom management, and I think I have the characteristics associated with teaching. (ST4.1)

In contrast, seven of eight 1st and 2nd-year students stated that they felt they were born with teaching ability. These PTs associated teaching ability with personal traits such as a passion for teaching, being patient, being enjoyable, and having love for children. For instance, pre-service teacher ST1.2 emphasized that he has enjoyed teaching, and she commented:

I think I was born with the ability to teach. I really enjoy teaching and explaining something to someone; it has been this way since my childhood. (ST1.2)

The responses from 1st and 2nd-year students predominantly reflect a belief in innate teaching ability. This early confidence in their teaching capabilities suggests a strong sense of self-efficacy and enthusiasm for the profession.

Only one of the second-year students stated that teaching ability is not an innate talent. Highlighting the significant improvement in his teaching skills since

starting university, which he attributes to the courses he has taken, pre-service teacher ST2.3 pointed out:

Teaching talent is not innate. It is all about self-improvement. Since starting university, I have noticed a significant improvement in my teaching ability, which I attribute to my upper-year courses. (ST2.3)

Pre-service teacher ST2.3 frequently referenced their teaching experiences and the upper-year courses they took during the summer term while answering the questions. This indicates that as PTs progress through their university education, their views shift towards the belief that teaching ability is a skill that can be developed through teacher training rather than an innate talent.

For the second dimension of ETIM, “confidence in becoming a teacher,” the following questions were asked:

Do you believe that you will be a good English teacher in the future? Why?

Are you confident that you will develop the resources and strategies necessary to be a good teacher? Why?

Do you have confidence in yourself to become a teacher? Why?

When asked if PTs believed they would become competent English teachers in the future, the responses from 1st and 2nd-year PTs reflect a tentative attitude. They are willing to strive towards becoming good teachers but do not convey a strong belief in their future competence. For example, the 1st year pre-service teacher expressed a hopeful vision of becoming a good English teacher without any reason. Reflecting on her aspirations, she asserted:

I dream of being a good English teacher, and I hope I will be one. (ST1.1)

Likewise, the 2nd year pre-service teacher, by stating his effort towards becoming a good teacher, mentioned that he did not express a strong belief in his future competence. He indicated:

I cannot say I believe it, but I will make much effort for this. (ST2.3)

Based on the statements of the participants shared above, it can be notable that the 1st and 2nd-year teacher candidates’ beliefs about being a good teacher have not yet been revealed.

Conversely, all 3rd and 4th-year students believe in being a good teacher. The pre-service teacher ST3.2 highlighted that his belief in his competence grew as a result of the information and support received from university instructors and teaching profession courses, stating:

Yes, I believe... After taking teaching profession courses in the 3rd year of study, my belief that I could do this increased... I now feel more competent with the information I received from our university instructors. (ST3.2)

This comment illustrates how the teaching profession courses have strengthened their self-belief and competence, showing a clear shift from initial doubts to confidence in their teaching abilities. From this, it can be inferred that confidence in becoming a good teacher grows through university education and the relationships formed with instructors.

Pre-service teacher ST4.1 expressed strong confidence in becoming an effective English teacher. Reflecting on the guidance provided by university instructors, she commented:

I strongly believe that I will definitely become a good English teacher. Our instructors have taught us in our university courses that we can constantly enhance our skills by researching, exploring literature, and expanding our knowledge on new topics, techniques, and strategies... (ST4.1)

Based on these comments of 3rd and 4th-year students, it may be stated that these student teachers have confidence in becoming good teachers in the future. Moreover, it is worth noting that they emphasize their beliefs with expressions such as “I strongly believe” and “I have no doubt that” when stating their opinions on this matter.

Only one second-year student showed clear confidence in his future teaching career. His comment is as follows:

I answer by underlining, and I say “yes” in capital letters because I have great confidence in myself and my occupation. (ST2.1)

As is seen in this quotation, the teacher candidate does not call “this occupation.” He calls it “my occupation”. This shows that he may have created a relevant identity. In addition, he uses expressions such as “I am underlining” which he uses to strengthen his answer, showing how confident he is about this issue.

Looking at the previously shared quotation and general analysis of the qualitative data, it is clear that ST2.1 is a teacher candidate who takes professional knowledge courses during summer school and has some teaching experience.

When asked whether PTs have confidence in their ability to develop the necessary resources and strategies to become effective teachers, all the students stated that they have confidence. They added that their university instructors,

teacher training curriculum, and personal traits have a significant effect in this manner.

The 2nd year pre-service teacher, highlighting the guidance provided by his instructors as a critical factor in his professional development, expressed:

Yes, I believe I can develop these skills because our teachers guide us in these skills, methods, or whatever is needed... (ST2.3)

The 4th year pre-service teacher attributed her development to the field and professional knowledge courses and the pieces of advice from her instructors. She stated:

I believe it... We have improved ourselves greatly with the help of the field and professional knowledge courses. Our instructors also recommend many books and articles on these subjects... (ST4.1)

The 3rd pre-service teacher attributed her confidence in developing the required teaching skills to her motivation and determination. Her comment is as follows:

Yes, I absolutely believe it... I have always wanted to be a teacher and will struggle to do my best to achieve this. (ST3.2)

When asked the question about self-confidence about being a teacher, all PTs stated they have confidence in themselves to be teachers. The important points that stand out here are that four out of eight 1st and 2nd-year students associate this confidence with personal traits such as the love of teaching and being patient.

The pre-service teacher ST1.3 linked his confidence to being patient, stating:

I am patient, so I have confidence in myself to be a teacher. (ST1.3)

Another 1st-year student linked this confidence to teaching love, and she remarked:

I love teaching, so I think I would be a good teacher. (ST1.1)

The other four PTs from 1st and 2nd-year stated that instructors in university, university education, and teaching experiences have a significant effect on confidence in becoming a teacher.

The pre-service teacher ST1.4 emphasized her ability to communicate effectively while acknowledging her lack of knowledge in the field and commented:

My confidence comes from my ability to communicate effectively with different age groups and adapt to modern methods. I am aware of my

knowledge gaps but believe I can address them through my university education and instructors. (ST1.4)

The pre-service teacher ST2.2 expressed her increased self-confidence stemming from her enrollment in courses in 3rd year of study as a second-year student. Highlighting that the 3rd-year courses contributed to increasing her self-confidence, she remarked:

I believe in myself because, as a second-year university student, I enrolled in a third-year level course. I took courses on Teaching Language Skills and Teaching Foreign Languages to Children. Those courses fostered my self-confidence increased. (ST2.2)

The pre-service teacher ST2.1 noted that engaging with university instructors and taking courses like Educational Psychology and Teaching Language Skills greatly boosted his self-confidence. Reflecting on these experiences, he stated:

I always wanted to be a teacher, but I initially doubted my abilities. However, courses like Educational Psychology and Teaching Language Skills, along with meeting university instructors, have fostered my self-confidence. (ST2.1)

In the comments above, it is worth noting that ST2.1 and ST2.2 have taken 3rd-year-level courses. They emphasized that field education courses positively affect their confidence as teachers. All third-year PTs stated they have self-confidence in becoming teachers, which is why they pointed out their traits.

Pre-service teacher ST3.1 emphasized her determination and effort to become a good teacher, stating:

I am confident because I want to be the best in this profession I have chosen, and I try very hard to achieve this. This effort and determination give me confidence. (ST3.1)

All 4th-year PTs emphasized that the hands-on experience gained during the practicum helps bridge the gap between practical application and theoretical knowledge in the classroom. The opportunity to observe and engage with real classroom dynamics has been instrumental in enhancing their teaching skills and self-assurance.

