



**EXPLORING NATIVISM AND PROFESSIONAL
IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF NON-NATIVE ENGLISH
TEACHERS IN A TURKISH EFL CONTEXT**

DOKTORA TEZİ

Hamideh HAMDİ KHOSROSHAHI

Eskişehir 2025

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Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı

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Hamideh HAMDİ KHOSROSHAHI'nin "Yerlililiğin Türkiye'deki İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Kimlik Gelişimlerindeki Etkisi" başlıklı tezi 29/05/2025 tarihinde aşağıdaki jüri tarafından değerlendirilerek "Anadolu Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim-Öğretim ve Sınav Yönetmeliği"nin ilgili maddeleri uyarınca, Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı İngilizce Eğitimi Programında, Doktora tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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ÖZET

YERLİCİLİĞİN TÜRKİYEDEKİ İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN KİMLİK GELİŞİMLERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

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Bu nitel çoklu durum çalışması, anadili İngilizce olmayan Türk İngilizce öğretmenlerinin (NNEST) İngilizceyi anadil olarak-konuşanlar'ın baskın olduğu yabancı dil öğretimi alanında mesleki kimliklerini nasıl oluşturduklarını incelemektedir. Bu çalışmada, Yazan'ın (2018) “Öğretmen kimliği çerçevesi ve konumlandırma kuramı” rehberliğinde, özel dil kurslarında, vakıf okullarında ve üniversite hazırlık programlarında çalışan altı NNEST'i araştırılmıştır. Veriler; otobiyografik denemeler, iki aşamalı yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler, iki aylık yansıtma e-postaları ve odak grup toplantısından görüşmesinden elde edilmiş ve tümevarım-tümdengelim tematik kodlama ile analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular; başlangıçta katılımcıların “anadilinde konuşma yanılığını” içselleştirmiş olduğunu ancak zamanla dilbilgisinde uzmanlık, iletişimde akıcılık, kültürel duyarlılık ve ilişki becerilerinin hibrit bileşimi ile rekabeti yeniden tanımladıklarını göstermektedir. İşe alım, ücret ve iş yükü ayrımcılığına rağmen öğretmenler gelişmiş sertifikalar edinerek, telaffuzlarını geliştirerek, öğrenci ilişkilerini güçlendirerek ve kimi zaman kariyer rotalarını değiştirerek rekabet konumlarını tekrar oluşturmuşlardır. Bu çalışma NNEST kimlik inşasına dair bağlamsal, nüanslı bir tablo sunmaktadır. Çalışma yabancıların İngilizce öğreniminde Konumlandırma Kuramı'nın açıklayıcılığını ortaya koymakta ve iki ana reform alanı önermektedir: kimlik merkezli öğretmen yetiştirme programları ve eşitlik temelli istihdam politikaları. Çalışma Türk NNEST'lerin güçlendirilmesinin, Türkiye'nin İngilizce yeterliğini yükseltmenin elzem ve pragmatik bir çözüm olduğunu savunulmaktadır

Anahtar sözcükler: Native-speakerism ; NNEST kimliği; Konumlandırma Kuramı; öğretmen eğitimi; istihdam politikası;

ABSTRACT

EXPLORING NATIVISM AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF NON-NATIVE ENGLISH TEACHERS IN A TURKISH EFL CONTEXT

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Department of Foreign Language Education

PhD in English Language Teaching

Anadolu University, Graduate School, May 2025

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This qualitative multiple case study examines how Turkish NNESTs reconstruct their professional identities within ELT, a field dominated by native-speakerism. The study investigated six Turkish NNESTs employed in private language schools, K-12 schools, and university preparatory programs. Data were collected through autobiographical essays, two rounds of semi-structured interviews, reflective emails, and a focus-group discussion, and were analyzed using inductive-deductive thematic coding. Findings show that participants internalized the “native-speaker fallacy” initially, but they redefined competence as a hybrid blend of grammatical expertise, communicative fluency, cultural responsiveness, and relational skills. Despite hiring, payment, and workload discrimination, participants reclaimed their agency by enhancing their qualifications, refining pronunciation, building student rapport, and in some cases redirecting their careers to gain authority. The study offers nuanced and context-sensitive narratives of Turkish NNESTs’ identity (re)construction and proposes two essential reforms: identity-centered teacher education programs and equity-based hiring policies. Empowering Turkish NNESTs is presented as a crucial and pragmatic solution to improve Türkiye’s English language outcomes.

Keywords: native-speakerism, Turkish NNEST identity, Positioning Theory, Teacher education programs, hiring policy

29/05/2025

ETİK İLKE VE KURALLARA UYGUNLUK BEYANNAMESİ

Bu tezin bana ait, özgün bir çalışma olduğunu; çalışmamın hazırlık, veri toplama, analiz ve bilgilerin sunumu olmak üzere tüm aşamalarında bilimsel etik ilke ve kurallara uygun davrandığımı; bu çalışma kapsamında elde edilen tüm veri ve bilgiler için kaynak gösterdiğimi ve bu kaynaklara kaynakçada yer verdiğimi; bu çalışmamın Anadolu Üniversitesi tarafından kullanılan “Bilimsel İntihal Tespit Programı”yla tarandığını ve hiçbir şekilde “intihal içermediğini” beyan ederim. Herhangi bir zamanda, çalışmamla ilgili yaptığım bu beyana aykırı bir durumun saptanması durumunda, ortaya çıkacak tüm ahlaki ve hukuki sonuçları kabul ettiğimi bildiririm.

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I hereby truthfully declare that this thesis/dissertation is an original work prepared by me; that I have behaved in accordance with the scientific ethical principles and rules throughout the stages of preparation, data collection, analysis and presentation of my work; that I have cited the sources of all the data and information that could be obtained within the scope of this study, and included these sources in the references section; and that this study has been scanned for plagiarism with “Scientific Plagiarism Detection Program” used by Anadolu University, and that “it does not have any plagiarism” whatsoever. I also declare that, if a case contrary to my declaration is detected in my work at any time, I hereby express my consent to all the ethical and legal consequences that are involved.

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Hamideh Hamdi Khosroshahi

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Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to all teachers, especially NNESTs, whose voices

often go unheard. May this work serve as a small contribution to the recognition, respect, and rightful place they deserve in the global ELT landscape. This is for you.



29/05/2025

ÜRETKEN YAPAY ZEKÂ KULLANIM BEYANI

Bu tezi hazırlarken ChatGPT’den destek aldığımı beyan ederim. Tezin hazırlığı aşamasında ChatGPT’den katılımcıların mesleki yolculuklarını betimleyen görsellerin oluşturulması amacıyla desteği aldığımı beyan ederim. Görseller, araştırma bağlamını görsel olarak desteklemek amacıyla üretilmiştir.

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I declare that I received support from ChatGPT while preparing this dissertation. I received support from ChatGPT to generate images that visualize snapshots of the participants' professional journeys. The images were created only for research purposes.

I also declare that, if a case contrary to my declaration is detected in my work at any time, I hereby express my consent to all the ethical and legal consequences that are involved.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
JÜRİ VE ENSTİTÜ ONAYI	i
ÖZET	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ETİK İLKE VE KURALLARA UYGUNLUK BEYANNAMESİ	v
STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND RULES	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
ETİK KURUL BELGESİ BEYANNAMESİ	370
ÜRETKEN YAPAY ZEKÂ KULLANIM BEYANI.....	ix
DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USAGE..	x
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xvi
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Statement of the Problem.....	7
1.2 Purpose and Significance of the Study.....	10
1.3 Definition of Key Terms.....	12
2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE	15
2.1 Native-Speakerism in English Language Teaching: Definitions and Challenges.....	15
2.2 Native-speakerism and Professional Issues in ELT	19
2.3 What Is Identity?	25
Table 2.1. Definitions of the term ‘identity’	25
2.4 English Teacher Identity.....	29
2.5 Conceptual Framework of Teachers' Identity by Yazan (2018)	33

2.6 Positioning Theory and Teacher Identity	42
2.7 Identity and Native-Speakerism	44
2.8. Studies on Native-Speakerism and Teacher Identity	48
2.9 Studies on Nativism and Teacher Identity in Türkiye	61
3 METHODOLOGY	72
3.1 Research Design	72
3.1.1 Philosophical underpinning and overall approach of the study	72
3.1.2 Multiple case study design	74
3.2 Context of the Study	77
3.3 Participants of the Study	78
3.4 Data Collection Tools	82
3.4.1 Biographical data questionnaire.....	82
3.4.2 Narrative essay	82
3.4.3 Semi-structured interview	83
3.4.4 Focus group discussion	84
3.4.5 Reflective emails.....	85
3.5 Data Collection Procedure	85
3.6 Data Analysis	91
3.7 The Role of the Researcher and Reflexivity	93
3.8 Ethics and Quality of the Study	94
4 FINDINGS	96
4.1 The case of Berke	97
4.2 The Case of Elif	125
4.3. The case of Behzat.....	146
4.4 The case of Selim	172
4.5. The Case of Murat	187

4.6. The Case of Gizem	206
4.7 Findings of the First Research Question.....	228
4.8 Findings of the Second Research Question.....	238
4.9 Findings of the Third Research Question	247
4.9 Findings of the Fourth Research Question	265
5 DISCUSSION	282
5.1 Exploring Turkish NNESTs' Perceptions of a Competent EFL Teacher	282
5.1.1 Linguistic knowledge as a marker of teacher competence	283
5.1.2 Teaching style as a marker of teacher competence	287
5.1.3 Teacher-student/administration relationship as a marker of teacher competence	291
5.2 Exploring Turkish NNESTs' Perceptions of NESTs.....	295
5.3 Exploring Turkish NNESTs' Challenges regarding Native-speakerism	302
5.4. Exploring Turkish NNESTs' Strategies to Counter Native-speakerism ...	309
6 CONCLUSION	315
6.1 Summary of the Study	315
6.2 Implications for Teacher Education Programs	317
6.3 Implications for Hiring Policy Reforms.....	319
6.4 Implications for School Management and Institutional Culture	321
6.5 Implications for Curriculum and Classroom Pedagogy.....	321
6.6 Implications for Research and Data Infrastructure	322
6.7 Limitations of the Study	322
6.8 Recommendations for Future Research	323
6.9 Crafting My Own Identity Through the Study of Others.....	325
REFERENCES	326
APPENDICES	

ÖZGEÇMİŞ



LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
Table 2.1 Definitions of the term ‘identity’	25
Table 2.2 Definitions of ‘teacher identity’	30
Table 3.1 Demographic Information of the Participants	80
Table 3.2 Demographic Profile of the Pilot Testing Participants	87
Table 4.1 Cross-case Analysis of Challenges and Their Impacts	263
Table 4.2 Turkish NNEST’s Strategies to Overcome Challenges and Their Positioning	280

LIST OF FIGURES

	<u>Page</u>
Figure 4.1 <i>Berke's emerged themes and categories</i>	97
Figure 4.2 <i>Becoming Berke: From self-doubt to self-definition</i>	125
Figure 4.3 <i>Elif's Emerged Themes and Categories</i>	125
Figure 4.4 <i>Elif's Teaching Odyssey</i>	146
Figure 4.5 <i>Behzat's emerged themes and categories</i>	147
Figure 4.6 <i>Behzat's Professional Journey</i>	172
Figure 4.7 <i>Selim's emerged themes and categories</i>	173
Figure 4.8 <i>Selim's Path: Growth, Success, and the Shadows of Native-Speakerism</i> ..	187
Figure 4.9 <i>Murat's Emerged Themes and Categories</i>	188
Figure 4.10 <i>Murat's Professional Life Trajectory</i>	206
Figure 4.11 <i>Gizem's Emerged Themes and Categories</i>	207
Figure 4.12 <i>Gizem's Journey of Empowerment</i>	227
Figure 4.13 <i>Turkish NNESTs' Perceptions of Competent Teacher Framework</i>	238
Figure 4.14 <i>Turkish NNESTs' Perceptions' of NESTs</i>	247
Figure 4.15 <i>Berke's Challenges and Their Impacts</i>	250
Figure 4.16 <i>Behzat's Challenges and Their Impacts</i>	253
Figure 4.17 <i>Elif's Challenges and Their Impacts</i>	255
Figure 4.18 <i>Selim's Challenges and Their Impacts</i>	257
Figure 4.19 <i>Murat's Challenges and Their Impacts</i>	259

Figure 4.20 *Gizem's Challenges and Their Impacts* 262



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CELTA	: Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults
CRT	: Culturally Responsive Teaching
DELTA	: Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults
ELF	: English as a Lingua Franca
ELT	: English Language Teaching
GeH	: Global Englishes for Higher Education
GELT	: Global English Language Teaching
MoNE	: Ministry of National Education
NEST	: Native English-Speaking Teacher
NNEST	: Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher
NNS	: Non-Native Speaker
NS	: Native Speaker
TBLT	: Task-Based Language Teaching

1. INTRODUCTION

What makes an English teacher a ‘good’ one? It might sound like a simple question, but its answers can be political if one goes through the lens of native-speakerism. Many qualified English teachers around the world are bilingual, and English is their additional language, and are often questioned about their competencies, not because they do not have the knowledge, education, or experience, but because their passport is not desirable. These teachers are forced to constantly undergo biases and discrimination. For many of them, being an English teacher has become a way of proving that they have the ability.

Global dominance of the English Language has transformed it into a widespread lingua franca, and along with that, it has created a hierarchy within the field of English language Teaching (ELT), which has classified English teachers into two groups of native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). This dichotomy and division have their roots in an ideology that favors NESTs as it assumes they are more qualified and authentic teachers than NNESTs. Through its spread worldwide, native-speakerism has significantly impacted NNESTs’ employment opportunities and professional identities. Native-speakerism promotes the bias that posits NESTs as teachers with better pedagogical skills and marginalizes NNESTs. This ideology affects NNESTs’ employment, professional development, and their effectiveness. Society and institutions question their legitimacy, forcing them to engage in continuous identity negotiation and self-assertion. Their professional identities are not shaped by their qualifications and competencies but by their reactions to the expectations and biases imposed by native-speakerism.

In Türkiye, NNESTs have significant roles as they are the main group of English teachers in the country. However, they are associated with deficiency and incompetent teaching despite their unique strengths and contributions. As the society, students, parents, and institutions admire NESTs, Turkish NNESTs lose their self-confidence, which affects their professional growth. They need to negotiate their worth continuously, and over time, this tension directly affects their identity formation. They believe that the resolution is to conform to native-speaker norms and attempt to redefine their roles through external validation, as they feel undervalued. This study focuses on the impact of native-speakerism on Turkish NNESTs’ identity (re)construction and attempts to unfold their identity negotiations through the application of a teacher identity lens and Positioning

theory. It studies the NNESTs' strategies in asserting their expertise and the way they adapt to the existing biases.

Turkish NNESTs' experiences are deeply rooted in the global politics of the English language, which goes back in history to British colonialism. The global status of the English language goes back to the time when English was considered not only a tool for communication but also an instrument to control and impose cultural norms. Schneider (2017) claims that the British Empire purposely ranked English over local languages and introduced it as a symbol of authority and civilization to facilitate economic exploitation. Pennycook (2010, 2020) and Schneider (2017) emphasize the way English was systematically integrated into the daily lives of colonized people through education. The main goal was to marginalize local languages and create a hierarchical structure that raised English above all others.

Similarly, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) explored the role of English in colonialism and highlighted its influence on power dynamics and social hierarchies. Scholars argue that Colonialism still exists through languages that post-colonial countries still use in their educational and economic systems. English is the dominant language in many former colonies, despite achieving independence, which has resulted in "World Englishes." Kachru (1985) introduced his model of three concentric circles, where the Inner Circle includes countries with English as their main language, such as the USA, UK, Australia, and Canada. Countries like India, Singapore, Ghana, and Kenya are in the Outer Circle, where English is used as a second language, and the Expanding Circle represents countries where English is taught as a foreign language, such as Japan, Korea, and Zimbabwe. While Kachru's model is an effective illustration of the global spread of English, scholars believe it suggests that the English of the Inner Circle is the standard, while others are inferior forms. Similarly, Crystal (1997) has been criticized regarding his description of English as a global language for implicitly promoting this hierarchy. Although his work is about the presence of English worldwide, scholars believe it promotes native speakers and contributes to native-speakerism, where speakers of Inner Circle English are often considered more legitimate and capable than those from other circles (Pennycook, 2010; Liu, 2018).

Later, Holliday (2005) introduced the term native-speakerism as a critical term, referring to the ideology that positions native speakers as inherently better English teachers.

Holliday critiques this ideology as discriminatory and groundless. Phillipson (1992) criticized this form of linguistic imperialism and argued that it leads to power imbalances in favor of those who speak English as their first language, often at the expense of other languages and cultures. He referred to this assumption as the "Native-Speaker Fallacy," which introduces NESTs as superior to NNESTs. Phillipson challenged this fallacy and argued that effective teaching is based on pedagogical skills such as explaining grammatical rules, classroom activities, and understanding student diversity. Widdowson (1998) similarly criticized the notion of language ownership and asserted that individuals from Inner Circle countries should not have the authority to dictate the development of the English language.

The increasing demand for NESTs reinforced the problematic hierarchies because language institutions often promote their programs by presenting NESTs and typically prioritize hiring native speakers (Clark & Paran, 2007). Studies show that students generally prefer NESTs over NNESTs, frequently associating nativeness and white skin with teaching proficiency (Amin, 1997; Tang, 1997; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005). Selvi (2021) argues that this fallacy resulted in various dichotomies within ELT, such as "us/them," "local/expatriate," "center/periphery," and "native speaker (NS)/non-native speaker (NNS)." These distinctions led to discrimination against NNESTs and have resulted in employment challenges and made them feel undervalued (Selvi, 2014; Song, 2018). Scholars such as Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) and Selvi (2014) advocate for more inclusive hiring practices that can recognize the valuable contributions of both native and non-native speakers in language education. There is a growing consensus among TESOL scholars that teaching effectiveness is not related to a teacher's native language, thus resulting in a shift towards using terms like 'bilingual' or 'multilingual' instead of 'non-native' (Floris & Renandya, 2020).

This perspective is reflected in TESOL's 2006 Position Statement Against Discrimination of Nonnative Speakers of English in the Field of TESOL, which emphasized that English language proficiency, teaching experience, and professionalism should be the key criteria for evaluating educators, rather than their native language:

TESOL strongly opposes discrimination against non-native English speakers in the field of English language teaching. Rather, English language proficiency, teaching experience, and professionalism should be assessed on a continuum of professional preparation. All English language educators should be proficient in English regardless of their native languages, but

English language proficiency should be viewed as only one criterion in evaluating a teacher's professionalism. Teaching skills, teaching experience, and professional preparation should be given as much weight as language proficiency. (TESOL, 2006)

Despite ongoing criticism, recruiters still prefer to hire NESTs (Clark & Paran, 2007) as Kiczkowiak (2020) revealed that despite the decline in native-speakerism biases to below 50%, the reliability of this finding may be questionable due to the self-reported nature of the data, because recruiters might be hesitant to acknowledge their support for discriminatory practices. Likewise, Floris and Renandya (2020) highlight that native-speakerism still exists in workplaces, and NNESTs are often viewed as less competent, facing disadvantages in terms of pay and workload. These biases, along with the NS and NNS dichotomy, complicate the professional identity development of NNESTs (Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Chung, 2014). Understanding NNESTs requires a closer look at the concept of identity to find out how they navigate biases, how their identity is shaped, challenged, and reshaped within specific contexts. Studies on identity are critical to understanding human behavior because identity development is a lifelong process that is shaped by beliefs, social status, relationships, and interactions with one's environment (Gedik & Ortactepe, 2017).

Among many, Erikson proposed a theoretical framework to study and understand identity, and through that study, the ways people define themselves, the role they take, and the beliefs and values they have. Erikson believes that individuals should face the conflict between their roles and identity in adolescence so they can resolve it. They explore and integrate various aspects of the self to construct their identities. If successful, the result of this process can be a strong sense of self that guides decision-making and commitment in areas like career, relationships, and personal beliefs (Erikson, 1968). Erikson's ideas of identity construction can help in finding out how NNESTs navigate their professional roles within contexts that often privilege native-speaker norms. Like adolescents, NNESTs may also struggle with similar conflicts in their professional lives, struggling to merge their personal and cultural identities with the expectations imposed by dominant native-speaker ideologies. Understanding this dynamic process is essential for analyzing how NNESTs construct and assert their professional identities through challenges.

Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory also helps us understand the way individuals get a part of their self-concept from the social groups that they belong to. The theory suggests that group membership not only encourages a sense of identity but also

increases self-esteem through the distinction between in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This perspective is remarkably significant in understanding how NNESTs form their professional identities in contexts dominated by native-speaker norms. As social identity theory emphasizes the importance of group membership in identity construction, NNESTs often navigate their group identity as non-native speakers and its crucial role in how they are perceived and how they perceive themselves in ELT.

The concepts of identity and professional identity construction have evolved in the digital age and technological advancements. NNESTs can manage and present multiple versions of themselves, both professionally and personally, through online platforms. Sherry Turkle (2011) explored how digital environments make the ground for identity navigation so that individuals can explore various aspects of their identity, which may be hard to express in face-to-face interactions. For NNESTs, these digital platforms provide opportunities to challenge native-speaker norms, thus contributing to a more inclusive understanding of professional identity in the field of ELT. Murray and Kosnik (2011) argue that there is a significant relationship between identity and teaching quality. Danielewicz (2001) argues that a teacher is not a “good teacher” only due to their ideology or teaching methods, but also through their identities and self-perception. He argues that teaching is not only a role but is also a state of being that is dynamic, multifaceted, and complex. Pishghadam, Golzar, and Miri (2022) similarly argue that teacher identity is non-linear and highly dependent on the professional context within the educational setting.

The importance of professional identity construction in ELT studies has increasingly intersected with studies on NS/NNS dichotomy and the power dynamics between these groups, which means that identity negotiation occurs as a fluid exchange between self-positioning and being positioned by others. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) explore these negotiations within teachers' personal and professional lives. They argue that those negotiations are critical when teachers face challenges, as they can construct their sense of agency and purpose. It is essential to understand these negotiations to understand teachers' motivations and commitment. The concept of agency is crucial here because it can be damaged by hidden TESOL discourses that position NNESTs as "others" and incompetent. These TESOL discourses involve constant negotiations with external forces that disempower NNESTs and ultimately affect their professional identity in a negative

way (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Castañeda, 2011). This concept also implies the importance of self-image, which is important for teacher identity construction and influences their confidence, behavior, and effectiveness in the classroom (Mutlu & Ortaçtepe, 2016).

Pennycook (2004) argues that the repetition of discourse around race, (non)nativeness, and competency leads to a racialized image of English teachers and consequently impacts their self-image. Llurda (2005) relates this issue of self-image to Stockholm Syndrome, a condition where hostages develop loyalty, empathy, and positive attitudes toward their captors. In the context of ELT, this manifests when NNESTs view NESTs as better teachers due to perceived linguistic and cultural advantages (Atay, 2008). Llurda (2005) emphasizes the importance of awareness raising among NNESTs and suggests native-speakerism will diminish if NNESTs recognize their legitimacy. Awareness raising can happen through incorporating critical language awareness and education into teacher training programs, which can positively impact the professional identity of NNESTs.

This study implements a theoretical framework that integrates teacher identity and Positioning Theory to explore how NNESTs in Türkiye construct and negotiate their professional identities with the biases in ELT. Through examining the intersection of native-speakerism with professional identity, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on native-speakerism and its impact on the professional identity development of NNESTs. The identity framework used here views professional identity not as fixed or stable, but as an ongoing process of negotiation and re-negotiation that is influenced by both internal and external factors. This perspective is highly relevant in the context of NNESTs, who often face challenges related to native-speakerism. Positioning Theory, as developed by Bamberg (2020), provides a theoretical lens through which this study analyzes how NNESTs construct their professional identities about the discourses and practices around ELT and native-speakerism. Positioning Theory studies the interplay of individuals' accepted or assigned positions in societies. NNESTs navigate their assigned positions, which happen under the influence of Native-speakerism, and position themselves actively to assert their competence and legitimacy.

The interaction between the teacher identity framework and Positioning Theory is particularly useful in examining how NNESTs in Türkiye experience and respond to the pressures of native-speakerism. These teachers often find themselves in a complex situation where their professional identities are influenced by both the local context and

the global discourses surrounding English language teaching. By adopting a positioning lens, this study aims to understand how NNESTs negotiate these influences and the strategies they employ to construct and maintain a positive professional identity. By implementing two perspectives, the study offers a nuanced understanding of the processes involved in professional identity development, focusing on contexts where native-speaker norms are deeply established.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The English language has gained more importance in Türkiye since it is critical for both individuals' progress and the country's global competitiveness. It also plays a key role in getting into the global economy, international education opportunities, and success in business sectors such as tourism and international trade. Given its importance in both personal and national advancement, the English language has been at the center of Türkiye's development agenda. As the global lingua franca and with its growing importance, English has infiltrated the educational system, influencing educational policies and practices. The British Council has emphasized that integrating English into university education is crucial for Türkiye's participation in economic globalization, due to its status as a major global language (Taquini, Finardi, & Amorim, 2017).

Turkish scholars also advocated for the integration of English into educational programs at schools and universities (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kiziltepe, 2005). As a result, English has become a core subject in the curriculum and some cases, the medium of instruction. Consequently, the number of language schools has increased since there is a huge demand from individuals who are seeking job promotions, better university placements, or opportunities to move abroad. English also plays a vital role in business sectors like tourism (Acar, 2015; Arik, 2020). Despite many efforts to increase English education opportunities, its proficiency levels in Türkiye have been significantly low, and Turkish learners often struggle to use English effectively in real-world contexts even after many years of study (Selvi, 2014; Acar, 2015).

Koru and Akesson (2011) conducted a survey in 2011, which revealed that Türkiye ranked 43rd out of forty-four countries in the English Proficiency Index (EPI), categorizing it as "very low proficient." This trend continued, with Türkiye ranking 47th out of 63 countries in 2014 and 69th out of 100 countries in 2020, categorized as "low proficient." This is a problem that needs to be addressed because there is a gap between the time and resources

invested in English education in Türkiye and the outcomes gained. One example of this gap was reported by the British Council in 2013, which indicated that the government's programs to improve English language teaching, such as the FATİH Project and the introduction of 12-year compulsory education, have not resulted in success. According to the report, although more than 80% of teachers in state schools had the qualifications to deliver effective language lessons, many students graduated from high school with only elementary English skills after many hours of instruction (British Council, 2013).

The Turkish government has been taking further initiatives to improve English proficiency through implementing a series of educational reforms over the past two decades. These initiatives include lowering the starting age for English language instruction, increasing the number of English language hours in school curricula, and introducing English as a medium of instruction in some university programs (Kırkgöz, 2009; MEB, 2013). Despite these efforts, the outcomes have not been satisfying, and as a result, the private sector has increasingly turned to NESTs for hiring to meet the growing demand for high-quality English instruction. This shift in favoring NESTs is not merely the result of unsatisfactory outcomes, but it is also influenced by ideological beliefs about language ownership. The belief that NESTs are, by nature, better teachers is deeply rooted in the ideology of native-speakerism, which suggests that native speakers have superior linguistic knowledge and a more authentic understanding of English teaching methodologies (Holliday, 2005). This belief has led to a strong preference for NESTs in private language schools and institutions, often at the expense of NNESTs. Research shows that many private schools in Türkiye prefer to hire NESTs to enhance their credibility and marketability, sometimes even asking NNESTs to adopt pseudonyms and present themselves as native speakers (Tezgiden-Cakcak, 2019). This practice not only damages the professional identity of NNESTs but also promotes the misconception that language teaching quality is inherently linked to nativeness.

While the NEST hiring was intended to increase the overall quality of English education in Türkiye, it has not resulted in significant improvement in proficiency levels either as expected. It has worsened existing inequalities within the English language teaching profession. NNESTs, who constitute most English teachers in Türkiye, often find themselves marginalized in favor of NESTs. This marginalization is reflected in hiring practices, salary differences, and workload inequalities, where NNESTs often receive

lower payments and fewer opportunities for their professional advancement despite having similar or even superior qualifications in English language teaching (Selvi, 2021). Beyond the existing discrimination in hiring practices, native-speakerism has also influenced the way NNESTs perceive themselves and their position within their profession. The impact of native-speakerism on NNESTs extends beyond professional challenges; it also affects their sense of identity and self-worth. The general belief that native speakers are inherently better teachers creates a dichotomy that positions NESTs as the ideal English teachers, while NNESTs are viewed as inherently inferior. This dichotomy has been internalized by many NNESTs, leading to feelings of inadequacy, weakened self-confidence, and a distorted professional identity (Atay, 2008; Tatar, 2019).

Tatar (2019) highlighted how NNESTs in Türkiye, particularly preservice teachers, experience significant anxiety and self-doubt when compared to their native-speaking counterparts. These feelings get even worse by discriminatory hiring practices that prefer NESTs, regardless of their qualifications. Therefore, this leads to a professional environment where NNESTs are pressured to hide their true identities to be seen as legitimate educators, as employers often ask them to adopt pseudonyms so that they can be introduced as native speakers, which is dehumanizing and damaging to their professional identity (Tezgiden-Cakcak 2019). As most English teachers in Türkiye are Turkish NNESTs, it is crucial to address this issue to improve English language education in the country. Studies show that the way teachers perceive their professional identities is closely linked to their effectiveness in the classroom (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Therefore, improving the professional status and self-perception of NNESTs is not only a matter of justice but also of increasing the quality of English education. The Turkish NNESTs need to be supported in their professional development as teachers (British Council, 2013).

Türkiye's low English proficiency levels and Turkish NNESTs' Marginalization together call for a more comprehensive approach to English language education, which includes promoting inclusivity in hiring practices, valuing the contributions of Turkish NNESTs, and facilitating professional development opportunities for NNESTs (Selvi, 2021). Considering all this, recent research has increasingly focused on the professional identities of teachers, recognizing that these identities shape their teaching practices and overall effectiveness. In other words, it is essential to explore and understand the

conditions and factors that guide teachers in reshaping their professional identities, especially in countries dominated by Native-speaker norms. Unfortunately, the number of studies that focus on the development of identity, particularly NNESTs, remains relatively low (Song, 2018). This gap is especially pronounced in the Turkish context, where the English language and NESTs are highly valued, yet there is a scarcity of research examining the factors affecting teachers' identities and how they negotiate these identities within this environment. Deeper explorations are essential to achieve language teaching policy re-evaluation, which requires a concentrated effort by the government and private sector to support all English teachers in their professional development and to create a more effective English language education system.

1.2 Purpose and Significance of the Study

Türkiye is uniquely positioned at the crossroads of Europe and Asia and recognizes the critical role that English plays as the global language of communication, trade, and cultural exchange. This position has made English the foundation of Türkiye's modernization and international engagement. Consequently, it has become an integral part of education across the country, from primary schools to universities, expanding into language schools and online learning platforms (Kırkgöz, 2017). Within these diverse educational settings, there are three main groups of English teachers: (a) Turkish Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs), (b) Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs), and (c) NNESTs from other countries where neither Turkish nor English is the native language (expatriates). Among these groups, Turkish NNESTs are by far the most numerous, so understanding their experiences can lead to English language education improvement in Türkiye.

Being a teacher can be complex and multifaceted and goes beyond knowledge transmission. It involves classroom management, guiding and counseling students, and fostering meaningful relationships with both students and colleagues (Skliar, 2014). To better understand NNESTs, it is essential to explore their professional practices along with their personal and professional identities. This involves examining how they perceive themselves, are perceived by others, and how these perceptions influence their ongoing identity (re)construction. The professional identities of teachers are particularly important as they significantly impact how teachers approach their work and their commitment. Implementing Yazan's (2018) framework and positioning theory, this study

focuses on teacher identity formation in the context of English language education in Türkiye with a focus on native-speakerism and its biased norms. It explores Turkish NNESTs' specific challenges in their professional lives, with a focus on discrimination and native-speakerism. Additionally, it examines how these teachers navigate, negotiate, and reshape their identities in response to these challenges, as framed by positioning theory. Moreover, this study seeks to find strategies that can support Turkish NNESTs in constructing strong and resilient professional identities.

The study aims to provide new insights into how Turkish NNESTs develop and reconstruct their professional identities in response to native-speakerism while also proposing practical ways to enhance their professional experiences and outcomes. Considering the challenges Turkish NNESTs have with native-speaker norms and the importance of their professional identity construction, this study seeks to address several key questions that will guide the exploration of these issues. To put this inquiry within the context of the existing research, it is essential to examine what has already been studied in Türkiye regarding NNEST identity and native-speakerism. Selvi (2021) conducted a scoping review of studies on native and non-native speakers in Türkiye, revealing that only two studies have specifically investigated identity negotiation. This indicates a strong need for in-depth research in Türkiye, where the native speaker fallacy continues to influence perceptions of teacher competence and the overall level of English proficiency.

By focusing on the challenges faced by Turkish NNESTs and employing a teacher identity framework alongside positioning theory, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how these teachers navigate their professional identities among the pressures of discrimination and native-speakerism. The goal of this study is to make a significant contribution to the existing literature on English language education, teacher identity, and the dynamics of native-speakerism, particularly within the context of Türkiye. The findings are expected to inform both theoretical and practical discussions on the roles of native-speakerism and context in shaping teacher identities, thus offering new perspectives on how to support NNESTs in their professional development.

Grounded on a teacher identity framework (Yazan, 2018) and positioning theory, the following research questions have been formulated to focus the investigation:

RQ1: How do Turkish NNESTs perceive a competent language teacher in a context with

NESTs, in terms of linguistic knowledge, teaching styles, and the ability to build relationships with learners and the administration?

RQ2: How do Turkish NNESTs perceive native English-speaking teachers in a context with NESTs, in terms of linguistic knowledge, teaching styles, and the ability to build relationships with learners and the administration?

RQ3. What challenges do Turkish NNESTs face in their professional lives due to native speakerism, and how do these challenges impact their identity?

RQ4. How do Turkish NNESTs reconstruct their professional identity in response to native speakerism?

1.3 Definition of Key Terms

The key terms and concepts listed in this section are the foundation of the theoretical and contextual base of this study. They show the ideological, pedagogical, and social aspects of ELT where native-speakerism, teacher identity, and positioning intersect.

Bilingualism and Multilingualism: The capacity to understand, speak, and function in two or more languages. For NNESTs, these skills are increasingly recognized as professional assets, enabling them to relate to learners' challenges, scaffold instruction more effectively, and navigate multilingual learning environments with greater sensitivity (Widdowson, 1998).

Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults: An internationally recognized initial teacher training qualification designed to provide practical teaching skills and methodology for those entering the field of English language teaching.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): An approach that prioritizes interaction, communication, and learner engagement over rote memorization or grammar drills. It has been popular in Western ELT contexts, and its implementation often interacts with local educational cultures and can be implicated in debates over whose methods are considered “best practice” and why.

Cultural Competence: The ability to understand, respect, and integrate the cultural dimensions of language into teaching practices. Though often assumed to be the domain of NESTs, cultural competence can be cultivated by NNESTs, who may draw upon their linguistic diversity and intercultural experiences to broaden students' global perspectives.

Culturally Responsive Teaching: A pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references and experiences in all aspects of learning to make education more meaningful and effective (Hall, 1996).

Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages: A higher-level qualification for experienced English teachers aiming to deepen their theoretical understanding, refine pedagogical strategies, and assume more advanced professional roles within ELT.

English as a Lingua Franca: An approach that views English primarily as a medium of communication among speakers of diverse linguistic backgrounds. ELF emphasizes function over form, value over correctness, and adaptability over adherence to a single native-speaker norm, reshaping traditional beliefs of what it means to teach and learn “proper” English (Seidlhofer, 2011)

Global Englishes for Higher Education: An approach in English teaching that emphasizes the use of English as a global and diverse language, accommodating the cultural and linguistic needs of international contexts, particularly in higher education (Galloway & Rose, 2021).

Identity Negotiation: A continual process whereby individuals reconcile personal, professional, and social dimensions of identity. In ELT, teachers constantly negotiate their roles and self-definitions in response to shifting educational landscapes, policy directives, and learner needs.

Linguistic Imperialism: A concept proposed by Phillipson (1992) highlighted how English has been promoted, legitimized, and sustained as a global language at the expense of other tongues. This process, historically linked to colonialism and power imbalances, continues to influence educational policies, cultural perceptions, and teacher credibility.

Native-Speakerism: It is a belief that native speakers can be better teachers as they represent the West. It promotes them as superior language users who know to teach English (Holliday, 2005).

NEST: An English teacher who speaks English as their first language and English is the major language in their countries. A NESTs is considered to be the ideal language model who have better linguistic competence than a NNEST (Medgyes, 2005).

NNEST: Educators whose first language is not English and have bilingual or multilingual backgrounds with their subjective experiences as language learners. NNESTs are more aware of language learning but often face biases and are often undervalued due to native-speaker ideologies (Medgyes, 2005).

Non-Native English Speaker: Individuals whose first language is not English but who use or learn English as an additional language.

Native English Speaker: Individuals for whom English is their first language and who have acquired it naturally during childhood.

Task-Based Language Teaching: A teaching method that focuses on using meaningful tasks as the central unit of instruction, where language is learned through authentic use in the process of completing specific, goal-oriented activities (Ellis, 2007).

Teacher Identity: A dynamic, evolving sense of self that educators construct as they interact with students, institutions, and professional communities. Teacher identity is informed by individual experiences, beliefs, cultural norms, and social expectations, and plays a vital role in shaping pedagogical decisions and professional development trajectories (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009)

TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages is a field dedicated to developing effective pedagogical strategies and policies for teaching English to learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. TESOL intersects with issues of native-speakerism, identity formation, language policy, and cultural competence.

The Native-Speaker Fallacy: A term coined by Phillipson (1992) refers to the faulty assumption that the best English teachers are necessarily native speakers of the language. This fallacy disregards the professional preparation, teaching skills, cultural awareness, and empathetic understanding that NNESTs bring to the classroom.

Positioning Theory: Positioning acts in a narrative process where speakers shape identity on three levels: within the story, in interaction with the audience, and broader societal discourses (Bamberg, 2020).

Professional Identity Construction: The process through which teachers define, negotiate, and continuously reshape their professional selves in response to external influences, institutional policies, cultural expectations, and their internal reflections. This

construction is fluid, reflecting changes in career stages, educational contexts, and societal pressures (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004).

TESOL's Position Statement:

A declaration by the TESOL International Association explicitly opposes discrimination based on nativeness and advocates instead of evaluating teachers according to their professional qualifications, pedagogical skills, and contributions to student learning outcomes.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter explores the concept of native-speakerism within ELT. It highlights its historical roots, sociopolitical origins, and impact on NNESTs' professional identity and marginalization. It also delves into NNESTs' privileges and biases around hiring policies, teaching methodologies, and beliefs about effective teaching. The chapter discusses NNESTs and their recognition in ELT.

2.1 Native-Speakerism in English Language Teaching: Definitions and Challenges

Native-speakerism is an ideology that promotes native English speakers as superior and eligible language users and educators, which results in marginalizing NNESTs. The origins of this belief go back to colonialism and linguistic imperialism. Native-speakerism leads to discrimination in ELT, power imbalances, and stereotypes, since it claims that native speakers of a language, particularly English, are better at using and teaching the language. This belief favors native speakers and places them in higher positions than NNESTs in terms of language proficiency and teaching ability (Phillipson, 1992; Holliday, 2005). This way of thinking is extremely common in the field of ELT, influencing hiring policies, methodologies, and how teachers are judged.

Train (2009) explained that the concept of a "standard language" and "standard language user" was started by the Roman Empire, which emphasized Latin as its official language, which gradually spread to other parts of the world. European aristocracy later normalized the 'native speaker' standard as a shift to linguistic authority by determining who could be considered a legitimate native speaker. Regarding English particularly, Hackert (2012) suggested that the term "native speaker" goes back to 1859 and claimed its usage increased through the efforts to define English language standards in Britain in parallel with the glorification of Anglo-Saxonism; thus, the label of native speaker is by no means

objective and has roots in politics and the belief that any native-born English speaker, particularly from Britain, has a privileged status as they had a pure race and language. Although English was not considered an important language in 1600, with less than four million native speakers inside the British Isles, the situation changed after the spread of British colonies, mass immigration to the U.S., and national/ethnic resistance following the French Industrial Revolution (Hackert, 2012). From 1600 onward, the expansion of colonies was not merely geographical but was also accompanied by a language shift process as a way of ‘civilizing’ indigenous people who were under control. During the nineteenth century, the aim was to replace home languages with English, which had gained a universal status, against which other speakers were measured (Lowe, 2020).

The role of English was more than just a communication tool in the colonies and was also a tool for reinforcing control over power dynamics. Pennycook (1998) argued that native English speakers became the gatekeepers of culture and modernity and the ideal models of cultural superiority, which later expanded into the education systems of colonies as well (Lowe, 2020). The Americans and the British gained the privilege of teaching English so that the colonized nations would model and follow their paths (Kachru, 1997; Pennycook, 2010; Yazan & Rudolph, 2018). Pennycook (1998) argued that imperialism creates a linguistic hierarchy where native English speakers are at the top tier, and Indigenous people have no choice other than abandoning their native language since the English language was the tool for social mobility and a key to access to power, education, and employment opportunities.

The spread of English and native speaker idealization is the result of technological advancements as well, which consequently gives it the status of *lingua franca*, mainly in the fields of science and digital communication. The English language has become the instrument for bridging the gap between different nations and cultures to ease the communication and creation of a community, moreover, it makes it possible for everyone around the world to have access to knowledge (Atasheva, 2024). However, its dominance in technology has resulted in a vision that sees English not only as a linguistically dominant phenomenon but also as a key element in shaping political and economic forces in communities that do not speak English (Zeng & Yang, 2024).

Although Noam Chomsky’s theory of Universal Grammar focused on language acquisition, it has been interpreted by some scholars as reinforcing native-speaker

idealization in ELT, although this was not Chomsky's original intent. Chomsky (1965) argued that all humans have an innate ability to learn a language, and as children, they are born with a pre-wired and embedded language knowledge system in their brains. He asserted that this innate system was the major source of language learning rather than their exposure to the environment (Ellis, 2007). Chomsky considered native speakers to be the best models for language studies since they had intuition and an unconscious understanding of grammar rules. Chomsky's work founded the idealization of native speakers both in language studies and teaching, thus, he received many criticisms from scholars who highlighted interaction, exposure, and social feedback in the language learning process (Ellis, 2007). Although Chomsky never used the concept of 'native speaker' against 'non-native speaker' and his definition of a native speaker was of an abstract linguistic system, he indirectly caused an ongoing glorification of the 'native speaker' that became a yardstick for measuring an ideal English Language speaker which was extended to ideal English teachers later (Yazan & Rudolph, 2018; Lowe, 2020).

Beyond linguistic competence, native-speakerism also includes cultural knowledge, as Davies (1991) suggested that native speakers have cultural competence and can navigate the social and pragmatic aspects of language use in ways that non-native speakers cannot. This includes the knowledge of idiomatic expressions, social cues, and the unspoken rules of communication that are deeply embedded in a language's culture. Davies (1991) believed the native speaker was not only a linguistic model but also a cultural one, capable of understanding and producing language in its most authentic form. He defined a native speaker as an individual who had started acquiring the language from an early age, unlike the learning process as an adult, who could hardly achieve the status of a native speaker. Davies (2003) challenged his prior statements, claiming that the concept of native-speakerism was a socio-political concept rather than linguistic. He suggested that the privilege of native speakers in education and employment was secured by power dynamics that support selected ethnic and national groups and marginalize non-native speakers. Davies (2003) argued that native-speakerism had turned into a form of linguistic exclusion that is used to justify discrimination against non-native speakers in the context of English language teaching.

There have been various attempts to define a native speaker which is demanding because it is hard to draw a clear-cut line between a native and non-native speaker, as any

individual could reach a high level of fluency equal to native speakers even if they started learning that language in later stages of their lives on the condition, they have the essential resource of language exposure (Ellis, 2007). Bloomfield (1933) defined a native speaker as someone who acquires a language naturally during childhood without receiving any formal instruction. However, this definition was later criticized for being simplistic since it overlooks the social and cultural dimensions of language learning. Nayyar (1994) tried to define the construct of a native speaker by providing a taxonomy that he called the “defining features” of a native speaker. This taxonomy includes the (a) superiority in acquisition; (b) environment of acquisition; (c) growing up in the speech community; (d) phonological, linguistic, and communicative competence; (e) comfort of use; (f) ethnicity; (g) nationality (h) self-perception of linguistic identity; (i) other perception of linguistic membership and eligibility; and (j) monolingualism (p.3). Similarly, Richards and Schmidt (2010) embedded learning in childhood, fluency, grammar knowledge, and community membership that uses language and intuition in their definition of a native speaker. Lowe (2020) criticized this definition by arguing that it excluded individuals who had not learned a language at an early age and denied that they could be members of the community that speaks the language. An individual might use the language grammatically and fluently; however, they cannot be considered native due to their age of learning.

Despite all these attempts to define the native speaker, it is still controversial and debatable. Scholars like Jenkins (2007) and Seidlhofer (2011) asserted that there is a need to reconsider native-speakerism, specifically in the context of ELF. According to Jenkins (2007), native-speakerism failed to explain how English is used around the world by speakers who have learned it as a second or third language. Lowe (2020) argued that since the term “native speaker” is not objective but part of a social process, it needs to be considered as a social construct. A study by Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (2001) revealed that the individuals who had moved to the U.S. were labeled as ‘native’ or ‘non-native’ based on shallow factors such as having an accent. The researchers argued that being native or non-native is a socially formed identity rather than a linguistic one. Seidlhofer (2011) argued that the distinction between a native and non-native speaker is invalid in a world where English is used as a means of communication. Jenkins (2007) and Seidlhofer (2011) both called for a more inclusive approach that recognizes the linguistic competence of NNES.

2.2 Native-speakerism and Professional Issues in ELT

Robert Phillipson is a key figure in discussions around linguistic imperialism. Phillipson (1992) examined the privileges native English speakers have in English language teaching and argued that these privileges were deeply tied to colonial power dynamics. He highlighted how native speakers hold dominant positions in the English language teaching world and outlined that starting in the 1960s, both the United States and Britain spread English globally, creating what he called "linguistic imperialism." He brought the neocolonialism in ELT to attention by discussing that the West was using ELT projects such as the British Council to standardize English Education for their own cultural and economic benefits. Phillipson argued that these nations created a divide between the "Center" and "Periphery." Thus, language policies can never be neutral but are always tied to cultural and political domination. Galtung (1972) proposed the terms "Centre" and "Periphery" to show the classification of power by imperialism, where "Centre" refers to the powerful authorities, and "Periphery" describes the nations under power. Phillipson (1992) asserted that this power control happens through dogmas that can never be questioned, such as the idealism of native speakers and monolingual teaching. He referred to native speaker idealism as the "native speaker fallacy," the false belief that native speakers are automatically the best teachers of English and that it should always be taught monolingually. He argued that this shifted focus away from the strengths of local teachers and their pedagogical methods, labeling them as lacking. This idea of deficiency was especially reinforced through terms like "non-native speaker," which defines individuals by what they are not (Dawe, 2017). Suresh Canagarajah also took a strong stand against linguistic imperialism. He discussed how the global dominance of English as a lingua franca has marginalized local cultures and created inequality. He advocated for linguistic diversity so that both teachers and students could benefit from their local cultures and languages inside the classrooms. Furthermore, Canagarajah supported inclusive policies in language teaching and emphasized the multilingual realities of language learners in pedagogy (Canagarajah, 2005). He pointed to the "native speaker fallacy" and showed the power dynamics that undermined the abilities of NNEs (Canagarajah, 2013; Canagarajah & Matsumoto, 2017).

Holliday (2006) created a new perspective on ELT when he coined the term "native-speakerism." He explained it as an ideology that positions native English speakers as the

ideal teachers, assumed to have better knowledge of both the language and teaching methods. According to Holliday, this worldview is distorted, turning the native speaker into a brand and overlooking the potential of non-native speakers in both language ability and teaching skills (Holliday, 2018). He calls for greater awareness of these biases, warning that such beliefs represent a form of imperialism that suppresses diversity. Selvi (2010) explored the job advertisements posted online and found that more than 60% ask for an NS in the countries where English is learned as a foreign language, while the percentage in the countries where English is learned as a second language was approximately 8%. Another study examining seventy-seven job postings in the Middle East showed that sixty-one out of 77 required an NS, and thirty-eight of them had referred to specific nationalities (Mahboob & Golden, 2013). In Colombia, Mackenzie (2021) examined discriminatory practices in job advertisements and found out that throughout ninety-five job postings on Facebook, nearly half of the postings, native speakers were required.

Native-speakerism has also influenced teaching methodologies, which resulted in a preference for Western methodologies rather than local ones. Lowe (2020) argued that teaching methods have political dimensions apart from scientific ones. Pennycook (1989) was another scholar who believed that prescriptivism in teaching methods creates inequalities in favor of the West. Ignoring the local settings, CLT and TBLT were advocated by the British Council, which might have contradicted local culture (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Susser (1998) examined two types of materials advising foreign teachers in Japan and learning styles. He argued that both materials were based on stereotypes and assumptions that authorize the teachers from the West and “othering” the local teachers, students, and educational setting. Lowe and Pinner (2016) strongly asserted that this phenomenon had pushed teachers from the ‘periphery’ to Western institutions to be authentic in ELT. Canagarajah (2012) narrated his own story when he decided to get a TESOL certificate to be seen as professional and authentic, and talked about a TESOL expert who considers the West as the threshold for recognition. Widin (2010) examined the ELT project of Australian authorities in Japan and revealed that this project was by no means intended to be effective, so Australians still have their jobs. He concluded that the project was not for the wants or needs but in favor of Australia. This happened through invalidating the learners’ first language and marginalizing the local expertise of the host country (Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

Other scholars, including Kabel (2009), Houghton and Rivers (2013), and Choi (2016), also believed that native-speakerism extended stereotypes and inequalities. They argued that there was a need to shift away from native-speakerism to create meaningful change in ELT. Holliday (2015) warned about the harmful effects of ELT as well and argued that the division of teachers into NESTs and NNESTs created unnecessary stereotypes. The mentality of “us” vs “them” rejected the individual strengths of teachers and contributed to an identity crisis within ELT (Fang, 2018; Huang, 2018; Yazan, 2018). Holliday (2018) labeled this phenomenon as a form of “neo-racism,” as it reinforced racial distinctions implicitly and overlooked the diversity within cultural identities. Lowe (2020) put forward the creation of a negative ‘self-image’ among Non-native teachers as another influence of native-speakerism. Through propagation, local English teachers began to doubt themselves as they did not fall into the category of ‘native speakers’, so they started to get negative about their language use and classroom skills, and become self-conscious about their errors (Lowe, 2020). Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) also explored the NEST/NNEST dichotomy, arguing that we needed to go beyond simplistic categories when talking about effective teaching. They claimed that this dichotomy was socially constructed and could distort how ELT teachers view themselves. They described two main approaches to the issue: the dominance approach and the different approach. The dominance approach focused on the power imbalance where NESTs were seen as the authority figures, overshadowing NNESTs and having easier access to opportunities. On the other hand, the different approaches value pluralism, emphasizing the unique contributions NNESTs bring to the field.

The NNEST movement began as a way to resist native-speaker domination in 1996 after a TESOL International Convention, when a group of NNESTs shared their stories about the struggles they had faced (Kamhi-Stein, 2016). As the movement progressed, NNESTs, their multilingual backgrounds, and their language learning experiences became recognized, and there was a call within ELT for more fair treatment (Mahboob, 2010; Kamhi-Stein, 2016; Yazan & Rudolph, 2018). Kamhi-Stein (2016) explained that the NNEST movement unfolded in three phases: emergence, coalescence, and aftermath. The emergence phase allowed more NNEST voices to be heard, which led to the creation of the NNEST Caucus within TESOL to address these challenges. In the coalescence phase, the Caucus advocated for research and pushed for more opportunities for NNESTs. However, despite the progress made in terms of awareness and publications, many

challenges around hiring practices and professional status remained unresolved (Llurda, 2009; Kamhi-Stein, 2016; Lowe & Pinner, 2016). Kumaravadivelu (2014) and Holliday (2015) criticized the lack of fundamental changes because it shows that the issues surrounding the NEST/NNEST dichotomy are not taken seriously. Kumaravadivelu called for immediate action to address discrimination against NNESTs and emphasized that their efforts and achievements are often undervalued. He advocated for a more flexible pedagogy that empowered both learners and teachers.

Lowe and Pinner (2016) discussed how bias in ELT often came down to concepts of authority and authenticity. They shared the story of an Indian British teacher who was rejected by a student who wanted a ‘real’ English teacher. This story, they argued, highlighted how racial appearance often shapes perceptions. Selvi (2018) pointed out that NESTs are often assumed to be Caucasian, Western, and male, and are so perceived as more qualified, while NNESTs are marginalized. This constant marginalization deeply affected the professional identities of NNESTs, as they were judged constantly (Mahboob et al., 2004; Lowe & Pinner, 2016). Davies (2003) called for moving beyond these restrictive categories, arguing that, in a multilingual world, supporting outdated NEST standards could cause harm to both learners and teachers. He advocated for greater inclusivity in ELT, suggesting that both NESTs and NNESTs bring valuable perspectives to pedagogy.

Following Holliday’s (2005) native-speakerism coinage, the term started to refer to overt and visible discrimination against NNESTs, specifically regarding biased hiring practices and favoring NESTs (Lowe, 2020). According to Lowe (2020), the attempt to narrow down native speakerism to overt discrimination would oversimplify Holliday’s original model and ignore the less visible issues; in other words, this type of focus would trick us as the overt issues would seem resolved while the covert forms of the issues continue. In a more recent definition of native-speakerism, Houghton and Rivers (2013) suggested that discrimination was against both NES and NNESTs, depending on the context, which means that it might be a disadvantage to native speakers as well. Some studies in Japan showed that NESTs were being considered and treated either as “living tape recorders” or “entertainers” and had less serious roles in the educational settings along with their job insecurities (Shimizu, 1995; Benoit & Haugh, 2001; Hullah, 2007; Miyazato, 2009; Rivers, 2013; Nagatomo, 2016). Lowe (2020) called for the need to go beyond native-

speaker classifications and recognize the individual qualities of the teachers. In a study by Benke and Medgyes (2005), students were asked to share their perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs. The findings revealed that students appreciated NNESTs for their detailed feedback, lesson preparation, and consistency with textbooks, while NESTs were preferred for speaking and cultural activities. Benke and Medgyes emphasized the complementary strengths of both groups, encouraging further research to better understand the complexities of ELT. Shimizu (1995) also surveyed to find out the students' perception of NEST and revealed that they often saw NESTs as entertainers and more approachable. A similar study by Hullah (2007) showed that the classes taught by NESTs were described as more fun, while their non-native counterparts were strict and boring. Furthermore, NESTs normally do the communication or speaking classes so they can only focus on conversational English rather than formal instruction for example in Japan formal English lessons (Eigo) are very valuable and are taught by Japanese teachers while conversation and less serious lessons (Eikaiwa) are assigned to NESTs (Nagatomo, 2016). Studies revealed that NESTs had very limited roles and career advancements in universities (Masden, 2013; Rivers, 2013).

Advocacy of moving beyond native-speakerism suggested that educators be chosen based on their characteristics rather than status and end any type of discrimination (Houghton & Hashimoto, 2018). Houghton and Rivers (2013) defined native-speakerism in the context of Japan and tried to show that NESTs also faced discrimination and struggled to get better positions specifically in universities; however, Lowe (2020) argued that Holliday's definition referred to broader issues such as teacher education programs, cultural issues, language models, and methodologies of teaching, whereas Houghton and Rivers (2013) overlooked the broader political and socio-political issues. Lowe (2020) believed that considering native speakerism based on individuals would reduce the concept and ignore the systemic issues. He argued that we need to consider the neo-imperialistic history of particular languages and see that both groups of teachers might have struggled while unconsciously serving the Western powers.

Canagarajah (1999) claimed that power can be "monolithic and absolute", and its exercise always raises a counter-power, and the interaction between dominant power and counter-power is called "dialogic". In other words, a dominant group does not destroy the other group but subordinates it, and the latter group always has the chance of gaining its power

back from the dominant group (Lowe, 2020). The resistance to native-speakerism has been both conscious and unconscious. In the conscious movements, there have been scholarly works such as Phillipson's (1992) "Linguistic Imperialism," where he criticized the West for its imperialistic language policies and somehow tried to subvert the dominance in ELT along with Holliday (2005). Activist initiatives like the NNEST Caucus in TESOL (Kamhi-Stein, 2016) were formed to address the challenges faced by NNESTs and professional practices like Jordão (2016), who conducted a research project and investigated a situation where teacher educators were supposed to introduce a communicative teaching approach in a context where it was not proper. Teacher educators started to engage in a process of unlearning so that they could resist the method that was imposed on them. The unconscious movement involved the subversion of American textbooks by students from Sri Lanka, where they transformed the material by writing and drawing in them so they could be more meaningful to them (Canagarajah, 1999).

Scholars like Baker (2011) also highlighted the value of multilingualism, arguing that non-native speakers bring essential skills to the classroom, such as empathy and problem-solving abilities. He believed that promoting multilingualism could reduce discrimination in educational systems. Jenkins (2007) argued that ELF can challenge native-speakerism by promoting flexibility and adaptability in language teaching, which better reflects how English is used globally. She linked ELF to identity, suggesting that it allows individuals to develop dynamic identities that move beyond conventional linguistic boundaries. Seidlhofer (2011) discussed how ELF and translanguaging allow individuals to bring their diverse linguistic backgrounds to ELT and shape their identities. She argued that traditional native-speaker models failed to capture the realities of ELF, which has its grammar, vocabulary, and communication strategies. In her view, diversity is not a weakness but a strength that should be embraced in ELT. Canagarajah (2013) strongly believed that speakers should be empowered to claim their identities against the dominant linguistic structures. He challenged the NES/NNES dichotomy and advocated translanguaging, which allows individuals to use their full linguistic repertoire to communicate and interact in a globalized world. Canagarajah (2013) emphasized that this flexibility in language use enables people to explore their identities, as these identities are continually shaped and reshaped by diverse interactions.

2.3 What Is Identity?

Identity is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been a connection link across various disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, and psychiatry (Buckingham, 2008; De Levita, 1965). It is derived from the Latin root “idem,” which means “the same,” and expresses a basic paradox by implying similarity and difference simultaneously (Buckingham, 2008). In other words, identity refers to the unique characteristics that distinguish an individual from others and also involves association with social groups, including national, cultural, or gender identities. Associations imply identification with others who share certain similarities, values, or experiences (Buckingham, 2008; De Levita, 1965). The conflict between individuality and group membership is central to many debates around identity. Individuals desire to be ‘themselves’ while at the same time they seek affiliations with others (Buckingham, 2008). According to Bauman (2004), this dynamic is even more complex in the modern world, where globalization increases social mobility, and shifting social structures contribute to fragmentation and uncertainty in identity formation. He argued that identity becomes a critical issue when it is threatened or questioned, emphasizing its fluidity and negotiability in modern societies.

The importance of identity and its process of formation comes from the need to understand maturing as a human being and how one can define their place in society (Miller, 2009; Pennington & Richards, 2016). There has been a variety of definitions and acknowledgments of what identity exactly means and how it is formed throughout the decades. Nowadays, it is generally known as an umbrella term that covers a range of social personalities, including social status, positions, relationships, and other community identities that one seeks to claim during their social lives (Ochs, 1993). Table 2.1 shows a few of these definitions and explanations chronologically:

Table 2.1

Definitions of the term ‘identity’

Authors	Definitions
Erikson (1959, p. 109)	"Identity is the capacity to sustain a sameness of meaning for oneself and others."
Goffman (1959, p.19)	"A social role will involve one's whole self, and one's inner identity may be involved in it."

Table 2.1 [Continue]*Definitions of the term 'identity'*

Tajfel, (1978, p. 63)	"Social identity is that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership."
Giddens, (1991, p. 53)	"Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of his or her biography."
Ricoeur, (1992, p. 2).	"Identity is a dialectic between 'idem' (sameness) and 'ipse' (selfhood)."
Taylor (1994, p. 25)	"Our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others."
Hall (1996, p.2)	"Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact... we should think of identity as a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process."
Castells (1997, p. 6)	"Identity is people's source of meaning and experience."
Bauman, (2000, p. 83)	"Identity is a never-ending process of self-definition and redefinition."
Sen (2006, p. xii)	"The concept of identity demands recognition of the plural affiliations of people."
Burke & Stets (2009, p. 3)	"An identity is the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person."
Breakwell (2015, p. 24).	"Identity is the totality of self-construal that defines the individual in relation to social groups and society, incorporating both personal attributes and social roles."
Appiah, (2018, p. 41).	"Identities are labels that shape our behavior, often accompanied by 'scripts' that tell us how to be who we are."

As Table 2.1 shows, the concept of identity has evolved during the past decades, reflecting the changes in theoretical perspectives. This evolution involves a shift from viewing identity as a stable, singular construct to understanding it as a dynamic, multifaceted process that is influenced by individual, social, and cultural factors. By examining definitions in Table 2.1 from 1959 to 2018, we can track the transformation in the understanding of identity. Erikson (1959) focused on the psychological aspect of identity and believed that the "self" is consistent through time, and emphasized that an individual needed a coherent identity to be recognized in society. He believed that identity is shaped in adolescence and is later stabilized and giving an individual a sense of self. Identity is

considered primarily as how a person perceives herself/himself and partly ignores others. Davey (2013) criticized this viewpoint as it disregards the context and considers identity as singular, non-dynamic, and an internalized mental model. Later, Erikson (1968) included social Interaction in his definition and believed that individuals achieve self-identification through ongoing interaction and negotiation with others in various contexts. Through these interactions, ideologies and images get passed down from earlier generations, by which individuals position themselves and others. It is also through images and ideologies that an individual's sameness or difference gets pronounced and, in this way, identity is ascribed to that individual.

Similarly, Mead (1934), Bucholtz and Hall (2005), and Riyanti (2017) emphasized the role of language and social interactions in identity (re)construction since it is the way an individual notices the similarities and differences between themselves and others. It is through language that an individual can associate themselves with some groups, which in turn define who they are. Djoudir (2019) highlighted the role of the context and society and saw them as a mirror that shows the individuals who they are, which means the understanding of the 'self' depends on how an individual imagines society sees them. Goffman (1959) examined identity as a sociological entity, highlighting the role of social interactions and suggesting that people can be like actors on a stage, and their identity emerges through these acts and performances. This view shifted the focus from internal psychological processes to the external expressions and roles individuals inhabit within society.

Tajfel (1978) introduced the concept of social identity and expanded our understanding of identity. He defined social identity as an individual's self-perception that derives from their group memberships and the significance attached to those memberships. This definition emphasized the importance of group affiliations and the meaning that an individual gives to those memberships and social comparisons (Tajfel, 1981). Hall (2004) supported the fact that being in society and part of a group is essential for identity development. Castañeda (2011) also argued that identity might be personal, but it is mostly an external request in a society so that a person can act as a group member and have a sense of belonging to a group. From a more modern perspective, Giddens (1991) proposed that identity has a reflexive nature and suggested that individuals continuously construct and reconstruct their identities through self-reflection and narrative. In this case,

identity is fluid, which is contrary to traditional prescriptive structures and roles. Ricoeur (1992) suggested that identity has both constant and dynamic aspects, and there is always a tension between them. In other words, identity refers to stable traits that can also transform. Hall (1996) argued that identity formation is never complete and is always evolving, rejecting the perception that identity is fixed. Castells (1997) and Bauman (2000) believed that identity is linked with the way an individual experiences the world and has a sense of it. They argued that in the modern world, identities are multiple and sometimes overlap due to the fast societal and network changes. Similarly, Sen (2006) advocated for a multifaceted and complex nature of identity and argued rather than a singular identity, people have multiple identities as they have multiple affiliations in the modern world.

Taylor (1994) emphasized the role of social recognition and the impact it has on others' perceptions and an individual's sense of self. He argued that identity is mainly shaped by interpersonal dynamics, and a lack of social recognition can damage one's development. Considering this fluidity, Clarke (2008) also supported the social part of identity as he argued that an individual's identity is more than how that individual perceives themselves and is more about how others perceive them. Burkner and Stets (2009) and Breakwell (2015) emphasized the individual's roles in any society and the meanings attached to those roles. Breakwell (2015) strongly believes that identity formation is the result of both internal and external factors.

Appiah (2018) stated that an individual's identity shapes their behavior, and societal norms and expectations tell them what to do and how to behave. Appiah suggested that identities come with societal expectations and norms that guide people's behavior. Emphasizing the social value of identity, Pennington, and Richards (2016) also viewed it as a set of characteristics and self-perceptions of an individual that are related to those of others; they argued that this self-perception originates from the differences that exist among humans for instance appearance, talents, social status, and affiliations. Pennington and Richards (2016) added the narration of one's story as a projector of one's self-image and self-identification as well, because it is through these stories that an individual conveys and shows their values and beliefs of how a person should be and behave. They argued that it is through these values and beliefs that one assesses their worth and being, and along with the requirements of the social context, they either downplay or reinforce

some types of behaviors, and the ones that are allowed later turn into habits.

Although these habits might create some stability in identity, other aspects of it are open to modification through experiencing new things and interpreting those experiences in new ways. This is where the concept of agency enters allowing individuals to open up to new ideas and to form their identities as they would like to, it also allows them to accept, or challenge the categories that they get assigned, so it can be entailed that although it is directly related to the society, identity is not predetermined; new contacts, interactions, experiences can push individuals to question who they are so that their values and solid thinking patterns can change (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Clarke, 2008; Jackson, 2008; Pennington & Richards, 2016).

2.4 English Teacher Identity

The importance of identity has increasingly been recognized in educational fields (Lasky, 2004; Cardelle-Elawar, 2007; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Salifu & Agbenyegu, 2016; Alsup, 2018; Reeves, 2018; Shutz et al., 2018; Kayi-Aydar, 2019). Miller (2009) argued that in the field of TESOL, the concept of identity had been mostly used to explore sociocultural contexts, language learners, marginalization, and empowerment of the speakers rather than language teachers, as a result, scholars were not certain how teacher identity is formed. Apart from being under-researched, this uncertainty has also been rooted in the complex and unstable nature of teacher identity, which in turn has also challenged the efforts to provide a clear definition of it (Trent, 2010; Ajayi, 2011; Mockler, 2011; Alsup, 2018; Yazan, 2018).

However, the role of identity formation in education, particularly in language teaching, is undeniable, and the reason can be attributed to the interactive and reflective nature of teaching, which needs continuous adaptation by educators (Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009). Teachers have a profession that is complex due to the diversity of classrooms and systemic demands (Shulman, 1986). Darling-Hammond (2000) argued that teachers need to negotiate constantly between their personal beliefs and professional responsibilities. Based on their identities, teachers come up with the answers to questions of “Who am I?” and “Who do I want to be?” and it is important to know that these answers are not stable and go through the process of becoming that is always changing throughout the teachers’ experiences, personalities and the contexts they are in since in every stage of their career they rediscover who they are and have different perceptions of themselves

(Beijaard et al., 2004; Varghese et al. 2005; Cardelle-Elawar et al., 2007; Sutherland et al., 2010; Reeves, 2018; Richardson & Watt, 2018; Richards, 2021). Like identity, there have been many attempts to define ‘teacher identity ’; however, there is no single definition that can capture its multifaceted characteristics.

This complexity is the result of dynamic relationships among factors like self-perception, emotional investment, narrative construction, discourse engagement, reflective practice, and contextual influences (Korthagen, 2004; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Consequently, teacher identity is often described as a combination of these factors that reflect both personal and professional features (Giroux, 1988). This multifaceted nature aligns with the broader theoretical challenges linked with "identity" itself (Gee, 2001). Therefore, it is necessary to examine various conceptual frameworks and definitions to get a comprehensive understanding of teacher identity. Table 2.2 below summarizes the key definitions and conceptualizations discussed in this paper.

Table 2.2

Definitions of ‘teacher identity’

Authors	Definitions
Vygotsky (1978, p. 45)	“Teacher identity is influenced by the cultural and social contexts in which teachers operate, shaping their beliefs, practices, and interactions within the classroom.”
Shulman (1986, p. 5)	"Teacher identity is shaped by the knowledge growth in teaching, encompassing both the understanding of subject matter and the pedagogical strategies employed to convey that knowledge effectively."
Giroux (1988, p. 42)	"Teacher identity encompasses the intellectual and ethical commitments that teachers bring to their practice, positioning them as critical agents in the educational process."
Crenshaw (1989, p. 140)	"Teacher identity involves the intersection of race, gender, and professional roles, influencing how teachers perceive themselves and are perceived by others."
McAdams (2001, p. 110)	"Teacher identity is constructed through life stories that integrate past experiences, present circumstances, and future aspirations, providing a coherent sense of self within the teaching profession."
Gee (2001, p. 105)	"Identity is a socially situated phenomenon that is enacted and reproduced through discourse, and teacher identity specifically involves the commitments and practices that define teachers in their professional roles."
Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, (2004, p. 115)	"Teacher identity is constructed through the ongoing interplay of personal beliefs, professional practices, and the sociocultural contexts in which teachers operate."

Table 2.2. [Continue]

Definitions of 'teacher identity'

Day and Gu, 2010, p. 450)	"Resilient teachers develop a strong professional identity that enables them to adapt to changing educational contexts and overcome challenges effectively."
Zeichner and Liston, (2013, p. 60)	"Reflective teaching practices contribute significantly to the continuous evolution of teacher identity, allowing educators to align their personal and professional selves." (Zeichner & Liston, 2013, p. 60)
Lundberg, (2020, p. 150)	"Teacher identity plays a crucial role in fostering resilience and adaptability in response to global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic."

It is noticeable that the definition of 'teacher identity' has undergone significant changes and evolution, which in turn can show its complexity. Shulman (1986) laid the foundation of teacher identity by introducing the concept of "pedagogical content knowledge". He emphasized that an effective teacher not only needs to know the subject very well but also needs to be able to convey it effectively to students. This perspective highlighted the importance of both content expertise and pedagogical skill as the key features of a teacher's professional identity. Giroux (1988) combined intellectual and ethical dimensions and positions teachers as critical agents who are responsible for developing critical thinking and promoting social justice in the classroom. In this way, the role of a teacher is not merely a transmitter of knowledge but also an ethical leader and an intellectual who influences and causes societal changes. Crenshaw (1989) applied 'intersectionality' to teacher identity to explore how multiple social identities interconnect to shape a teacher's professional experiences and self-perceptions. The author acknowledged the complexity of teacher identity and concluded that teachers go through various identities that can influence their interactions within educational settings.

Later, there was a shift to narratives to understand teacher identity since scholars like McAdams (2001) believed that life stories play a key role in teacher identity formation. They suggested that understanding one's professional self is closely related to their personal stories, prior experiences, current circumstances, and future aims, therefore he emphasized the importance of storytelling and self-reflection. Gee (2001) argued that identity is socially situated, and individuals perform it through discourse and their professional practices. According to Gee, teachers form their identity through interactions and communications within their professional communities, emphasizing the role of

language and social context in identity formation. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) studied the relationship between teacher identity and teacher efficacy and proposed that teachers' beliefs and experiences influence the way they see their efficacy and connections within their context. They believed that teacher identity is linked to teaching effectiveness and student achievement, thus emphasizing the practical implications of identity formation. Beijaard et al. (2004) introduced a framework and claimed that there is an interplay between teachers' personal beliefs, professional practices, and broader contexts. They strongly claimed that teacher identity is not stable but develops through their continuous engagement with stakeholders.

The concept of context is vital here since, according to Miller (2009), the theoretical movement in the field of identity had started to involve not only psychological processes but also social processes that are contextualized. In other words, the answer to the question of "Who am I?" might not directly be related to either psychological or sociological factors, but both. MacLure (1993) also claimed that teachers can "explain, justify and make sense of themselves concerning others, and to the world at large" (p. 311). This means that they can shape their ideas of their beings, their place in society, and the groups they are members of (Bullough, 1997; Yazan, 2018). Lasky (2004) believed that teacher identity involves beliefs, emotions, and professional narratives, influencing teachers' self-perception and their roles within educational settings. Grossman et al. (2009) suggested that teacher identity includes the combination of personal values, beliefs, professional experiences, and responsibilities that can result in a resilient self-perception of a teacher. They argued that personal and professional identities must be aligned to foster teacher resilience and efficacy. One can notice how easily teachers get affected by their internal and external world; to make it even more complex, Zembylas (2003) thought the concept of teacher identity was messy because it is shaped by social interactions and power relations; he believed that identity is directly related to what we know about ourselves, our relations to others, and the context we are in, the majority of which people cannot talk about.

Cohen (2010) also highlighted the importance of educational policies in how teachers perceive themselves as professionals. Day and Gu (2010) explored the way resilient teachers form strong professional identities so that they can adapt to changing educational contexts and overcome challenges. Furthermore, Zeichner and Liston (2013) emphasized

the importance of reflective teaching practices in teacher identity formation, so which allows teachers to align their personal and professional selves. Lundberg (2020) argued that teacher identity plays a significant role in promoting resilience in response to challenges.

Considering all the existing definitions of teacher identity Yazan (2018) outlined the main commonalities among them regarding teacher identity: (a) It is about teachers' perceptions about themselves; (b) it involves expectations of others and social positioning; (c) it is dynamic; (d) it is (re)constructed in social contexts and interactions; (e) it evolves through teachers' involvement and investment in their profession. By reviewing all the existing definitions, Miller (2009) also presents the common keywords in all the existing definitions as "relational, negotiated, constructed, enacted, transforming, and transitional" (p.184). Hanna et al. (2019) also reviewed twenty studies done around teacher identity and reported that the main components of teacher identity are: self-image (how individuals perceive themselves as teachers), motivation, commitment, self-efficacy, task perception, and job satisfaction. According to Beijaard et al. (2004), many of the studies on teacher identity have been conducted by referring to the fields of philosophy, psychology, and sociology. However, Miller (2009) claimed that new definitions of teacher identity entail that we look at the concept more individually and in a more complex way, considering the context, contradiction, and conflict where teachers are challenged by their background, social membership, and attitude. The idea is that teachers develop their identity by negotiating these challenges.

2.5 Conceptual Framework of Teachers' Identity by Yazan (2018)

Yazan (2018) offered a conceptual framework that illustrates the multifaceted nature of teacher identity. The framework emphasizes the interplay between personal, professional, and contextual factors, revealing how they continuously shape and reshape a teacher's professional self-perception within educational settings. Personal factors are foundational to the conceptual framework that includes the attributes and experiences that teachers bring to their occupation, such as their core beliefs and values about teaching and learning, which influence their teaching approaches. For example, a teacher who values constructivism might believe in student-centered activities that foster exploration and critical thinking. Teachers make instructional decisions that align with their educational philosophies, thus shaping their exclusive teaching styles. Teachers' prior educational

experiences, cultural contexts, and personal challenges affect how they relate to their students and subject matter. For example, if a teacher has had academic challenges, they may develop empathetic strategies to support students who have similar difficulties.

Moreover, Yazan (2018) highlighted the importance of self-perception in teacher identity. In other words, how teachers see their strengths, weaknesses, and professional goals has a direct impact on their confidence and approach to teaching. Self-perception also affects teachers' willingness to adopt new teaching methods, engage in reflective practices, and interact with colleagues and students. He believed that teachers who have a positive self-image can be more resilient and flexible with challenges.

Other personal factors that are very important are motivation and the passion to teach. Intrinsic motivation can foster professional commitment. The teachers who have professional passion would seek innovative ways to boost student learning. The personal factors involve teacher cognition, biography, and emotion. Teacher cognition refers strongly to teachers' decisions, their problem-solving skills, their practical knowledge, and teachers' theories of teaching (Burns & Richards, 2009). Teacher cognition describes personal and unseen aspects of teaching that can affect their practices and their professional development (Borg, 2019). Borg (2009) argued that teaching is not merely a matter of applying knowledge or skills but is more complex and involves the issues of contexts, teachers' goals, and overall, it is about teachers' ways of teaching; he related the field of teacher cognition to those mental aspects of teachers that cannot be observed.

Early studies of teacher cognition were mostly based on information-processing models that explain the predictable mental responses to various stimuli happening during the lessons, but more recent studies relate teacher cognition to their self-image, self-perception, and future goals, so it can be said that the more they experience in the teaching contexts through participation and interactions the more they will modify what they believe and value, in other words, their cognition, and their cognition, in turn, changes their identity and vice versa (Borg, 2003), so in this way, teachers' cognition acts as a basis for their identity development.

Borg (2019), argued that although cognition deals with the mind, one needs to go beyond that to understand the term teacher cognition, where he referred to the teachers' personal, sociocultural, and historical dimensions of lives and called for attention to how teachers' feelings and attitudes are being shaped by their process of becoming and developing as a

teacher, in other words, teacher cognition studies should not only focus on discrete aspects of individual teachers' cognitions but they should also try to consider and interpret those findings in teachers' immediate contexts that shape their lives. Öztürk and Gürbüz (2017) conducted a study on three in-service teachers to find out the main resources for cognition construction, the findings revealed that teachers' previous language learning experiences, their pre-service training, their experiences as novice teachers, and institutional atmosphere were among the main sources of cognition construction, which proved the importance of teacher learning, discussed in the previous section, in both cognition and identity development.

The way teachers think and construct their identities is also influenced by their biographical changes, since they select, organize, and evaluate their social experiences based on their importance to them (Hirsch, 1993). An autobiography is related to how someone reorganizes their experiences, which entails that the autobiographical memory is not merely a simple chronology of past events but rather is based on patterns of how events are remembered and arranged according to their perceived importance (Hirsch, 1993).

Biography, which refers to teachers' prior experiences, influences the way they see teaching and learning. Borg (2009) also emphasized the role of previous experiences, as he believed that when teachers gain initial views, they will be affected by them for a long period, and the new input they receive will always be in interaction with them. This entails that prior experiences and stories act as mediators in the process of identity development.

The findings of Ellis (2004) also showed that multilingual teachers use their experiences of learning English as a resource in classrooms. Pennington and Richards (2016) argued that the identity projection of a teacher is partly also a projection of their identity that is based on the teacher's autobiography. By identifying the teachers' personalities as the starting point, Sugrue (1997) claimed that their immediate and extended family and political context, teaching traditions, and cultural prototypes also have outstanding roles in identity construction. Malderez et al. (2007) showed that relationships that are a major part of past experiences have a significant impact on teaching identity. They listed these relationships between the participants and their teachers, colleagues in school, and family members and friends.