The pre-service teacher ST4.1 based his self-confidence on the education he received at the university and his interest in self-improvement. Emphasizing the importance of being exposed to practicum training earlier, ST4.1 stated:

Yes, I have confidence in myself. I trust the education I received at university and enjoy researching and self-improvement, which gives me confidence. The practicum experience has broadened my teaching perspective in many ways. I could not imagine classroom dynamics before, but now I clearly see the difference. Entering a classroom as a confident teacher has many positive impacts, and I wish I had felt this way earlier. Observing classroom dynamics would have been very beneficial. For instance, making these observations while taking the "English Language Teaching to Young Learners" course would have been undoubtedly much more beneficial.
(ST4.1)

This statement underscores the need to integrate practical experience earlier in teacher training to improve effectiveness.

To get insights from PTs about the third dimension of ETIM, “participant as a teacher,” the following questions were asked:

Can you imagine yourself teaching English to children? Why?

Can you imagine yourself teaching English to adolescents? Why?

Are you looking for opportunities to work with adolescents in your spare time? Why?

Are you looking for opportunities to work with children in your spare time? Why?

Do you enjoy helping children with their activities and tasks? Why?

Have you ever volunteered to teach English before? Why?

When asked about their preferences for teaching English to children versus adolescents, 3rd and 4th-year PTs preferred teaching adolescents. They noted that adolescents grasp topics more quickly and managing adult classes is generally easier. They believed that adolescents are more autonomous. Conversely, they found teaching children challenging due to active classroom behavior and difficulties with abstract concepts.

For example, a 3rd-year pre-service teacher noted that managing a classroom while teaching English to younger students can be challenging due to their high energy levels. He stated:

I find it difficult to imagine teaching English to energetic children and feel I might struggle to control them. Although we had a four-year education process, we only applied what we had learned for two semesters in our senior year. I believe that gaining practical experience is crucial for boosting self-confidence. (ST3.3)

ST3.3's quotation highlights a perceived gap in practical experience with different age groups during their training. The candidate needs more comprehensive practicum opportunities throughout their education to build self-confidence and develop a stronger teacher identity.

When discussing their ability to teach English to younger children, 4th-year PTs highlighted challenges, such as adapting lessons to match developmental stages, engaging students effectively, and maintaining their attention. For example, the pre-service teacher ST4.1 noted that, despite being patient, teaching children can be challenging, especially when dealing with abstract concepts. He expressed feeling less competent in this area and made the following comment:

Even though I am patient, I think teaching things to children is a little difficult, especially when we take abstract and concrete period characteristics as a basis...I think I will have a little difficulty in this regard. (ST4.1)

This quotation reveals the struggles faced by PTs when it comes to teaching younger children. Despite being patient, the candidate expresses difficulties in teaching abstract concepts to children. This finding indicates an awareness of developmental stages that influence learning. The comment underscores a lack of confidence in managing these challenges, reflecting broader concerns about the adequacy of their training and preparation for working with younger students. This analysis highlights a gap in practical experience and readiness for teaching younger children, suggesting a need for more focused training on handling developmental differences.

In contrast, seven out of eight 1st and 2nd-year teacher candidates stated that they preferred teaching children and emphasized their ability to attract, influence, and entertain them. Describing themselves as energetic and cheerful individuals, they stated that they successfully created lively and interactive learning environments and believed that children would respond positively.

The pre-service teacher ST1.4 mentioned that thanks to her cheerful and lively personality, she found working with children in English easier and remarked:

Yes, I can imagine myself teaching English to children. Although I have no experience, I am an active and cheerful person by nature, and I feel that as a cheerful teacher, I can handle everything in the classroom with children. (ST1.4)

This statement highlights a strong sense of self-efficacy and enthusiasm for teaching children, suggesting that personal characteristics significantly shape their teaching approach and confidence in handling young learners.

On the other hand, the pre-service teacher ST1.2 noted that adolescents can maintain their attention longer than children. Highlighting the difficulties of teaching English to children due to their easily distracted attention, she commented:

I struggle to imagine teaching English to children and feel I need more professional development. For example, I have experience teaching English to my younger brother and my dormitory roommates. I find it easier to teach my friends, as they seem better at focusing and understanding than children who get distracted quickly. (ST1.2)

As inferred from the quotations, ST1.4 attributes her confidence in teaching children to personal traits like cheerfulness and enthusiasm, whereas ST1.2's response highlights a contrast between her experiences with children and adolescents. ST1.2 points out that children are more easily distracted and struggle with abstract concepts compared to adolescents, who are seen as more focused and better at understanding. This suggests that hands-on experience teaching different age groups significantly influences PTs' perceptions and self-confidence.

The answers of almost all 1st and 2nd year PTs to the questions “Are you looking for opportunities to work with adolescents in your spare time? Are you looking for opportunities to work with children in your spare time?” were the same. They stated that they were not particularly looking for this opportunity, but when a request, demand, or offer came, they would not refuse it and would happily engage in teaching. The representative comments are as follows:

I do not usually look for it, but when I come across it, it does not seem like a tiring job; it seems more fun, and I accept it immediately. (ST1.2)

I can say I am not looking for it. However, I do not refuse when people want to learn something from me. (ST2.2)

This statement reflects a pragmatic approach among PTs regarding teaching opportunities. They generally do not actively seek out extra work with children or adolescents but are receptive and willing to take on teaching tasks if presented with them. This willingness indicates a positive attitude toward teaching and an openness to teaching situations.

In contrast, 3rd and 4th student teachers stated they were looking for opportunities. Drawing on the value of these opportunities for professional development, the 3rd-year pre-service teacher noted:

Certainly, I find such opportunities particularly valuable for my professional development. They allow me to enhance my teaching skills.
(ST3.1)

The pre-service teacher ST4.1 emphasized the significance of contributing to children and shaping society. He made the following statement:

Definitely, contributing to children is important for us teachers and for shaping society. Teaching my cousin last year was valuable, as it revealed my teaching shortcomings. The subsequent internship training further improved this. (ST4.1)

When asked whether they enjoy helping children with their activities and tasks, PTs from 1st and 2nd-year students generally answered this question by considering their characteristics.

The pre-service teacher ST1.2 highlighted the significance of ensuring that his assistance is beneficial to the children while teaching English, stating:

I enjoy helping if it benefits the children and makes them happy. (ST1.2)

The pre-service teacher ST2.2 emphasized his enjoyment of spending time with children, commenting:

Yes, because I like spending time with children. (ST2.2)

The 3rd and 4th-year PTs generally expressed a positive attitude toward helping children with tasks. They highlighted that their university courses were beneficial in preparing them for such activities. For example, the pre-service teacher ST4.1 highlighted that children's openness to learning and their lack of fear of making mistakes are sources of motivation for him. Emphasizing the enjoyment of impacting children's development beyond just teaching English, he commented:

Children's openness to learning and their lack of fear of making mistakes really motivate me. Even though teaching them can be challenging, seeing

them learn brings me immense joy. I feel like teachers are like 'behavioral doctors,' and I enjoy having the chance to impact their development in many ways beyond just teaching English. (ST4.1)

On the other hand, when asked about their experiences with voluntary English teaching, 1st and 2nd-year PTs generally reported that they had not participated in such activities. Their responses reveal a common theme of self-doubt and perceived inadequacy. They expressed that their lack of confidence and experience in teaching English significantly influenced their decision not to engage in voluntary teaching. For instance, the pre-service teacher ST2.4 emphasized her lack of confidence in teaching due to being only a 2nd-year student and said:

No, I did not. This was because I was still in the second year of study and was questioning myself. I doubt that I am competent enough to do this yet...(ST2.4)

In contrast to the 1st and 2nd-year teacher candidates, nearly all the 3rd and 4th-year PTs stated that they volunteered because they felt happy to teach someone something.

The pre-service teacher ST3.2, highlighting her desire for self-improvement, said:

I teach my nephews English because I want to experience and improve myself. So yes, I volunteered. (ST3.2)

Only two student teachers stated that they did not volunteer because they could not spare time for this. A representative comment is as follows:

I have not had the chance to volunteer because I've been focused on preparing for the KPSS and studying for my university courses. (ST4.1)

In summary, teacher candidates stated that they felt more determined to qualify themselves as teachers and had more self-confidence as their years of study increased. From the responses to the interview questions asked in the dimension of the scale, the participant as a teacher, it can be inferred that PTs are generally eager to participate in the teaching process. Their views on joining the teaching process vary only depending on the information they receive from the courses they have taken at the university. Qualitative data findings show that teacher candidates have high levels of teacher identity. Overall, the qualitative data findings support the quantitative data findings. Teacher candidates' responses to the questions provided insights into the factors that shape and influence teacher identity. Figure 4-1

presents the factors affecting early teacher identity formation and development, reached through qualitative data analysis in a holistic framework.

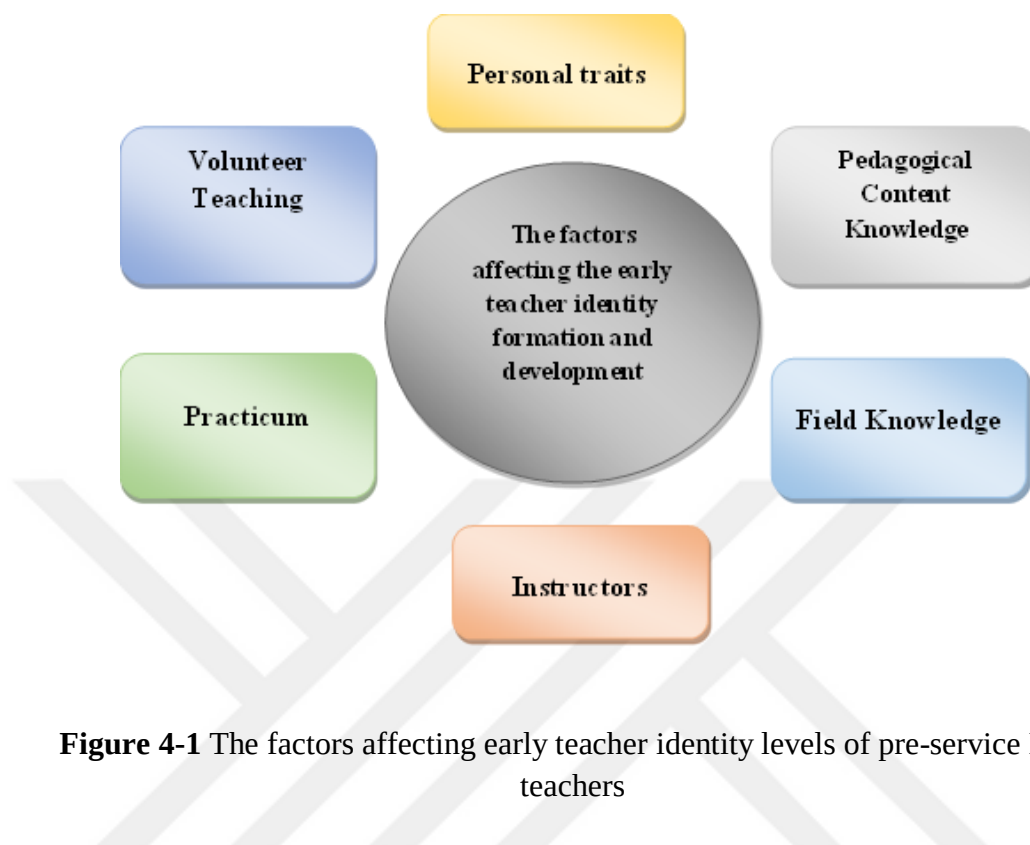


Figure 4-1 The factors affecting early teacher identity levels of pre-service EFL teachers

4.2 The Relationship between Early Teacher Identity Perceptions of Pre-service English Teachers and Demographic Characteristics

To answer the second research question, which aimed to determine whether the early teacher identity perceptions of pre-service English teachers differed according to demographic characteristics, the data were examined using two variables: year of study and gender, as presented in the following two subsequent sections.

4.2.1 Statistical Findings of Pre-service English Teachers' Early Teacher Identity Perceptions According to Gender

To answer the first sub-question to determine the early teacher identity perceptions of pre-service English teachers in terms of gender, the independent samples t-test was used to determine whether there was a difference in terms of gender. To obtain reliable results from the t-test, certain conditions need to be met. Can (2020) emphasizes that these conditions are the means for each data to be compared, having normal distribution properties, equality of variances between

groups, and each data being independent of the other. In this current study, female and male groups are unconnected with each other. Levene's test was applied to measure variance equality.

As illustrated in Table 4.2 below, the significance value in Levene's test (Sig.: .039<.05) confirms that the two groups do not have almost equal variance on the dependent variable in this current dataset (Can, 2020). When the variances are not homogeneous, the "Equal variances not assumed" line resulting from the t-test is considered, and the difference between the two groups is interpreted according to these values (Kilmen, 2022). If the significance value (Sig.) is more significant than .05, it is concluded that there is no statistically significant difference between the variances of the two groups. The result of the test is given in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 The Levene's test for ETIM

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		
Early Teacher Identity	F	Sig.
	4.322	.039

To test the normality of the data before conducting the Independent Samples t-test, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was utilized as the sample size exceeded 50.

Upon examining Table 4.3 below, which provides the results of the normal distribution for the pre-service English teachers participating in the present research, it is seen that the distribution is normal ($p>0.05$). The results of the normality test are given in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results for gender

Early Teacher Identity	Gender	Kolmogorov- Smirnov		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
	Female	.071	148	.062
	Male	.099	58	.200

Because of normal distribution, the parametric independent samples t-test was carried out to understand whether early teacher identity perceptions of English language teachers differed.

As seen in Table 4.4 below, no significant difference was observed between the means of early teacher identity of female pre-service English teachers ($\bar{X}_A=3.88$) and male pre-service English teachers ($\bar{X}_B=3.88$). In this case, gender does not have a significant effect on pre-professional teacher identity perceptions. The test results are given in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 The Independent Samples t-test results for gender

Early Teacher Identity	Gender	Number	Mean	df	t-value	Sig. (2 t.)
	Female	148	3.88	204	.004	.99
	Male	58	3.88			

4.2.2 Statistical Findings of Pre-service English Teachers' Early Teacher Identity Perceptions According to Year of Study

In the ELT departments of education faculties, courses related to general knowledge related to the English language are delivered in the first four semesters, while courses related to professional knowledge are offered in the last four semesters. Upon examining the English Language Teaching Undergraduate Program published by The Council of Higher Education, updated in 2018, it is seen that professional knowledge courses such as “Teaching Foreign Languages to Children, Teaching English Language Skills 1” are taught in the 1st Semester of the 3rd year. In addition, it becomes apparent that professional knowledge courses such as “Course Content Development in English Language Teaching” and “Exam Preparation in English Language Teaching” are in the 4th year. For this reason, in this sub-question, the participants were divided into two groups according to years of study as Group A and Group B. The aim was to conclude whether the mentioned courses given at the university had an effect on pre-professional teacher identity perception levels and whether those perceptions differed in terms of years of study. During the data analysis phase, the 1st and 2nd years were considered Group A, while the 3rd and 4th years were categorized as Group B.