Yazan (2017) related teachers' biographies to their existing self-image and argues that

language teachers (re)construct their identities according to the teacher education programs they have participated in. They need to study their biographies if we want to understand their beliefs and the way they (re)construct their identities. The third personal factor in teacher identity is teacher emotions, which are the very basis of constructing oneself, that is, organized socially. In this way, teacher emotions are known as challenges that are experienced by teachers through their professional development (Song, 2018). Gedik and Ortactepe (2017) categorized the research in this field into two groups: 1) teaching and learning involve both skills and emotional labor, and 2) leaving a teaching career, and poor education quality causes negative emotions and is influenced by them.

Scholars such as Nias (1996) and Zembylas (2003) highlighted the importance of studying teachers' emotional experiences since teaching is not only a technical practice but is also related to the personal stories of the teachers. Zembylas (2003) mentioned two views on teachers' emotions: (1) emotion is not only personal or psychological but also social and political since either experiencing or expressing one's emotions is ruled by social convictions which differ throughout different cultures, in other words, the construction and communication of emotions depend so much on social relationships; therefore understanding teachers' cognition necessitates studying their emotions; (2) he rejected the dichotomy of reason vs. emotion and believes that emotions cannot be separated from rationality. According to Zembylas (2003), emotion exists in discursive practice, and if its expressions become productive, any individual will turn up to be a socially specific person; however, power relations permit an individual to feel some emotions and prohibit others; how teachers communicate their emotions is related to their self-perceptions.

Teachers can undergo various vulnerabilities when there is a lack of agency due to their power relationships, and their moral integrity would be compromised the moment they are not respected and valued by their employers, parents, students, and the public (Day, 2011; Gedik & Ortactepe, 2017). That is why Yazan (2018) argued that the interactions that occur between teachers and their colleagues, or supervisors, can define their identity development. Teachers need their supervisors' support, otherwise, their shaping identity will affect the way they respond emotionally to various incidents and how they channel their energy and efforts.

Day (2011) also argued that instabilities and insecurities of the policies and workplaces

put the teachers' identities under stress, so they need to be supported emotionally to be able to construct and develop positive identities since their positive and negative professional identity directly influences their self-efficacy, agency, and job satisfaction, which in turn affect their students. Considering NNESTs, this can be even more important since there is a serious lack of research studying their emotions concerning their socioeconomic and sociopolitical contexts (Song, 2018). Moreover, NNESTs mostly face institutional biases, unfair hiring, assignments, and professional evaluations (Ruecker & Ives, 2015), which cause them to internalize their negative emotions resulting from the questioning of their competence, which might negatively affect their performance.

Song (2018) argued that scholars need to trace NNESTs' emotions and their expressions within their cultural context and avoid analyzing emotions separately and out of context. He suggested that understanding teacher emotions should be incorporated within teacher education programs, so teachers know better how to approach emotional labor and align their emotional responses with their cognitive responses regarding their profession. Professional factors are related to teachers' formal roles and responsibilities in educational settings. According to Yazan (2018), these factors include educational background and training, professional development, pedagogical knowledge and skills, professional community and collaboration, and reflective practice. Professional factors include teacher learning, participation in communities of practice (CoP), and some aspects of teacher cognition.

Teachers' educational background in shaping teacher identity. He argued that teacher training programs that incorporate theoretical knowledge with practical experience offer teachers the necessary teaching skills that can prepare teachers with helpful strategies, classroom management techniques, and a deep understanding of subject matter, all of which contribute to a solid professional identity. Previously, teacher training programs offered only an isolated body of knowledge about language, language learning, and language teaching in a decontextualized way. However, the rise of sociocultural theories criticized it as ignoring teacher candidates' values, beliefs, and memories (Olsen, 2016). Sociocultural studies investigated identity development considering the social contexts (Kayi-Aydar, 2019).

On this basis, Golombek (2003) offered a new definition of teacher learning by referring to teacher candidates as learners, participants, and, most importantly, teachers. It can be

understood that by the start of sociocultural movements, the focus was on teachers themselves as individuals whose identities interact with their learning. Olsen (2016) believed that teacher candidates start the program based on their prior experiences, beliefs, and values about teaching, which in turn shape their interpretation of the learning experience in pre-service teacher education programs. That frame of interpretation, however, will change as candidates participate in the discourses throughout their education program, which will assist them in renewing their self-images as second language teachers (Yazan, 2018).

According to Johnson (2016), the classrooms that student teachers participate in construct the way they perceive themselves, their learners, and the activities they will do in the classroom. Hammerless et al. (2005) also highlighted the importance of these programs since they guide student teachers about the way they look for their professional development and organize their actions. It is through this program that they can change their prior beliefs and reshape them, and develop their agency. The positive or negative effects of these programs mean that teacher educators need to be aware of and care for their students' identity development (Izadinia, 2013).

Based on a study by Levin and He (2008), it was revealed that student teachers are mainly influenced by three factors: (1) their family and educational background, (2) observations and teaching experiences during practicum, and (3) the courses in the education program. Izadinia (2013) also has classified the influencing factors as (1) reflective tasks, such as journals, group discussions, and portfolios, (2) learning communities like collaborative tasks, (3) context or setting, and (4) experiences of prior learning. Yazan (2018) also highlighted the importance of continuous professional development and argues that non-stop training and learning enable teachers to improve their skills, stay updated, and adapt to innovations. This continuous training includes participation in workshops, conferences, and additional education to boost professional identity. Mastery of subject matter and teaching methodologies also increases teachers' confidence.

Another professional factor includes the professional community and collaboration with them. Connecting with colleagues through team teaching, mentoring, and participation in professional learning communities provides a sense of belonging. Collaboration encourages the exchange of ideas, mutual support, and collective problem-solving, which in turn can strengthen teacher identity.

Similarly, Wenger (1999) claimed that identity is constructed and reconstructed through teachers' participation in their communities. Regarding communities of practice, there are two scopes in (re)construction of identity, which Wenger (1999) named participation and non-participation; the former is related to one's membership in specific social communities where one is active, and the latter refers to the activities that one rejects and resists, in other words, an individual defines their identity not only by what they are but also with what they are not. Wenger (1999) believed that an individual attempts to understand both the social system and their position in it by participating in community practices. Regarding identification, Wenger (1999) named three modes of membership in a community: active participation (engagement), identity construction even without being active (imagination), and adapting one's practices to the nature of the community (alignment). This argument has sociocultural perspectives underneath it, which support the conception that teachers' cognition develops as they participate in those communities and yearn to be members of them (Yazan, 2018). In other words, a community of practice consists of individuals who shape their identity while they participate actively in group activities, and their goal is to contribute to the group, through which individuals (re)construct their identities (Wenger et al., 2002).

Clarke (2008) mentioned three dimensions of CoP: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire, where mutual engagement is related to teachers' participation in practice with negotiated meaning. Castañeda (2011) referred to this as teacher candidates' inclusion or exclusion from certain communities. The joint enterprise refers to 'the focus of an activity that links members of a CoP' (Clarke, 2008, p. 31). Joint enterprise can be negotiations between mentors or supervisors and teachers or teacher candidates about planning the lessons, or assessment approaches, where, according to Castañeda (2011), they might agree or disagree. Wenger (1999) referred to the shared repertoire as the ways of creating resources to negotiate meaning, such as meeting routines of the members, and how they arrange the events. It can be said that by actively participating in these routine activities in a community, the teacher's identity evolves. Teachers' membership and their identity are shaped through their participation as they experiment and reshape their identities through their discourses (Yazan, 2018).

Miller (2009) claimed that teachers in general and teacher candidates, in particular, want to be recognized and endorsed. This was also supported by Wenger (1999), who

highlighted the importance of ‘what others think or say about us’ (p.151). He also argued that several layers of experience result in shaping the identity, which also directs the teachers to construct their perception of the world and make their choices regarding their contribution to the community. So, as Castañeda (2011) claimed, participation, negotiation, and interaction within a community are constructive elements of identity, and through them, teachers experience what teaching is about. Clarke (2008) also argued that teachers’ stories, their learning experiences, existing tensions in the institutions they work in, their interactions with broader communities, and their professional goals are all involved in teachers' identity shaping through their memberships.

Contextual factors refer to the external causes that influence teacher identity, which can be beyond a teacher's control. Yazan (2018) outlined contextual factors such as workplace culture, policy and curriculum, expectations of society, student profiles, classroom dynamics, and technological trends. The existing culture of the school, including management style, values, and expectations, is highly important and can affect teachers. If the administration is supportive and encourages innovation, provides resources, and assists the professional growth of the teachers, there will be a positive development of identity. On the other hand, environments with high stress can hinder teacher identity through burnout and disempower teachers.

Yazan (2018) believed educational policies and forced curricula can either support or restrain teachers. He discussed how teachers often need to adapt their personal educational beliefs to external expectations, which can be challenging if there is a disparity between the two. Societal expectations are also significant in shaping teacher identity. Perceptions of the teaching profession and cultural norms affect how teachers view their roles and responsibilities. If education is important, teachers may be more respected with better job satisfaction and professional identity. Student characteristics and their learning abilities influence teaching approaches. Teachers often adapt their identities to meet the needs of their students.

Technological and educational trends are other contextual factors that impact teacher identity. Technology advancement and the creation of innovative educational practices require teachers to continuously update their skills and adapt their teaching methods. Integrating innovative technologies into the classroom can change teachers' roles as facilitators of digital literacy. Accepting these trends is essential for teachers if they want

to be relevant and effective. Gee (2000) related identity to the context in a very direct way and claims that identity can be recognized as a certain person in a certain context; therefore, it should be studied in that particular context. Context influences how people perceive themselves and the way they act out in various settings (Li, 2011).

Salinas (2017) classified classroom context into two main categories: emotional and cognitive dimensions. Emotional dimensions consist of: (1) the bond between teacher and student, (2) the work atmosphere, and (3) the sense of appreciation; the cognitive dimension includes the need for professional development, like in-service training opportunities. Macro context, on the other hand, relates to the demands of the authorities in the fields of (1) bureaucracy, (2) new programs, (3) national testing, (4) teacher assessment, and (5) supervision.

As an example, Pennington and Richards (2016) mentioned the case where, under pressure to cover content or prepare the students for an exam, a teacher might give priority to a more formal teacher identity rather than their authentic one. Another example can be shown by Eslamdoost et al. (2020), which showed the conflicts that teachers of EFL undergo in Iran since the 1979 Revolution changed the textbooks, curricula, and educational goals due to its being Islamic, and institutions had to follow national policies on how to teach English, which triggered dissatisfaction, and dilemmas regarding the policies and local culture and preferred practices; as a result, Iranian teachers have had to negotiate their professional identity. Researchers highlighted the importance of the fact that here the context is different from the background, but as an interlocutor (Freeman, 2013; Varghese et al., 2005).

Pennington and Richards (2016) argued that identity does not have a predetermined nature; rather, it is related to social context and its requirements that restrict behaviors and allow others. For this reason, Yazan (2018) emphasized the importance of sociocultural factors and argued that they should be critically examined if we aim to understand how teacher identity is developed. Teachers learn about themselves and their overall professional goals and create their self-image in the contexts of the institutions, their personal stories, and their interpersonal contexts, which consequently will shape what they value in teaching, so they direct their energy towards what seems to be important for them (Pennington & Richards, 2016).

Some scholars refer to teacher training courses and programs as vital contexts for identity

shaping as well, since they believe that they are related to the macro contexts in which language teaching occurs (Singh & Richards, 2006). Part of identity and self-image shaping happens when student teachers are exposed to and accordingly properly or resist what they have learned in those programs, such as curriculum, testing, and student needs (Yazan, 2018).

2.6 Positioning Theory and Teacher Identity

Positioning Theory focuses on an individual's position, its relation to others, and deciding on its being acceptable or not (Denen, 2011). Position on its own refers to the 'rights and duties' in a particular setting; when an individual claims their rights and accepts particular duties, they are performing the act of positioning to support or challenge the sense of identity, so confirmation of positioning and categorization by the individuals themselves or others gets impacted by the relation between self-positioning and identity (Denen, 2011; Harre, 2011). Davies and Harre (1990) developed positioning theory to indicate how identity development happens through discourse and explain how individuals shape themselves and the world around them (Green et al., 2020). According to Davies and Harre (1990), Positioning Theory has three principles: storyline, position, and act; if one of these principles gets modified, so will the others because they are interlinked.

Positions are a group of norms and are fluid because different individuals perform or reject those norms uniquely based on their context, backgrounds, and goals, in other words, the position is a cluster of rights and duties, and for its formation traditions are essential because it is the customs that authorize a person to say or do something (Davies & Harre, 1990). Acts or speech acts seem important if they are accepted socially and are meaningful in the context they are performed in other words for an action to be significant it needs to be related to the environment; speech acts can develop storylines where there will be new positions and different speech acts, it can be said that storyline refers to different enactments of individuals in various contexts when that individual position others or themselves and simultaneously are being positioned by others, (Davies & Harre, 1990).

Storylines are developed by the social meaning of the individuals' actions and speeches and create a narrative based on which it can be implied if an individual has a right or a duty, and if they do, how they need to act (Davies & Harre, 1990). Positioning Theory has been mostly used in multidisciplinary research that explores people's narratives where

they position themselves and others, through discursive interactions, and has roots in poststructuralism (Harre & Langenhove, 1999; Riyanti, 2017). According to Vetter et al. (2013), since interactions of any nature generate social phenomena, we can learn how an individual constructs their identity and enacts it through interactions by using positioning theory. This is the reason Kayi-Aydar (2015) introduces positioning theory as an efficient tool to uncover an individual's multiple identities shaped through interactions.

According to Langenhove (2017), Positioning Theory makes it possible to analyze any social situation by because there are plenty of norms that are pre-determined through which positions are assigned to the individuals and these assigned positions might entitle them to certain powers and rights or taken from them; however, individuals can also approve, disapprove or transform those positions. Bamberg (1997) identified Positioning Theory as a framework to capture the shaping and performing identities through narratives and believes in the fluid nature of positions in the narratives that are constructed dynamically, and the subject attempts to negotiate them through storytelling. Bamberg (1997) offered a few key analytical strategies to understand identity construction. Examining the main components of a narrative including, plot, events, and roles, the way the stories are being told (performing acts), (re)negotiation of the positions by the subject, self, and other positionings are among those that Bamberg (1997) believed can help a researcher to capture the identities in a story.

Bamberg (2020) introduced narrative analysis as a qualitative study and highlighted the interactive nature of the story, which has contextual and relational aspects. He emphasized the need to analyze narratives within their interactive context and proposed three aspects of identity navigation that are central to character construction in the story: sameness/difference, agency/passivity, and continuity/change. These illustrate how narrators position the characters, themselves regarding their interlocutors, and the dominant social discourses (Bamberg, 2020). According to Bamberg (2020), the concept of the interlocutor is particularly important as it shows the interactive nature of storytelling and the way that the narrator does the act of self-positioning regarding them. An interlocutor can be as broad as the people that the narrator interacts with within the story, such as students or colleagues that might have been mentioned or even given implications (Bamberg, 2020). Bamberg (2020) outlined three layers of narrative analysis: (1) the way they position characters concerning one another, (2) the way they

position themselves concerning their interlocutors, and (3) the way they position themselves within the broad context to show who they think they are to both themselves and their interlocutors. Bamberg (2020) attempted to go beyond textual analysis to include relational aspects of the narratives, to fully understand the identity depiction in narratives.

2.7 Identity and Native-Speakerism

Nativism in ELT, the preference for NSs/NESTs, and the existing linguistic imperialism have led to the marginalization of NNSs/NNESTs and an identity crisis (Fang, 2018). Due to this crisis, scholars try to problematize the NS idealization and focus on it in terms of identity and interaction within ELT, they seek to direct attention to understanding and studying the identity and positioning of the individuals in the local-global culture, linguistic, professional, and geographical discourse (Yazan & Rudolph, 2018). Kayi-Aydar (2019) reviewed the historical development of the literature around language teacher identity and identified three phases: focusing on linguistic identities can be seen in the early studies to find out how NNESTs negotiate their identities in the instructional contexts that dichotomize NNSs/NSs, and how this distinction affects their professional identities as language teachers. The scholars mostly refer to Pennycook (1999) and Kumaravadivelu (2003) to discuss the issues of capitalism and neo-imperialism, which empower the native speakers of Western countries (Kayi-aydar, 2019).

The second phase of the studies has been influenced by sociocultural theory and the communities of practice framework and has studied the development of identity in language teachers' social contexts, by using the concept of social turn (Kayi-Aydar, 2019). The social turn in language teacher education mentions that in language teacher education, learning does not happen by linguistic or SLA theories, but by co-constructing the knowledge which is a dialogic process that happens by participation in unique sociocultural contexts; teacher candidates shape their identities and self-perceptions during the teacher training programs and later in the schools that they start to work (Johnson, 2016).

The third phase of the development in this field has been impacted by poststructuralism, which emphasizes the plural nature of language teacher identity that is complex due to ethnic, racial, and cultural identities, and the concepts of agency and emotions are more prevalent in these studies (Kayi-Aydar, 2019). Naming the positioning of the scholars and

their used theories and frameworks even in a more detailed way it is noticed that they have approached the concept of teacher identity by using various theoretical frameworks: communities of practice (Tusi, 2007; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Liu & Xu, 2011), critical theory (Amin, 1997, Brutt-Griffler & Samimi, 1999; Pavlenko, 2003; Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Ajai, 2011; Abednia, 2012; Huang & Varghese, 2015; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Decost & Norton, 2017), Positioning Theory (Trent, 2012), Sociocultural Theory (Vélez-Rendón, 2010), and Bakhtinian Theory (Ilieva, 2010).

Despite using various theoretical frameworks in their studies, most of the mentioned studies highlighted the importance of teacher education programs in empowering and raising the awareness of the NNESTs (Brutt-Griffler & Samimi, 1999; Pavlenko, 2003; Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Ilieva, 2010 Vélez-Rendón, 2010; Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Liu & Xu, 2011; Abednia, 2012). The positive effect of courses in training programs was proved to be true by Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1997), who criticized the discourse of teacher education programs that establish colonialism, which consequently disempowers future teachers. They suggested that education should establish a context to empower learners through problem-solving while they are involved in dialogue to raise their awareness of the existing inequality.

Pavlenko (2003) also claimed that the traditional discourse of linguistic competence places teacher students as either NS or NNS. He argued that educators need to use the option of multicompetence instead. This exposure to a better discourse can happen during specific critical courses during the programs, as Golmbek and Jordan (2005) examined the effect of empowering discourse by designing a reading course for their study, and the results show that teacher candidates had much better self-perceptions that helped them shift their identities.

Velez-Rendón (2010) and Ilieva (2010) also argued that teacher education programs do not support minority teacher candidates in generating a professional agency. They believed that by applying critical approaches, and poststructuralist and sociocultural theories, the educators should orient their students into their new communities of practice by practicing scaffolding and supporting them in shaping professional identities.

Ilieva (2010) believed that identity development processes are dialogical and are co-constructed in a sociocultural and political context. The way teachers get empowered or disempowered by the discourse that teacher candidates are exposed to in their training

programs can also be seen in Liu and Xu (2011), who explored the way EFL teachers negotiate their identities to adapt to a transformative curriculum. They support the idea of culturally appropriate pedagogy, rather than a Western one, since the teachers might feel disempowered and ignored.

Kanno and Stuart (2011) also reported that training programs helped their participants identify themselves as teachers through the learning-in-practice period in practicum. Another study that explored the influence of critical instruction in teacher training programs on language teachers' professional identity is Abednia (2012), by asking the participants to write self-reflective journals and conducting class discussions, they found that there were three main changes in participants' professional identities: from accepting dominant ideologies to critical autonomy, from no orientation to a critical orientation of teaching, and a linguistic and technical view to an educational view of second language education.

Kayi-Aydar (2015) explored the interaction among one's multiple identities and agency. In the study, it is discussed how power differences, due to being a non-native, caused the participant's withdrawal from her profession as a language teacher. Kayi-Aydar (2015) highlighted the role of equal emphasis not only on speaking in teacher education programs but also on other abilities as well. The researcher also believed that educators should raise the awareness of the candidates on their multilingual abilities rather than focusing on the NS/NNS dichotomy. They also argue that teacher educators can assist preservice teachers in reaching a more complex understanding of themselves and the distribution of power. Tsui (2007), Ajayi (2011), and Huang and Varghese (2015) focused on the participants' previous experiences and histories to understand their identity. Ajayi (2011) showed the impact of race, ethnicity, cultural backgrounds, and teachers' personal histories on their professional identities and roles.

Hunag and Varghese (2015) also focused on teachers' previous experiences in their personal and professional lives. They claimed that teachers have other co-existing identities, such as gender, ethnicity, and language learning, that challenge the non-fluid NES/NNES dichotomy. They claimed that the personalized teacher identity, which is mediated by their previous experiences, considers the roles that a teacher personalizes and acts on through their interactions, particularly with their students. Whereas the institutionalized teacher identity is based on tensions in one's professional life because of

larger structural influences, the main purpose of the study was to present the fact that non-native teachers have composite identities that directly influence their classroom practices and their interactions with their students.

In a different study, Amin (1997) studied the cases of five female participants who were non-native teachers of the English language to find out their students' perspectives on a good language teacher. The results of the interviews showed that an ideal ESL teacher is a white NS, which made the teachers feel disempowered and "othered" since these perceptions hinder students from investing in their learning English, and consequently get discouraged. As a result, Amin (1997) observed that NNESTs must try harder to prove themselves as competent teachers as their NS colleagues are. According to Amin (1997), this disempowerment is rooted in the ownership of the English language by NSs as well as TESOL pedagogy that highlights the importance of native speakers. Unlike Amin (1997), Trent (2012) focused on NSs and explored the discursive positioning of NESTs in Hong Kong based on discourse theory. It tried to examine self-positioning and the process of identity formation. After conducting interviews with each participant, the results suggested that NESTs are being challenged as NNESTs question their teaching experiences, and their self-positioning was not validated, which led them to reposition themselves.

Focusing on the unequal workplace conditions between NESTs/NNESTs, Fang (2018) investigated the context at a university that includes Chinese, native, and non-native teachers. According to the researcher, despite having the same workload and conditions, non-native teachers and native teachers do not have similar working requirements or payments. He highlighted the marginalization of NNESTs by illustrating how they are favored less than NESTs. He focused on the concept of teacher identity and discussed the identity negotiations of NNESTs at a university in their own country. The results of the study showed a discrepancy in the way NNESTs and NEST teachers were treated, which is believed to hinder teachers from experiencing translinguistic and transcultural identity negotiation. Regarding NNESTs' identity, they were concerned about the fact that the English language is owned by the natives and is being ignored as a global language. This ownership empowers the native English-speaking teachers, which also affects non-native teachers' professional identity, as they cannot make their voices heard. However, it is quite thought-provoking that the participant teachers mentioned that they had not

experienced the countries of the inner circle as they do in the Chinese context. This was also found in Hunag (2014), as he conducted a study in a secondary school in the US and found that both students and administrators did not downgrade non-native teachers; on the other hand, they appreciated their English fluency, which made those teachers confident.

2.8. Studies on Native-Speakerism and Teacher Identity

The impact of native-speakerism on language teacher identity has been widely studied, revealing different results that all show the challenges faced by NNESTs and their contributions to ELT. Multiple studies have focused on discrimination and NNESTs' marginalization in their professional setting. Ramjattan (2019) interviewed ten NNEST in Toronto to investigate the racist microaggressions that they had faced at their workplace and to find out the strategies they had adopted for resistance. The participants were interviewed twice; at the first interview, they were asked to talk about their backgrounds, and at the second one, their experiences were explored. The findings revealed that the participants had undergone three types of microaggressions: questioning their nativeness, subtle implications of their being foreigners to English, and behavioral indications labeling them as invaders. To overcome these adversities, the participants either decided to conform and to 'whiten' themselves by changing their names or try to transform the belief that white teachers could teach English better, by participating in workshops and upgrading their skills and knowledge.

While Ramjattan (2019) focused on external racialized microaggressions Widodo, et al. (2020) explored how NNESTs themselves negotiate and reshape their professional identities as professional English teachers by using their narratives. Their participants were Chinese-speaking English teachers. The researchers examined the participants' previous experiences as NNEST. The data was collected through unstructured interviews and reflective writings focusing on their identity construction. The findings revealed some levels of marginalization, particularly self-marginalization of NNESTs and lower payments compared to NESTs, along with students' preference to be more in contact with NESTs rather than NNESTs. All the participants had struggles with their legitimacy when they had NEST colleagues in their workplace. The participants kept challenging Native-speakerism and continuously tried to update their self-perception to a competent teacher who has made great contributions to their school.

Building on identity exploration by Widodo et al. (2020), Lawrence and Nagashima (2020), one a native English-speaking and the other a Japanese-speaking English teacher, studied teacher identity and the issue of race and ethnicity by applying a poststructuralist framework since they believed that the poststructuralist approach could offer a deeper understanding of language teaching. There were 11-hour discussions by both researchers throughout three months, and during this period, they reviewed and reflected on the copy of their discussions by writing reflective journals and observing each other's classes. Through juxtaposing their narratives, they found that the categories of race and being a native speaker or not had influenced their identities as professionals and consequently their practices. They highlighted the role of the sociocultural contexts in which positioning occurs through discourse and divided the context into two categories: macro and micro. Considering the macro level, Lawrence, not being Japanese, was ascribed as being irresponsible by the institutions due to his L1 language and appearance, while Nagashima had the opposite experience. On the micro-level, however, Lawrence received more legitimacy, while Nagashima, as a bilingual, was seen as a native speaker by some students because she had been studying and living in the United States of America and received similar but not equal legitimacy to that of Lawrence. However, the students who had traveled abroad perceived her as less competent.

While Lawrence and Nagashima (2020) highlighted the role of sociocultural positioning within classroom and institutional contexts, Treki (2020) scrutinized the recruitment websites by conducting a qualitative research method so that the teachers could share their experiences regarding recruitment and marginalization and their effects on the participants' self-image and their professional identity. To have three sources of data collection, the researcher applied a critical discourse analysis regarding online recruitment websites and the employment requirements of local universities to find out the extent of discrimination in recruitment. The second source of data collection was the interviews focusing on the participants' experiences with job opportunities, their emotions on being labeled as NNEST, their perceptions of nativism, and tools of empowerment, and the third source included summaries of the participants' recommended actions to make changes. The first phase of data collection revealed that nearly all the universities had shown a preference for native speakers, whether explicitly or implicitly, and the word "native" was the tenth most frequent word in the job advertisements. The second source of the data revealed that the participants attributed good job opportunities to being a native

speaker, and according to their experiences, the full-time job positions were mostly offered to native speakers. It was also reported that the administrations and the parents had explicitly articulated their preference for NEST. The issue of racism was shown to lead the participants to frustration and demotivation. It is reported that to compensate for this labeling, the participants had been obliged to take more certificates and apply for doctorate studies to make their resumes bolder. None of the participants had the hope of positive and constructive changes on this matter; however, they believed that awareness-raising by conducting more research and holding conferences could help.

Similarly, the participants of other studies reported their frustration and lack of motivation. Domingo (2022) examined the hiring criteria of thirty-one Asian websites recruiting teachers by applying content analysis of the written texts, images, and videos. The results of which revealed that the most prevalent ideal teacher image was depicted as “white and American”. The researcher argued that teacher training programs need to prepare their students for the existing job market and raise their awareness of these discriminations. Panaligan and Curran (2022) conducted interviews with eleven Filipino online English teachers. The participants of the study experienced discrimination against them, such as lower pay, being rejected due to their accents, and being judged by the students. Some of the participants reported that they had been asked to give false information about their nationalities to their students and to present themselves as Westerners. As a result, the participants had lower self-esteem due to their accents. Mahboob (2010) studied NNESTs in the United States and found that they often faced discrimination due to their accent, and their teaching abilities were questioned. Mahboob (2010) highlighted how these discriminations marginalize NNESTs and affect their professional identities, career opportunities, and self-perceptions. They suggested strategies to empower NNESTs, such as mentorship, professional development, and supportive networks.

Other studies have gone beyond individual discriminations and have critically interrogated the ideological underpinnings of native-speakerism, particularly its entanglement with race, whiteness, and postcolonial legacies in ELT. Kubota and Lin (2009) argued that native-speakerism intersects with racialized notions of authenticity, affecting NNESTs of non-White backgrounds. They argued that native-speakerism idealizes NESTs and is closely tied to racism that privileges whiteness as the standard of

linguistic and cultural authenticity. This intersection of race and language boosts discrimination and limits the professional opportunities of NNESTs and damages their self-perception. The authors emphasized that there is a need for critical reflection and changes within educational institutions to diminish native-speakerism. Nur et al. (2022) focused on the experiences of NNESTs in Indonesia and examined how native-speakerism and institutional marginalization affect their professional identity. They highlighted four key areas of inequality: dissatisfaction with payment, gender, and race-based promotional materials, the need for decolonizing ELT, and NNESTs' authenticity as English teachers. The study used case studies to be the voice of NNESTs and introduced "glocal pedagogy" to empower NNESTs by aligning teaching practices with local cultural contexts.

Following the calls for local approaches, some studies have investigated the factors that sustain native-speakerism. Wright (2022) used the lens of Bourdieu's concepts of capital and symbolic violence to investigate the symbolic boundaries and inequalities between NESTs and NNESTs in TESOL. This study highlighted how native-speakerism preserves hierarchical structures by favoring the cultural and linguistic capital of NESTs, while subtly marginalizing NNESTs. He highlighted symbolic violence as an often neglected but powerful process by which these inequalities are reproduced, both institutionally and socially. The study analyzed native-speakerism and called against these structural barriers that disadvantage NNESTs in hiring practices, professional development, and cultural recognition. Boonsuk, et al. (2023) is a thorough exploration of hiring practices in ELT, focusing on how native-speakerism influences employment decisions in countries like Thailand and China. The study showed that job advertisements explicitly or implicitly ask for NESTs. The authors asked for the integration of Global English language Teaching (GELT) to challenge native-speakerism and raise awareness of linguistic diversity and an inclusive approach to teacher recruitment in ELT.

Similarly, Maganaka (2023) studied the role of native-speakerism in ELT in hiring practices through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). The study revealed there are biases that not only devalue NNESTs but also spread racial and linguistic hierarchies. The study illustrated how discrimination in employment is trying to be disguised by using competency and proficiency-based terms, while in fact, race and nativeness are the key factors. Bebars (2024) investigated the influence of native-speakerism on the employment

opportunities of NNETs in Egypt. The study is based on the perceptions of NNETs working in Cairo, where hiring policies are in favor of NESTs. The researcher highlighted the way these biases impact NNETs' job opportunities and lead to professional marginalization. Conducting interviews and job advertisement analysis revealed that many employers explicitly or implicitly prioritize native speakers. The study called for policy reforms and inclusivity in the hiring of ELT.

Extending this critique, Raza and Eslami (2024) explored the intersection of native-speakerism, institutional racism, and the professional challenges faced by NNETs in TESOL. The study revealed that NNETs often encounter racism, which questions their knowledge and contributions. The outcome of this institutional racism is the barriers that limit their career enhancement. They argued that these challenges influence NNETs' professional identity as their expertise and cultural knowledge get devalued. The study also reported NNETs' resilience, who require inclusivity and equity in TESOL. They believed systemic changes are needed to value the diverse contributions of NNETs.

Calling for institutional changes, Zhong (2024) explored the discrimination in TESOL and its effect on the professional identity construction of NNETs. The study was conducted to find out how inequalities impact Asian NNETs' professional authenticity. The findings of the study revealed the experience of high anxiety due to perceived inadequacies in linguistic proficiency. However, the participants reduced these experiences by recognizing their strengths, promoting their teaching credibility, and raising intercultural awareness. The author concluded that despite discrimination, NNETs actively constructed their professional identities and attempted to get legitimacy through self-reflection, constant learning, and adapting their teaching practices to meet the demands of a multicultural classroom.

To continue investigating individual agencies, some researchers have highlighted how NNETs actively reconstruct their professional identities through self-awareness and narrative reflection. Vitanova (2018) applied narrative inquiry to examine how race impacts NNETs' agency, revealing that teachers resist stereotyping through self-awareness practices. The participants composed personal narratives focusing on their life stories, professional trajectories, and their challenges. Using narratives and reflective journals, they noticed how societal norms and stereotypes influenced their identities as NNETs. The study showed that the factor of agency can change through various contexts

and environments and suggests that this issue needs to be addressed in pre-service and in-service teacher training programs.

Building on the theme of reconstruction of the self, Gómez-Vásquez and Guerrero Nieto (2018) explored the subjectivity of four NNESTs by analyzing their narratives in the context of Colombia, where foreigners are recruited to assist in teaching English. The data was collected through narratives and narrative interviews. Based on the gained results, the researchers claimed that the issue of subjectivity and empowerment is entangled, which means that there are various factors affecting the (re)construction of “self,” and these factors do not follow any pattern. The results highlighted the way the participants had changed their beliefs throughout the years, for example, one of the participants had regained their subjectivity by starting to disrespect NESTs and seeing themselves as superior. The researchers argued that NNESTs should not be seen as passive actors and should be part of the policymaking processes, and the inequality between NNESTs and NESTs should be deeply resolved. To deeply resolve this issue, researchers emphasized the importance of teacher training programs where teacher identity starts to shape.

Emphasizing Identity reconstruction, Yazan (2019) studied the effectiveness of auto-ethnography as an activity for teacher candidates in providing them with an opportunity to work on their identities by designing an auto-ethnographic narrative course. Throughout the semester, the teacher candidates worked on and analyzed their experiences of learning, using, and teaching languages. The data was collected through feedback sessions, discussions, concept maps, rubric co-construction, and presentations. The data analysis of the study, however, focused only on one of the participants who had developed a different accent from other family members due to the family’s moving situation. The researcher highlighted the values that are assigned to various accents and the fact that there is indeed a hierarchy of accents that is socially constructed, which values some accents over others. The researcher argued that teacher candidates will be able to get empowered and assert their agency if they have the chance and space to narrate their stories, since they can explore the way their identities are (re)constructed by ideological borders and communities. They can also be more critically aware of the language positioning ideology within the contexts they are teaching.

Critical examination of teacher training programs also aligns with the concerns of how broader discourses might contribute to native-speakerism. Lowe and Lawrence (2018)

investigated the language teacher training program curriculum to find out if there was any idealization of native-speakerism in it. They applied duo-ethnography, where the researchers used their life histories to achieve a deep understanding of the problem. Both researchers engaged in multiple online discussions. They attempted to find out if their beliefs regarding native-speakerism had been influenced by their training programs. During one of the conversations, the researchers claimed that native-speakerism was established for them during the teacher training programs (CELTA, TESOL) discourses, for example, the trainers promised that they would find jobs easily since they were native, or by over-emphasizing native-like pronunciation and grammar knowledge. They also presented the way Western methodologies of teaching were emphasized over the local ones.

Canagarajah (1999) shifted the lens to local contexts and emphasized that NNESTs need to exercise their agency by adapting teaching practices to suit their local setting. He challenged the superiority of Western pedagogical methods and native speakers. The researcher conducted an ethnographic study in Sri Lanka and showed how NNESTs actively negotiate and transform imported teaching methodologies to align with their cultural values and educational needs. The NNESTs are reported as not passive but are engaged actively in a dynamic process of professional identity construction. They are reported to critically assess the relevance of imported approaches, change them if necessary, and integrate local pedagogies. The researcher argued that those NNESTs assert their professional self-sufficiency and contribute to the development of a more contextually proper education.

Exploring agency and localized pedagogy, Reis (2011) explored the identity development of NNESTs through reflective practices in teacher education programs and showed that they help NNESTs in navigating their professional challenges so that they can build confidence as a result. The researcher argued that NNESTs need to be engaged in activities like journaling, self-assessment, and collaborative discussions. The study showed that reflection allowed teachers to critically analyze their beliefs, experiences, and the societal norms influencing their professional identities. The NNESTs could recognize and value their unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds and could reconstruct their professional identities, shifting from seeing themselves as incompetent to individuals with strengths and contributions to ELT.

While reflective practices support identity reconstruction, Faez (2011) highlighted how NNESTs who recognize and value their bilingualism develop their self-efficacy and found that when NNESTs embrace their bilingualism, they use their own language learning experiences to connect with students. This connection boosts a more empathetic and supportive classroom environment, and NNESTs view their bilingualism as an asset rather than a limitation; thus, they become more confident. Faez (2011) suggested that NNESTs need to welcome their bilingual identities.

In addition to individual empowerment through bilingualism, Kiczkowiak and Lowe (2019) conducted a duo ethnographic study to examine how personal experiences regarding native-speakerism influence teachers' identities and professional practices in ELT. One of the authors was a NEST and the other a NNEST, and together engaged in reflective dialogues to examine and compare their journeys within the ELT. They found out that native-speakerism affected their self-perceptions, employment opportunities, and relationships with students and colleagues. The non-native author shared their experiences regarding discrimination, such as being overlooked for job opportunities and being questioned about linguistic competence, whereas the native author reflected on undeserved privileges and the expectations that native speakers encounter. The study showed the complexities of native-speakerism not only as an external bias but also as an internalized issue that forms teachers' identities.

A group of studies has focused on teacher training programs. Kamhi-Stein (2016) collected perceptions on NNESTs in ELT. She gathered all the contributions offered by NNESTs around the world who shared their personal experiences, challenges, and accomplishments within teacher education and professional development contexts. The NNESTs emphasized strategies to manage professional challenges presented by native-speakerism, such as developing pedagogical skills, linguistic proficiency, and professional confidence. The study emphasized the importance of mentorship and professional networks in supporting NNESTs. By creating relationships with experienced teachers and peers, NNESTs can access guidance and resources and gain validation. Kamhi-Stein (2016) underscored the important role of teacher training programs and mentorship in helping NNESTs regarding their professional identities.

Similarly, Llorca (2005) is a collection of research studies and personal narratives that explored the experiences of NNESTs across various educational contexts. The

contributions include themes like professional identity formation, self-perception, and NNESTs' challenges. Llurda (2005) highlighted how teacher training programs can support NNESTs by addressing their specific needs and using their unique strengths. It advocated for curricula that validate the contributions of NNESTs and emphasized the importance of teacher training environments that promote confidence, pedagogical skill development, and professional growth among NNESTs.

Expanding this focus on supportive environments, Matsuda (2001) explored the underlying forces of autonomy and collaboration in teacher education by examining the practice of journal sharing between NESTs and NNESTs. The study highlighted how collaborative reflection can connect teachers when they engage in journal sharing and discuss their teaching experiences and challenges. This activity caused mutual understanding and respect, thus NNESTs gained confidence and asserted their professional identities, and NESTs became aware of the biases associated with native-speakerism. The study showed that a collaborative environment can encourage teachers to learn from one another and enhance their professional development. The findings revealed the importance of creating supportive and collaborative programs for teacher training.

While Matsuda (2001) highlighted the benefits of collaborative reflection, Rodriguez-Mojica, et al. (2020) emphasized the systemic barriers experienced by non-white preservice teachers to investigate the obstacles they face. The results of this qualitative study showed that the participants underwent an experience of feeling invisible and facing stereotyping. Findings showed how these challenges had affected their career development and feelings of belonging. The study called for a fundamental change in Teacher Training programs to create a supportive and inclusive environment for the teacher candidates.

Nabilla and Sutrisno (2023) explored NNESTs' identity construction using narrative inquiry and the Bilingual Identity Negotiation Framework (BINF). They attempted to find out how factors like language competence, educational background, and institutional discourse influence their identity negotiation. The authors identified factors such as language competence, educational background, and participation in a CoP that were influencing her identity construction. The participant navigated her role through her colleagues and other NNESTs. Moreover, her attempts to improve her language skills had

a significant role in her professional development.

Building on systemic challenges, Ershadi et al. (2024) applied an ecological-post-structural lens to examine the impact of native speakerism on the professional identity and agency of NNESTs. The study focused on the experiences of fifteen Iranian NNESTs and found three main themes: marginalization, spreading inequality by school policymakers, and pedagogy of doubt. The study contributed to the literature by showing how native speakerism goes beyond geographical borders and influences NNESTs' professional identity even in a non-Western context like Iran. It emphasized how stakeholders, particularly school policymakers, contribute to inequalities and question the legitimacy of NNESTs. The study showed how native-speakerism functions, even if there is no physical presence of any NESTs. Even stakeholders' prioritizing native-like pronunciation causes NNESTs to doubt their abilities and feel inadequate.

These findings reflect that native-speakerism exists at multiple levels and beyond individual attitudes, which includes institutional policies and societal beliefs. De Costa and Norton (2017) argued that language teacher and learner investment need to be analyzed at micro (classroom), meso (school), and macro (societal) levels. They asserted that a multilayered perspective could provide a deeper understanding of the ways that native-speakerism influences teachers' identity (re)construction where NESTS may not even be present, but their power exist symbolically.

Continuing studies on systemic exclusion, Nigar et al. (2024) studied the interplay between professional identity construction and socio-cultural discrimination faced by NNESTs in Australia. The study showed how factors such as race, language proficiency, and nationality contribute to the marginalization of NNESTs and their employment. The authors argued that native-speakerism shapes employment practices and leads to systemic exclusion of NNESTs. However, the study reported NNESTs' resilience despite dominant discourses.

Some studies have focused on ELF as a way to enhance NNEST identity construction. For instance, Bayyurt and Sifakis (2020) used a self-education program for ELT teachers to become aware of ELF. The researchers designed workshops including reflective activities to assist teachers in recognizing the variety of English, its diversity, and their beliefs about English language teaching. The authors introduced ELF to the participants and led discussions to find ways to explore ELF incorporation in the lessons. As a result,

the teachers developed a greater awareness of the realities of English use around the world and the dominance of native-speaker standards. They felt more empowered and confident in their teaching since they embraced linguistic diversity.

Galloway and Rose (2021) is also another study that advocated for including the concept of Global Englishes into ELT classrooms and emphasized that teacher training programs must prepare teachers for the multilingual and multicultural realities of English use. They similarly argued that traditional approaches focused on native-speaker norms and are inadequate for the current global context. They provided practical strategies and suggested including exposure to various Englishes by including authentic listening materials, encouraging critical discussions about native-speakerism, and teaching communication strategies that prioritize effective international communication over native-like accuracy.

Expanding the discussion of global Englishes, Kemaloglu-Er and Lowe (2023) explored the effect of World Englishes and ELF on teacher identity through a duo ethnographic approach. The authors, one of whom is a NEST and the other a NNEST, compare their journeys to find out the way WE and ELF have formed their teaching identities and practices. The results emphasize that there should be an understanding of WE and ELF for language teachers since it can affect their self-perception and their classroom practices. The authors believe that global variations of English should be incorporated into teachers' environments.

Building on inclusive approaches in ELT, Cenoz and Gorter (2017) explored the impact of translanguaging in English lessons and argued that strategic use of L1 can enhance both teachers' and students' confidence. They opposed the monolingual ideology and believed that it was time for more inclusive teaching approaches. The study found that translanguaging teachers are often warned about using L1, which is rooted in native-speakerism ideologies, however, multilingual strategies are found to be more effective. Similarly, Hasrina, Aziz, and Fitriani (2018), Tiwari (2024) found that despite all discouragements, L1 needs to be used strategically to reduce both students' and teachers' anxiety.

Stakeholders' and students' perceptions of NNESTs and NESTs have huge impacts on native-speakerism. Colmenero and Lasagabaster (2024) focused on the fact that how NESTs and NNESTs were being perceived by their students and their parents by

conducting a mixed-methods approach for 507 participants, who were secondary and high school students, their parents, and the teachers. The survey was designed to find out the number of preferences for NESTs and NNESTs. As the results showed, there is a general preference for NESTs in all groups of participants. However, the data illustrated specific attributes of NESTs and NNESTs being preferred. For example, NESTs were preferred for their language proficiency, while NNESTs were preferred for their ability to empathize with students. The authors believed that native-speakerism was still playing a key role in how stakeholders perceived ELT. They called for inclusivity of both NESTs and NNESTs and reassessment of stakeholders' biases.

Deng et al. (2024) explored 470 Chinese students' perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs and how these perceptions correlate with the psychological well-being of NNESTs. According to the results, the students had positive perceptions of both groups of teachers. While NESTs were described as more approachable, enthusiastic, and better at managing class discussions, NNESTs were better at professionalism, subject knowledge, and classroom management. Moreover, a positive correlation was identified between students' motivation and their perceptions of both NESTs and NNESTs. Students with higher motivation were reported to favor NESTs. The study also reports that native-speakerism harms NNESTs' psychological well-being and job satisfaction. The study advocated for awareness raising of the damages native-speakerism causes and suggested implementing motivational strategies and co-teaching models to enhance teacher-student relationships and improve teacher well-being.

Similarly, Le Ngoc, (2023) examined Vietnamese university students' perceptions of NESTs and non-native NNESTs in pre-sessional English courses. The study applied the Competency Framework for Teachers of English for Academic Purposes (CFTEAP) to evaluate perceptions. The findings show students generally were positive towards both groups. NESTs were valued for their language knowledge, and NNESTs for their understanding of students' needs and being relatable. The study did not report any strong preference for either group among university students. García (2023) explored the perceptions of students, parents, and administrators regarding NESTs and NNESTs and reported that students generally admired NESTs for their fluency, pronunciation, and cultural knowledge, and NNESTs for their empathy, grammar teaching, and learning experiences. Parents tended to prefer NESTs for advanced instruction, and administrators

go for NESTs in hiring practices.

Mourchid et al. (2023) conducted a similar study in Morocco and focused on 76 Moroccan EFL students' attitudes and 43 EFL teachers' self-perceptions. Findings showed that NESTs are generally preferred by many students, however, there seems to be a growing positive attitude towards NNESTs for their understanding of students' learning difficulties. The authors reported that native-speakerism still influences hiring practices and perceptions in ELT.

A similar study was done by Purba and Wahyuni (2024), who examined student perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs in an Indonesian university. The study explored how students evaluated their educators' effectiveness based on their teaching style, language proficiency, and teaching approaches. They found that students preferred NESTs for communicative skills and NNESTs for their structured teaching and grammar knowledge. NNESTs would use more technology and interactive fun tasks. However, NNESTs continuously faced biases and could not compete with NESTs, who were assumed to be naturally "better" at teaching.

The studies mentioned in this section collectively reveal how native-speakerism can significantly impact NNESTs' professional identities, employment opportunities, and experiences in ELT. They highlight NNESTs' struggles with racism, microaggressions, and self-marginalization (Kubota & Lin, 2009; Ramjattan, 2019; Widodo et al., 2020; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020; Raza & Eslami, 2024). There are reports on existing hiring biases in favor of NESTs, either explicitly or implicitly, NNESTs' lower pay and fewer job opportunities (Treki, 2020; Domingo, 2022; Panaligan & Curran, 2022; Bebars, 2024). The perceptions of students, parents, and administrators regarding NESTs and NNESTs also reveal the continuing native-speakerism biases, despite NNESTs' strengths such as empathy and classroom management (Colmenero & Lasagabaster, 2024; García, 2023; Mourchid et al., 2023). Faez (2011), Yazan (2019), and Nabilla & Sutrisno (2023) reflect the NNESTs' active identity negotiation through self-reflection. Wright (2022) and Zhong (2024) report on NNESTs' encounters with symbolic violence and self-doubt and their resilience through enhancing skills. The scholars call for incorporating Global Englishes and ELF into teacher training programs to promote inclusivity (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2020; Galloway & Rose, 2021; Kemaloglu-Er & Lowe, 2023).

2.9 Studies on Nativism and Teacher Identity in Türkiye

Native-speakerism in ELT has been studied in various settings, including Türkiye, where the number of NNESTs is significant. One group of studies examines how teachers perceive themselves and their competency in teaching English. These studies have explored multifaceted ways in which Turkish NNESTs construct their identities through their self-perceptions and navigate the existing tensions regarding their proficiency. Some studies underscore the importance of reflective practices in improving Turkish NNESTs' identity awareness and offer deep insights into NNESTs' inner selves. Ezberci (2005) investigated NESTs' and NNESTs' career perceptions in Istanbul. The focus was on how both groups perceive their career, strengths, and weaknesses. As the results reflected, NESTs and NNESTs had different perceptions. NNESTs tended to view English Language Teaching as a career and highlighted the importance of pedagogical knowledge, like grammar and learning strategies, by referring to their own experiences as language learners. while NESTs saw ELT as a temporary job and focused more on providing authentic language input, such as idiomatic language and pronunciation. NNESTs acknowledged disadvantages related to job opportunities, but NESTs enjoyed better treatment in the job market due to the 'native speaker fallacy'. The authors reported that native-speakerism impacts NNESTs' professional opportunities and status.

Building on this, Erkmen (2010) investigated NNESTs' beliefs on teaching and learning English and focused on how they changed during the first year of teaching. Another aim of the study was to find out the relationship between Turkish NNESTs' beliefs and classroom practices. Erkmen (2010) reported that novice teachers' former learning experiences and teacher education programs affected their primary beliefs about teaching. Over one year, NNESTs' beliefs did not change radically but were restructured. Teachers often experienced discrepancies between their beliefs and classroom practices, due to external forces like the syllabus or classroom management. This study showed that teachers' beliefs could be dynamic, however, they would not be reflected in their practices, specifically considering contextual factors. The study concluded that teacher education programs must address the transition from teacher training to real classroom teaching in a way that novice teachers can feel more well-prepared.

Focusing on self-perception and practice, Sarıkaya (2013) explored the relationship between NNESTs' self-perceptions of their own pronunciation and pronunciation

teaching practices. The research also investigated factors like teaching experience, having a native English-speaking teacher, and the amount of time spent in English-speaking countries. The findings revealed a negative relationship between the variables, which means that if they had a NES instructor and they had spent time in English-speaking countries, they would rate their pronunciation lower. Moreover, there was no significant relationship between NNESTs' self-perceptions of their pronunciation and their teaching practices. They would actively teach pronunciation despite their self-doubts.

Extending the discussion on self-perception and its implications, Bozoğlan (2014) explored NNESTs' self-perception and other perceptions. The author examined how NNESTs perceived themselves, how learners perceived them, and how NNESTs believed learners perceived them. The study also explored the linguistic and pedagogical competencies of NESTs and NNESTs from the perspectives of both learners and teachers. The findings showed that NNESTs were believed to be pedagogically strong but linguistically weak, and NESTs are linguistically strong but pedagogically weak. The study also reported gaps between NNESTs' self-perceptions, learners' perceptions, and NNESTs' beliefs about how learners perceive them. Students' perceptions of NNESTs were reported to be lower than both the teachers' self-perceptions and their meta-perceptions, which reflects the fact that NNESTs could be falsely positive about how learners perceive them regarding their language proficiency and teaching behavior. The study argued that continuous undervaluation of NNESTs impacts their professional identity, and teacher training programs need to focus on enhancing their confidence. The study also promoted the collaboration between NESTs and NNESTs. Merç (2015) studied the impact of anxiety on Turkish pre-service NNESTs' self-confidence during practicum and found that anxiety significantly decreases their self-efficacy, which implies that Turkish NNESTs' professional identities can be hindered by their anxiety because the more worries they get about their abilities, the less capable they feel as professionals.

Continuing with research from the Turkish context, Mutlu and Ortaçtepe (2016) conducted a study to find out the relationship between being considered a native speaker teacher and their identity. The study focused on the identity (re)construction of five Turkish NNESTs who had been to the USA to teach Turkish. The study attempted to find out what it was like for them to experience a shift from a non-native to a native teacher and how it impacted their self-image and self-efficacy. The data were gathered through

questionnaires, written journals, and interviews. The findings showed an improvement in participants' self-confidence since they had received more respect as Native teachers of Turkish compared with being non-native teachers of English. The participants also were reported to have a feeling of empowerment since, as Native teachers, they had the agency of choosing the topics and the allocated time to them, resulting in their better teaching abilities, which in turn increased their motivation to teach a language. These shifts enabled the participants to (re)negotiate their identity as language teachers. The researcher argued that the findings of the study confirm that the concept of identity can be multiple, fluid, and context-dependent.

Similarly, Çağatay (2021) investigated the professional identity and bilingual identity of NNESTs in Türkiye, with a focus on pronunciation and intonation. It investigated how NNESTs perceived their pronunciation skills, how their identity as NNEST influenced their teaching practices, and the scope of these factors might cause a potential identity crisis. The results of the study showed that most of the NNESTs (96%) checked the new vocabulary pronunciation before the lesson, which reflects the sense of responsibility of the teachers. Half of the participants claimed that NNESTs should have native-like accents. The participants believed that teaching pronunciation and intonation is important, but only 55% attempted to make their students sound like native speakers. Sixty-eight percent of the teachers preferred using an American English accent, and 70% stated that a noticeable accent would suffice. Seventy-six percent of the NNESTs claimed to feel flattered when they received compliments on having a native-like accent. NNESTs who had MA or PhD degrees were more careful about their pronunciation and attempted to sound native-like accents. The study concluded that NNESTs in Türkiye face an identity crisis related to pronunciation and intonation. NNESTs try to sound native-like and struggle with the limitations of their non-native status.

In a peculiar qualitative study, Kimsesiz (2023) explored the self-perceptions and professional identity of 40 NNESTs from different contexts in Turkey by using metaphors and emojis to reflect their perceptions and emotions. The participants were supposed to select metaphors and emojis to express their perceived professional identities. The metaphors were classified into various categories. The findings show that the NNESTs in Türkiye highly perceive their identity. Some of the gained categories were 'nurturer', 'challenger', and 'inspirer'.

Following the studies of Turkish NNESTs' self-perceptions and their internal negotiations about their linguistic abilities, teaching abilities, and self-confidence, some studies examined the internal factors that might influence Turkish NNESTs' teacher identity formation. Kavrayıcı (2020) explored the crucial factors in teacher identity formation, mainly during their initial experiences of their training. The study revealed that intrinsic personal attributes like passion for teaching, patience, and genuine affection for children were the main contributors to pre-service teachers' identity development. The study showed that internal factors can outweigh external factors in identity formation. The study calls for more authentic, reflective, and experience-based teacher training programs to support Turkish NNESTs' professional identities.

Another group of research focused on students' perceptions, offering insights into how they evaluate NESTs and NNESTs. These studies reveal recurring patterns in which students associate NESTs with fluency and Turkish NNESTs with empathy, grammar teaching, and their abilities in understanding their linguistic background. Üstünlüoğlu (2007) explored Turkish university students' perceptions of both NESTs and NNESTs. The study showed that NESTs were often favored for their linguistic proficiency, and NNESTs for their empathy and understanding of learning a foreign language. The study also reported that native-speakerism influenced the teacher-student relationship in Turkish university classrooms. Students idealized NESTs and, as a result, NNESTs faced challenges in claiming their professional identity.

Complementing previous research on NNESTs' self-perception, Meşincigiller (2014) explored secondary school students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs in Türkiye in EFL settings. The study focused on learning English, students' preferred teacher type, and the reasons for these preferences. The findings of the study showed that students were positive towards both groups of teachers and preferred their collaboration in the lessons since they have different strengths. NESTs were preferred for teaching oral skills and vocabulary, and NNESTs were preferred for grammar instruction and their knowledge of L1. Students believed that both NESTs and NNESTs were competent teachers, however, they rated NNESTs higher regarding pedagogical skills. They are preferred for explaining complex grammar rules, classroom management, and mutual cultural background. The study highlighted the benefits of exposure to both groups of teachers.

In line with studies comparing perception of NESTs and NNESTs, Skliar (2014)

investigated the perceptions of NESTs and NNESTs about their roles as English teachers in Türkiye. Another aim of the study was to find out students' attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs in two universities in Ankara. Both NESTs and NNESTs were reported to have multifaceted views about their roles. While NESTs emphasized their proficiency in English, authentic pronunciation, and cultural knowledge, NNESTs highlighted their understanding of the learning process, grammar knowledge, and the ability to empathize with students. NNESTs felt marginalized due to NESTs' preference for hiring and classroom authority. Students perceived both groups of teachers as having strengths. NESTs were preferred for their oral skills, pronunciation, and cultural knowledge, and NNESTs for grammar instruction and usage of Turkish (L1) when needed. The study also reported that students' English level influenced their preferences. Overall, NEST and NNEST collaboration were reported as the ideal approach.

Building on comparative perspectives, Ersoy (2020) studied the existing NEST preference among Turkish students in Turkey, focusing on their teaching skills. The setting of the research was a university that has both NNESTs and NESTs; the findings reveal that the students perceived NNESTs as more skillful in teaching grammar and writing because they could understand the mindset of Turkish students, while they preferred NESTs for listening and speaking skills due to their pronunciation. The author advocated for the pedagogical collaboration of NNESTs and NESTs.

Similarly, Sezgin and Önal (2021) explored the preparatory students and NNESTs' perception of NNESTs and NESTs. The findings revealed that both students and instructors believed that NESTs were better at teaching pronunciation and speaking, and NNESTs were better at teaching grammar. Students were satisfied with the way NNESTs compared Turkish and English and found it helpful for understanding difficult grammatical concepts. Students identified NNESTs as more encouraging, supportive, and empathetic. NESTs were reported to be better in terms of language fluency, and NNESTs were better at being approachable and empathetic. NESTs were also considered better in teaching culture, while NNESTs were perceived as more effective at exam preparation. The authors highlighted the benefits of collaboration and the necessity of challenging the biases of native-speakerism.

Expanding comparative studies, Yıldırım and Önal (2022) conducted a study to develop a reliable and valid scale to measure university preparatory students' perceptions of

NNESTs and NESTs. The scale would explore students' perceptions of speaking, listening, cultural knowledge, interaction with learners, and classroom language. Another goal of the study was to compare NESTs and NNESTs as perceived by students. As the results show, NESTs were believed to be better at teaching speaking, listening skills, and improving students' fluency. NNESTs were reported to be more effective in teaching grammar and improving students' accuracy. NESTs were also valued for their cultural knowledge and their integration into their lessons. NNESTs were perceived as more empathetic and supportive. Students with lower English proficiency levels favored NNESTs due to structured language support. However, students with higher proficiency (B1-B2) preferred NESTs. Students who had experience with NESTs were more positive about NESTs' teaching abilities.

In a more recent study, Cengiz and Mede (2024) explored native speakerism in the context of ELT, with a focus on English language variations and cultural considerations. They conducted research at a private university in Istanbul, which involved 171 preparatory students and seventy instructors. The data was gathered through surveys and semi-structured interviews with a group of instructors. They reported that instructors were positive toward teaching diverse cultures and Englishes. Another finding shows that both instructors and students often perceived NESTs as superior in areas like pronunciation and fluency, and NNESTs were valued for their empathy and understanding of learning difficulties. The authors argued that native speakerism needs to be addressed in ELT through more inclusive pedagogies that are beyond the standard American and British models.

A few studies examined native-speakerism biases in hiring practices and Turkish NNESTs' challenges. Coşkun (2013) investigated the NNESTs' reactions to a nationwide project to hire 40,000 NESTs. The author wanted to find out whether the pre-service teachers were supporting the project or not. Moreover, the study tried to understand how such a project would affect the job market for NNESTs in Türkiye. As the findings showed, most of the participants were against the project due to employment and pedagogical concerns, and salary inequality. The supporters of the project believed that NESTs could improve students' speaking and pronunciation through exposure to native English. The study highlighted the possibility of tension between NESTs and NNESTs.

Origo (2016) investigated the hiring practices of employers in Türkiye regarding NESTs

and NNESTs. Fifteen job postings were analyzed, and 66.6% of them were reported to have requested NESTs. The study also mentioned that the majority of institutions preferred NESTs. 71.4% of the employers believed that hiring NESTs was very important, particularly those from countries like the UK, USA, and Canada. Moreover, employers acknowledged that being a native speaker does not equal teaching competence, but NESTs were more marketable.

Expanding the research on hiring practices, Ünlü (2022) conducted a qualitative study by exploring online job advertisements presented on Turkish websites on two different dates in 2021 to study the effect of native-speakerism on current employment status in Turkey. Through the content analysis, two main themes were found: preference for native speakers and professional and personal qualities. The first theme covered requirements such as nationality and accent, while the second theme covered categories like educational level, certificates, and experience. According to the researcher, the studied advertisements supported nativism by referring to countries where it is traditionally believed that there is an ownership of the English language. The researcher defined the second theme as ‘latent native-speakerism’, where the dichotomy of NEST/NNEST is more hidden than the first one, for example, mentioning expertise such as native-like or native-level language speakers. The researcher argued that in Turkey, there is still a tendency for native speakers as English language teachers, which is the result of neoliberal policies in education, and thus suggests that there is a need for focusing more on hiring practices of Private institutions to reduce discrimination in employment.

Expanding the implications of native-speakerism in the Turkish educational system, Osoydan (2022) saw native-speakerism as an ideology that attributes superior linguistic and pedagogical qualities to NESTs and investigated how educational and hiring policies mostly favor native speakers, which marginalize NNESTs. She argues that there is a need for reformation of the policies because native-speakerism might result in a curriculum that ignores the linguistic diversity of students in Türkiye and undervalues the NNESTs’ contributions. The author advocated for a more inclusive approach in language education since even learners might get affected by native-speakerism regarding their identity, since they must conform to NEST cultural norms, which in turn would have an impact on their motivation. Osoydan (2022) emphasized equity for all language teachers and called for more research on native-speakerism in language education.

A group of studies focused on how NESTs and Turkish NNESTs differ in their teaching approaches. For example, Mede, Cosgun, and Atay (2017) compared the NESTs and NNESTs techniques for speaking lessons in Preparatory Programs at universities in Türkiye. The study found that NESTs implement collaborative tasks such as pair and group work to boost communication. They also assign students distinct roles and use information-gap and real-life tasks to encourage students to practice speaking. Whereas NNESTs focused more on teacher-student interaction. They prefer to use individualized questioning and prompts along with controlled activities like asking short questions and setting time limits for students to speak. NESTs use more communicative and interactive tasks, while NNESTs use more structured and guided tasks. Moreover, NESTs tend to give real-time feedback, but NNESTs prefer written feedback after the lesson. The study argued the strengths of both NESTs and NNESTs and the benefits of collaboration.

In a similar study, Demir and Özmen (2017) explored NESTs and NNESTs' oral corrective feedback (OCF) in Türkiye. The study focused on the types of errors, the types of OCF used, and the teachers' tolerance towards student errors. As the findings showed, NESTs were more tolerant when it came to errors, and they would focus more on phonological and lexical errors, while NNESTs focused on grammatical errors.

Expanding previous studies, Kemaloglu-Er (2017) investigated the perceptions of university students in Türkiye regarding NESTs and NNESTs, focusing on in-class teaching roles, in-class management roles, in-class communication skills, and individual qualities. The findings showed that there was no significant difference between NESTs and NNESTs regarding in-class teaching roles and in-class management roles. However, considering in-class communication skills, NESTs were perceived to be better, more engaging, and more enjoyable. They were considered more respectful, energetic, cheerful, and easygoing. Considering individual qualities, NESTs again were rated higher in being trustworthy, consistent, and tolerant.

Demir (2017) explored the challenges faced by NESTs and NNESTs in an EFL setting in Türkiye. The author also examined the teachers' coping mechanisms. As the findings show, both groups of teachers faced attitudinal problems with students, like a lack of motivation, disinterest, and reluctance to participate in speaking activities. It was reported that NESTs were more tolerant when students used Turkish (L1), but NNESTs discouraged L1 use in the classroom. Another difficulty of NESTs was students' extreme

reliance on teachers and not being autonomous. They also struggled with class management due to their cultural backgrounds. This study implies that sharing cultural backgrounds can be a big asset, particularly in class management.

Focusing on institutional challenges, Bada and Özkan (2019) investigated NNESTs' perceptions regarding the native/non-native teacher dichotomy. The study aimed to explore how NNESTs perceive their roles compared to NESTs, their attitudes towards culture in language education, and the institutional treatment of NESTs and NNESTs. Most NNESTs believed in the importance of integrating both local and target cultures in lessons and would often refer to Turkish culture in class to assert their identity and increase teacher-student connection. The findings also show that NNESTs perceived themselves as more effective in teaching grammar and classroom management, and in knowledge of students' challenges. They believed that their own experience allowed them to teach language learning strategies more effectively. NNESTs also see NESTs as better at teaching communication skills, especially pronunciation and the use of idiomatic expressions. They acknowledged that students often preferred NESTs for speaking lessons. The study reported that students believed NESTs were more fun and acknowledged NNESTs' grammar knowledge and detailed feedback in Turkish. Parents and administrators favored NESTs and perceived them as more competent in teaching English. NNESTs reported workload imbalance since they were assigned more teaching hours and responsibilities, which made them feel frustrated. They also felt undervalued for their contributions.

The last group of research examined broader institutional and policy frameworks that are important in shaping Turkish NNESTs' professional identities. Öztürk and Aydın (2019) critically examined the shortcomings of English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) in Türkiye and argue that the theoretical courses in those programs cannot support Turkish NNESTs in the real-life classroom practices. They emphasized the need for reformations that would result in Turkish NNESTs' preparation for the realities of teaching in Türkiye, for example, more practice-oriented curricula and a support system to empower Turkish NNESTs in their contexts.

Karakaş and Aydın (2021) investigated the concept of “ELF” among Turkish NNESTs and found out that they had internalized native-speaker norms and believed that L1 should be avoided, despite its potential benefits. The authors suggested that native-speakerism

ideologies have deeply affected Turkish NNESTs, so they feel pressure to align with native-like teaching approaches. The study also found that external pressures, such as institutional policies, also made them hesitate to use L1 in the classrooms. The study highlighted the need for increasing Turkish NNESTs' awareness regarding ELF through reflective activities.

Expanding the research on teacher education programs, Merç (2024) studied the practicum of Turkish pre-service NNESTs and focused on their challenges. The data were gathered from around 160 pre-service teachers, twenty-two teacher educators, and thirty-nine supervising teachers' reflective reports and focus group interviews. The findings revealed that pre-service Turkish NNESTs had problems related to their teaching skills, classroom management, and student engagement. The study suggested that the practicum should provide more qualified practical practices for Turkish pre-service NNESTs as a solution to their problems.

Similarly, Uştuk and Yazan (2024) designed a practicum that included Language teacher identity as its central principle. The study highlighted the dynamic nature of identity formation that forms through social interactions and agency. The research investigated the experiences of two teacher candidates through their identity-oriented activities, including diary creation and reflective discussions. The investigation showed participants' experiences of identity tensions and their management. Implementing their beliefs and previous experiences, both participants showed struggles with the dominant grammar-oriented teaching methods in Türkiye as well as the authoritative discourses challenging their identities, which led to either conformation or resistance to these. The study showed how engaging teacher candidates in dialogic activities laid the ground for teacher candidates' empowerment so that they could refine their professional identities.

The outlined studies have explored the impact of native-speakerism on NNESTs, examining aspects like professional identity, self-perceptions, and challenges due to discrimination. In Türkiye, some research has compared NESTs and NNESTs from students' perspectives or focused on teaching practices. However, few studies have specifically investigated how Turkish NNESTs perceive competent language teachers, how they view NESTs, and how native-speakerism affects their professional identity (re)construction, especially using frameworks like Yazan's (2018) and positioning theory. This study fills that gap by examining these perceptions and experiences among Turkish

NNESTs, providing a nuanced understanding of their professional identity development in response to native-speakerism within Türkiye's unique educational context.

In summary, the reviewed literature reflects the complexities of being an NNEST along with the inequalities that exist globally and locally. Although native-speakerism continues to exist, the outlined studies show how NNESTs resist, reshape their identities, and assert their agency through reflection, adaptation, and community support. This study builds on these insights by focusing on Turkish NNESTs' lived experiences in various institutional settings.



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a multiple-case design and narrative inquiry to examine the professional identity (re)construction of Turkish NNESTs in universities, private language schools, and K-12 institutions. It explores their narratives, perceptions of competent language teachers, experiences with NESTs, and encounters with discrimination and biases to understand their complex identities. The aim is to see how they navigate and reshape their professional identities in response to native-speakerism. The study's research questions necessitate a design that can capture subjective narratives across different educational settings, which justifies the adoption of multiple case studies and narrative inquiry approaches. Details on the design and methodology will be provided in the following sections.

3.1.1 Philosophical underpinning and overall approach of the study

The global literature on Native-speakerism signifies a preference for native speakers as language teachers at schools, universities, and language schools. As a country in need of economic, social, political, and educational growth, English plays a particularly important role in Türkiye, where there are NESTs hired to work as language teachers. However, the number of Turkish NNESTs is much higher than that of NESTs, so to increase the quality of language education, it is essential to support and empower them to develop a better self-image and professional identity.

To support the NNESTs, it is essential to understand them by studying their perceptions of themselves, their contextual situation, and the challenges they face throughout their careers regarding nativism and its impacts. Moreover, it is important to study how they negotiate their professional identity to overcome those challenges and what external support they might need. The research questions, goals, and data collection tools are reflective of the nature of the current study. They necessitate gathering Turkish NNESTs' perceptions of a competent EFL teacher, themselves, and the power of nativism in influencing their professional identity development in various contexts of private schools, universities, and language schools. The other aim of the study is to find out how Turkish NNESTs negotiate their professional identities regarding the native speaker myth.

Considering the research problem, the goals of the study, and the fact that identity is a

highly complex concept to understand, the current study adopts the philosophical underpinning of interpretivism. Interpretivism acknowledges the subjective and multiple nature of reality and thus resonates with the nature of this study because this study is based on complex human experiences. A paradigm represents a fundamental system of beliefs and a theoretical structure encompassing assumptions related to the nature of reality (ontology), the nature of knowledge (epistemology), methodology, and research techniques that provide the lens through which we perceive the reality of the world (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

Ontology is about understanding one's beliefs about the nature of reality, whether it is singular or multiple, and guiding the researcher in investigating it (Richards & Morse, 2012). Rehman and Alharthi (2016) explained epistemology by linking it to the nature and form of knowledge, the way it is obtained, and how it can be transferred to others; in other words, it guides the researchers to consider if their gained knowledge needs to be objective or subjective. They argued that ontological belief leads researchers to their epistemological assumptions, which means that if they believe in a singular reality, the researcher adopts an objective path to gain knowledge, while the belief in multiple realities leads to subjectivity. Interpretivism does not support the notion of a single reality and roots for multiple realities; it believes that we always mediate reality using our senses, and it has a subjective epistemology (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

It is argued that a researcher cannot be separated from the social phenomenon under study. As there might be various studies on a single phenomenon, there might also be various interpretations, each equally significant. This suggests that there is no universal truth or fact, but rather, everything depends on a particular context (Grix, 2004). Studying the phenomena from the perspective of the participants emphasizes the role of context which leads the researcher to qualitative data collection methods to discover patterns and themes which means that data is not statistical but verbal and is normally obtained through interviews with different levels of structure, note taking, observations, document analysis, or journals or diaries (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

As discussed, the current study tries to understand the world through the eyes of its participants which means it is dependent on the context and is constructed by the perspectives of the individuals who are active agents in the social context and create their realities which is dynamic, and this leads the study to have the ontology of the

multifaceted nature of the reality. From interpretivism qualitative research approach is deliberately chosen for this study because it is field-focused and based on specific contexts, and as Denzin and Lincoln (2008) claim, it creates the condition to see the world regarding situated activities with a specific context.

Qualitative studies examine the situation from various perspectives and through different data collection tools because reality can be multifaceted and clear through subjective evidence that illustrates its dynamism (Gumusok, 2020). Qualitative studies align with social constructivism and highlight the idea that individuals are actively engaged in their meaning-making process and their specific context and if a problem is complex and cannot be measured easily due to being multifaceted, there is a need to contact and interact directly with the participants to understand and learn their opinions (Creswell& Creswell, 2017).

Richards and Morse (2012) also recommended the application of qualitative research if the goal is to study the participants within their natural setting as they try to make meaning out of their daily experiences. Biber and Leavy (2010) also supported a qualitative study if the researcher wants to understand and make sense of an issue by listening to others' experiences. Considering these perspectives, a qualitative approach allows for in-depth exploration of the complex subject of professional identity (re) construction of the Turkish NNESTs in the contexts where NESTs are present. To capture individual narratives fully, this study adopted a multiple case study design, which focuses on the detailed examination of each participant's unique story and experience.

3.1.2 Multiple case study design

A multiple-case study design is a research method that involves the in-depth study of multiple cases within a real-world context. In this study, each of the six participants represents a unique case, allowing for detailed exploration of their professional journeys. Treating each participant as a separate case helps to have a cross-case comparison and strengthens the depth and validity of the findings. This approach enables the researcher to identify differences and similarities across cases, which can be useful in examining complex phenomena. Merriam (1998) defines it as a strategy that involves data collection from several cases so that a researcher can understand a phenomenon and find patterns, themes, and variations among the findings.

Stake (2006) emphasized the opportunity of examining several instances to better

understand a phenomenon in various contexts. It makes it possible to look for uniqueness and similarities across cases (Stake, 2006). Simons (2009) and Patton (2015) also argued that this method allows for detailed investigation of each case and eases cross-case comparisons to get a broader understanding of the phenomenon. Creswell and Poth (2018) argued that in a multiple case study, the researcher can explore real-life cases through detailed and in-depth data collection to develop a better understanding of the individual cases and collectively as well, which leads to insights that might go beyond each studied case separately.

Yin (2018) stated that a case study design is appropriate when a researcher attempts to understand how or why a phenomenon happens, specifically when the researcher has little control over the events being studied. In a multiple-case study, each case is treated as a separate experiment, and findings from the different cases are compared or contrasted to gain broader insights (Stake, 2006). The main goal of multiple case studies is to boost the strength of the findings. Baxter and Jack (2008) explained that multiple case studies allow for more diverse data that can improve the external validity of the findings. Through the analysis of various cases, the researcher can understand the contextual factors better.

Yin (2018) believed that one advantage of multiple case design is the fact that it makes it possible to create more convincing and valid conclusions through replication. Each case offers an opportunity to extend new theoretical insights. Multiple case study design offers rich and contextualized insights so that the researcher can explore a phenomenon in various settings. The researcher can benefit from this design since it shows the influence of the context (Stake, 2006).

Comparative analysis is another advantage of multiple case study design, as researchers can compare cases to find patterns, similarities, and differences. Yin (2018) stated that this comparison enhances the strength of the research findings since it shows the results across various contexts. Patton (2015) believed that multiple case study strengthens the credibility of the findings because the study would not rely on only one single case, and this makes the findings more persuasive and enhances the reliability of the study as well (Patton, 2015).

Baxter and Jack (2008) argued that a multiple-case study design is ideal for complex phenomena that can be hard to understand through a single case. Studying multiple cases can help researchers explore the phenomenon from various angles, offering a more

comprehensive view and a deeper understanding of the interaction between varied factors and variables (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Flexibility in data collection is another advantage of this method since researchers can use interviews, observations, document reviews, and other methods, which allows for data triangulation and strengthens the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This study uses a multiple-case study design complemented with a narrative inquiry approach. It examines the professional identity (re)construction of Turkish NNESTs in response to native-speakerism by selecting six individuals working in various contexts, including universities, private language schools, and K-12 schools. The chosen design allows for an in-depth analysis of each teacher's narratives, providing a comprehensive understanding of how they negotiate their identities within different settings.

As Yin (2018) stated, a multiple case study is useful in the investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context where the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are blurred. This design offers multiple advantages in studies about complex social issues that require a deep understanding of individual cases within their specific environments. Multiple case study design enables the researcher to provide rich, contextualized insights into each case while allowing for comparative analysis across cases (Stake, 2006). Therefore, the researcher can identify patterns, themes, and variations in how Turkish NNESTs perceive competent language teaching, interact with NESTs, and respond to challenges posed by native-speakerism.

Cross-case analysis enhances the robustness and credibility of the research findings by highlighting both commonalities and unique experiences among the participants. Through multiple case studies, the study will be able to examine each Turkish NNEST's professional journey. Each participant is studied within their unique context that influences their identity construction and is explored deeply to find out their perceptions of competent teaching, NESTs, challenges faced due to native-speakerism, and identity reconstruction strategies. Therefore, a multiple-case study design is compatible with addressing these questions as it helps to provide detailed reports of each participant's experiences.

Exploring multiple cases and applying various data collection techniques is believed to strengthen the validity of the study through data triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Multiple case study design integrates the concept of various contexts, which is critical for

this study as professional identity construction is deeply influenced by contextual factors, and each context or institution has its policies, cultural norms, and interactions with colleagues and learners (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004).

Multiple case study design acknowledges these influences by situating each participant within their real-life contexts and providing a holistic understanding of how native-speakerism affects Turkish NNESTs. Selvi (2021) showed a need for more in-depth studies focusing on identity construction among NNESTs in Turkey. A multiple case study design allows this study to do it and thus contributes to the existing literature by offering deeper investigations that single-case studies or quantitative methods might overlook. By situating each case within its specific institutional context, the study captures how context shapes the (re) construction of professional identity, which enables a holistic understanding of the participants' experiences with native-speakerism. Using multiple data collection tools, including narrative essays, interviews, and reflective emails, supports data triangulation, which enhances the study's credibility by offering multiple perspectives on participants' identity negotiations.

3.2 Context of the Study

The current study explores the professional experiences of Turkish NNESTs within three primary institutions conducting foreign language education, specifically English, in Türkiye. These institutions include private language learning schools, private schools, and English preparatory schools affiliated with universities. In Foreign Language Schools, university students take a year-long course in English to improve their general English, to continue to study their main courses of the major only if they pass the English exams (Acar, 2015). To prepare English teachers for these contexts, Turkish NNESTs undergo teacher training programs. Student teachers in Türkiye, according to Tunaz (2020), had to go through a two-week working schedule at schools as part of an education program before 1999. However, this program was considered a failure since they could not be prepared enough so they increased it to one year while being observed by mentors, but due to the lack of mentor teachers, the Higher Education Council made university faculties responsible for supervising the teacher candidates with whom the student teachers were supposed to work (Tarman, 2010). Teacher education programs in Türkiye, as well as the curriculum in primary and secondary schools, have undergone reforms to accommodate the American and European systems due to Türkiye's EU candidacy

(Tunaz, 2020). Tunaz (2020) conducted a qualitative study revealing factors that might negatively impact student teachers' identity development. According to the study, compared with the Finnish curricula of educational programs in language teaching, Türkiye offers fewer courses in language and linguistics, literature and culture, and pedagogy. Moreover, Turkish students do not have enough opportunities to practice the theories they have learned. Tunaz (2020) believed that the lack of experience, scaffolding, and autonomy, along with predetermined curriculum, theory, and exam-based education process, affects how student teachers develop their self-image as language teachers, and this leads them to face problems in developing their professional identity.