Descriptive statistics (Table 4.5) and normality test (Table 4.6) for the data were first conducted to answer this sub-question and determine whether parametric or non-parametric tests should be performed. As Gerald and Frank Patson (2021) state, non-parametric tests are suitable when the data is not following a normal distribution, while parametric tests can be employed when the data approximates a normal distribution.

As shown in Table 4.5 below, the mean of the total points of pre-professional teacher identity perceptions of 3rd and 4th year (Group B) English teacher candidates (XB=3.99) is slightly higher than the mean of the total scores of pre-professional teacher identity perceptions of 1st and 2nd year (Group A) English teacher candidates (XA=3.74). The median value of the total score from 3rd and 4th years (4.11) is significantly higher than the median value from 1st and 2nd years (3.64). The standard deviation of the total score of the 3rd and 4th years (SD=0.755) is higher than the standard deviation of the total score of the 1st and 2nd years (SD=0.614). Based on this, while pre-professional teacher identity perceptions may vary within a broader range among 3rd and 4th-year English teacher candidates, this variability is less among 1st and 2nd-year English teacher candidates. Descriptive statistics are given in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Descriptive statistics of early teacher identity for groups A and B

Early	Groups	Mean	Median	Std.Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Teacher Identity	Group A	3.74	3.64	.614	.127	-.322
	Group B	3.99	4.11	.755	-.964	.872

Table 4.6 below shows that the significance value was .016 ($p < 0.05$). This showed that the data were not normally distributed. Thus, in the study, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyze whether there was a difference between the groups that consisted of 1st and 2nd year students and 3rd and 4th year students.

Table 4.6 The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for groups A and B

Early Teacher Identity	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			
	Groups	Statistic	df	Sig.
	Group A	.103	93	.016
	Group B	.098	113	.010

As seen in Table 4.7 below, the Mann-Whitney U test value is 3895.500, and the p-value (Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)) is 0.001. If Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value is less than 0.05; there is a significant difference between the scores of the two groups (Can, 2020; Kilmen, 2022). From this information, it can be assumed that there is a significant difference between the pre-professional teacher identity perceptions of the 1st and 2nd-year English teacher candidates and those of 3rd and 4th-year English teacher candidates. The test result is given in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Mann Whitney U test according to year of study

Early Teacher Identity	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
	3895.500	-3.194	.001

Table ranks in Table 4.8 was made to interpret which group had a higher difference (Kilmen, 2022). As seen in Table 4.8 below, the mean rank of Group A (Mra=88.89), consisting of 1st and 2nd-year students, is lower than the mean rank of Group B (MRb=115.53), comprising of 3rd and 4th-year students. When the mean rank is high, it indicates that the group associated with that mean rank has higher scores or values compared to the other group (Kilmen, 2022).

Table 4.8 Ranks for groups

	Groups	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Early Teacher Identity	Group A	93	88.89	8266.50
	Group B	113	115.53	13054.50
	Total	206		

Based on these findings, it is noticeable that the pre-professional teacher identity perceptions of the 3rd and 4th-year English teacher candidates are higher than those of the 1st and 2nd-year English teacher candidates.



5. DISCUSSION

The development of identity among pre-service teachers holds significant importance in fostering their professional attitudes and facilitating the transition from being learners to educators who guide students' learning journeys (Yang, 2023). Thus, this chapter presents a discussion of the findings from the current research, incorporating examples and insights from relevant literature. The study aimed to investigate the early teacher identity levels of pre-service EFL teachers and examine how these levels are influenced by various demographic factors such as gender and year of study. This study comprehensively explains early teacher identity levels among pre-service English as a Foreign Language teachers through qualitative and quantitative analyses.

5.1 Perceived Early Teacher Identity Levels of Pre-service English as a Foreign Language Teachers

5.1.1 Research question # 1 What is the early teacher identity level of pre-service English as a Foreign Language Teachers?

The first question of the research was about the early teacher identity level of pre-service English as a Foreign Language teachers. The average score given by teacher candidates to their pre-professional teacher identities is in the "agree" range. This finding shows that teacher candidates' pre-professional teacher identity perceptions are above average and at a high level. This finding is consistent with the results of studies carried out on pre-service English Language teachers' early teacher identity level in the literature (Babanoğlu, 2019; Babanoğlu & Ağçam, 2019; Keskin & Zaimoğlu, 2021; Kimsesiz, 2023).

In the interviews conducted, pre-service teachers also stated that they believe they will become good teachers in the future because of their personal traits, experiences, or university education. They also reported feeling confident in this regard and enjoying participation in the teaching process. In short, the responses from the interviews also indicate that early teacher identity levels are generally high among pre-service English teachers.

As a result of their research with prospective English teachers, Keskin and Zaimoğlu (2021) also determined that the pre-professional teacher identity perceptions of pre-service teachers were high. Additionally, Kimsesiz (2023)

pointed out that pre-service English as a Foreign Language teachers predominantly adopted positive roles and generally carried pleased feelings and emphasized that pre-service English as a Foreign Language teachers had a high level of early teacher identity. Similarly, in the interviews in the current study, pre-service teachers expressed hopeful and positive thoughts regarding their future in teaching. In Koca's (2016) study involving prospective music teachers, pre-service teachers were also found to have a strong sense of identification as teachers. These results may indicate that the majority of teacher candidates might have already chosen the teaching profession willingly during their university selection process.

Similarly, Aydın and Aslan (2024) found that in-service teachers from different departments exhibited high perceptions of teacher identity, along with strong self-perceptions, motivation, duty perception, and professional dedication. This suggests that a strong sense of teacher identity plays a crucial role in various aspects of a teacher's professional life. Given this, it can be inferred that the positive and hopeful attitudes expressed by pre-service teachers in the current study may stem from an emerging sense of teacher identity, which aligns with the high levels of dedication and motivation observed among in-service teachers. This continuity between pre-service and in-service teacher identity highlights the importance of fostering a strong teacher identity early in a teacher's career, as it appears to contribute significantly to their professional commitment and effectiveness.

The study by Nevin et al. (2014) demonstrates that teachers' belief in their own abilities and their capacity to manage teaching processes significantly impact their motivation. This indicates that a strong teacher identity level enhances teachers' confidence in their professional skills and abilities, thereby boosting their motivation. Similarly, in the current study, pre-service teachers' hopeful and positive feelings about acquiring teaching skills can be seen as a reflection of their developing teacher identity. Their high levels of motivation suggest that they are in the process of establishing a strong teacher identity, laying the foundation for it before they enter the profession.