Regarding the context, career-wise, Türkiye has been a host country for a considerably high number of NESTs, particularly at the private universities, schools, and language institutions to teach or co-teach along with the local teachers (Demir, 2017). Many of the administrators and learners believe that the English language should be taught by native speakers of that language, who are often offered extra benefits like free accommodations, private health insurance, and lower working hours while receiving much higher salaries (Tatar, 2019). The favoring of NESTs and the discrimination against Turkish-speaking EFL teachers harm NNESTs' self-esteem, and so their performance (Celik, 2006).

3.3 Participants of the Study

The research covers the experience of six Turkish NNESTs working as English instructors across three distinct settings. These settings encompassed two important English language learning institutes in Eskisehir, two universities situated in the cities of Bursa and Eskisehir, and two private schools found in Eskisehir.

The study focused on three typical settings in which Turkish NNESTs work in Türkiye, including Language Schools, Universities, and Private Schools. Since state schools generally do not employ NESTs and the focus of the study is on the impact of nativism, the state school setting was excluded. All participants were Turkish nationals and EFL graduates from Türkiye, and each participant was affiliated with a different institution. Participants were equally selected from each setting to ensure the diversity and breadth of the study. As sampling is particularly important in qualitative studies, and considering the nature of this study, purposeful sampling was chosen.

Purposeful sampling is related to the judgment of the researcher of the study who recruits participants based on their judgment of who can provide deep perspectives and data on

the phenomenon under study (Staller, 2021). Shaw and Holland (2014) argued that in qualitative research studies, random sampling is not necessary, as participants, settings, or documents are typically chosen purposefully. Patton (2015) described purposeful sampling as a key element of qualitative studies, supporting its use by stating that it allows researchers to select cases that can provide rich information, thereby facilitating comprehensive answers to the study's questions. He argued that we can get rich information by focusing on the issues that are highly important for the study to get more in-depth insights.

The existing literature discusses the determination of participant numbers in qualitative research. Creswell (2013) recommended a number between twenty and thirty for grounded theory, while only one or two participants for narrative analysis studies. However, Staller (2021) argued that the size of the sample highly depends on the topic of the study, the population it studies, and the research method. Thus, the decision to include six participants in this narrative inquiry is based on the belief that data richness and depth can be achieved by exploring the experiences of a few individuals.

Purposeful sampling has different strategies among which Criterion Sampling was used to select the participants of the present study (Patton, 2015). Criterion Sampling involves selecting participants based on predetermined criteria. The specific criteria for participant selection in this study are as follows: (1) Participants must be Turkish nationals by birth, (2) they should be employed at either a private school, language school, or a Preparatory English School at a university in Turkey, and (3) they must collaborate with NESTs. These criteria were designed to ensure that participants' experiences are relevant to the focus of the study and native-speakerism within typical Turkish contexts. Purposeful selection of teachers who collaborate with NESTs in different settings offers a solid foundation to explore identity dynamics.

The first criterion requires participants to possess Turkish nationality by birth and it can be justified by referring to the main focus of the study which is the professional identity development of Turkish NNESTs in Türkiye; therefore, it attempts to increase the contextual relevance in exploring the relation between nativism and professional identity construction of NNESTs in Türkiye by recruiting participants who have the same national background to capture the unique perspectives and challenges faced by Turkish NNESTs.

The second criterion involves selecting two participants from each setting: language

school, private school (K-12), and university Preparatory school. The second criterion requires participants to be employed at either a private school, a language school, or a Preparatory English School at a university in Türkiye. This is aligned with the research focus because they represent the common environments where both non-native and native teachers collaborate, therefore, it is possible to explore the dynamics of nativism and its impact on the professional identity development of Turkish NNESTs. Moreover, it considers variations in workload, responsibilities, and hiring requirements.

The third criterion emphasizes the role of NESTs, including participants who have native English-speaking colleagues, aligning their professional identity development with the context of nativism, which is highly integral to the study's major aim. This criterion is assumed to provide insights into the challenges and experiences faced by Turkish NNESTs as they work with NEST colleagues, their interactions, and power dynamics, and the level of language proficiency is expected to be relative in shaping professional relationships of Turkish NNESTs. The details of the participants are in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1

Demographic Information of the Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Degree	Teaching Certificate	Context of Teaching	Years of Experience
Behzat	27	Male	B.A.	No	Private School	4
Elif	30	Female	B.A.	No	Language School	10
Gizem	33	Female	B. A	CELTA	University	11
Murat	33	Male	B.A.	CELTA	Private School	11
Selim	32	Male	M.A.	TESOL	University	10
Berke	26	Male	B.A.	NO	Language School	4

The age of the participants ranged between 23 to 34, including both male and female teachers with varied lengths of experience. They have diverse academic qualifications and teaching certifications that offer a comprehensive sample to explore the complex professional identities of Turkish NNESTs in different educational settings. To get

familiar with each participant, the researcher provided an overview of each participant in this study. The forthcoming participant profiles will include information such as demographic details, professional experiences, and collaboration with NESTs. It is important to note that the names of the participants have been kept confidential, and the mentioned names are pseudonyms:

Behzat is a 28-year-old male English teacher who is originally from the Anatolian region of Türkiye. However, currently, he lives and teaches in Eskisehir, Türkiye. He has been working for a prestigious private college for the past three years. Before getting his current position at a private college, he worked for a language school for more than a year. His first position allowed him to develop foundational teaching skills and adapt to different learning environments. He has a degree in English Language Teaching from Anadolu University, an institution known for its comprehensive programs in language education. With four years of teaching experience, Behzat does not have any additional teaching certificates beyond his university degree.

Murat is a 34-year-old male English teacher and has a degree in English Language and Literature from a prestigious university in Türkiye. Murat holds a CELTA certificate from Cambridge University as well. He has 11 years of teaching experience, including working at private schools in Eskisehir, Türkiye. He has been offering one-on-one Turkish language lessons online and is interested in implementing technology in his lessons learning.

Elif is a 30-year-old female English teacher in Eskisehir, Türkiye. She holds a bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching from Anadolu University. During her teaching experience, she has worked in both a language school and a private school in Eskisehir, Türkiye. Currently, Gizem is teaching at a language school in Eskisehir.

Berke is a 23-year-old male English teacher at a private language school in Eskisehir, Türkiye. He has his bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching from Anadolu University. He has three years of experience in both school and language school settings, he is dedicated to advancing his knowledge and skills in English language education. Berke is currently engaged in teaching at a private language school.

Gizem is a 33-year-old female English teacher based in Eskisehir, Türkiye. She serves as a lecturer at a state university's Foreign Languages School. She has obtained her bachelor's Degree in English as a Foreign Language from Hacettepe University and is

actively pursuing her master's in the same field. She has added CELTA certification from Cambridge University to her academic diplomas as well. She has teaching experience at both language schools and private schools in the 11 years of her teaching experience.

Selim is a 32-year-old teacher and has years of English teaching experience at schools, language schools, and higher education institutions. He earned his bachelor's degree from a well-known university in Istanbul and is currently pursuing his Ph.D. Selim also has a teaching certificate from TESOL and is currently a lecturer at the Preparatory English School of a state university in Türkiye.

3.4 Data Collection Tools

In qualitative studies, using various data sources and methods to increase the validity of the results is known as triangulation. As Thurmond (2001, as cited in Aslan, 2020) articulates, triangulation not only increases data accuracy but also eases innovation, leads to outstanding findings, and enhances the understanding of the phenomenon under study. In the context of a narrative inquiry study, there can be different field texts that help the researchers collect data, such as interviews, discussions, conversations, observations, and autobiographical writing (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell, 2002). Recognizing that diverse data sources enhance study validity, this study will employ a multifaceted data collection approach, including a bio-data questionnaire, autobiographical essay, reflective reports, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group interview, all of which are expected to enhance the depth of the study and provide a detailed exploration of its research questions

3.4.1 Biographical data questionnaire

To get comprehensive background information about the participants of the study, a biographical data questionnaire was designed by the researcher to explore the various aspects of the participants' profiles, such as age, historical and current career paths, educational background, professional experiences, and any certifications they may hold. This questionnaire aims to capture a snapshot of the participants' professional lives.

3.4.2 Narrative essay

Narrative inquiry serves as a strong tool for researchers to get a deep understanding of the experiences of individuals through their stories. It involves extracting meaningful experiences as actions exist through these meanings that can be embedded in the stories

and narratives of the individuals (Mishler, 1986). Bamberg (1997) further defines narrative as the representations of past events and their importance to the storyteller. In the context of this study, participants were asked to write their biographies, reflecting on their experiences in learning and teaching English. They were asked to write about the challenges they had faced as NNS and NNEST, as well as the strategies taken to overcome these challenges and their impact on their lives. To ensure targeted storytelling, participants were provided with prompts guiding them in addressing important aspects, such as their experiences as language learners, interactions with their English teachers, teacher training periods, professional journeys, and their perceptions of NESTs. These prompts aimed to direct the participants towards reflective storytelling, so they could explore how they position themselves concerning NESTs.

3.4.3 Semi-structured interview

It is very prevalent to use interviews in qualitative studies because interviews help us to catch the participants' feelings and thoughts as well as learn about their past experiences and the meanings they have attached to those experiences (Patton, 2015). Yin (2018) also stated that interviews are common in qualitative studies because they explain the phenomenon and guide the conversation between the participants of the study and the researcher. Brinkmann (2018) introduced three types of interviews based on their structure: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews. He argues that semi-structured interviews allow information-rich dialogues to appear by using follow-up questions if the researcher finds an important gap, which results in flexibility and an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

Magaldi and Berler (2020) believed that a semi-structured interview has an exploratory nature and is based on a guide with a focus on the main topic that allows for an in-depth exploration, particularly in studies of life stories. Unlike structured interviews that have a fixed set of questions, semi-structured interviews are flexible and allow the researcher to ask new questions in the process of the interview based on the responses provided by the participants of the study (Ruslin et al., 2022).

To do a more in-depth study and to increase the validity of the study, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were included in the data collection procedure of the present study. Semi-structured interviews were chosen since they can cover both pre-determined topics and be flexible, so each participant could add their insights or there could be questions

arising from their written narrative reports; therefore, it can be said that the key role of the semi-structured interviews was to complement the findings from the reports. The conceptual framework behind the interview questions was both research questions and Yazan's (2018) framework on teacher identity, which includes (a) teacher learning (b) teacher cognition (c) participation in communities of practice, (d) contextual factors, (e) teacher biographies, and (f) teacher emotions. The questions were open-ended since, in qualitative studies, open-ended questions allow the participants to talk about their experiences in an unconstrained way, and they can create their options to respond to the questions (Creswell, 2002).

There were two semi-structured one-on-one interviews for each participant, the first one covered research questions 1, 2, and 3, and the second interview covered research questions 4,5, and 6. The researcher constructed the interview questions through the related literature, the Identity framework of Yazan (2018), and the research questions of the study.

3.4.4 Focus group discussion

In this study, a focus group interview was used for data collection on the related topic. A focus group interview, as stated by Gill and Baillie (2018), seemed feasible for this study due to its flexible and yet structured nature that makes it suitable for in-depth discussions moderated by the researcher of the study and a group of participants.

The number of research participants is six, which is believed to be suitable for focus group interviews, excluding the researcher, based on Barkhuizen et al. (2013), Gill and Baillie (2018), and the aims of this study. Considering the geographical locations of the participants, one individual residing in Bursa, and the participants' intense schedules, the Zoom platform was used to conduct the interviews to overcome the logistical issues and to guarantee flexibility of time for scheduling.

The participants were reassured about the confidentiality of the responses, and their consent was taken before the start of the focus group interview. The data collection process involved well-designed and expert-approved open-ended questions, and by anticipating the possible challenges, like the quality of the internet or any other technological issues, proper measures were taken to minimize the possible challenges.

3.4.5 Reflective emails

To capture the participants' changing emotions and various experiences, each of the six participants was requested to send a reflective email each month for two consecutive months. No specific templates or structured prompts were provided to participants, as the intention was to give them the freedom to express their feelings. These reflective emails aimed to provide the context so that the participants could reflect on their professional lives with a specific focus on their interactions with their colleagues, administration, and students. Reflective emails enabled the researcher to have an exploration of the key factors playing a role in participants' identity shaping as NNESTs working with NESTs within the related educational settings. The emails facilitated the documentation of changing perspectives and provided the conditions through which the interaction between emotions and circumstances could be captured throughout the data collection process.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The first crucial step in the current research was to create research questions addressing the study's problem. Extensive reading of the existing literature on nativism and teacher identity, particularly Yazan's (2018) framework of teacher identity and positioning theory, resulted in four research questions. Four field experts confirmed the research question to ensure the validity of the study, since their opinions provide valuable insights, ensuring the relevance and alignment of the research questions.

Besides confirming the research questions, the experts also gave several recommendations for the data collection process. The initial plan was to collect data through one comprehensive biographical questionnaire, one essay, three semi-structured interviews, and two reflective emails. However, following a field expert's recommendation, the last semi-structured interview was replaced by a focus-group interview. Focus group interviews play a key role in qualitative studies since they increase interaction among the participants and are naturally more effective in exploring participants' emotions and experiences.

With the revised data collection plan, it became important to design questions that could elicit data through an essay inquiry, a biographical data questionnaire, reflective emails, two semi-structured interviews, and a focus group interview. The design of all questions was aligned with the research questions and, in turn, with Yazan's (2018) framework of teacher identity and the theory of positionality. His framework outlines six crucial factors

fundamental for teacher identity: (a) teacher learning, (b) teacher cognition, (c) participation in communities of practice, (d) contextual factors, (e) teacher biographies, and (f) teacher emotions.

Following the framework, all of the questions were carefully designed to explore the interaction between research participants' experiences covering their years of learning English, their teachers, beliefs, and attitudes towards their profession, identification, or lack of identification, with specific communities, physical and social and educational contexts within their workplaces, professional experiences, and a deep exploration of their emotions throughout their career journey.

In addition to exploring participants' experiences, positioning theory was also added as an important layer to explore how participants position themselves as NNESTs with NESTs in general and specifically within their workplace. The interview guide for semi-structured interviews was tailored based on the research questions to delve into the participants' beliefs regarding teaching English, their perspectives on NESTs, and the challenges they may have encountered or currently face as NNESTs.

To further enrich the data collection process, a focus group interview guide was designed to encourage the participants to discuss the concept of teacher training, a crucial element within Yazan's framework. Most of these questions were like those asked in semi-structured interviews to expose participants to related questions in different contexts to find out how community dynamics might influence participant reactions, which provided an extra level of understanding about the complex interaction between individual perspectives and community affiliations.

After completing the data collection tool design, the Supervising Committee members thoroughly reviewed the essay and interviewed the authors regarding their relevance and wording. In this process, the interview questions underwent multiple modifications regarding the wording of the questions.

Once the revised questions were finalized, the next step was to reach out to the participants to initiate the data collection. They were contacted through email, and the scanned copy of the approval and consent form was attached to the email. They also received the Biographical Data Questionnaire. In the email and follow-up phone calls, the goals of the study and the procedures for data collection and analysis were explained. The participants received the biographical essay guide as soon as they signed the consent

forms and completed the biographical data questionnaires.

The requested essay was supposed to be a minimum of five hundred words and focus on their experiences as an English language learner and teacher. They wrote a chronological narrative clarifying their experiences with their English teachers, the nationality of their English teachers, their experience in teacher training programs, and their professional journeys. This organized inquiry aimed to capture the multifaceted dimensions of participants' experiences. There were related prompts to ensure the accuracy of the participants' responses.

However, it is essential to note that a pilot test was conducted before the formal data collection process in June 2022. The essay question and the instructions were shared with two of the researcher's previous colleagues and friends, both female Turkish NNEST. As Turner III and Hagstrom-Schmidt (2022) articulated that pilot testing participants need to have the same criteria as the research participants, it was made to choose the participants for pilot testing were chosen based on the same purposeful sampling criteria. Table 3.2. summarizes the demographic information of the pilot testing participants.

Table 3.2

Demographic Profile of the Pilot Testing Participants

Name	Age	Last degree	Teaching Certificate	Teaching Setting	Years of Experience
Ece	27	B.A.	No	Private School	5
Ayse	36	B.A.	NO	Language school	12

Pilot testing confirmed the clarity of instructions and their potential to elicit details from the participants. Trusting the quality of the narrative essay guide, the researcher instructed the research participants to follow the prompts and compose a 500-word narrative about their experiences as both English language learners and teachers. Although the instructions were clear, there were some challenges during the essay submission phase. The researcher could not collect the essays until December because of the participants' busy schedules. Additionally, the researcher moved to Jakarta, Indonesia, in August 2022. The initial plan was to conduct interviews online through the Zoom platform during the fall semester of 2022-2023; however, since the formulation of follow-up questions for the

semi-structured interviews depended on the essays, the online interviews could not be conducted.

The second step of pilot testing was conducted in August 2023 with the previously mentioned participants to ensure that the interviews would proceed effectively. The goal of the second phase was to refine the interview questions for both the semi-structured and focus group interviews. As the participants lived in Bursa and Izmir, all pilot interviews were conducted online via Zoom with their consent. The average length of the semi-structured interviews was fifty-five minutes, and the focus-group interview took thirty minutes. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) believed the proper duration for any interview should not exceed ninety minutes. It is important to highlight that the pilot test for the focus-group interview had only two participants, while the main interview would consist of six participants, so it was assumed that it would exceed the thirty-minute length of the pilot test. The goal of this pilot test was to measure the clarity of the questions and as an exercise for the real interviews, as it was helpful to notice how important it was to have a rapport between the researcher and the participants. To enhance the rapport during the pilot interviews the researcher initiated by using icebreakers and warm-ups before asking the questions, and once the interviews started the pilot participants were allowed to talk without interruption as long as they were sticking to the main theme of the question, if not the researcher would use some follow up probing questions to get more in-depth answers or to guide them in the right direction.

The pilot testing process offered precious insights into several improvements within the interview questions. After the first pilot interview, the researcher noticed that the two sets of questions for both semi-structured interviews had some complexities regarding the clarity of the theme under investigation. Therefore, most of the questions underwent slight adjustments and rephrasing to enhance clarity for the participants. The first set of questions formulated for the first semi-structured interview initially included sixteen questions. However, it was recognized that one of the questions needed to be broken into two, because the participant only captured one of the themes and answered according to that. As a result, the number of questions increased to seventeen, and some questions underwent some improvements regarding wording since they elicited divergent responses from the first pilot test participant.

After adjusting the questions based on the insights obtained from the first pilot participant,

there was a substantive improvement in the quality of responses by the second participant. The adjustments led to responses that were clearer and more in line with the research aims. The same procedures were applied to the second set of questions designed for the second semi-structured interview. Once more, there were slight modifications to enhance clarity and participant comprehension. The questions designated for the focus group interview appeared to be clear and required no modifications, which was understood by the elicited answers. These improvements had a vital role in capturing the perspectives of the research participants.

In September 2023, the researcher reached the participants to coordinate the scheduling of the first set of one-on-one semi-structured interviews for October 2023. The scheduling process turned out to be quite challenging, as the interviews were to be conducted in the workplaces of the participants, so the researcher and the participants had to adjust the appointments with their available schedules. Another challenge of the scheduling was the fact that the researcher had to take a day off for three consecutive weeks, for logistical reasons, because, as mentioned before, it was important for the interviews to be conducted in the relevant setting of each participant. Conducting the interviews in participants' natural and authentic settings was intended to provide a natural ambiance for them, which in turn would ease the flow of the interview. Moreover, it would be easier for the participants to participate in the interviews, considering the logistical concerns. Another reason for conducting the interviews in the authentic settings of the participants would also reflect the diversity of the environments of language education.

Based on individual schedules, five interviews were conducted in Eskisehir, and another interview was carried out in Bursa within the first three weeks of October 2023. In the first week, one participant was interviewed at a state university in Eskisehir's library, while another participant was interviewed in the language school where they taught in an available classroom. Both interviews were carried out on the same day. In the following week, two interviews were conducted in a private school and another language school, and during the third week, there were two consecutive days of interviews, with one of them held in Bursa. The interviews happened in an environment where the confidentiality of the interviews could be maintained, so the participants could freely share their thoughts without any risk of eavesdropping. The interviews were conducted in English, and the participants' well-being and comfort were ensured.

Each interview took fifty minutes on average and was recorded by the researcher's phone, the sound and recording quality of which had been successfully tested before the start of each interview. McNamara (1995) argued the importance of the interview guide since the guide assists the researcher in ensuring consistency of the approach in each interview and in collecting similar areas of information from each participant. He believed that it not only helps with a better focus, but also gives a degree of freedom as well, since the follow-up questions can be adapted to each interviewee.

It is essential to emphasize that before each interview, the researcher counseled the participants about the aims and purpose of the study, the confidentiality of the data, the format, and the length of the interview. They adopted a pseudonym to be more comfortable during the interview, and if they had any questions before the start of the interview. As suggested by McNamara (1995), the researcher was committed to the neutrality of the question. The same questions and similar follow-up questions were asked of each participant; however, they were not asked in the same order for each of them because each participant is unique and has their individual experiences and narratives.

As guided by Creswell (2013), the researcher tried to pose the questions, helping the participants to stay focused on their responses. The follow-up questions were asked attentively. The researcher tried to encourage the participants to respond while taking occasional notes in a way that the interviewees would not be distracted. The researcher informed the participants upon transitions between the topics not to lose control of the interview flow. After the interview, the researcher did not forget to thank the participants and appreciate their cooperation. In addition, extra measures were taken at once to guarantee the security of the stored data by transferring it to a locked folder on the researcher's computer.

In the final week of October, participants were again contacted by email and shared their experiences and challenges as Turkish NNESTs regarding nativism. Unfortunately, the reception of the emails did not proceed as anticipated within the initially scheduled timeframe. The second phase of semi-structured interviews was conducted approximately one month after the first interviews. For instance, if a participant underwent their first interview during the first week of October, the second session was scheduled for the corresponding period in November.

The intervals between the first and second semi-structured interviews were not

consistently within a strict thirty-day time limit because the researcher and the participant had to adjust the appointment with the availability of their schedules. The second semi-structured interview followed the same steps and procedures, along with the second submission of the second round of reflective emails in the last week of November. Following semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion took place at the end of December 2003. Although Doodle.com eased the scheduling process of the session, it was challenging to find a suitable date and time that worked for all participants. Since there was no unanimous date in the last week of December, as intended, a date was set for the first week of January 2024. The interview was conducted online and through Zoom since it was impossible to gather the participants together for a face-to-face interview.

The techniques for focused group discussion were followed as described by Morgan (2018), who emphasized the importance of being interactive and facilitating discussions. The researcher was the moderator and had some challenges, particularly in ensuring equal participation of the participants and avoiding taking part in the discussion.

Before the start of the interview, participants were briefed on confidentiality and anonymity, the format of the interview, its purposes, and the role of the moderator. The researcher, as the moderator, as suggested by Morgan (2018), attempted to have low control over content while at the same time ensuring in-depth coverage of relevant issues.

She also tried to set up a rapport with the participants and stay neutral. The participants were a bit hesitant; however, they gradually became more comfortable, and the moderator tried to create a dynamic atmosphere. Discussions became interactive and led to a depth of understanding. The researcher took notes during the discussion. After the session, the researcher thanked the participants for their valuable contributions and reminded them of the follow-up procedures, including how the data would be used and the steps taken to ensure their privacy and confidentiality.

3.6 Data Analysis

This study explores the professional identities of Turkish NNESTs who work alongside NESTs and employs a comprehensive analytical approach through each participant's data examination and later through cross-comparisons. Each participant's data was analyzed deeply to get the nuances of their narratives and experiences. The participants' narrative essays, reflective emails, and interviews were examined deeply at the beginning of the analysis process to fully understand their unique context and journey, highlighting the

elements of their professional identities. To reflect participants' voices, the study employed vivo coding, and each data set was read multiple times. The codes that emerged were grouped into categories based on their redundancy and association. For example, if a participant emphasized language proficiency, dedication, and discipline in teaching English, these characteristics were placed under the category of "attributes of a good English teacher."

Later, the researcher clustered the categories into themes that encompassed the participants' past experiences, perceptions of Turkish NNESTs, NESTs, their self-positioning as English teachers, and the expected support that they felt was necessary for professional development. This process was an iterative process for final themes to mirror the participants' narratives accurately and address the research aims. Considering its complexity, this study employed both inductive and deductive analytical approaches. Following Patton's (2015) guidelines, themes emerged from the data in the inductive approach. Patton (2015) emphasized the importance of an iterative, reflexive, and context-sensitive approach to give the participants' voices. The process of analysis starts with immersion in the data through repeated and careful readings to identify the themes rather than using predefined categories. He argued that researchers must be reflexive and self-examine their biases and assumptions. The process is iterative, and it involves moving back and forth between coding and interpreting themes. The findings were then interpreted deductively through the lens of Yazan's (2018) teacher identity framework. The framework consists of six aspects of teacher identity: teacher learning, teacher cognition, participation in communities of practice, contextual factors, teacher biographies, and teacher emotions. Referring to literature, sub-themes were used to refine the categories within these aspects, for example, for teacher cognition, the sub-themes were teachers' beliefs, attitudes, goals, and teaching practices.

As another theoretical lens to enrich the interpretation, the study employed Davies and Harré's (1990) Positioning theory, which was further developed by Bamberg (1997, 2020). The theory guided the analysis at three levels: how participants positioned themselves relative to other characters (particularly NESTs), how they positioned themselves vis-à-vis the researcher and any implicit audience, and how they located themselves within broader social contexts, including the influence of native-speakerism. The main purpose of this

The study applied a multi-layered analysis by combining Patton's (2015) inductive approach, Yazan's (2018) framework, and positioning theory. Multiple lenses also enhance the validity of the findings as the potential of overlooking is minimized. They also ensure a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences in their broader context. The gained themes from different participants were cross-checked and compared to identify their shared patterns and their unique circumstances, which helped to have a deeper understanding of Turkish NNESTs' experiences of native-speakerism and professional identity construction in Türkiye. The study aims to provide a holistic perspective on Turkish NNESTs' professional identity through individual and comparative analyses.

The Baguette application was used to ease the in vivo coding as it is accessible and efficient. Two external coders assisted in evaluating the codes and their alignment with the research questions to mitigate researcher bias and enhance the reliability of the study. One of the external coders was an expert in the field with a PhD, and another was an electronic engineer who had foundational knowledge in qualitative analysis. The researcher of the study provided the transcripts, research questions, and a summary of the study. Each of the coders coded the data independently, and online meetings were conducted separately to discuss the codes and ensure consistency. Some codes underwent modification or even got excluded as the research questions were the guide. The researcher used Baguette for coding, however, the external coders worked manually, highlighting keywords in the transcripts.

3.7 The Role of the Researcher and Reflexivity

Clarifying the researcher's role is crucial in qualitative studies because of their direct involvement in the data collection and interpretation process; in other words, a researcher can be an instrument (Patton, 2015). Creswell (2013) argued that in qualitative studies, a researcher must be self-reflexive and clarify their positionalities and their background, as they need to understand how they affect the research study. Berger (2015) also found reflection as being aware of one's beliefs and values, highlighting the importance of being self-reflexive and calling it an important strategy for controlling the quality of any qualitative study.

Creswell (2013) outlined two methods of reflexivity: 1) A researcher needs to integrate their experience with the phenomenon that is being investigated through their past

experiences and background, and 2) they need to clarify how those experiences form and affect their interpretation and understanding of the investigation (Creswell, 2013). The researcher finds it essential to acknowledge her position regarding this phenomenon for the study's validity. As a Turkish-speaking English teacher from Iran, I have experienced both privilege and discrimination. I have been hired as a 'native' teacher in Türkiye because of my fluency but have also faced challenges globally due to my 'non-native' status. These experiences have allowed me to empathize with my participants' challenges and struggles.

Throughout the research process, I consistently kept conscious of my background, beliefs, and values that might influence data interpretation. Both my insider and outsider positions allowed me to build rapport and trust with the participants, although there was the risk of over-familiarity. There were moments when participants could not finish their reflections, and despite shared understanding, I attempted to ask for clarification or remain silent to encourage them to elaborate and offer deeper insights.

Patton (2002) argues that reflexivity is an important principle in qualitative research that involves repeating self-examination and reflection on one's roles, biases, and potential influences. He encourages the integration of reflexive comments in the reporting section of the study so that it shows how the researcher's positionality might have impacted the outcomes. Patnaik (2013) also introduces reflexivity as a valuable tool to situate the researcher in qualitative studies that involve self-awareness so that the researcher can acknowledge their influence on the process and outcomes of the research.

Reflexivity was maintained in this study by adopting multiple strategies. I consistently kept reflexive memos to document my thoughts and emotional reactions. I also employed member-checking to validate my interpretations with the participants. There were also two external coders to minimize personal bias throughout data analysis. I attempted to ensure that the knowledge of this study was co-constructed with the participants. However, I cannot deny that my background and experiences shaped my understanding and interpretation of the narratives. Therefore, through reflexivity and transparency, I tried to balance empathy with accuracy.

3.8 Ethics and Quality of the Study

In the development of this study, it was attempted to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. This commitment began with the submission of a detailed application to the

university's research committee, outlining the research participants, topic, and methodologies. After receiving approval from the Ethics Committee of the university, the data collection process started. Another major step of this ethical process was the consent of the participants, who were briefed about the study's goals, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any stage of the study. Confidentiality measures were taken by using pseudonyms. Additionally, the researcher informed the participants about the audio recording device throughout the interviews, and they were assured that the recordings would only be accessed by the researcher for data transcription.

Employing a multiple case study approach, this study follows the principles of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability that are crucial for qualitative research studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2013). To enhance the credibility of the study, multiple strategies were used to ensure the accuracy of the findings and their true reflection of participants' perspectives and experiences. These strategies consist of data triangulation, prolonged engagement, and peer debrief. Data collection happened through interviews, narrative essays, and reflective emails, and the diversity of the data sources gives multiple perspectives to the study and enhances the depth and validity of the study. Patton (2015) claims that triangulation reduces biases and verifies the information gained. Moreover, the study followed the principle of prolonged engagement with the participants to build trust, as Barkhuizen et al. (2013) highlight the importance of prolonged engagement in understanding participants' contexts and narratives and gathering accurate data interpretation. The researcher examined the data and their interpretations with other field experts to employ peer debriefing, which provides an external check to identify potential researcher bias that could affect the study's findings (Creswell, 2013).

Dependability is another factor that is very important in qualitative studies, which require consistency and stability in the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study uses transparency principles and researcher triangulation to enhance its dependability. Two independent coders analyzed the data to minimize subjectivity in data interpretation and increase inter-coder reliability (Patton, 2015). The coders used codebooks and held regular meetings to keep consistent. Dependability was also reinforced by adopting a systemic approach to managing data and analysis. Software tools, consistent coding practices, and regular discussions ensured the limitation of coding discrepancies.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify the confirmability of a qualitative study as its

objectivity and neutrality and claim that it indicates that the findings come from the participants rather than researcher bias. To enhance confirmability, this study employed member checking, reflexivity, and external review. The researcher shared the interview transcripts and their analyses with participants for verification, and to ensure alignment between findings and their experiences (Barkhuizen et al., 2013; Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, the reflexivity and positionality of the researcher have been clarified to commit to transparency, as recommended by Patton (2015). Two external experts in the field were also consulted to verify the researcher's interpretations. Moreover, maintaining an audit trail, documenting all research processes and procedures, supported the confirmability of this study as these steps allow others to follow the research process and verify the findings independently.

Transferability is another important factor in any qualitative research, which shows the extent findings can be applied to other contexts. In this study, it was addressed through rich descriptions of participants, their contexts, and the settings in which the study was conducted. Detailed information on context allows others to decide if these findings can be applicable to their settings. The purposeful selection of the participants also enhances the study's transferability, as they were chosen from diverse educational settings.

Trustworthiness, which is another important principle in the quality of qualitative studies, can be achieved through iterative data collection, data saturation, and inter-coder agreement (Creswell, 2013; Barkhuizen et al., 2013). Three interviews were conducted for a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and identities, which also in turn led to data saturation, as no new information emerged. The employed independent coding and researcher triangulation strengthened the reliability of the study as coders ensured consistency in the findings.

4. FINDINGS

This chapter explores the identity (re)construction and professional journey of Turkish Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs) in Türkiye, where native speakers play significant roles in ELT. The chapter presents the personal narratives of six Turkish NNESTs (Behzat, Elif, Gizem, Murat, Selim, and Berke), who have been working alongside Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs) in various contexts such as private schools, language schools, and university preparatory programs.

The first section of this chapter presents the narratives of each Turkish NNEST by

highlighting their background, professional experiences, and challenges around native-speakerism, which intends to provide a deep understanding of each participant's journey and how they perceive their competencies and identities within their specific contexts.

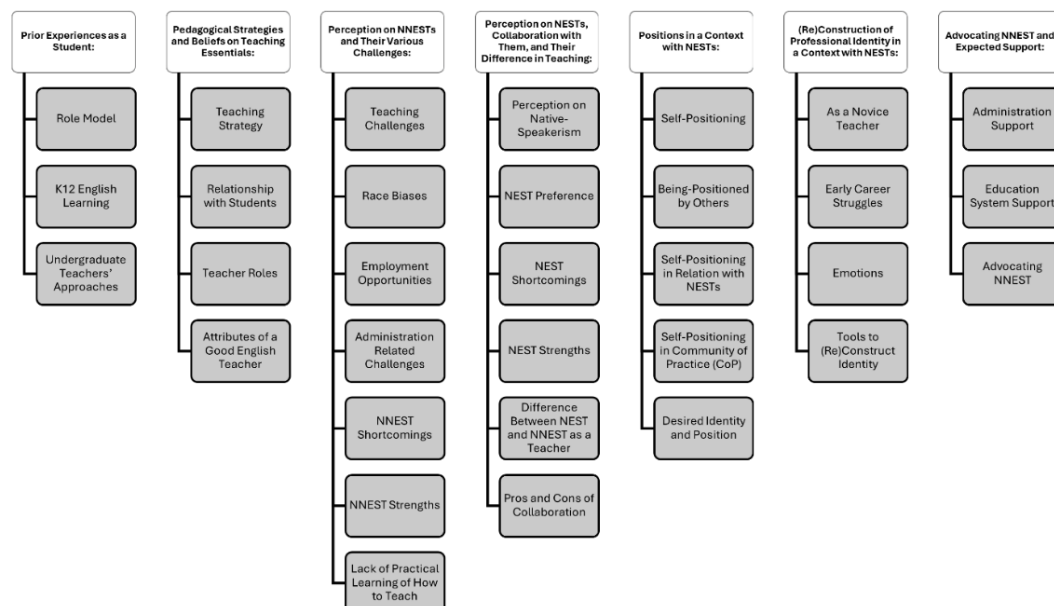
The second section of the chapter corresponds to each research question by integrating thematic findings that have been obtained from the participants' narratives. This analysis identifies the themes and patterns across the individual narrations and highlights how Turkish NNESTs perceive language teacher competency and NESTs. It also identifies the challenges that Turkish NNESTs face due to native-speakerism and how they reconstruct their professional identities in response to these challenges. The second section of the chapter addresses four research questions based on the collected data through narrative essays, semi-structured interviews, reflective emails, and a focus group discussion.

4.1 The case of Berke

This section delves into the findings of the participant with the pseudonym of Berke, whose data was collected from his narrative essay reflective emails, semi-structured interviews, and the focus group discussion. It presents Berke's professional identity (re)construction as a Turkish NNEST in the context of native-speakerism. The obtained themes identified through inductive thematic analysis are shown in the following diagram, which illustrates the emergent themes and categories. Figure 4.1 shows the themes and categories that emerged from Berke's narrative:

Figure 4.1

Berke's Emerged Themes and Categories



Prior Experiences as a Student

Berke's English teaching journey goes back to his experiences when he was a student, which were critical in his professional identity formation and his teaching philosophy. The theme of 'prior experience as a student' investigates his educational background, the teachers who have had a great impact on his career, and his decision to pursue English language teaching. The most important factor in Berke's career decision has been his 'role models,' in particular his English teacher during the 11th and 12th grades. This teacher inspired Berke both academically and personally and Berke decided to follow him regarding his teaching style and worldview: "The personality, teacher characteristics, and worldview of my final English teacher during my K12 education (11th and 12th grades) have played a key role in my decision to be an English teacher" (Berke, personal communication, December 2022). Berke admired the way this teacher was approachable and engaged with students outside the classroom. The teacher's global perspective, enthusiasm for cultural exchange, and commitment to student learning became Berke's standards for the future: "He was my 11th and 12th grade teacher... He inspired me in choosing this career... He has been the role model for me, the way he actually is approachable to students..." (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

This teacher's emphasis on using language as a tool for cultural exploration rather than merely an academic subject influenced Berke's teaching philosophy. He appreciated how his teacher guided students to engage with various cultures and enriched their learning experiences. The teacher also organized Erasmus projects and created opportunities for the students to travel and interact with people from different countries, showing them the practical and cultural dimensions of language learning.

He used to travel around the world, and he was the one who actually just assisted us having those Erasmus projects and going and exploring the culture of 15 countries in Europe and speaking the language, emphasizing the importance of practicing language. (Berke, personal communication, October 2023).

Berke started recognizing English as a means to access other cultures and opportunities only after meeting his high school teacher, who marked a significant turning point in his attitude toward the language. This teacher incorporated cultural exchange and practical language use into his lessons, making English more meaningful and engaging. Berke

reflected: “As a student, my English education was largely uninspiring until a particular teacher showed me the power of language to connect across cultures” (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). He later added: “He inspired me in choosing this career... He was... approachable to students... emphasizing the importance of practicing language” (Berke, personal communication, November 2023). These experiences allowed Berke to use English in real-world contexts, transforming his perception of the language from a school subject into a tool for communication and personal growth. As he put it, “The very language itself is not the end, but the tool to explore the cultures and personalities of others and everything that we can get from other people, foreigners in the very countries we visited” (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). His teacher not only enriched his English learning but also broadened his worldview through cultural explorations—an approach that later shaped Berke’s teaching philosophy. Comparing his earlier experiences with this ‘role model’ teacher highlighted, for Berke, the crucial role of pedagogical methods in language education. He also emphasized that the absence of a NEST in his K12 education had no negative impact on his language learning experience.

I neither had a native English teacher during my K12 education nor felt the need for one. According to what I have experienced as a language learner and teacher, there is not a certain need for being instructed by a native teacher. Rather, a teacher who has the world perspective and qualifications to teach a language and promotes the communicative aspect of a language means a lot more than that. (Berke, personal communication, December 2022)

This statement challenges the belief that NESTs are better teachers than NNESTs. Berke’s reflections propose that teaching quality and the way a teacher connects with their students are more important factors than being a native speaker. His early language experiences challenge native-speakerism and underscore the role of pedagogical skills and the ability to inspire students. He believes that to be an effective language teacher, it is important to connect with students, teach engagingly, and create a communicative classroom environment, thus rejecting the importance of being a native English-speaking teacher. Berke’s K12 learning experiences directed his teaching philosophy, so he advocates for CLT by focusing on meaningful communication and practical use of language rather than grammatical knowledge. He stated: “I think a good language teacher must communicate with the students... and also has linguistic knowledge, having the required skills to communicate and to integrate into their lessons” (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). Berke also recalled: “He was... trying to make sure that

we get his point of view in terms of world view, in his way of living” (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). His teacher was also his model for intercultural openness: “He was always communicating with other teachers, creating opportunities for us to contact other teachers, other students from different schools and classes, and also people from different countries” (Berke, personal communication, October 2023).

Berke later implemented these positive experiences in his teaching to inspire and motivate students through engaging and rich cultural instruction. Despite his high school teacher and his positive influence, Berke had some challenges in his K12 years, as he acknowledges that the initial instruction was uninspiring, which probably slowed down his interest in language and its development.

As a regular Turkish citizen/student, the only English instruction I received as a foreign language learner was limited to the compulsory English courses during my K12 education. Considering the majority of my former English teachers even though their attitudes towards my peers and me were relatively positive and engaging, the instruction they gave and their teaching habits were neither interesting nor encouraging for practicing the language further. (Berke, personal communication, December 2022)

Lack of engagement in early English lessons (K12 English learning) signifies the failure of the curriculum to motivate students or show them how to apply what they have learned in real-world settings. He acknowledged that his teachers had positive attitudes towards him and his classmates; however their teaching methods never encouraged them to use English outside the classroom setting. This lack of encouragement in language classes reflects a bigger issue within the educational system, as language instruction focuses more on grammar rather than communicative competence and cultural engagement.

Berke’s K12 experiences were critical in shaping his professional identity as he learned how language can be taught effectively and how important it is to commit to prioritizing student engagement, cultural exchange, and communicative competence. Berke’s journey shows how early education experiences can influence career choices and perspectives. He attempted to incorporate the positive aspects of his learning experience into his teaching practice and avoid the mistakes his early teachers made. His high school teacher became a model for him and transformed his perspectives on language teaching and learning by highlighting approachability, cultural exchange, and communicative practices. The experiences he had also shaped his rejection of native-speakerism and his advocacy for pedagogical competence rather than being a native speaker: "Thinking about how I have

actually ended up here... he is the one who probably made a little human mark on me to see that I can pursue my dreams, I can pursue things that I can really like to do." (Berke, personal communication, October 2023).

Through following 'Undergraduate Teachers' Approaches,' the critical role of undergraduate experiences in shaping his professional identity also emerged. He attended the ELT department in Türkiye, where he was both supported and challenged. A deeper exploration of his experiences shows that his interactions with his professors, the curriculum, and practicum impacted his beliefs, teaching practices, and professional aspirations. Berke speaks highly of his professors, who contributed to his identity construction as an educator. These instructors and professors supported him academically and enhanced his confidence as well: "During my BA studies in the ELT Department of a state university in Turkey, I had amazing professors and instructors who encouraged and supported my teacher-self" (Berke, personal communication, December 2022). He felt valued and motivated, and his professors and faculty members recognized his potential and thus guided him beyond the curriculum: "Most of the teaching staff had significant achievements in the field as well as remarkable educational backgrounds" (Berke, personal communication, December 2022). The professors' accomplishments, expertise, and dedication to ELT inspired Berke, so he decided to follow their paths.

The very reason that I chose this career as an English teacher in language school and tertiary level, then the very reason that I would give the answer to the second question, I would choose it again, yes, because I was quite inspired by those role models and how they affected my life. (Berke, personal communication, November 2023)

The positive and supportive interactions with his professors influenced Berke's teaching philosophy especially regarding being approachable and having good connections with students: "I think a good language teacher must be one who communicates with the students and the administration and also has linguistic knowledge, having the required skills to communicate and to integrate into their lessons" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). Berke noticed that the professors who were accessible had more impact on students' learning experiences, which highlighted the importance of approachability in effective teaching (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). He later emphasized: "Now what I care about, what I value is being approachable, guiding them, facilitating them, and especially helping out those who are looking to do further and to get themselves in a better position in the future" (Berke, personal communication,

November 2023).

He adopted these values and incorporated them into his teaching practice and aimed to be a mentor and guide for his own students, similar to the professors who supported him. Not everything was positive for Berke while doing his undergraduate studies; he also had professors who were the opposite which means were unapproachable and disconnected from their students: "I had those who didn't even have their doors open to students even once. They were not approachable." (Berke, personal communication, November 2023). He reflected that the professors who were less engaged with students limited the mentorship opportunities for the students. He felt that this lack of accessibility was not helpful for student development and led to a less supportive learning environment.

They are not very much familiar with the generation, so a lot of the professors, despite their academic achievements, struggled to connect with us as students. They were teaching more from a theoretical perspective, but they didn't understand the realities we face or how to engage us in a way that felt relevant to the current educational needs. (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

He believed that there was a generational gap between some professors and the students, which was another reason for the lack of communication and connection, which in turn diminishes meaningful academic experiences. The contrasting experiences that Berke had with his professors influenced his professional identity, where the supportive professors became his role models, and the unapproachable ones showed him the traits he had to avoid in his career. He decided to be an English teacher because he was influenced by his supportive mentors and teachers. His decision to continue teaching as his profession highlights the importance of his undergraduate experiences.

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Although Berke recognized the academic support provided by his professors he was aware of the deficiencies regarding practical aspects of teacher training, at least through other language teachers: "Despite the common complaint that we could have further and more elaborate practical aspects of teaching practice during the BA studies, I still believe that the instruction given at my alma mater was fruitful and academically supportive." (Berke, personal communication, December 2022). He was aware that the theoretical

knowledge he gained from his university was precious; however, he acknowledged the lack of practical teaching that challenged him when he stepped into the real-world classroom:

I think the programs that we are being given, the objectives of the whole department, are not very much related to the practical aspects of being an English teacher. We are more on the theoretical aspects of how to be a teacher, how to give instruction, but the reality, the actual practices, is not very much related to what we have as in theory. (Berke, personal communication, January 2024)

The gap between theory and practice hit him when he started to teach as he felt unprepared for the real demands of teaching, in particular classroom management and knowledge delivery: "When I first started having my teaching experience, I said, wow, we just didn't learn anything. It wasn't related to what is expecting me in the classroom. It's just very, very different." (Berke, personal communication, January 2024). The start of the pandemic aggravated the lack of practical teaching experience even more because he had to conduct his practicum experiences online. Remote teaching limited his opportunities to learn and practice classroom management and interactions with students and affected his confidence in real classrooms after graduation: "The only downside during my studies was having my practicum experiences online because of the Covid-19 Pandemic" (Berke, personal communication, December 2022). To overcome these challenges, Berke decided to develop himself professionally by reviewing his academic sources so that he could extract practical strategies to apply in his classrooms.

I had to go back to the very theoretical books and everything that we were given, the instruction we were given at the BA level. Then I was like, okay, so there was this different technique, there was this different type of method or approach, then maybe I can utilize this in my classroom doing this differently, doing something, you know, in a way that might be more interactive. (Berke, personal communication, January 2024)

Berke's proactive approach shows his commitment to continuous learning and adaptation, which is an important quality in effective teaching. He acknowledged that he had internal challenges and struggled with self-confidence, teaching identity, and the desire to enhance his pedagogical skills. It was this internal conflict that motivated him to be self-reflective and to self-improve. He experienced personal and professional growth which made him more confident as a teacher: "...but for my own conflict inside me as a teacher and with the very teacher identity I think I have, you know, gained through years, I think now I feel

more confident" (Berke, personal communication, January 2024).

When Berke reflected on his undergraduate program, he could identify its shortcomings that left him underprepared after graduation. He lacked practical knowledge of classroom management strategies, practical teaching methods, and lesson delivery. He did not know how to connect the learned theories to practice. He noted the absence of practical learning: "We are not given enough instruction on how to manage the... how to do the crisis management in the classroom, how to take action, how to take the initiative" (Berke, personal communication, January 2024). This lack of practical learning extended to important teaching skills: "How to give instructions, how to check instructions, no one told me about this. They were just talking about how to create a lesson plan. No one creates a lesson plan in the real world" (Berke, personal communication, January 2024). He further critiqued: "Everything we talk about in the classrooms... it just comes down to the very basic level, base level, and you're not providing enough practical suggestions to our students what to do in the classroom" (Berke, personal communication, January 2024).

These reflections motivated Berke to adapt his teaching practices to address the shortcomings he had identified by prioritizing student-centered learning, interactive instruction, and reflective practice. He recognized that: "Now I'm observing practical processes of the fourth-year students... everything we are talking about is not or was not a part of any course, any instruction they received in the earlier three, four years" (Berke, personal communication, January 2024). His experiences encouraged him to try more engaging approaches: "Then maybe I can, you know, utilize this in my classroom doing this differently, doing something, you know, in a way that might be more interactive" (Berke, personal communication, January 2024).

Berke now tries to support and guide his students and younger colleagues as he feels they are lacking in his own learning experiences. He believes that it is important to prepare future teachers for the realities of the classroom by bridging the gap between theory and practice: "I'm also trying to emphasize all those specific notions, everything to my students, my English teacher candidates" (Berke, personal communication, January 2024). Berke became aware of the issue of native-speakerism during his undergraduate studies. This awareness influenced his perspectives on language teaching and professional identity formation. In the beginning, Berke admired NESTs and used to see their

advantage in language proficiency and authenticity. He thought being native gives someone benefits that could make them better teachers. He believed that being a native speaker provided certain linguistic benefits that could enhance language instruction: "I always looked up to those native teachers because they were the ones who were speaking the language as their native language. This is like the very reality of their lives" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023).

As he began to interact with native teachers more and observe their teaching practices, he started evaluating them critically based on their pedagogical competence. He noticed that most native teachers did not have any formal education or training in language teaching methodologies: "I believe that as far as I have seen, most native teachers I have met so far have not [had] education in terms of having a BA or MA in a very specific field of language teaching" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). Through this realization, Berke started to question the inherent superiority of native language teachers. He understood that linguistic proficiency does not lead to a competent teacher on its own. To be a competent teacher, there is a need for a combination of pedagogical knowledge, teaching skills, and the ability to connect with students. Berke's critical reflection on native-speakerism resulted in his advocacy for NNESTs and challenged the assumption that native speakers are better teachers: "I don't think that being linguistically competent is something that we can attribute to being born in a country where the language itself is spoken" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023).

Reassessing his previous perceptions, Berke enhanced his professional identity as an NNEST and became more confident in his skills and abilities. He recognized that his academic education, continuous development, and commitment to effective teaching make him a high-quality language instructor who values inclusivity, cultural awareness, and interpersonal relationships with students. He admired his teachers, who inspired him, and replicated them in his teaching method through student engagement. The challenges he faced regarding his unapproachable professors and curricula motivated him to employ a different approach to his teaching. As a teacher, Berke values being accessible to his students and supporting them in their learning process. His experiences of learning became his professional identity foundation, and his exposure to diverse cultures expanded his worldview, which resulted in his inclusive teaching philosophy.

Pedagogical Strategies and Beliefs on Teaching Essentials

As a Turkish NNEST, Berke's professional identity cannot be separated from his teaching strategies and beliefs. He shaped his teaching approach through his personal experiences as a learner, his investigation of effective teaching practices, and his awareness of challenges caused by native-speakerism. The gained theme encompasses teaching strategies, relationships with students, teacher roles, and attributes of a good English teacher. Berke perceived communication, cultural awareness, and student engagement as the cornerstones of effective language teaching. He has grounded his approach in contemporary language teaching methodologies that focus on the holistic development of language skills like CLT. He strongly believes in the CLT approach since it underscores communication and interaction in the learning process. He believes that language teaching must enable the students to use language: "I always try to create opportunities for my students to practice speaking in authentic situations. This not only improves their language skills but also boosts their confidence in using English outside the classroom" (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

He designs activities so that the students can engage in real-life situations. He believes that language learning should be interactive and student-centered, and students learn better when they are involved in the learning process. As he explained: "I think a good language teacher must communicate with the ... also has linguistic knowledge, having the required skills to communicate and to integrate into their lessons." (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). His teaching approach is based on the communicative function of language: "I use real conversations in my lessons because learning language is not about grammar rules. Students need to use it for communication and connection" (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

Berke values cultural diversity, and his classroom content is mostly based on that. He believes that it is critical to increase students' global awareness and cultural sensitivity: "I try to create an environment that welcomes diversity and unique linguistic backgrounds to increase the effect of my teaching" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). To broaden his students' worldview, he uses literature and various cultural materials in his lessons. He believes that this can enrich students' experiences in a globalized world. He incorporates discussions around cultural similarities and differences to enhance his students' cultural sensitivity: "I use stories from various cultures, it can be Turkish or English. I want to help my students to understand and appreciate all cultures." (Berke,

personal communication, October 2023).

Berke believes in adaptive and reflective teaching practice and is committed to professional development. He regularly reflects on his teaching approach and attempts to improve it. He strongly believes in student needs as the cornerstone of his teaching practices. He tries to follow up on the latest ELT developments through workshops and webinars: "I think I value the methodology, innovations in teaching field, and also the needs and expectations of my students as well." (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

We have the opportunity to, you know, have social experiences in institutions, in non-governmental organizations. We have the chance to have the exchange programs. We can have everything we can want actually, we can have webinars, we can have certificates, we can enroll in...(Berke, personal communication, November 2023)

Berke believes that it is important to get students' feedback and modify the teaching approach based on them. He believes that a good teacher can improve their students' experiences through self-reflection: "I always reflect on my lessons and try to make them more effective. If there is something that isn't working, I try to change it." (Berke, personal communication, November 2023)

Berke strongly believes in strong teacher-student relationships and how they can be supportive in creating a learning environment where students get motivated and feel valued as well. He believes that it is important to be approachable and empathetic to increase the trust of the students because if students believe their teacher to be accessible and understanding they will engage in the learning process more actively: "Now what I care about, what I value is being approachable, guiding them, facilitating them, and especially helping out those who are looking to do further and to get themselves in a better position in the future." (Berke, personal communication, November 2023). He positions himself as a facilitator and a guide who encourages his students to express their needs and seek assistance. He reflects on his relationships with students: "Some students really do like you as a friend or a brother... the very communication with the students got better." (Berke, personal communication, October 2023)

He believes that approachability leads to a conducive learning environment and a strong rapport between him and his students. Berke's emphasis on empathy comes from his own experiences as a young language learner. He relates to his students' challenges and wants

to support them effectively: "As a non-native English teacher, I can relate to my students' experiences and help them navigate the difficulties of learning a new language." (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). Berke highlights the importance of students' individual needs and learning styles and believes that adapting his teaching according to them encourages and facilitates effective learning. He mentions that: "If I know my students well, I can design activities that suit their interests and strengths. This makes learning more meaningful for them." (Berke, personal communication, October 2023).

He creates his lessons through personalized approaches so that he can increase their motivation and participation. Berke attempts to create a classroom atmosphere that is positive and inclusive so that his students feel safe and are ready to take risks. He thinks this type of environment is critical for increasing their confidence. Being open to his students gives his students a sense of community and belonging: "I always keep my door open for my students. They know they can come to me with any concerns or questions they have, whether academic or personal." (Berke, personal communication, November 2023). Berke believes that the role of a teacher is multifaceted, which goes beyond academia and includes mentorship and guidance. He sees himself as a facilitator who guides his students through their learning journey and encourages them to be more active in their educational path and more independent. He believes that autonomy enhancement helps students develop skills that are essential for a long-term learning process. "I think the complexity of being a teacher is not just like going to the classroom and teaching; it is like we have to be the guide of the students." (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

Berke knows that it is critical to support students even out of a classroom setting, so he acts as their mentor and guides them on their personal and academic issues. He understands that these aspects are highly interconnected with his students' learning experiences. His holistic approach shows his commitment to his students' well-being and success: "We have to be the guide of the students, we have to be their therapist, we have to be the one who leads the way for them, being the facilitator in terms of their career and everything" (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

Berke does not ignore his students' emotional needs and knows that their psychological needs influence their learning. He wants to create an environment where his students' progress is both academic and personal. He shared: "I focus on the well-being of my

students. And as a therapist, I have given so many speeches. I did two of them yesterday. It happens" (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

According to Berke, one of the most important teaching roles is a lifelong learner who always wants to increase their knowledge and skills. He engages in reflective practice to evaluate his teaching and find out its shortcomings, and make improvements. He believes that professional development can ensure responsiveness to students' needs. He notes: "I think I value the methodology, innovations in the teaching field, and also the needs and expectations of my students as well" (Berke, personal communication, November 2023). When it comes to a good English teacher's attributes, there are several factors that Berke thinks are essential. He emphasizes both professional and personal qualities. He thinks a good knowledge of the English language is fundamental.

I think a good language teacher must be one who not only communicates effectively with students but also possesses a deep understanding of the language itself. Having comprehensive linguistic knowledge is important for teachers to provide accurate explanations and answer students' questions. It's not just about speaking the language fluently; it's about understanding its grammar, and usage so that we can guide our students effectively. Linguistic competence is something that non-native English teachers can also have. (Berke, personal communication, October 2023)

Berke believes that NNESTs can be proficient if they keep learning and improving themselves continuously.

I have worked hard to improve my own English language skills and to be a non-native teacher who is not just like the thousands of others. I think being linguistically competent is something non-native English teachers can also achieve. (Berke, personal communication, October 2023)

He knows that it is also important for a teacher to know teaching methodologies and be able to use various teaching strategies. He believes that getting updated can allow a teacher to enhance their teaching quality and meet their students' needs in a better way.

I find myself a competent teacher because I think I value the methodology, innovations in the teaching field, and also the needs and expectations of my students as well. By keeping up with new teaching strategies and approaches, I can adapt my lessons to be more effective and engaging. Continuous learning allows me to improve my teaching practices and provide better support to my students. (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

Berke believes that English teachers need to be culturally competent, aware and sensitive to students' backgrounds so that their classroom environment can be inclusive which can

result in better learning experience and their students can be prepared for a globalized world: "I care a lot about diversity and my students' cultural backgrounds. I try to connect with them and make the lessons more engaging" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). He further noted: "I think students need to be familiar with different cultures and viewpoints. I use multicultural content in my lessons, so they can understand the world" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023).

Berke believes that a good teacher is someone who keeps learning and stays updated with the latest teaching developments so that they can meet their students' needs. That is why he looks for any opportunities to improve himself through professional activities, exchange programs, webinars, and courses. He believes that a teacher must ensure that they are always responsive and follow teaching standards. Berke, in general, believes in a student-centered approach and emphasizes communicative competence, cultural awareness, and strong connections with students. He dedicates himself to his students' academic and personal development through creating an inclusive classroom environment by being a facilitator, mentor, and advocate. He continuously tries to be competent, passionate, and to improve himself professionally to challenge native-speakerism.

Perception of NNESTs and Their Various Challenges

Berke's perception of his Turkish NNEST colleagues is somehow conflicted and nuanced. Although he advocates for their strengths and contributions and thinks that they need to be recognized, he attempts to gain native-like language proficiencies and shows his preference for NESTs if he could. This internal conflict reflects the deep impact of native-speakerism in ELT. Berke admits that Turkish NNESTs are competent teachers and can be skilled, and rejects the fact that good language teaching is dependent on nativeness. He stated: "I don't think that being linguistically competent is something that we can attribute to being born in a country where the language itself is spoken" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). In general, Berke believes that Turkish NNESTs have the advantage of mutual cultural understanding and empathy to be a supportive teacher. Turkish NNESTs are more connected to their students, which results in their deep understanding of students' difficulties and challenges. Through close bonds with their

students, Turkish NNESTs can create a more comfortable learning environment. Berke sees this ability as an important and valuable strength.

I think Turkish teachers are more emotional and more supportive when it comes to being there for the students. They can connect better because of shared cultural backgrounds, and that connection means they really understand what students struggle with. It's not just about teaching the language; it's about guiding them in a way that helps them feel more comfortable and supported in the classroom, which I think really improves the learning experience. (Berke, personal communication, November 2023)

He believes that Turkish NNESTs are more advantaged than NESTs: "We learned English too, so we understand the difficulties our students might have. We can empathize with them and know their struggles. We can teach strategies that helped us too" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). Berke also believes that Turkish NNESTs have good linguistic knowledge: "We have studied English grammar and vocabulary extensively. This allows us to explain language concepts clearly and anticipate areas where students might have misconceptions" (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

He believes that if Turkish NNESTs continue to improve themselves regarding their language skills and teaching skills, they can be effective in English teaching. However, He identified some of their shortcomings because of which NESTs can be preferred even by himself. He discussed that Turkish NNESTs struggle with fluency, and this affects their teaching and their self-confidence as well. Furthermore, Turkish NNESTs tend to prioritize grammatical structures over communicative activities which can limit students' opportunities to develop fluency skills: "I believe that non-native teachers... focus more on the form and the meaning of a specific grammatical or vocabulary item... but not probably focusing on the specific practice of English in the classroom " (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). He further explained: "In our context specifically, especially in Turkey... fluency is a bit of a problematic aspect of language learning in Turkish education because we... prioritize accuracy rather than fluency " (Berke, personal communication, October 2023).

Emphasis on accuracy and grammar over communicative competence has negative effects on Turkish NNESTs' language practice. He also mentioned that one way for Turkish NNESTs to get accepted and recognized is by imitating NESTs. He believes that having native-like language skills makes their teaching skills more credible: "...but

thinking about lack of confidence or a challenge, you know, for non-native teachers in Turkey, maybe one way could be non-native teachers imitating how native teachers are doing in the classroom " (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). There are pressures as such that lead to Turkish NNESTs' professional insecurity and prevent them from showing their strengths. He is aware that students tend to prefer NESTs, which also has a huge impact on NNESTs' teaching experiences:

"I think students... compare non-natives with natives, especially in the very specific language learning context. Maybe their expectations or their stereotypes of teachers, or maybe cultural biases could be one thing that is probably playing a very huge role here " (Berke, personal communication, October 2023)

Despite all these shortcomings, Berke mentioned Turkish NNESTs' strengths in language teaching as well. NNESTs are culturally connected to the students and can make better connections, which in turn increases the quality of the teaching and learning experience.

They- NNESTs-can connect better because of shared cultural backgrounds, and that can make students feel more understood and comfortable. It's not just about teaching the language; it's also about guiding them in a way that they feel supported, which I think really improves the overall learning experience. (Berke, personal communication, November 2023)

He also believes that Turkish NNESTs' approachability and support are big assets: "I always give quite importance to being approachable and communicating with them as well as the other teachers" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). During his reflection, Berke identified the focus on grammar knowledge as Turkish NNESTs' shortcoming; however, in other situations, he sees that as their strength. He acknowledged their understanding of grammar and language structure: "...they have a solid grasp of language rules, which can be really beneficial for students needing a strong foundation. This detailed focus is something non-native teachers do well" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). Empathizing with students is another strength that Berke identifies with Turkish NNESTs. They have passed the journey of learning a language, so they can understand students' difficulties more easily. Berke reflected: "I would probably feel closer to students in their language learning process because I would probably say that, okay, in data language, this is how it's used, so I could provide more practical, more real-life related situations" (Berke, personal communication, January 2024).

Despite all his advocacies for Turkish NNESTs, Berke himself attempted to achieve native-like language proficiency regarding fluency and idiomatic language knowledge.

This conflict highlights how native-speaker norms can be internalized, as being like natives becomes a benchmark for teaching a language. His language goals show how native speakers can get idealized so that even a competent NNEST aspires to get to their level so that his teaching find credibility: "I think having a more native aspect in providing specific phrases and maybe with different explanations of things... it could make it better for me to explain myself and the subject topic much better" (Berke, personal communication, November 2023). He added: "Sometimes I feel that even though my English is fluent, there's a level of naturalness or idiomatic fluency that native speakers have, and I think having that could really enhance my teaching. It's something I've always aimed to work on" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023).

Berke also admitted that he would prefer hiring a NEST if he were to decide between them and a Turkish NNEST as an administrator. Although he is aware of societal biases, he would hire a NEST as he considers students' expectations, market demands and perceived authenticity: "I think I would also go with a native one...or I would probably go with a friend or a colleague I worked with before. I would probably go straight with this and look for someone that I actually know" (Berke, personal communication, January 2024).

When he was asked additionally whether he would consider hiring a Turkish NNEST, he clearly responded: "No, no, I wouldn't, no" (Berke, personal communication, November 2023). Berke knows that Turkish NNESTs can be competent and skillful, but his hiring practices would come under external pressures. He is a NNEST, and he believes in Turkish NNESTs abilities; however, he is aware of the biases as well. He knows that students and parents demand NESTs. These biases and preferences challenge NNESTs regarding their credibility and authenticity. Berke does not question Turkish NNESTs' ability in teaching, but he knows that native-speakerism is deeply rooted in ELT. It is this internal conflict that has made him pursue professional growth: "Students... are willing to attend your (NEST) classes more, they respect you (NEST) more than they do us (NNEST)" (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

Berke is aware of the biases that impact Turkish NNESTs and of the employment challenges they have in ELT. Societal preferences are in favor of NESTs, and Berke knows it; he knows that NEST preference hinders Turkish NNESTs' establishment of their credibility, their recognition, and their career opportunities. Native-speakerism has

limited Turkish NNESTs' global employment chances, and institutions are led by the market and students who prefer NESTs. Turkish NNESTs now must continuously prove themselves, their competence, and their teaching skills. Berke never had difficulty with employment, but he is aware that other colleagues have. His professional job has been smooth due to his qualifications, exchange experiences, and fluency. However, he knows that not all Turkish NNESTs have these advantages and are not preferred in the ELT industry. Turkish NNESTs are scrutinized more critically than NESTs and are more overlooked. Berke noted: "The focus is on having a native teacher, not their education, not their practice, nothing... This might be one of the challenges as well... we really do have it in Turkey" (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

The biases impact Turkish NNESTs' hiring opportunities, their professional growth, and their retention in the field. They feel the pressure of unrealistic expectations, so they are forced to have native-like fluency and adopt Western teaching methods. They must prove themselves, which puts them in a cycle of self-doubt and professional insecurity: "We have the desire to prove ourselves to the students, to the administration, maybe to the native teacher... So maybe one way could be non-native teachers... imitating how native teachers are doing in the classroom" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). Berke noted that students and parents perceive NESTs as more authentic and devalue Turkish NNESTs: "Students... are willing to attend their [NEST] classes more, they respect them [NEST] more than they do us [NNEST]" (Berke, personal communication, January 2024). The biases extend to payment as well, and Berke revealed that Turkish NNESTs are often paid less and have fewer benefits compared to NESTs, despite their qualification: "Salary-wise, yes. Discriminated, I'm not sure, but... I probably had half the salary that a native teacher would have" (Berke, personal communication, November 2023). The discrepancies impact Turkish NNESTs' self-perception and confidence. Although Berke recalled the moments when he could connect with his students on a more personal level, they would respect and favor NESTs more:

Some students really do like you as a friend or a brother... but the very way that students compared me and native teachers, I always felt that they could interact more with me... but respect was more often given to the native teachers. (Berke, personal communication, October 2023)

It is because of these challenges that Berke believes in the need for professional development to get credibility. He thinks Turkish NNESTs should advance in their

careers. His journey of professional development was not only for proficiency but also a response to the pressures. His internal conflict between being native-like and advocating for NNESTs' qualities reveals the gravity of the struggle many Turkish NNESTs face when they face employment challenges.

Sometimes I feel that even though my English is fluent, there's a level of naturalness or idiomatic fluency that native speakers have, and I think having that could really enhance my teaching. It's something I've always aimed to work on. (Berke, personal communication, October 2023)

Apart from employment issues and low payment, Berke also acknowledged that Turkish NNESTs often undergo challenges regarding the administrators. Their school management hinders their professional growth through unequal treatment and limited support. Berke noted that Turkish NNESTs normally work hard and have heavier workloads compared to NESTs, which shows the reality that Turkish NNESTs need to continue to prove themselves. They often are expected to do lesson planning, material development, and meetings with parents. This number of responsibilities would give Turkish NNESTs less time for their professional growth. He shared his experiences about the lack of support from his administration:

One of the institutions I was the teacher who was both teaching groups of students and also having one-on-one private lessons so my workload was more... The administration would prioritize a native teacher, while those of us who are NNESTs did more and received less recognition. (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

Berke described the times when the management was not open to feedback and support which would lead to a working environment that aggravated NNEST's identity construction and left them feeling marginalized and isolated:

They were not quite approachable... I think they were not quite, you know, qualified in what they were doing in terms of administration. Not administrating the language, but administration-wise, they were not respectful to the office workers and those in reception. (Berke, personal communication, January 2024)

Berke believes that institutions need to re-evaluate their support systems and policies to be more inclusive so that Turkish NNESTs can achieve their potential. The issues of insufficient support are also present in the teacher training programs that Turkish NNESTs complete. The challenges begin early for them because the teacher training programs lack practical and hands-on experiences that can prepare them for real-life teaching. The lack

of connection between theories and real-life practice creates problems for Turkish NNESTs regarding classroom management and teaching flexibility. Berke shared his frustration and noted that the program was mainly focused on theoretical knowledge with restricted emphasis on practical skills. He believes that this issue causes NNESTs to feel less confident when they face NESTs. Turkish NNESTs are forced to emulate NESTs and struggle to meet the expectations of the students. He described how these programs overlook classroom dynamics and overlook the skills teachers need to navigate real classroom challenges:

I believe the programs that we are being given, the objectives of the whole department, are not very much related to the practical aspects of being an English teacher... We are more on the theoretical aspects of how to be a teacher, how to give instruction, but the reality, the actual practices, are not very much related to what we have as in theory. (Berke, personal communication, January 2024)

Berke explains that Turkish NNESTs are left alone in real life, so they try to learn skills through trial and error. He emphasizes some neglected areas in his training program, such as classroom management, lesson integration, and adapting lessons to fit students' needs:

No one told me about how to manage the classroom, how to give instructions, how to keep the atmosphere where students feel free to ask questions... They were just talking about how to create a lesson plan. No one creates a lesson plan in the real world. (Berke, personal communication, January 2024)

Turkish NNESTs often struggle with self-doubt due to this disconnection, which adds to their challenges related to biases. The limited teacher training programs decrease their self-confidence and strengthen the belief that NESTs are more intuitive regarding language and culture and thus are better teachers. Turkish NNESTs now need to work much harder to overcome these gaps, which is the reason behind their urge for professional development. Berke believes that teacher training programs fail to address the reality in the classroom.

I found it challenging to manage the classroom, to keep students engaged, and to address their diverse needs. The reality of teaching was quite different from what I had imagined based on my academic studies. There was a disconnect between what we learned and what we needed to do in practice. (Berke, personal communication, January 2024)

He thinks there should have been more practical training in their teacher training programs, besides which he was forced to conduct his practicum online, which deeply

affected him once he was in a classroom: "During my BA studies, we didn't have enough opportunities to practice teaching in real classroom settings. Our practicum experience was also limited, so I could not get ready for the challenges of a real classroom" (Berke, personal communication, January 2024). He added:

Classroom management, how to control the class, how to keep the atmosphere where students can be interactive and where they would feel free to ask questions, where collaborative teaching would occur. I didn't have any instruction on how to do this. (Berke, personal communication, January 2024)

Perception of NESTs, Collaboration with Them, and Their Difference in Teaching

Berke is aware of native-speakerism, which results in favoring NESTs over NNESTs in ELT. He knows that this is a significant issue as it impacts NNESTs' perceptions and experiences. Berke's reflections reveal that society and institutions prefer NESTs, and this limits NNESTs' employment and affects students' perceptions. He noted that students and parents value NESTs and respect them more. As a result, Turkish NNESTs undergo pressures to prove themselves: "They [institutions] see native ones as an important factor in their business—it is to sell their service" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). Berke knows that private language schools tend to use NESTs to attract students and parents, even if they are not qualified enough to teach. He understands that this comes from the biases that societies have: "...it is about having a native teacher...they never see if they know how to teach...we have this in Turkey" (Berke, personal communication, November 2023). Berke is also aware that native-speakerism has impacts on NNESTs' economic status as they get lower payments than NESTs. Private institutions favor NESTs, and that is why Turkish NNESTs feel themselves under pressure to become native-like. "I try to reach native-like level... it is important if you want to be successful" (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

Berke described how, under the influence of native-speakerism, students preferred NESTs and trusted their lessons more: "Students think native teachers are cool...they adore them" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023). The reason behind NEST admiration is the perception that NESTs are more authentic teachers and can teach better. Berke is also aware of the areas where NESTs are better and more authoritative. His ideas reveal that he also likes these qualities and has a desire to be like them. He explicitly mentioned that he would not value NNESTs from other countries: "If I have someone

coming from Afghanistan and teaching, I would consider them of probably less valuable... but not really, this is more related to education, more related to competency” (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

Berke believes that NESTs are more proficient in language knowledge and fluency. He noted that NESTs speak the language naturally with authentic pronunciation and idiomatic expressions. He discussed that in Türkiye and for NNESTs, accuracy comes ahead of fluency, and that is why they face the challenges of not being fluent. Berke’s reflections show that he feels motivated to the level of native-like fluency:

In our context specifically, especially in Turkey... fluency is a bit of a problematic aspect of language learning... Because we... prioritize accuracy rather than fluency. That’s why lack of fluency might be one of the challenges... versus native English teachers. (Berke, personal communication, October 2023)

Berke admires NESTs’ teaching style, which focuses on the communication aspect of language. He mentioned that NESTs are better teachers at speaking and implementing interactive activities in contrast with NNESTs, who insist on form-focused activities and teaching. He discussed that NNESTs emphasize grammar and structure of the language, whereas NESTs emphasize communication and conversation, which help students be more comfortable in lessons:

I think native teachers in a way probably prioritize speaking and communication activities more than those non-native teachers... non-native teachers... focus more on the form and the meaning of a specific... grammatical or vocabulary item. (Berke, personal communication, October 2023)

Cultural competence is another strength that Berke thinks NESTs have. He sees them as the authentic knowledge source of English-speaking nations’ cultures. Berke believes that integrating culture into language lessons would enhance students’ learning experience. So, he tries to do the same: “Maybe... having very authentic language provided by the native speaker... Maybe cultural insights that the very native teacher provides... in terms of pronunciation and maybe enhanced listening skills, and also speaking skills...” (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

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Berke believes that NESTs have several advantages, but he is also aware that they have shortcomings. He pointed out that many NESTs do not have any formal teaching training, and they mostly rely on their conversational skills. Many NESTs do not have any knowledge of teaching methods:

The majority of them were just locals who were probably doing some other jobs in their own countries when they were living there. And they moved here in Turkey and what they're doing here is just giving us some parts of the very language that they used to use. (Berke, personal communication, October 2023)

Berke emphasized that NESTs cannot always connect with students culturally, and this can create challenges in the process of language teaching because NESTs cannot easily relate to the students or the environment. He believes that NNESTs have this cultural connection advantage, so they can empathize with students and facilitate their learning.

Berke finds it beneficial if NESTs and NNESTs cooperate in language teaching. He noted that NESTs can be helpful regarding their contributions in linguistic authenticity and fluency, while NNESTs would be valuable by integrating their Turkish culture and structured approaches in teaching grammar and vocabulary. According to Berke, by blending these strengths, there would be a positive influence in a teaching context. He claimed that the cooperation between NESTs and NNESTs would allow each group to benefit from their strengths and alleviate weaknesses:

One benefit could be getting the... language authenticity maybe, having very authentic language provided by the native speaker... the adversities could be, maybe limited teaching experience could be one thing, because as I said, from my experience, the native ones had less teaching experience than those non-native ones that I worked with. (Berke, personal communication, November 2023)

Berke is also concerned about some tensions that might result from collaborative teaching. Administrators often favor NESTs, and this results in a workload imbalance. Berke noted that Turkish NNESTs end up doing more, including lesson preparation and classroom activities, whereas NESTs only do the communication tasks:

I also felt that I was the one who had to do the hard work because a native teacher was... focus[ing] more on the interaction... and they just really don't keep up with the syllabus... the work that was supposed to be done by the syllabus. (Berke, personal communication, October 2023)

(Re)Construction of Professional Identity in a Context with NESTs

Berke's professional identity construction in a context of native-speakerism has been complex and a reflective process that has been influenced by his experiences, his resilience, and his internal negotiations. His journey started as a novice teacher full of uncertainty, into a confident professional self. Financial stability was his first aspiration as a novice teacher, which outweighed professional identity creation. 'Live, to survive' was his first practical trigger, which means he did not base his career on growth but economic stability. As he reflected: "I knew from high school that I wanted to be an English teacher...but at the beginning I wanted to survive. I had to make money. My initial beliefs were mostly based on teaching rather than classroom" (Berke, personal communication, January 2024).

Berke's start of his profession was accompanied by the practical gaps between his teacher training and real-life teaching. He needed more skills in classroom management, problem solving, and adaptability. He realized that the theoretical knowledge was not enough for him, and this was a trigger for a sense of inadequacy, so he struggled to adopt the identity of a "trained teacher": "When I started, I was shocked and scared. I had not learned anything and was not ready for a real classroom. It was very different" (Berke, personal communication, January 2024). This vulnerability made him doubt himself and his identity. He questioned his skills and his role as a competent teacher. Later in his career, he faced native-speakerism through the perceptions of his students and administrators. It was difficult emotionally because he felt the pressure of NESTs' preference: "Students think native teachers are cool ...they, like, adore them and think they are special just because they are native" (Berke, personal communication, October 2023).

Berke was positioned as "less valued", and it triggered his self-reflection journey he decided to improve himself and his teaching approach. He wanted to be seen as competent as NESTs or even more. The students respected NESTs more, and he felt that he needed to be like them to be acceptable. Meanwhile, he also recognized his unique strengths and wanted to have his own authentic identity.

Majority of native teachers I encountered, that I've worked with, have the education or the pedagogy of teaching in a very competent way. So I think, in a way, I thought that okay, I'm a really good teacher because I know what I'm doing and I'm trying to do it as well as I can do. So in a way, it motivated me more to, again, improve myself and be a non-native teacher who is not just like the thousands of others, but one that people, you know, enjoy to have company and that they would like me in their language school institutions to work for.

Because in a way that's quite a satisfactory moment to see that, okay, you are someone desired, you're someone who is doing things good and the others not as that (Berke, personal communication, October 2023)

The emotional toll also became another trigger that directed Berke towards seeking resilience and self-improvement. He transformed his frustration into motivation and determination to redefine his professional identity. He became determined to reduce the impact of native-speakerism and reconstruct his identity through professional development. He took additional training, exchange programs, and multiple certifications to be proactive and increase his skills. The continuous self-improvement was a way for validation of his role, and it became the key element in his identity evolution and growth:

I'm always learning how to teach better, how to teach in a way that touches the students to seek out for more because we must be the one who guides the students, who facilitates teaching... the conflicts and everything that happens with native teachers or the administration, I think we shouldn't be focusing that much on what's going on with things that are outside the classroom, even though they really do affect us too much. Our focus should be on the lesson and improving ourselves as a teacher, the professional development (Berke, personal communication, January 2024)

Berke's decision to improve himself and seek extra knowledge and experience reflects his desire for self-legitimization. His commitment to professional development is a response to his feelings of being inadequate and native-speakerism. Understanding students and building rapport with them was another important tool that he used to enhance his teaching identity. He sees cultural connection as an asset and attempts to be their mentor and supportive figure. This type of connection and support is something that NESTs can hardly achieve, as it is a quality that Turkish NNESTs have that makes them unique.

Some students really do like me as a friend or a brother... they could interact more with me in a way that they could sometimes in Turkish would express themselves. And this probably made it easier for them to communicate with me than the native teachers. (Berke, personal communication, October 2023)

The connection with his students became integral to Berke's identity, which reflects his belief in effective teaching. Native-speakerism made him doubt himself at the beginning, but it ended up pushing him to enhance and redefine his identity as a teacher. Berke continued to develop his skills, and meanwhile, his identity evolved from a survivor who needed others' validation to someone who is confident and recognizes his

professionalism. He sees himself as a competent and dedicated teacher who is recognized and valued by his administration: "They [administrators] are grateful for my contribution, and they're always so supportive and appreciative, and they're always, you know, giving specific feedback on saying thank you for what you have contributed" (Berke, personal communication, November 2023).

The recognition reinforced Berke's professional identity reformation as he is respected and valued for his team and community. He does not need to prove himself anymore and positions himself as an NNEST who has many strengths and qualities. His identity shifted from dependent to an independent one that does not need any external validation. Native-speakerism has been a challenge and a catalyst for Berke and his journey. His initial experiences resulted in a cycle of emotional resilience and adaptation that allowed him to grow. His reformed identity is a blend of pedagogical knowledge, cultural relatedness, and a commitment to building connections with students. Berke has reshaped his identity from a teacher with inadequacies to one with strengths and a unique perspective as a Turkish NNEST.

Theme 7: Advocating NNEST and Expected Support

Berke acknowledged the lack of administrative support and leaving Turkish NNESTs feeling undervalued and ignored. He believes that administrators need to listen to teachers' feedback about their workplace conditions:

The problem with my expectations and the real-life situations that were taking place...considering the wages or the side benefits, everything we were getting, I think they were not quite taking the complaints or the ideas that people were giving them. (Berke, personal communication, January 2024)

Berke reflected on his frustrations and the lack of his administrators' approachability. He explained that payment discrepancies and institutional inadequacies are generally overlooked, and it results in Turkish NNESTs' lack of trust, and their concerns are not taken seriously. Berke suggested that if administrators engage with Turkish NNESTs' feedback and create an inclusive and respectful environment, they will feel supported:

For teachers, we might be experiencing lots of problems in the classroom, outside the classroom, with the parents, with the students, or with anything else that we can have in a classroom or the institution. So it should be closed, there should be a close relationship. (Berke, personal communication, October 2023)

The very specific experiences I have observed and actually experienced are related to the language institutions...But for the general case of full evaluation, I believe the non-native English teachers who are, you know, having their nationalities from Turkey, probably we are having all those complaints about the native English teachers. (Berke, personal communication, October 2023)

Berke highlighted the significance of having a ‘close relationship’ between teachers and administrators and empathy towards them. He argued that management support is important because Turkish NNESTs face various challenges, including students’ parents and classroom problems. He thinks that this support would alleviate some of the NNESTs’ pressures so that they can focus on their profession. Berke also believes that there is a need for structural changes within the education system of Türkiye. He critiques the system’s overemphasis on theory and ignoring practical training, and notes that this approach leaves Turkish NNESTs unprepared for real classrooms: “I believe the programs that we are being given, the objectives of the whole department are not very much related to the practical aspects of being an English teacher” (Berke, personal communication, January 2024). He emphasizes the need for a teacher training program that offers more practical experience so that Turkish NNESTs can benefit from it, gain more confidence in their teaching, and develop stronger teaching identities.

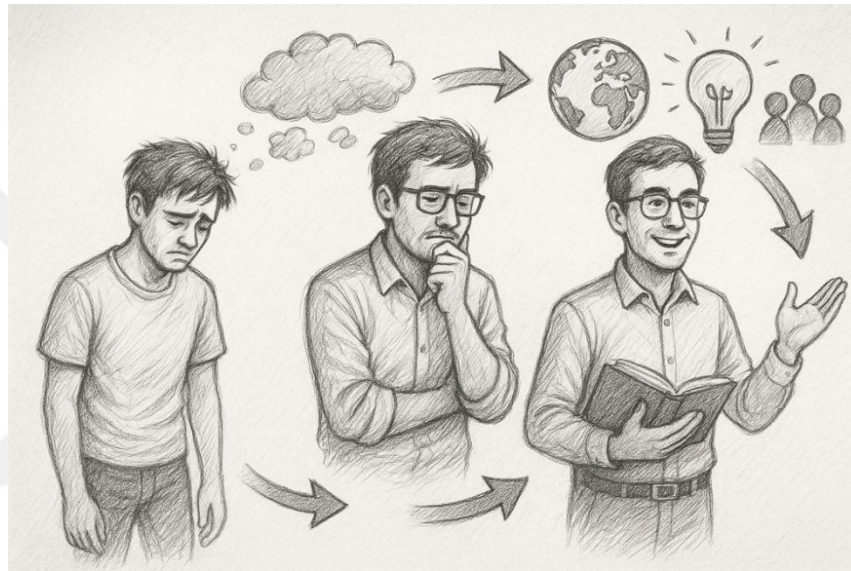
Berke strongly advocates for NNESTs’ recognition and challenges the belief that NESTs are inherently better at teaching English. He emphasizes that teaching quality is not related to a teacher’s first language: “I think non-native English teachers can be competent too...they can have language knowledge” (Berke, personal communication, November 2023). Berke believes that linguistic proficiency is not exclusive to NESTs and that Turkish NNESTs can also achieve it. He argues that the ability to be an effective teacher is based on experience, commitment, and continuous learning. He advocates for supporting Turkish NNESTs’ professional growth with a more inclusive working atmosphere:

I think support and providing more support would be only beneficial. Especially in-service training, times that administration can have meetings they have with teachers, collecting their ideas, asking for feedback from them, maybe specific occasion events that would connect the either non-native with the institution, with the administration, but also for native, non-natives, the whole group, you know, connecting us would be a lot better. Then we would have this collaborative learning, collaborative teaching. It would probably work only for the best. (Berke, personal communication, January 2024)

Berke's case is an example of Turkish NNESTs' professional identity (re)construction in Türkiye. His journey shows the interconnection between personal experiences, pedagogical beliefs, native-speakerism biases, and identity negotiation. Berke navigates his professional identity and reshapes it through advocacy for systemic support and emphasizing his competencies. Figure 4.2. shows his professional journey and how his self-doubt in his novice years is replaced by his confidence.

Figure 4.2

Becoming Berke: From Self-Doubt to Self-Definition

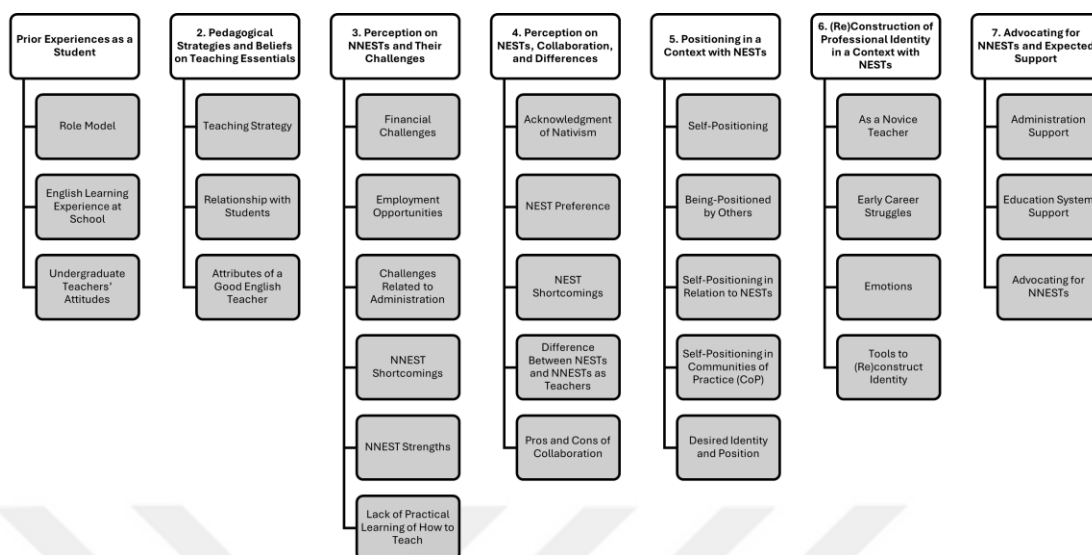


4.2 The Case of Elif

This section delves into the findings of the participant with the pseudonym of Elif, whose data was collected from his narrative essay reflective emails, semi-structured interviews, and the focus group discussion. It presents Elif's professional identity (re)construction as a Turkish Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher (NNEST) in the context of native-speakerism. The obtained themes identified through inductive thematic analysis are shown in the following diagram, which illustrates the emergent themes and categories.

Figure 4.3

Elif's Emerged Themes and Categories



Prior Experiences as a Student

Elif's journey is rooted in her experiences as a student, which shaped her teacher identity and her beliefs on native speakerism in Türkiye. Elif's professional aspirations were influenced by her early 'role models' during her middle and high school years. Her reflection reveals how inspiring teachers can have a significant role in future career decisions. Elif describes the first time she was introduced to English in sixth grade and how her first English teacher affected her:

I started learning English in the 6th grade as a compulsory lesson in middle school. I was lucky enough to have great teachers in my middle school life. My first English teacher was probably a newly graduate as I remember because she was enthusiastic to teach us English. I remember my first day with her. When she entered the class, I heard English for the first time, and I was amazed because she was talking so well. She was very kind, affectionate, ambitious, and sympathetic. (Elif, personal communication, December 2022)

This teacher's teaching enthusiasm and eagerness, along with her affection, created a positive learning environment. Elif described how amazed she was when she heard English for the first time and how her teacher increased her interest in the English language. The teachers left a lasting impression on Elif through enjoyable teaching:

Elif recalls how her teacher made the lessons engaging and fun: "She used to enter the class with Randy, which was a puppet, and Randy was talking to us, making us laugh, and asking some simple questions before every lesson. Moreover, we used to dance with English songs at the end of every lesson. (Elif, personal communication, December 2022)

The teacher's creativity made the lessons fun so that Elif found herself having a deep connection with the English language. Using a puppet and music made English learning memorable for Elif as she continued acting the same in her future years as a teacher. She reflected on the significance of joy in teaching and learning:

First of all, I can say that [a good language teacher] should be enjoyable because if the students can't enjoy in the classroom, they cannot learn. That's why I think you have to create a funny environment because they need to feel confident in the classroom. (Elif, personal communication, October 2023)

Elif's second English teacher in middle school also had an important role in her career decision, specifically regarding the teacher's style:

My second English teacher was also funny, although she was more disciplined than my previous teacher. Her English was better than the other teacher. I can now say that she had a British accent. She was so authentic in those years. Her unique style, beautiful face, and her laugh attracted me as a child, and so I wanted to look like her and even I chose my current career owing to her. (Elif, personal communication, December 2022)

Elif liked this teacher's authenticity and discipline in a way that also affected her personal development. She admires her teacher's British accent, unique style, and language proficiency. These became her values in her teaching practice. She added how these teachers and role models affected her career choice. Elif further explained the influence of her teachers on her career choice:

In the first paragraph, I mentioned why I wanted to choose this career in short. My middle school teacher, whose name is Seçil, became my idol in those years. After starting high school, I had another wonderful teacher, Süleyman. I wanted to be a teacher like them. (Elif, personal communication, December 2022).

These teachers influenced Elif's self-perception and teaching styles, and she is also aware of the lasting impacts on her professional identity as she still attempts to emulate them, their teaching styles, and personal attributes. Elif's experiences as a student included enjoyable activities and disciplined learning, which she highlights as critical in effective language learning. She emphasized the importance of fun and engaging teaching approaches she learned through her English teachers. Elif recalls how her teacher adapted lessons to suit young learners:

"She was trying to teach English with fun, which was so normal as we were just children aged around 12 years. She used to enter the class with Randy... Moreover, we used to dance with English songs at the end of every lesson" (Elif, personal communication, December

2022).

She was affected by her enjoyable language learning experiences, and she created a similar environment for her students:

For example, I do create enjoyable classrooms. I analyze the student and then I ask some funny questions, and that's why he or she doesn't care that he or she is just talking in English. He's just trying to talk in English, trying to give an answer in English. That's why he's just not caring about the grammatical mistakes or any other things. He's just trying to focus on the question. (Elif, personal communication, October 2023)

Elif believes that reducing anxiety and creating an enjoyable environment can facilitate language learning. She focuses on communication rather than perfection and encourages her students to speak and communicate freely and without any worry. She also follows her second teacher's disciplined approach:

My second English teacher was also funny, although she was more disciplined than my previous teacher. We did not have any specific activities that we performed like a ritual in the lessons. However, I can say that she was good at teaching, and I began to learn the correct usage of English. (Elif, personal communication, December 2022)

Elif's main teaching philosophy is creating a balance between discipline and fun along with adapting to students' needs: "Yes, of course I apply [grammar instruction], but I am changing my techniques according to the students because every student's need is different. That's why I am applying different techniques" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023).

She believes that the lessons need to be fun, however, an effective teacher needs to give importance to accuracy as well. Elif criticized her undergraduate teachers' negative attitudes and insufficient support. She frequently underscored their approaches towards students and their frustrating demeanor: "We had to make lots of sacrifices to meet our assignments' deadlines; we had to bear our professors' humiliation" (Elif, personal communication, December 2022). This statement reflects her emotional struggles, such as feeling humiliated, which shows that her professors undermined her confidence, and she felt that the professors had unreasonable demands from her and her peers, which resulted in stress. She elaborated her professors' demeanor further: "They were arrogant, so only a few of them deserved their positions in the faculty" (Elif, personal communication, December 2022).

She perceives her professors as arrogant and approachable. This arrogance resulted in a

barrier between the students and the professors, which in turn hindered their effective mentorship. When she mentions that only a few of them deserved their positions, she tries to question their qualifications and their dedication. Later, she adds more context to her critique:

Because I was a lazy student. I couldn't finish my university in seven years because all my professors, they were so egoistic. They were just, you know, in the classroom—this is my observation and experience as a, you know, university student at Anadolu University—the professors actually didn't know what they were doing. They were just reading from the, you know, smart board, and they are not supporting us in a way that they are not supporting or they are not facing us to the reality. (Elif, personal communication, November 2023)

She relates her undergraduate education struggles to her instructors' egoism and ineffective teaching. She also reflected on her experiences with foreign instructors: "I have had them in my faculty as foreign educators. Some of them were good, but some of them were terrible at their jobs" (Elif, personal communication, December 2022). Elif also criticized the foreign instructors and acknowledged the competence of some, while others were ineffective. Criticizing NESTs along with Turkish implies that having a NEST professor would not guarantee a high-quality education. Elif's experiences as a learner have contributed to her identity shaping as a teacher and her perceptions on native-speakerism. The positive influences that her English teachers at school had on her resulted in her passion for teaching and her commitment to being creative, enthusiastic, and authentic. They motivated her and channeled her career decision, along with shaping her early beliefs around pedagogical skills and personal connections. During her undergraduate studies, she noticed that her native English-speaking instructors were not necessarily better or superior to the Turkish ones, and this led her to question the native-speakerism biases. She based her beliefs on her observations that to be an effective teacher, it was important to know how to balance enjoyment and discipline, to understand students' needs, and to have the ability to connect with the students rather than being a native speaker. Elif's language learning experiences reflect the importance of dedicated and skillful educators rather than being native.

Pedagogical Strategies and Beliefs in Teaching:

Elif has been deeply affected by her experiences regarding her teaching beliefs. She emphasizes the importance of adaptable teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of students. He believes in creating an enjoyable environment while maintaining discipline:

"because if the students can't enjoy themselves in the classroom, they cannot learn. That's why I think you have to create a funny environment because they need to feel confident in the classroom" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). A positive learning environment can help reduce student anxiety so that they can be more engaged. Elif also believes in humor and interactive activities to enhance student participation:

For example, I do create enjoyable classrooms. I analyze the student and then I ask some funny questions, and that's why he or she doesn't care that he or she is just talking in English. He's just trying to talk in English, trying to give an answer in English. That's why he's just not caring about the grammatical mistakes or any other things. He's just trying to focus on the question. (Elif, personal communication, October 2023)

Elif believes in CLT and thinks fluency and communication are more important than grammatical accuracy. Moreover, she believes in basing language lessons and teaching approaches according to students' needs. She acknowledged that not a single teaching method can suit all students. She thinks teaching strategies need to be modified to meet learners' needs, their learning styles, and challenges: "I am changing my techniques according to the students because every student's need is different. That's why I am applying different techniques" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023).

Methods are important. You believe in methods. Like what type of methods? For example, you are teaching an international exam, and if you do not understand the students' needs, you cannot respond. You have to understand and you need to give this thing to your students. (Elif, personal communication, October 2023)

Elif also emphasized that teachers must be attentive to their students' progress and adjust their teaching: "For example, if I look at students, I can understand, oh, he didn't probably understand my question, that's why I need to ask an easier question. I need to use an easy vocabulary for the student" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). Building positive connections and relationships with her students is very important for Elif. She noted that it is trust between teachers and students that can lead to effective learning: "I think we need to have a good relationship with our students because they need to trust us, first of all. If they do not trust us, they cannot open themselves in the classroom" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). She understands that a teacher needs to create an environment that is supportive so students can express themselves and are willing to take risks: "If you create a funny and trustworthy environment, you can be successful as a teacher" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023).

Elif believes that a good language teacher should be enjoyable, adaptable, disciplined, and a good communicator. She emphasizes how important it is to be enjoyable: "A good language teacher should be enjoyable because if the students can't enjoy in the classroom, they cannot learn" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). She also thinks that teachers need to be adaptable and have high-quality teaching methods:

Methods are important. You believe in methods. Like what type of methods? For example, you are teaching an international exam, and if you do not understand the students' needs, you cannot respond. You have to understand and you need to give this thing to your students. (Elif, personal communication, October 2023)

She puts an emphasis on students' needs and understanding them to be able to create an effective environment. She also highly values discipline, which she learned through her teacher in middle school. Elif's reflections on her own and her teacher's discipline imply that it is another attribute that she values and believes a good teacher should have:

When I started the group, I had some basic homework. So every time without any hesitation, without any forgetting, I check their homework. And this way I can say that I'm a disciplined person, teacher. Also, I give to my students a lot of writing exercises, and after I give them feedback. (Elif, personal communication, November 2023)

Elif's pedagogical beliefs and approaches are shaped by her past experiences and her commitment to quality teaching. She values creating a joyful environment for her students, adapting to her students' needs, and having discipline and professionalism. The qualities that she believes are important for effective teaching do not necessarily require being a native speaker. However, she also cares about her second English teacher's accent and appearance, which also can reflect her perception of a good English teacher: "I can now say that she had a British accent. She was so authentic in those years. Her unique style, beautiful face, and her laugh attracted me as a child, and so I wanted to look like her, and I even chose my current career owing to her" (Elif, personal communication, December 2022). This admiration shows that Elif associates a native-like accent and a professional appearance with a good and successful teacher. Her teacher's British accent impacted her, so she decided to emulate her later as a teacher. However, she does not believe that these are the qualities that only NESTs can have, as her teacher had them as a Turkish NNEST.

Perception of NNESTs and Their Challenges

Through her experiences and observations, Elif acknowledged that Turkish NNESTs have several strengths that contribute to their effectiveness. These strengths include their educational background, empathy, and dedication to self-improvement. Elif emphasizes Turkish NNESTs' knowledge of English language teaching which equips them with effective methodologies to teach and use in the classroom: "I do believe that we have great teachers in Turkey, you know. There are some great English teachers, and I could find some great English teachers" (Elif, personal communication, January 2024). This statement shows that Elif believes in Turkish NNESTs' qualifications and abilities as teachers. She noted that their academic background is a big asset for them: "We go to university, we take courses about teaching something, and we learn the methods, and we learn something related to linguistics, and we can give these things to the students" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023).

She pointed to Turkish NNESTs' training background as English teachers and positioned them as well-prepared. Additionally, she believes that Turkish NNESTs have better grammar knowledge as they learn it explicitly. Sharing a linguistic and cultural background with students is another advantage of Turkish NNESTs, as it helps teachers to understand their students' challenges and needs better. Elif thinks Turkish NNESTs can connect with their students due to this empathy and meet their needs: "As a non-native English teacher, I do believe that we have great teachers in Turkey... They can understand the difficulties our students face because we, as teachers, have been through the same learning process" (Elif, personal communication, January 2024). Elif is aware that Turkish NNESTs can deeply understand their students as they were learners too. She also admires Turkish NNESTs' commitment to professional development and improvement. She underscored their initiation in improving their skills: "It is all about self-development. As an English teacher, I can say that my university was not a very prestigious university maybe in Turkey... So, it is all about self-development" (Elif, personal communication, January 2024).

Although Elif advocates for Turkish NNESTs' strengths, she is also aware of their shortcomings. These challenges include speaking skills and fluency, and a lack of confidence. Elif believes that Turkish NNESTs struggle with speaking English fluently and accurately, and she considers this a big shortcoming. She believes that this can make it challenging for them to teach effectively and be a good model for their students:

As you know, in Turkey, as you are a non-native English teacher, most of the teachers, I can say English teachers, they do not know how to talk in English actually. They need to improve their speaking skills to give students a better example. (Elif, personal communication, January 2024)

She sees this as a big shortcoming, as it is essential to have good communication skills to teach, so she believes that Turkish NNESTs must attempt to improve their fluency. Lack of Confidence is a common problem for Turkish NNESTs which hinders their teaching and interactions: "I've seen that some teachers are not confident when they speak English in front of their students. They hesitate, and that hesitation can create a less engaging classroom atmosphere" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). Elif believes that teachers need to be confident so that they can engage students and create a positive learning environment. Without confidence, teachers would find it hard to claim authority and motivate their students. Elif believes that one reason Turkish NNESTs might feel unconfident might be their lack of professional preparation. The teaching training programs do not offer a substantial amount of practical learning, which causes challenges to the NNESTs regarding their effectiveness in classrooms and their confidence. Elif expressed her disappointment with the teacher training program regarding the practicality and applicability of the courses. She criticizes the program:

As an educator, I can say that most of the courses, which were mandatory, were redundant. They did not serve any purpose in the real teaching atmosphere. Furthermore, most of the fundamental information our instructors gave us was just a myth. The utopian teaching world given in the lectures was false. (Elif, personal communication, December 2022)

Elif's university experiences were more about theories of teaching, and she did not feel prepared for real teaching. She elaborated this disconnection:

I think professors do not have enough experience in the real world. They are just dealing with the university students, and they do not know the reality. What is the reality in language schools, institutions, other colleagues, or I don't know, private high schools—they do not know the reality. They are just teaching us like a very, you know, utopic world. (Elif, personal communication, January 2024)

She believes that this gap between theory and real practice left her unprepared for the real classroom environment. She reflects on this:

When I first started my job as an English teacher, I was shocked, you know, because the lesson hours were not enough, the teaching techniques—they are not relatable to the natural atmosphere, the real atmosphere. They are just talking about the academic part of being a

teacher. But if you are working in a language school in the private sector, you are not working in an academic-like area. (Elif, personal communication, January 2024)

Elif believes that her university instructors need to be more supportive, and they should have guided her better. The lack of guidance led to her sense of disillusionment. She emphasizes that she needs more practical training, specifically regarding speaking skills:

They should have supported us more in speaking because, as I told you, when you graduate, most of the English teachers, they do not know how to talk really in a good pronunciation, in a fluent way. They do not know. So, they should have supported us more in speaking skill. (Elif, personal communication, November 2023)

Elif's undergraduate experiences represent Turkish NNESTs' challenges regarding the teacher training program. She also believes that her professors did not have practical experience: "I think professors do not have enough experience in the real world. They are just dealing with university students, and they do not know the reality" (Elif, personal communication, January 2024). Elif reflected on the limitations of the educational system and her experiences in the teacher training program and argues that this lack of practical training and professors being unsupportive results in Turkish NNESTs' frustration and their later challenges. Being unprepared, Turkish NNESTs become vulnerable to native-speakerism biases and NEST preference. As a Turkish NNEST, Elif reflected on Turkish NNESTs' employment challenges, financial hardships, and difficulties regarding their administrators. These are the challenges that hinder their professional growth and career satisfaction. The main challenge of their employment is the NEST preference in the job market.

I was shocked when I saw the cruelty done to non-native teachers by any kind of educational institute. As a non-native teacher, I had to deal with the inequality of opportunity. Native speakers can easily be titled as a 'teacher' in Türkiye. The companies do not care about their resumes because they assume they are hard to come by. Any non-native teachers cannot compete with native speakers. (Elif, personal communication, December 2022)

NEST preference marginalizes Turkish NNESTs and overlooks their qualifications. This bias roots in the belief that NESTs are better teachers and marginalize Turkish NNESTs' competencies and academic background. As an experienced NNEST, Elif reported her own job interview as an example of this bias:

I had a job interview; I don't know how many years ago it was. There was a native teacher and he was the candidate also like me. I was the non-native one, he was the native one. I performed very well in the job interviews. I killed it, but native one took the job because he

was native. (Elif, personal communication, October 2023)

This discrimination goes beyond Turkish NNEST's employment opportunities and deeply affects their professional identity as well. Continuous undervaluation causes a lack of self-confidence and a working environment where NNESTs have to prove themselves all the time, even though they have the necessary qualifications. Elif described how it feels to be neglected: "I think that I'm a good English teacher, but still I cannot earn enough money to survive in Turkey... I cannot develop myself every day" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). Elif also mentioned financial issues as a big challenge for Turkish NNESTs despite their years of experience and qualifications. Turkish NNESTs often receive inadequate compensation so that they cannot afford even their basic expenses: "If you are an English teacher in Turkey, you cannot afford your basic needs" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). The financial instability affects Turkish NNESTs' personal lives and job satisfaction in a way that they regret their career choices:

I wouldn't choose [English teaching] because first reason is about payments... I lost my motivation because at the beginning of the career I was thinking that I can earn good money... But now I know that even if I try so hard I cannot earn enough money to afford my basic needs. (Elif, personal communication, November 2023)

Besides getting low salaries, Turkish NNESTs face challenges when they desire to get a secondary income. Elif shared her experience when she was not able to do so:

I applied for Preply... and even they didn't accept my diploma, you know. I studied in the department and I spent my time for years in the university, in the faculty, but after they didn't accept my diploma. And I do not have any other opportunities. (Elif, personal communication, November 2023)

She believes it was her nationality that had a role in this rejection: "I don't know the reason exactly, probably because of my nationality. They thought that I am a Turkish citizen, that is why my English wouldn't be good enough" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). Lack of financial satisfaction had caused Elif to lose her motivation and feel undervalued: "I lost my motivation... I need to do more and when I do more I need to do more and more and more because I cannot earn enough money so I lost my motivation I can say" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). Turkish NNESTs get marginalized and rejected on international platforms as well, and this limits their opportunities to increase their income and develop professionally. Another factor leading

to financial issues roots from the payment disparity between NNESTs and NESTs in Türkiye. Elif expressed her frustration as Turkish NNESTs do the demanding work, but they receive less: "This is not a good thing for non-native teachers because we do most of the things, but they earn something more, I can say" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023).

Elif can be one of the Turkish NNESTs who have lost their trust in school administrators. They view them as exploitative and unsupportive. Elif believes that administrators focus on financial gains rather than their teacher's well-being and professional growth:

They are just trying to earn money, you know. We are just slaves for them. They are earning a lot of money, but they are hesitating to give enough amount of money for the teachers. They are not supporting the teachers. (Elif, personal communication, November 2023)

There is a deep sense of mistrust toward administrators who are seen as profit chasers. The label of “slave” shows how Turkish NNESTs perceive their situation in Türkiye and the injustice in ELT. This reflects the essential need for more efforts from institutions and stakeholders to ensure fairness and equitable treatment and support for Turkish NNESTs. The educational system can promote a more supportive environment only by valuing its NNESTs so that students can benefit too. Elif also emphasizes the lack of support from administrators, which results in NNESTs’ sense of isolation and abandonment. Their teaching styles and contributions are questioned, and their dedication remains unrecognized. She expressed her frustration with administrators' expectations who refuse to accept her unique teaching style. Administrators impose their views on how she should teach and disregard her professionalism: "They are not just, you know, accepting the fact that this is a teacher, but we cannot change the teacher's style... So, when I get this response, I feel that they are not appreciating me and they are not grateful at all" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). There is a disconnection between Turkish NNESTs and their administrators that undermines their confidence and worth. The lack of support impacts their motivation to do their best in classrooms and show effort. The administrators attempt to promote conformity rather than appreciate NNESTs’ unique strengths and contributions. Elif sees administrative support beyond providing resources for teachers. Administrators also happen to have better attitudes towards NESTs, even if their performance is not as it should be. Elif shared her experience when she told management about her concerns about a NEST: "I went to the administration, and I talked with the manager, but of course manager didn't do anything because he was the native, I

was the non-native, and she should protect the native one" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). She described a working environment where NNESTs are undermined and there is discrimination: "Managers, administration members cannot say or judge any of these native speakers because the institutes are afraid to lose them" (Elif, personal communication, December 2022).

Perceptions on NESTs, Collaboration, and Differences

Elif's perceptions on NESTs have been shaped by her experiences as a NNEST in Türkiye. Her perceptions include admiration, skepticism, and professional rivalry. She acknowledged the existence of native-speakerism in Türkiye and reflected on its harsh realities:

I started work. I faced the truth of life. What was it? It was about being a native of Türkiye. I was shocked when I saw the cruelty done to non-native teachers by any kind of educational institute. As a non-native teacher, I had to deal with the inequality of opportunity. (Elif, personal communication, December 2022)

This reflects the systemic bias that prioritizes NESTs and creates an unfair situation for NNESTs like Elif. This issue often results in missing opportunities: "Native speakers can easily be titled as a 'teacher' in Türkiye. Companies do not care about their resumes because they assume they are hard to come by. Non-native teachers cannot compete with native speakers" (Elif, personal communication, December 2022). She thinks the problems in ELT of Türkiye are too obvious to be overlooked, and they are seriously affecting NNESTs:

The problems that non-native English teachers face in Turkey are clear. It's sad to see such a big difference in chances between native and non-native speakers. I've seen it myself, where people prefer native speakers even if non-native teachers are qualified and dedicated. (Elif, personal communication, December 2022)

Although Elif recognizes that NESTs have advantages, she is aware of their shortcomings such as lack of formal educational background: "They do not have the background, educational background, if they didn't go to university, they are just the speakers. And they do not know the language deeply, as we do" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). Elif argued that being a native speaker does not equal a teacher with skills. She questions NESTs' lack of academic education and relates it to their lack of competence: "I have worked with lots of native teachers, and they do not have discipline. They don't know how to teach the students. They cannot understand the students' needs. I guess that

we are better than them" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). She questions their teaching skills, classroom management, and effectiveness in teaching English. However, she knows that NESTs bring value to the classrooms and attract students: "And when we think about the language schools, do they have native speakers, native teachers? Students will come more, and they will earn more" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023).

She knows that they are demanded by the market, which leads to financial benefits for the institutions. Elif believes that there are many differences between NESTs and NNESTs in teaching style and attitudes. She strongly asserted that there are more differences than similarities: "I think there are not similarities but differences most of the time" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). She sees the level of discipline and professionalism as the most important difference. She believes that Turkish NNESTs have a better understanding of learning challenges and processes because they have already undergone them:

English wasn't our native language. And we learned, we can understand the students' problems more. The native ones, they cannot because English was their native language, and they do not know the obstacles while you are learning a new language. (Elif, personal communication, October 2023)

Elif is experienced regarding co-teaching with NESTs, and she has mixed feelings about it. She knows that having NESTs in language schools attracts more students, and this in turn benefits all teachers regarding the number of classes: "And we are going to have more groups, and it is not affecting us. This is one benefit" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). Elif emphasizes the disadvantages of collaborating with NESTs, specifically if they are not qualified to teach. She has had negative experiences regarding NESTs' lack of professionalism and discipline: "It felt bad because, you know, while in my last experience, I can say that I was sharing that class with a native teacher and at the end I really couldn't feel very right" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). She acknowledged that when NESTs cannot fulfill their responsibilities it affects students' learning process negatively and add to her already heavier burden: "He wasn't doing anything in the class... He was just entering the class, he was talking about some nonsense things, some unrelated topics... The students started to complain about that native teacher" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). The negative experiences regarding collaborative teaching have made Elif skeptical about it. However, she admitted her

internal conflict regarding NESTs teaching values when she contemplates a hypothetical situation where she would hire a teacher for her hypothetical child: "I think about my child, I would probably hire a native to teach him" (Elif, personal communication, January 2024). This reflects that even Elif herself cannot dismiss the superiority of NESTs. However, she tried to rationalize this preference by mentioning the benefits of early exposure to NEST: "It's not an education for a child, you know? I would probably start in his or her very early age... It's all about talking, speaking, understanding, and it is not about... it's not like direct education, education" (Elif, personal communication, January 2024).

Collaboration has been accompanied by the need for competition in Elif and her interactions with NESTs. She feels she is in a race with NESTs, which leaves him frustrated: "Sometimes as a non-native English speaker I feel that I'm in a race with native teachers, and when I am in a race, I cannot beat them" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). Elif's perceptions of NESTs and collaborating with them are multifaceted and conflicting. She is aware of the market that is interested in NESTs, but she cannot accept that they are better teachers. She has had challenging experiences regarding biases and a lack of recognition. Her narrative reflects the need for valuing the strengths of both NESTs and NNESTs so that there can be an inclusive and supportive environment for them.

Positioning in a Context with NESTs

Elif's narrative shows that her experiences as a NNEST have shaped her self-positioning in a complex way. She navigates her identity about NESTs and her fellow NNESTs as well. She is strongly self-confident and believes in her abilities as an English teacher. She knows that she is competent and teaches English in a very effective way. "I always have confidence because I know I am a very good teacher" (Elif, personal communication, December 2022). She was inspired by her teacher (her role model), and she reflects on the qualities that she emulated and adopted:

However, I can say that she was good at teaching, and I began to learn the correct usage of English. She was a perfectionist, as I am right now, she was an outspoken person, as I am now, and most importantly she was a good educator, as I am now. (Elif, personal communication, November 2023)

She has ambitious standards and likes to have a strong presence in the classroom, so she

shaped her teacher identity based on her role model's traits. She emulated her teacher and became a teacher like her. Perfectionism, creativity, joyfulness, and discipline became important parts of her teacher image as she believes she can be an effective teacher that way. Perfectionism helps her to be well-prepared, and her creativity makes her teaching engaging. Discipline keeps the classroom in order, as it is important to meet educational goals. She perceives herself as "a perfectionist person", "creative," "enjoyable", and "disciplined". Due to all these traits, she believes she has, Elif sees herself as an asset to the schools she works for, as she is qualified and is committed to her job. She strongly believes that she is a "valuable" teacher and mentioned her natural accent, communication skills, language proficiency and her pedagogical knowledge as the factors that make her irreplaceable: "I am a capable teacher because most of the teachers in Turkey, they even cannot talk, but I do have a natural accent, and I can explain myself in a great way in English" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023).

Although she has not been successful in landing an international job, she has always been successful regarding employment opportunities in Türkiye: "Most of the recruiters, whom I have had a chance to talk to, have never rejected my application" (Elif, personal communication, December 2022). Elif is highly confident when she positions herself to NESTs; she believes in her superiority because she has a teaching background, qualifications, and is committed to her profession. NESTs only rely on their fluency, while Elif has an outstanding knowledge of teaching methodologies. "I know that I am better [than NESTs] because I have this teaching background. I am the one who knows teaching methods they know nothing; all they can do is just speak" (Elif, personal communication, January 2024). She deeply believes that her academic background makes her a much better educator: "They [NESTs] do not have the background, educational background, if they didn't go to university, they are just the speakers. And they do not know the language deeply, as we do" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). Elif knows that NESTs attract students at the beginning, but she is confident that her students will prefer her in the end due to her abilities. She shared her experiences of the times when students acknowledged her teaching abilities over their native teachers: "At the end of the course, students are coming, most of the students, and they are saying that Hocam, you were better than the native one" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). When students do this, she becomes even more confident in her abilities and boosts her self-positioning as an effective teacher. Elif sees herself as a different teacher from other Turkish NNESTs

as well. She believes she is dedicated, and her teaching quality is much better because they are not as enthusiastic as her:

I try to do my best. Normally, when you are working in a private sector, teachers do not care, because they are just earning not enough money, low salary, and they are, when they enter the class, they're just teaching something, but they are not so, you know, enthusiastic about teaching something. But when I enter, I try to do my best, that's why I can describe myself as a competent teacher. (Elif, personal communication, November 2023)

She positions herself as a teacher who is more passionate and committed to her fellow teachers. Her students' success is incredibly important for her and is more linguistically proficient than other Turkish NNESTs: "I am a capable teacher because most of the teachers in Turkey, they even cannot talk, but I do have a natural accent, and I can explain myself in a great way in English" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). Elif believes that her language skills and level of commitment set her apart from both NESTs and other Turkish NNESTs. Elif is perceived and positioned by her students and her administrators as a valuable and effective teacher. However, she has had moments when her value was undermined. One experience she shared is the time when she was asked to pretend to be NEST from U.S. as students wanted one: "Even I got asked to become a native speaker from the USA for a private student, who only wanted to have lessons with a native speaker" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). She reflected on these experiences as the times when she was considered less desirable and inferior to NESTs. The same positioning happens due to schools' unequal treatment as well: "It can be... They are native, you know, if the language school or the schools have got native ones, the native ones can see themselves better from the non-native ones" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023).

Turkish NNESTs get positions as secondary even if they have many skills to offer. Elif shared her moments where she feared making a mistake because if she did as an NNEST, she would be positioned as an incompetent teacher:

I was saying that, oh, probably I will do some mistakes and, oh my God, that will be bad for them, you know, they will say that, oh, these are, you know, non-native English teachers, they do not know anything, oh, she's doing some mistakes. (Elif, personal communication, November 2023)

Elif believes that she is continuously being judged, so she attempts to keep her standards high and prove her worth so she will not be dismissed. The administrators' feedback also

put her on the edge as they want her to change her teaching style and be funnier: "But they are just saying that you can be more, much more funnier than you are actually" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). Instead of appreciation, such expectations position Elif as a teacher who needs to adapt her teaching style to meet superficial expectations. Elif's experiences reveal Turkish NNESTs' multi-layered challenges as they get positioned in a less valued status by others. This affects their confidence and job satisfaction. Being positioned by administrators and students undermines Elif's professional identity as she feels that she is not appreciated:

They are not just, you know, accepting the fact that this is a teacher, but we cannot change the teacher's style... So, when I get this response, I feel that they are not appreciating me, and they are not grateful at all. (Elif, personal communication, November 2023)

Elif highly desires to be recognized and valued. She sees herself as a valuable and dedicated teacher and wants others to see her unique contributions and appreciate her. She does not want to be overshadowed by NESTs because she wants her students to like her: "They [students] should like me" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). Elif relies on her self-confidence and is dedicated to teaching. Support has not been there for her all the time, particularly from administrators. Despite this, she is highly committed to her students and asserts her professional identity through her dedication. Her interactions with others and her experiences influence her self-position and she focuses on her students' needs despite the lack of professional development opportunities: "Yes, we are using technology, but it is so easy and we are just finding some documents according to our students' needs and after we are applying them, actually we are not changing, developing ourselves" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). She maintains her confidence through the practice of resilience and tries to keep her high standards in a context that tends to undervalue her contributions.

(Re)Construction of Professional Identity in a Context with NESTs

Elif's identity negotiation has been dynamic and influenced by her interactions with NESTs and her self-reflection. When she started teaching, there were significant challenges that influenced Elif's self-perception and confidence. She started teaching before she graduated, so she had fresh knowledge of teaching theories. However, she noticed that she did not have any practical skills in the classroom: "When I look at my first or the second year of my career path, I wasn't as good as now. I wasn't enough in

those years. I was inexperienced" (Elif, personal communication, December 2022). Elif labeled herself as “inexperienced” and “not enough,” which shows the struggles that novice teachers can have in Türkiye. They need to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and this puts huge pressure on them as they want to be effective. Students and administrators increase their pressures by their expectations: "I was feeling stressful as a novice teacher. I was afraid" (Elif, personal communication, January 2024). Elif was full of insecurities and was scared. Those feelings got even worse with the systemic challenges within ELT, such as time constraints and strict curricula she had to cover. She reflected on how she attempted to use teaching methods she had learned in her teacher training program:

So, when I was in my first month of my career, I was like, you know, I was trying to do it, really, because I was thinking that, yes, I got this education, and I know what to do. So, I was trying to follow these steps in the first month. But after, I realized that, no, it is impossible because there is a schedule, you know, you have to finish the unit. (Elif, personal communication, January 2024)

Initially, she could not be the ideal teacher she had in her mind due to her lack of practical skills, so she started to feel frustrated and inadequate. Elif’s challenges were doubled by native-speakerism and the biases around it. Institutions and students preferred NESTs, and this caused a working environment that was full of competition:

When I get feedback or when I understand I cannot compete with the native, it doesn't affect me anymore. But some of the non-native teachers, maybe they are losing their motivation because they say that, no, I cannot compete with the native ones. (Elif, personal communication, November 2023)

At the beginning, Elif compared herself and her abilities to NESTs, which was debilitating for her. She felt she was in a continuous “race”, and she had no chance to win because she was inadequate: "I sometimes had bad experiences, and I was thinking a lot about them" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). What she means by “bad experiences” she refers to the times when she was overshadowed by NESTs. She was being compared, and this impacted her emotions and caused stress and anxiety. Elif started to develop emotional resilience, and she came to know that she needed to stop comparing herself to NESTs, as it was hindering her growth. She decided not to compare herself: “When I get feedback or when I understand I cannot compete with the native, it doesn't affect me anymore" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023).

This statement is very important in her identity reconstruction as she acknowledged that competition was not productive, and she had to liberate herself from external validation. She also started to reflect on her emotions and realized that she was focusing on her negative experiences which were stopping her from seeing her strengths: "But now I am not stressful at all because I believe in myself, and I do not have any bad feelings after I failed" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). She started to move from her vulnerabilities to a sense of self-assurance, and this way could overcome her negative emotions and her anxiety. She started to improve her teaching skills and adapt her teaching methods: "I have to do something, I have to study more and more, maybe I have to, you know, memorize some other words or, I don't know, I should have done something more" (Elif, personal communication, January 2024).

Elif began to be more committed to self-improvement regarding teaching techniques and understanding her students' needs: "I didn't know that before. And right now, I do have specific techniques, specific strategies, methods that I can apply for my students, and I can say that they are working" (Elif, personal communication, January 2024). She created more flexible teaching methods, and this way she improved her performance and reinforced her professional identity as an English teacher as well. The most significant aspect of Elif's identity reconstruction is the enhancement of her confidence: "I have developed myself and I have got self-confidence" (Elif, personal communication, January 2024). She became a teacher who perceives herself as a valuable teacher and has a great impact on her students. This internal validation was the reason she could overcome external biases, and her competitiveness became a tool to motivate her rather than stressing her out: "I feel good, because in the end, I win" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). Elif measures her personal growth and success through her standards and achievements rather than others. She modified her teaching by implementing "more fun activities" to enhance student engagement, as she believes that traditional methods were not effective. She attempted to make her teaching style enjoyable and interactive, which resulted in her students' positive feedback, and this, in turn, strengthened her professional identity. Acceptance has been another factor that has helped Elif with her identity reconstruction. She accepted her role as a Turkish NNEST and no longer viewed this as a disadvantage, which made her "happy" with her profession. Her happiness indicates that she reconstructed her identity to be a resilient teacher and ignored the biases. Accepting her identity allowed Elif to focus on what truly matters, which is her students

and their needs. Elif is now managing her emotions and does not react based on emotions anymore, which means she is now in control of her narrative.

I cannot change my nationality or my first language, what can I do. I have many positive things in my teaching...I am happy, my students are happy. I don't care what some students or people think or if they do not like me. I used to care, but I don't anymore. I just do what I should do. (Elif, personal communication, January 2024)

Advocating NNESTs and Expected Support

Elif's professional identity as a NNEST has been shaped by her experiences and her advocacy of Turkish NNESTs. She recognizes the systemic challenges that Turkish NNESTs have and how administrators and policymakers can support them. She believes in a multifaceted approach that includes financial support and appreciation of NNESTs' contributions. Financial support is the main factor that can motivate Turkish NNESTs, as she does not find the current compensation amount adequate. She believes this external motivation would result in more enthusiastic teachers and more effective teaching and learning. She stated that "If I get much more money, I would be more motivated" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). She elaborated on this point:

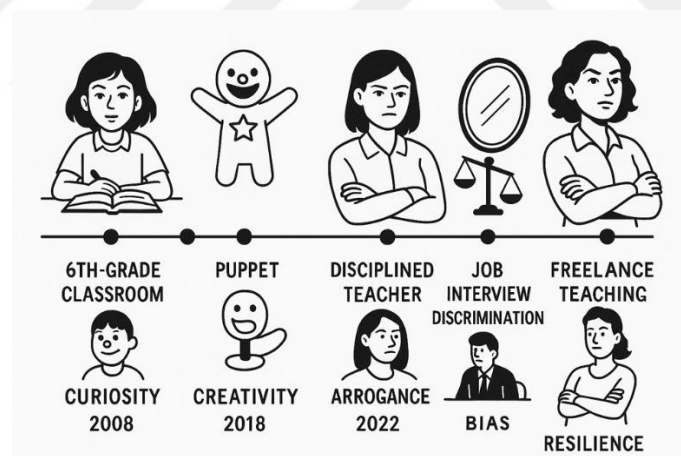
Yeah, because while we are working to earn money, to earn enough money, and we are living in a capitalist world, as you know, so when I get much more money than expected, I would be more motivated when I enter the class. I will be more energetic to talk to the students, do my best. (Elif, personal communication, January 2024)

She highlighted the relationship between financial stability and satisfaction, and teaching performance. Elif also emphasized the significance of being recognized and appreciated by administrators. They need to acknowledge Turkish NNESTs' efforts so that their morale and commitment can be enhanced. She expressed this need: "We need to feel that someone is appreciating us" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). This statement reflects the need for validation, which she thinks is lacking. The absence of appreciation results in feeling undervalued and can decrease a teacher's professional dedication. Administrators need to engage with their teachers so that they can understand them and their contributions. Elif believes that administrators should support Turkish NNESTs: "They need to understand our needs" (Elif, personal communication, November 2023). She believes that administrators make decisions without considering teachers and the challenges they might have. Elif asks for a societal perception change regarding NNESTs because the biases that favor NESTs have become very common. She noted, “

This difficulty shows that we need to change how people think about non-native teachers in the education system.” (Biography Essay). She believes that Turkish NNESTs will continue to have problems if these issues are not addressed. Elif proposed showcasing Turkish NNESTs' strengths and abilities: "Programs that highlight the strengths of non-native teachers might slowly change how people think" (Elif, personal communication, December 2022). If Turkish NNESTs' unique skills get promoted, there will be a great improvement in misconceptions around native-speakerism. She is confident that Turkish NNESTs have many capabilities and states, "I do believe that we have great teachers in Turkey" (Elif, personal communication, October 2023). The education system needs to invest in local talent and provide opportunities for NNESTs to show their effectiveness. Elif believes in the necessity of systemic support and acknowledgment. Figure 4.4. Shows her English language learning and teaching journey, which has not been smooth for her, but ended in her empowerment and resilience.

Figure 4.4

Elif's Teaching Odyssey

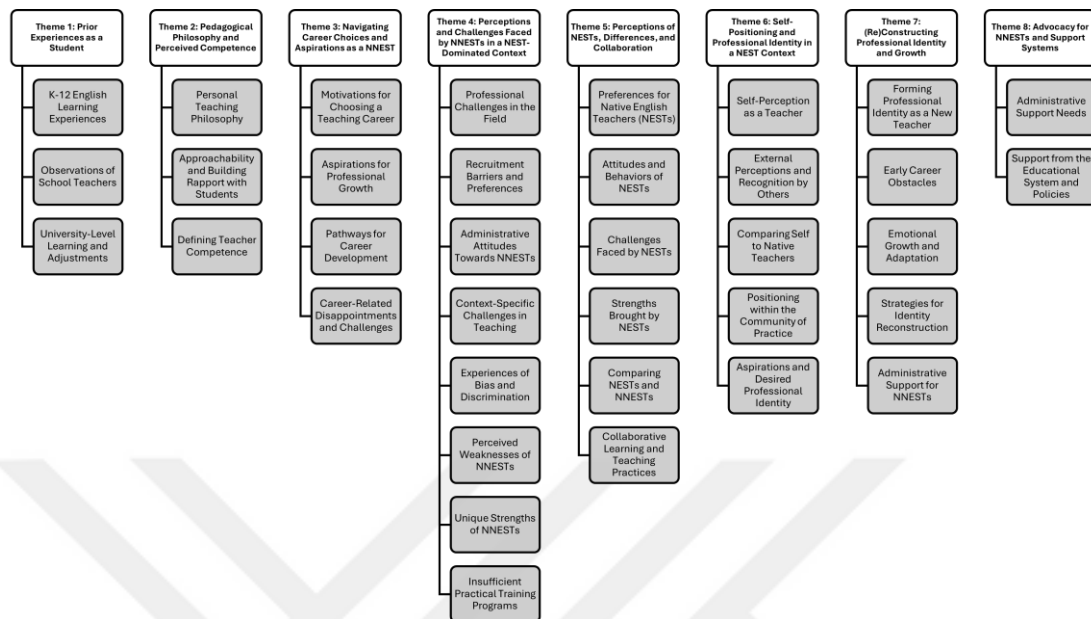


4.3. The case of Behzat

This section delves into the findings of the participant with the pseudonym of Behzat, whose data was collected from his narrative essay reflective emails, semi-structured interviews, and the focus group discussion. It presents Behzat's professional identity (re)construction as a Turkish Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher (NNEST) in the context of native-speakerism. The obtained themes identified through inductive thematic analysis are shown in the following diagram which illustrates the emergent themes and categories. Figure 4.3 show the themes and categories that emerged from Behzat's narrative:

Figure 4.5

Behzat's Emerged Themes and Categories



Prior Experiences as a Student

Behzat's early introduction to the English language, his school teachers, and the academic challenges influenced his journey as a language learner and teacher. His reflections gathered through multiple resources show the interplay between his experiences as a student and his teaching identity. Behzat's exposure to the English language happened in his primary school and was the basis of his passion for language learning and teaching. However, later he noticed that there were limitations back then:

When I started studying in English Language teaching department, I learnt that most of my teachers' methods they used in their lessons were incorrect, thus, being an English teacher is actually far beyond what I was expecting. (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022)

His early education attracted him, but it was not innovative or student-centered. He reflected that his early English learning experience was dominated by traditional and grammar-focused teaching methods: "When we were students, we used to get more grammatical classes" (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). He later came to believe that engaging activities and communicative practices are essential for language learning, which his early learning did not provide for him. It was through this lack of fulfilling learning experience that he was motivated to be a teacher who goes beyond

traditional methods. He had realized that his learning experience could have been much better: “I realized then that there could have been many ways of surprising me as a child and language learner” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). The idea of “surprising” him as a student shows that his teachers could have been more effective and their teaching could have been more stimulating. Through this realization, Behzat later enhanced a desire to adopt more innovative techniques in his teaching practice.

Despite all this, Behzat admired his English teachers, and he remembers his teachers very positively: “Since I was 10, I knew that there was something unusual with the English teachers... my English teachers used to seem magnificently magical.” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). The phrase “magnificently magical” reflects how he was inspired and how he was in awe of his language learning experience. He admired his teachers because they could inspire him and shape his aspirations. It was the felt magic that Behzat decided to be an English teacher. He was under the influence of his fifth-grade teacher: “I was totally mesmerized when I first heard my new 5th grade English teacher speaking English in the whole lesson” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). There was a long-lasting impression on Behzat, and he was “mesmerized” as the lessons were impactful and transformative for him because the teacher had done all the lessons in English, which shows that full language immersion can show the authenticity of the teacher. He came to believe that it was very important to use English exclusively in the classroom.

Behzat had a deep connection with his teachers, which affected him significantly. These connections became important in his enthusiasm and engagement: “As soon as I started the lessons, I formed really intense and positive relationship with my English teacher” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). The use of “intense and positive” shows how his connection with his teachers was strong and deep, which creates an encouraging and motivating environment for him. It suggests that supportive relationships are important if teachers want their students to take risks and participate actively. He still remembers this relationship because it goes beyond academic teaching and touches students’ emotions, and affects them psychologically. Behzat built the belief that rapport is important and made it his teaching philosophy. Undergraduate Study years shifted Behzat’s perceptions on effective teaching and impacted his professional beliefs: “I was really happy about the education program in our department since I could always

think of a scenario that I would use the methods they taught me” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022).

The teaching training program aligned with his career goals, and he found it very practical. He was so excited to be a teacher and implement the things he had learned in his lessons. This appreciation reflects the importance of teacher training programs as they can empower educators through offering practical tools. When he started his university, Behzat realized that he was going to have significant challenges: “When I first started university, I was really shocked because I couldn't speak any English” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). This shows how ineffective teaching can make students struggle at the university. Behzat could not communicate well in English, which was the result of a grammar-focused instruction. The language programs need to balance grammar teaching with communicative practices, and Behzat learned this the hard way. Behzat decided to improve himself during his university years: “In most of our lessons I learnt something new, and it pushed me to learn more and more about my field” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). This statement shows his commitment to continuous learning and growth. He was “pushed” to learn more reflects how his teaching training program challenged him and increased his passion for English teaching. He learned practical strategies that he could use in a real classroom setting.

Behzat’s early experiences as a learner have been important in developing his beliefs. He learned about the debilitating effects of grammar-focused instruction. He gained theoretical and practical knowledge in his undergraduate studies, so he recognized that there were shortcomings in his school teachers' instructions that needed to be avoided.

Pedagogical Strategies and Beliefs on Teaching Essentials

Behzat’s teaching style is closely connected with his beliefs and philosophy. He emphasizes building strong relationships with his students. He believes in an immersive and communicative approach, highlighting the importance of monolingual instruction. He thinks his students' proficiency will increase through consistent language exposure. He is committed to English-only instruction: “I'm not speaking Turkish in school, never, ever” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). This belief shows his dedication to ultimate exposure to English so that his students can acquire the language better:

As much as possible, I use all the time the communicative approach so that I can enhance my

students' speaking skills more than the grammar... We are speaking, I am talking, everything, and I'm trying to get all the natural language from them so that they are learning the grammar and the other things. (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023)

Speaking and language usage are important aspects of Behzat's teaching philosophy. He encourages his students to use English and is actively engaged with it. According to Behzat, this approach develops students' language skills. He also incorporates technology in his lessons: "I played Minecraft with my students, which is like the education version of it. So, I kinda, let's say, I kinda managed that achievement of Minecraft" (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023). By using Minecraft Education Edition, Behzat attempts to create an interactive and enjoyable language learning environment for his students. He believes that this method can engage the students so that they can practice it more. Another important aspect of Behzat's teaching philosophy is a strong relationship with students. A deep connection with his students is his teaching philosophy cornerstone. Being approachable and having good rapport are very important to him and his teaching: "I become their friend, and they gossip about the other friends, but I let them do it only in English" (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). He positions himself as their friend and thus reduces the perceived distance that can exist between a teacher and students. Students feel more comfortable with him, and this leads to their better participation in the learning process. He increases their interest in social interaction: "They feel that they are talking about their friends, like they are gossiping, they think that, but at that time I'm just correcting their mistakes in English and they are not focusing on their English, they are focusing on the gossip but I'm focusing on their English" (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). Behzat attempts to shift his students' focus to communication acts so that they engage more as they start talking about topics that they like and meanwhile, Behzat guides them linguistically. Being relatable is highly important for Behzat, and he does his best to understand his students: "They feel that I am from themselves" (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023).

By "from themselves" Behzat means that he wants to align himself with his students and their experiences. He wants to enhance the trust between them and himself and encourage his students to talk more freely: "I believe that a good teacher must have some good social skills... It includes also the parents, the teachers, the students sometimes, so that's why having good social skills I guess is of utmost importance for me" (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). Behzat has realized that if he wants to be more effective,

he needs to go beyond the classroom and deepen his relationship with his parents and his colleagues as well. He wants to have a supportive network. Behzat believes that to be a competent language teacher, it is important to have pedagogical skills along with social abilities and commitment to supporting students: “I believe that a good teacher must have some good social skills... Sometimes sending a message is important but sometimes having social skills like this is going to be more important, I guess, being a good teacher especially” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023).

Interpersonal relationships are very important for him, and his philosophy is based on a deep connection with students, understanding them and their needs, and effective communication. He believes in the influence of attitude and approachability: “Probably from the attitude part I would win... Like, it comes to the first question, like I believe that I have that social ability to speak all my kids, like all the students in that level” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). Behzat believes that his friendliness and relatability have been helpful in his teaching career and that “social ability” can help the teacher reach their students. He also advocates for communicative teaching approaches and prioritizes real-life contexts for language use: “Communicative approach to teach my students. We are speaking, I am talking, everything, and I'm trying to get all the natural language from them so that they are learning the grammar and the other things” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023).

Behzat thinks that a competent teacher needs to create opportunities for students so that they can use the language actively and this way, internalize grammar gradually. He also acknowledged the role of self-improvement and believes that a good language teacher needs to be adaptive: “I still try to change my behaviors, I still try to change my speaking, and I believe in time actually. So in time probably everything is going to get better” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023). He is a believer in personal growth and continuous evolution through being open to change. Behzat believes in a student-centered teaching approach that prioritizes communication, personal relationships, and social competence. Exclusive use of English is highly important for him as well as building rapport with his students. His beliefs go beyond traditional approaches to language teaching as he thinks students needs are the cornerstone of effective teaching. He also believes in incorporating technology and innovative techniques to increase student engagement.

Navigating Career Choice and Aspiration as an NNEST

Behzat decided to become an English teacher due to his early language-learning experience. Since then, he has had a deep passion for both teaching and creating connections. He realized he liked teaching at a young age and had an intrinsic motivation to share his knowledge with others. He was later exposed to the English language through video games and became even more curious to learn English. He remembers that in his childhood, he used to pretend to teach his imaginary students, which was a manifestation of his teaching desire. He became more passionate as he grew older and started to believe in the transformative power of education. He defines himself as a purpose to inspire his students and broaden their perspectives.

I have great passion into teaching since my childhood so at first I thought that I am going to be a teacher and then because of the games and everything that I learned in about English I decided that okay I'm going to teach this I'm going to teach a language the first foreign language that I learned was English so that's why I chose teaching English actually. (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022)

There was an interplay between Behzat's interest in teaching and his love for the English language, which spiced up his love for video games later. He elaborates on how he idealized teaching as a profession:

I always romanticized this job in my head. I have never thought about the money, how much money I'm going to get. I have never thought about the situation in teaching in Turkey. But I always thought about like, okay this is going to be my job and I believe that I have necessary requirements that's why I decided this career actually. (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022)

His idea of teaching was based on his idealistic motivations and intrinsic rewards, one of which was broadening his students' horizons: "I could see the sparkle in the learners' eyes and show them how small their world is after they learn a language in a proper way" (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). Using the verb "sparkle" shows how Behzat was motivated to impact his students' lives by empowering them. He was optimistic and full of vision: "In the end, I graduated with the highest hopes from my department with the aim of changing many things radically in the system by starting from my lessons first" (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). He was ambitious and wanted to contribute to the system by improving it through his teaching. Later, practical aspects began to impact his career aspirations as well, such as financial stability

and personal growth. He discussed the impact of financial concerns later:

In terms of the money, in terms of the other things I would choose the other paths of the careers probably. But again, I always think about this, but this is my mind right now. Again, if I probably go back in time, if I had a chance to go back in time, I would probably lose to my emotions and I would say, okay, I'm going to be a teacher again. (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022)

Although there is tension between Behzat's passion for teaching and financial gains, he still believes that he might have chosen teaching again if he could go back in time. In another situation, however, he emphasized his financial issue: "I believe that if I had a chance to have a career which has a better income, I would definitely choose that career because of the money, just because of the money" (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). This statement shows how NNESTs in Türkiye face financial challenges that directly affect their job satisfaction. Behzat has a desire for professional growth, and he wants to be recognized. He shared:

"Actually, I always think myself like if I didn't feel like this right now, I would probably change my job instantly because right now I believe that in my school if it weren't me there would be lots of problems let's say because I'm working on an MUN project... So, I believe that this is something serious for a teacher to make." (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023)

He gets involved with projects like Model United Nations (MUN) to demonstrate his motivation for leadership and contribution to his school. He wants to develop himself professionally and enhance his teaching skills. He wants to be a teacher who is recognized for his perfection: "I devoted myself more to become the perfect teacher that my teachers in the Department of English Language Teaching have trained me to be" (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). The school that he works for supports him, and he appreciates this. He acknowledged that: "When it comes to teaching our school is really sacrificing themselves in terms of money and time. They create all the resources for us to be a better teacher actually" (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022).

He can pursue professional development because his workplace facilitates it through the creation of resources and opportunities. Behzat takes these opportunities seriously and participates in them to improve his teaching:

Recently we joined to a conference related to using AI in education... Whenever we have a conference like this, whenever we have a small course for teachers, our school gives the most

attention to us and whatever they have they just send us those conferences whatever it takes.(Behzat, personal communication, December 2022)

Although Behzar is dedicated to his profession and seeks opportunities to develop himself, he gets disappointed and faces challenges in his career as well, particularly regarding expectations and perceptions. He was highly disappointed when he started his job: “The image of 'English Teacher' that I had in my mind was not the same with the people’s thoughts, especially not the same with the ones that my first employer had” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). There was a mismatch between his idealistic view of teaching and its realities. He noticed that: “Working as an English teacher, working as a teacher in Turkey is very difficult” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). There were systemic problems and Behzat had begun to experience challenges:

As a teacher at the beginning, you say that, okay, we will do it, we will do more communicative activities, and we will be maybe more idealist teachers at the beginning. You try to find and use more... But later, you get tired of this. (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023)

This statement reflects the realities of how professional burnout can diminish the initial excitement of teachers and their job satisfaction: “Yes, in terms of money I'm not happy about that so my emotions are kind of filed let's say they are not as sharp as when I first started teaching” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023). There is a highly complex interplay between Behzat’s passion for teaching, his idealism, and the challenges. Initially, he was motivated and in love with teaching and insisted on inspiring his students; however, as time passed and financial challenges arose there his idealism started to diminish. He started to even consider choosing a different career. He wanted to improve himself as an English teacher, but his job satisfaction started to decrease gradually. Behzat’s journey shows how important it is to support and recognize teachers and their contributions. It is also important to consider their monetary issues and challenges. His reflections are very insightful as they illustrate Turkish NNESTs' career paths in Türkiye.

Perceptions of NNESTs and Their Challenges in a Context with NESTs

There is a common perception toward Turkish NNESTs, and Behzat is aware of that. He acknowledged that Turkish NNESTs do not have the same value as NESTs. He thinks Turkish NNESTs are judged by their status and society would prefer NESTs as they are

perceived as superior in language teaching: “Since there are a lot of English Teachers in my country, I believe it is normal to be seen as not as valuable as the native English teachers” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). Behzat believes Turkish NNESTs have numerous qualifications however, they cannot receive equal recognition as NESTs: “Nobody directly said that native English teachers are better, but I used to feel always from the students’ and my employers’ attitude” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). These biases impact Turkish NNESTs’ confidence and professional identity, while they have their unique strengths and contribute to their educational setting. Behzat thinks that Turkish NNESTs can understand students needs: “I believe that non-native English teachers have also some advantages... my native language is Turkish, so that's why I believe I can understand more about my students' mistakes and errors when we are teaching English” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023).

They have a similar linguistic background to their students which enables them to anticipate students’ errors and challenges and support them more effectively: “It's probably something related to culture. I just don't want to generalize it for saying Turkish teachers are more emotional and more supportive” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). Cultural relatedness allows Turkish NNESTs to connect with their students and thus create a supportive environment for them. Behzat is aware that Turkish NNESTs have some weaknesses, particularly in terms of their fluency and self-confidence, that impact their teaching practice and self-perception. He believes this struggle with fluency comes from a focus on accuracy in Turkish language education which does not prepare Turkish NNESTs for language use: “It seems that fluency is a bit of a problematic aspect of language learning in Turkish education... they prioritize accuracy rather than fluency” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023).

Behzat also discussed the challenges of being an English teacher in Türkiye, both for NNESTs and NESTs, although it affects NNESTs more. As an English teacher in Türkiye, teachers have to work for long hours, and the institutions normally undervalue their profession. In addition to this, there are many societal pressures that add to teachers’ challenges. Moreover, Turkish NNESTs face challenges regarding biases that favor NESTs. These biases are encountered in hiring practices, interactions, and parents' and students’ attitudes. The general perception is that NESTs are more authentic and have native accents, so Turkish NNESTs need to prove their competence:

Working as an English teacher, working as a teacher in Turkey is very difficult... we also work in long hours, like from early in the morning and then till in the evening like 5 pm or sometimes 6 pm. And it's a long time. (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023)

Turkish NNESTs are perceived as employees rather than professionals

“In Turkey, they don't see you as teachers; they see you as their workers. So being a teacher in Turkey is also difficult. Not an English teacher, not a non-native teacher, just being a teacher is difficult, I think.” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023)

Turkish NNESTs constantly try to prove their validity and proficiency as they are compared to NESTs. Behzat noted that although these biases are implicit, teachers can feel them through the employers' and students' attitudes. NNESTs carry a heavy burden as they have to prove themselves continuously, and this impacts their confidence and self-respect. Behzat also highlighted the problems regarding administrators and their approaches toward teachers, particularly NNESTs. He believes that Turkish NNESTs generally have a lot of difficulties due to native-speakerism. The administrations do not support them, and there is a lack of effective communication; thus, Turkish NNESTs feel undervalued and unrecognized as they do not get involved in important decision-making processes. Behzat shared his experience: “I have had some problems with the administration, and they are not being approachable to us... teachers are not quite close to administration, either they are native or non-native” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023).

This statement shows that both NESTs and NNESTs are affected by a lack of administration transparency. This lack of transparency and approachability can isolate teachers so that they cannot express their needs and struggles. However, Behzat believes that there is a disparity in administrators' approach towards NESTs and NNESTs. He believes that NESTs tend to get treated better: “Only to know that native teachers are probably approached in a more delicate manner” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). This disparity of approach affects Turkish NNESTs' morale and strengthens their beliefs that NESTs are the ones with higher status. Behzat believes that these biases impact NNETs' job satisfaction. Behzat questions the competency of the administrators: “They are not quite, you know, qualified in what they were doing in terms of administration” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023).

Turkish NNESTs feel marginalized due to a lack of administrative competence. If the administration is not knowledgeable and supportive, Turkish NNESTs find it challenging

to access resources, opportunities for career development, and equal treatment. Behzat reflections emphasize that the administrators need to be trained to create an inclusive environment for all teachers. Behzat sees native-speakerism as a common challenge for NNESTs, too. Despite being subtle, Behzat notes that biases can be sensed in interactions and institutional decisions: “Nobody directly said that native English teachers are better, but I used to feel always from the students’ and my employers’ attitude” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). Attitudes like this result in an atmosphere where Turkish NNESTs like Behzat feel undervalued even if they have skills: “One challenge is that some people seem to prefer English teachers who are native speakers... I've found situations where people tend to prefer native English accents” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). Under the influence of native-speakerism, students tend to engage more in NESTs’ classrooms, and NNESTs are left in a battle to prove themselves so that their students can trust them. Native-speakerism also limits the recruitment opportunities of NNESTs as Behzat elaborates: “Financial issues and how they probably prioritize a teacher, one non-native and native, and they probably go for the native one because they can find thousands of non-natives if they really want to, especially in our context” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023).

When Turkish NNESTs become the secondary choice for employment, they do not have job security and access to better positions. Native-speakerism causes internal struggles and affects NNESTs’ self-confidence and professional identity: “They [students] say hello to us, and we just say hi, but it's not enough for them because deep inside they know that we know Turkish, and it's not a natural environment to speak” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). Behzat underscored how interaction with NNESTs is different for students, as they are not considered authentic. This shows that there is a need for systemic change to create an environment where all teachers are recognized for their strengths. Behzat also mentioned the situations where there have been biases and discrimination within the community of both NESTs and NNESTs. He noted that the biases around nationality and ethnicity divide the teachers as well.

I see some of my colleagues, you know, both native and non-native English teachers, they are being some kind of racist to each other... he was from South Africa, and some of our friends said that, like the colleagues said that, she must be, you know, like not in a high cultural way. (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023)

Prejudices such as this can undermine the educational environment and result in a toxic

workplace. Teachers will not be able to collaborate if there are biases on nationality, ethnicity, or cultural background. Behzat believes that lack of practical learning is another challenge that Turkish NNESTs struggle with and hinders their self-perception: “As English teachers, like non-native English teachers, we have really, let's say, little areas that we can improve our English assets. So mostly, I believe that most of the teachers are improving their language skills in their lessons” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). Turkish NNESTs have limited development opportunities: “So, when you start teaching them, you really have difficulties at the beginning, and in Turkey, you don't have such kind of programs that prepare teachers for it” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023).

Turkish NNESTs are generally unprepared and under-equipped when they start teaching. Behzat acknowledged that Turkish NNESTs receive mainly the theoretical knowledge of teaching, so they have to rely on their own experiences to learn and develop essential skills:

When you start teaching them, you really have difficulties at the beginning, and in Turkey, you don't have such kind of programs that prepare teachers for it... some of the pedagogical things, methodological knowledge that I have got from the university is not somehow enough. (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023)

Behzat's reflections show the multiple and multifaceted challenges that Turkish NNESTs have in their career. Although they have unique strengths and contributions, they are trapped in the systemic biases of native-speakerism and insufficient practical learning. Native-speakerism impacts their professional identities by hindering their recruitment opportunities, classroom dynamics, and self-perception. It is essential to address these systemic issues and enhance teacher training programs, promote an approachable and inclusive management, and recognize Turkish NNESTs.

Perceptions of NESTs, Their Differences, and Collaboration

Although Behzat notes the challenges of native-speakerism and the biases, he appreciates NESTs and their contributions to English language teaching. He thinks they are valuable due to their cultural authenticity, pronunciation, and English-only instruction. He expressed his desire to have NEST when he was a student. He reflected: “Working as an English teacher, working as a teacher in Turkey is very difficult... we also work in long hours, like from early in the morning and then till in the evening like 5 pm or sometimes

6 pm. And it's a long time" (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). The expression shows that NESTs are believed to contribute to better learning of the English language as they can offer language exposure for natural acquisition. He elaborated: "In Turkey, they don't see you as teachers; they see you as their workers. So, being a teacher in Turkey is also difficult. Not an English teacher, not a non-native teacher, just being a teacher is difficult, I think" (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023).

Behzat believes that NESTs are authentic and bring value to the classroom. Their cultural knowledge is insightful and contributes to language learning. He recognizes their strengths and uniqueness in language teaching as they can immerse learners in English use and understanding of English culture. Behzat thinks NESTs are valuable as students can have better learning experiences with them: "I have had some problems with the administration, and they are not being approachable to us... teachers are not quite close to administration, either they are native or non-native" (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). As NESTs only use English as their instruction medium, students have better chances to learn English faster. Behzat observed that students are forced to communicate in English as NESTs do not know Turkish: "The students think that the only way to communicate with them is speaking English. So that's why they don't even think about speaking Turkish" (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). Behzat perceives this immersion as a way to increase students' confidence as they talk in English only. Another factor that students benefit from NESTs is their exposure to various accents. Even Behzat thinks he would have benefited from a NEST if he had one:

Unfortunately, I didn't have any chance to have my lessons with native English teacher. I wish I could have had a native English teacher at least in small part of my learning process because I believe my English knowledge would be totally different. (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022)

Despite the positive factors that Behzat attributes to NESTs, he points out their shortcomings as well. He claims that NESTs are not competent in teaching grammar or vocabulary because they do not know students' main language: "Native English teachers cannot do this one because they don't know the Turkish language" (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). He believes that this limitation causes misunderstanding between NESTs and students as they cannot provide enough explanations. NESTs often feel cultural disconnection which impact their class management and student engagement. Cultural disconnection can also lead to insensitivity and lack of respect to

local culture which can result in confrontations with students and colleagues: “And we heard some bad things also from the native teachers, like, you know, like, 'There's a genocide in Turkey, you Turkish people are not so good people.' I've been to Georgia before and like, 'You are not accepted’” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). Behzat highlighted that these attitudes can cause hostility in the workplace and impact constructive collaboration. Behzat also shared his experiences where NESTs were not supportive and were critical of Turkish NNESTs:

My native colleagues, like they are making fun of us, like, you know, between us, they are saying like, 'Okay, IELTS teacher, okay SAT teacher,' because sometimes I find myself using some, you know, those academic vocabulary, those words that are used in the SAT exams, the IELTS exams. (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023)

Despite being a light-hearted teasing, it makes Behzat feel embarrassed as he believes Turkish NNESTs are trained to focus on language exams. He admitted that NESTs and Turkish NNESTs have differences, however, this does not make them better teachers: “I believe that non-native English teachers can also be linguistically competent as native ones, but it depends on the person as well” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). He believes that both NESTs and NNESTs can have linguistic competence and teaching ability: “So, in terms of ability, I don't believe that we have any difference, or I have any, let's say, that something disadvantage” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023).

In general, Behzat does not think that there are significant differences between Turkish NNESTs and NESTs. He believes that their abilities are complementary because while NESTs are better at communicative approaches, Turkish NNESTs have better structured approaches to teaching in teaching grammar and vocabulary. He believes that NESTs are more disciplined in conducting their lessons in only English and encourage their students to practice fluency more. On the other hand, Turkish NNESTs can explain grammar better as they share a language background with students: “My native language is Turkish, so that's why I believe I can understand more about my students' mistakes and errors when we are teaching English” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). Behzat recognizes NEST's cultural knowledge as their strength as well. He thinks they can teach cultural aspects to students much better: “I believe native teachers can reflect the culture, therefore, the language better when it comes to some certain points” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). However, Turkish NNESTs also have a shared culture

with students, which makes them more empathetic towards students and can be better at understanding their difficulties: “We, as non-native teachers, can recognize students' mistakes because we have been in their shoes as learners” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023).

Behzat believes that not sharing students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds challenges NESTs as they can find it hard to teach grammar or vocabulary. “Native English teachers cannot do this one because they don't know the Turkish language” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). Behzat believes NESTs have other challenges as well, such as homesickness, visa, and working permit-related issues. He believes that school administrators do not support them most of the time which can cause stress and sense of instability for NESTs: “They are far away from their homes and sometimes they have some visa problems etc. I believe that this is one of the biggest issues and some schools are not careful about them” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). Behzat has an empathy for NESTs as he observes that students and institutions specify them only for limited roles and thus limit their contributions: “Students believe that the native English teachers in their classes are just for speaking” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). He believes that this issue does not allow NESTs to practice their teaching skills and engage in broader activities.

Another significant problem that NESTs have is that they do not share the language of the administrators so they have problems in communicating with them and cannot get close for support: “That administration has not a good but not enough relationship, let's say, because they are not communicating so much” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). He believes that the lack of communication can result in misunderstandings and a sense of isolation for NESTs. They might be affected in their physical or psychological well-being and teaching practice.

Behzat is highly positive about the cooperation between Turkish NNESTs and NESTs as it can create a balanced approach to language teaching. They can combine NESTs' cultural authenticity and fluency with Turkish NNESTs' structured teaching and reliability: “When it comes to our mutual goal, which is teaching, it is more important to collaborate since both parties have many crucial things to learn from each other” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). He sees collaboration as a means for professional growth for both groups of teachers. He believes that Turkish NNESTs can

have many opportunities to learn NESTs' strategies and techniques. He reflected: "As we worked together with the native teachers, I realized that we, as the English teachers, have so much to learn from the native English teachers" (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022).

He believes both groups of teachers will have opportunities to grow professionally through cultural exchanges and uniting strengths in classrooms. He highlighted the importance of this unity in making teaching more effective:

If we cooperate with the native teachers or native teachers cooperate with the non-native teachers in Turkey, it's going to be the best education because they are going to motivate each other well and they are going to motivate the students too. (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023)

In general, Behzat tends to appreciate NESTs due to their authenticity and fluency. He also advocates for Turkish NNESTs for their contributions and relatability to students. He has experienced the benefits of NEST and NNEST's collaboration and thinks that both groups can enrich the teaching effectiveness of the other group. He emphasizes that both groups of teachers have a shared goal, which is educating their students. He also has experience the incidents where professional relationships could be strained by biases and cultural insensitivity. This shows that it is essential to support the teaching community in having cultural exchanges and communication openness.

Self-Positioning and Professional Identity in a Context with NESTs

Behzat's professional identity as a Turkish NNEST is closely related to his self-perception and the way he compares himself with NESTs and other colleagues. He tends to doubt himself and position himself negatively. He does not believe in his competence and fees are inadequate regarding his fluency and language authenticity. He equates fluency to effective teaching and thus makes a confession: "I don't feel myself as competent as the native ones because of the fluency... Our only difference comes in the fluency and the competence part of the language itself actually" (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023).

Behzat believes he is not a fluent teacher, and it makes him inferior to NESTs. He has internalized the idea that he needs to have native-like fluency to be worthy, which is an

idea at the heart of native-speakerism. He elaborated on this deficiency:

As a non-native English teacher, I don't believe that I am as competent as native ones, but it doesn't mean that I am a bad teacher or let's say that it doesn't mean that I'm not capable of teaching language to the students. (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023)

Behzat tries to alleviate his self-doubt by identifying himself as a teacher with abilities when he says, “It doesn't mean that I’m a bad teacher”. However, this statement shows his internal struggles as he continuously compares himself with NESTs regarding his teaching. He sees fluency as an important aspect of English teaching which is not addressed in the educational system of Türkiye: “Fluency is a bit of a problematic aspect of language learning in Turkish education... They prioritize accuracy rather than fluency.” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023)

Behzat criticizes the Turkish system as it focuses on grammatical accuracy and restricts language development. The result of this issue has been his lack of self-confidence and feeling of inadequacy. Furthermore, he senses unnaturalness in NNESTs’ role as English teachers when he reflects: “I always think that there is something unnatural about being a non-native English teacher in a lesson” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023). Behzat struggles to label himself or any other NNEST as an ideal teacher, even if they have outstanding qualifications. The status of “non-native” is a big obstacle for him, which has its roots in the native speaker fallacy. In his continuous self-comparison with NESTs, Behzat positions himself in a lower position as he is a NNEST: “But in general, native teachers would be more effective. Because, as he says, we are not as good as them” (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023).