However, the present study also found that some pre-service teachers, particularly those in their first and second years, struggle with fully identifying as teachers. This challenge is often attributed to a perceived lack of readiness and insufficient practical experience, as noted by ST1.3 and ST2.4. In the qualitative phase, some pre-service teachers mentioned that their teaching experiences were

effective in managing the teaching process and building confidence in their abilities. Ceylan and Akkuş (2018) highlight that classroom management challenges diminished pre-service teachers' motivation and led them to question and reorganize their "teacher identity", and specifically junior and senior pre-service teachers reported lower self-assessment scores regarding their teacher identity due to these challenges. Despite this, their classroom presence and interactions with students help them feel more like teachers. Similarly, the results of the current study suggest that a more developed teacher identity in 3rd- and 4th-year students may stem from increased engagement in practical teaching activities and accumulated experience, which contribute to a clearer understanding of their role as educators. These findings suggest that early-stage pre-service teachers might benefit from more opportunities for hands-on teaching experiences, as this could foster their confidence and sense of self-efficacy (Busher et al., 2015; Fajardo Castañeda, 2014).

As Üstün (2021) emphasizes, pre-service teachers can better develop as individuals and contribute more to society and their students as a result of receiving higher-quality education. Consistent with the findings of the current study, Najihah et al. (2023) also claim that pre-service teachers become more confident in themselves as a teacher and can express themselves as a teacher as they meet the students, take part in real-class activities and are seen as a teacher by others. Moreover, Taşdemir and Seferoğlu (2022) state that teacher candidates begin to become aware of the powers and responsibilities inherent in the teaching role during the practice process. Torres-Cladera et al. (2021) also emphasize that during their practicum, teacher candidates can close the knowledge gap between what they learned in theoretical classes and what they really experience in the classroom.

Similarly, Busher et al. (2015) explore how student teachers transform school-based practicum experiences, highlighting the significance of this process for both the student teachers and their future students. Their study, which surveys student teachers from universities in Turkey and England, finds that while the practicum poses challenges, it was instrumental in helping participants develop key skills such as classroom management, addressing diverse student needs, and understanding multiple student perspectives. In other words, the practicum allows these future teachers to gain a deeper, more practical understanding of what it means to be a teacher in a real-world setting. Fajardo Castañeda (2014) also states that

student teachers' experiences regarding real-teaching activities help to build their early teacher identity. Additionally, in the current study, the positive impact of experience on teacher identity, whether through practicums or voluntary teaching, was frequently emphasized by student teachers in interviews. Student teachers often mentioned that real classroom experience significantly enhances their feelings about becoming a teacher.

However, the qualitative findings revealed that teacher candidates did not find the practicum sufficient to have the teaching practice course only in the 4th year semester. Similarly, Seferoğlu (2006) emphasizes that the practicum period is not enough to assume the identity of a teacher. Coşgun and Savaş (2023) also state that teacher candidates have basic concerns about their professional identities due to insufficient professional development. From Taşçı's (2023) perspective, the inadequacy of teaching practice courses is shown as one of the important problems of teaching English in Türkiye because, as Ó Gallchóir et al. (2018) mention, teacher candidates' ideas about what it means to be a teacher change before and after the practicum and that this change makes early teacher identity development difficult. In the present study, teacher candidates stated that during the practicum, real classroom experience can highlight the differences between theoretical knowledge and practical application, which may lead to changes in the student teachers' perceptions of teaching.

Similarly, in the study conducted by Eret-Orhan et al. (2018), pre-service teachers claim that more hands-on learning opportunities and events are required and that practicum opportunities are insufficient for a university degree. The study of Çelik and Zehir Topkaya (2023) also shows that teacher candidates experience teaching anxiety due to a lack of teaching practice and untested teaching skills; therefore, as evidenced by the findings of this study, teacher training programs should increase the duration of teaching practice.

Likewise, Seferoğlu (2006) emphasizes that courses on teaching methodology and practice adequately equip prospective teachers for their English teaching careers. Nonetheless, in her study, pre-service teachers thought there ought to be a stronger connection between theoretical information and its real-world implementation in the classroom. Moreover, as highlighted by the teacher candidates in the interviews of the current study, it has been mentioned that pre-service teachers need more chances to practice teaching.

In this study, it was found that practical courses were seen as insufficient to enrich teacher identity by prospective teachers. There are other studies in the literature that reach results consistent with this finding. For instance, in the study conducted by Rocha-Erkaya and Ergünay (2021) with EFL student teachers, teacher candidates state that theoretical courses should be reduced from the program whereas practical courses should be increased instead.

In the study conducted by Okumuş and Daloğlu (2024), it is pointed out that ELT methodology courses are significantly influential in teacher education. They state that the most significant one among them is practicum. Thus, they claim that to adequately prepare students for their future practice, initial teacher education programs should include more practical courses, such as microteaching, beginning in the second year. In the current study, pre-service teachers state that practical courses should start at least from the 2nd year and that practicum should be added to the curriculum from the 1st year, even if it is in the form of observation. Based on this, it can be argued that the results of the current study are compatible with the literature.

As for the confidence issue raised by some of the interview participants, some major findings can be inferred. Firstly, it was revealed that students in all years have confidence in themselves to become teachers. This study finding is consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Alkış Küçükaydın and Gökbulut (2019) with the elementary school teachers. They found that as teachers, teacher candidates have trust in their abilities. In contrast to this study, Durgunoğlu and Hughes (2010) indicated that preservice teachers did not believe they were ready to teach English to kids and meet their needs. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2002) maintained that student teachers did not have adequate confidence in themselves to work with English learners. In the study conducted by Wessels et al. (2017), it was also pointed out that teacher candidates did not have self-confidence regarding teaching.

The differences in findings regarding teacher candidates' confidence might be attributed to several factors. Firstly, participants in this study may have had access to a more comprehensive teaching experience, which could enhance their self-confidence compared to those in other studies with less exposure. Additionally, methodological differences, such as varying data collection methods, may influence how participants report their confidence. Finally, sample size and diversity can

affect results, with larger and more diverse samples potentially providing a broader understanding of confidence levels among teacher candidates. In terms of the confidence in becoming a teacher dimension of the qualitative phase, 1st and 2nd-year students were revealed to attribute “confidence in becoming a teacher” to their traits such as patience, cheerfulness, motivation, and determination. In the same vein, the study conducted by Teneva (2019) stated that a good teacher should have tolerance, love for the students, and love for the profession. In another study along the same line, Göksel and Rakıcıoğlu-Söylemez (2018) argue that after patience, having good personality traits such as friendliness and helpfulness is the most important quality for an English as a Foreign Language teacher. Ulfatun (2021), in her study, states that a good teacher is understanding, upbeat, and responsive to the opinions of their students, and she points out that teacher quality in this regard is attributed to professional development; moreover, the study emphasizes the critical role of personal traits and professional development in shaping a teacher’s identity, suggesting that the interplay between innate characteristics and acquired skills is essential for fostering confidence in teaching.

Erden (2021) states that value perceptions, beliefs, and expectations related to academic learning areas increase the success of academic behaviors by activating academic determination and an increase in academic performance. The current study showed that 3rd and 4th-year students defined themselves as “a teacher” by improving their self-confidence about being a teacher. Reyes (2023) also indicates that strong development mindsets have been linked to the academic success of pre-service teachers. She points out that pre-service teachers can overcome obstacles, seize opportunities, and maintain motivation in the teacher education program when they have a strong growth mindset.