He has a hierarchy in his mind that places NESTs at the top, and his acceptance of this hierarchy has a huge impact on his confidence. His ultimate focus on fluency has overshadowed other qualities that a teacher can have, including empathy, cultural understanding, and being relatable. The way Behzat positions himself shows his internalization of native-speakerism ideologies. There is a duality when Behzat positions himself regarding other Turkish NNESTs. On one hand, he states the similarities and their common experiences and challenges, on the other hand, he implies that he has unique strengths and qualities that others do not have. He stated: “It would not be right to claim that I experienced particular challenges as a non-native English teacher as many others do, such as lack of fluency, lack of confidence, and so on” (Behzat, personal

communication, November 2023).

Behzat is aware of Turkish NNESTs' struggles with fluency, and he stated that he has the same challenges, yet later he positions himself as a NNEST who does not have these issues. This statement implies that he sees himself as a confident teacher who is more competent than other NNESTs. He emphasized this even more: "You're someone who is doing things good and the others not as that" (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). He believes in his competence in some areas and his skills that set him apart from other Turkish NNESTs. Although he feels inadequate when he compares himself with NNESTs, he recognizes his value in comparison to Turkish NNESTs. Behzat reflected on the incidents when he was implicitly compared to NNESTs by his students and employers: "Nobody directly said that native English teachers are better, but I used to feel it always from the students' and my employers' attitude" (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023).

In his biography essay, Behzat expressed his recognition of implicit messages that NNESTs are better teachers, which automatically positioned him as an inferior English teacher. However he shared other incidents when his status of NNEST had positioned him in a better place: "In my working environment, students see the Turkish English teachers as more closer than, let's say, closer than the native teachers because they believe that they understand or they explain themselves more and like in our school" (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023). As this statement conveys, Behzat sees himself positioned as an approachable and relatable teacher who shares students' cultural and linguistic background. However, Burak still believes that students position Turkish NNESTs in general and himself in particular negatively: "So, I believe that students have some rights that they feel that small, at least that small negativity in our lessons" (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023). When it comes to his employers, Behzat deeply values how they position him and needs their recognition.

"Because I value myself according to my administrators. If my principal sees me as a person who is doing many things, if he or she appreciates what I'm doing and that's what I call a good job actually that's what I call to myself at the end of the day okay Burak you are in a good path right now." (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023)

Behzat reveals that he is dependent on how his employers position him, and it can be a benchmark for him to feel accomplished. He believes he is a capable teacher if they see

him that way. On the other hand, if his employers position him as a secondary, he will feel inadequate. “When my employers see how hard I work, and I try, I get motivation... that is when I see the result of my efforts” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023). The way Behzat’s employers position him affects his self-perception and his future actions. Positive positioning will motivate him to do more, and he will feel validated. Otherwise, his professional identity will be affected, and he will feel inferior due to being NNEST.

Behzat also shared his experiences when institutions attempted to disguise him and other colleagues as NESTs. This positioning in the form of disguise reflects the existing biases and parents’ preferences in assigning NESTs to their children:

They say that the teachers are actually foreign. So the students think that they are in a natural level of speaking with the teachers. So, we cannot manage this in high school. So, they are trying to give some different names to each other, so you know, they change their names. (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023)

Asking Turkish NNESTs to alter their real names is a form of positioning that makes NNESTs believe they are not enough, which directly impacts their professional identity as they cannot act as their real selves. This act reflects the depth of native-speakerism and NNESTs’ ongoing and unresolved challenges. Behzat regularly gets positioned by his students’ parents as well. He remembers the moments when they had questioned his competence: “Parents are coming to the meetings and they are saying like okay you are young, and I don't think that you are so competent why don't we have a native English teacher in high school” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023). This statement shows the superiority of NESTs in ELT and the way these biases impact NNESTs’ professional status. However, Behzat has been positioned as a capable teacher by other parents as well: “They are saying like teacher, they are always talking about you at home and we are lucky that we met you something like this you know and that made my day” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023).

Being positioned positively encourages Behzat and reinforces his sense of value. He feels competent, and this way he can overcome negative biases. Parents’ expression of gratitude helps Behzat believe in himself and boosts his confidence and thus strengthening his professional identity. Behzat’s reflections on the identity he desires to have are complex and include both ambition and his awareness of a changing world. He always wanted to

be a devoted and dedicated English teacher: “I devoted myself more to become the perfect teacher that my teachers in the Department of English Language Teaching have trained me to be” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023). He wanted to be an ideal teacher and desired a professional identity as an influential educator; however, his experiences changed his purpose as he claims:

To be honest, I would change it [teaching career] because I have never thought about these changes in the world, let's say the technological ones. Especially recently I am into these chatbots, the AI and etc. And I would find myself more in a, let's say, different position in my future careers if I had the chance to go back. So, I would probably choose to be like a computer engineer or something like a developer. (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023)

The shift from commitment to teaching to an interest in technology and engineering shows how Behzat has been impacted by global trends. Behzat’s overall self-positioning is affected by a tension between his self-doubt and his commitment. When he compares himself with NESTs, he does not see himself as an adequate teacher. His belief of inadequacy gets reinforced by the way students, parents, and administrators position him. However, Behzat aspires to be a teacher who is recognized and appreciated. His ultimate desire is to influence his students’ lives, so he remains passionate and does his best to overcome difficulties. Behzat’s narrative shows how Turkish NNESTs navigate their identities through biases and societal expectations.

(re) Construction of Professional Identity in a Context with NESTs

Turkish NNESTs’ journey of professional identity formation is highly complex, particularly if they work alongside NESTs. They face societal expectations and biases that impact their self-perception. Behzat’s professional identity as an English teacher has been formed through his struggles, emotional changes, and the contexts he has been in. When Behzat started his teaching career, he did not feel as if he had any significance, and this led to tremendous self-doubt. He continuously compared himself with NESTs, as he expresses: “I felt myself just a clerk that signs some papers in the office and doing nothing productive in their lives” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). He did not feel like an educator, and he had some mundane tasks to do. When he uses the phrase “doing nothing productive in their lives,” he tells us how he felt unmotivated as he did not have any influence on his students. His potential was being ignored, and he did not feel valued. He started to feel inferior, stating, “I felt myself so small compared to the

other native teachers who are my lovely colleagues” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022).

Even though he uses “lovely” to describe his colleagues, he was struggling internally due to low self-esteem as he felt “so small” compared to his NEST colleagues. The feeling of being small also reflects the way he was perceived by his students and administrators, which was rooted in biases of native-speakerism. Behzat also had struggles related to a lack of practical knowledge that is common among novice teachers: “I was surrounded by disappointment when I first applied as an English teacher to some schools and English courses” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). The word “surrounded” shows the amount of discouragement he had through his attempts to find a teaching position. His internal doubts grew stronger over time, as he admitted, “So I didn't think that it was going to be this difficult, actually” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023). There was a disparity between his expectations and the realities of teaching. He elaborated on these difficulties:

In the class you have lots of challenges with students. You are unexperienced with students, how to manage the classroom because training is... ok, we got this training at universities but it is difficult, it's different in the classroom you are face to face with the students and you are alone in the classroom. (Behzat, personal communication, January 2024)

Behzat’s narrative reflects the existing gap between theoretical knowledge and the essential skills required in a classroom. He reveals his sense of isolation through the phrase “alone in the classroom” and how he was under pressure while lacking support. He was not prepared for classroom management or engaging his students. Behzat also had other problems due to the school management. Not only was he struggling in the classroom, but he was also overwhelmed with excessive responsibilities. He remembered that he felt overwhelmed: “At the beginning, the first years of my career, I really had difficulties. Especially when you are a non-experienced teacher, it starts from the management” (Behzat, personal communication, January 2024). He was not guided or supported, and he felt the burden of his tasks as he explained, “They give you more responsibilities, but I don't understand this. They give you lots of responsibilities. They don't give you chance to improve yourself” (Behzat, personal communication, January 2024).

He needed to focus on self-improvement, but the heavy workload would not allow it.

Moreover, he felt emotionally damaged and experienced a deep sense of worthlessness: “My disappointment grew even bigger when I first started my career” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022). Behzat’s situation was intense among his challenges, and he was not prepared enough for the realities of the classroom, and he felt inadequate. He reflected on his self-perception: “I have to state that all the bad emotions about feeling worthless next to the native teachers were in the past when I was inexperienced” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022).

He acknowledged that these feelings were related to his being inexperienced. However, over time, he was able to overcome them as he started to gain experience. He started to feel fulfilled and enjoyed his career: “If my student is happy, I become more than happy actually” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023). He started to focus on a student-centered teaching approach, which satisfied both him and his students. His students’ happiness and satisfaction became his source of motivation, and thus he could overcome his negative feelings. Currently, he has a different idea of others’ opinions: “Now, for me, the value of my job or others doesn’t have any importance since all that matters is teaching” (Behzat, personal communication, December 2022).

He decided to prioritize the act of teaching rather than how others perceived him; therefore, he had control over his professional identity. The sense of “having in control” empowered him as he focused on his students’ success rather than their judgments. He acknowledged that his emotions still impact him:

My emotions are kind of ... let's say they are not as sharp as when I first started teaching but as I said some things definitely changed but not my motivation but sometimes my emotion let's say impact my approach to teaching. (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023)

He claimed that he had organized and managed his emotions by reducing their impact, but his motivation is strong. Adapting his teaching according to his emotional growth helped Behzat to reshape his professional identity and navigate his challenges. He started to normalize his students’ perceptions because they might have different ideas about the lessons when their teacher is not a NEST: “I believe that students have some rights that they feel that small, at least that small negativity in our lessons” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023). He is now empathetic towards his students, which has helped him to adapt his teaching according to their needs. Gaining experience was another factor that increased his confidence over time as he got more familiar with classroom

environments and various responsibilities. Experiences helped him overcome the anxieties he had at the start of his career, and he became more “relaxed,” and developed strategies for classroom management and teaching: “But in the other years you get used to it and you are more relaxed with students” (Behzat, personal communication, January 2024).

Behzat learned that he needed to focus on his students’ progress, which is a more tangible benchmark for his teaching rather than mere perceptions. He measured his teaching and his validity through his students’ success:

It motivates me ... at the end of the term kid in a higher level of let's say proficiency so that they say you passed the test and now we believe in you as well next year we want you as a teacher. (Behzat, personal communication, October 2023)

Another factor was Behzat’s pursuit of opportunities for his professional development. He started to learn more skills through various projects and taking initiative in organizing events that could promote his ability in leadership abilities as well. He involved himself with new challenges beyond classroom teaching: “This [international project] is something serious for a teacher to make, and in November we are actually planning to have our own conference in the school” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023).

Behzat decided to be innovative and take adaptive approaches in his teaching methods. He also decided to dedicate himself even more by “changing his identity” to engage his students: “To make my lessons more natural I can change my name I can change my identity” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023). Behzat decided to change his name and identity to present himself as more authentic because he knew that NESTs are preferred and valued within ELT. He assumed that he could engage his students and create an immersive learning environment by adopting a Western name associated with NESTs. He also focused on developing new teaching techniques to meet his students’ needs, such as constant adaptation and innovation: “I create some new techniques for my class, new styles for my teaching” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023).

One important step that Behzat took was avoiding self-criticism and focusing on self-improvement. He decided to understand his limitations and be more self-compassionate and motivated: “I’m not trying to be harsh to myself since I didn’t have any chance to speak when I was in high school. I try to improve myself” (Behzat, personal

communication, November 2023). By acknowledging his own educational background and its limitations, he avoided self-criticism and focused on improvement, through self-compassion enabled him to maintain a positive outlook and remain motivated.

Besides being proactive in self-development and personal growth, he also shared the role that his administrator had in supporting him by providing resources and opportunities: “They create all the resources for us to be a better teacher actually” (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023). He has access to various resources, including training programs and workshops, and appreciates the school management’s investment in teachers and supporting their growth:

When it comes to teaching our school is really sacrificing themselves in terms of money and time... We have different opportunities to improve ourselves and that's why actually I'm still in the private sector. (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023)

He is committed and satisfied because he believes he has opportunities for more advancement in his current workplace. Behzat’s narrative illustrates the complexity of the professional identity (re)construction journey as an NNEST in a context where NESTs are present. He had early career struggles and challenges, and felt inadequate in the classroom. However, he remained resilient and reshaped his professional identity. He focused on his students’ success, positive feedback, and his development to transform his early negative experiences. His administrator had a significant role in his career development by supporting his growth. Behzat’s experience shows how important it is to support NNESTs by recognizing them and providing opportunities for them. Through appreciation, opportunities for growth, and self-compassion, Behzat was able to negotiate his professional identity.

Advocating NNEST and Expected Support

Behzat believes that employers need to support NESTs and NNESTs equally by providing resources to both groups. He also believes that the administration must provide teaching materials, resources, and fair and equal compensation to motivate teachers. He believes that administrators can boost collaboration and positivity by ensuring equality: “Employers should be careful and provide equal material and support for both teachers” (Behzat, personal communication, January 2024).

He thinks that administrators must trust their teachers and their professional judgment by allowing them to have autonomy. Micromanagement decreases the effectiveness of

teaching and takes away their freedom. Teachers should be able to act freely and without any interference so that they can be empowered and innovative:

Administration part should be more relaxed with the teachers, let's say, because teachers know what to do and administrate, yeah, like the people, the principals should actually leave the teachers alone and let's say that, let them do whatever they know actually. (Behzat, personal communication, January 2024)

Behzat highlighted the importance of having fair salaries as a fundamental aspect of recognizing teachers' contributions. He thinks financial stability can enhance teachers' morale and their ability to focus on the quality of their teaching. Turkish NNESTs need to receive fair payment: "If you give the money for private sector teachers or all the teachers, they are going to be happy" (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023).

Behzat acknowledged the need to support NESTs as well regarding their visa and job security. He recognizes that NESTs have these complications and their needs should be addressed: "I believe that the native English teachers are not supported enough... They have bigger problems that we have to turn our back on, maybe" (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023).

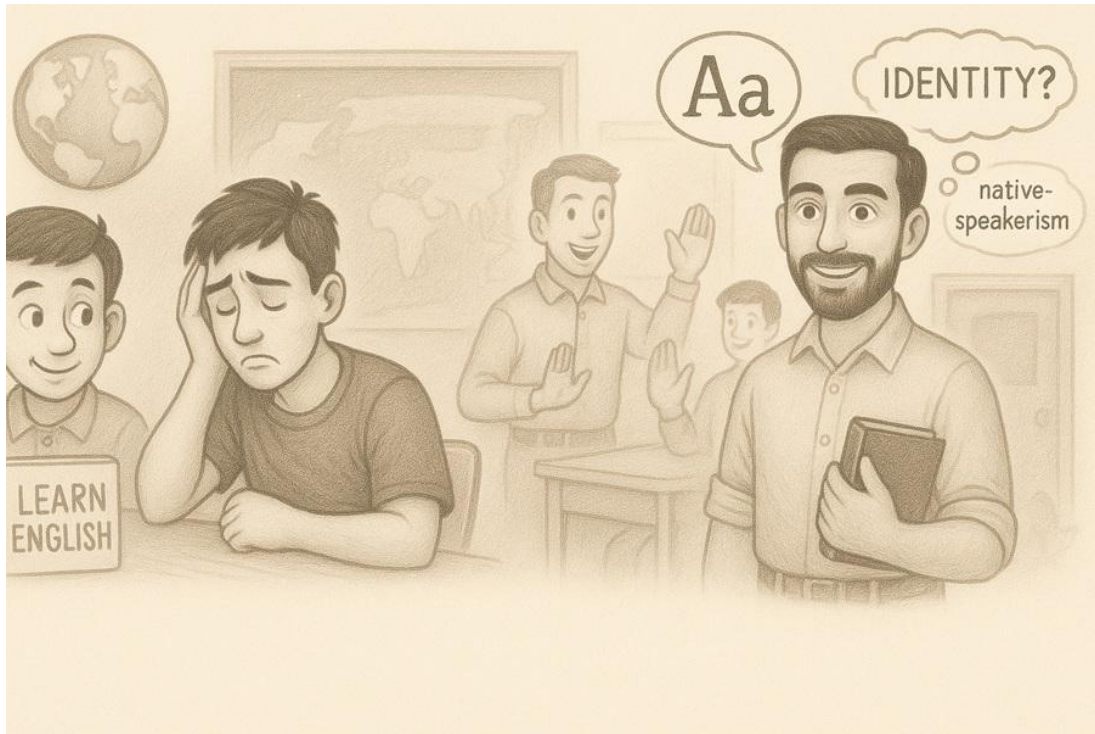
To enhance Turkish NNESTs' recognition, Behzat calls for activities to highlight their value and advocate for non-native accents. If having non-native accents gets normalized, NNESTs will be able to overcome stereotypes. Schools can create an inclusive environment by helping students understand that English is a global language and there are numerous accents: "Maybe they can do activities that show different non-native English accents to change these ideas" (Behzat, personal communication, January 2024).

He implies that the Turkish educational system should improve NNESTs' skills and support their growth through regular in-service training, workshops, and conferences: "We have different opportunities to improve ourselves and that's why actually I'm still in the private sector" (Behzat, personal communication, November 2023).

Behzat outlined the roles of equity, collaboration, and diversity for NNEST advocacy. He thinks administrators should be supportive and trust their teachers' professionalism. The educational system should enhance collaborative opportunities as NESTs and NNESTs have distinct strengths. Figure 4.6. shows his complex emotional struggles along his professional journey:

Figure 4.6

Behzat's Professional Journey

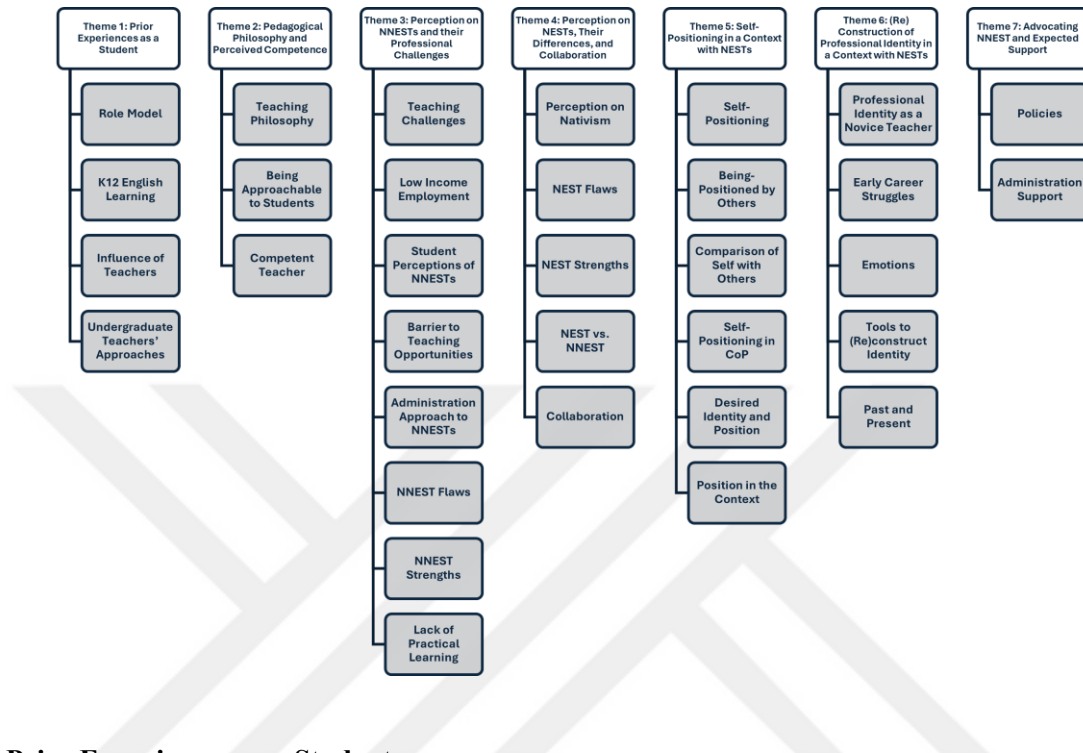


4.4 The case of Selim

This section delves into the findings of the participant with the pseudonym of Selim, whose data was collected from his narrative essay reflective emails, semi-structured interviews, and the focus group discussion. It presents Selim's professional identity (re)construction as a Turkish Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher (NNEST) in the context of native-speakerism. The obtained themes identified through inductive thematic analysis are shown in the following diagram, which illustrates the emergent themes and categories. Figure 4.7 shows the themes and categories that emerged from Selim's narrative.

Figure 4.7

Selim's Emerged Themes and Categories



Prior Experiences as a Student

Selim has been influenced by his experiences as a student, as his educators and their teaching methods later shaped his teaching beliefs and career choice. He believes in “fun” and enjoyable learning and highlights the significance of the environments that boost it. Students learn better and are influenced when their experiences are fun. He still remembers the teachers who made language learning fun for him and his peers. “But I think the entertainment part mostly is important because the teachers I have had, I just remember those who I had fun in their classes” (Selim, personal communication, October 2023). This shows how important it is for teachers to go beyond traditional teaching and create an environment that is interactive and engaging. Selim values this aspect of teaching that enhances student engagement and enjoyment, and he emulates it in his teaching practice.

Selim’s high school teacher was the main reason he decided to be an English teacher. He believes that his English teachers paved the way for him to be successful and professional. He decided to follow their paths as his English teachers stood out in their quality in comparison with other subjects: “I believed that only the English teachers in my high

school could provide me with the knowledge to study at top universities”(Selim, personal communication, December 2022). His English teachers became his role models and inspired him in his career choice: “I think that my teachers in high school really kind of like inspired me to be an English teacher and I believe I was really good in learning English, so I just wanted to earn money from whatever I was good at” (Selim, personal communication, November 2023).

However, Selim chose to be an English teacher as he thinks he was inadequate in other subject areas, such as math and science. The teachers of those subjects were not qualified enough to push him forward and to inspire him: “I was slightly forced to be a teacher since the math and science teachers were not qualified enough in my opinion” (Selim, personal communication, December 2022). When Selim entered university, he had the opportunity to learn a lot from his native professors. He believes this exposure improved his language skills, specifically in listening and comprehension. His professors affected him with their native proficiency, their teaching approaches, and the way they interacted with students. “I had many professors whose native language was English. I felt lucky to have them not because of their linguistic capabilities but their approach to students” (Selim, personal communication, December 2022).

He had one British professor who employed innovative teaching methods and could make the curriculum relatable to real life. Selim was deeply inspired by his creativity and flexibility, so he decided to emulate him:

His creativity in using the language was what affected me the most. His off-the-book approach to teaching and associating the syllabus with real life made me feel that I could be flexible even when I am to adhere to the strict curricula. (Selim, personal communication, December 2022).

He showed Selim that effective teaching goes beyond textbooks and tries to engage students. Selim acknowledged that being taught by NESTs improved his language proficiency and confidence: “I think it contributed to my listening skills and confidence as I felt more confident in my skills as I was able to understand them even when they spoke fast” (Selim, personal communication, December 2022). However, he highlighted the importance of factors such as teacher personality and teaching style and believes that they are more essential than being a native speaker: “I don't think it would have made a difference as I believe the personality of a teacher is more important” (Selim, personal

communication, December 2022).

Selim's reflections show that he appreciates high knowledge and being a supportive and enjoyable teacher. He has learned that an effective teacher can connect with students, inspire them, and create a joyful experience for them. Selim decided to be an English teacher and shaped his teaching philosophy based on his experiences as a student. His prior experiences have affected his professional identity formation. He gives importance to engaging teaching methods, teacher-student relationships, and personality, as he admires these factors in his native and non-native teachers.

Pedagogical Philosophy and Perceived Competence

Selim's teaching philosophy is based on increasing students' confidence by supporting them. He pursues a teaching approach that blends structured teaching with flexibility and puts teacher-student relationships and personality traits at the center. If a teacher is confident, their students will become confident as well. Selim believes a teacher should create a learning environment that is both positive and trusting. He thinks confidence is contagious: "When a teacher is confident, they can send that sense of confidence to the students as well" (Selim, personal communication, November 2023). For him, language teaching should cover both grammar and communicative activities; however, the grammar instructions need to be brief so that most of the lesson time is for communication. He focuses on teaching practical use of language: "I'm giving more time, it's like maybe 15 minutes of grammar and then 30 minutes of communicative activities on it because it's enough for them to learn" (Selim, personal communication, November 2023). Selim admitted that his mood and energy can impact his teaching—for example, when he is relaxed, he teaches differently than when he is tired. He emphasized the realities of teaching challenges: "It depends to my mood as well sometimes when I'm really tired in some of my groups I just don't go farther than I can and I just keep it easy and chill" (Selim, personal communication, November 2023).

Selim admitted that he is human, and his well-being directly affects his teaching either negatively or positively. Teacher-student relationships are also very important for Selim. He underscored the importance of creating a warm and approachable learning environment so students can take risks and ask for help without feeling judged: "Warmness and closeness of the student and teacher is very important" (Selim, personal communication, October 2023). He elaborated that teachers should be supportive enough

to enable their students to be comfortable with their mistakes:

You know the students shouldn't be intimidated when they want to go when they make a mistake or like they want to approach their teacher so they should be, you know, feel free for that... I think a teacher needs to be supportive and be approachable so the students can feel free to come and approach. (Selim, personal communication, October 2023)

Selim asserted that being a good and competent teacher goes beyond expertise of the subject matter and includes personal qualities. He maintained that a good teacher can engage students and inspire them by involving them in their learning process: "How you convey what you want to teach, how you engage the students in the classroom" (Selim, personal communication, October 2023). He considers being fun and energetic as critical traits of a competent language teacher. These qualities keep students interested in learning and satisfied: "A teacher has to be fun and energetic and dynamic. Otherwise, you can lose their [students'] interest" (Selim, personal communication, October 2023). Linguistic competence is a critical aspect of a good language teacher, specifically pronunciation: "Good pronunciation, yeah, I think having good linguistic knowledge is also important" (Selim, personal communication, October 2023).

Selim argued that a competent teacher needs to engage in continuous self-improvement and be committed to professional development. Teaching is a dynamic profession and if a teacher remains stagnant, they can lose their effectiveness: "Self-improvement, like not just keeping it there and you need to just improve yourself linguistically or academically or anything because teaching is something that, you know, is not stable and you need to just continue learning" (Selim, personal communication, October 2023). Selim argued that self-improvement is not limited to language skills; it also involves academic and pedagogical skills. A teacher's professional level directly impacts students and their engagement. Teachers need to explore and learn new and innovative strategies to stay relevant to recent trends. Selim's teaching philosophy embodies a balance of confidence, adaptability, and student-centered approaches. He prioritizes being supportive and approachable so that students can feel comfortable. Selim describes a good language teacher as someone who is linguistically skilled, energetic, and committed.

Perception of Turkish NNESTs and Their Challenges

Selim offers his in-depth perceptions of Turkish NNESTs' strengths and weaknesses along with the various challenges they face. He believes that the most important strength

of Turkish NNESTs is having a common cultural and linguistic background with students. He argues that this is important as teachers can create an empathetic environment where they can understand students and build rapport. “They share the same backgrounds as the students. They are speaking the same language, so it's easier to organize everything” (Selim, personal communication, January 2024). Selim underscored Turkish NNESTs' grammar knowledge, which is a big asset for them. Students can receive structured and clear grammar instruction:

And the second thing is if you're going to teach them grammar or something, like the theoretical things, it's easier to do it in the first language and you don't need to spend a lot of time like trying to show them like the vocabulary things and stuff so and sometimes yeah, like even if like even like instead of spending an hour trying to Distinguish two words or something you just say the equivalence in the language in the first language And then you just skip it so I think a good A good proficient non-native speaker would do a very good job at doing such things. (Selim, personal communication, October 2023)

Selim is aware of Turkish NNESTs' weaknesses that impact their teaching practice negatively. He named the lack of cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries as the major issue. He asserted that this shortcoming limits NNESTs' abilities to have a good contextual knowledge of language usage, which is highly important: “I think they have problems with cultural knowledge...in teaching it is not only about grammar and vocabulary we need to understand the context of what to use when and where. Non-native teachers are not good at this” (Selim, personal communication, January 2024).

Selim holds the view that Turkish NNESTs are often not proactive and do not attempt to develop professionally after graduation. He does not see them as motivated enough to follow and keep up with the dynamic nature of the English language and its teaching.

When the time they graduate, not all of them, they just stop learning and well, of course, they forget many things and language is dynamic so our teachers are not very, you know, as motivated to try to be updated about what new vocabulary is there, which words are outdated and stuff So yeah. (Selim, personal communication, October 2023)

Selim also claimed that Turkish NNESTs often make mistakes and students lose their trust which pushes them towards NESTs: “When they speak, I know this from my colleagues or myself either, sometimes we make mistakes, and when students see this they believe again in native teachers more” (Selim, personal communication, October 2023). Selim pointed out student attitudes and perceptions as Turkish NNESTs' major challenge. He

argued that students come to class with some prejudices influenced by patriotism and skepticism: “The students, they come into the class with some beliefs, they have... prejudices against language. We are kind of patriotic... We always think we are superior. It is difficult to have open-minded lessons” (Selim, personal communication, January 2024). Turkish NNESTs have more difficulty in classroom management as students and teachers share the same native language, so there is a tendency to speak Turkish in lessons, which debilitates immersion and effective learning: “As a non-native speaker, of course, like even though you try your best, they know that you are sharing the same native language, so they always want to go back there. That’s one of the problems” (Selim, personal communication, January 2024).

Despite all these challenges with students, Selim believes that students have neutral or even positive feelings for Turkish NNESTs because it is normal to have Turkish teachers as they live in Türkiye: “I don't think they perceive their non-native English teachers as bad” (Selim, personal communication, November 2023). However, there is a possibility that they prefer NESTs: “Deep down maybe they said oh yeah I wish it was native, but it doesn’t mean that yeah when they have, I think non-native teachers they don't get actually upset or they don't feel any downside” (Selim, personal communication, November 2023).

Teaching English in Türkiye can be demanding, as teachers must be energetic and dynamic all the time to engage students. Turkish students get distracted easily, thus, teachers need to focus on being interactive and enthusiastic, which can lead to burnout over time. Selim highlighted: “Turkey, because I think like students get bored very easily, so you need to be really energetic and dynamic so you can catch their attention” (Selim, personal communication, January 2024). Financial struggles are common among teachers in Türkiye, even if they have advanced qualifications. Despite teaching at a university, Selim is not satisfied with the compensation: “The economy of Turkey is tough, and sometimes I think about giving up teaching, even though I’m teaching at a very good university. I still see that there is no future in it” (Selim, personal communication, October 2023).

The difference between NEST and NNEST salaries is another challenge that Turkish NNESTs experience in private schools and international platforms: “If you want to talk about private schools or language schools, my colleagues receive less than natives. And

as I mentioned, other platforms that pay in foreign currencies tend to pay more to native teachers” (Selim, personal communication, October 2023). Selim shared his experience when he applied for a job on an international platform but was rejected because of his nationality. He believes that biases restrict NNESTs’ job opportunities, particularly outside their home country: “I decided to apply for other websites and, unfortunately, they don’t accept me because I’m non-native. Even if they do, the pay is significantly less compared to someone from an English-speaking country” (Selim, personal communication, October 2023). He elaborated on these challenges:

I try to have another income because of the economy so I want to take lessons from foreign platforms and maybe earn in a foreign currency; however, I always get rejected as I am not a native speaker. I have a bachelor’s and master’s degree and I have many years of experience. I have a good accent but still, I get rejected. (Selim, personal communication, November 2023)

Selim shared his frustration by comparing his initial future aspirations and his current situation with many barriers. He often faces rigid requirements favoring NESTs: “I always have this thing, yeah, I can teach English and then I can go to different countries ... but in reality, you cannot” (Selim, personal communication, November 2023).

He further explained: “For volunteer jobs, I wanted to apply, so they still have this condition of being native” (Selim, personal communication, November 2023). These experiences reflect the amount of bias, particularly internationally, that undervalues NNESTs’ skills and contributions. Selim admitted that his career could not offer financial benefits and shares: “I believe that if I had a chance to have a career which has a better income I would definitely choose that career because of the money, just because of the money” (Selim, personal communication, November 2023). Financial pressures distort job satisfaction and can push even the most dedicated teachers to consider alternative jobs.

Regarding Turkish NNESTs and their administrators, Selim does not think that there are any challenges, as he believes that NNESTs are closer to administrators and are favored. He shared: “Non-natives are much better with the administration, I don't think there is any difference. I think administrations normally are closer with non-native teachers” (Selim, personal communication, November 2023). This closeness might be rooted in mutual culture and language, and better communication. Selim believes that Turkish NNESTs have numerous challenges, but their administrators mostly support them. Selim

highlighted the lack of practical learning in teacher training programs, as there is a noticeable gap between them and classroom teaching realities: “They are always talking about some ideal situations, but like yeah, when it comes to the reality if you go, if you step into the classroom, it's not the case” (Selim, personal communication, January 2024).

Selim argued that teacher training programs must prepare educators for various psychological challenges: “We should focus on those parts, and our teaching training programs are not usually good at it” (Selim, personal communication, January 2024). Selim perceives Turkish NNESTs as educators with unique strengths and downfalls. They have the same cultural and linguistic background as students and can teach grammar very effectively. However, they also have limitations, such as a lack of cultural and contextual knowledge. They also do not attempt to develop themselves after graduation. Selim believes that Turkish NNESTs face employment and financial disparities and cannot be well prepared in their teacher training programs.

Perception of NESTs, Their Differences, and Collaboration

Like NNESTs, Selim offers insights into NESTs’ strengths and weaknesses. He compares both groups of teachers and offers his ideas about their collaboration. Selim believes that NESTs have linguistic authenticity and better skills in student preparation for standardized exams like IELTS and TOEFL. Their students can benefit from direct exposure to the English language in their lessons and develop listening and speaking skills:

For example, IELTS or TOEFL exam teacher, maybe, yeah, maybe in that case natives can be better because they're more authentic. They bring in the kind of natural fluency and real-world usage that students might not otherwise encounter in a classroom setting. Their accent, choice of words, and natural intonation are often viewed as benchmarks for students aiming for fluency. (Selim, personal communication, October 2023)

Apart from linguistic advantage, students admire NESTs as they are more engaging in the lessons, therefore, students are more motivated in the lessons. “I think students find them [NESTs] cool. They admire them and find them fascinating...they are always excited in the classroom. Maybe they think they can learn better” (Selim, personal communication, October 2023). However, NESTs have shortcomings that limit their effectiveness. Selim believes that a lack of cultural understanding can cause a disconnection between them and students. He argued that without understanding culture, NESTs cannot recognize

students' challenges: "They don't share the culture. A lot of native teachers don't understand Turkish students, the educational system here, or how people learn here. They can't understand students' needs" (Selim, personal communication, January 2024). Selim also believes NESTs do not have any academic and formal educational background—they only rely on being native speakers, which cannot help them all the time:

Because they weren't usually teachers. Some of them come here to teach just because they are native speakers, but they don't always have the training or experience to manage a classroom or explain concepts clearly. Speaking a language doesn't make someone a good teacher. (Selim, personal communication, January 2024)

As Selim had observed, NESTs have certain behaviors that can intimidate their students, such as presenting themselves as superior. He mentioned that some NESTs are not as approachable as they should be. "They look at students from above. They feel superior because they're native speakers, and it can be intimidating for students" (Selim, personal communication, October 2023). Selim also mentioned situations where NESTs correct NNESTs' pronunciation or other mistakes, which he thinks is unnecessary in those moments: "They try to correct pronunciation or stuff, which is really irritating for me, like, you're not my teacher" (Selim, personal communication, October 2023). Comparing NESTs and Turkish NNESTs, Selim acknowledged that NESTs are better in language since it is their native language, but NNESTs also have other strengths that make them valuable:

Maybe, like, linguistically I might think that they are maybe at the upper hand, but teaching-wise, I don't think that our teaching ability [is] less or more. NNESTs often have a more structured approach to teaching because we've learned the language ourselves and know the challenges students face. (Selim, personal communication, October 2023)

Selim stresses that NNESTs are much better at grammar teaching as they provide accurate and detailed explanations, whereas NESTs are not as able to:

Our teachers are mostly focusing on grammar or, you know, like, yeah, grammar maybe, maybe fluency, but I think native teachers don't go out with their grammar a lot. NNESTs understand the importance of building a strong grammatical foundation, and we can explain it in ways that make sense to students. (Selim, personal communication, October 2023)

Selim remarked that students' admiration of NESTs does not necessarily mean they are better teachers: "Students admire native teachers more, but that doesn't mean they don't value NNESTs. In the classroom, it's about how well you connect with the students and

how effectively you teach, not just where you're from" (Selim, personal communication, October 2023). Selim assesses NESTs and NNESTs' collaboration as an opportunity for both groups so that they can teach students better. He believes they can complement each other and create a better learning environment for students. NNESTs will be more motivated and inspired to improve their language skills as they can be exposed to natural language by NESTs:

So I think it has a lot of benefits because it can be, like, motivating and pushing for Turkish teachers to improve themselves linguistically. When you're working with someone who's a native speaker, it's a constant reminder to stay sharp and keep learning. (Selim, personal communication, October 2023)

Selim emphasized that a collaborative atmosphere can enhance language learning. Students can benefit from natural language exposure and structured grammar instruction:

Students, they know that they cannot go back to their own language, so they have to push hard and to learn, but at the same time, it has to be authentic practices, you know, activities, and it should also be in line in parallel with the other teacher if they are two teachers teaching at the same time. (Selim, personal communication, January 2024)

However, Selim is aware that collaboration brings challenges too. Turkish NNESTs believe that NESTs are less committed to teaching, which can cause tension:

Non-native teachers normally gossip behind native teachers because natives almost like tend to be lazier and, you know, more laid back in the classroom. It's a bit, yeah, maybe it goes on their nerves, but it doesn't mean the collaboration can't work. (Selim, personal communication, October 2023)

Selim admitted that collaboration has more benefits than drawbacks: "They try to support each other, so there is nothing wrong. If both sides communicate openly and respect each other's strengths, the collaboration can be really effective" (Selim, personal communication, October 2023). Selim appreciates NESTs' linguistic authenticity and roles; however, he critiques their lack of cultural understanding, which causes misunderstandings. He emphasized that both groups have strengths and weaknesses and could be effective teachers. He has a positive viewpoint on collaboration and believes it can result in better educational outcomes. He admitted specific challenges that can be resolved with communication and mutual respect and highlighted the benefits of the complementary teaching of English.

Self-Positioning in a Context with NESTs

Selim has been influenced by his experiences as a student, as his educators and their teaching methods later shaped his teaching beliefs and career choice. He believes in “fun” and enjoyable learning and highlights the significance of the environments that boost it. Students learn better and are influenced when their experiences are fun. He still remembers the teachers who made language learning fun for him and his peers: "But I think the entertainment part mostly is important because the teachers I have had, I just remember those who I had fun in their classes" (Selim, personal communication, October 2023). This shows how important it is for teachers to go beyond traditional teaching and create an environment that is interactive and engaging. Selim values this aspect of teaching that enhances student engagement and enjoyment, and he emulates it in his teaching practice.

Selim’s high school teacher was the main reason he decided to be an English teacher. He believes that his English teachers paved the way for him to be successful and professional. He decided to follow their paths as his English teachers stood out in their quality in comparison with other subjects. “I believed that only the English teachers in my high school could provide me with the knowledge to study at top universities” (Selim, personal communication, December 2022). His English teachers became his role models and inspired him in his career choice: “I think that my teachers in high school really kind of like inspired me to be an English teacher and I believe I was really good in learning English, so I just wanted to earn money from whatever I was good at” (Selim, personal communication, November 2023).

However, Selim chose to be an English teacher as he thinks he was inadequate in other subject areas, such as math and science. The teachers of those subjects were not qualified enough to push him forward and to inspire him: “I was slightly forced to be a teacher since the math and science teachers were not qualified enough in my opinion” (Selim, personal communication, December 2022). When Selim entered university, he had the opportunity to learn a lot from his native professors. He believes this exposure improved his language skills, specifically in listening and comprehension. His professors affected him with their native proficiency, their teaching approaches, and the way they interacted with students: "I had many professors whose native language was English. I felt lucky to have them not because of their linguistic capabilities but their approach to students"

(Selim, personal communication, December 2022).

He had one British professor who employed innovative teaching methods and could make the curriculum relatable to real life. Selim was deeply inspired by his creativity and flexibility, so he decided to emulate him:

"His creativity in using the language was what affected me the most. His off-the-book approach to teaching and associating the syllabus with real life made me feel that I could be flexible even when I am to adhere to the strict curricula." (Selim, personal communication, December 2022)

He showed Selim that effective teaching goes beyond textbooks and tries to engage students. Selim acknowledged that being taught by NESTs improved his language proficiency and confidence: "I think it contributed to my listening skills and confidence as I felt more confident in my skills as I was able to understand them even when they spoke fast" (Selim, personal communication, December 2022). However, he highlighted the importance of factors such as teacher personality and teaching style and believes that they are more essential than being a native speaker: "I don't think it would have made a difference as I believe the personality of a teacher is more important" (Selim, personal communication, December 2022). Selim's reflections show that he appreciates high knowledge and being a supportive and enjoyable teacher. He has learned that an effective teacher can connect with students, inspire them, and create a joyful experience for them.

(Re)Construction of Professional Identity in a Context with NESTs

Selim has undergone a complex process of self-discovery, adaptation, and growth as a Turkish NNEST. He has been reconstructing his professional identity through teaching challenges and native-speakerism biases. His teaching beliefs and emotions have evolved over time, and he has developed a unique professional self. He had numerous challenges as a novice teacher and was nervous and self-conscious. He shared that the first time he entered a classroom he was full of self-doubt: "At the beginning, I remember, I was scared. I would really be self-conscious and scared and nervous. Each time I entered a classroom, I felt like I had to prove myself" (Selim, personal communication, November 2023).

Selim attempted to attract his students' attention and gain their trust. He tried to gain credibility by his engaging lessons: "I was more, I used to show more efforts to attract the students. I wanted them to feel that I was knowledgeable" (Selim, personal

communication, November 2023). Selim's emotional problems challenged his motivation and job satisfaction. Although he was becoming more confident through his experiences, he noticed the systemic issues in his career, specifically regarding financial stability:

I feel like stuck like it's not something that I want. I can't earn more than, I don't think we're earning as we should, and I have no motivation. I kind of like feel that I'm stuck here in this system. (Selim, personal communication, November 2023)

Moreover, he felt monotonous and fatigued, which affected his enthusiasm for teaching: "I get bored easily, maybe I get bored of a group easily, so I just don't have the same motivation. By the end of the semester, I don't feel as excited as I did at the beginning" (Selim, personal communication, November 2023). However, his commitment to influencing his students was satisfying for him: "I like my job despite difficulties. I like being a teacher" (Selim, personal communication, November 2023). Selim focused more on grammar at the beginning. However, he shifted his approach towards a communication-based teaching style and adapted his teaching to his students' needs:

I always tried some new approaches like maybe less grammar, more speaking, more grammar, less speaking or like more vocabulary, like everything. I tried every different way and in time my idea of teaching English kind of changed...I would say like instead of a grammar teacher, now I'm more like a speaking teacher. (Selim, personal communication, November 2023)

Selim reflected on his experiences that contributed to his personal and professional growth. He learned to adapt his style to his students' needs: "I think experiences... they shape you as a teacher. They teach you what to do and how to react in the classroom" (Selim, personal communication, November 2023). Selim relied on several strategies to shape his professional identity through challenges. The most important was improving his language skills, pronunciation, and vocabulary: "I've worked on my pronunciation a lot, and I try to keep my vocabulary and language skills up to date. As a teacher it is important for you to be fluent" (Selim, personal communication, November 2023).

He also learned to be resilient regarding the systemic issues, as he did not hope they would get resolved. He knew that only his efforts could help him: "It is what it is. You can't change the system but only work harder to prove them wrong...if non-native teachers try to improve themselves linguistically, language-wise they can be good" (Selim, personal communication, November 2023). There is a significant contrast between Selim's past and present teacher image. Initially, he focused on proving himself, but over time, he

became confident and shifted his focus from “teaching” to influencing and creating good learning experiences for his students. He used to focus on grammar, whereas he prioritizes communicative teaching now. Selim has become more confident; however, he has lost his motivation and his hope in the system. Despite his hopelessness, he continues to improve himself professionally.

Advocating NNESTs and Expected Support

Selim identifies Turkish NNESTs as valuable teachers and notes that some policies need to change, and administrations must support them so that they can improve. He calls for better financial compensation, opportunities for professional development, and school management’s trust, and remarked that Turkish NNESTs have serious financial issues that are rooted in national policies. For him these changes seem beyond the control of individual teachers or school management: “I hope they could pay more, but you cannot change it. I don't think it's up to the administration. It's kind of like a national policy thing” (Selim, personal communication, November 2023). Although the financial problems seem hard to resolve, he still believes that schools must advocate for and support their teachers. One way to do this is by recognizing their value and contributions. Administrators should value their Turkish NNESTs regularly:

At least psychologically they can support them by giving them motivation and complimenting them that they are valuable, and they are a big asset for that school, and complimenting them that they are valuable and they are a big asset for that school. (Selim, personal communication, November 2023)

Selim believes that schools must support their NNESTs to enhance their teaching abilities. He draws attention to international certifications like CELTA, DELTA, or TESOL and points out that schools can be supportive, as these certificates are expensive. He thinks that schools can improve their teachers’ skills and benefit from it in the long run. He emphasizes that schools can offer loans to their teachers:

Like [they] maybe help them to get some certificates like CELTA or later DELTA or you know TESOL because you know sometimes they are kind of like costly, maybe they can loan some money to the teacher so they can have some, send them to some seminars or stuff. (Selim, personal communication, November 2023)

Treating teachers is also another important factor that administrators need to care about. Selim believes that they need to trust their teachers’ expertise and give them their autonomy. Mutual trust is ultimately important, and administrators must trust their

teachers' decisions regarding teaching and students:

Administration needs to respect teachers like, because when you enter a class you have an idea about that class, okay? like, you know, the best way and administration needs to trust you and I think if admins of a school trust their teachers, that gives confidence to the teachers as well and because administration maybe they have some policies they have some standards but in classroom, you cannot have them all. (Selim, personal communication, November 2023)

Selim stressed that mutual trust can empower NNESTs, therefore, they can work in a supportive working environment where they are validated. Selim outlined several key factors in advocacy for Turkish NNESTs: financial stability, professional development opportunities, respect, and trust. These supports are important in increasing their job satisfaction and teaching quality. Figure 4.8. shows Selim's path, his success, and his financial frustration.

Figure 4.8

Selim's Path: Growth, Success, and the Shadows of Native-Speakerism



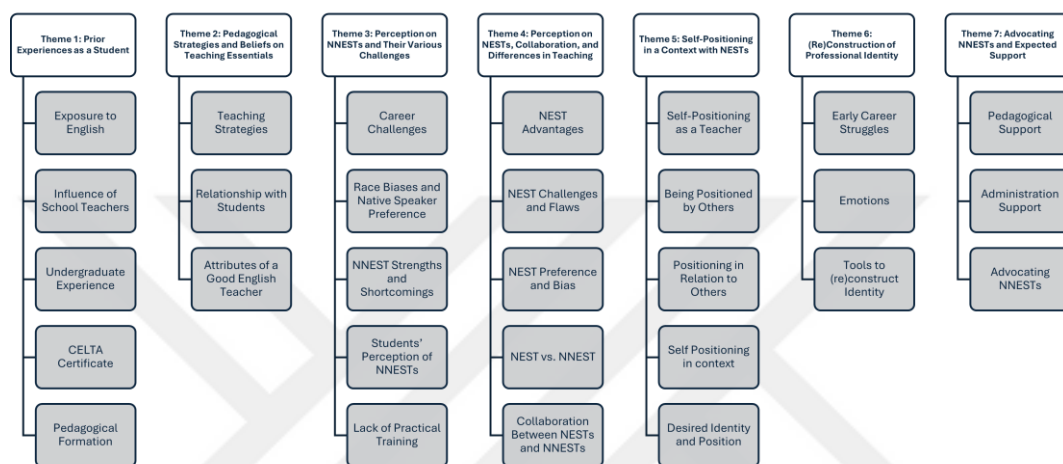
4.5. The Case of Murat

This section delves into the participant's findings with the pseudonym of Murat whose data was collected from his narrative essay reflective emails, semi-structured interviews, and the focus group discussion. It presents Murat's professional identity (re)construction

as a Turkish Non-Native English-speaking teacher (NNEST) in the context of native-speakerism. The obtained themes identified through inductive thematic analysis are shown in the following diagram, which illustrates the emergent themes and categories. Figure 4.9 shows the emerging themes and categories from Murat’s narrative:

Figure 4.9

Murat’s Emerged Themes and Categories



Prior Experience as a Student

Murat’s early exposure to the English language, his teachers, and other educational experiences shaped his English learning journey. As he recalls, he was attracted to English as a child. His uncle introduced him to English by teaching him basic vocabulary, and Murat felt excited and accomplished. He describes the impact:

The very first time of mine to become interested in English was due to my uncle’s homework. He was studying for his school exam, and he taught me some English words like apple, book, ruler, notebook, etc. I remember that it made me feel so good to name something with multiple words. (Murat, personal communication, December 2022)

Murat became interested, and he would scrutinize his uncle’s books and resources during his visits to his grandparents’ home. His uncle’s English sets and tape cassettes allowed him to develop his English: “After that, I was exposed to his English sets with some tape cassettes. I used to listen to them whenever I visited my grandparents” (Murat, personal communication, December 2022). His English language skills further improved during his university years when he started to work as a tour guide assistant. He was directly engaged with English speakers from various backgrounds. It was through this real-life exposure that he could experience English outside the classroom and develop his

communication skills: “I worked as a tourist guide assistant during my university years. I was exposed to various speakers of English, and nearly half of them were native speakers” (Murat, personal communication, December 2022). Murat was later influenced by some of his school teachers, who also impacted his motivation and language skills. In primary school, he received English lessons only in the fourth and fifth grades. He describes his teacher as competent enough, if not perfect:

During my primary years, I had English lessons only in the 4th and 5th grades. Our teacher was a middle-aged man. He was a good teacher but not the perfect one. He wasn't a native speaker. I learned most of the basics in those years. (Murat, personal communication, December 2022)

He learned the basics of English in primary school, and later in middle school, he encountered another teacher who impacted him profoundly. He vividly recalls this teacher and her effectiveness:

In middle school, I had a lovely English teacher. I can say that I was her pet. That situation gave me a lot of motivation. She wasn't a native speaker but she was native-like. So, I learned a lot from her. (Murat, personal communication, December 2022)

This teacher inspired Murat and gave him the initial perception that a non-native teacher could be competent and effective. However, his high school language learning experience was not positive enough, as his teachers were not enthusiastic and their teaching quality was low. He remembers their demotivation and how they influenced his perception of teaching English as a profession:

When I was a student, I saw my teachers, like, some of my teachers weren't so motivated. And I felt like... at high school... I saw them very demotivated, and they weren't having fun at school, and I thought that, okay, maybe this is not a good idea to become a teacher. (Murat, personal communication, December 2022)

These observations made him believe that a non-native teacher cannot be competent and effective:

I used to think that I wasn't able to teach English as a non-native speaker because I saw my English teachers when I was in high school, in middle school, and they weren't capable of teaching English to the students. (Murat, personal communication, December 2022)

Murat's negative perceptions of being a non-native teacher discouraged him in a way that he did not consider becoming a teacher despite his family's insistence: “My mom used to say, become a teacher... you can speak English very well, and you can

become a teacher. And I used to keep saying that, okay, I don't want to be a teacher like my teachers” (Murat, personal communication, December 2022). His teachers’ inability to teach and lack of passion disappointed Murat, but he was eager for the English language. He reflected on some of his high school teachers who were inspiring and knowledgeable, and he remembers their contributions: “My high-school English teacher was also a great one who was not a native speaker either. I had a course teacher, and he was a very knowledgeable person. I learned many details about the language from him” (Murat, personal communication, December 2022).

Murat was not eager to become an English teacher, but eager to develop his English language knowledge. Therefore, he decided to study English Language and Literature at a well-known university in Türkiye. He was exposed to a high standard of English instruction and lecturers with native-like fluency and British accents. He believes that he could develop his listening skills there: “I studied English language and literature at Istanbul University. Most of the lecturers had a native-like level of English and British accents. It was a great experience to develop my listening skills” (Murat, personal communication, December 2022).

His undergraduate studies also changed his perception of the English language, which he could use in his career path. At the beginning of his career, Murat engaged in various jobs such as tourism and sales expert; however, they did not satisfy him and he did not feel fulfilled: “I worked as an export representative for a year. I didn’t enjoy it and saw a friend of mine who was teaching and traveling around the world. So I asked her how she was doing it” (Murat, personal communication, December 2022).

The conversation with his friend, a desire for professional development, and longing for international positions inspired Murat to explore and pursue the CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) program: “Then I came across with CELTA certificate program. It was a completely amazing experience for me which made me think of being an English teacher. I was planning to teach abroad” (Murat, personal communication, December 2022). Taking the CELTA certificate changed Murat’s perspective on teaching English. Before the course, he had doubts about his ability to teach effectively as a NNEST, but he could overcome his insecurities after it: “After I got my CELTA certificate, I said, okay, like, if anyone who doesn't know about teaching should come and take CELTA, and everyone will become a teacher” (Murat, personal

communication, December 2022).

He learned practical English teaching skills and noticed the difference between those approaches and the traditional teaching approach dominant in Turkish schools. He believes that Turkish NNESTs need to take the CELTA course to increase their quality: "After I got my CELTA certificate, I realized that if maybe half of the teachers in state schools got the certificate of CELTA, it could be better teaching as a non-native English teacher" (Murat, personal communication, December 2022).

Murat wanted to teach abroad, and he thought CELTA could make this possible. However, he was disappointed later as he noticed the systemic biases that preferred NESTs. Despite this disappointment, he was confident about pursuing a teaching job and navigating the possible challenges: "So, we can say that before I wasn't motivated, and after the CELTA, I was fully motivated to teach" (Murat, personal communication, December 2022). Later, Murat pursued a pedagogical formation program as it would allow him to teach and develop himself even more: "And after that, I got my pedagogical formation, but it wasn't for becoming a teacher. I just had it in order to develop myself, like a kind of personal improvement, like personal development" (Murat, personal communication, December 2022). Murat wanted to strengthen his educational background, showing his high commitment to self-improvement. His early exposure to the English language, educational influences, and qualifications illustrate how he shifted from a learner to a teacher. His experiences draw attention to the fact that quality education can be transformative.

Pedagogical Strategies and Beliefs on Teaching Essentials

Murat's teaching beliefs and philosophy are deeply rooted in his early experiences and professional development. His fundamental beliefs are monolingual teaching, building deep connections with students, and keeping up with new teaching models and trends. He strongly believes in consistently using the target language during teaching and stresses the importance of maximum exposure. He explained: "Please speak English with your students because this is very important for them to be the only source like you are the only source for them" (Murat, personal communication, December 2022).

Furthermore, he advocates for engaging students outside the classroom because informal interactions are highly significant in language acquisition: "Wherever you can find a chance, please communicate with your students and in the target language" (Murat,

personal communication, December 2022). He believes in the creation of immersive environments so that students can have opportunities to develop communication skills. Murat remarked that teaching a language effectively goes beyond the ability to speak it fluently. Teaching is complex, and it includes monitoring, tutoring, and classroom management: "Because language teaching is not only speaking. So, it requires monitoring, it requires tutoring, it requires classroom management, it requires lots of things" (Murat, personal communication, December 2022).

He believes that effective teaching goes beyond linguistic competence and a teacher must recognize their students' needs, manage a classroom environment, and facilitate students' learning: "Everybody can speak a language, but not everyone can teach this language to someone" (Murat, personal communication, December 2022). He reflected that teaching requires language knowledge, teaching skills, and the ability to connect with students. He also stressed continuous growth and improvement: "I still believe that as long as we do something in a good way, we can be better" (Murat, personal communication, December 2022).

Teachers must be proactive and pursue professional development. They also need to invest in meaningful relationships with their learners. Murat views teacher-student relationships as the most important factor in effective teaching. He highlighted the dual role of teachers: an instructor and a trusted guide.

The language teacher also should be very close to the students, not only in the classroom but also outside of the classroom because they are the only source for the language, mostly of their children and of the pupils in the classroom." (Murat, personal communication, December 2022)

He stands for rapport, which allows students to communicate openly while the teacher maintains authority: "It should be like friend and friend. They should be able to come to you as a kind of information source, and also they could share, or they should share the things with you sometimes" (Murat, personal communication, December 2022). He further added: "The teacher should be friends with their students so that the students feel free to come and ask something about it" (Murat, personal communication, December 2022). Murat emphasized the importance of being approachable and supportive and challenged the hierarchical atmosphere of traditional classroom environments. Murat thinks there should be a balance in a teacher-student relationship, where a teacher is a

mentor and a friend rather than an absolute authority figure in the classroom: "The teacher should not be like... the authority like much, the absolute authority" (Murat, personal communication, December 2022).

Murat thinks the teacher-student relationship could go beyond the classroom for the sake of immersion: "So, I think teachers should be always in contact with students... That's why in the classroom and outside the classroom they should be always talking and speaking in the language, like the target language" (Murat, personal communication, December 2022). Murat bases his definition of a good language teacher on adaptability and eagerness for self-improvement. A teacher must always try to keep up with the recent methods: "A good language teacher should always, should be open to learning and he or she should check the updates about the language learning techniques and also the technology... nowadays everything is very quick" (Murat, personal communication, December 2022).

Murat is aware that making mistakes is inevitable and stresses the significance of accountability and correction: "It is important to correct this mistake, and if they had given this mistake to the students, then they also should correct them" (Murat, personal communication, December 2022). The cornerstone of Murat's and a recurring theme in his reflection is that a teacher must stay updated with trends and technologies: "So, you need to be updated with the new techniques, as I said, you always need to keep up with the changing trends" (Murat, personal communication, December 2022).

Perception of NNESTs and Their Various Challenges

Murat considers Turkish NNESTs advantageous in understanding their learners' struggles by reflecting on their own experiences of English learning. He believes that Turkish NNESTs can empathize with students, particularly those who are at beginner levels, and can explain complex grammatical concepts easily: "Non-natives are better at understanding and also teaching the grammar" (Murat, personal communication, October 2023). He explained that Turkish NNESTs are better teachers for beginner and intermediate-level students who need more explanations and clarity: "If they are not able to speak in, for example, A1, A2 level, like once they become A1 and A2, they highly prefer non-native speakers because they want to be understood when they need something" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023).

Murat asserted that Turkish NNESTs can be more supportive and effective by leveraging

their learning experiences. However, Murat admitted Turkish NNESTs' limitations regarding proficiency in pronunciation, idiomatic expressions, and natural communication. He proposed that these gaps are due to a lack of immersion in the English language: "As long as they are not in a country or they haven't lived in a country where the language is like English, English is the first language, I think they cannot do it. It is impossible" (Murat, personal communication, October 2023). Murat critiques the NNESTs in state schools, their lack of linguistic competence, lack of effectiveness, and unpreparedness: "And when I looked at the teachers overall in MEB, like state schools, they are not fully capable of teaching English" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). Murat pointed out that these teachers struggle with natural communication as a result they cannot teach effectively: "For non-native, some of the things may not be so natural, communication may not be so natural since they still have not the competence in the lessons, during the lessons" (Murat, personal communication, October 2023).

These observations suggest that immersive language learning in teacher training programs is needed to enhance teaching quality. He also stated that Turkish NNESTs do not keep up with pedagogical advancement:

"I think most of the teachers failed online teaching because of this. They weren't ready for renewing themselves for the new trends and then they said they tried the old techniques for online lessons and they said, oh, I don't like online lessons because it didn't work" (Murat, personal communication, November, 2023)

Murat emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and adaptive teaching. However, he thinks that Turkish NNESTs may be unable to find enough time due to their workload. Turkish NNESTs are usually expected to take on additional responsibilities: "They always force you to do more if you are capable of doing something" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). He believes that these expectations are never compensated for, in particular compared to NESTs: "We as non-native speakers had more workload, and they [NESTs] always had the bigger pie for themselves" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). These disparities demotivate Turkish NNESTs, and they feel undervalued. Systemic biases against NNESTs are not limited to workload and payment disparities, they also include biases in hiring policies. As a Turkish NNEST, Murat revealed the numerous biases he has faced within Türkiye and globally. He claimed that NEST preference is mostly common in private schools in Türkiye.

He recalled the time when a foreign NNEST had faced scrutiny due to her nationality: "In Turkey in private school, they really love and they ask, for example, we had a native-like teacher, like a foreign teacher but native-like, and they were questioning her country" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). Murat shared his experiences of applying for various teaching positions abroad and being rejected each time. He argued that his qualifications were not even considered only because he was not a NEST: "Every interview I had the same last sentence at last: 'You're the first potential candidate if we can't manage to find a native speaker'" (Murat, personal communication, December 2022). He mentioned that specific passports from selected English-speaking countries can be used to apply for these jobs. If an English teacher does not have one of those passports, they will not have any chance to be evaluated:

"I always applied for different jobs in different countries, and as a non-native English teacher, I always saw that there are six passports, like six countries' passports that I should have. And since I didn't have [them], most of the jobs, I had to say directly goodbye to them" (Murat, personal communication, October 2023).

Although Murat has a CELTA certificate, his non-native status overshadowed his credentials. He noted that even the best of NNESTs would have secondary status in hiring decisions: "And if they got, for example, CELTA certificate or some certificates to like work abroad, they are always not preferred in the first choice since they are non-native and that's like it" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). Murat recalled one experience when he had an interview in the Gulf region, he explains that the interview went well and was promising until they asked about his nationality. After his response, the hiring process was stopped:

"It happened to me with this like I guess one of the Saudi Arabian or United Arab Emirates like they even called me and they had an interview like for five minutes like they have been telling that okay like you can come and your family may come like this and like that and suddenly they asked me if I was native or non-native and I said I'm a non-native oh like this time we only need like native teachers ... and I said thank you and like they just directly canceled it" (Murat, personal communication, January 2024).

These incidents highlight how native-speakerism promotes inequalities. Murat's experiences call for a critical reevaluation of hiring practices globally. There is a critical need to value competence, experience, and skills over nationality and native status. In Türkiye, parents and administrators also perceive that effective English teachers should

have native status, regardless of their abilities:

"Parents will affect their students directly. The parents will always ask for the native teacher of course, since they are only native and they don't even know what native is sometimes. So, they think that all the native English teachers are more qualified than the non-natives. So, they will direct their own children in this way, and the students, of course, will say that, oh, like, they don't value us" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023).

Murat implies that most students have accepted that NESTs are more proficient. They value Turkish NNESTs for their classroom management skills and their relationships with students: "I also have never felt or I have never compared myself with the other teacher as to like the language competence, and I guess students are also aware of it. They only compare it as to the classroom management" (Murat, personal communication, October 2023). Murat's observations underscore that students evaluate their teachers based on their practical teaching skills and effectiveness. Murat critiques the inadequacy of teacher training programs for Turkish NNESTs so that they cannot get prepared and skilled enough. He reflected on his pedagogical formation program: "To start with the pedagogical formation, I'm not happy with the program because it doesn't prepare for anything, I guess. It only gives you some theoretical background, maybe" (Murat, personal communication, January 2024).

He argues that one main source of NNESTs' struggles is their lack of practical learning: "It doesn't add anything I guess like if it is not done properly even if it is done properly as an English teacher as a non-native English teacher it doesn't prepare you for these kinds of like challenges I guess" (Murat, personal communication, January 2024).

Murat believes nearly all NNESTs enter the teaching profession without practical preparation and limited support or resources.

Perception of NESTs, Native Speakerism, and Collaboration

Murat confirmed the existing biases in ELT that favor NESTs in either hiring practices or societal perceptions. There is an assumption that, as it is their native language, NESTs are inherently better teachers. Murat shared his frustration through multiple rejections: "One of the schools that I was trying to get the job from was in China and they said that in here in China they love Native speakers." (Murat, personal communication, January 2024) The recurring theme in Murat's narrative is the NEST preference of students' parents. He stressed their superficial judgments: "The parents will always ask for the native teacher, of course, since they are only native, and they don't even know what native is sometimes"

(Murat, personal communication, November 2023). These biases lead to disparities in the workplace, such as payments. NESTs typically receive higher salaries, regardless of their teaching abilities. Murat explained that Turkish regulations mandate higher payments for NESTs:

"If a native teacher is there, even if they are not a native teacher and they are a foreign teacher, and about the Turkish regulations, you have to have three times minimum wage salary for them, and it was a bit demotivating for me." (Murat, personal communication, November 2023)

Murat critiques these inequities and underscores the amount of demotivation that NNESTs feel as a result. Murat critiques native-speakerism, but is also aware of its strengths and contributions in language teaching. He underlined their natural fluency, which gives them authenticity in the learning environment:

Being native gives you more freedom about playing with the language. So for example, when there's a question, you can directly or you can easily say why. You can easily tell about the reason of the, like even if you want to, sometimes it is a natural thing of the language. (Murat, personal communication, November 2023)

Murat believes that, as NESTs can offer authentic input, they can be considered as language models and students can benefit and improve their speaking and listening skills. Murat noted that NESTs' communication style seems more natural and less forced than NNESTs: "It is more natural with the native ones, with non-native teachers, it cannot be natural" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). Murat's affirmation of NESTs' authenticity aligns with parents' and societal expectations, which in turn shows the strength of NEST preferences in language teaching contexts: "A native one...so like I guess they are a kind of the correct source of the language" (Murat, personal communication, October 2023).

Similarly, Murat identified NESTs' weaknesses and challenges. The most outstanding shortcoming of NESTs is their limitation in teaching grammar. As many NESTs do not have formal training, they are unable to address their students' needs, specifically those at beginner levels: "But sometimes looking at the grammatical structure... they may have some difficulty about the grammar part because they haven't taught it before" (Murat, personal communication, October 2023). NESTs are not advantageous in building deep connections and rapport with students, and they often struggle to have positive relationships:

So that's why they feel a little bit scared of the communication and of the feeling, sharing the feeling with the native teachers first. So, the first, for example, after the meeting, like after they meet the native teacher, the first one month or two months are very important. If the teacher can create a kind of positive situation or positive classroom environment for the students, it is a good thing. But if they cannot do it in one month or two months, then they cannot do it for the entire year. (Murat, personal communication, October 2023)

Murat believes that a lack of rapport in the classroom can reduce the effectiveness of the lessons. This disconnection normally results in students' demotivation and lack of interest:

The native teacher's lesson is a kind of lesson which is not effective one and which is like they don't have any relation, they don't have any like apart from a few students for example, who are good at English, the other students always see this lesson as something like arbitrary and they don't like attending to this lesson (Murat, personal communication, October 2023).

Murat implies that despite their fluency, NESTs cannot engage students in the classroom since there is no meaningful connection between them, particularly with students with low English levels. NESTs also struggle with connection and interaction with school administrators due to the language barrier. NESTs often feel isolated and are never part of important decision-making: "There is nearly no relation with the administration of the native teachers... there weren't so many people in administration who were able to speak in English" (Murat, personal communication, October 2023). Murat highlighted NESTs' challenges and shortcomings, emphasizing the complex nature of teaching English in diverse settings. It implies that fluency alone is insufficient for effective teaching, and rapport, student engagement, and cultural understanding are also needed. These challenges open the way to discuss the differences between NESTs and NNESTs regarding teaching style and effectiveness.

Self-Positioning in a Context with NESTs

Murat deeply understands his identity and role as a Turkish NNEST. His narrative shows his confidence, desire for leadership, adaptability, and awareness of systemic challenges. Murat knows his strengths as a teacher, his growing ability, and his commitment to empowering his students. Murat perceives himself as a competent and successful teacher who can manage classrooms and exceed others' expectations. "After 4 years of experience... I tried to be a team leader who learns every day and shares with his teammates. I felt really successful during those years" (Murat, personal communication,

December 2022). “So, I think, and I always try to do better than what I was responsible for. So, I always try to do more than I was asked” (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). His achievements never become static, and he emphasizes the importance of continuous improvement and adaptation: “So if I say, for example, today I’m a competent teacher, maybe tomorrow something new will come, and I will not become a competent teacher anymore” (Murat, personal communication, November 2023).

Murat believes in collaborative teaching and positions himself both as a leader and a learner. As a leader, he manages his classrooms and acts as a mediator in administrative tasks that involve NESTs:

As a non-native teacher, I was just like the leader teacher of the class, and the other teacher was like co-teacher, like I can say that it was a kind of assistant teacher of the class as the skill teacher. (Murat, personal communication, October 2023)

He further added: “I was always the interpreter, and whatever they had as a problem, I had to report it to the administration, and from the administration, I used to give what they say” (Murat, personal communication, October 2023). As a learner, he is always open to shared learning with his students: “I am not afraid to share stuff that I don’t know with my students, and we learn it together” (Murat, personal communication, January 2024). Murat highlighted his flexibility by projecting his roles as a leader and a collaborator. His belief in autonomy and freedom has impacted his teaching philosophy and career choice: “I am a person of like, sometimes I don’t like being locked in a place, so I always like being free as much as I can” (Murat, personal communication, November 2023).

Even though Turkish NNESTs face systemic challenges such as being undervalued, Murat believes in himself and his contributions. He is aware that his colleagues and students always appreciate him as he provides opportunities for their language practice: “We are the only source for them [students] to practice the language” (Murat, personal communication, January 2024). “I was always okay to give them some advice or some techniques that I used and it worked and I was very happy when they worked with the students too” (Murat, personal communication, October 2023).

Additionally, Murat positions himself as a critical observer of the educational system's shortcomings. He tries to scrutinize the broader context that prioritizes financial gains: “I

don't think that schools exist to educate people. ... the main reason is to become richer. So, the more students they had, the happier they were" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). Murat has adopted a critical attitude and highlights the systemic flaws in the Turkish education system. He does not believe in the system's genuine educational goals: "I don't trust the Turkish system" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). He does not trust the institutions and believes that they are mostly profit-oriented: "I don't think that schools exist to educate the people. ... the main reason is to become richer. So, the more students they had, the happier they were" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). Murat feels alienated and reveals his hostility toward the system: "I used to like these kinds of schools in a way, but now I am nearly a kind of a hostile person to them" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). However, Murat is not interested in system reformation as he sees its collapse approaching: "I'm not very much interested in changing the system myself because I think the system will collapse after a while because it seems so" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023).

Overall, Murat positions himself as a Turkish NNEST who is resilient and an innovative educator. His narrative illustrates the complexity of his self-positioning as his personal beliefs intersect with systemic biases and challenges. Moreover, he positions himself as a critic who is not satisfied with the education in Türkiye. Regarding other teachers, particularly NESTs, Murat has a confident self-positioning. He highlighted his strengths in teaching and classroom management. He stressed that there is an obvious distinction between him and NESTs since he is the one with expertise and is mostly contributive and supportive to NEST colleagues: "I [am] way better than most of the native teachers regarding to the language teaching" (Murat, personal communication, October 2023). He asserted that effective language teaching can never be related to being a native speaker; rather, it requires skills. He shared that he supports his NEST colleagues by offering advice: "I remember that I always gave them some advice about the classroom management" (Murat, personal communication, October 2023).

Murat seeks to uplift his teaching community by offering them advice regarding strategies and teaching solutions. He positions himself as a source of collaboration and innovation: "And also I wanted to change the other teachers' lives, like showing and presenting these kinds of solutions to them" (Murat, personal communication, January 2024). He positions

himself as a problem-solver who feels responsible within his community. He shared any new ideas or resolutions that strengthen his role as a leader and a collaborator within his network: “When I found a solution for something, I always tried to share what I had” (Murat, personal communication, November 2023).

By positioning himself as an experienced and resourceful educator, Murat highlights his ability to excel in areas where NESTs might lack expertise, while also framing himself as a supportive and collaborative professional who seeks to improve the collective practice of teaching. Murat reflected on how others position him, and his reflections show a mix of recognition, comparison, and bias. He noted that his administrators and colleagues see him as a skilled and reliable teacher: “They were always say okay like is he's a good teacher he does this, he does that” (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). However, he does not think that his students value him enough due to native-speakerism biases: “The students, of course, will say that, oh, like, they don't value us” (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). He thinks that there is a tendency among Turkish NNEST communities and administrators to compare teachers based on their fluency, which can result in tension: “X teacher speaks very well whereas the Y teacher is not very competent in speaking” (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). Murat confirmed being positioned as an NNEST, and this often leads to frustration during hiring practices. He is disappointed to be dismissed merely due to his nationality: “When you say I'm not native they directly cancel everything so that's why I guess it's a little bit disappointing and you just question everything about yourself, about your country etc.” (Murat, personal communication, January 2024).

Through his narrative, Murat conveys the duality of being positioned by others. He is a respected educator, but there is native-speakerism that causes biases, so his expertise gets overshadowed along with his accomplishments, which is challenging his professional identity. Murat started his career desiring and aspiring to be an international educator who is recognized for his professionalism and knowledge: “I tried to be a team leader who learns every day and shares with his teammates” (Murat, personal communication, December 2022). Teaching abroad was his main ambition, and he wanted to experience diverse cultures and contexts. He had an ultimate desire to teach in multiple countries: “My motivation to be a language teacher in different countries was that I wanted to teach in nearly like every country” (Murat, personal communication, October 2023). Murat

believes that working beyond borders would give him the freedom and growth he was looking for as he yearns for a flexible lifestyle: “In a different country living in there as an expat would be a little bit more, like, let's say, better for me” (Murat, personal communication, October 2023).

His desire to be the best teacher he can be comes from his sense of fulfillment when his students succeed. When he started his career, he wanted to create a meaningful experience for other people: “I enjoy doing it and I love being helpful like I like helping someone improve himself or herself. So, seeing it motivates me, and when I see the results, I feel even better” (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). However, he could not actualize his desire due to systemic biases that favor NESTs in hiring practices.

He is frustrated when he thinks that he could do all of those things only if he were a native speaker: “If I was a native English-speaking teacher, it would be better, like possible. I will travel around the world” (Murat, personal communication, January 2024). Murat's desired identity combines professional growth, global adventure, and personal fulfillment. Although he could not achieve what he wanted, he was resilient enough to actualize his commitment to self-improvement. Murat's journey as a Turkish NNEST has been through a dynamic identity (re)construction process. His challenges, emotions, and proactive strategies have helped him shape and reshape his identity. The challenges he had at the beginning of his career, particularly regarding classroom management, catalyzed his growth. He reflected on his experiences: “The first two months of mine was a nearly complete disaster as to classroom management” (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). Despite his CELTA certificate, Murat experienced unexpected difficulties initially. He reflects on the times when difficulties challenged his optimism:

Just completed CELTA and also like I thought that I would be able to use all the techniques in the classroom my classroom would work well, etc. And the first year, the first two months of mine was a nearly complete disaster as to classroom management.” (Murat, personal communication, November 2023)

He faced even more challenges when he began teaching in private schools. He did not find it easy to manage his sixth and seventh graders, as he noticed he was not well-equipped with strategies: “When I started teaching in private school, I was really struggling about the classroom management because I had the sixth and seventh graders”

(Murat, personal communication, January 2024). His early struggles reveal that even formal training programs like CELTA cannot fully prepare teachers for real-life classroom dynamics, and teachers need in-service and on-the-job training. Murat reflected on his emotions and admits that he felt satisfied and fulfilled as a leader and mentor to his students and colleagues: "So I felt good about it and I used to and I always got their advices about the students and I always like talked with them in order to understand the students like improvements." (Murat, personal communication, October 2023)

Sometimes, Murat was frustrated by the tensions between him and his NEST colleagues. The inequity of responsibilities made him feel conflicted: "I kind of felt not good with that because I always believed that they [NESTs] have to have their own authority on classroom management" (Murat, personal communication, October 2023). However, Murat continued to be motivated to help his students:

Like this is actually the thing that I like, like I enjoy doing it and I love being helpful, like I like helping someone improve himself or herself. So, like seeing it motivates me and when I see the results I feel even better. (Murat, personal communication, November 2023)

Murat highlighted and stressed his disappointment with the employment opportunities he could not have, even though he was qualified. He continuously questions his place in ELT: "Disappointing. So, you know that you are able to teach, you are the one who they are looking for, and only because your being native or non-native, everything changes" (Murat, personal communication, January 2024). Murat's emotional narrative reveals the duality of his professional identity. He is committed to teaching and helping others, while he remains affected by limiting inequities.

Murat's challenges and emotional experiences laid the foundation for becoming an educator. His struggles shaped his teaching philosophy and fueled his desire to improve and overcome his limitations. Murat proactively searched for strategies and tools to reconstruct his professional identity. He implemented innovative tools, dedicated himself to continuous learning, and improved his craft. Murat adopted a problem-solving approach and solidified his identity as a reflective and resourceful teacher. As a Turkish NNEST, Murat believes it is critical to increase knowledge continuously:

It is of course like always learning, that's why I said always learning because like I still have the things like whenever I see a new thing I directly go and try to like search for it and I try to learn as much as I can do. (Murat, personal communication, October 2023)

Adaptation and embracing personal development are the cornerstones of Murat's growth. He underscored the importance of keeping up with emerging trends and incorporating new tools into teaching: "If there is a new trend, for example, I need to be able to apply this to my lessons so I can become a competent teacher again or I can keep going being a competent teacher" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). Murat believes focusing on solutions, such as becoming a ClassDojo mentor, can assist teachers in developing themselves professionally:

I met with Class Dojo application and I used it. And I used it so much that I became the mentor of it and I gave presentations about it. So the more problems I've come up with or confronted with, the more solutions I had to come up with. (Murat, personal communication, January 2024)

Murat's professional identity is also based on his ability to innovate and share knowledge. He thinks collaboration and shared growth are critical in the professional community: "When I found a solution for something, I always tried to share what I had. So, finding a solution and sharing it improved me" (Murat, personal communication, January 2024). Flexibility has been another tool in Murat's identity reconstruction. Faced with the challenges of being a NNEST, he changed his teaching path to online teaching and leveraged his native language: "I tried to find another way of, like, reaching my goal. Now I teach online and some of my students are learning English, some of my students are learning Turkish and they are all around the world" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). Murat maintained his motivation by shifting his focus to his native language, Turkish: "Keeping my motivation high for this, for example now I am teaching my own language as a native speaker and this is also another chance and I also found a chance." (Murat, personal communication, October 2023)

This pivot proves Murat's resilience and adaptability to fulfill his teaching aspirations as an international teacher. By turning to his native language, Murat constructed a space where his identity is recognized and celebrated, and his goal is achieved: "I am also native in Turkish now, so I can charge, I'm compensating the other way" (Murat, personal communication, October 2023). He justified his decision: "I tried to find another way of, like, reaching my goal." (Murat, personal communication, October 2023). Murat's professional identity formation involves an intersection of resilience, innovation, and collaboration. He has been able to stay motivated, grow, adapt, and help, thus redefining his identity as a proactive teacher.