Furthermore, the perceptions of being born with teaching ability varied among participants in the current study. Many first- and second-year students believed they possessed innate teaching abilities, associating this with personal traits such as patience, enjoyment of teaching, and a passion for working with children. However, a notable shift in perception was observed among third- and fourth-year students, who increasingly viewed teaching ability as a skill developed through education and experience rather than an innate trait. However, in the study conducted by Ünalı et al. (2023), it is also emphasized that personality traits are considered to be related to effective teaching, and the alignment between self-

perceived traits and teacher identity may serve as a strong predictor of teaching effectiveness. From this, it can be suggested that both experiences and personal traits, as well as self-awareness, play significant roles in teacher identity. In this context, in initial teacher training, it is very important to help teacher candidates understand themselves and their teacher identity better.

Pre-service teachers' satisfaction with helping children and adolescents learn English was the highest-scoring item in this study. Likewise, in the study by Babanoğlu and Ağçam (2019), most pre-service teachers expressed high satisfaction with their ability to support young learners. While the quantitative results of the present study reached the same conclusion, qualitative results provided more detailed insights, showing that first- and second-year students feel more confident in working with children, whereas third- and fourth-year students feel more confident working with adolescents. These differences can be related to the evolving knowledge of pre-service teachers regarding the developmental stages of learners. Early-year students often feel more confident working with children because their knowledge and skills related to this age group are more recent, and they may feel better prepared. On the other hand, advanced-year students might have developed the necessary skills for working with adolescents through their accumulated experiences, leading to greater self-confidence. This indicates that the evolving experiences and competencies of pre-service teachers enhance their confidence in working with different age groups over time (Aydın & Aslan, 2024; Ceylan & Akkuş, 2018; Najihah et al., 2023; Nevin et al., 2014).

According to the “participant as a teacher” dimension of the qualitative phase of the present study, it was revealed that pre-service EFL teachers enjoy teaching English or helping activities to children or adolescents. In this study, as in the study conducted by Babanoğlu and Ağçam (2019), the highest score was obtained for items related to involvement with children in the quantitative analysis. These findings are consistent with each other and support the idea that the main motivation driving English teacher candidates to pursue their profession is their desire to make a positive impact on children's lives and their genuine enthusiasm for working with children. As one of the interview participants pointed out, contributing to students' lives benefits society, emphasizing the value of the teaching profession. The participant also stated that working with children is particularly significant to him for this reason alone. This finding is consistent with

the studies of Akar (2012), Başöz (2021), and Damar (2018), who state that the primary motivation for English teacher candidates to pursue a career in teaching English is their desire to positively influence children's lives and their enjoyment of working with children.

Similarly, Alptekin Yolcu (2018), who aimed to investigate the teacher identity of pre-service elementary school teachers maintained that prospective elementary school teachers enjoyed helping children learn and feel happy. Ölmez-Çağlar (2022) also indicates that the first motivation of the pre-service English teachers for choosing to teach as a career is social utility values such as influencing children's and adolescents' futures and contributing to society. Given that nurturing is considered a fundamental aspect of teaching, it can be said that the essence of the teaching profession is rooted in the desire to contribute to society and positively impact children.

The study conducted by Aslan (2016) aimed to examine how teachers who left their previous professions to become English as a Foreign Language teachers from various disciplinary backgrounds perceive their professional identities and the factors that influence those beliefs. From her perspective, these teachers indicate that they leave their prior careers because they are personally dissatisfied, even though they had higher salaries and better career opportunities. Similarly, Lee et al. (2011) explored the motivations and experiences of teachers who transitioned from other professions and uncovered the same result. This dissatisfaction could be related to an intrinsic motivation to contribute to the well-being of society and seek personal fulfillment.

Based on these findings above, it can be said that the teaching profession is performed with more spiritual satisfaction. It can be considered compatible with the teacher candidates' theme of helping and teaching children and adolescents, which was found to be the highest in this study. The aim of helping and adding something to the other person can also be seen as spiritual satisfaction. Koç (2014), who examined the metaphorical perceptions of classroom teacher candidates about teaching, concludes that teacher candidates are aware of what teaching means and think that teachers are as devoted as a mother and a father to their students. Moreover, these findings suggest that a comprehensive approach to teacher education should consider both individual experiences and the broader educational environment; additionally, integrating insights from diverse factors into curriculum

design may enhance the development of teacher identity and better prepare future educators for the complexities of their profession.

5.2 The Relationship Between Demographic Variables and Perceived Early Teacher Identity

Upon reviewing the literature, it becomes evident that numerous lines of research have investigated the connection between pre-professional teacher identity and demographic variables. Considering this, it is imperative that the teacher education system be structured and developed with consideration for the potential influence of demographic features on the identity of pre-professional teachers (Arpacı, 2015; Babanoğlu & Ağçam, 2019; Çelik & Kalkan, 2019; Ölmez- Çağlar, 2022). In this study, whether early teacher identity differs significantly in terms of gender and year of study is examined.

5.2.1 Research question # 2 Do early teacher identity levels of pre-service EFL teachers differ in terms of demographic variables?

Research question # 2a Does gender significantly affect the teacher identities of pre-service English as a Foreign Language teachers?

The findings revealed that early teacher identity perceptions of pre-service English teachers do not vary according to their gender. This result is consistent with several research on the early teacher identity of pre-service English language teachers (Arpacı, 2015; Babanoğlu, 2019; Bacakoğlu, 2018). For example, in her study, Babanoğlu (2019), who aimed at the early teacher identity level of pre-service EFL teachers found that gender is not a distinctive factor for pre-service teacher identity. Arpacı (2015), who conducted a study on the early teacher identity levels of teacher candidates from four different fields, including pre-service English language teachers, stated there was no significant relationship between gender and early teacher identity.

Additionally, Bacakoğlu (2018), in a study with pre-service pre-school and elementary school teachers, and Çetin (2017), whose participants are preservice teachers from various departments, including the ELT department, along with Uluyol and Şahin (2018) found no significant effect of gender on teacher identity among pedagogical formation students. On the contrary, Eğmir and Erdem (2021) and Erdem (2020) found significant differences in favor of female teacher

candidates among pre-service teachers from different departments. Similarly, Karatepe and Akay (2020) reported this finding with pedagogical formation students, while Alptekin Yolcu (2018) reached the same conclusion with pre-service primary teachers. Uygun and Karalı (2019) also observed significant differences related to the gender variable in the context of the pre-professional teacher identities of social studies teacher candidates.

Eğmir and Çelik (2019) examined the early teacher identity and beliefs of teacher candidates from four departments other than ELT and revealed that teacher identities differed significantly according to gender. Similarly, Alptekin and Kingir (2021) focused on pre-service elementary school teachers, Aydın and Aslan (2024) investigated pre-service teachers from different departments, and Çelik and Kalkan (2019) studied students in the Faculty of Education and the Pedagogical Formation Certificate program. All of these studies also revealed that teacher identity levels differ by gender.

Similarly, the findings of the current study in this regard conflict with those of several other studies (Babanoğlu & Ağçam, 2019; Keskin & Zaimoğlu, 2021). For instance, Keskin and Zaimoğlu (2021) investigated the professional identity perceptions of Turkish EFL teachers and found that female teacher candidates had a brighter identity and were more faithful than male teacher candidates. In another study investigating the pre-professional teacher identities of English language teacher candidates, Babanoğlu and Ağçam (2019) found that male teacher candidates had high identity levels in the sub-dimension of self-confidence as a teacher and female teacher candidates had high identity levels in terms of interaction with children. The related literature argued that in Turkish society, becoming a teacher is thought to be a more suitable career for women and stated that this pattern is repeated and internalized at home and educational institutions (Çelik & Kalkan, 2019; Esen, 2007; Haskan Avcı et al., 2019).

In a similar vein, Ullah (2016) stated that school teaching has historically been gendered as a predominantly female occupation, with societal perceptions often linking women's domestic roles to their careers as educators. He claimed that the nurturing of young children within the educational setting has traditionally been viewed as an extension of motherhood, thereby reinforcing the notion of teaching as a "natural" profession for women. Based on these reasons, the pre-professional

teacher identity of female candidates may have been higher than that of male candidates.

In his study, Pérez-Gracia et al. (2022) stated that male and female teacher candidates have disagreements even about the construction of early teacher identity. They revealed that the opinions of male and female teacher candidates differed on the influence of learning new techniques, receiving psycho-pedagogical training, and having a more extended practicum period on the formation of teachers' professional identities. They suggested that gender plays a significant role in this context when it comes to the formation and development of pre-service teachers' identities.

In the study by Karatepe and Akay (2020), it was argued that female student teachers evaluated their identities as teachers significantly more highly compared to male student teachers. However, Alsup (2004) stated that the development of one's identity can also be influenced by the sociocultural traits of the community, personal views, and outside and internal influences. Therefore, individuals' previous personal perceptions may be the reason why the gender variable the current study looked at has no impact on pre-professional identity perceptions. It should be noted that the results of this study are limited to the sample of this study, and the gender effect can be observed by conducting the study across universities with larger samples.

In summary, contrary to these studies in the literature, this study did not reveal a significant impact of gender on teacher identity among pre-service English teachers. Several factors might explain this finding. First, if the sample shared similar career goals and similar educational backgrounds, gender differences might not have been noticeable. Additionally, the cultural and institutional context in which the study was conducted might have contributed to a less pronounced impact of gender on teacher identity. Finally, in this study, the number of female teacher candidates is significantly higher compared to male teacher candidates, which is consistent with the general trend of more female candidates in English teaching programs. The gender imbalance in the sample may have contributed to the lack of observed gender differences. A more balanced sample could better reveal the effects of gender on teacher identity.

Research question # 2b Does the year of study significantly affect the teacher identities of pre-service EFL teachers?

When comparing the levels of early teacher identity perceptions of 1st and 2nd-year students to levels of early teacher identity perceptions of 3rd and 4th-year students, it was observed that the pre-professional teacher identity perception levels of 3rd and 4th-year teacher candidates were higher than the pre-professional teacher identity perception levels of 1st and 2nd-year teacher candidates. It can be pointed out that the year of study plays a significant role in the formation and development of early teacher identity.

In the relevant literature, there are some similarities with the results of the current study. For instance, Ölmez-Çağlar (2022), studying with pre-service EFL teachers in a state university, also found that teacher identity levels increase steadily from freshman to senior year. Babanoğlu and Ağçam (2019) noted that senior students showed high early teacher identity scores. This study is consistent with also other studies, such as the study of Arpacı (2015) and Çelik and Kalkan (2019). As Arpacı (2015) explained, this issue may be attributed to the increasing exposure of pre-service teachers to field studies, which could lead them to become more aware of their professional identities.

Babanoğlu's (2019) study found that professional teacher identity levels were high among both 3rd and 4th-year students. She revealed that English teacher candidates begin to perceive themselves as teachers as early as the 3rd year. The current study also uncovered that the overall pre-service teacher identity scores of 3rd and 4th-year students were higher compared to 1st and 2nd-year teacher candidates. In the qualitative section of the research, when asked if they see themselves as teachers at present, 1st and 2nd-year students mostly responded "no," whereas 3rd and 4th-year students reported that they could identify themselves as teachers. Similarly, Yaşar et al.'s (2009) research found that preschool teacher candidates started to feel like teachers from the third year of university. This can be explained by the increase in pedagogical training and micro-teaching opportunities that teacher candidates receive by the third year (The Council of Higher Education, 2018). Since many courses and fieldwork are generally completed by this time, pre-service teachers are likely to better understand their teaching roles and identities. The combination of academic learning and micro-

teaching opportunities may contribute to the formation of their professional identity at this stage.

Alptekin and Kırır (2021) and Alptekin Yolcu (2018) investigated the professional identity of pre-service primary school teachers, and Erdem (2020) aimed to examine early teacher identities of pre-service teachers from different departments. In contrast to the present study, their studies revealed that the year of study did not influence the teacher identity of elementary school teachers. In these studies, the lack of significant impact of year of study on teacher identity across different teaching fields (e.g., primary school teaching) might be due to several factors. According to these studies, the similarity in pedagogical training across various teaching fields may have minimized the effect of year of study, creating a common foundation for professional identity development. Additionally, differences in sample sizes and methodological approaches could have influenced the ability to detect the years of study impacts, suggesting that more extensive and field-specific samples might be necessary.

6. CONCLUSION

This chapter starts with a summary of the current study. It then presents the conclusions drawn from the data and ends by offering some recommendations for additional research.

6.1 Summary of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the early teacher identity level of pre-service EFL teachers. It also aimed to examine the effects of gender and year of study on early teacher identity. A mixed-methods strategy was used to perform the current study, combining quantitative and qualitative data.

Data were collected through the ETIM scale, developed by Friesen and Besley (2013) and adapted into Turkish by Arpacı and Bardakçı (2015) and the personal information form prepared by the researcher. The sample of the quantitative data consisted of 206 pre-service EFL teachers in a state university in Türkiye. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted to obtain qualitative insights.

The quantitative data were initially evaluated using descriptive statistics to determine the participants' early teacher identity levels and demographic characteristics. The results were analyzed using SPSS 29.0. Additionally, the qualitative data acquired through semi-structured interviews were utilized to explain and clarify the statistical findings derived from quantitative data. Fifteen pre-service EFL teachers were included in semi-structured interviews.

The quantitative findings point out that pre-service EFL teachers had a high early teacher identity level. Regarding demographic variables such as gender and year of study, the findings showed that gender did not affect the participants' identity perceptions, but year of study had a significant effect on the candidates' teacher identity perceptions. A noticeable difference in early teacher identity became evident as student teachers advanced to their studies.

The qualitative findings revealed several factors influencing the formation and development of their early teacher identity, including personal traits, pedagogical content knowledge, field knowledge, instructors, practicum, and volunteer teaching, all of which enriched their early teacher identity.

6.2 Implications of the Study

This section outlines key implications for stakeholders, drawing from both the study's findings and insights from the existing literature (Bacakoğlu, 2018; Okumuş & Daloğlu, 2024; Tekin, 2019; Yaşar et al., 2009; Yazan, 2016):

- Some pre-service teachers claimed that their lack of confidence as teachers is due to limited exposure to real classroom settings. They emphasized the need for a longer and earlier-starting practicum. To address this, extending the duration of practicum training and initiating it earlier in the teacher education program should be considered. This adjustment could provide candidates with more extensive classroom experience, thereby enhancing their confidence and practical skills more effectively.
- Universities should strengthen partnerships with schools to offer more practical teaching experiences and voluntary teaching opportunities, which are crucial for identity development. This will help teacher candidates gain hands-on experience, build confidence, and better prepare for their future roles as educators.
- Some pre-service teachers mentioned feeling inadequate when they suddenly start their practicum in the 4th year, particularly because they have not previously experienced classroom environments. Therefore, stakeholders should provide additional opportunities for observation in teaching contexts earlier in the program. This will help pre-service teachers gain valuable insights into teaching practices and better prepare them for their future roles as educators.
- As indicated by some of the preservice teachers, general English courses are taught in the first two years of university education, while methodology courses are introduced in the last two years. They indicated that they have learned a lot of theoretical content but have not had enough exposure to practical application courses. Therefore, the curriculum should be restructured to provide a balanced education in both General English courses and teaching methodologies from the outset of their university studies. This approach would ensure the integration of English

content and teaching methods throughout the program rather than separating them into distinct phases.