Advocating NNESTs and Expected Support

Murat strongly advocates for Turkish NNESTs and stresses that it is critical to support them systemically. He hopes there will be a time when skill and effort will be more important than biases. He argues that Turkish NNESTs should receive continuous in-service training to remain effective. He also believes that in-service training programs must incorporate practical feedback from experienced trainers or external observers regarding classroom management and teaching techniques:

Refreshment in-service trainings, I guess. So also like someone from a kind of outsource may come and just observe you in the classroom and may give a feedback to you and you need to act about it. So like this kind of periodical observing may happen. (Murat, personal communication, January 2024)

He proposes that Turkish NNESTs should participate in conferences to exchange teaching techniques:

The training especially related to the classroom management and the techniques or the updated techniques, current techniques on this one and not by a Turkish trainer but a kind of a native trainer maybe or a competent trainer or going and sharing with other teachers' kind of conferences. (Murat, personal communication, November 2023)

Murat believes administrators must also support their teachers by creating a collaborative environment. They also should value teachers' input and address their workload concerns: "They could listen to my workload when I asked, and they could value my ideas when I approached with my ideas" (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). He argues that administrators must have better communication with teachers to address students' and parents' concerns promptly:

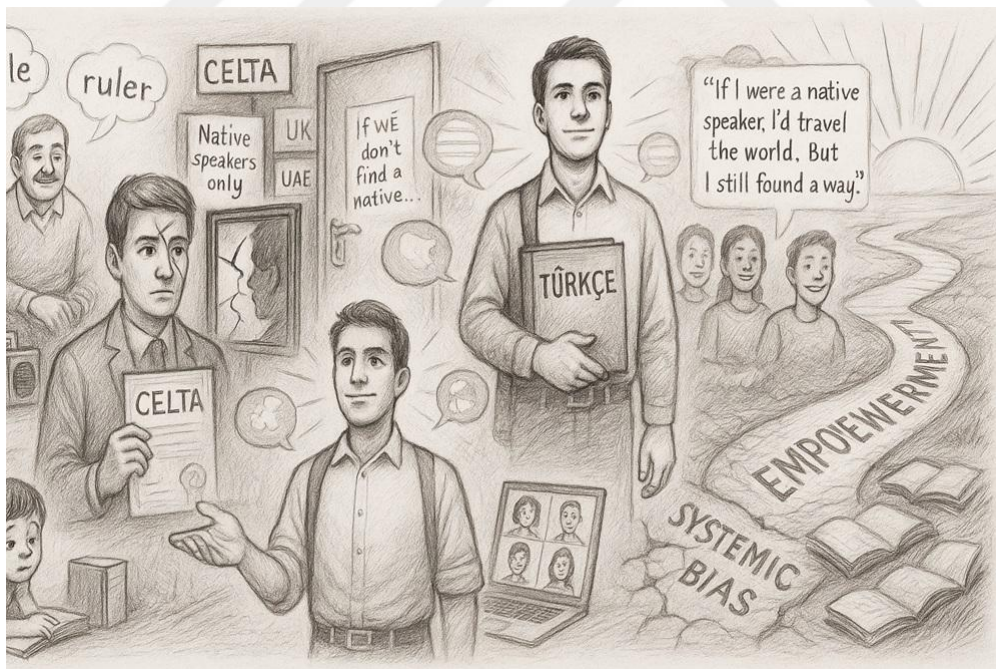
Administration should also be communicating with the teacher because sometimes the parents directly go to the administration and they tell the administration what is wrong and what is not going well to the administration. (Murat, personal communication, October 2023)

Murat thinks even verbal motivation can boost teachers' morale; however, support like in-service training can be more promising: "... motivating them by, you're doing good, or if they need anything. Yes, in-service training is the best though." (Murat, personal communication, November 2023). Murat challenges native-speakerism and believes that NNESTs should be assessed based on their skills and dedication rather than their nationality: "If they feel that the teacher is skillful, I guess every teacher should have a chance to work and to find a job" (Murat, personal communication, October 2023).

He stands against prejudices and calls for equitable opportunities for all teachers to develop. He believes in inclusivity, continuous learning, and collaboration. However, Murat's call for inclusivity is nuanced by his paradoxical preference for native English-speaking trainers for in-service training. While he thinks NNESTs should be judged based on their skill rather than nativeness, his statement shows his implicit bias toward native teacher trainers. This perspective reflects the deep-rooted impact of native-speakerism, where 'native' equals authenticity. This juxtaposition can reveal NNESTs' challenges who are forced to negotiate their professional identities, despite their transformations. Murat's perspective highlights the need for shifts in external beliefs and NNESTs' internalized beliefs. He advocates for inclusivity, while he prefers a native speaker as a teacher trainer, and this reveals the impacts of native-speakerism even on those who resist it. Figure 4.10 depicts Murat's numerous strategies to resist native-speakerism and how he finally could fulfill his legitimacy.

Figure 4.10

Murat's Professional Life Trajectory



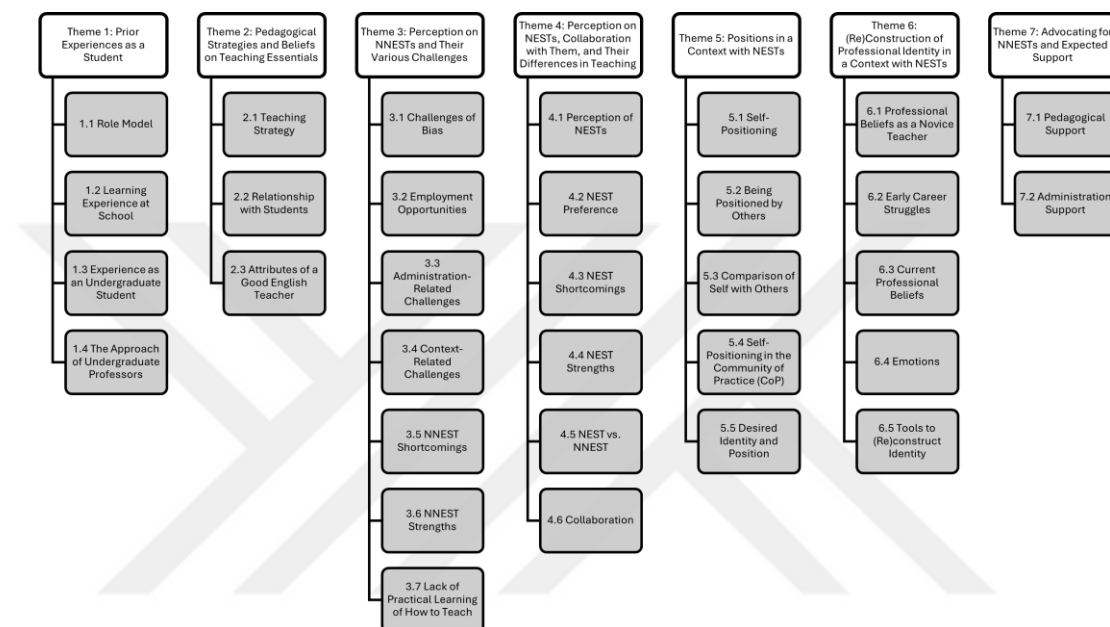
4.6. The Case of Gizem

This section delves into the participant's findings with the pseudonym of Gizem, whose data was collected from his narrative essay reflective emails, semi-structured interviews, and the focus group discussion. It presents Gizem's professional identity (re)construction

as a Turkish Non-Native English-speaking teacher (NNEST) in the context of native-speakerism. The obtained themes identified through inductive thematic analysis are shown in the following diagram, which illustrates the emergent themes and categories. Figure 4.11 shows the emerging themes and categories from Gizem’s narrative:

Figure 4.11

Gizem’s Emerged Themes and Categories



Learning Language Experience

Reflecting on her language-learning journey, Gizem notes that language learning is a lifelong process with ups and downs. It involves many challenges, including emotional ones: “Learning a language takes a lifetime, which is full of ups and downs on the way” (Gizem, personal communication, December 2022).

This belief is the foundation of her resilience and empathy. Later, adaptation and perseverance became the core of her beliefs as a teacher. Gizem recalled many failures in learning English before high school due to a lack of effective and meaningful teaching. This phase of her learning process taught her the importance of structured teaching: “Before high school, I remember learning or trying to learn a little bit of English, which all ended up with failure” (Gizem, personal communication, December 2022). She believes that those failures were the result of traditional teaching methods. However, she had a transformative experience in high school, which she called the true beginning of

her learning journey. She attended an Anatolian Teacher Training High School, where she received an immersive education in English: “I started learning English truly when I was in high school at the age of 14” (Gizem, personal communication, December 2022). She added: “However, when I started high school, we were supposed to go through a preparatory year which lasts one year to learn English” (Gizem, personal communication, December 2022).

She received 24 hours of English Instruction per week, significantly improving her English. Gizem believes this period was the best opportunity for her to develop her English skills. But in this prep school, in this prep year, we had 24 hours of English lessons a week. So that was a perfect opportunity for me. So I actually learned English there. (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023)

Gizem’s high school experience improved her English and became the foundation of her future teaching beliefs. She deliberately emulates her teachers, particularly their supportiveness: “I think about how it contributed to my teaching, I can still remember the way I was taught English and sometimes I feel myself teaching the same way I was taught back in high school” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). She elaborated: “Everybody could ask questions, you know, they weren't afraid to ask questions. And I think I am kind of similar now” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023).

Her reflections reveal that her learning experience was critical to her professional identity as an educator. She stressed the significance of a classroom where students feel comfortable taking risks. Despite her positive experience, Gizem sees the absence of native teachers as limiting her language exposure. She believes that having a NEST can have potential benefits such as better pronunciation and cultural understanding.

If I had had a native one, I could have practiced the language because I wasn't, I had never been abroad at that time and a native teacher, and having a native teacher might have been the only opportunity for me to practice the language. So that's why I could have been fortunate or I could have been lucky, but I wasn't. (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023)

She believes that she would have been more motivated if she had a NEST: “I think, you know, that could have been different, and I could have been more motivated” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). She believes in authentic language exposure to NESTs, specifically if someone does not have the chance to travel. Additionally, Gizem was affected by some of her dedicated and motivated high school

teachers. She thinks she was fortunate as she had access to high-quality English education through her dedicated teachers. “I am one of the very few lucky students in Konya who have really ambitious teachers, with a motivation to do their best to teach us English” (Gizem, personal communication, December 2022).

Gizem’s teachers had important roles in her interest in the English language. The competency of her high school teachers compensated for her lack of NESTs in school: “Although I never had a native teacher, the ones in our school were qualified enough to be able to provide necessary input and teaching” (Gizem, personal communication, December 2022). Her high school teachers created a supportive environment, and she was impressed and owes her success to them. “I was lucky to have really nice teachers when I was back in high school” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). Her teachers’ ambition influenced her teaching philosophy and language skills. She adopted their teaching approach, as evident in her emphasis on student-centered teaching. Her reflections reveal that teaching quality is more critical in students’ learning experiences than native status.

Gizem reflected on one particular teacher who inspired her both personally and professionally. She recalled the sense of friendship and family-like environment he had created: “I had two, but one of them was my, like, the inspiring one for me, and he was really encouraging, he was really hard-working, not only we were, we studied, he also did study” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). She added: “He was really funny, you know, it was like a family” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023).

The supportive environment motivated Gizem to be approachable and focus on the teacher-student relationship. She admitted that her current teaching style mirrors her high school teachers. She emulates him in teaching vocabulary and emphasizes contextual learning: “I think the way he taught vocabulary is very similar to the way I teach vocabulary now” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). She also pointed out that her teacher used to focus on writing, which she also decided to employ in her lessons. She argued that writing skills are often neglected in Turkish schools despite their importance:

He used to pay a lot of attention to writing, which was not normal at that time because we were getting ready for an exam. And now I also give specific attention to writing. I make my students write about something. (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023)

Gizem also remembered how her teacher insisted on the exclusive use of English in the classroom, even for those with lower proficiency. She argued that immersion enhances students' skills and confidence. "My level was A2, maybe A1, he used to speak English, only English, and this is what I do" (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). Gizem acknowledged that she deliberately emulates her teacher's strategies, as he was like her mentor in shaping her identity as a teacher: "I learned everything from him. Sometimes I find myself kind of imitating him, you know, copying the way he teaches" (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023).

Gizem imitates her teacher's techniques and teaching philosophy, which emphasize student engagement, practical skill development, and a supportive classroom environment. Her teacher taught her the philosophy that emotional and motivational aspects of teaching are very important. Gizem learned the power of mentorship and relatability. Gizem was admitted to the Department of English Language Teaching and became a committed student. She described herself as a proactive student who was engaged in her courses. "At the department of English Language Teaching, I was a diligent student trying to attend classes on time and participating in the tasks when I was expected" (Gizem, personal communication, December 2022). During her undergraduate studies, she noticed that the theoretical courses did not reflect reality. For example, she was taught that the ideal classroom should have 12 to 13 students, while her first classroom had 27 students. She believes she was not prepared enough upon her graduation to teach in a real classroom: "I learned something in the lesson, saying that okay the best number of students like should be 12 you know, or 13 but we live in Turkey you know the first high school in the first high school where I started teaching I had 27 students" (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024).

Her experience reflects a common problem in teacher training programs: they do not align with real-life teaching. Gizem was disappointed with the lack of mentorship and guidance. She felt that her professors prioritized their academic tasks over preparing and training students with teaching skills. She felt unsupported and unprepared: "I was a bit disappointed regarding the teachers in the faculty" (Gizem, personal communication, December 2022). She further criticized that:

They were more interested in their academic lives than the necessary skills they should have taught us. The only worries they had were publishing a few more articles, and having the lesson through the slides they prepared beforehand or the ones we prepared. (Gizem, personal

communication, December 2022)

Gizem remembered how she was frustrated and neglected as a student in those years. Her professors were too preoccupied with their achievements to deal with their students. She saw herself as a burden to them: “Teachers were only, you know, they were only worried about themselves, their recent publications, their articles. I have to admit that I felt like I was a burden on their shoulders” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). She also reflected on the lack of constructive feedback and guidance from her professors, as she believes that they could have been more supportive regarding guidance for career, professional growth, and teaching strategies: “They could have given us more feedback. And they could have guided us, you know” (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). She further elaborated: “They were only interested in their career, their own career” (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023).

With over a decade of teaching experience, Gizem now questions the necessity of her courses—for example, the necessity of lesson plans: “You're a teacher, like, teaching more than 10 years, you don't need a lesson plan because lesson plans sometimes limit you and it puts some pressure on you, I think” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024). Gizem’s undergraduate experience influenced her professional identity. Her challenges gave her the critical perspective she needed to become a professional educator. Her experience stresses that training programs must align with realities, provide feedback, and be more supportive.

Pedagogical Strategies and Beliefs on Teaching Essentials

Gizem’s teaching philosophy is concentrated on a student-centered approach and stresses that education is a science and also an art. She strongly believes in creativity and student engagement. “Innovation is important, and it can mean different things for every teacher. Every teacher can be creative in their own way” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024).

Gizem argued that students progress in environments that motivate and engage them. Motivation is another key factor for her as she tailors her activities to boost students’ participation. For example, she integrates writing tasks in a way that students practice language practically, like telling about their experiences. “You know, if I teach past tense, then I say, OK, tell me about your last weekend. I just make students do the writing task” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). Gizem advocates for the effectiveness

of peer learning in language learning: “Even the worst students, like, not the worst, let's say, the least successful students were motivated because he learned something. And I do agree that students learn more from each other than from the teacher” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023).

Gizem highlighted the key significance of the exclusive use of English in the classroom for immersive learning, even if the students are low-level learners. “I speak English no matter what the level is” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). She also employs discipline and structure in her lessons to ensure that her students know how to respect their responsibilities. “There should be a deadline, they have to follow the deadline” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). Gizem underscored flexibility and adaptability for the times when there might be challenges and there is a need for a quick solution. “I always save questions, I always think about the anticipated problems, and I try to come up with some solutions, to add some follow-up questions” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). She goes beyond standard lesson planning and maintains a repertoire of engaging activities and games to ensure her lessons are interactive:

I always have something for flexi time you know like a game or kind of an extra activity always prepared and that's why I have a printer actually at my home. I always prepare something for the students, something fun you know. (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023)

Gizem adds the element of fun to her lessons so that her students can also enjoy them. She notes that even young adults prefer gamified activities: “While doing grammar activities I put some music on” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). She added: “They are young adults, but I think they're still raising, they still need to have a prize, kind of, for the chocolate” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024). Gizem believes that it is important to maintain a disciplined relationship with the school administration. She argues that a structured relationship with institutional management can boost mutual respect. “There should be a strict relationship, I think, with the administration, because otherwise there won't be any discipline” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). She stressed the role of respect and points out that teachers should recognize the administrators' authority: “We have to respect the administrative staff; we should respect them” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023).

She argued that discipline can boost order and structure and allow individuals to be vulnerable and honest with students and school staff. “Share it with the students, saying that, you know, I’m not at my best today” (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). She believes that a teacher should be honest with students so that they can also maintain their authority. Apart from being friendly and vulnerable, there should be a degree of strictness: “He or she creates a friendly atmosphere...I think she should be a little bit strict too because if she’s not, the students may not follow the deadlines” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). Gizem strongly advocates for an encouraging classroom atmosphere so students can be comfortable asking and engaging in their learning process: “That the students will be willing to ask questions and it could be, I mean, the learning environment could be encouraging, you know, not hostile” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023).

It is important to balance being approachable and maintaining authority. Gizem believes that a competent teacher must be strict and friendly so that students respect them and be willing to take risks in learning: “He should be strict, but at the same time friendly. So students can, like approachable users, students should be able to ask questions, but at the same time they have to respect their teacher” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). Gizem’s vision of a competent language teacher’s attributes focuses on their relationship with students, their patience, ability to inspire students, and language knowledge. Teaching can be challenging, and a calm and understanding environment is critical for teaching and learning effectiveness. Gizem believes that patience can allow teachers to create such an environment: “A good teacher should be patient first” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). In addition to patience, a good language teacher should have high language knowledge to ensure credibility and confidence. “A good teacher should have sufficient linguistic knowledge” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). Gizem also highlighted the importance of being encouraging so that they can inspire and motivate students: “I think the teacher should be, as I told you, encouraging” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023).

Perceptions of NNESTs and Their Various Challenges

Gizem has a balanced perception of Turkish NNESTs and acknowledges their strengths and weaknesses. She believes they are good at teaching English grammar and understanding students’ problems. Relatability helps Turkish NNESTs empathize with

their students and build a better rapport. However, she noted that Turkish NNESTs have pronunciation and cultural knowledge challenges. Gizem emphasized Turkish NNESTs' linguistic knowledge and their advantages in teaching grammar. They also have experience learning English, which equips them with various strategies to teach its grammar. "Non-native English teachers are a little bit more linguistically competent in terms of grammar" (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). Turkish NNESTs' past experiences as English learners make them better at anticipating students' challenges. "We have gone through the same process, so that's why we have the same questions in our minds. That's why we teach grammar well, I guess" (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024).

I think in terms of teaching, I do think that non-native teachers have more advantages as the students are mostly non-native, they are non-native and we are non-native so we kind of have this bond so we can explain better. (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023)

According to Gizem, Turkish NNESTs can use their own experiences to tailor teaching techniques and thus be more adaptable. Turkish NNESTs usually benefit largely from their experiences, as it is challenging for them to get practical academic skills from their teacher training programs. Gizem highlighted a huge downside of these programs as they do not offer any practical training. Although she was a hardworking student, she can remember the lack of certainty and direction in her final year of university. "I remember in the last year of university, I didn't know what to do" (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). The amount of uncertainty reflects the insufficient mentorship and guidance from her institution. She elaborated that she and her peers had to navigate their paths on their own: "We were kind of left alone trying to find our way" (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023).

When Gizem contrasts her high school experience with her university, she feels she had learned more about teaching in Türkiye in high school: "But in that, maybe in that high school, believe me, I learned more about the schools in Turkey, about the education system, about the quality" (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024). Her high school teachers had offered a more holistic and hands-on understanding of the educational system than her teacher training institute, which focused more on academic knowledge rather than practical teaching skills. The shortfall of teacher training programs is a recurring issue where theoretical learning dominates practicality.

Apart from a lack of practical knowledge, Gizem is also aware of Turkish NNESTs' systemic and societal challenges, including biases, discrimination, employment challenges, and lack of practical learning. She knows that NESTs are believed to be better teachers, which negatively affects Turkish NNESTs' professional lives. "People tend to think that non-native English teachers are less competent than the native ones" (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). She argued that private institutions particularly undervalue Turkish NNESTs: "But in a private institution, I think, I feel sorry for the non-native ones. The same thing, but the other way around" (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). Gizem relates this issue to administrators' lack of qualifications and believes that their ignorance can hinder NNESTs' professional growth: "And unfortunately, most people think the same way and especially in language courses because the administrative staff, they're not graduates of, you know, education faculty, they're just, you know, they're just entrepreneurs let's say" (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023).

Through her narrative, Gizem stresses that Turkish NNESTs are limited to having access to the global job market, despite their qualifications. Her experiences with NEST preference reveal the structural inequities and biases. She noted that most international job advertisements in countries like Vietnam and Spain emphasize native status as a prerequisite:

But when I look for a job on some website, you know, they have this thing, like the requirements, CELTA, DELTA, or TESO, ISELT, whatever, and then, especially in such countries like Vietnam or maybe Spain, they say you need to be a native speaker. (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023)

Gizem shared her experience of being rejected for a summer training program only because she was an NNEST, even though she had all the other qualifications:

There was this [participatelearning.com](https://www.participatelearning.com), there was this website, and I really wanted to go there because I think it is fun and some of my friends, some of my foreign friends have been there. And it says, alright, English teacher, we are looking for an English teacher for our summer camps, but the requirements, like I have all the requirements except being native. (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023)

She shared another experience she had around a job rejection:

I applied for a job, summer job in the US with a program called [participatelearning.com](https://www.participatelearning.com) something like this and then you know I introduced myself I gave a lot of information I said

you know I have this certificate I did this I did this, etc. and then I get a reply saying that yeah it's very good that you have this one you have this certificate but we only work with native teachers. (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024)

Gizem also critiques English teaching certification, as plenty of courses issue a certificate with a price as little as one hundred dollars. It has become super easy for anyone to gain a certificate and start teaching, which is disadvantageous for the English teachers with extensive academic experience:

With only a hundred dollars, you can get a diploma to teach English. Wow. Without any, because, you know, it's a really poor country in Africa, like Egypt. No, Egypt is better. Like, let's say Tanzania, for example. So, like the economy is really bad. So, with even a hundred dollars, you can get a diploma to teach English, he said, back in Liberia. And I was shocked. (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024)

Gizem expressed frustration when she shared her envy for NEST's global job opportunities. She mentioned that if she were a NEST, she would have a different lifestyle:

And this is what my friends, what my CELTA and then one of the girls, she started teaching in different countries. And well, I was kind of, you know, I was jealous...If I were a native English-speaking teacher, I think I would travel around the world and I would settle down in Spain because of the weather. (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024)

Despite her acknowledgment of biases in recruitment practices, Gizem notes that she would also prefer a NEST if she were a recruiter. Her rationale for this decision is that students and their parents demand native speakers: "But if I was an administrator, one of the administrators, I think I would prefer native speakers in order not to lose any customers" (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024).

Perception of NESTs, Collaboration with Them, and Their Difference in Teaching

Gamze confirms that there is an extensive preference for NESTs in ELT. She argues that native-speakerism biases define NESTs as the better choices in language teaching, even if Turkish NNESTs have the essential qualifications. Parents are the main agents who believe in these biases:

When they want their kid to go to a course like a language course, the first question they ask is, "Is there a native teacher?" Even in kindergarten level, you know, like preschool days they ask if there is a native teacher. (Gamze, personal communication, October 2023)

These biases are deeply rooted within ELT as Gizem reflected on her own beliefs as well.

She admitted that she had questioned her NEST preference: “When I remember those days, I was like, oh my god, I shouldn't ask this question [if the teacher was a native speaker]. It's not good” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). Gizem’s reflections reveal how NEST preference shapes market demands and societal perceptions. Although Gizem critiques the biases around native-speakerism, she affirms that NESTs have noticeable strengths that can be beneficial in language teaching. She believes that NESTs can easily create a natural and engaging learning environment that fosters communication:

They just go and talk, ask a follow-up question, which in turn I think is more fun than a whole teacher because the student has this feeling that, "Oh I have communicated with a native speaker, she can understand me, he can understand me, I am understood." (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023)

She observed that NESTs bring authenticity to the classrooms and students perceive them as an immediate language source and connection to the target language and culture. Gizem stressed NESTs' strengths in teaching pronunciation, speaking, and vocabulary: “Of course, there are some parts especially the pronunciation and the speaking or the vocabulary that they are good at because it's their language... In terms of vocabulary, okay, they beat us definitely” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024). Additionally, Gizem highlighted NESTs’ quality feedback and appreciates their ability to balance encouragement and constructive criticism. She believes that their approaches are more motivating and mostly underscore strength:

They write really nice feedback starting from like, "Dear Ali, for example, you have done a great job, I really like your review if it was a review job, I'm planning to go to that film, go to that restaurant for example if it's a restaurant review, or I'm planning to watch that film, that's really good," then they focus on the mistakes more. (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023)

However, Gizem also critiques NEST teaching practices and thinks they often lack structure in their lessons, hindering students’ learning. Gizem argued that NESTs do not get prepared before lessons: “For example, in terms of speaking, yeah, they just talk, you know, sometimes they don't even prepare something” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). This shows that NESTs can create communicative environments, however, they lack structured planning or pedagogical focus. Gizem’s comment, “They don’t prepare before entering the classroom” (Gizem, personal communication, October

2023), emphasizes this problem. She implies that a lack of preparation limits the depth and effectiveness of teaching, as students in Türkiye require more guided and systemic approaches. She suggested that while NESTs can engage students and boost their confidence, they cannot always meet their needs. She observed that a lack of preparation and system can demotivate students: “It's a Tony Hoca, it's Tom Hoca, whatever. I [the student] don't need to do that. You know, I'm [the student] not just going to do that” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023).

Drawing on her experiences and observations, Gizem is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of both NESTs and NNESTs. She asserted that Turkish NNESTs can teach grammar much better as they empathize with students and know their possible challenges: “We know what the students are going through, we have been there. But native speakers, they don't have any idea about how English was learned because they just learned it when they were kids” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). She further critiques NESTs’ grammar teaching approach: “They say, okay, let's say this is present continuous without even teaching the form. They say, okay, let's write about what your family might be doing. And then they write and then they try to correct the sentences” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). She believes that this approach ignores students’ need to learn grammar explicitly. However, she acknowledged that NESTs are more creative in teaching vocabulary:

In terms of creating games or vocabulary, I think they are better than us. They have lots of activities all the time, and it makes the classes more engaging...I still think they are good, maybe better than us or better than me because they have more knowledge of course, vocabulary knowledge, and they can direct students better. (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023)

Additionally, Gizem believes NESTs and Turkish NNESTs have fundamentally different teaching styles. While NESTs prioritize communication skills, Turkish NNESTs focus on precision:

They [students] just call them [NESTs] by their name. And I think... they feel more relaxed. Maybe because they [NESTs] are teaching. Depending on their teaching style, I don't know. But maybe because they just, not just, but mostly pay attention on the speaking thing. They're much more relaxed in their classroom... I think we are more error-focused, but we are not, they just look at the content first, get a general picture. So in terms of writing, I think they are better, teaching writing. (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023)

Gizem pointed out another difference in grading: “They are easy graders, I think. But, yeah, when it comes to me, I think, I'm like, hey, you know, the students just should have moderate vocabulary and the pronunciation was, you know, not bad, but the grammar, he just used present simple tense” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). She argued that NESTs prioritize communicative effectiveness over grammatical accuracy, thus giving higher grades to students.

Outlining NESTs and Turkish NNESTs' teaching style differences, Gizem emphasized the benefit of their collaboration as it can enrich students' learning experiences. She reflected on her positive experience regarding collaborative teaching and described it as supportive and rewarding: “I felt very supported because she used to support me a lot” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). She recalled one specific occasion:

We were in a collaboration, and I felt myself lucky. I felt a lot of things from her, especially writing, because, for example, she told me that she divided the students into groups of four and she used this technique called collaborative writing. (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023)

She stressed that this technique created an environment where students worked together, boosting their motivation and peer learning. Later, Gizem started to incorporate it into her teaching. Collaborative teaching introduced Gizem to creative teaching methods:

And in terms of speaking, she had great ideas, you know. She had a lot of games in her mind because I think she was used to teaching speaking or doing speaking stuff. That's why she had lots and lots of activities all the time. It was like five minutes activity, but she had it up on her sleeve so yeah I felt motivated. It was a good time. (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023)

Gizem appreciates the opportunities she had to learn from her NEST colleagues and she even invited them to observe her lessons: “I also sometimes invited American people, American colleagues saying that, okay, just, you know, observe me, you can say anything that you want” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024). Despite the many benefits, Gizem highlighted a common challenge in collaborative teaching: “I kind of feel that they pass the grammar part really quickly, kind of sparing it for the non-native ones” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). She highlighted the imbalance where NNESTs get perceived as grammar instructors and cannot be involved in more creative teaching practices.

Self-Positioning in a Context with NESTs

Gizem's self-positioning is a dynamic interplay of professional identity, commitment, and student connections. She attempts to balance flexibility with structure in her lessons to empathize with them while maintaining strictness. However, Gizem believes she is not a strict teacher and prefers to be approachable. She stated that "I'm not that strict teacher" (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023) and stressed her efforts to create a safe space so that her students can be encouraged to take risks: "In my classes, I don't think anybody is afraid to ask me questions" (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). She understands her students' struggles because their experiences are relatable to her own:

I can relate to them saying that okay, I know what you're feeling, what you're going through, but this is going to pass, just, you know if you're not if you don't want to listen to the lesson or if you don't want to come just go and just walk around you know. I can relate to them in terms of the motivation. (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023)

She identifies herself as a teacher who integrates planning and adaptability. Her statement that "I always plan" (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023) reveals her commitment while balancing it with flexibility: "If you don't want to listen to the lesson or if you don't want to come, just go and walk around" (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). Gizem positions herself as an enjoyable teacher and notes that her students often find her classes meaningful and engaging. During the first interview, she reflected, "I think my classes are also fun" (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023), adding, "I never get bored in my classes, and neither do the students" (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023).

She believes her students genuinely learn from her, stating, "My students actually learn something" (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). However, she also admitted that there can be times when she feels confused and does not know what to do, specifically when the students are not motivated enough. In the second interview, she explained, "If the students don't have any motivation, I'm kind of lost there" (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). Even though she feels lost, she attempts to address their lack of motivation by reminding them of the importance of learning English. She attempts to gain their motivation through creativity and fun activities.

Gizem positions herself as a "hard-working" teacher who enjoys her work. She also sees herself as a teacher who can easily connect with students and build rapport: "First of all,

I have motivation, I have energy, I really like teaching...I have a good rapport with the students” (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). She is emotionally attached to her job and feels grateful and rewarded when she sees the results of her efforts. She recalled her experience with a specific student whose achievement had made her proud of her work: “It was not a job, but for me, it was something big, and I remember him thanking me, and it was so touching for me.” (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023)

Gizem positions herself as a dedicated and ambitious teacher and appreciates the respect and support she receives from administrators. However, she noted the limitations regarding her institutional policies: “Sometimes there are conferences all over the world, not even in Turkey, sometimes abroad. And when we want to go there, they say, okay, as long as you have makeup classes, then you’re free to go” (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). Such policies make Gizem feel restricted and like she does not have agency in her professional development. Professional development is highly important for Gizem, and she attempts to remain innovative: “I came up with lots of useful links, lots of games, songs, you know, with lots and lots of materials” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024).

Overall, Gizem positions herself as an empathic, dedicated, and adaptable teacher. She is proud of her ability to connect with students, create engaging lessons, and commit to her growth. However, her early challenges, eventual respect, and her students' and colleagues' feedback have shaped the way she perceives others' position her as a teacher. As a Turkish NNEST, Gizem sees herself as a teacher with more strengths than NESTs. She points out that she teaches grammar, listening, and reading much better as she is more focused on details: “I can teach grammar better than them, and like, listening or reading better than them, because I pay a lot of attention, I spend a lot of time on reading, but they don’t” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023).

She sees herself as more diligent and structured, and a teacher who brings value where NESTs would not. However, she admitted that NESTs have better skills in teaching writing and speaking and believes that in those areas she cannot compete with them: “In terms of writing and speaking, which are productive skills, I think they are better than me” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). This, however, does not discourage her and makes her willing to learn from them while maintaining her

confidence. Gizem also sees herself as a more empathic and relatable teacher: “Because we have been there, we have gone through the same process, so that’s why we have the same questions in our minds” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024). On the other hand, she admitted that she focuses more on students’ errors, while NESTs tend to focus on their strengths: “I tend to focus on the mistakes more, but this shouldn’t be the case” (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023). Gizem knows that she has certain advantages over her NEST peers, however, she is inspired by their positivity and skills and is willing to learn from them.

Although she positions herself as a competent and structured teacher who is mostly respected, her perceptions of how others judge her and position her have had ups and downs. At the beginning of her teaching career, Gizem had some challenges regarding the narrow age gap between herself and her students: “As the age gap between me and the students wasn’t that big, they mostly considered me as their friend, which led to not being taken into account seriously” (Gizem, personal communication, December 2022). This dynamic undermined her sense of authority, which later gave her the teaching belief of the essentiality of strictness and discipline. Her early challenges made her find the balance between being approachable and a figure of authority.

Gizem recalled the time when one of her students positioned her as a “boring teacher”: “Hocam, I got really bored in your classes” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024). She described it as a shocking moment that became a catalyst for her self-reflection and growth. She later began to incorporate fun and engaging activities into her lessons. Being positioned negatively by others pushed her to develop and improve, so she achieved a place where her students treated her respectfully and her peers applauded her. She noted, “Well, I am treated the way I like actually” (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). She believes that a shift in how she is perceived resulted from her growth as a teacher. She also thinks that there is a general respect for English teachers in Turkish society: “It’s also a well-respected profession, considering the other, like, physics teachers, chemistry teachers, it’s well-respected.” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024).

Currently, Gizem is valued and trusted as her administrators give her the autonomy and support, she desires: “I asked, like, our director, you know, the director of the foreign language school, if I can take any time off for my MA. And they said yes, they didn’t

even ask me why or which day” (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). Gizem’s journey narrates her transition from a struggling teacher to a well-respected one. However, she aspires to refine her professional identity and connect better with her students. She is passionate about expanding her teaching experience beyond her current context: “I’m still loving English and teaching English, but, you know, being able to work abroad as an English teacher would be a really different experience.” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024)

She desires to teach in diverse contexts and grow professionally. Teaching abroad has always been important to her, as she feels it can enrich her professional and personal experiences. Moreover, she desires her relationship with students to get to the point that she does not have to always be cheerful and entertaining: “It was not like having a smiling face is not always necessary, okay, to make your lesson fun” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024). She asks for a meaningful and impactful learning environment that does not need superficiality. She wants to grow both within her current context and globally. Gizem’s journey involves continuous self-reflection and aspirations for professional growth.

(Re) Construction of Professional Identity in a Context with NESTs

In her early teaching years, Gizem had an idealized vision of being a teacher, and her professional identity was shaped accordingly. She believes that an English teacher has to have a smiling face no matter what: “When I first started teaching English, I used to believe that the English teachers had to have a smiling face, they had to motivate students” (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). She felt responsible and used to do her best to provide plenty of resources and spend long hours to prepare materials: “I used to think that I had to spend a lot of time for my students, you know, I had to prepare everything, I had to provide them with every type of resource” (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). She reflected: “I used to believe I have to do everything; I had to do everything” (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023).

However, she felt frustrated and demotivated as her students were mostly inattentive, and she could not establish authority. She had challenges with classroom management and student engagement: “They did not pay any attention and I was just struggling, you know, struggling to teach them English and this was just nothing. They were on their phone, you know, they weren't paying any attention” (Gizem, personal communication, November

2023). Gizem was puzzled and was struggling with uncertainty and self-doubt: “When I started teaching English for the first time in my life, I was puzzled, sometimes even lost” (Gizem, personal communication, December 2022). As a Turkish NNEST, Gizem had additional pressure to prove herself to her students and connect with them: “The first year of teaching was especially hard as I didn’t know the interests and needs of the students” (Gizem, personal communication, December 2022).

This disconnection was challenging as it was mixed with societal biases that positioned NNESTs like Gizem as less capable teachers. Therefore, it was much harder for her to establish her authority. The pressure and struggles made her feel anxious and overwhelmed during her first years of teaching: “I was anxious. First, I would say two or three years, I was anxious.” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024). Native-speakerism intensified Gizem’s struggles due to the resulting inequities and her need to overcompensate: “I thought about it quite a lot because what I was doing was to cover everything” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024).

Her personal insecurities and external pressure led to Gizem’s overpreparation for the lessons. However, her early struggles catalyzed her growth, and native-speakerism pushed her to evaluate her teaching practices. She became a more confident teacher due to her initial difficulties. She started reflecting on her teaching and weaknesses and turned to her experienced and NEST colleagues for advice: “Colleagues who are more experienced, who I thought were fun teachers, I said can you please just come to my class and observe me? And then they had kind of checklists and they gave me really good feedback” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024). Her colleagues helped her identify the areas she needed to improve and suggested new techniques to enhance her teaching quality.

Gizem’s professional identity has evolved since then into a more balanced and pragmatic approach. She does not attempt to do everything for her students and emphasizes that they need to feel responsible for their own learning: “Now I’m like, no, they have to study on their own as well. It’s their responsibility; they should be responsible for their own learning” (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). She incorporates innovative strategies and authentic materials and focuses on communicative activities: “Now I’m like, OK, I have these materials. I have lots of materials designed online and in pen-and-paper format. This experience has taught me the power of creativity and

perseverance in the face of adversity” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024).

She has stronger relationships with her students and can show her authentic self in the classroom without forcing herself to smile all the time: “Sometimes it’s okay to be upset; it’s okay to share emotions” (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). Gizem has several strategies to overcome challenges and reform her professional identity as a Turkish NNEST. Her main step was seeking advice from her colleagues who observed her lessons and provided constructive feedback: “They gave me really good feedback and I took advantage of them” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024). In addition to her colleagues, Gizem decided to take the CELTA certification to enhance her teaching knowledge: “It did open my eyes because I got CELTA after I started teaching, and then I was like, okay, this is teaching” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024).

Gizem adjusted her teaching practice through continuous self-reflection. She noticed that as a Turkish NNEST, she did not have to overcompensate and do everything for her students, and therefore, she empowered her students to take responsibility for their learning. She also embedded technology into her lessons: “Because our students belong to Generation Z and they know technology more than us, we have to keep up with technology.” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024). NESTs were her inspiring source as they provided Gizem with new ideas and strategies: “They [NESTs] came up with lots of useful links, lots of games, songs, you know, with lots and lots of materials. And I use them in my class” (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024).

Through her self-reflection, Gizem also started to listen to her students as she noted that “Listening to students helped me a lot” (Focus Group Discussion). She argued that it is important to understand students’ perspectives. Currently, Gizem is motivated, empathetic, and competent. She believes in creativity and collaboration, in particular with NESTs and a student-centered approach. While she still faces challenges due to a lack of global opportunities for teaching and student motivation, she enjoys her profession and has reconstructed her professional identity through resilience, adaptability, and collaboration.

Advocating NNEST and Expected Support

Gizem’s reflections stress the impact of native-speakerism on Turkish NNESTs’ professional identities. She critiques the existing biases that favor NESTs. She believes there is a need to empower Turkish NNESTs so they can easily overcome their challenges

and shape a confident professional identity. Gizem pointed to a lack of guidance in teacher training programs in Türkiye and believes that it limits NNESTs' opportunities to establish their niche and develop better skills to counteract native-speakerism. She argued that strategic mentorship and direction can empower NNESTs: "They could have guided us more, saying that if you are interested in teaching kids, then you should go to this, you should try this, you should take this exam" (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). Native-speakerism restricts NNESTs from global career opportunities, which is rooted in international bias. Gizem highlighted the need for support for introducing NNESTs to programs that can help them develop their skills and enhance their cross-cultural teaching experience:

Maybe they could have guided us to go abroad because I remember only one or two friends had been abroad at that time, but I wasn't one of them. So maybe they could have guided us for these programs to learn more, to improve ourselves more, or maybe to even develop some teaching skills. (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023)

Gizem argued that the teacher education system must be more practical and value NNESTs and their strengths. She noted that the programs must integrate real-world experiences like conducting collaborative teaching projects so the NNESTs can experience diverse contexts: "They could have involved us, I guess. Involved us in this type of European Union project, for example, or to do some teaching. We should have done more teaching" (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). The lack of career opportunities is a main challenge for Turkish NNESTs in asserting their professional identity internationally. Gizem shared her uncertainty related to academic progression and believes there is a critical need for mentorship on this issue: "Maybe they could have informed us about this academic world. I had no idea about how to become a professor, how to become an assistant professor. I had no idea" (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). Gizem argued that teacher education programs must act against native-speakerism by showcasing Turkish NNESTs' unique strengths. She believes that teacher training programs can benefit from experienced NNESTs so that teacher candidates can get familiar with the potential challenges they might face:

If I was a teacher trainer, I would have invited people from private institutions, you know, just to give a lecture, just to tell about the situations going on in Turkey, not only in Ankara but in some other places. (Gizem, personal communication, January 2024)

Additionally, Gizem extended her reflections to administrative support as they can

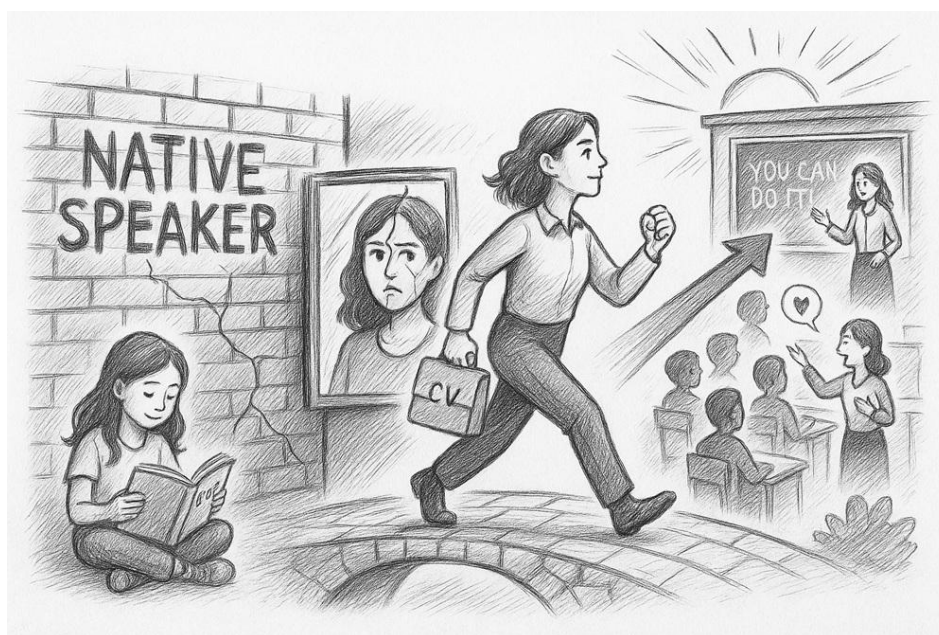
empower and support their NNESTs against native-speakerism. School administrators must create an environment for NNESTs to feel empowered, heard, and understood. Gizem argued that Turkish NNESTs should be able to voice their concerns and ask for changes in policies that favor NESTs:

When we have a problem, we should also have the courage to ask them, or we should have the... Like, I don't know how to express this. We should ask them, you know, or we should ask them for some changes if something doesn't work. (Gizem, personal communication, October 2023)

Institutions must provide an environment that advocates for open communication and responsiveness to Turkish NNESTs' requests regarding the pressures imposed by native-speakerism. Turkish NNESTs can benefit from short breaks for rest and well-being: “We kind of need like two days, you know, just two days to relax a little” (Gizem, personal communication, November 2023). Overall, Gizem advocates for a movement to challenge native-speakerism by offering targeted support through structured mentorship, global exposure, development opportunities, and a platform and authority to advocate for themselves. Figure 4.12 illustrates Gizem’s journey, including her emotions and efforts to reach her current level of confidence.

Figure 4.12

Gizem’s Journey of Empowerment



4.7 Findings of the First Research Question

Linguistic Knowledge

In response to the first research question, linguistic competence is a key area to focus on in participants' perceptions of a good English teacher. The question elicited their reactions about the significance of linguistic competence in their understanding of effective teaching. Grammar and fluency appeared to be the essential components of teacher credibility, whereas a few participants explicitly emphasized idiomatic proficiency.

Berke emphasized fluency and idiomatic proficiency as the essential aspects of linguistic competence. He believes that fluency has a critical role in language teaching and stated: "A good language teacher must communicate with the students and also have linguistic knowledge, having the required skills to communicate and to integrate into their lessons" (Berke, personal communications, October 2023). He emphasized that fluency enhances communication in the classroom and motivates students to engage as well. Berke also addressed idiomatic proficiency as an important aspect of linguistic competency. Initially, he believed that idiomatic proficiency was NESTs' inherent advantage, as he explained that "Being born in the country where English is spoken" gave NESTs linguistic superiority (Berke, personal communications, October 2023). However, he later noticed that NNESTs can also achieve it as he asserted: "Linguistic competence is not something we can attribute to being born in a country where the language is spoken" (Berke, personal communications, October 2023). He strongly values idiomatic proficiency and emphasizes the importance of idiomatic expressions for authentic communication and as a means to equip students with practical tools for real-world use.

Another participant who emphasized the importance of fluency and idiomatic proficiency was Behzat. He focuses on creating an English-only and immersive learning environment to boost students' fluency and stated, "I'm not speaking Turkish in school, never, ever" (Behzat, personal communications, November 2023). He highlighted that this approach could allow students to be exposed to the language and foster their communication ability. Behzat also named idiomatic proficiency as the other key aspect of linguistic competence. He explained that he "still try to learn some idiomatic expressions" as he thinks it is important for an English teacher to sound authentic (Behzat, personal communications, November 2023). Behzat believes that a competent teacher can prepare their students for real-world contexts by using and teaching idioms.

Selim's responses centered on fluency and grammar as important components of linguistic competence. He argued that fluency and good pronunciation increase a teacher's credibility and confidence. He strongly values pronunciation as he explained, "I've worked on my pronunciation a lot." (Selim, personal communications, November 2023). Selim emphasized the role of grammar in linguistic competence as well. He noted that students rely on their teachers' accuracy, explaining "Students trust their teachers to provide correct explanations" (Selim, personal communications, October 2023). Selim believes that grammar and fluency are interconnected, and both are essential for effective teaching. Murat's reflections revealed that he prioritized fluency and grammar as the markers of linguistic competency. He believes in providing consistent exposure to fluent English to students and explains that English teachers are students' only source: "Please speak English with your students because this is very important for them to see you as the only source" (Murat, personal communications, October 2023).

Besides his commitment and belief in an immersive language learning environment, he also acknowledged that grammar knowledge is critical for effective communication. He believes that grammar can help students construct their own language and understand how language works, and only a teacher with a good understanding can offer them this opportunity. Elif named grammar knowledge and fluency as important components of a competent teacher. She recalled her middle school teacher and explained her admiration for that teacher due as they could teach grammar effectively. She noted, "I began to learn the correct usage of English, and that stayed with me" (Elif, personal communication, December 2022). Elif views grammar as the foundation of structured and clear instruction. Moreover, Elif reflected on the importance of fluency and associated her teacher's "British accent" and fluent speech with competency. She explained that these qualities influenced her perceptions of linguistic competence.

Similarly, when defining a competent teacher, Gizem emphasized fluency and grammar. She noted that her schoolteacher was very qualified and could "provide the necessary grammar input" (Elif, personal communication, December 2022). Gizem believes grammar is a fundamental aspect of effective teaching as it helps students understand and use language accurately. Gizem advocated for immersive language teaching and highlighted the role of teacher fluency. She believes that English-only and fluent teaching can engage students in the lessons. The importance of grammar and fluency emerged

across all participants' responses, which reflects their fundamental roles in effective teaching and linguistic competence for Turkish NNESTs. Grammar was referred to as the critical aspect of structured language teaching, and providing students with tools to make sentences and understand language better. For example, Elif and Gizem both reflected on their teachers and their grammar teaching and noted grammar instruction as a factor on shaping their learning and teaching practices. Elif highlighted "the correct usage of English" from her middle school teacher, and Gizem emphasized "necessary grammar input", to point to language proficiency.

All participants underscored fluency as a key factor for building student confidence and boosting communication. Participants like Selim and Murat view fluency as an essential marker of teacher credibility. Selim highlighted the role of good pronunciation and confident speech in reassuring students that their teacher is a capable one. Being the "only source" for students, Murat also stressed the necessity of fluency in the classroom. Moreover, participants like Behzat and Gizem emphasized that classroom instruction should be English-only and advocated for an immersive teaching approach, as they see it as the best approach to improve students' fluency. Behzat insisted on "never, ever" speaking Turkish in the classroom and it reflects his belief in the power of immersion and fluency development (Behzat, personal communications, October 2023). Gizem replicated her high school teacher's exclusive use of English even with low-level students as she aims to create a natural language acquisition environment. Despite the differences in teaching contexts and priorities, all participants believe that grammar and fluency are key factors of linguistic competency of an English teacher.

While the participants unanimously mentioned grammar and fluency, they slightly diverged in identifying idiomatic proficiency as they reflected linguistic competency. Berke and Behzat were the only participants to name it as a marker of competency explicitly. Berke sees idiomatic proficiency as a way to bridge the gap between academic instruction and real-world communications. Although he used to attribute it to NESTs, later he rejected his prior belief and claimed that idiomatic expressions are teachable and learnable. Behzat viewed idiomatic proficiency as a tool for immersive learning rather than authenticity. In contrast, Selim, Murat, Elif, and Gizem did talk about idiomatic proficiency explicitly, and their reflections center instead on grammar and fluency. They perceive them as sufficient to reflect linguistic competence. For example, Selim

emphasized fluency for teacher credibility but never mentioned idiomatic usage. Similarly, Murat and Elif mainly focused on the role of grammar in structured teaching and fluency in effective communication.

The participants also diverged in their emphasis on immersive teaching and the role of fluency in the classroom. All participants value fluency; however, Behzat and Gizem argued that the English-only approach explicitly enhances students' exposure to authentic language. By using "never, ever" Behzat reflected a more rigid approach to immersion, while Gizem was more flexible and adaptive to suit students' levels and needs. Participants like Murat and Selim related fluency to teacher credibility and student engagement, and did not mention strict immersion policies. Selim defined fluency as having accurate pronunciation and confident speech, whereas Murat focused on fluency as a tool to engage students and help them learn better, rather than increasing credibility. Finally, participants connected linguistic competence to their unique teaching philosophies and beliefs. For Berke and Behzat, linguistic competence goes beyond the classroom and is a tool to be their students' models. In contrast, Selim and Murat connect it with teacher credibility and authority. They see it as a tool to establish trust and engagement. Elif and Gizem see linguistic competence as a foundation for better instruction and stress its role in structured instruction.

Teaching style

The study participants had different insights into a competent teaching style. They mostly referred to engagement, immersion, and adaptability. While there were overlapping ideas reflecting shared values, they also shared their unique perspectives. Berke emphasized a student-centered teaching approach and prioritized communicative activities and cultural engagement. Influenced by his high school teacher, he noted that language is a tool to explore various cultures and ideas rather than only an academic subject. He explained, "The very language itself is not the end, but the tool to explore the cultures and personalities of others" (Berke, personal communications, October 2023). Berke values inclusiveness, innovation, and adaptability, and emphasizes that it is important to respect diversity. He thinks that a competent teacher must integrate cultural studies into the lesson, including Turkish as well. He explained that "By integrating stories and examples from various cultures... I've aimed to broaden my students' understanding and appreciation of the world" (Berke, personal communications, October 2023).

Berke believes in CLT and interactive teaching and stresses that it is important to integrate linguistic knowledge with real-life applications to motivate and inspire students. He argued that a competent teacher must tailor the lessons to students' needs and communicate with students. He believes that teaching goes beyond the classroom, and it must promote practical skills and a broader worldview. One of the most significant key aspects of a competent teaching style for Berke is interactive teaching methods, as he believes that they boost communication and enrich lessons with cultural knowledge. Emphasizing teacher-student communication, he advocates for student engagement. He explained how his high school teacher inspired his teaching philosophy, as he recalls being engaged and encouraged to engage. Berke argued that a competent English teacher must integrate communication, interaction, and cultural awareness to promote both linguistic competence and global understanding.

Behzat emphasized immersion, student engagement, and technology integration while focusing on communicative and interactive teaching methods. He insisted on an English-only teaching policy and believed that it could push students to internalize language naturally and boost their fluency and confidence, and claimed, "I'm not speaking Turkish in school, never, ever" (Behzat, personal communications, November 2023). He advocates for incorporating technology and gamification into lessons and explains that games such as "Minecraft" can engage students in the lessons. "I played Minecraft with my students to manage education in a way that engages them" (Behzat, personal communications, November 2023). He emphasized communicative and interactive teaching, believing that they foster active student involvement and make their learning process more dynamic. He shared his belief that he tried to elicit natural language from his students, and this way ensured their learning. Selim's teaching philosophy focuses on balancing communicative and structured teaching. He believes that lessons must not focus only on grammar activities; they must provide students with opportunities to practice language. In the focus group discussion, he admitted that he used to focus more on grammar, but later he switched to communicative practices and automatic language use.

Selim believed that fifteen minutes was enough for teaching grammar, and the rest of the lessons should be allocated for communication. Student engagement, dynamism, and clear communication are the cornerstones of Selim's teaching style. He noted that a competent teacher must ensure student engagement through energetic and interactive

lessons, stating, “A teacher has to be fun, energetic, and dynamic; otherwise, you can lose their interest” (Behzat, personal communications, October 2023), because in Turkey “students get bored very easily, so you need to be really energetic and dynamic to catch their attention”. A lively and engaging classroom environment is essential to keep students focused and motivated. He strongly believes that a competent teacher must be a model and a strong communicator to gain students' trust to guide them. He highlighted that it is through effective communicative teaching that a teacher can inspire students and equip them with the necessary tools. Additionally, Selim stressed the significance of dynamic teaching strategies in balancing structured teaching. His reflections show his belief in adapting to students' needs and requirements.

Providing consistent exposure to English in the classroom is the cornerstone of an effective teaching style for Murat. He sees English teachers as students' “only source” of English input and highlights their consistency and fluency. He believes that through immersive and interactive teaching, students can internalize language and become confident. Murat emphasized communicative teaching, interactive methods, and technology incorporation in the lessons to enhance student engagement. Murat thinks a competent teacher must actively guide their students and advocate for teaching real-world communication skills. To achieve this, he believes that a teacher must go beyond grammar-focused teaching to prioritize language use. Technology, specifically internet-based tools, is important in teaching beliefs, and stresses that the internet can connect students with authentic materials and help teachers in classroom management. He stressed that a teacher must keep up with the latest trends and modernize their teaching approach to meet their students' expectations. Blending communicative methods and technological innovations to create a student-centered learning environment is the foundation of Murat's teaching belief.

A quality teaching style involves a communicative approach, creativity, a fun and engaging atmosphere, and a focus on students' individual needs for Elif. She advocates for an enjoyable learning environment, so students can acquire the language in a relaxed and entertaining way. She stated, “If the students can't enjoy the classroom, they cannot learn. That's why I think you have to create a funny environment” (Elif, personal communications, October 2023). Enjoyment is central to Elif's teaching philosophy, and she prioritizes a positive and lively classroom to reduce student anxiety and enhance their

participation. She argued that a teacher can incorporate fun activities and ask funny questions of students so they can focus on communication rather than grammar and accuracy. Elif believes in a need-based approach and stresses the necessity to tailor lessons to suit students' learning styles and requirements. She is committed to adapting her teaching techniques to ensure each student can engage in the lessons, as their needs are different and they have unique strengths and challenges. She values interactive activities and encourages students to communicate with one another through collaborative and supportive learning. One of the most important teaching aspects for Elif is providing constructive feedback. She stresses that a competent teacher must be disciplined to provide feedback and ensure that students are on the right track. She believes that the consistency of feedback is important if a teacher wants their students to improve. The combination of fun, creativity, and responsiveness reflects Elif's teaching beliefs.

Gizem believes in a teaching style that includes creativity, technology, and discipline. She also emphasized improving student autonomy and addressing their needs and argued that a classroom environment must be fun, creative, and engaging. Inspired by her high school teacher, Gizem believes in immersive teaching and communicative teaching methods. She stressed that a teacher must be creative and make the learning experience enjoyable for students, such as playing background music while students are doing grammar activities. Using technology and innovation to boost interaction and student motivation is important for her too, and she argued that it is necessary to have other activities or games to improve flexibility in lessons. Gizem stressed the important roles of discipline and structure, discipline regarding student deadlines and responsibilities. She noted that a disciplined approach helps teachers create a sense of responsibility in students. Moreover, she prioritizes students' needs and stresses the importance of adapting teaching to meet their needs. Focusing on students' needs can help teachers design lessons that suit their students and thus result in their autonomy. Gizem believes that a competent teacher must support students to achieve independence by giving them the essential skills and confidence. Her approach to teaching is a combination of fun and accountability, ensuring that students are engaged while achieving their academic goals.

Communicative teaching was important for all participants for effective language teaching. Behzat, Murat, Elif, and Gizem explicitly advocated for English-only teaching to improve students' fluency. Interactive teaching was another shared belief among

participants in particular among Berke, Behzat, and Selim, who focused on employing engaging methods to keep student engagement. Integrating technology into lessons emerged as a common belief for Murat, Behzat, and Gizem as they believed online tools and platforms could keep students engaged. Moreover, all participants emphasized students' needs and flexible teaching.

Although all participants agreed on communicative approaches for language teaching, they had various unique styles. Behzat and Gizem emphasized creativity through music and games, while Berke stressed cultural inclusiveness and storytelling to enhance students' learning experiences. Fun and humor were the key factors for Elif to add joy to lessons, while Selim believed in communicative activities with a focus on language. Murat advocated for keeping updated with teaching trends and using online platforms as authentic resources to engage students. Discipline was explicitly named by Gizem and Elif, but for Elif, it was about feedback and showed the teacher's discipline, but for Gizem, discipline was linked to students' deadlines and learning responsibilities. On the other hand, Selim and Behzat valued a relaxing environment over rigidity.

Relationship with Students and Administrators

Highlighting the communicative teaching approach, student engagement, and student-centered teaching, the participants also agree on strong relationships. Each participant is committed to supporting their students and building emotional connections with them. Berke argued that a competent English teacher must be approachable and social. He stressed the creation of an environment where students can feel comfortable interacting with and trusting their teachers. Berke believes that guiding students, relatability, and being open to their feedback are essential, and teachers can be like their "friend or brother." Similarly, he advocates effective communication with the administrators. Although a good relationship with the administrators is incredibly important for a positive teaching environment, he claimed that administrators often do not communicate openly and sufficiently with teachers. He believes that there should be a meaningful collaboration between a teacher and the school management.

Behzat believes that it is important to balance teacher authority in the classroom with closeness. Being friendly and approachable can allow students to take risks and ask questions; however, Behzat also believes that there is a need for a level of professional distance, so students recognize their teacher's leadership and thus respect them.

According to Behzat, a teacher needs to have efficient social skills to adapt to both students and colleagues. Although he mainly reflects on the student-teacher relationship, he also implies that administrators can create a better learning environment if they support their teachers.

Selim believes that if students become intimidated in the classroom, teaching can never be effective. He named warmth, accessibility, and patience as the main factors of teacher-student relationships. Selim argued that students must feel safe so they can approach their teacher and not fear making mistakes. His focus is on teacher openness and support, as he believes students can learn better. Selim did not extensively address teacher-administration; however, he suggested an open relationship between them, too. Selim's ideal teaching context is a supportive one that leads to better language instruction. Murat believes that a teacher should be close to students and consistently support them both inside and outside the classroom. For Murat, a teacher is the primary language resource and argues that a teacher must be friendly rather than an authority figure. Students need to feel safe to ask for help. Additionally, Murat underscored the importance of an open and trusting relationship between teachers and administrators. He believes that this type of relationship can allow teachers to act like students' guides and boost their confidence.

Elif believes that trust and responsiveness are the foundation of a competent teacher's relationship with students. According to her, a student will not take part in lessons fully if they do not trust their teachers. She advocates for students' needs analysis to enhance trust and interest. Considering school administrators, Elif expresses frustration and explains that many school managers are unable to distinguish between speaking a language and teaching it. She is aware that any capable teacher can feel the impact of recognition and support. She argues that the relationship between teachers and management should be based on respect and positivity.

Gizem emphasized the need for both friendliness and discipline for students and administrators. A welcoming classroom environment is important for her as it encourages students to participate more. However, she strongly believes in clear boundaries to ensure students' respect and their sense of responsibility. She argued that the relationship between teachers and administrators should be based on respect and discipline. A teacher must respect the management and cooperate with them. The balance between discipline, boundaries, and friendliness can contribute to everyone's progress.

Examining the way participants view a competent teacher's relationship dynamics with students and administrators reveals several themes: the balance between openness and authority, trust and rapport, and the influence of respect between administrators and teachers. Each participant refers to their personal experience and their specific teaching context, however, all of them collectively stressed the dynamic nature of teacher-student-administrator relationships. All participants agree that a good language teacher must be approachable and supportive, but they differ when it comes to authority. Berke and Murat believe in a peer figure, a "brother" or a "friend," and highlight the significance of casual relationships. They argued that this degree of closeness can encourage students to let go of their fears and be open to communication. Behzat believes that there should also be a level of "distance" and explains that students must feel the boundaries of respect and keep their teacher's leadership figure. Similarly, Gizem highlighted the importance of authority through discipline to keep the classroom orderly. She argued that a teacher can be both warm and still be the authority. This notion somehow resonates with Elif as she cares about trust and claims that students always need someone to direct and guide them.

Besides friendliness, participants also underscored a competent teacher's adaptive skills. As an NNS, Behzat believes that he needs to 'blend in' with his students as he can understand them and have empathy. Selim also argued that a good language teacher should be welcoming so students can ask questions without feeling intimidated. Participants collectively illustrate a continuum for a skilled English teacher: mentor, confidant, leader, and sometimes peer. A competent teacher needs flexibility to have any of these roles based on the context and students' needs. They proposed that a language teacher must negotiate every day according to the classroom dynamics.

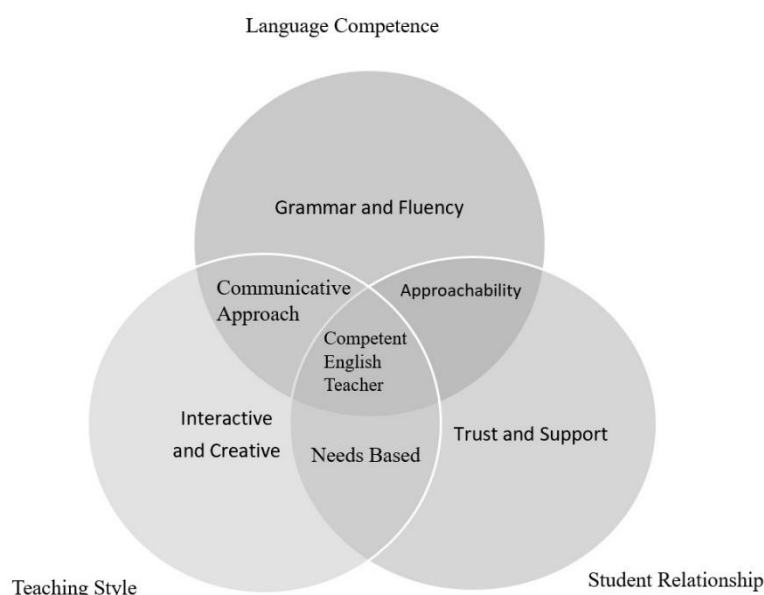
Although every participant values trust, Elif is the only participant who mentioned it explicitly and believes that if students do not trust their teachers, they can never open themselves. Trust for Elif is linked with a non-judgmental atmosphere so students can feel respected and not be scared of failure. Other participants used terms like "approachability" or "closeness" to imply trust, for example, Behzat acts as a peer with his students while gossiping so that students feel relaxed confiding in him. Selim uses the terms "welcoming" and "non-intimidating" so students can feel at ease, and Berke also referred to trust by using "friend or a brother".

Elif also believes that a good language teacher needs to be funny and view humor to create

a relaxed learning environment. Other participants did not explicitly use “funny” or “humor,” but they referred to it in diverse ways. Behzat talked about casual relationships with students, and Selim mentioned “being positive”. Collectively, the participants share the belief that teacher-student relationships should be based on confidence and safety. All participants agree that a good English teacher should have a respectful, collaborative, and professional relationship with the administrators, although they articulate it differently. Berke highlighted “open communication,” noting that administration support can motivate teachers. Elif believes that administrators need to trust their teachers’ expertise and give them some agency. Behzat used “social skills” to refer to clear communication, and Gizem adds discipline to emphasize that both sides need to respect boundaries. Figure 4.13 illustrates the key components of a competent English teacher as perceived by Turkish NNESTs.

Figure 0.13

Turkish NNESTs’ Perceptions of Competent Teacher Framework



4.8 Findings of the Second Research Question

Teacher perceptions are important in their identity formation and teaching practices, so research question 2 delves into the way Turkish NNESTs perceive NESTs regarding three areas: (1) the linguistic competencies that NESTs have, (2) NESTs’ common teaching styles, and (3) the dynamic of their relationships with students and the administrators. The

participants of the study shared their evaluations of their NEST colleagues based on their subjective experiences.

Linguistic Knowledge

Behzat sees NESTs as linguistically competent and strong, but he stressed the importance of formal teaching training. He linked his English skills improvement to NESTs and believes that they helped him to be more confident as he began to understand them fully. He argued that NESTs can improve learners and NNSs' comprehension due to their fluency and authenticity. He believes that they can create opportunities for better interactive experiences, which can be true opportunities for learners. He appreciates NESTs' authentic language input and their naturalness; however, he refutes the idea that nativeness can guarantee effective language teaching and claims that NESTs who do not have formal teaching education can never be effective. He noted that he had never seen any NESTs with formal academic education and believed this was a deficiency. He views linguistic competency as only one factor of effective teaching. Additionally, Behzat believes that NESTs' language competency and fluency might disadvantage them because they often get assigned as speaking teachers. Students also perceive that they exist only to teach speaking skills. He thinks their speaking fluency limits them to only one single function (i.e., conversation partners).

Selim highlighted NESTs' inherent English authenticity and suggested that they are better and 'more authentic' teachers for high-level exam contexts (IELTS, TOEFL). He noted that NESTs are linguistically strong, and their fluency contributes to enhancing learners' language exposure. However, he also argued that NESTs' language competency has made them overconfident and criticizes them for using their knowledge in professional settings because they often correct NNESTs' pronunciation, which he finds irritating. In other words, Selim stated that NESTs' ability for authentic pronunciation and accent can make them overly assertive towards their colleagues. Selim underscored NESTs' lack of formal teacher training and claimed that there is a gap in their linguistic knowledge and their ability to teach language. He argued that teaching requires more than mere knowledge, and NESTs often lack a systematic understanding of the language and its grammar.

Berke appreciates NESTs' authenticity and contribution to providing exposure to colloquial language and highlights that they help students with authentic communication. He sees them as natural pronunciation role models who can teach idiomatic expressions.

He also believes that they can help teach cultural knowledge and listening skills. Despite their authenticity and fluency, Berke believes that NESTs lack a formal teaching background and cannot teach language structures well. He stated that NESTs are just speakers and do not know the language as deeply as NNESTs. He implies that being a fluent speaker does not mean NESTs understand and know grammar or language acquisition, and often struggle with grammar teaching because they never received the training for that.

Elif acknowledged NESTs' natural linguistic abilities, specifically regarding pronunciation and vocabulary. She noted that it is natural for NESTs to be good at pronunciation and speaking, as it is their first language. She admitted that NESTs can be better than NNESTs in vocabulary teaching, as English is their native language. However, NNESTs have a better systemic understanding of English, such as grammar and structures. She explained: "I do not want to call them teachers because I do not believe them they are." Elif rejected the assumption that NESTs' linguistic knowledge makes them better teachers. She discussed that effective teaching asks for more than just linguistic competency and speaking ability; they must understand how to teach the language effectively, particularly in the Turkish context, where grammar and exams are important.

Gizem underscored NESTs' abilities in pronunciation and vocabulary and linked their knowledge to the inherent advantage of being an NS. She acknowledged that NESTs are great sources for natural and authentic language. She believes that they can contribute to the correction of pronunciation and vocabulary mistakes. Like other participants, Gizem rejected the belief that fluency means effectiveness and argued that: "The way teaching... is different than speaking, being able to communicate." She criticizes NESTs as she believes they rely on linguistic fluency and overlook language grammar structures. Although she did not state that NESTs do not have grammar knowledge, she argued that they do not prioritize teaching it and focus merely on speaking and listening. Whereas an effective teacher must guide learners through language structures.

Like other participants, Murat identified authenticity and natural communication as the key strengths of NESTs. He noted that "they are a kind of the correct source of the language," and appreciated NESTs as they can be a real-life model for students to learn natural pronunciation. He asserted that NESTs are big opportunities for students as they

can have the chance to prepare for situations in English-speaking countries. On the other hand, he views them as incompetent in explaining grammar and points out: “When we look at the grammar, since they haven’t thought about the grammar so much, they may have some difficulty with the grammar part.” He believes the reason for this challenge is the fact that NESTs often have not had any formal grammar studies. He believes that a lack of formal grammar knowledge limits NESTs’ effectiveness in teaching English to students in Türkiye.

All participants agree that NESTs are authentic language models that can offer natural pronunciation, vocabulary, and cultural knowledge. Behzat highlighted their contributions to students and their listening skills and confidence. Similarly, Murat described NESTs as the “correct source of the language,” and appreciates NESTs’ authenticity and naturalness. Gizem and Elif both acknowledged NESTs’ natural pronunciation and vocabulary knowledge. Selim extends this idea and underscores NESTs’ benefits in exam preparation, such as IELTS or TOEFL, because fluency is important.

Although all participants unanimously appreciate NESTs and their authenticity, fluency, and speaking skills, they unanimously criticize NESTs’ lack of grammatical knowledge that is needed for teaching English effectively. For example, Berke emphasized that “They do not know the language extremely, as we do.” They attributed their lack of grammar knowledge to their status as NS, as they have never studied grammar formally. Elif believes that NESTs cannot address students’ grammar challenges as they are not well-equipped. They collectively addressed their concerns that NESTs mostly rely on their intuition rather than grammar knowledge and background education, which is a big disadvantage for Turkish learners.

Teaching Style

Behzat identified the strengths and challenges of NESTs’ teaching styles. He believes that NESTs’ unique strength is their ability to reflect cultural authenticity because they can integrate cultural knowledge and content into their teaching. He stated that NESTs can enrich students’ understanding of the target culture. He also acknowledged their flexibility and creativity in teaching and emphasized that they prefer “off-the-book” methods and associate the syllabus with real-life contexts, so students are better engaged. On the other hand, Behzat criticized NESTs’ lack of pedagogical training and understanding of

teaching methodologies. He believes that relying only on their native status, NESTs focus only on speaking activities and thus hinder students' language development.

Berke also has mixed perspectives on NESTs' teaching styles, which result from his experiences. He values NESTs and their contributions, such as providing language exposure to the students and their cultural knowledge. He pointed out that NESTs focus on communication and interactive activities, and they can engage students. He believes that students often have more fun with them as they incorporate fun activities like playing games. He stressed the benefit of how they teach practical language. However, Berke believes that NESTs do not have any pedagogical knowledge or formal training. He believes that NESTs' lack of expertise is a disadvantage for Turkish NNESTs as they end up having more workloads and responsibilities. He believes that NESTs usually do the enjoyable aspects of teaching, while Turkish NNESTs are left with the demanding parts.

Referring to her past experiences and observations, Elif predominantly criticized NEST teaching styles. She acknowledged that NESTs prioritize communication and speaking activities, which are beneficial, however, learning language is not only about speaking skills. She believes that language teaching must be holistic, and teachers need to focus on all language skills rather than merely speaking. Similar to other participants, Elif sees the lack of pedagogical background as a big downside and highlights their lack of discipline as well. She argued that NESTs do not know how to teach because they do not know students' needs. She sees NESTs' lessons as unproductive as unlike Turkish NNESTs, NESTs have never experienced learning English and thus can never empathize with students. Additionally, Elif questioned NESTs' lack of discipline in following course objectives and stressed that Turkish NNESTs are forced to compensate for NESTs' lack of engagement with comprehensive teaching.

Gizem agreed with other participants that NESTs only rely on casual and speaking activities. She argued that they never prepare for the lessons and only improvise in the. She believes this type of teaching can be fun and motivating, but teaching a language is not only about having fun, as claimed, "the way teaching... is different than speaking." Gizem highlighted the role of other skills, such as reading and writing, and also grammar knowledge. She believes that NESTs can engage students in the lessons as they have cultural authenticity and appreciate their writing lessons because she believes that NESTs are good at providing constructive feedback. Tolerating students' mistakes is another

NEST teaching strength for Gizem, and she argues that this tolerance creates a better supportive learning environment for students. Gizem also criticized NESTs' disengagement with grammar and remarked that NESTs often neglect grammar despite its being crucial for learning a language.

Murat mentioned NESTs' authenticity and cultural expertise as their advantages in teaching and argued that NESTs do their best to expose students to real-life contexts and teach them how to react. He also appreciates their relaxed and encouraging way of teaching English because they help students take risks and not be afraid of making mistakes. However, Murat claimed that they cannot teach very effectively because they do not have any teaching training background. He believes the pedagogical gap pushes NESTs to speaking activities and ignores other skills such as writing and grammar. Furthermore, Murat questions NESTs because they cannot adapt to their students' needs

Selim highlighted NESTs' confidence in the lessons and their focus on communication activities. He stated that their confidence "helps them create a dynamic and interactive environment. He added authenticity and cultural insights to their strengths. Similar to other participants, Selim argued that NESTs often do not have formal pedagogical training, and they only focus on speaking. He believes that NESTs prioritize vocabulary teaching and pronunciation corrections, moreover, they cannot teach effectively because they do not know students' cultures and learning needs: "They didn't share the culture, which made it harder for them to connect with the students on a deeper level."

The cross-case analysis of the participants' perceptions of NEST's teaching styles reveals common themes. All participants agree that NESTs are strong in providing authentic target language exposure and enhancing students' confidence. A recurring theme stressed NESTs' ability to create an engaging and interactive classroom environment. Selim appreciated their confidence and dynamic teaching style, and Murat valued the way they could expose students to natural pronunciation and cultural facts. Gizem mentioned NESTs' feedback and tolerance, which results in a supportive environment where students can take risks. However, they also shared their concerns about NESTs' lack of pedagogical training background. Both Selim and Murat believe that NESTs ignore teaching writing skills and grammar, and Elif linked their lack of formal education background to their failure to address students' needs. She argued that Turkish NNESTs are much better at empathizing with students because they have been students too. Lack

of cultural and contextual understanding is another downside that participants agree on. According to Selim, NESTs are not familiar with Turkish culture, which can make it challenging for them to teach effectively and communicate constructively with students. Murat has the same idea and believes that NESTs often struggle to adapt to students' needs in Türkiye. Elif added that NESTs lack discipline and a structured teaching approach to argue that NESTs cannot be effective teachers.

Relationships with Students and Administration

Behzat highlighted that NESTs often have problems regarding their relationships with students and administration because of cultural and language barriers. He remarked, "With Turkish students, communication is not easy for native speakers," and noted that NESTs have unfamiliar cultural expectations. This gap limits NESTs' ability to understand students' needs as well, which results in less effective communication. Behzat believes that school administrators often undervalue NESTs' abilities to contribute more by assigning them as only "speaking teachers." Moreover, Behzat critiques how administrators do not support NESTs regarding their working visa, which causes NESTs to feel instability. He believes that NESTs are not safe in Türkiye, and that is why they do not want to teach better and feel isolated and unsupported.

Berke criticizes NESTs regarding their relationship dynamics. He believes that NESTs do not engage in interactions with students and just enter the lesson, spend some time, and then leave the classroom. He feels that NESTs do not care about students and their performances because they do not feel responsible for students' learning progress. He argued that NESTs tend to avoid meaningful relationships with their students. Regarding NESTs' relationships with the administration, Berke questions the way the administration prefers them despite their limited qualifications.

Elif shared her frustration because she argues that NESTs do not genuinely care about students and do not put any effort into understanding their needs and challenges. She expressed their disengagement by remarking that NESTs often do not follow any teaching techniques and only prioritize talking, even if students do not understand them. She believes that this approach of NESTs disconnects them from students because they do not try to understand their students' difficulties. Elif also believes that NESTs do not have any discipline or sense of responsibility in their lessons. Despite these deficiencies, Elif believes that the Administration favors NESTs and idolizes them only because there are

NSs.