- Given that early teacher identity does not differ significantly in terms of gender, teacher training programs should ensure that their environments are inclusive and supportive for all pre-service teachers, regardless of gender.

6.3 Recommendations for Further Research

In line with the relevant literature (Alkış Küçükaydın & Gökbulut, 2019; Arpacı, 2015; Çulha Özbaş, 2012; Fajardo Castañeda, 2014; Koca, 2016; Ó Gallchóir et al., 2018), the following recommendations can be made for further research:

- To observe teacher identity development more effectively, longitudinal studies using the same sample over time should be conducted. This approach would allow researchers to track changes in teacher identity throughout their education and early teaching years, providing deeper insights into how teacher education programs influence identity formation and offering valuable information for improving these programs.
- To reveal how teacher identity develops over time, research should start with teacher candidates and continue with them into their teaching careers. This approach allows for tracking changes in their identity levels from their training period to their professional practice, providing a clearer picture of how their identity evolves.
- To explore the impact of gender on pre-service teacher identity, it is important to conduct similar studies at other universities. The current study shows no significant gender differences in identity levels, suggesting equal support from teacher education programs. However, more research in different academic contexts can offer a clearer understanding of how gender in different academic environments affect teacher identity, leading to better teacher training programs and policies.
- To investigate the impact of various factors on pre-service teacher identity, investigating variables such as age, educational background, and

previous teaching experiences could offer deeper insights. Understanding the influence of these variables can help identify the key elements that contribute to identity formation.

- To uncover how exposure to third-class methodology courses affects pre-service teacher identity, future studies should include this as a variable. Investigating the impact of early exposure to teaching methods can offer valuable insights into how such experiences influence identity formation and overall effectiveness in teaching.
- To understand best practices and areas for improvement in teacher education programs, conducting comparative studies across various institutions, both within Türkiye and internationally, can be highly beneficial.
- To observe the development of professional identities over time, future research could utilize reflections, journal papers, and stimulating recall interviews as data collection tools. These methods can provide rich, qualitative insights into the experiences and evolving perceptions of PTs throughout the process, offering a deeper understanding of their identity formation.

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8. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 Early Teacher Identity Measure (ETIM) Scale

Meslek Öncesi Öğretmen Kimliği Ölçeği

Sevgili Öğretmen Adayı,

Bu çalışma İngilizce Öğretmenliği bölümü okuyan öğrencilerin meslek öncesi öğretmen kimliklerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu ölçekte toplam iki bölüm bulunmaktadır. A bölümü kişisel bilgi formu olarak tasarlanmıştır. B bölümü 17 maddeden oluşmaktadır. Cevaplama süresi yaklaşık 5 dakikadır. Her bir ifadeyi okuduktan sonra, buna ne derece katıldığınızı ya da katılmadığınızı size verilen kâğıt üzerinde işaretleyiniz. Adınızı yazmayınız ve kimliğinizi belirtecek herhangi bir işaret koymayınız. Çalışmada toplanan veriler sadece çalışmada ismi geçen araştırmacılar tarafından incelenecek ve üçüncü kişiler ile asla paylaşılmayacaktır. Çalışma bittikten sonra araştırmacılardan çalışmanın sonuçları hakkında bilgi alabilirsiniz. Bu sonuçlar ve aklınıza gelen herhangi bir başka soru için aşağıda bulunan e-posta adresleri aracılığıyla araştırmacı ile çekinmeden iletişime geçebilirsiniz.

Çalışmaya verdiğiniz destek ve katkıdan dolayı teşekkür ederiz.

Araştırmacılar: Gülçin ATEŞ

Elektronik posta adresi:

BÖLÜM A: Lütfen size en uygun olan seçeneği işaretleyiniz.

-Cinsiyet:

Erkek ()

Kadın ()

-Sınıf:

1. sınıf ()

2. sınıf ()

3. sınıf ()

4. sınıf ()

APPENDIX 1 Continued

BÖLÜM B: Lütfen size en uygun olan seçeneği işaretleyiniz.

		Hiç Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Katılıyorum	Tamamen Katılıyorum
1.	Öğretmen olmak için doğru kişi olup olmadığımıdan sıklıkla şüphe duyarım.					
2.	Gönüllü çalışmak için daha çok zamanım olsaydı, çocuklarla çalışmayı tercih ederdim.					
3.	“İyi bir öğretmen” olmanın ne olduğu hakkında hiçbir fikrim yok.					
4.	Çocuk veya erişkinlerle çalışma ve onlarla ilgilenme konusunda ailem ve arkadaşlarım bana sıklıkla danışırlar.					
5.	Kendimi öğretmen olarak görüyorum.					
6.	Çocukların yeni şeyler keşfetmesine ve öğrenmesine yardımcı olmaktan zevk duyarım.					
7.	İyi öğretmen olma konusundaki yeterliliklerimle ilgili sıklıkla şüphe duyarım					
8.	Kendimi çocuklarla veya erişkinlerle çalışırken ve onların gelişimine yardımcı olurken kolaylıkla hayal edebiliyorum.					
9.	Kendimi rahatlıkla öğretmen olarak nitelendiririm.					
10.	Kendimi bir grup çocuk veya erişkine öğretmenlik yaparken düşünmekte zorlanıyorum.					
11.	İyi bir öğretmen olmak için gerekli beceri ve yöntemleri geliştirebileceğimden eminim.					
12.	Bir gün iyi bir öğretmen olacağımdan eminim.					
13.	Boş zamanlarımda çocuk veya erişkinlerle çalışmak için elimden geleni yaparım.					
14.	Bir çocuğun yeni bir şey öğrenmesine yardımcı olmak benim için mutluluk vericidir.					
15.	Çocuklara etkinliklerinde yardım ederken mutlu oluyorum.					
16.	Öğretmenlik eğitimimde gösterdiğim ilerlemeden memnunum.					
17.	Öğretmenlik doğamda var.					

APPENDIX 2 Semi-structured Interview Questions

MÜLAKAT SORULARI

1. Kendinizi şu an bir öğretmen olarak görüyor musunuz? Neden?
2. Öğretmenlik yeteneği ile doğduğunuzu düşünüyor musunuz? Neden?
3. Kendinizi çocuklara İngilizce öğretirken hayal edebiliyor musunuz? Neden?
4. Kendinizi yetişkinlere İngilizce öğretirken hayal edebiliyor musunuz? Neden?
5. Gelecekte iyi bir İngilizce Öğretmeni olacağınıza inanıyor musunuz? Neden?
6. İyi bir öğretmen olmak için gerekli olan beceri ve yöntemleri geliştirebileceğinize inanıyor musunuz? Neden?
7. Öğretmen olmak için kendinize güveniyor musunuz? Neden?
8. Boş zamanlarınızda çocuklarla çalışma fırsatı arar mısınız? Neden?
9. Boş zamanlarınızda yetişkinlerle çalışma fırsatı arar mısınız? Neden?
10. Çocuklara yaptıkları aktivite ve etkinliklerde yardım etmekten keyif alır mısınız? Neden?
11. Daha önce İngilizce öğretmek için gönüllü oldunuz mu? Neden?