Gizem appreciates NESTs as they can easily create a positive and tolerant classroom environment. She believes that they support and encourage students to participate without fearing judgment. Despite their excellence in enhancing student support and empowerment, Gizem questions NESTs' abilities to address students' individual needs. She remarked that they get challenged in understanding students because they do not have to learn English. Moreover, she claimed that students often do not take NESTs seriously and do not do well with the assigned homework. Gizem highlighted the fact that NESTs are often subject to better treatment as they are prestigious assets to attract customers

Murat highlighted that students can be "scared of the communication" with NESTs initially, and this is the time that teachers need to build rapport. "If the teacher can create a kind of positive situation or positive classroom environment... it is a good thing. But if they cannot do it in one month or two months, then they cannot do it for the entire year." He appreciated NESTs' ability to build strong rapport with students and asserted that they easily create a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere inside the classroom. He believes that NESTs encourage students to participate and enhance their confidence flawlessly. However, he believes that NESTs often exaggerate this relaxing state to the point that students lose their sense of accountability. He believes NESTs are not authoritative enough, and students abuse this situation by not doing their assignments. Murat noted that there is often a communication gap between NESTs and school management: "There is nearly no relation with the administration of the native teachers... there weren't so many people in the administration who were able to speak English." He believes this language barrier puts NESTs at a disadvantaged situation as they cannot get the required support. Despite the communication gap, Murat highlighted the preferential treatment NESTs receive regarding workload.

Selim noted that NESTs often struggle to connect with students deeply because of cultural and language differences, specifically if the students are at a lower level. However, he believes NESTs are good at motivating students through their confidence and natural language usage. Referring to his experiences, he pointed out that sometimes students find NESTs less approachable than NNESTs due to their arrogance. He stated that NESTs usually think they are doing the right things, while they have no idea what is happening. Selim also emphasized a lack of communication between NESTs and the administration

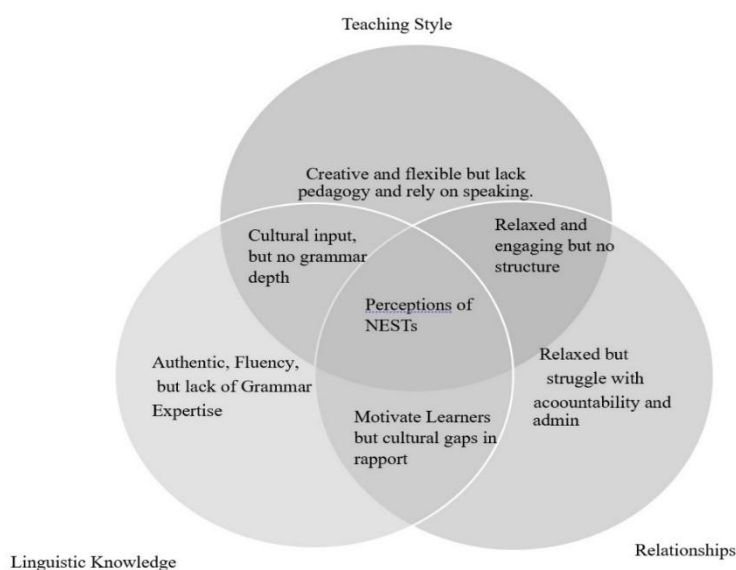
due to the language barrier, which results in frustration and isolation. He believes that administrators view NESTs only as a marketing asset and do not integrate them as team members.

The participants of the study have multifaceted views on NESTs' nature of relationships with students and the administration. They agree that NESTs can create a positive classroom atmosphere. Murat believes this reduces students' anxiety, and Gizem appreciates the way NESTs are less rigid with students' mistakes, which leads to better participation. Selim admires their confidence in motivating their students despite their cultural and linguistic differences. However, participants like Eilif, Selim, and Berke are aware that NESTs do not try hard to connect with students, engage in institutional tasks, and understand local culture. Selim's belief that NESTs "are not that approachable" resonates with Behzat and Murat's perspectives that cultural differences undermine strong connections. Murat and Selim pointed out that students find NESTs less strict and become less accountable. Elif and Selim highlight NESTs' arrogance, which limits their rapport with students.

Participants such as Murat and Selim agree that NESTs cannot make deep connections with students due to language barriers and blame the administrators' limited English proficiency. However, all participants agree that NESTs are often treated better as they receive less workload and are respected more as they are seen as assets. Behzat is the only participant who emphasized how management often neglects NESTs and their job security. Gizem went further to mention that in her context, NESTs are usually paid less than NNESTs, which demotivates them. Figure 4.14 illustrates the six participants' perceptions of NESTs:

Figure 4.14

Turkish NNESTs' Perceptions of NESTs



4.9 Findings of the Third Research Question

Berke's challenges and their impacts

As a Turkish NNEST, Berke shared his experiences of systemic biases, workplace policies, and societal assumptions that shaped his classroom experiences and professional identity. Having studied-abroad experiences and a strong résumé, he was disappointed that NESTs were considered more “authentic”, regardless of qualifications. He confronted the common belief that NESTs are better English teachers, irrespective of their qualifications, and they have more prestigious roles, lighter workloads, and higher salaries. On the other hand, Turkish NNESTs like Berke had more pedagogical tasks to do with lower payments. He noticed that many of his NEST colleagues often did only “chit-chats” in the classrooms and were considered more credible and better teachers, despite their lack of formal education. He started struggling with frustration and rage due to unfairness.

Over time, Berke started to feel “Not valued” and “Replaceable,” even if he showed much effort in designing lesson plans and materials tailored to his students’ needs. He felt that the moment a NEST appeared, the management would replace him or his Turkish colleagues. This situation even got aggravated when he also noticed that Turkish NNESTs received much lower payments despite all their complex responsibilities. He had

dedicated years to studying how to teach a language, yet all those efforts were undermined by NESTs' "authentic accent." He started to have emotional frustration and struggles since he had to stay positive and smile for his students while confronting his internal insecurities. Berke did not have job security and lost his sense of legitimacy, so he did his best to prove himself and his value because the context was continuously contrasting him against NESTs, who were always favored. He describes this period of his professional life as mentally exhausting, as he had to manage his students and prove his self-worth because he was viewed as less competent.

The systemic biases and stereotypes attributed 'lack of fluency' to Turkish NNESTs, and Berke had to fight against this by continuously proving himself, even though he trusted his proficiency. He felt that he was not allowed to make any mistakes in the lessons or that students would judge his competency because he believed that Turkish NNESTs were always under scrutiny, especially due to their "Turkish accent." He had to overcompensate to be flawless to show that he was "good enough" to be a teacher, and this caused more pressure for him. At the same time, as a newly graduated NNEST in Türkiye, he did not feel prepared to teach as he had mostly received the theoretical knowledge of teaching at the university and there was a lack of "Lack of Proper Training" that undermined his confidence even more when he confronted native-speaker biases in the job market. He felt ill-equipped and observed that the gap between academic training and real-world settings reinforced the biases even more, that NNESTs are less effective, which put Turkish NNESTs in a further disadvantaged position. However, Berke believes he was lucky as he had joined workshops and international exchange programs, and had pursued rigorous self-study, so he felt visible while looking for a job.

Despite the 'Low Payment', Berke and his Turkish NNEST colleagues had a lot of workloads, such as preparing lesson plans, exam evaluations, and sometimes administrative tasks. Whereas their NEST colleagues did not have to do any of these and were paid more. The combination of higher workloads, lower pay, and native speakerism biases frustrated Berke in such a way that he started having second thoughts about his career. In his workplace, there was a division between NESTs and NNESTs, favoring the former group as superior teachers and assets to the institution.

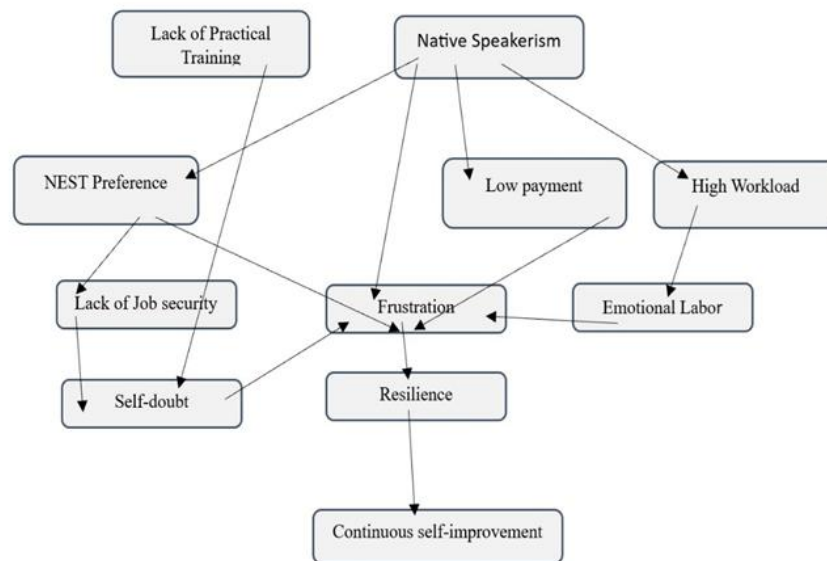
These challenges impacted Berke on multiple levels. Emotionally, he often felt frustrated and demoralized. He remembers being "hesitant to go into classrooms," as he knew he

was under scrutiny. To overcome this fear, he prepared fully for his lessons to compensate for his Turkish accent and lack of NEST “authenticity”. He had lost his initial enthusiasm for teaching and had started to question his career choice. Motivationally, however, Berke started to push himself to work harder, refine his teaching methods, and establish his credibility. Stressing the importance of bilingual insights, he incorporated culturally relevant materials in his lessons. However, over time, his need to increase his credibility and self-proof made him feel resentful as NESTs were getting those virtues only by doing a little and only through their background.

His challenges affected Berke’s professional identity in many ways. He decided to turn inward and take crucial steps toward his self-improvement. Despite trusting in his qualifications and his “remarkable CV”, he started improving his classroom practices and creating an environment where his students could flourish. He decided to dedicate himself to his professional growth and become resilient to challenge the biases. The need for validation forced him to understand his students’ needs and see his bilingualism as an advantage. He remarked that “I had to act as if I were native,” which prompted him to adopt an image to counteract native-speakerism biases. However, he had come to know that the value of an English teacher depends on their connections and educational background rather than their accent. Figure 4.15 shows Berke’s challenges and their impact:

Figure 4.15

Berke's Challenges and Their Impacts



Behzat's challenges and their impacts

Behzat's narrative as a Turkish NNEST reveals his challenges that are intertwined with native speakerism, systemic biases, and his early struggles as a novice teacher. His challenges shaped his career trajectory and his emotional, motivational, and professional identity in critical ways. Once a novice teacher, Behzat faced several difficulties in a context that idealizes NESTs.

When Behzat started his career as an English teacher, he experienced school administrators' and parents' rejections. He recalled that parents would question his ability to teach English and ask for a NEST for their children during parent-teaching meetings. He shared his experience when a parent had asked him, "Why isn't there a native teacher for my child?" Attitudes such as this pushed Behzat to doubt himself and his abilities and made him feel "less important". While he was trying to establish his professional identity as an English teacher, his confidence was eroded by native-speakerism biases. This skepticism drained his hopes and aspirations and caused a sense of impostor syndrome, which made him feel that he had to constantly prove his abilities to others.

He believes that the basis of this lack of confidence was also related to the lack of proper

teacher training. He had learned theoretical knowledge of teaching at the university, but he realized that it was not sufficient, and he was not prepared for the realities of teaching. He reflected on his first year of teaching and remembered that he was not competent, and he decided to learn from his mistakes to be a better teacher. He felt isolated and doubtful because he had to deal with the challenges of classroom management, lesson planning, and student engagement on his own. He felt this gap even more when he started to compare himself with his NEST colleagues, who were naturally equipped to teach English and were favored by everyone. NESTs did not often have any formal educational background, and Behzat had started to question his training and background.

Behzat also started to notice his linguistic insecurities and was highly self-conscious about his lack of fluency, specifically regarding idiomatic expressions, which he believes made his English less “natural”. He admitted that “I still try to learn idiomatic expressions, but I’m not sure if they make my English sound more natural.” There were times when his students would compare him to his native colleagues, and this made him feel even more inadequate. He wanted to be linguistically competent and credible while increasing his relatability, and this became his emotional burden, as he attempted to constantly refine his skills and was afraid of students, parents, and colleagues’ judgments.

In addition to linguistic challenges that made him feel insecure, Behzat also had problems with the amount of workload and responsibilities at his school. As an NNEST, Behzat had to perform additional tasks such as decorating the school bulletin boards, calling parents regularly, and translation tasks: “The administration often comes to us for translations,” he explained, “and we’re the ones conveying messages to the native teachers.” What made this situation more of a burden was the fact that he did not feel these extra responsibilities were compensated for or even acknowledged; therefore, he felt even more undervalued. Meanwhile, his NEST colleagues had no other tasks other than speaking activities in the lessons, and this imbalance of responsibilities made Behzat feel resentful.

Behzat was also challenged regarding salary inequities as a novice teacher. Although he never explicitly knew his colleagues' salaries, he knew that NESTs were receiving much higher salaries, even if their qualifications were like NNESTs and Behzat himself. This payment discrimination, along with the existing biases, caused Behzat to feel seriously devalued as a Turkish NNEST. Behzat was frustrated by the notion that NEST could be paid more only because of their nativeness, and he started questioning the system:

“Sometimes I wonder if I’m getting what I deserve,”. He reflected that financial discrimination demotivated him as a passionate and dedicated teacher.

These challenges impacted Behzat emotionally, motivationally, and professionally, especially during his first years of teaching. He was frustrated and disheartened because he had to prove himself to others. He reflected on those years and recalled being “stuck” as he had no agency, and he felt like “just a clerk,” which was against his idealized image of teaching he had since childhood. Parents, administrators, and even students reflected implicitly that NESTs are better teachers, a belief that also affected Behzat. Behzat wanted to have an impact on his students’ lives, however, he felt isolated as he did not receive immediate validation and recognition. He felt that NESTs were overshadowing all his efforts.

These challenges were painful for him; however, they acted as a catalyst. Rejections and skepticism had made him feel burned out, but Behzat was determined to prove his worth. He was motivated by all the biases of native-speakerism. Each time he faced a situation that questioned his competence, Behzat pushed even harder to show his abilities through his students’ progress. “At the beginning of the term, parents would question me,” he said, “but by the end of the term, they’d say, ‘Next year, we want you as the teacher.’” These validations became his triumph over the biases that favored NESTs.

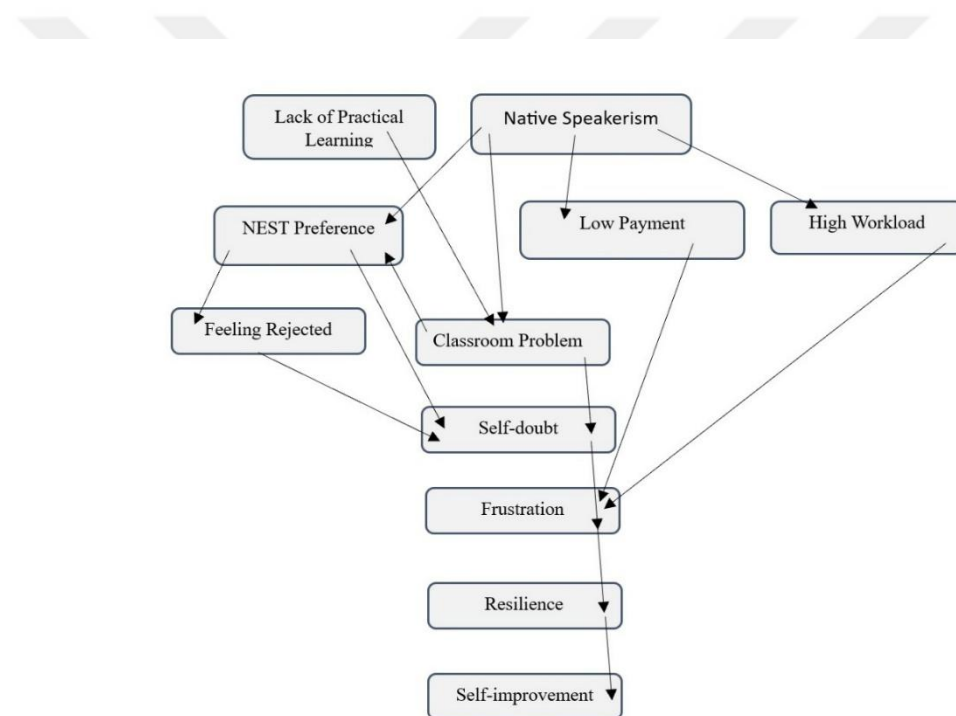
The challenges Behzat faced in his initial years of teaching also impacted him professionally as he decided to navigate the realities of native-speakerism with resilience and adaptability. Having limited practical teaching knowledge and native-speakerism turned him into a reflective practitioner as he had to analyze his teaching practices all the time to improve himself, hoping he would be recognized. He started to study to improve his language proficiency, particularly idiomatic expressions, as he was insecure about his lack of idiomatic fluency. He knew he had challenges, and this awareness helped him to be aware of students’ challenges as well. He explained, “I know their mistakes before they make them,”. He could anticipate Turkish students’ common errors, a skill that NESTs did not have. Additionally, sharing the same native language, his students mostly tend to speak Turkish with him, so he had to adapt to an “English-only” teaching environment.

Native-speakerism had an enormous impact on Behzat’s emotional well-being and professional identity. Feeling his contributions were overshadowed, he questioned his

professional commitment, and his confidence was harmed due to NEST's preference. However, he stayed motivated through his passion for teaching and his desire to make his students successful. As a form of self-empowerment, he decided to use communicative and student-centered approaches to empathize with Turkish students' challenges. Behzat never had any problems finding teaching positions in Turkish schools, however, he was rejected by online teaching platforms like Cambly as they explicitly prioritize NESTs. He is forced to feel less competent through these market-driven hiring discriminations. Figure 4.16 illustrates Behzat's challenges and their impacts:

Figure 4.16

Behzat's Challenges and Their Impacts



Elif's challenges and their impacts

As a Turkish NNEST, Elif's narrative also reflects the systemic barriers and biases that impact Turkish NNESTs' careers, professional identity, and emotional well-being. Elif experienced the disadvantages of being an NNEST throughout her career as recruiters rejected her despite her good performances in the interviews: "Even when I performed my best, I knew deep down they would prefer a native speaker." Elif feels that her qualifications, experience, and passion for teaching have always been overshadowed by

native-speakerism. These rejections impacted her self-esteem and professional identity, underscoring how native-speaker biases can privilege nativeness over teaching skills.

Another important challenge for Elif was the fact that she did not receive adequate training during her undergraduate years, therefore, she did not feel prepared for real classroom challenges. She reflected on her university program and explained that she mainly received theoretical knowledge, while she needed practical skills. She pointed out that although they received high-quality lessons on lesson plan designing, they never received any guidance on time management or students' needs. Lack of practical skills became a source of stress in her first years of teaching. She remembers the overwhelming sense of not knowing what to do with advanced-level students whose English proficiency was better than hers. She felt inadequate and lost her confidence as a novice English teacher.

Payment inequities aggravated her frustration as she came to suspect that NESTs were receiving notably higher salaries, despite NESTs' backgrounds. She explained that the salary discrimination could never be explicitly confirmed, but her colleagues and she knew that NESTs were respected more only because of their accents: "They valued them because of their accents, not their teaching skills." This unequal treatment made her feel devalued and demotivated, as Turkish NNESTs had a much more demanding workload, as she explained, "It felt like we were just workers." Doing more and receiving less made her assured that institutions do not care about their teacher but their profits.

Elif shared her struggles with the administrators and their attitudes as well. She felt that she was never truly appreciated or supported. She described how she felt unrecognized and unsupported during conflicts with students. "Whenever students complained, management always took their side," she said. "It was as if my professional judgment didn't matter." These experiences made her feel that her role was only to satisfy students and parents rather than to be an educator. This management approach undermined her sense of authority, and she felt alienated. She also highlighted her observation that management often treated NESTs differently and assigned complex tasks to NNESTs: "They [NESTs] wouldn't do anything," she noted and further explained, "Yes, they can speak English perfectly, but what else?" she argues that administrators use NESTs as marketing tools and the fact that they often do not have any task to do divided NESTs and NNESTs, "They are just there for show," she noted.

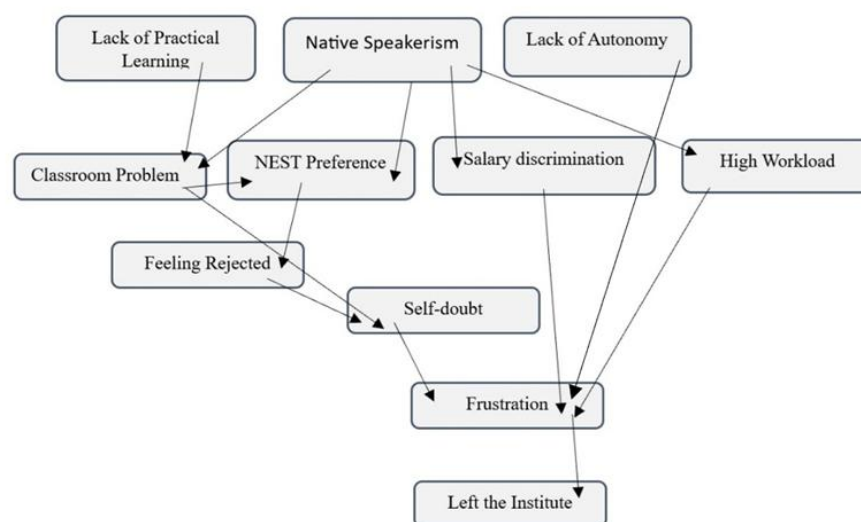
Elif was deeply affected emotionally by the systemic biases of native-speakerism and the inequities, and struggled with frustration and self-doubt. She felt undervalued when she compared her workload and salary with those of NESTs. She felt frustrated as she thought that her hard work was taken for granted and received no support from management. She noted that her administrators “don’t support teachers; it’s just a trade for them.” She started to question her values, and she admitted that she was afraid, as she thought students would say “non-native teachers don’t know anything,” which reveals the internalized pressure she constantly had to prove herself.

Struggling with inadequacy, frustration, and NEST preference, Elif felt professionally invisible and was disillusioned that she could not compete with NESTs. Her professional identity was reduced to that of an undervalued worker in the system. Over time, she was defined as an English teacher who lacked something. She was devastated as she noticed how “Native speakers can easily be titled as a ‘teacher’ in Turkey.” She did not have the agency she desired and explained, “I wish they [Administration] had respected me more about my choices.” All these inequities pushed her to leave formal institutions and make a transition to freelancing, where she could gain autonomy.

Figure 4.17 shows Elif’s challenges and their impact:

Figure 4.17

Elif’s Challenges and Their Impacts



Selim's challenges and their impacts

Selim's experiences as an NNEST reveal a unique perspective of native-speakerism, particularly within the university context, where the dynamics are more equitable than in the broader global teaching market. He is aware of the challenges his Turkish friends encounter as NNESTs; however, unlike them, Selim described his university as a supportive environment where Turkish NNESTs are valued for their contributions and knowledge. He explained that he is respected and valued, and his management thinks that he is a "good catch." He expressed his professional satisfaction within his working context.

Selim noted that Turkish NNESTs who work at the universities have plenty of development opportunities and are even paid more than NESTs, which is the contrary of other teaching settings. Being respected and recognized, Selim was able to focus on his teaching skills and was never forced to prove his worth to anyone, as he shared that "I don't have to fight to show my value." His statement reflects the fact that professional recognition positively impacts his professional identity. Despite his situation within Türkiye, Selim also encountered the impact of native-speakerism and the systemic discrimination that favors NESs. Although he has advanced qualifications and extensive teaching experience, his applications for international teaching roles were rejected multiple times. He stated that international recruiters don't care how good a candidate is or how much experience they have, and even if they hired NNESTs, they would pay less just because of being Turkish. Despite his satisfaction within his teaching context, these rejections made him feel limited and restricted his career mobility. He felt so disappointed when he wanted to try teaching online as a side hustle to "earn in a foreign currency however, I have been receiving lots of rejection just because I am not from an English-speaking country."

Selim shared his awareness that although Turkish NNESTs did not struggle with payment disparity at his workplace, in private schools, his friends receive lower salaries compared to NESTs. He claimed that salary inequities combined with low salaries in the teaching profession were distressing his friends and partly himself. Selim believed that teaching in general is a profession that is undervalued everywhere.

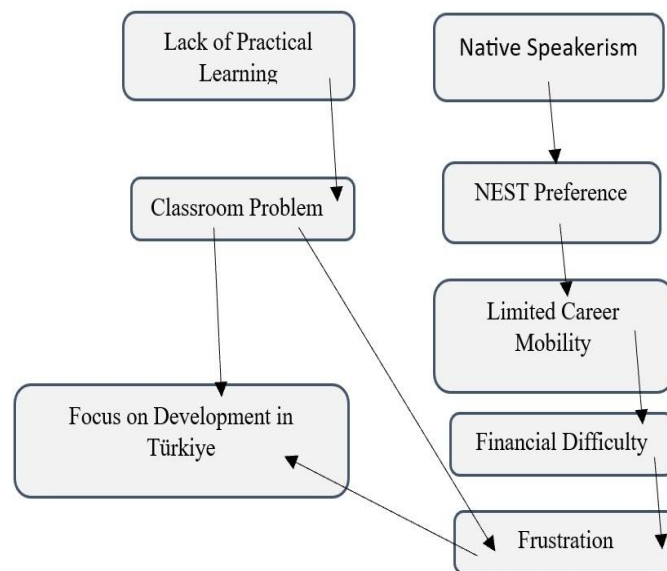
Although Selim is well-respected at his university, he shared how he felt frustrated emotionally due to his international rejections. He shared his frustration by noting that

NNESTs will always be judged by their non-native status, no matter how hard they try. Despite this frustration, Selim is committed to his profession and is satisfied that he has opportunities to grow professionally. Unlike other participants, Selim's emotional challenges are mainly external, and he has never had any problem with his confidence.

Similar to other participants, Selim also had struggled as a novice teacher and believes that he was not prepared enough, as they had only learned the theoretical part of teaching. He underscored that teacher candidates mostly learn theory, whereas they need practical skills such as classroom management for a class that is full of students who are not willing to learn. He shared his experience when he had to rely on trial and error to learn teaching skills and strategies. Figure 4.18 illustrates Selim's challenges and their impact:

Figure 4.18

Selim's Challenges and Their Impacts



Murat's Challenges and Their Impacts

Murat was exposed to the English language by his uncle and became interested in learning English at a young age. However, His teachers later overshadowed this interest as he said, "My high-school teachers weren't that good... They were not native speakers, and they weren't capable of teaching English to the students." Disappointed by the formal language instruction, he became doubtful about choosing English teaching as a career. He decided to study the English language and Literature instead and hoped to use his English skills in other fields like tourism or sales. He was reluctant to follow his teachers and became

an unenthusiastic teacher like them.

Eventually, Murat decided to take a CELTA certification as he wanted to become an international teacher and travel and work in different countries. However, international recruiters rejected him repeatedly only because he was a NNEST. “Every interview I had, the same last sentence: ‘You’re the first potential candidate if we can’t manage to find a native speaker,’” he stressed. He was discouraged because all those recruiters ignored his qualifications and focused only on the country mentioned in his passport. When he noticed that he could not find a job abroad, he decided to start teaching at a private school in Türkiye. However, even in Turkish schools, he was confronted with a system that valued NESTs and their accents. He noticed that both school administrators and parents favored and valued NESTs. He recalled it when parents would repeatedly question their children's teachers' nationalities. Murat emphasized how parents asking exclusively for NESTs at private schools can discourage Turkish NNESTs.

Another challenge that Murat faced in the private school he was working for was that Turkish NNESTs automatically have additional job burdens that are not related to their job description. He had to do plenty of administrative tasks and other responsibilities that NESTs would avoid. “Native teachers get the bigger pie and don’t do anything,” Murat remarked as an example of how underqualified or inexperienced NESTs can be. He highlighted that NESTs often have fewer duties and higher pay. Murat recalled that “Sometimes, during my break, they [NESTs] came to me: ‘Murat teacher, can you please help me?’” Murat highlighted how parents are the main group of people who believe in the superiority of NESTs, and as a result, their children have the same belief. As Murat noted, “Most students have accepted that NESTs are more proficient.” He shared that students could doubt their teachers' capabilities just because they were not NSs. Moreover, Murat argues that Turkish NNESTs do not receive proper teacher training and criticizes the state’s pedagogical formation programs, as he thinks they are inadequate and cannot provide novice teachers with essential tools or skills for teaching difficulties. He believes that when Novice teachers start teaching unprepared, native speakerism gets promoted even more because others think it is because of their being Turkish.

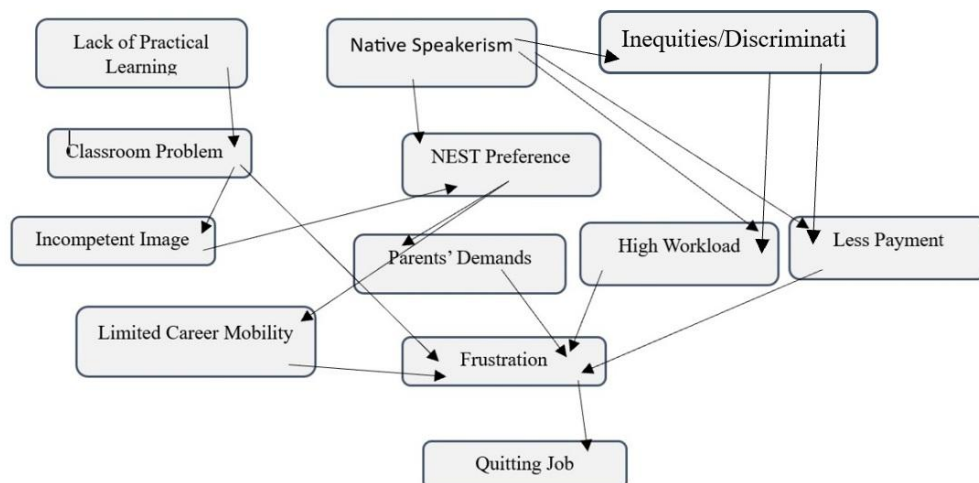
These challenges impacted Murat’s professional journey and self-confidence. The series of rejections he received only because of his nationality caused him to question his abilities, as he mentioned he started to “question everything about myself and my

country.” He became frustrated with being undervalued and seeing the inequities regarding workload and payment. He wanted to teach abroad and became proactive in taking the CELTA, but it was disheartening for him as he could never achieve his goal.

At a deeper level, Murat became a teacher who continuously questions the system that undervalues teachers based on their accents rather than teaching skills. He underscored the irony that better training programs are never accessible to teachers who need them and reflected on his decision to seek professional development on his own. Over time, he became a teacher, a mentor, and a guide for his peers, which eventually made him the head of the department in his school. Murat’s journey reveals how systemic biases and inadequate training programs can create barriers for Turkish NNESTs to achieving what they genuinely want professionally. Although Murat was promoted to head of the English department at his school, the workload, payment inequities, and existing biases pushed him to quit teaching at school. Figure 4.19 shows Murat’s challenges and their impacts:

Figure 4.19

Murat’s Challenges and Their Impacts



Gizem’s Challenges and Their Impacts

Attending an Anatolian Teacher Training High School was Gizem’s most critical luck in her profession as she decided to be a teacher. She remembered that her instructors were competent and enthusiastic and appreciated the school’s focus on pedagogical methods. However, she could not experience the same quality when she started to study at the

university. She noticed that her professors often focus on their academic publications rather than training students and preparing them for their future teaching profession. She noted that she expected them to inspire them with hands-on skills so they could benefit from them in the classroom. She recalled those days and highlighted that “We were kind of left alone trying to find our way.” She believes that theoretical lessons overshadow practical teaching practices.

Gizem reflected on her initial years of teaching and recalled that she was “puzzled, sometimes even lost.” She remembered that her first workplace was a vocational school, and there was a small age gap between her and her students: “They [students] mostly considered me as their friend, which led to not being taken into account seriously.” She admitted that she was struggling to establish her authority and credibility in the classroom. She underscores the fact that she was not prepared enough and shared that “The first year of teaching was especially hard as I didn’t know the interests and needs of the students.” As a result, she decided to take a CELTA course so she could learn how to teach practically and travel abroad and work in different countries.

During her CELTA course, she made some friends who were NESTs and, upon course completion, could easily find jobs and “travel around the world.” She remembered how jealous she had felt as traveling abroad was her ultimate desire, too, but each time she applied for an international position, she was rejected. “I introduced myself; I gave a lot of information, I said I have this certificate, I did this, I did that,” she explained, only to receive rejections because of her nationality. She noted that one recruiter told her that they were hiring “native speakers,” exclusively, regardless of the teaching credentials or even experience. These experiences frustrated her as she noticed that she was in a system that prioritized “passport” over classroom skills. At the same time, Gizem observed that many NESTs could acquire “cheap certificates” to teach in other countries and, ironically, could find jobs more easily than many qualified NNESTs. She felt it was unjust and not fair that someone could get a position with minimal training only because they had a passport and a “native accent.”

Inside Türkiye, Gizem was able to secure a job at a state university without any challenge. Although to enter a university she had to pass many steps, she could do it all smoothly. Reflecting on her experiences in a university setting, she admitted that there can be some doubts among students from time to time about whether their teacher was an NNEST.

However, she believes that her working setting supports her and appreciates her contributions. She noted that Turkish NNESTs receive better salaries than NESTs and have more job security, and believes that the reason is that state universities recruit instructors under standardized conditions. So, there is often no discrimination regarding workload, benefits, and professional opportunities. However, she is aware that in other contexts, Turkish NNESTs struggle with underpayment, heavier workload, and fewer opportunities to improve themselves.

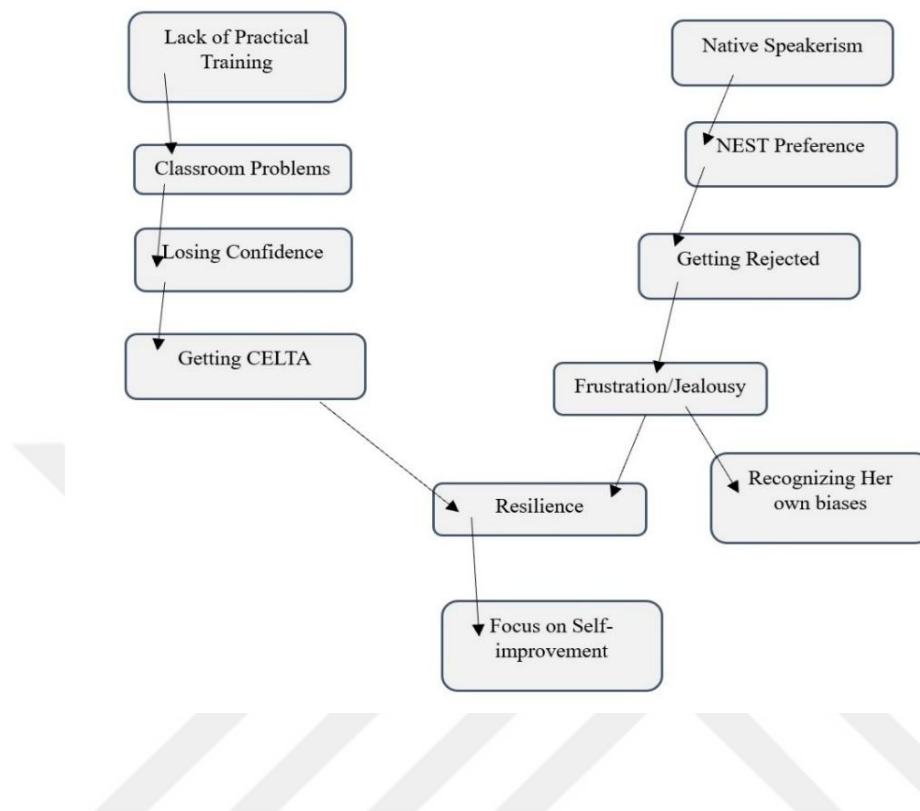
Gizem admitted that native-speakerism is so common and settled in everyone's mind that she was also affected. She shared a personal experience of looking for a Spanish teacher when she insisted on a Native Spanish-speaking teacher, as she believed that they would provide the needed exposure. She admitted that she was disillusioned that a native teacher would be better. Eventually, her last Spanish teacher was not a native speaker, but he was well-trained and experienced. She believed that the non-native teacher was remarkably effective, while her native teacher could not understand her needs. This realization forced Gizem to reevaluate her assumptions, and she acknowledged that being an NS did not equate to competency.

Despite her career satisfaction, Gizem is still disheartened when she remembers that she could not have her desired professional opportunities because of her NNEST status. She remarked that despite having CELTA and extensive teaching experience, she got rejected by recruiters who lost interest when they learned she is not a NES. As a result of these biases, Gizem also recognized her own former belief in a native Spanish-speaking teacher and now focuses on supporting her students and improving her teaching. Figure 4.20

shows Gizem's challenges and their impacts:

Figure 4.20

Gizem's Challenges and Their Impacts



Cross-Case Analysis of Turkish NNESTs' Challenges and Their Impacts

All six participants have experienced native-speakerism, although each navigated this bias distinctively with unique outcomes. Berke shared his frustration with NESTs' undeserved credibility and benefits. Despite his extensive experiences and a noticeable CV, Berke's expertise was overshadowed by NESTs who, in his words, "often did only chit-chats." Behzat highlighted parents' demand for a "real" NEST and payment, and workload disparities between NESTs and NNESTs. Both felt insecure regarding their language abilities and accents and were self-conscious about making a mistake, as students would link to their non-native status. Elif experienced rejection for being an NNEST and struggled with self-doubt and disappointment. She complained repeatedly about the lack of administrative support and a system that focuses on profit-making.

Murat was demotivated as he was always rejected by international recruiters, despite his potential, and struggled with native-speakerism in Türkiye regarding higher pay and fewer responsibilities for NESTs. He also stressed parents' disillusionment about NESTs and their superiority. Gizem shared Murat's disappointment over not being able to travel

around the world and teach in different countries like NESTs because recruiters rejected her repeatedly as well. Unlike others, Selim and Gizem were both satisfied with their working condition as Turkish NNESTs were paid more, and they did not report any discrimination. They both are valued for their qualifications and rarely need to “prove” themselves. However, Selim also felt stuck in the biased system as he could not get any job from online recruiters.

Collectively, the participants have shared common challenges: limited global career mobility, biases about accent and authenticity, unfair salaries, and insufficient practical teacher training. However, each participant had a unique trajectory. Berke and Behzat experienced daily discrimination and burnout, while Selim and Gizem worked in a supportive environment. Elif and Murat both revealed the emotional impacts of native-speakerism, and they both decided to leave their schools. All participants experienced the disadvantage of being a novice teacher, and they all claimed that the lack of skills seemed like native-speaker biases could be right. They all had to overcompensate to thrive in their professions or else were forced to quit. Even if the participants of the study are from diverse contexts, they all complained that they could not achieve and have what they wanted and what they deserved due to strong biases around NNESTs. All participants had to choose resilience as native-speakerism impacted their emotional well-being, professional identities, and long-term aspirations. Table 4.1 shows the participants’ challenges and their impact:

Table 4.1

Cross-case Analysis of Challenges and Their Impacts

Participant	Common Challenges	Individual Challenges	Workplace Context	Common Impacts	Individual Impacts
Selim	International rejection, Teacher training issues, Economic challenges, NEST preference	Limited career mobility internationally	University: Supportive environment with recognition and equal pay	Emotional frustration due to systemic biases	Felt restricted in career mobility despite being highly qualified

Table 4.1 [Continue]*Cross-case Analysis of Challenges and Their Impacts*

Gizem	International rejection, Teacher training issues, Economic challenges, NEST preference	Felt jealous of NESTs traveling and working abroad; struggled with authority as a novice teacher	University: Supportive environment, equal pay, more job security	Emotional frustration due to systemic biases favoring NESTs	Realized her own native-speakerism bias when looking for a Spanish teacher
Elif	International rejection, Teacher training issues, Economic challenges, NEST preference	Struggled with preparation for advanced-level students	Language School: Discriminatory management, salary inequity, heavier workload	Loss of confidence, professional invisibility	Transitioned to freelancing to gain autonomy and respect
Berke	International rejection, Teacher training issues, Economic challenges, NEST preference	Felt replaceable and undervalued due to systemic native-speakerism	Language School: Discriminatory workload division, salary inequity, and overburdening	Emotional frustration and professional demoralization	Dedicated himself to self-improvement to counteract biases
Behzat	International rejection, Teacher training issues, Economic challenges, NEST preference	Linguistic insecurity regarding idiomatic expressions	Private School: Salary inequity, extra responsibilities like translations and administrative work	Emotional frustration, feelings of being "less important"	Became resilient and focused on students' progress for validation
Murat	International rejection, Teacher training issues, Economic challenges, NEST preference	Frustration with inequities in workload and pay	Private School: Overburdening, NESTs favored, lack of formal teacher training	Loss of motivation	Quit private school teaching despite being promoted to department head

4.9 Findings of the Fourth Research Question

Reconstructing Identity Through Multifaceted Strategies: Berke, a Turkish NNEST

Berke navigated and shaped his professional identity as a response to native-speakerism, systemic biases, workplace inequities, and their emotional burdens. His challenges made him feel undervalued, replaceable, and scrutinized for his “mistakes” or “Turkish accent”. He was frustrated at lower payments, heavier workload, and being in continuous comparison to NESTs, known as better teachers. He believed he had to act like a NEST and overcompensate to get validated.

Berke acknowledged that upon graduation, he had not felt prepared and well-equipped with sufficient skills, like classroom management skills. Therefore, he started to look for opportunities for professional development and attended various workshops and conferences on innovative teaching so he could be updated with the latest teaching trends. His participation in various programs made him feel “visible” in the community. Berke also worked hard to enhance his language proficiency and overall teaching, particularly regarding vocabulary and idiomatic expression, so he could meet students’ expectations. Overcompensation was his critical way to overcome his shortcomings, as he explained that he felt he had to be flawless and always prepared. The continuous improvement helped him with his confidence as well as he had started to challenge the stereotypes.

Berke later decided to use his bilingualism and his shared cultural background as his main tools in his teachings. He noticed that he could anticipate students’ common errors and address those, which was an ability that NESTs could not have. He embedded relevant cultural information in his lessons and created a supportive environment for his students to engage them. His connection with his students also became another important aspect that could increase his acceptability, and he viewed his closeness with students as an important aspect of his professional identity.

Innovating and modifying his teaching methods was another solution to systemic biases for Berke. He adopted student-centered teaching and incorporated interactive activities, technology, and collaborative tasks to engage and motivate his students engaged and motivated. His students’ feedback became his priority, and he started seeking it to refine his teaching so that he could meet their needs. The iterative process of improvement became a cornerstone for his professional identity formation as he saw himself as a reflective practitioner who was committed to perfection.

Berke noted that it was his self-development and being proactive that he could reclaim a sense of agency and legitimacy. He remarked that He had to work hard to prove he was good enough and show his value. His self-improvement empowered him and also positioned him as a role model for novice Turkish NNESTs, as he started to guide them. Berke used resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to continuous learning to shape and reshape his professional identity against native-speakerism.

Berke views himself as a dedicated and capable teacher who can overcome biases and establish a strong professional identity. He emphasizes his intelligence and professionalism and argues that understanding his students' needs makes him a teacher who can go beyond expectations. He believes that his experiences and studies have turned him into a systematic and informative teacher who gets positive feedback from his students all the time. He names himself as an approachable teacher who is respected and admired by his students, who also see him as their mentor and friend. He highlights that he always integrates extracurricular activities to enhance his students' learning experiences.

Berke contrasts himself and his teaching style with NESTs and views them and their teaching practices as less invested and less skilled. He underscores that he is a much better teacher than any NEST because he can understand his students' needs and cultural challenges. He is assured that he is valued, appreciated, and recognized, as other workplaces chase him because his employers can see his expertise and contributions.

In a broader sense, Berke positions himself as a Turkish NNEST who could succeed against native-speakerism through his resilience and adaptability. His narrative shows his journey from a teacher who felt undervalued and replaceable to one who is appreciated and chased after. He portrays himself as a competent, resourceful, and respected professional teacher to challenge the biases in ELT.

Berke hopes that one day all Turkish NNESTs will be valued and supported. He believes that they deserve to get better pay and be recognized for their qualifications. He asserts that they should not be forced to handle an extensive workload, unlike NESTs. He believes that it is necessary to have in-service training opportunities so that teachers can stay updated and learn essential skills. He also emphasizes the importance of training programs and preparing teachers with skills so they can be ready for the various challenges in the classroom, such as classroom management, students' needs, and

evolving pedagogical methods. Additionally, Berke highlights that administrators must be approachable and supportive respect Turkish NNESTs, and listen to them. He expects administrators to support their educators and advocate for them.

Reconstructing Identity Through Multifaceted Strategies: Behzat, a Turkish NNEST

Behzat's narrative begins with his early admiration of the English language and learning it, and his deep relationships with his teacher. However, he faced discrimination and biases later when he entered the profession. He developed a multifaceted approach to overcome those challenges and biases, such as personal growth, external validation, and acceptance. Behzat reflected on his early challenges and experiences and stated that he tried to learn from his mistakes each time he made a mistake. He focused on his growth, and this mindset enabled him to turn his challenges into opportunities. His confidence was boosted over time as he committed himself to self-development, specifically regarding his fluency and classroom management skills. Behzat had linguistic insecurities and worked hard over time to address them.

Behzat also aligned his behavior with the expectations of his workplace and tried to gain their approval. He started to take on additional responsibilities to prove his self-worth and engaged in extracurricular activities to identify himself as a contributive and approachable teacher in the school community. He engaged himself with extra tasks such as organizing events or supporting his colleagues to enhance his visibility. Behzat decided to accept the situation and the existing inequities without getting disheartened, and this has been his main tool in reconstructing his professional identity. He made peace with the fact that NNESTs were preferred and the reality was not going to change. Acceptance helped him focus on the parts that he could control, such as building strong relationships with his students and understanding them and their challenges. He positioned himself as an insightful and empathetic teacher who would gossip with them in the breaks, but in English. He accepted that he could not be perfect, and this self-compassion and continuous learning increased his confidence. He decided to focus on his strengths, such as knowing his students better than NNESTs, and this allowed him to define himself as a capable and empathetic teacher.

Self-compassion and continuous learning not only strengthened Behzat's resilience and confidence but also made him negotiate his professional identity. He became determined that he was going to prove to others he could be a competent teacher like NNESTs: "At the

beginning of the term, parents would question me, but by the end, they'd say, 'Next year, we want you as the teacher.'" Each time he was validated, his self-belief and self-value became stronger, and so did his professional identity. Behzat's identity reconstruction has also been shaped by how he perceives himself, how he thinks others perceive him, and how he perceives his place within the broad teaching context. Behzat reflected on his struggles with native-speakerism, his resilience, and his connection with students. Behzat sees himself as an approachable teacher who is close to his students, and believes that this is a strength that NESTs do not possess. He believes that he is hardworking and valued by the administration, who has an innate ability to teach. He underscores that he is naturally an effective teacher despite challenges.

However, Behzat acknowledges that comparing himself with NESTs, he considers himself a continuous learner and a weak user of English, which is why he tries to improve himself linguistically. This admission reflects his acceptance of the realities and his self-compassion. Although he has self-confidence and believes in his teaching abilities, he admits that there is a societal preference for NESTs. His self-compassion had helped him admit that he cannot speak English as naturally as NESTs, and he is at peace with it; he knows his strengths and weaknesses and admits that, considering fluency, "native English teachers are, let's say that, ahead of us."

Behzat perceives that his administrators, colleagues, and students see him as a proactive educator who is focused on his development, except for students' parents. He believes that parents often view him as "less important" than NESTs. Despite the societal preference for NESTs, Behzat still views himself as competent, approachable, and a capable teacher, and presents a narrative of perseverance and empowerment. He emphasizes that he was able to rise above native-speakerism because, as a Turkish NNEST, he knows he can understand his students and their needs. Behzat believes that teacher training programs need to improve to prepare Turkish NNESTs comprehensively and advocate for justice in the payment systems and policies. He believes that the administration must be approachable and respectful. He thinks a supportive and equitable environment can help Turkish NNESTs feel recognized and valued. Behzat also advocates for NESTs' rights regarding their insurance and visa problems and calls for more inclusive and supportive environments that value all teachers equally.

Reconstructing Identity Through Multifaceted Strategies: Elif, a Turkish NNEST

As a Turkish NNEST, Elif dedicated herself to moving beyond the inequities caused by native-speakerism. She adopted a multifaceted approach to navigate her challenges through self-development, adapting teaching practices, and aligning her teaching and her lessons with her students' needs. She believed that continuous learning, practice, and refining her teaching methods could turn her lessons into dynamic and personalized ones. To understand students' needs, she actively asked her students to give her their feedback so that she could improve her classroom practices and ensure that her practices were relevant to her students as she shared, "I always ask my students, 'What do you think I can do better?'" she focused on continuously improving her teaching and becoming a resourceful teacher. Elif also improved her spoken English and tried to have a "natural accent" as an asset so that she could deliver lessons effectively and prove that Turkish NNESTs can also speak fluently. Elif currently sees herself as a teacher who is much better than any NEST, as she thinks she is a better communicator and a better guide for students. She emphasizes her discipline, creativity, and her ability to empathize with students as she noted, "I know where they'll struggle before they even do because I've been there." She claims to be confident and hardworking and identifies her students' success as her top priority. However, she is also aware that administrators are undervalued, despite her self-assurance and her students who perceive her as more effective than NESTs.

Apart from NESTs, Elif sees herself as a better teacher than other Turkish NNESTs as well because she has discipline and creativity. She believes that, unlike many Turkish NNESTs, she is hardworking and has done her best to improve her language abilities and teaching practices. She believes that her perfectionism in teaching and her communicative ability distinguish her from both NESTs and other NNESTs, as she explained, "I've worked hard to be unique. She also identifies herself as a Turkish NNEST who can speak fluently as she explained, " Because I think that I am a capable teacher because most of the teachers in Turkey, they even cannot talk, but I do have a natural accent and I can explain myself in a great way in English."

Elif thinks that her administrators always prioritized their profits and reputation over recognizing their teachers. She reflected that "Whenever students complained, management always took their side. It was as if my professional judgment didn't matter."

This reflection reveals that she never felt respected, and her autonomy was often in question. She was overly frustrated due to her administrators' lack of acknowledgment. In a broader sense, Elif presents herself as a capable, experienced, and resilient educator who is much better than NESTs. She emphasizes her self-development, her students' success, and the positive feedback she receives from her students. She identifies herself as an outspoken person who shows that NNESTs can be more competent than NESTs. Elif thinks that the education system is flawed and advocates for an inclusive environment for Turkish NNESTs. She argues that she wanted to be judged by her work and not her originality. Elif expects improvements in ELT and advocates for reasonable and fair payments. She also argues that administrators must be more approachable and supportive. They must respect their teacher more and provide them with greater agency in practicing their teaching. Teacher training programs must be more practical and reflect classroom realities. She remarked that Turkish NNESTs need to be prepared for "actual teaching."

Reconstructing Identity Against Native-speakerism: Selim, a Turkish NNEST

As a Turkish NNEST, Selim dedicated himself to teaching English and found resilience an essential tool against the biases of native-speakerism. He deliberately invested in his self-development and academic devotion and committed himself to excellence. Selim continuously negotiated and reshaped his professional identity, while he kept challenging NESTs' linguistic superiority. Selim called himself "lucky" and fortunate as his university professors were NESTs. He noted that "I had many professors whose native language was English when I was at uni... I think it contributed to my listening skills and confidence." This experience became the foundation of his teaching beliefs that fluency and effective teaching are both important for effective teaching. Therefore, he focused on improving his fluency and accent because he knew that clear communication was important to gain students' trust and engagement. He explained, "I worked on my pronunciation a lot, so I try to be good linguistically." He dedicated himself to overcoming the biases that NNESTs cannot be linguistically proficient.

Moreover, Selim decided to develop academically as well and pursued advanced degrees in Teaching English as a way to push his limits and get further with his knowledge. He also asked his peers and students for constructive feedback to refine his teaching. He discussed that he could overcome his teaching and classroom management challenges if

only he knew what his students needed and wanted from him. He noted, “ Open communication matters, and I need to know how I can gain their [students’] trust more.” He argues that when students “ know you care about them [students], they become like your co-teachers.” He stated that over time, he “started to focus more on communicative practices rather than just grammar.” He adapted his teaching methods to meet his students’ needs.

Despite being a Turkish NNEST and his awareness of systemic challenges and biases, Selim defines himself by his reliability, competence, and confidence. He believes that he shows these qualities through his teaching and interactions. He identifies himself as a valuable asset within his teaching community and describes himself as “ cool, reliable, and valuable.” He perceives himself as an educator who is committed and able to deliver excellent instruction in the classroom. He asserted, “I am a competent teacher because I believe in my language proficiency and my ability to convey knowledge effectively,” and highlighted both his language skills and teaching abilities.

Selim shows his pride in his language fluency by stating, “Most people immediately assume I am a native myself since I have that kind of accent. But when I look for jobs abroad, I get rejected on account I am not a native speaker.” However, he is aware that he is not perceived the same by international recruiters, and explained that “They do not see me that way and often ignore my applications.” He admits that native-speakerism results in international recruiters misjudging him through their misconceptions and biases. On the other hand, Selim believes that his colleagues and students have different ideas, and they appreciate him, and his administrators think he is a “good catch.”

Selim presents himself as an extremely confident NNEST who has adapted to native-speakerism and its challenges. He emphasizes his self-development and reflective methods to overcome the inequities. Selim attempts to project his excellence and determination and positions himself as a role model for other Turkish NNESTs who might have similar challenges. He declares his competence by stating that he is a linguistically competent and proficient teacher and presents his self-belief and skills to create a professional image that aligns with the perceptions he desires to cultivate in his community: “cool, reliable, competent, confident, and valuable.”

Selim argued that educational institutions can support Turkish NNESTs in various forms to empower them. He advocated for an approachable administration that supports their

teachers either mentally or financially. He believes that institutions “might help with certificates like CELTA or TESOL, or at least provide psychological support by motivating and complimenting teachers.” He also emphasizes inclusivity and believes that school management must create an aspirational environment so NESTs and NNESTs can work together without facing any discrimination. He believes that “You can't change the system but only work harder to prove them wrong,” which underlies resilience as the only way to thrive in a biased environment.

Reconstructing Professional Identity Against Native-Speakerism: Gizem, a Turkish NNEST

As a Turkish NNEST, Gizem adopted resilience and professional development to reconstruct her professional identity against native-speakerism biases. Gizem dedicated herself to improving her teaching practices proactively. Seeing her inadequacies after graduation, she decided to take CELTA certification and reflected that “it did open my eyes because I got CELTA after I, like two years after I started teaching, and then I was like, okay, this is teaching.” CELTA improved her teaching abilities and also enhanced her confidence.

Gizem’s pursuit of professionalism did not end with CELTA and continued learning how to embed technology and other innovative tools to enhance students’ learning experiences. She integrated music and technology into her lessons to enhance her role as an engaging teacher in the classroom. She shared, “While doing grammar activities, I put some music on. You know, I'm not that strict a teacher.” She insisted on creating a dynamic and enjoyable learning environment. Self-compassion and adaptability are other strategies Gizem adopted to establish her professional identity against systemic biases of native-speakerism. Struggling during her first years, Gizem decided to ask for her peers’ feedback and recommendations. She emphasized the role of feedback and her peers’ support, stating:

I asked to my colleagues who are more Experienced and I thought was fun teachers, can you please just come to my class and observe me and just I'm open to any kind of criticism, any kind of feedback, but just tell me what I was doing wrong, what I was doing right.(Gizem, personal communication, October 2023)

She was open to constructive criticism and believed it had a tremendous impact on her teaching practices and professional identity. She also tried to get insights from colleagues who were NEST of the U.S. and incorporate their techniques in her lessons, such as

collaborative writing techniques or interactive activities. She shared, “I felt very supported, because she used to support me a lot. And she was American... we were in a collaboration and I felt myself lucky.” To remain relatable to the recent educational trends, Gizem dedicated herself to continuous learning by attending workshops, seminars, and other training programs. Gizem kept improving herself through her students’ feedback, too. She tried to ensure that her lessons and her teaching methods remained relevant to the students. She shared, “I have been conducting interviews with...my students anyway...we ask them questions, did you like the quizzes? What do you think was the hardest for you to work on?” Gizem shared her compassion for teaching English abroad and had been rejected repeatedly by international recruiters. She was disappointed as there were barriers on her way that were out of her control and were imposed by native-speakerism. However, Gizem decided not to surrender to disappointment and instead compensated for that by benefiting from local opportunities and continuously learning new things.

Professionally, Gizem identifies herself as a professional teacher who can also be a good leader. She perceives herself as a professional who prepares structured lessons and sticks to academic standards. She thinks being approachable has helped her to create a supportive classroom environment and noted that “In my classes, I don't think anybody is afraid to ask me questions, I'm not that strict teacher.” She tries to balance her friendliness with authority and adds her creativity to motivate students. She sees herself as an innovative and adaptable teacher who knows how to keep up with the generational differences, as she noted, “I use fun activities, but like online, doing online things. Because our students belong to Generation Z and they know technology more than us.” Apart from her flexibility, Gizem perceives herself as a moderately more strict teacher than others, in particular NESTs, regarding grading and deadlines. She shared, “I always remind them of the tasks, the deadline, and everything. So, he should be strict, but at the same time friendly,” she notes, emphasizing the importance of discipline in her teaching philosophy. She positions herself as a “competitive teacher,” as she always needs to excel in her job.

On the other hand, Gizem compares herself with her NEST peers and acknowledges that she overemphasizes correcting mistakes and puts more pressure on her students, while her NEST colleagues focus on students’ strengths and can thus motivate them. She thinks,

however, that she can understand students better as they “have had similar learning paths, so that's why we have the same issues.” Gizem believes that her students are also aware of her competence, and they see her as an approachable teacher and appreciate her. Gizem also views herself as valued and respected due to her contributions and states, “They show me the same value and well, I think they are grateful.” Despite biases around Turkish NNESTs, Gizem is respected and appreciated. In a broader sense, Gizem thinks she is an experienced, recognized, and creative teacher who has agency in her professional life. She projects a confident and dedicated teacher who can keep her authority and flexibility in the classroom. She presents herself as an effective teacher and asserts, “I have motivation, I have energy, I really like teaching, and I think I have a good rapport with the students.”

Advocating for Turkish NNESTs, Gizem highlights the need for regular in-service training and better payment for those who work in private schools. She also argues that administrators must be approachable and provide teachers with a better work-life balance. Moreover, Gizem believes that teacher training programs need to be more innovative and must offer teachers skills to navigate challenges such as nativism. She reflected, “They could have informed us about the academic world. I had no idea about how to become a professor, how to become an assistant professor,” and highlighted the need for better mentorship systems within teacher training programs.

Reconstructing Professional Identity Against Native-Speakerism: Murat, a Turkish NNEST

Murat is a dedicated and resilient teacher from Enskisehir who has effectively navigated native-speakerism and its challenges to reconstruct his professional identity. He did so through a combination of self-development, technological innovation, practical teaching experience, and formal certifications like CELTA. He employed all these to establish himself as a valuable and competent teacher inside Türkiye and internationally.

Murat took proactive steps to enhance his teaching ability, and central to his professional growth was CELTA certification. He reflected that taking CELTA “was a completely amazing experience for me, which made me think of being an English teacher.” Through Celta, he could improve his teaching skills and achieve his long-time dream of teaching abroad. Murat also decided to employ technology in his lessons to engage his students and improve his self-image as he shared, “I think keeping up with the updated techniques and also like being able to follow the trends ... helped me to develop myself as like my

self-image.” He used online platforms and digital resources to transform the relatability of his lessons. Murat thinks self-development and continuous learning are important and noted that “I always try to renew myself. Like, whenever I find a chance, I try to update the knowledge that I have.” He followed the latest educational trends to be more effective in teaching and to become more practical. He reflected on his issues with classroom management and noted, “I became the ClassDojo mentor and gave presentations about it. So I tried to improve myself whenever I had problems.” He proactively refined his management skills through ClassDojo and kept sharing his experiences and knowledge with his colleagues as well, and therefore he could promote himself as an effective teacher.

Additionally, Murat invested in his skills of leadership and problem-solving to grow professionally. He reflected, “I always try to do more than I was asked. And I think that that makes me a kind of less valuable teacher.” Although Murat believes doing more reduced his value, he could establish himself as a reliable and influential teacher within his community. Faced with international rejections and numerous challenges related to native-speakerism, Murat decided to transition into a native teacher by transitioning from English to teaching Turkish. As a Native Turkish-speaking teacher, Murat was able to teach internationally as he explained, “Teaching a language as a native speaker gave me more motivation, and I feel more comfortable teaching it. I quit teaching at school last year because of economical reasons.” This shift provided him with new and international opportunities and reinforced his professional identity as an adaptable teacher.

Thinking about NESTs, Murat identifies himself as a teacher who has distinct strengths. He believed that he was a more competent teacher in classroom management, which underscores his dedication to creating supportive connections. He positions himself as a leader and as his students’ primary language source. He noted that “I always try to do better than what I was responsible for,” which highlights his commitment and dedication as an important figure in his community. He accepted that he is a lifelong learner and must learn new knowledge and skills continuously. He declared, “I always try to renew myself. Like, whenever I find a chance, I try to update the knowledge that I have.” He asserted that he is better than NESTs because he can understand students’ challenges. He also sees himself closer to his students, relates to them, and positions himself as a supportive and empathetic teacher. Murat believes that his students perceived him as a

competent and approachable teacher and appreciated his grammar lessons and individualized teaching support. Reflecting on his recognition in his workplace, Murat noted, “They were always saying I was a good teacher, but they couldn't do much more for me,” highlighting that he is a valued and recognized teacher, even if only verbally. As an English teacher, however, Murat still believes that international recruiters position him as a teacher whom they cannot rely on because of his non-native status, as shared, “Being non-native was a big disadvantage to teaching abroad. Every interview I had, the same last sentence at last ‘You’re the first potential candidate if we can’t manage to find a native speaker.’” Murat presents himself as a confident, qualified, and dedicated teacher with a professional demeanor. He claimed that he has “always been committed to improving my teaching practices through continuous learning and adapting to new technologies.” He shows his enthusiasm and proactiveness as a Turkish NNEST to overcome native-speakerism.

Murat advocates for Turkish NNESTs and argues that there is a need for continuous in-service training for them so that they can be effective and maintain it. He stated, “They [administrators] should be able to send the teachers into this kind of training or they should make them go there.” He also emphasizes that administrators must regulate their payment system and ensure fair compensation. He underscores the importance of having an approachable administration as their support can ease teachers against their challenges. He believes that administrators must be open to feedback and shared his problem with his administration, “They could listen to my workload when I asked, and they could value my ideas when I approached with my ideas.” He highlighted that administrators must make their teachers, specifically Turkish NNESTs, feel recognized and supported if they want quality instruction. Furthermore, Murat points to the importance of a comprehensive teacher training program to equip Turkish NNESTs with various hands-on skills so they can navigate and overcome other challenges imposed by native-speakerism.

Cross-Case Analysis: Reconstructing Professional Identity Among Turkish NNESTs

The reconstruction of professional identity among the six participants of this study shows how systemic challenges of native-speakerism can lead to individual strategies and resilience. The participants’ journey shows how their professional identity was shaped by their responses to the existing biases, their self-improvement, and their positioning.

Although each participant’s journey is unique and they have distinct contexts, they share

common strategies to navigate challenges. For all participants, self-development emerged as the main strategy as they all pursued professional development through certifications like CELTA, participation in workshops, and discipline self-study. Berke relied on his international exchange programs and self-study efforts to enhance his confidence and teaching skills. Similarly, Selim and Elif worked on their fluency and pronunciation as a response to biases, and Behzat worked on his idiomatic fluency. Elif reflected on the time she noticed she needed to improve her language skills and noted, “I have to study more and more, maybe I have to, you know, memorize some other words.” Similarly, Behzat dedicated himself to improving his language fluency: “I try to push my limits and try to learn something from them in terms of fluency.” Through the commitment to continuous self-improvement, they could redefine their professional identity beyond their limitations and NNESTs.

Another shared tool was their acceptance of native-speakerism. Behzat accepted that NESTs are preferred, and this reality will never change, and this helped him focus his energy on maximizing his strengths. He admitted that his accent might not be perfect, but his students liked him because he understood them well. He channeled his frustration into productive actions such as building a strong rapport with students. Similarly, Elif transitioned to freelancing to escape institutional discrimination as she knew that even if she did her best, “they would prefer a native speaker.” She also showcased her acceptance of the situation as she explained, “When I get feedback or when I understand I cannot compete with the native, it doesn't affect me.”

Another common strategy for all participants is adapting their teaching to their students' needs. Elif consistently prioritized her students' feedback to refine her teaching. Focusing on students, their engagement, satisfaction, and outcomes has shifted all participants' narratives from language skills to effective teaching. Berke noted that he tailored his lessons according to his students' interests, which helped him gain their respect and trust as he noted, “adrenaline rush that I have any time I go into a classroom and see faces that are looking at me and just waiting for something that I can provide them.”

The participants also referred to extracurricular activities as a tool to strengthen their professional identity. Behzat and Berke highlighted that keeping their connection with students outside the class enhanced their recognition, and they were more respected by students and administration. They could both showcase their abilities and thus move

beyond the native-speakerism restrictions. Behzat explained, “ We are looking for some new conferences that we can improve ourselves,” and it resonates with Berke as he noted, “Workshops and collaborating with native and non-native teachers has been a cornerstone of my strategy.” Although participants can achieve recognition, they are aware that they usually are under pressure to prove themselves to others as Berke expressed, “We know that some non-native teachers may feel pressured because we have the desire to prove ourselves to the students, to the administration, maybe to the native teacher, it really does happen.”

Despite commonalities, the participants of the study also had unique approaches to reconstructing their professional identities due to their differences in contexts, personalities, and individual aspirations. Contextual differences had an important role in shaping their experiences and thus their strategies. Selim and Gizem both work in a university setting, and they benefit from relatively equitable environments compared to the NNESTs who work in private language schools like Elif or private schools like Murat or Behzat. The participants in private schools, for example, were confronted and exposed to native-speakerism and its manifestations through parents and administrators. Behzat expressed how directly parents would ask for a NEST, and it made him feel devalued. He remarked, “Sometimes, I wonder if I’m getting what I deserve,” highlighting his emotional toll.

Selim’s journey reflects his approach to challenging stereotypes by committing to language proficiency and his academic growth. He established his confidence and reliability by pushing himself to “prove them [the system] wrong,” by showing that Turkish NNESTs can be proficient, as he noted, “if non-native teachers try to improve themselves linguistically, language-wise they can be good.” In contrast, Behzat adopted a more accepting approach and decided to focus on his strengths and his connection with students, as he explained, “So in time probably everything is going to get better because I’m not trying to be harsh to myself.” However, he goes another way to push the boundaries as he explains, “In order to make my lessons more natural, I can change my name, I can change my identity.” He preferred to change his identity and “wear a mask” and be a “different person.”

Elif’s identity reconstruction is mainly based on her creativity, discipline, and adaptability. She positioned herself as superior not only to NESTs but also to other

Turkish NNESTs, as she sees herself as competent and confident. She believes that she has worked very hard and notes that “I have developed myself and I have got self-confidence.” She has decided not to compete with NESTs because she cannot control others' opinions, but she has changed her perception and has assured herself that she is much better than NESTs and emphasizes that “They [NESTs] cannot be better than us [Turkish NNESTs].” And she goes even further by claiming that “I do not want to call them teachers because I do not believe they are.” She also transitioned to freelancing to enhance her agency and have her own space where her contribution is valued.

Similarly, Murat decided to quit his job at a private school, leverage his native proficiency in Turkish, and start to teach Turkish to foreigners online. Therefore, he could compensate for his inability to have an international teaching position. He could secure new opportunities and also strengthen his professional identity he could reach global students as he always wanted.

Gizem decided to fully focus on her teaching and channel her passion for teaching to develop innovative teaching methods. She used her non-native background to her benefit and committed herself to pursuing local opportunities to gain better teaching positions. Her innovation included integrating art, music, and technology, like artificial intelligence, into her lessons.

The way all participants position themselves shows the way they navigate their professional contexts and engage with others' perceptions. Selim and Gizem identify themselves as valuable and competent at their universities. Behzat and Elif focused on building deeper connections with their students and emphasized their teaching strengths. Berke's reflections revealed his belief in systematic teaching, which he thinks distinguishes him from others. Overall, there is a consistent effort to shift focus from language proficiency to effective teaching, thus challenging native-speakerism and the biased assumptions resulting from it.

All participants believe supporting Turkish NNESTs needs systemic changes, such as better teacher training programs that reflect Turkish NNESTs' unique challenges. Moreover, participants collectively asserted that administrators must be more inclusive and respect their teachers, which also includes a better payment structure. Despite his satisfaction with his current workplace, Selim noted the necessity of psychological support, particularly in private institutions. Gizem and Elif asked administrators to respect

teachers' expertise and agency. Gizem and Murat also emphasized the need for regular in-service training and administration support for that. Table 4.2 shows the participants' strategies to overcome their challenges and how they position themselves professionally:

Table 4.2

Turkish NNEST's Strategies to Overcome Challenges and Their Positioning

Participant	Key Challenges	Tools / Strategies	Unique Positioning / Outcome
Berke	- Pressure to demonstrate systematic professionalism - Need to tailor lessons to varied student interests	- Self-initiated study (exchange programs, online resources) - Tailored lessons for student engagement - Organized clubs/events for visibility	- Positions himself as a systematic, professional teacher - Earns student respect by linking lessons to real-world interests
Behzat	- Accent-related bias from students/parents - Limited institutional support in private school settings	- Acceptance of native-speaker preference as a reality - Personalized lesson plans - Strong rapport with students through empathy and support	- Focuses on relationship-building and in-class success to counter biases - Calmly channels frustration into productive efforts
Gizem	- Instances of discrimination due to non-native status - Balancing authority and approachability (close age to students)	- Emphasis on communicative activities, cultural integration (music, art, tech) - Consistent self-development (CELTA, reflection on personal journey)	- Positions herself as a "creative problem-solver" - Gains recognition from peers and admins by showcasing multicultural strengths
Murat	- Repeated rejections in attempts to teach abroad - Parents in private schools explicitly demanding native speakers	- Self-improvement (CELTA, continuous learning) - Eventually quit private school to teach Turkish online - Became a mentor/department head	- Redefines value by leveraging native-level Turkish teaching - Overcomes rejections by creating alternative teaching paths

Table 4.2 [Continue]*Turkish NNEST's Strategies to Overcome Challenges and Their Positioning*

Elif	- Challenge of proving competence to students/administration - Feeling overshadowed by NEST preferences	- Strong focus on student feedback to refine teaching - Creativity in lesson design (collaborative projects, real-world tasks) - Disciplined approach	- Emphasizes her ability to “connect with students and understand their struggles” - Positions herself as more competent than many natives
Selim	- Need to push boundaries and challenge stereotypes - Desire to prove he can match native-speaker competence	- Extensive academic/professional growth (fluency, pronunciation work) - Collaboration with peers; actively seeks feedback	- Positions himself as “confident, reliable, competent” - Strives to show NNESTs can be equally effective in all teaching domains

5. DISCUSSION

This chapter focuses on discussing and interpreting the study's key findings and is structured around its research questions. Each section of the chapter explains participants' experiences and beliefs and how they align or diverge from existing literature and theoretical frameworks. Organizing the analysis based on the research questions, the chapter highlights how Turkish NNESTs conceptualize and navigate the complexities of teaching English in a context that is shaped through local and global discourses of native-speakerism.

5.1 Exploring Turkish NNESTs' Perceptions of a Competent EFL Teacher

This study aims to discover how Turkish NNESTs conceptualize a “competent language teacher” in an environment that often favors NESTs. Six Turkish NNESTs from diverse contexts contributed to the current study—Berke (a language institute teacher), Behzat (a private language teacher), Selim (a preparatory school instructor), Murat (a private school teacher), Elif (a language institute teacher), and Gizem (a preparatory school instructor)—as they shared their beliefs regarding effectiveness and competence in English teaching. Their beliefs were explored based on a competent English teacher's linguistic knowledge, teaching style, and their nature of relationship with students and administration. For example, Berke highlighted cultural integration and interactive teaching, Behzat emphasizes immersive teaching methods, Selim believes in fun speaking activities, Murat emphasizes consistent exposure, Elif highlights humor, empathy, and structured feedback, and Gizem advocates for creativity and technology integration while maintaining classroom discipline.

Native-speakerism has influenced the concept of “competent teacher” and has positioned NESTs as the ideal teachers due to their “authenticity” (Phillipson, 1992; Holliday, 2005; Lowe, 2020). However, the situation is more layered in Türkiye as Turkish NNESTs are appreciated for their grammar knowledge, empathy, and local cultural understanding (Meşincigiller, 2014; Bada & Özkan, 2019). In contrast, NESTs are associated with authentic pronunciation and speaking skills (Ünlü, 2022). This study aims to find out Turkish NNESTs' teaching values and how they perceive a “competent teacher” to determine if their beliefs align or conflict with the broader discourses of native-speakerism and teacher identity.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, biographical essays, emails, and

a focus group discussion to answer the research questions. The multifaceted approach of data collection enables the study to capture the teachers' beliefs and the reasons behind those beliefs. It also creates a field to understand if their beliefs align with or challenge their professional identities and positioning within ELT. Through the first research question, the study attempts to uncover the existing patterns of participants' thoughts that support or contradict previous findings.

The study uses dual framework analysis to offer in-depth insights into how Turkish NNESTs navigate the challenges of native-speakerism while shaping their professional identities. This study integrates Yazan's (2018) teacher identity model that underscores personal, professional, and contextual dimensions of identity construction along with Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990) and Bamberg (2020) that examines the way teachers negotiate their roles within local discourses. The analysis of the study also uses ideas from local studies (e.g., Coşkun, 2013; Demir & Özmen, 2017; Yıldırım & Önal, 2022) and wider studies on teaching practices, bilingualism, identity shaping, and power imbalances (e.g., Borg, 2009; Kubota & Lin, 2009; Lowe, 2020).

Previous studies have critiqued native-speakerism and the “native speaker fallacy” by emphasizing NNESTs' strengths and contributions and have exposed the discrimination, hiring biases, and NNESTs' self-doubts (Canagarajah, 1999; Kubota & Lin, 2009; Yazan & Rudolph, 2018). In the Turkish context, the concept of “competence” is a multifaceted construct and covers linguistic knowledge, innovative teaching methods, and the ability to build effective relationships within the workplace. Therefore, this study questions the existing norms and attempts to show how teachers' beliefs on grammar, fluency, teaching styles, and classroom management reflect their past experiences, discourses, and workplace demands.

In the following discussion, participants' quotes are integrated to exemplify their viewpoints directly. Visuals such as tables and images are also included to increase its clarity. This study shows how Turkish NNESTs navigate and challenge native-speakerism and contribute to a nuanced understanding of what it means to be “competent” in English teaching in Turkish EFL settings.

5.1.1 Linguistic knowledge as a marker of teacher competence

Linguistic knowledge is an important aspect of a “competent teacher” for Turkish NNESTs, reflecting their strengths and challenges. The findings of this study suggest

grammatical knowledge is perceived as an asset, but so are fluency and pronunciation, which are Turkish NNESTs' source of anxiety due to native-speakerism. This section examines the complexities of linguistic knowledge, how Turkish NNESTs navigate social expectations, and broader implications for their professional identity within ELT.

Grammar knowledge is a recurring theme among the participants regarding a “competent teacher”. The Turkish education system follows a rule-based and exam-oriented approach to English teaching and learning (Üstünlüoğlu, 2007; Erkmen, 2010), therefore, it has shaped a belief that an effective English teacher must have a deep understanding of grammar rules. As a result, many Turkish NNESTs perceive grammar knowledge as a core strength and essential for classroom authority. Selim, a preparatory school instructor, highlighted this belief and stated that students trust teachers to give them a thorough explanation of grammar rules. This finding aligns with previous research showing that Turkish students prefer NNESTs when it comes to grammar teaching because they explain the rules clearly and in a more structured way than NESTs (Sarıkaya, 2013; Sezgin & Önal, 2021).

Although Turkish NNESTs see grammar as a key factor for professional identity, some participants expressed their concerns about the overemphasis on grammatical accuracy at the expense of communicative competence. Some participants acknowledged that, despite their grammar expertise, they sometimes got challenged in balancing explicit grammar teaching and creating opportunities for meaningful communication. The same concern is echoed by Coşkun (2013) and Mede et al. (2017), arguing that grammar teaching must be done within communicative practices rather than as an isolated skill. Berke, a language institute teacher, reflected on this and explained that he actively uses interactive activities in his lessons and critiques Turkish NNESTs: “I believe that non-native teachers... focus more on the form and the meaning of a specific grammatical or vocabulary item... but not probably focusing on the specific practice of English in the classroom.” Despite their emphasis on grammar knowledge, participants also highlighted the importance of oral proficiency, particularly in terms of pronunciation and fluency. The expectation that teachers should have native-like accents is an additional pressure on Turkish NNESTs, who also believe that their credibility and authority would be questioned if an English teacher does not sound native-like.

The belief that NESTs are inherently better English teachers (Phillipson, 1992) and the

ideologies that promote native-speakerism (Holliday, 2018) result in the expectation that NNESTs must prove their competency through deep grammar knowledge and native-like fluency simultaneously. In the Turkish context, Çağatay (2021) found that NNESTs often have pronunciation-related anxiety due to hiring biases and student preferences for native-like speech patterns. In a broader context, Skliar (2014) discusses how NNESTs have similar challenges in various global contexts and struggle with self-perception. He continues to state that NNESTs often are challenged regarding their professional validation in environments where native-speakerism is prevalent. The current study shows some Turkish NNESTs have a sense of linguistic insecurity, as Selim claimed: "It would be better to have a native speaker in this case because they would know, like their language is their language, so I will never be as good as them." This statement shows the deeply rooted self-doubt of NNESTs even when they are known as competent teachers.

Grammar expertise is important for Turkish NNESTs due to the exam-oriented learning styles in the Turkish education system. On the other hand, they care equally about fluency as it is the key marker of communicative competence and credibility. Job advertisements in Türkiye often emphasize the importance of native-like pronunciation and fluency (Origo, 2016; Ünlü, 2022), therefore, many Turkish NNESTs internalize the belief that strong idiomatic knowledge and having a natural accent are essential if they want to have credibility as English teachers. This belief is reflective of a broader institutional and societal expectation that claims fluency is part of effective teaching and, in turn, reinforces the idea that English teachers must sound like NES. Yıldırım and Önal (2022) concluded that students and institutions in general prefer NEST pronunciation and speaking skills, which aligns with the findings of this study that Turkish NNESTs emphasize fluency as an essential part of professional competence. Many participants showed that fluency, particularly in terms of pronunciation and idiomatic usage, is a benchmark for legitimacy in the classroom. For example, many participants claimed that they had worked on pronunciation a lot. Their belief that a natural accent enhances credibility aligns with Ersoy's (2020) study, which indicated that students expect their teachers to have natural pronunciation skills and thus prefer NESTs for listening and speaking lessons.

Berke also implies that fluency is a professional asset and important in shaping a teacher's professional identity, as he acknowledged that despite his language structure knowledge

he is dedicated to improving his idiomatic expressions and fluency to enhance his “naturalness”. His belief is closely linked to institutional and societal expectations that define the effectiveness of an English teacher through their native-like fluency, and as a result, NNESRs are expected to bridge the gap between themselves and NESTs (Meşincigiller, 2014; Çağatay, 2021; Ünlü, 2022). Murat also reflected on this, stating that if a Turkish NNEST does not sound natural, the students would feel as if something is missing, and thus suggests that fluency and pronunciation are important markers for teacher credibility in the classroom, and Turkish NNESTs can only gain students' trust through that. This perception supports Çağatay (2021), who found that Turkish NNESTs are often under pressure regarding their pronunciation to avoid student biases.

Facilitating authentic communication in the classroom is another reason the participants give importance to fluency and idiomatic competence. As Berke shared his experience when he started to use and teach idiomatic expressions, “Students start to see how English is really used outside the textbook.” Several studies have viewed fluency as a way to engage students and increase their confidence as they see their teacher model natural speech, or in other words, NNESTs highlight the importance of fluency as they internalize native-speakerism discourses (Cengiz & Mede, 2024; Ershadi et al., 2024).

Drawing on Yazan's (2018) teacher identity framework and positioning theory developed by Davis and Harré, the study can interpret the participants' beliefs regarding a good teacher's linguistic competence in the context of native-speakerism. At the individual level, Yazan (2018) argues that identity formation is continuously influenced by personal experiences and internalized beliefs. For example, as language learners, Turkish NNESTs have been exposed to explicit grammar instruction and have learned to value deep grammar knowledge while aspiring to achieve native-like fluency. In other words, the dual expectation is rooted in participants' formative experiences in high-school lessons, as a belief was instilled that explicit rule-based instruction is important. Meanwhile, the participants had influential role models and some even had British accents, who idealized the authentic use of language.

Davies and Harré's (1990) and Bamberg (2020) positioning theory highlights the importance of discursive construction. They believe that identity is fluid and continuously negotiated through language and interactions. Turkish NNESTs position themselves and are positioned by others in a way that they believe they need to excel in both grammatical

rules and native-like fluency and pronunciation. They believe that a competent teacher must be fluent and a natural speaker like NESs. This dual positioning causes cognitive and emotional tension, which means on one hand, they are proud of their expertise in grammar, and on the other hand, they have deep anxiety and struggle with self-doubt when their spoken English does not match an idealized native-speaker standard.

At the institutional level, the Turkish education system imposes a context that prioritizes explicit grammar teaching while promoting native-like fluency. Institutional policies, curricular designs, hiring practices, and media collectively promote the dual norms within ELT. Yazan's framework indicates how teachers internalize contextual factors, and Davis and Harré similarly explain how external narratives position NNESTs within hierarchical structures. Drawing on Yazan's and Davis and Harré's insights, Turkish NNESTs are in an environment that pushes them to believe that deep grammatical knowledge is non-negotiable for intellectuality, while fluency and natural accent are important markers of a teacher's credibility. This discursive positioning makes Turkish NNESTs engage in a continual process of self-evaluation and negotiation as they internalize and also critique these expectations.

5.1.2 Teaching style as a marker of teacher competence

Participants of the study shared their perception of a "competent" teacher's teaching style, and the findings show that there is a core tension in their beliefs and a paradox exists between broader institutional and societal emphasis on grammar mastery and their pedagogical rejection of grammar-focused instruction. Grammar is still important in the Turkish educational system, and students, parents, and institutions associate accuracy with language proficiency. This belief stems from the exam-oriented system where high-stakes proficiency tests emphasize accuracy and language rules (Üstünlüoğlu, 2007; Erkmen, 2010). For example, Murat noted that in private schools, students need to be prepared for comprehensive exams and these exams are usually about language grammar rather than language usage. However, the participants believe that teaching language should not be grammar-dominant as it might be restrictive, ineffective, and cannot enhance communicative skills.

The participants collectively advocate for a teaching approach that focuses on communicative fluency rather than explicit grammar instruction. They believe that an effective teacher must integrate grammar within a meaningful, real-world context. For

example, Gizem explains that she teaches past tense by asking students to write about their last weekend and thus embeds grammar within a practical task that can be experienced in daily situations. This approach aligns with CLT, which argues that students should learn grammar through meaningful language use instead of explicit and out-of-context teaching (Coşkun, 2013). Therefore, the participants can enhance student engagement and challenge the assumption that NNESTs focus mainly on grammar teaching (Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Selvi, 2014). Turkish NNESTs attempt to position themselves as teacher who follow communicative teaching and student-centered methods.

Although the participants advocate for CLT approaches, they acknowledge that institutional expectations and students' needs relate to the effectiveness of an NNEST in their grammar teaching ability. Gizem exemplifies this dilemma by noting that: "Students say they want to speak, but at the end of the semester, they want to know all the rules too... If I don't teach grammar, I feel like I'm not doing my job properly." This tension reflects Turkish NNESTs' struggles regarding their professional identity. They must stick to what the system values as knowledge while reconciling communicative methods (Yıldırım & Önal, 2022; Cengiz & Mede, 2024). This conflict and tension is not only about their teaching beliefs but their daily realities regarding lesson planning, classroom management, and self-perception.

Over time, the participants have adopted creative and fun ways to teach grammar so that they can relate to both tradition and innovation within ELT. They believe that a "competent teacher" must embed grammar within communicative and engaging activities to ensure that students enjoy the lesson through music, games, online platforms, or humor. Their promotion of innovative methods has a dual purpose: they try to inspire students to learn and be active, and also help them learn grammatical rules through practical language use. This aligns with Purba and Wahyuni (2024) as who asserted that NNESTs often employ creative strategies to teach grammar so that they can remain effective and desired in a demanding system that values native-like fluency but focuses its measurement on accuracy. Through creativity and innovation, NNESTs not only can challenge the bias linking them to grammar-teaching but also position themselves as modern teachers who adapt their instruction to the needs of their students.

Another important aspect of participants' teaching philosophies is their extreme rejection of L1 use in the classroom, which reflects a bias often associated with linguistic

imperialism and native-speakerism. They believe that English-only environments are essential for improving students' fluency, despite the evidence that strategic use of L1 can help students learn better and improve their comprehension and confidence (Canagarajah, 2013; Canagarajah & Matsumoto, 2017; Hasrina & Fitriani, 2018; Tiwari, 2024). Gizem explicitly states that "I speak English no matter what the level is." The preference for an English-only classroom is in alignment with ELT discourses that promote an exclusive target-language use for effective teaching and reflects the participants' unawareness of multilingual practices and their internalization of native-speakerist biases and ideologies (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Karakaş & Aydın, 2021).

The participants' previous experiences and pedagogical beliefs show their multifaceted and dynamic professional identities. Undergoing a deep negotiation between grammar needs and communicative ideals, they believe in the balanced teaching that can be responsive to the demands for explicit grammar teaching through innovative and contextually relevant authentic language use. Through this balance, they can challenge the beliefs that NNESTs are often explicit grammar teachers. The result of this professional identity negotiation has been their redefining themselves as teachers with grammar knowledge who can be interactive and fluent in and out of the classroom. Turkish NNESTs continuously navigate between personal beliefs, institutional expectations, and the broader discourses around student-centered and communicative teaching (Kırkgöz, 2009; Selvi, 2014; Kırkgöz, 2017; Widodo, Fang, & Elyas, 2020; Yıldırım & Önal, 2022; Cengiz & Mede, 2024; Uştuk & Yazan, 2024). The complex interplay between external pressures and NNESTs' innovations illustrates their resilience and commitment to develop a more holistic teaching approach as they attempt to merge traditional teaching with evolving global teaching trends.

Based on Yazan's (2018) framework and Bamberg's (2020) Positioning Theory, the participants' responses reveal a layered perception of what it means to be an effective English teacher. The image they create of a competent teacher is not fixed and cannot be reduced to a single teaching method, as it is continuously evolving as a response to both internal beliefs and external pressures. The way they see a competent teacher is based on dual commitment, one of which is having a strong knowledge as a response to the exam-oriented educational system, where accuracy and learning through rules is appreciated by students. Moreover, this belief comes from their early experiences of traditional,

grammar-focused lessons that compel them to ensure that students understand the English language structures. However, they emphasize that teaching grammar should go beyond drills and happen through real-world communicative practices.

The balance they seek is in the core of teacher cognition, which is a concept that encompasses what teachers know and believe about language learning and the ways they enact based on those beliefs. Yazan (2018) emphasized that teacher identity is not static and is actually a dynamic construct, which Turkish NNESTs illustrate as they refine their teaching methods. They find themselves in a situation where their continuous professional development-learned through their explorations or colleagues-helps them shift from a form-focused teaching approach to a more balanced one. Their professional identities are shaped by their ongoing professional development and reflective practices. They draw on their own experiences as learners where teaching was highly strict and mostly focused on rules, and these memories push them to change their teaching methods. They aim to focus on both language accuracy and effective communication.

At the same time, Positioning Theory adds an important layer to this negotiation. Davies and Harré (1990) and later Bamberg (2020) stated that identities are under ongoing negotiations through language and interactions. This is a notion that Turkish NNESTs demonstrate in their conversations inside the classrooms. They actively shape their professional identities by positioning themselves against the stereotypical image of NNESTs as only grammar teachers. In an environment influenced by native-speakerism, they face extra challenges as they have to deal with discourses that question their expertise implicitly or explicitly. However, through their daily speech acts, they affirm their commitment to high language standards by asserting the importance of English-only lessons or designing authentic activities. They challenge the traditional discourses and the NEST idealism through innovative and adaptive teaching.

Yazan's (2018) teacher identity framework shows that identity construction is a dynamic procedure which gets evolves through continuous professional development, beliefs, and the emotional experiences in daily career life. For Turkish NNESTs, this process is revealed at different levels. In their everyday classroom interactions, participants experience positive emotions that shape their practices. For example, Berke notes that he always attempts to create opportunities for his students to practice authentic English, which increases his students' confidence. This example shows how they experience

rewarding emotions in their innovative lessons. The complex emotional negotiation can also be felt when Selim reflects on his balanced teaching, the joy from his students' engagement, and the anxiety of fighting against native-speakerism and external expectations. Gizem also highlights her anxiety as she shared that she is forced to assert her teaching self daily.

Promoting communicative teaching practices over traditional form-focused ones, the participants of this study engage in what Bamberg (2020) described as the strategic positioning, which is the intentional speech acts to reshape one's self. It aligns with Yazan's (2018) framework, which explains how teacher identity changes through negotiations of beliefs, professional learning, and contextual demands. Through denying grammar-only methods, Turkish NNESTs align themselves with broader ELT trends and declare the "English-only" lessons as the ideal ones. They challenge native-speakerist assumptions by showing students, and the wider community, that they believe in a teacher who is beyond grammar knowledge. They depict a competent teacher in a holistic and empowered way that resonates with both Yazan's conceptualization of teacher identity and Positioning Theory's focus on discursive self-construction.

5.1.3 Teacher-student/administration relationship as a marker of teacher competence

The participants of this study were asked about the dynamics of a competent teacher's relationship with students and administrators as part of their career. They collectively underscore the importance of building rapport with students, empathy, and support. Regarding administration, they emphasize respect and healthy communication to promote a positive and supportive atmosphere. Their beliefs are closely related to their experiences as learners, the Turkish educational context, and the common discourses around native-speakerism that shape their professional identities. The data, research on teacher identity (e.g., Yazan, 2018), and Positioning Theory (Bamberg, 2020) show that local dynamics and global ideologies together inform the reasons Turkish NNESTs attempt to develop positive relationships in their professional practice.

Some of the participants view strong teacher-student relationships as an essential factor for classrooms. They often describe this rapport as increased motivation, engagement in activities, and trusting the teacher. For example, Behzat sees himself as his students' "friend" and allows them to share personal stories and "gossip" in English. He explains

that he tries to correct their language implicitly, which he thinks is important for more natural learning. His viewpoint resonates with studies emphasizing that NNESTs who share learners' language and cultural background have more empathy towards them (Bada & Özkan, 2019). Behzat follows CLT ideals and asserts that the emotional aspect of language learning is as important as the linguistic one.

Elif has a similar belief, as she states that if her students don't enjoy the lessons, they will not learn well. She underscores the warmth in a teacher-student relationship, which aligns with her learning experiences as her teacher was "kind, affectionate, and ambitious." She believes that a competent teacher can influence students' learning process by helping them feel safe. She insists that "students need to trust us, first of all. If they do not trust us, they cannot open themselves in the classroom." Elif's statement supports studies that suggest NNESTs who have had similar challenges as learners can understand and anticipate their students' fears (Faez, 2011). Elif's emphasis on fun and discipline also resonates with studies showing that students prefer empathy in classroom management rather than nativeness (Sezgin & Önal, 2021).

For Murat teacher-student relationship goes beyond the classroom as he thinks teachers are students' primary source of language exposure. He believes that teachers need to be friendly mentors who are approachable and can consistently guide students academically. Practicing mentorship through social interactions has been reflected in research that highlights the fact that learners often attribute higher credibility to teachers who are responsive to their personal needs and their genuine care (Colmenero & Lasagabaster, 2024). Murat's experiences show, however native-speakerism overshadows NNESTs' being accessible and supportive, as he shares how institutions or parents always keep idealizing NESTs and language models. Therefore, NNESTs start proving themselves through deeper relationships with students and pedagogical innovation (Bada & Özkan, 2019; Sezgin & Önal, 2021).

Similarly, Gizem highlights the value of trust and approachability and states that an effective teacher should be "strict but at the same time friendly" so that students are willing to engage in the lessons without fear. She clarifies that a friendly atmosphere can encourage students, which aligns with findings that show teachers who have open communication with their learners get more positive student feedback (Colmenero & Lasagabaster, 2024; Deng et al., 2024). It also resonates with research within the Turkish

context, where “approachability” and a caring demeanor promote students' participation in the classroom (Erkmen, 2010; Sezgin & Önal, 2021). Gizem also insists on a disciplined relationship with the administration and asserts that “there should be a strict relationship... otherwise there won't be any discipline.” Her statement reflects a broader tension in Turkish institutions, in which administrators tend to have top-down approaches, so teachers need to be more professionally assertive (Bada & Özkan, 2019; Yıldırım & Önal, 2022). From Gizem's perspective, a “competent English teacher” must balance friendliness with firmness to keep their authority in the classroom, avoid conflicts with the management, and improve their credibility. As Ünlü (2022) and Ershadi et al. (2024) discussed that this credibility is very important for NNESTs who are exposed to discourses around native-speakerism that question the legitimacy of NNESTs. Creating a trusting environment and validating professional expertise are considered to be the pressures that NNESTs have to navigate within the systems that are under the influence of native-speakerism (Nabilla & Sutrisno, 2023; Raza & Eslami, 2024).

Berke emphasizes being approachable and believes that being a true guide is an integral part of an effective teacher identity. His belief is rooted in his experiences with his high school mentor and undergraduate professors, who taught him to be open-minded and collaborative through tasks and cultural exchanges. This shows that NNESTs often develop high empathy and focus on teacher-student relationships as they have undergone the same process (Faez, 2011; Reis, 2011; Yazan, 2019). Strong interpersonal connections can be a strategy for Turkish NNESTs to counter the “native speaker fallacy” (Çağatay, 2021; Yıldırım & Önal, 2022; Raza & Eslami, 2024). Consequently, Turkish NNESTs foreground their relationships as a self-positioning tactic (Bamberg, 2020).

Selim, likewise, highlights the importance of “warmness and closeness” between teacher and students, and notes that “students shouldn't be intimidated... they should be, you know, free to approach.” He believes that a friendly classroom environment can make lessons enjoyable and effective. Selim links his belief to his early teacher, who inspired him by focusing on speaking activities and building confidence. Selim argues that creating a dynamic classroom environment is important, so an effective teacher needs to be approachable and reliable. Selim's insistence on positivity and humor also echoes findings showing Turkish learners appreciate teachers who are entertaining and who focus on their needs (Coşkun, 2013; Demir & Özmen, 2017; Sezgin & Önal, 2021). Moreover,

studies also show that deep and warm relationships with students help NNESTs form a stronger professional identity in the contexts that favor NESTs (Kubota & Lin, 2009; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020; Widodo et al., 2020).

Participants also articulate the complexities of an effective teacher-administration relationship as it can either validate or undermine their authority. Elif, for example, believes that for a language teacher to be effective, they should be able to maintain their professional autonomy. She feels that “they [administrators] are not just accepting... that this is a teacher, but we cannot change the teacher’s style.” She explains that the administration should not make teachers feel like “slaves,” which reflects NNESTs’ frustration with institutions as they prioritize financial gains. This feeling shows how NNESTs perceive themselves as exploited and undervalued, especially when the status of “native-speaker” is considered to be marketable (Treki, 2020; Ramjattan, 2019; Raza & Eslami, 2024).

Considering the Positioning Theory (Bamberg, 2020), Elif believes that administrators position her in an inferior way and expect obedience rather than collaboration, which makes her feel marginalized. The conducted studies in Türkiye also show that institutions attempt to control teachers’ decision-making in classrooms, which restricts Turkish NNESTs’ professional authority (Ünlü, 2022; Bada & Özkan, 2019). Therefore, teacher-administrator relationship dynamics are another area that NNESTs are supposed to continuously negotiate regarding their legitimacy and autonomy (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020; Widodo et al., 2020). Murat, similarly, emphasizes the quality of the teacher-administration relationship as it is crucial for job satisfaction and professional identity formation. Participants collectively suggest that a respectful and mutually supportive relationship with administration is essential for Turkish NNESTs to be effective and maintain their autonomy in the classroom (Coşkun, 2013; Sezgin & Önal, 2021). Studies also reveal that having a balanced relationship not only can increase the sense of job security but also improve the effectiveness of the lessons as teachers can sustain their sense of legitimacy (Widodo et al., 2020; Raza & Eslami, 2024).

Yazan’s (2018) teacher identity framework emphasizes that teachers’ personal, professional, and contextual dimensions collectively shape their beliefs. On the personal level, participants internalize the values from their experiences as learners. In this case, nearly all participants had approachable teachers who were empathetic and helped

students trust them. Professionally, the participants underscore the importance of relationships in language instruction and advocate for empathy, supportive feedback, and students' needs (Erkman, 2010). They expand the importance of relationships to that of administrators as well, and in Yazan's (2018), those dynamics shape and reshape teachers' "cognition" and "learning" through power negotiations. Considering their contextual situation contextually, the hierarchical educational system in Türkiye, along with global discourses of native-speakerism, forces NNESTs to prove themselves through deep relationships and adaptive methods (Çagatay, 2021; Ünlü, 2022). Studies conducted in Türkiye confirm that Turkish NNESTs use empathy and support to challenge "native speaker fallacy" and increase their credibility (Erkmen, 2010; Coşkun, 2013).

Positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990) and Bamberg (2020), as another interpretive lens, help the study to understand that teachers engage in "speech acts" and thus position themselves as friendly guides or empathetic mentors. They challenge the identities that administration or society assigns them, for example, some of them resist the administrative directions and try to assert their autonomy. Native-speakerism complicates the identity negotiation as it implicitly requires Turkish NNESTs to be more understanding, approachable, and supportive. (Widodo et al., 2020). Turkish NNESTs position themselves as student-centered professionals to recast the assigned positions by native-speakerism. This finding supports the recent studies on NNESTs' marginalization, revealing that NNESTs continuously need to prove themselves through investment in their relationships and creating a caring persona in class (Ershadi et al., 2024; Raza & Eslami, 2024). In other words, student rapport and administration acceptance are the areas that participants believe a competent teacher must continuously negotiate and improve regarding their professional identities. The participants of this study have formed their beliefs based on their memories of approachable teachers, frustrations with distant or "arrogant" university professors, exposure to a negative or indifferent administration, and their ongoing battle with native speaker fallacy. They transfer their experiences into the belief of what a "competent teacher" should be like (Borg, 2009; Coşkun, 2013; Yazan, 2018; Yazan & Rudolph, 2018; Lowe, 2020).

5.2 Exploring Turkish NNESTs' Perceptions of NESTs

Following the discussion of the first research question, which explored Turkish NNESTs' perception of a "competent language teacher," the second research question explores how

they perceive NESTs in Türkiye. Specifically, this question aims to understand how Turkish NNESTs position themselves about NESTs regarding their linguistic knowledge, teaching style, and the ability to form relationships with learners and administrators. Like the first question, the second question is also guided by Yazan's (2018) teacher identity framework, which considers personal, professional, and contextual factors, as well as Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Bamberg, 2020), which examines how teachers negotiate their identities within broader discourses.

Participants' perceptions of NESTs' linguistic knowledge reveal a complex interplay of appreciation and critique, the causes of which can be linked to native-speakerism. The participants' narratives frequently attribute "authenticity" and "naturalness" to NESTs. For example, Selim stated that he thought NESTs are much better than him, language wise which indicates Turkish NNESTs associate nativeness with superiority in language knowledge. Similarly, Murat believes that NESTs have more freedom to play with language, highlighting their idiomatic knowledge, spontaneous expressions, and natural pronunciation. These statements affirm the global belief that equates native-speaker with better and higher linguistic competence as stated in studies conducted in Türkiye (Üstünlüoğlu, 2007; Sezgin & Önal, 2021) and broader literature on native-speakerism (Phillipson, 1992; Holliday, 2018).

However, as the discussion progressed in RQ2, an important tension emerged, and participants began to question NESTs' competency and their ability to teach effectively. While they appreciate NESTs' authenticity, fluency, and spontaneity, participants also argue that being fluent and having an authentic accent does not guarantee better language knowledge and superiority. Elif critiques the NESTs as she believes they do not have any formal teaching education and only rely on the fact that it is their mother tongue. Likewise, Behzat asserts that speaking a language fluently cannot necessarily mean someone is a good teacher, pointing out that pedagogical knowledge and structured grammar teaching are important. The participants draw attention to the fact that pedagogical knowledge, structured grammar teaching, and cultural awareness are essential in the exam-oriented educational system of Türkiye (Sarıkaya, 2013; Kırkgöz, 2017; Yıldırım & Önal, 2022). These insights show that participants do not see fluency or language authenticity as the only important factors in effective teaching, which necessitates grammar expertise as well.

The participants' narratives reveal that over time, their reflections have undergone significant transformation in their understanding of linguistic competence. Their transformation can be understood by Yazan's (2018) teacher identity framework, which emphasizes the continuous negotiation between personal experiences, professional training, and contextual realities. Participants were initially inspired by their own English teachers, whom they described as fluent and passionate about English teaching. Later, they admired NESTs' fluency and naturalness, but over time, they became aware of the critical need for structured grammar instruction due to their professional experiences and the demands of the Turkish education system. Through this lens, I interpret that the participants have reshaped their definition of linguistic competence to include grammar and pedagogical proficiency alongside native-like fluency and idiomatic usage.

Positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Bamberg, 2020) also explains how participants deliberately position themselves concerning NESTs, underscoring their strengths to resist being marginalized as NNESTs. At the beginning, they had internalized native-speakerism and felt anxious or inadequate because they could not compete with NESTs regarding native-like pronunciation or spontaneity. This internalized belief emerged from their early appreciation of teachers whose speech was natural and fluent, shaping their initial aspirations as language learners. However, later they experienced institutional realities and responsibilities and decided to reposition themselves by highlighting the importance of grammar teaching and structured teaching approaches, which they believe NESTs often neglect. By describing NESTs as teachers who do not have essential grammar knowledge, the participants are indeed positioning themselves as professionals whose grammar expertise and contextual awareness better address the Turkish learners' needs (Kırkgöz, 2017; Yıldırım & Önal, 2022). Although participants critiqued NESTs on reliance on fluency, interestingly, their role models were generally fluent and native-like speakers who had a significant impact on them regarding their teaching philosophies. I believe there is a contradiction here, as the participants emulate their role models and yet they critique their NEST colleagues over the same qualifications that their favorite teachers had. I believe that this paradox can be explained by recognizing the fact that participants' earlier appreciation of their role models was shaped by their positions as learners, and they were inspired by their fluency. However, in their current positions, there are professional teachers who think there must be a balance between fluency and grammar structures, due to the exam-oriented learning context of Türkiye (Kırkgöz, 2017; Yıldırım

& Önal, 2022).

I can interpret this tension through observing it from a professional-contextual perspective of Yazan's (2018) teacher identity framework. The participants' teacher identity is constantly reshaped through their professional journeys and their institutional demands. Their identities emerged from balancing their early admiration of native-like fluency with the institutional demands and educational realities that ask for grammar knowledge. By defining a competent teacher's linguistic knowledge and questioning NESTs' lack of grammar knowledge, the participants position themselves as hybrid professionals who have the fluency of NSs as well as grammar expertise that Turkish learners demand. Therefore, participants continuously challenge the "native speaker fallacy" (Phillipson, 1992), as well, because they are demonstrating that linguistic competence in teaching is more important than accent or idiomatic fluency alone. The participants of this study clearly illustrate how teachers can redefine their perception of a "competent language teacher" through their experiences as language learners and teachers. Although they acknowledge NESTs' fluency and authenticity, they continue to question them and thus position themselves as better teachers who have grammar and pedagogical expertise and are culturally relevant to the students. This identity negotiation is not just theoretical but also can be seen in their practical beliefs inside the classroom, teaching style, and how they prefer to interact with students and administrations.

The participants' perception of NESTs regarding their teaching styles is also mixed with significant tensions and contradictions. Initially, the participants shared their admiration for their role models, linking them with fun, cultural richness, and communicative practices. For example, Berke and Elif both praised their former teachers due to their native-like fluency, accents, and culturally rich and interactive lessons. This initial admiration shows how they value native-like attributes, which reflect their internalized biases aligned with native-speakerism (Selvi, 2014). However, later they critique actual NESTs for their superficiality, lack of pedagogical depth, and inadequate classroom management skills. There are many example reflecting the complex tension in participants' current perceptions, for example, Gizem appreciates NESTs' creativity and teaching and the various fun activities they use, but also she criticizes them for their spontaneous teaching, which she believes lacks structure. She also believes that NESTs are reluctant to follow any structured lesson plan and states that they "do not do real

teaching." Paradoxically, Gizem also questions the necessity of lesson planning and argues that teachers are taught lesson planning during teacher training programs despite the fact that lesson plans are outdated. Based on Widodo et al. (2020) and Yazan (2018), I believe these contradictions show participants' internal struggles arising from institutional expectations, their own learning experiences, and native-speakerism. As Yazan and Rudolph (2018) argue, tensions like this show how NNESTs resist but also reinforce native-speakerism and related ideologies as they shift their perceptions and positioning to both NESTs and native-like NNESTs.

There are even deeper tensions in participants' professional identities, which have been formed by their early experiences and societal expectations. Although they previously named interactive, communicative, and student-centered methods as markers of effective teaching, they later paradoxically highlighted the necessity of strictly following of syllabus and grammar-focused practices. Additionally, NNESTs often note the inadequacy of their teacher training programs during university years, and mention that all they had learned were merely theoretical and they could not use their knowledge in real classrooms (Domingo, 2022), and yet they strongly questions NESTs' lack of any formal training and believed that since NNESTs have formal educational background they are much better teachers. The participants of this study also acknowledge that the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical skills is exactly what they criticize about NESTs, suggesting that NNESTs themselves also feel they were not ready for real classroom teaching despite university degrees.

There is a discrepancy between the appreciation of creativity in teaching and following a "closed-book" approach, and at the same time criticizing NESTs for "not following lesson plans," and this alone shows how Turkish NNESTs struggle in navigating discourses around native-speakerism. Yazan's (2018) framework reveals that the participants' identities have been evolving as a result of conflicting external demands and expectations that want them to strictly follow pedagogical standards, and yet global trends that call for communicative, engaging and and less standard and more spontaneous instruction. Turkish NNESTs are stuck in a complex negotiation between choosing local demands from NNESTs and global trends associated with NESTs. Bamberg's (2020) Positioning Theory clarifies this tension as well. Drawing on their theory, I can interpret that Turkish NNESTs strategically position themselves in opposition to NESTs' teaching styles so they

can reinforce their legitimacy through highlighting their depth of pedagogical knowledge and following students' needs regarding explicit grammar instruction. They have a defensive positioning as an attempt to reclaim their authority and credibility in a system that overlooks their professional identities (Kubota & Lin, 2009; Wright, 2022). Berke's critical reflection on NESTs and their pedagogical background confirms this discussion as he initially admired NESTs' fluency and spontaneity and later recognized that fluency alone cannot make an instruction effective as he stated that "Most native teachers I have met so far have not [had] education in terms of having a BA or MA in a very specific field of language teaching."

As Treki (2020) and Bebars (2024) acknowledge, native-speakerism also acts as a marketing strategy, so private institutions prefer NESTs to attract students and parents, as a result, NNESTs are forced to justify their value continuously. They promote themselves as more structured and disciplined to be recognized, for example, Elif often emphasized that following a structured syllabus is necessary so that she could position herself higher than NESTs, who she thinks have superficial classroom practices. Turkish NNESTs prioritize measurable academic outcomes over communicative spontaneity, as it is the only way they can redeem their professional values. This finding aligns with Yazan's (2018) view that professional identity is dynamic and is always under negotiation and reflection based on contextual demands and personal beliefs. I believe Turkish NNESTs actively engage in identity (re)construction by criticizing NESTs and their teaching styles, and positioning themselves as more culturally aware to resist native-speakerism and its causing marginalization

The participants of this study describe the dynamics of NESTs' relationship skills as "cool" and "fascinating. However, they also believe that they cannot deeply connect with either students or administration and might even "look at students from above," which often intimidates students which supports the Turkish studies that students do not feel empathy when there is a cultural disconnection (Bada & Özkan, 2019; Sezgin & Önal, 2021). As Gizem mentioned, NEST's language barrier also limits the nature of their communication with the administrators, which in turn leaves NESTs "far away from the decision-making process," and frustrated. Literature also confirms the usual situation where NESTs often cannot form strong bonds despite their assigned prestige (Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Skliar, 2014; Bada & Özkan, 2019; Sezgin & Önal, 2021). By contrast,

Turkish NNESTs of this study perceive themselves as teachers who are better at forming deep relationships with both students and management. For example, Behzat described himself as a “friend” who joins his students during the time “they gossip” in English, and this enables him to correct their errors. Elif also thinks this closeness is essential because she believes “if the students do not trust us, they cannot open themselves in the classroom.” Elif’s statement has been previously confirmed in Türkiye as Coşkun (2013) and Sezgin and Önal (2021) validate that empathy and warmth can increase student satisfaction and reduce anxiety. Murat argued that Turkish NNESTs are “the only source” of English language exposure and suggests that there should be a deep bond with students both inside and outside the classroom.

Studies show that interpersonal connections can help balance the power dynamics where NESTs are often preferred and NNESTs can establish their credibility through empathy, reliability, and sustained support (Faez, 2011; Ramjattan, 2019). Therefore, I believe Turkish NNESTs overcompensate regarding their relationships with students and administrators, such as by being “extra helpful”, “extremely approachable”, or “caring”. They use this positioning strategically to attract validation, which is often directed towards NESTs. Looking at this phenomenon from Yazan’s (2018) teacher identity lens, these behaviors are the result of an interplay between personal beliefs (e.g., being empathic, being a role model) and professional, contextual pressures. The participants experienced having approachable teachers in their teen years and saw it as an essential part of teaching. Professionally, they work in contextual cultures that are influenced by native-speakerism, therefore they are forced to overcompensate, which also increases their emotional labor. While NESTs simply show up in the classrooms, Turkish NNESTs dedicate themselves to providing structured feedback, out-of-class support, and extra tasks to claim a more valued professional identity.

Looking from the lens of Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Bamberg, 2020), overcompensation has become Turkish NNESTs’ strategy for self-positioning. They position themselves as the teachers who “care more”, “work harder,” and “know the local culture.” NESTs either do not have these attributes or they do not need to develop and Turkish NNESTs use them as their assets. As NESTs do not need to prove their worth, they seem “distant and arrogant”, as participants believe. One participant also mentioned that students often see NESTs as “the real deal,” which means that NESTs are relaxed

about making deep bonds, and instead of that, focus more on having fun. Meanwhile, Turkish NNESTs like Berke and Behzat are under pressure to reinforce their relationships, and in other words, it seems like by positioning as “more caring” teachers, they are crying “Look, I’m helping you so much because I understand your needs and your struggles” to endear themselves to students. As studies like Song (2018) show, when their emotions are reciprocated and they receive positive feedback from their students, they feel validated, and this in turn increases their professional confidence (Faez, 2011). I believe that Turkish NNESTs use “overcompensation” as a defensive and empowering tool. On one hand, they compensate for a lack of NS identity, and on the other hand, they attempt to create their narratives by claiming a stable professional identity.

The participants also noted distinctions in NEST-administration relationship dynamics and believed that they navigate hierarchies differently. Gizem argued that the relationship with management should be strict and based on discipline, and others also highlighted the importance of respect. However, they all agree that a deeper connection is harder for NESTs due to their language barrier and not knowing the institutional norms in Türkiye. On one hand, they believe that NESTs are not assigned any extra task because administrators cannot communicate with them, and on the other hand, Turkish NNESTs are forced to improve themselves and apply overcompensation with administrative tasks as well. Their cognition and thus practice evolve in a self-proving and reward system. For example, Turkish NNESTs see evidence that volunteering for administrative tasks, forming social connections, and extra labor help them get recognized by administrators. As they internalize those behaviors to become a “competent teacher”, they become more frustrated by the extra workload and burnout. However, nearly all participants believe that this tactic helps them to be recognized for their contributions and “wanted”. Simultaneously, administrators also rely more on Turkish NNESTs overcompensation and as a result assign them more tasks as NESTs seem “too distant.” Overcompensation and describing NESTs as distant and arrogant act as a discursive re-positioning tactic to change the idea that NEST equals “best” and to spotlight themselves and show that teaching English needs caring souls which NNEST have but NESTs don’t.

5.3 Exploring Turkish NNESTs' Challenges regarding Native-speakerism

The findings of this study show that Turkish NNESTs face various challenges that are rooted in native speakerism. Native-speakerism manifests itself in different forms, for

example, discrimination, institutional biases, and discrimination in hiring practices. The existing literature confirms that native-speakerism imposes challenges explicitly and implicitly in various contexts (Origo, 2016; Fang, 2018; Bada & Özkan, 2019; Ramjattan, 2019; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020; Treki, 2020; Widodo et al., 2020; Domingo, 2022; Osoydan, 2022; Panaligan & Curran, 2022; Ünlü, 2022; Bebars, 2024; Raza & Eslami, 2024; Zhong, 2024). These challenges cannot be considered as mere inconveniences because they deeply change the way NNESTs worldwide and in Türkiye perceive themselves and are perceived by institutions, their colleagues, and students (Amin, 1997; Wright, 2022; Zhong, 2024). Further highlighting these challenges, this study reveals more about how Turkish NNESTs' professional identities get influenced, resulting in identity conflict, the sense of inferiority, distress, self-doubt, and a limited sense of professional legitimacy. Although most challenges and disadvantages are systematic, this study shows that context is an important factor, like challenges and their severity. Through Yazan's (2018) teacher identity framework and the lens of Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Bamberg, 2020), this part of the discussion explores the challenges that have been identified along with their impacts on Turkish NNESTs' professional identities.

The challenges found in this study align with the broader literature on NNESTs' experiences worldwide. One common challenge in all studies is NNESTs' marginalization and discrimination in their specific professional contexts due to racialized attitudes (Fang, 2018; Widodo et al., 2020; Domingo, 2022; Panaligan & Curran, 2022). Due to marginalization, NNESTs do not receive the professional recognition they deserve as their expertise is often undervalued and they are normally positioned as less competent compared to NESTs (Amin, 1997; Kubota & Lin, 2009; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020; Wright, 2022; Raza & Eslami, 2024). Turkish NNESTs often get questioned about their nativeness and language skills with an implication of their inferiority, which results in their professional isolation and emotional distress (Ramjattan, 2019). This study highlights how Turkish NNESTs are consistently forced to prove their competence in ways that NESTs are not. As administrators, parents, students, and colleagues doubt Turkish NNESTs' language skills and question their "authenticity" in English, they lose their self-confidence and internalize the belief that they need to overcompensate to receive more recognition as English teachers. During the interviews, participants pointed out how marginalization made them feel "less qualified," despite their rich educational backgrounds, often surpassing those of NESTs. Elif, for example, mentioned how her

teaching style and classroom management were often questioned by administrators. As Yazan (2018) views it, these “dialogic moments” continuously made Elif struggle and re-evaluate her identity and legitimacy as a teacher, and finally prompted her decision to leave formal institutions and work as a freelancer. Similarly, Berke experiences that his pedagogical choices get questioned, despite his master’s degree in TESOL and multiple workshop attendances.

Participants also reported marginalization in their settings as they felt that administrators were unsupportive and preferential toward NESTs. They repeatedly reported feeling undervalued by their administrators, as they would never advocate for their NNESTs in situations that involve students or NESTs. Neglecting NNESTs and turning into NESTs is a management disengagement, as Selvi (2014) asserts that hierarchical structures reinforce NESTs’ superiority. Yazan (2018) perceives teacher identity as fluid and dialogic, drawing from that when administrators neglect their NNESTs, they give them the message that they will always be the second-tier compared to NESTs, even if they have more qualifications. Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Bamberg, 2020) can explain that the management unintentionally or intentionally subordinates NNESTs and continuously positions them as professionals with less linguistic and pedagogical legitimacy. One specific way of this “positioning” happens through unfair workload distribution. Participants noted that Turkish NNESTs often get assigned administrative tasks without any financial compensation. Participants of the study believe that they are often being treated as support staff rather than skilled teachers. The workload inequities have also been found in Ramjattan’s (2019) findings that reveal how marginalization can impact teachers’ self-confidence, and cause identity conflicts resulting in NNESTs’ concerns if they belong in the profession. In this study, participants like Behzat, Murat, Elif, and Berke shared the amount of workload leading to their sense of frustration. As their efforts do not get compensated, they feel that the administrators never support them and thus undermine their credibility, which also reinforces native-speakerism.

Disparities between NESTs’ and NNESTs’ workload can be found in their payments, as well as NESTs often get paid more even though they have fewer qualifications, and this leads participants to question the worth of their careers. Berke, for example, reported feeling “undermined” by NESTs’ and their “authentic accent,” despite his advanced teaching skills and teaching knowledge. He cannot fully understand why NESTs can

enjoy better pay and a much lighter workload. Similarly, Behzat questions if he is getting what he deserves, as he is also aware that his NEST colleagues receive much higher pay. Elif, likewise, believes that NESTs receive more than they deserve just because of their accents and emphasizes her belief that institutions value their profit over their teachers. The economic unfairness brings about the “us versus them” that separates NNESTs from NESTs, and considering Yazan’s (2018) teacher identity framework, this division can show itself in more complex ways as there are clashes, continuous negotiations, and contests across communities of practice. Yazan (2018) believes that identity is about how teachers see themselves and are seen by others, which is not fixed but dynamic. Identity shifts and adapts over time as a response to teachers’ experiences and pressures. Therefore, I believe that when a notion of “us vs. them” appears, Turkish NNESTs initially attempt to conform to native-speaker norms; however, later, they become more conscious of the biases and start to adopt new ways to define their professional worth. For example, Murat reported that he initially attempted to sound like NESTs, but following his experiences with inequities and parents explicitly asking for “real native speakers,” he began to give himself credit for his insights and the way he can solve others’ problems. This study illustrated this shift in all participants, which reveals how the “us vs. them” is not static and can move from trying to align with NESTs’ changes to challenging them and the assumptions around NESTs. Their settings, experiences, and CoPs push them to recognize that “real” English teaching is related to pedagogical expertise and empathy for learners rather than a passport. This evolution is Turkish NNESTs’ self-perceptions reshaped how they participated in their CoPs and encouraged them to either resist and question the policies or change their career pathways.

Observing from the lens of Davies and Harré’s (1990) and Bamberg’s (2020) Positioning Theory, the classification of “us vs. them” places Turkish NNESTs into marginalized positions and consistently signals to them that they do not belong in a shared CoP. I believe this division is not the result of individual events but rather is gradually created and sustained by discourses, policies, and administrative decisions that favor NESTs as “legitimate” insiders and treat Turkish NNESTs as secondary and peripheral. The lens of Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Bamberg, 2020) helps us notice Turkish NNESTs initially get “positioned” in lower-status roles by dominant discourses, but later their frustration forces them to begin repositioning themselves and start to question the assumption that NESTs can be considered as benchmarks of teaching English. Over time,

their frustration grows, and Turkish NNESTs start asserting themselves as not only equal to NESTs but superior to them. Gómez-Vásquez and Guerrero Nieto (2018) confirm this finding as they also found that marginalization led their participants to deliberately disrespect or distance themselves from their NEST colleagues to claim their agency and authority.

Turkish NNESTs' struggles and challenges also go beyond the national borders as they search for teaching roles abroad or on international online platforms, either for professional growth or better compensation. Hiring biases favoring NESTs have been documented in various studies (Treki, 2020; Domingo, 2022; Panaligan & Curran, 2022; Boonsuk et al., 2023), which place Turkish NNESTs at a disadvantage, too. Two of the participants even gained a CELTA certificate, however, they learned that neither CELTA nor their extensive classroom experiences mattered for the international recruiters, who only perceived "nativeness" as the main criterion. All participants hoped to find an international teaching role either to gain global experience or escape the economic stress of Türkiye. However, each time they were rejected because they were not "native," and each rejection devalued their education and training background and rekindled a sense of anger and envy toward NESTs who could easily teach "anywhere" without any strict requirements. Continuous rejections left Murat dispirited, so he turned to teaching Turkish so he might find more validation, as he would be considered a "native" teacher. Gizem admitted feeling "jealous" and resentful of NESTs who were her classmates in CELTA and could easily find global jobs, and this later led her to recognize how she once insisted on a "native teacher" for Spanish lessons, and she was forced to confront her own biases.

Yazan (2018) believes that teacher identity is a fluid and dialogic process, and this study confirms it by showing how Turkish NNESTs' experiences of native-speakerism reshaped their self-concepts. Each time they were rejected for being a "non-native" teacher, a dialogic moment happened for them, so they began to relate their professional ambitions to a system that questioned their worth only because of their nationalities. Internalizing their frustration, the participants responded by exiting their career or at least considering it, while others enhanced their teaching practices to show the strengths of bilingualism. Murat decided to join the community of "native" speakers by switching to Teaching Turkish as a native speaker, while Gizem recognized her own internal biases and became

a more reflective and inclusive teacher. These transformations align with Yazan's belief that identity is negotiated within a broader matrix of societal and cultural expectations. Turkish NNESTs either retreated, redefined their goals, or resisted the idea of native-speakerism when they experienced global rejections.

Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Bamberg, 2020) proposes that individuals position themselves on multiple levels: they adopt certain roles about their own self-image, they respond to the broader social or institutional context, and they also control how they present themselves to their interlocutors. In this study, participants positioned themselves as competent teachers and highlighted their qualifications. Simultaneously, they navigated a context that positioned them as "outsiders" because of hiring policies. Therefore, participants like Murat decided to redefine their role as he believed it was a way out, and others like Elif positioned themselves as "better" and "superior" regarding NESTs. Behzat, on the other hand, yielded and accepted that he could never compete with NESTs and that they are indeed better teachers than he. In other words, he chose the channel of "acceptance" to negotiate with the broader discourse and system. Despite all these different negotiations, all participants presented themselves as confident educators to the researcher and designed their narratives in a way to underscore their frustrations and resilience in the systemic biases that somehow found their agency in challenging those biases and having everything in control. In other words, they offered the researcher a counter-narrative to the common beliefs around native speakerism so that the interviewer also might share or contest their ideas. The interview process revealed how each participant could strategically navigate their self-perceptions, external forces, and a potential audience's biased perceptions, which illustrated how positioning can operate across personal, contextual, and performative layers.

Cross-checking the participants' narratives, I found out that context deeply influences the severity and the nature of native-speaker biases. The participants who work in private schools and language schools describe a setting with commercial profits, with a focus on marketing NESTs to attract "customers". This issue makes Turkish NNESTs feel "replaceable," and they end up having heavier workloads and lower pay to keep their jobs. Berke's narrative reflected how insecure he was, and Murat reported many incidents where NESTs were highly favored. In contrast, participants who teach at Turkish universities, such as Selim and Gizem, reported a standardized hiring process and

equitable treatment, which relieved them as they could trust that their credentials and expertise were not undervalued. Their narrative showed that Gizem and Selim were more positive about NNEST and NEST team teaching, as they had less resentment towards them compared to others. This finding echoes Yazan's (2018) assertion that the broader framework can shape teacher identity, as I can observe that a profit-oriented school culture can intensify the feeling of being an "outsider" for Turkish NNESTs. In contrast, in a setting where expertise is valued and there are standards, the overt discrimination is mitigated, and Turkish NNESTs feel more empowered. Üstünlüoğlu (2007) also found that in Turkish university contexts, students did not undervalue their NNESTs as the atmosphere was less based on native-speakerism.

This study could trace the various challenges that Turkish NNESTs undergo and reveals that native-speakerism can have psychological, professional, and emotional impacts on them. The findings align with patterns in Fang (2018), Ramjattan (2019), and Panaligan and Curran (2022) as the teachers shared their self-doubt and questioned their worth and qualifications, which reduces their sense of legitimacy and job satisfaction. Participants like Berke and Behzat reported anxiety and continuous second-guessing their language competencies as they wanted to avoid stereotypes linked with NNESTs. Participants were also emotionally frustrated as two of them decided to quit their schools. Kubota and Lin's (2009) and Wright's (2022) also reported that native-speakerism results in teachers' frustration and eroded self-esteem. Following Yazan' (2018) teacher identity framework helps us to understand how each discriminatory act forces NNESTs to continuously renegotiate their identity and sense of professional belonging, which can also be frustrating if they are forced to renegotiate by consistently proving their skills. Turkish NNESTs' efforts to prove themselves can also be explained by Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Bamberg, 2020) as they have attempted to remove themselves from the position of "subordinate" imposed by the system and instead find the agency to position themselves as "competent" teachers who are better and superior. As Raza and Eslami (2024) explained, teachers always develop new strategies for self-empowerment, and the participants of this study employed resilience and other tools to redefine their identities, which will be discussed in the next session.

5.4. Exploring Turkish NNESTs' Strategies to Counter Native-speakerism

This study reveals that Turkish NNESTs' professional identity reconstruction is a nuanced and multifaceted process among their challenges that native-speakerism has imposed on them. Yazan (2018) believes that teacher identity is dynamic, socially negotiated, and is rooted in personal, professional, and contextual dimensions. The participants of this study adopted a range of tools and strategies to reposition themselves as more valued and legitimate individuals. Positioning Theory (Bamberg, 2020) also offers an extra lens that helps the study to show how these teachers actively challenge imposed identities and reposition themselves to counter institutional and social discourses that favor NESTs. One of the recurrent strategies used by participants was investing in continuous professional development to compensate for their inadequacies and to resist discourses and narratives that linked NNESTs with deficiency. Murat and Gizem decided to pursue CELTA certification, and Berke attended many workshops and training sessions, and Selim pursued higher academic education to boost his knowledge. The participants did not engage in professional development courses only to increase their skills; they worked on their identities and deliberately attempted to reposition themselves as competent and evolving professionals within the ELT community. Notably, all participants reported that their pre-service training programs were inadequate as they were mainly theoretical and did not prepare them for the real challenges of teaching. They did not feel well-prepared, which forced them to follow more professional development opportunities. As Yazan (2018) asserts, teacher learning can never be separated from identity, but it is a tool through which teachers change their professional self-perceptions. This aligns with the studies that show how reflective teacher education programs can be empowering for NNESTs (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1997; Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Yazan, 2019). In this way, participants could reconstruct their professional identity and claim their legitimacy.

As part of their professional development, participants also highlighted their efforts in enhancing their linguistic knowledge, particularly regarding fluency and pronunciation. For example, Selim and Elif reported they worked hard for their "natural" accent so that they could sound like NESTs and thus avoid being linguistically marginalized. Berke and Behzat also enhanced their vocabulary and idiomatic expression knowledge through NESTs' support. According to positioning theory, the participants consciously attempted

to change their linguistic selves and realign them within discourses that link proficiency with teaching legitimacy. I believe that participants were aware that better language proficiency could help them be valued more in their profession. This finding can also be confirmed by studies showing that self-developing linguistically and bilingualism together could enhance NNESTs' self-efficacy and student rapport (Faez, 2011; Widodo et al., 2020; Zhong, 2024). NESTs and students had key roles in participants' reflective practices as they reported asking them for feedback, which was critical for them in shaping their professional identities. Gizem repeatedly reported how NESTs and her "American" colleagues helped her refine her teaching practices, and Selim and Elif highlighted the importance of their students' feedback. These instances reflect Yazan's (2018) dialogic identity construction, where identity is negotiated and co-constructed through interaction and reflection. Positioning Theory also highlights how individuals reposition themselves through their narratives and deliberate self-creation. Constructive feedback and reflective activities such as journaling and dialogic inquiry have been outlined as important techniques to help NNESTs overcome their internalized sense of inferiority so that they can become efficient professionals.

Participants referred to adapting their teaching practices to their students' needs as another strategy through student-centered teaching. Berke, Elif, and Gizem reported that they would change and modify their teaching methods to incorporate technology and authentic tasks based on their learners' interests. They believe that effective teaching must be relevant to students culturally. For example, Berke discussed how he used online collaboration tools and contemporary news articles in his classroom to connect their textbook with students' everyday life. Elif reported that she follows her students' interests actively and designs project-based tasks to increase students' engagement. Using technologies and adapting lessons to students' interests enhanced their students' motivation and participation and thus NNESTs' pedagogical legitimacy. Turkish NNESTs can establish their relatability by benefiting from students' cultural backgrounds and needs. According to Canagarajah (1999), NNESTs claim their agency by transforming teaching techniques so that they align with students' culture. I believe Turkish NNESTs use this strategy to relate to students and thus to empower themselves, which aligns with Yazan's (2018) contextual dimension of teacher identity. He argues that teachers can regain their agency and ownership through teaching practices that are in line with students' sociocultural realities. I believe that Turkish NNESTs play their relatability card

against native-speakerism and position themselves as innovative, flexible learning facilitators to claim themselves as the “good teachers”. Bayyurt and Sifakis (2020) and Kemaloglu-Er and Lowe (2023) also had similar findings showing NNESTs could increase their self-confidence through pluralistic teaching practices, which would relate to global English Language teaching and learning.

Participants also emphasized the importance of building strong bonds with their students in their professional identity reconstruction. Behzat, Elif, Murat, and Berke highlighted that they connect deeply with their students through empathy, attentiveness, and shared linguistic or cultural backgrounds, which also distinguish them from NESTs. Participants named connection-making as a strategy to enhance student engagement and their legitimacy in the classroom, where NESTs are preferred. For example, Selim used “co-teaching” to describe his relationship with his students and claimed that it created mutual respect in the classroom. Yazan (2018) recognizes that emotional investment and rapport are very important as they lead teachers to have a vision of themselves and let them see how others perceive them. I believe, as the researcher, participants are aware of their marginalization that has been imposed on them by native-speakerism, and as a response, they deliberately self-position themselves as empathetic guides and caretakers. This finding can also be explained through positioning theory, as it shows how teachers have to construct and defend their authority through their daily interactions. Faez (2011) notes that bilingual teachers try to connect with their students on a personal level, and Hunag and Varghese (2015) show this strategy so that teachers can co-construct their identities and establish emotional resonance. The fact that NNESTs use empathy and cultural awareness deliberately has also been confirmed by Zhong (2024).

As the researcher, I observed that subtle overcompensation is common among Turkish NNESTs who feel they have to provide extra emotional support to be “accepted”. I could observe this “overcompensation” in participants’ efforts at gaining institutional visibility as well. For example, Behzat and Berke organized events and clubs to enhance their profile, while Murat adopted the role of a mentor in his department. Their efforts can also be explained through Positioning Theory as participants intentionally position themselves in roles that their institutions can see and value them. I believe these activities are another layer of overcompensation only to get recognized and seen, and they might intend to cover their so-called “non-native deficiencies” as well. Treki (2020) confirms this finding that

NNESTs attempt to have extra qualifications so that they can compete against NESTs. Ramjattan (2019) also has documented NNESTs' attempts to prove themselves. I believe Turkish NNESTs try to act as leaders and adopt commitments to position themselves as the “model teacher” as a strategy to resist native-speakerism and the way its principles devalue NNESTs.

Besides their proactive strategies, some participants also decided to accept the situation and thus reframe their emotions to cope with native-speakerism. For example, Behzat acknowledged that he knows native-speakerism will never vanish and is out of his control. Therefore, rather than investing his energy in fighting against it, he redirected his attentions and efforts to whatever he could control, such as his connection with his students. I believe the way each of these participants ended up navigating their feelings of frustration, self-doubt, and disillusionment imposed a huge emotional labor in their identity formation process as they attempted to achieve self-validation. Positioning Theory can explain that the participants' acceptance and reframing process acted as internal negotiations in which Turkish NNESTs acknowledged the “lesser” positions imposed on them by dominant discourses and, at the same time, gave them the power and a new sense of self to challenge those ascribed identities. They underwent a process of self-positioning and rewrote their narratives to affirm their expertise and value, despite societal narratives that label them as deficient. They accepted the existence of native-speakerism; however, they decided to emphasize their strengths to close the gap between how they are perceived and how they wish to be perceived. This way, they could maintain their emotional well-being and form their identity based on their empathy and deep connections. This finding confirms Widodo et al. (2020) and Raza & Eslami (2024), who reported that NNESTs find their survival in reframing their self-perception without looking for external support.

An obvious pattern in some narratives was the way the participants positioned themselves as superior to NESTs, particularly regarding pedagogical investment and student understanding. For example, Elif and Berke described themselves as teachers who are more competent and effective than NESTs. They highlighted that they invest much more than NESTs in their students' success through their efforts, structured teaching approaches, and empathetic engagement. They shifted the discourses from marginalization to superiority, which can be viewed as counter-positioning against

dominant discourses of native-speakerism. This finding aligns with Gómez-Vásquez and Guerrero Nieto (2018) and Kiczowski and Lowe (2019), who similarly reported that NNESTs challenged the NEST authorities by reframing their teaching as richer. Beyond discursive repositioning, some participants decided to change their careers as a way to reclaim their agency. For example, Murat decided to teach Turkish to foreigners as a way to avoid institutional discrimination and reassertion of his status as a legitimate language teacher. Similarly, Elif decided to be a freelancer to gain control over how she was perceived. These shifts reflect their agentic responses to structural biases, which also align with Yazan's (2018) emphasis on context, which shows how it can affect teachers' professional trajectory as they attempt to reshape their identity as a way to adapt to or escape from restrictive institutional norms.

Participants of this study employed a rich repertoire of strategies such as professional development, overcompensation, acceptance, building rapport, and career repositioning. By employing them, the participants attempt to negotiate their identities within settings that are under the influence of native-speakerism. Drawing on Yazan's (2018) teacher identity framework, participants take distinct paths for their identity negotiation. Participants' narratives reveal that teacher learning was always evident either through additional certification programs or their attempts. Moreover, iterative reflection and method adaptation were mentioned by all participants, although context played a decisive role, like their challenges and identity negotiation strategies. On one hand, participants' CoPs also had critical roles in their professional identity reconstruction through their collaboration, peer support, and feedback, and on the other hand, they were motivated by their frustration and sense of empathy. They believe that their pedagogical expertise and awareness of existing biases impacted their classroom practices, highlighting their strengths, such as linguistic background or cultural insights. Participants also employed their own learning experiences to understand their students and connect with them. Positioning Theory (Bamber 2020) explains participants' strategies in three levels: First, they positioned themselves in direct contrast to NESTs and claimed that their expertise and empathy make them superior. Second, they adopted diverse roles within their institution to gain visibility to position themselves as legitimate educators for their administrators. In the third level of positioning, participants continuously presented themselves as resilient, reflective teachers who actively develop themselves and have multilingual insights. They claimed themselves as the teachers who understand students

in a way NESTs can never do to counter native-speakerism norms. Findings of this study show the dynamic, context-sensitive process of identity formation as Turkish NNESTs integrate their learning, emotions, and narratives to empower themselves. The findings of this study reveal how any teacher can assert their positions despite any systemic biases and can define themselves as an “effective” English language teacher.



6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of the Study

This study investigates how Turkish NNESTs (re)construct their professional identities in a context that promotes NESTs as ideal teachers. Despite contemporary publications and TESOL's (2006) call for an inclusive hiring, Turkish private schools and language schools continue to believe and promote that learning English by NESTs is an advantage. Therefore, they pursue NESTs in their hiring practices and assign them less workload and higher pay. As a result, many Turkish NNESTs experience a sense of inferiority as their legitimacy is questioned. They lose their confidence, struggle with deep self-doubt, and find themselves in conflict between their professional image and native-speakerism. The study is conducted in Türkiye, where English plays an essential role, and examines how Turkish NNESTs define ELT teacher competence, perceive NESTs, experience professional challenges, and negotiate their professional identities in a complex context that marginalizes them due to native-speakerism. The study is grounded on Yazan's (2018) multidimensional teacher identity framework and Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Bamberg, 2020). Both lenses claim that identity is socially constructed and fluid as teachers are continuously repositioning themselves to reclaim their agency as a counteract to dominant discourses.

A multiple-case study was conducted to capture the experiences of six Turkish NNESTs in three different settings: private language schools, private K-12 institutions, and university preparatory programs. Data were collected through autobiographical essays, two rounds of semi-structured interviews, reflective emails, and a focus group discussion. Data analysis procedure consisted of in vivo and thematic coding as the researcher wanted to gain case-specific and cross-case themes, and the gained data was strengthened through triangulation, external coding, reflexive memo-writing, and member checking. The study addresses four research questions: (1) How do Turkish NNESTs define teaching competence relative to NESTs? (2) How do they perceive NESTs' linguistic and pedagogical strengths and weaknesses? (3) What challenges did they have due to native-speakerism, and how did they affect their professional lives? and (4) What identity (re)construction strategies have they adopted in response?

Findings reveal that the participants' early beliefs around teaching competence reflected societal biases, as they believed that a competent teacher must have native-like fluency

and accent. However, their classroom experiences and professional development reshaped their perception, and they adopted a “hybrid” model which includes both grammatical expertise, fluency, cultural relatedness, humor, and strong student support. Participants continue believing NESTs can use language more spontaneously and are more authentic, but they critique them for their lack of pedagogical background and inability to teach grammar effectively. They also think that NESTs cannot understand local students' needs and struggles, as they have different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Through complimenting NESTs and criticizing them, the participants have been able to change their positions and claim themselves as qualified teachers who have a solid understanding of teaching and can make deeper connections with learners.

Although the participants have been able to redefine their position and might have more stability in their careers, they report that native-speakerism exists and they have experienced it in multiple ways such as being rejected by international recruiters, lower payments, or heavier workloads, or being forced to consistently teach lower level student and grammar lessons. They believe that NESTs often do the communicative and fun sections of the language teaching job, which undermines their motivation, ambition, and confidence. Data show that the private sector is more biased, as its main concern is its profit. As a result, the participants who work for a private institution report a deeper sense of inferiority, anxiety about fluency, and an urge to prove themselves.

As participants reported their challenges imposed by native-speakerism, the data elicited their responses as well. They reveal that participants adopted various strategies to negotiate their professional identities. They collectively invested in professional development either through international certification programs like CELTA or postgraduate studies, workshops, or even self-paced personal efforts to improve pronunciation and vocabulary. They also reported their attempts to create a deep connection with both students and administrators to gain legitimacy and trust. However, the data show that nearly all of the participants ended up with overcompensation behaviors such as out-of-classroom support, extracurricular activities, mentoring colleagues, or even pioneering in school events. Although they felt more accomplished and valued, they reported their emotional frustration and exhaustion, which led one of them to start teaching Turkish (as a native speaker) and another to quit the institution and do remote freelancing. The data across cases reveal that the participants enacted their

professional identity (re)construction through iterative, reflective, and emotional labor.

This study has four major contributions to the field. Theoretically, it practically extends Yazan's (2018) teacher identity framework and Positioning Theory (Bamberg, 2020) to a Turkish EFL context and highlights the existing discourses around native-speakerism and their sociocultural and professional impacts on Turkish NNESTs. Methodologically, it shows how storytelling and narration can be powerful through multiple-case research design, as we can deeply understand the participants' subtle challenges and broad micro-aggressions that might go unnoticed. Practically, it implies that teacher education programs need to include critical language awareness modules to empower pre-service and later English teachers. The study also promotes the importance of equitable payment policies and hiring practices to control and mitigate native-speakerism. The researcher deeply believes that empowering Turkish NNESTs can result in better English language proficiency levels in Türkiye.

De Costa and Norton (2017) can contribute to understanding the current findings in the three-level model of investment. At the micro level, participants' daily decisions, including their CPD, creative task designs, and being supportive of students, mirror the ways they claim their expertise in the classroom. At the meso level, institution-level decisions such as hiring priorities, workload allocations, and marketing strategies play a key role in shaping NNESTs identity aspects they would like to highlight or hide. At the macro level, there is a widely believed ideology that promotes 'authenticity' and 'nativeness' in parallel, and thus, NNESTs have to continuously negotiate their competence and agency.

This study shows that Turkish NNESTs are not victims who are deficient, but rather, they are proactive professionals who continuously (re) construct their professional identities through self-development, reflective practices, and relationship building. Their stories underscore the fact that being a native speaker does not equate competence; instead, it is all about empathy, expertise, resilience, and agency. Highlighting their challenges, this dissertation advocated a more inclusive ELT that would value multilingual and multicultural competencies that NNESTs bring to the classrooms.

6.2 Implications for Teacher Education Programs

Previous studies that have been conducted globally and in Turkey, along with this study, make it clear that it is mainly through teacher-education programs that dismantling native-

speakerism is possible. Collectively, all participants critiqued the inadequacy of their teaching training program. Moreover, Öztürk and Aydın's (2019) review of English Language Teacher Education programs across Turkey revealed that the courses are mainly decontextualized and there is less focus on real-world practice. As a result, novice NNESTs begin their careers without feeling prepared for the realities of real-life classrooms. They do not know how to manage large classes, and obviously would lose their confidence even more when faced with challenges around native-speakerism. Merç (2015) confirmed that pre-service teachers struggle with anxiety, and it negatively impacts their self-efficacy and thus their teaching capabilities. Pre-service practicum is a crucial time for pre-service NNESTs to shape their identities confidently, and otherwise they enter the real classroom feeling inadequate, which later presents itself through Turkish NNESTs' emotional frustration and overcompensation. These findings reveal that there is an urgent need for a teacher education model that is rich with practice and critical reflective activities and thus more identity attentive.

To meet that need, there can be formalized mentorship led by NNESTs explicitly. There can be specific funding for mentoring so that experienced local teachers can observe, provide feedback, and coach pre-service teachers. Mentors can openly discuss the existing biases and guide pre-service teachers through turning theory into context-specific moves. This can be a long-term pair-working that can make school placements more effective for pre-service teachers.

The findings show that from year one of teacher education programs, the curricula should embed modules on critical language awareness and native-speakerism. I believe programs must support their pre-service teachers against native-speakerist ideologies that might shape their careers and identities in the future. This can happen through guided readings, structured debates, and analysis of job ads so they can be cognitively ready for what is waiting for them out in the real world. Moreover, programs must replace monolingual norms with a critical translingual pedagogy that legitimises strategic usage of L1. There can be translanguaging tasks, metalinguistic sessions discussing the fact that Turkish is not an interference. Following the essential reforms mentioned in Merç (2024), this study also emphasizes that each student teacher should work with a trained mentor who can provide feedback and explicitly scaffold their identity reflection through various tasks such as journaling or club sessions. Collaboration of schools with universities can reflect

the classroom realities to teacher candidates and also teach them the fact that legitimacy comes from expertise that anyone can have, rather than only a foreign passport.

Building on Öztürk and Aydın's (2019) critique of exam-centric teacher education, I believe that, along with linguistic accuracy, the assessment should also prioritize relational skills such as empathy, culturally responsive scaffolding, and strategic use of L1. The programs must teach and test teacher candidates' intelligibility, clarity of modeling, and their sensitivity to learners. Moreover, teacher training programs must include identity-development workshops right before graduation. As this study reveals, identity (re) construction is iterative, and this means that teacher candidates' final year can embed tasks that ask teacher candidates to reflect and write their personal stories about who they are, what experiences have shaped them, and why and how they decided to be English teachers. They can practice positioning themselves in a broader context to find out how they see themselves and how they think others treat them. I believe these tasks can develop their awareness of their roles and powers. Peer-mentoring circles can also be beneficial, as candidates will be able to articulate their future professional selves. Besides these innovations, programs should also include well-being and resilience modules so that pre-service teachers can gain the strength they need through guided reflective writing, mindfulness practices, and stress-management seminars.

This study reveals the importance of in-service training and advocates continuous professional development beyond initial certification. Ministries and private associations should create CoPs led by NNESTs through online forums or even action-research grants so in-service teachers can share their classroom innovations and resolve identity tensions collectively. These CoPs can act as professional networks so that Turkish NNESTs can understand they belong to a group that can be highly valuable even without an essential passport. Guiding teachers to be researchers can be normalized through grant action-research series, conference supports, and publication mentoring. These activities would position NNESTs as producers, and their sense of agency will be enhanced, thus they will have a sense of prestige within their communities.

6.3 Implications for Hiring Policy Reforms

Transforming teacher education programs will not suffice if it is not accompanied by supervision on labor market policies regarding inequities in hiring practices. Various studies (Coşkun, 2013; Origo, 2016; Ünlü, 2022; Osoydan, 2022), along with the

participants of this study, confirmed that asking for a “NEST passport” is common in job advertisements, the salary grids are two-tier, and local teachers are often assigned as grammar teachers. These structural biases extend inequities and fuel Turkish NNESTs’ overcompensation and emotional labor. I believe that a legally binding anti-discrimination clause should ban references to “native speakers” or even “native-like teachers” in all ELT job posts to reflect TESOL’s (2006) position statement.

Moreover, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) needs to force institutions to have transparent and skill-based recruitment standards and avoid passport-based ones. The Ministry should also mandate salary transparency across all institutions and require systemic and structured pay scales that are based on clear and verifiable indicators such as education level, years of teaching experience, working hours, and additional professional certifications. Institutions must disclose their salary grids along with specific criteria for justifying compensation levels. Furthermore, there must be stricter limitations on maximum working hours to prevent exploitation through excessive workloads or tasks that are not in Turkish NNESTs’ job descriptions. Aligning salaries and working conditions with measurable professional qualifications, the system can dismantle the two-tier payment structure and promote a culture of transparency and accountability within ELT. Such a framework would even create strong incentives for all teachers to pursue further professional development as they would know that additional qualifications and experience would be rewarded. This way, there can be a rise in the overall quality of English language teaching in Türkiye over time that promotes equity, professionalism, and teacher well-being.

The Ministry of National Education needs to mandate bias workshops for HR staff so they can evaluate demo lessons with rubrics that weigh scaffolding, clarity, and learner engagement rather than nativeness. Reflective checklists can be used to document the application of anti-bias protocols to create an audit trail for inspectors. As sustained reformation depends on monitoring, I believe MoNE needs to dedicate an office to investigate employment discrimination through anonymous reports and audits. Through structured, competence-oriented hiring practices and identity-centered teacher education programs, Türkiye can create a professional setting where Turkish educators’ strengths can be easily recognized and they will have the central role in their country’s ELT context.

There can be extra measures to control hiring policies and practices of the private

institution. There can be a national 'Fair Hiring Index' that gets published once a year, which includes an open list that scores all ELT institutions based on three categories: the Ratio of NNESTs to NESTs, fair salary scales, and the duration that teachers stay in that institution. To get higher scores, schools might feel the pressure to meet standards that would come from the market and customers, and there will be a need for the government to constantly check them. There can also be blind screening so that schools would examine CVs without seeing any photo, the name of the applicant, or their nationality. Panels would then shortlist people from the first round, and the next stage would focus on qualifications and experiences. To ensure teachers' well-being, there can be an anonymous hotline that would provide service for teachers who report biased job posts, unfair contracts, without risking their jobs.

6.4 Implications for School Management and Institutional Culture

Native-speakerism often is hidden in the everyday routine of an institution, such as which teacher gets the most desirable timetable slots or who teaches high-profile exam classes. These daily decisions are often unnoticed, and thus NESTs can have more advantages, including lighter schedules and prestige courses. Over time, these small advantages pile up and result in the ideology that equates NESTs with more worth. School managers can dismantle these hidden biases by keeping clear records to track if opportunities are fairly distributed. This way, managers can justify any imbalance, and the school culture would shift towards expertise and performance rather than passports. Participants of the study also reported that NESTs often avoid challenging teaching tasks; therefore, there can be regular classroom visits to brief teachers and offer them feedback.

6.5 Implications for Curriculum and Classroom Pedagogy

Many students are biased by native-speakerism and believe that 'real' English would sound like speakers from the UK or USA, and accent is important. To counter these biases curriculum can include 'world Englishes' to teach students about different accents and Englishes. Another step can be taken through translanguaging projects that would allow learners to switch between Turkish and English, maybe through bilingual podcasts, posters, or role plays. Students should see that Turkish can be their learning resource. There can also be some classroom discussion about language and power, which would help students notice how a language can impact someone's status. If Turkish NNESTs promote global accents and practice bilingual teaching, learners would learn that effective

communication is the main aspect of learning a language. Broader policy reforms can happen through changing everyday classroom practices, and students can start questioning native-speakerism biases rather than accepting them.

6.6 Implications for Research and Data Infrastructure

Native-speakerism has deep roots in societies that need long-term plans as a response. There are no standards for Turkish NNESTs' pay scales or how they perform over time. There can be a small permanent research center at MoNE that can fill the gap by collecting and updating data on teacher hiring, salaries, and student outcomes. These projects would allow policymakers, schools, and researchers to find unfair patterns. The gained data can also lead to deeper studies, and researchers can be able to follow the group of teachers for several years to find out how careers and identities change or examine the pay gaps by region, gender, or school type. There can also be grants for teacher-led action research so teachers can test ideas like bilingual lesson plans or peer mentoring sessions. They can then offer their findings for training programs, and thus, teachers can shift from mere teachers to knowledge co-creators.

6.7 Limitations of the Study

This dissertation offers rich insights into Turkish NNESTs' teacher identity formation under the influence of native-speakerism; however, there are a few limitations. First, the multiple case study design was conducted on six participants who were selected purposefully, which is a proper sample for the depth of the study. However, I believe it is not enough for the breadth of the study, as it cannot capture the full heterogeneity of Turkish NNESTs who work in various other settings. Considering the K12 or language schools, other settings' subcultures cannot be ignored, as there might be other power dynamics there. Second, the study was mainly based on self-reported data such as autobiographical essays, semi-structured interviews, reflective emails, and a focus group conversation. The participants shared their aspects of the events and their meaning-making processes, which are at the heart of identity studies; however, there can be memory lapses, selective recall. Although the study used triangulation, member checking, and external coders to minimize distortion, it is possible that the participants did not share everything. I believe it would be more effective to include classroom observation to corroborate or perhaps complicate the portraits they presented of themselves.

Third, identity is dynamic and longitudinal, but the data of this study were collected

within a shorter period. I believe the analysis reflects only a snapshot of their identity formation process. Meanwhile, there might have been new hiring laws, fluctuations in the ELT market within Türkiye, which could have changed the native-speakerist pressures and thus changed Turkish NNESTs' identity formation journeys. Therefore, a follow-up study or a more longitudinal design over multiple years might capture better insights.

Finally, although the researcher's positionality was acknowledged, as an Iranian English teacher, I have been labelled both as "native" in Türkiye and "non-native" elsewhere. Therefore, I might have brought some empathy and potential interpretive bias to the study. Reflexive memos, external audit, and participant validation were used to avoid these biases and the insider-outsider ambiguity, but I believe it is impossible to be completely neutral. I believe it is important to consider the thematic findings as co-constructed interactions between the researcher and the participants.

These limitations do not invalidate the current study, but rather, they only define the borders within which data should be interpreted. Given the mere reliance on self-narration and temporal and contextual factors, scholars and practitioners can better judge if the findings and conclusions resonate with other contexts.

6.8 Recommendations for Future Research

Considering the listed limitations of the study, future studies on Turkish NNESTs can adopt a more longitudinal study design that would capture their identity formation process across important career stages such as graduation, induction, mid-career, and potential transition into other careers. Temporal depth can also reveal how important events such as reforms, economic shocks, and immigration policies can change the process.

Second, mixed-method studies can benefit the field through a large number of quantitative surveys with qualitative cases. A nationwide teacher survey measuring self-efficacy, perceived discrimination, and job satisfaction could measure how common the issues found in this study are. Researchers could complement statistics by including personal stories that can add depth and context to the findings. A multi-level analysis can explore further to find out if factors such as the type of institution, teachers' CEFR proficiency level are linked to their professional well-being.

Third, there can be intervention-based studies as small-scale experimental or quasi-experimental designs, to study the impact of identity-focused teacher education modules,

bias-mitigation workshops for hiring panels, or peer mentoring circles on NNESTs' self-confidence and employment journeys. The participants can receive critical language awareness training, and then the researcher can study their employment and early career struggles. Turkish NNESTs can also conduct action research to document their classroom innovations and the benefits of bilingualism.

Fourth, future research can conduct comparative cross-cultural studies to examine how various conditions can shape the experiences related to native-speakerism. Comparing data from Türkiye with other countries and cultures would help separate broad global language teaching ideologies from specific labor market conditions impacted by local conditions. Those studies can be used to find out if successful policy interventions can also be adapted in Türkiye.

Fifth, future studies can adopt digital ethnography as teachers often build their professional identities through online platforms like Instagram, Telegram channels, and institutional webinars. Online platforms might act as spaces for NNESTs as a refuge from discrimination and related challenges. Examining how Turkish NNESTs use online platforms to present their expertise, expand international networks, or hunt for remote work opportunities. Overall, future studies need to go beyond listing the challenges of native-speakerism to more experimental studies that can test reform strategies. These studies can deepen academic understanding of teacher identity by providing more context-sensitive suggestions that can dismantle structural biases and support Turkish NNESTs. 6.7 Final Reflections

Sixth, there can be intersectional studies because native-speakerism can intersect with gender, regional accent, ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic status. Future projects can map these overlapping identities and the way they promote or hinder discrimination. For example, the studies can ask whether female NNESTs with specific local accents experience more hiring bias than male teachers. A sequential-exploratory research design can lead to better target-specific policies.

Seventh, the majority of the studies focus on teachers' perception; however, decision-makers would be interested in finding out if a teacher's identity reconstruction reflects in their learning. Studies can study correlations between NNESTs' self-reported professional identity strength and their students' progress on language proficiency or engagement. There can be studies comparing classes taught by highly confident NNESTs with those

with lower-confident teachers. They can offer their findings to show whether teacher identity strength supports students' achievement.

Eighth, there can be corpus and discourse analyses studies of public narratives, job advertisements, news articles, and social media posts that could find the frequencies and the ways native-speakerism appears in Türkiye. They can also track challenges before and after any major policy changes to show if public discourse is changing or not. There can also be focus-group discussions among HR managers to examine their discourse on hiring decisions.

This study began with a fundamental question: how do Turkish NNESTs navigate and reconstruct their professional identities within a system that privileges nativeness? The narratives presented herein reveal teachers who are resilient, reflective, and deeply committed to their professional growth despite facing systemic bias. Rather than capitulating to the constraints imposed upon them, these educators actively reimagine what it means to be an effective English teacher in a globalized, multilingual world. Their journeys demonstrate that nativeness, far from being a necessary condition for teaching excellence, is but one thread in the rich tapestry of language education. True professional competence lies not in the accident of birth but in the deliberate cultivation of empathy, expertise, adaptability, and pedagogical commitment. It is hoped that this study contributes, however modestly, to a future where ELT recognizes and celebrates the diverse identities of all its teachers, native and non-native alike.

6.9 Crafting My Own Identity Through the Study of Others

This study reshaped my own professional identity as well. I questioned my assumptions about competence and legitimacy after considering Yazan's (2018) teacher identity framework and Positioning Theory. I was aware of native-speakerism when I started this research, but analyzing the participants' narratives and stories sharpened my critical language awareness. Listening to participants' life stories strengthened my listening skills and deepened my appreciation for Turkish NNESTs. The participants' resilience catalyzed my own, and their strategies to reclaim agency inspired me and made me more aware of my multilingual background.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: FORM OF APPROVAL AND CONSENT

Bu çalışma, **Yerlililiğin Türkiyedeki İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Kimlik Gelişimlerindeki Etkisi** başlıklı bir araştırma çalışması olup **Türkçe konuşan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin mesleki kimliklerini inşa etmelerinde destekleyici mekanizmaların ortaya çıkarılması** amacını taşımaktadır. Çalışma, **Hamideh Hamdi Khosroshahi** tarafından yürütülmekte ve sonuçları ile **İngilizce öğretmenlerinin eğitim programlarının** gelişimine ışık tutulacaktır.

- Bu çalışmaya katılımınız gönüllülük esasına dayanmaktadır.
- Çalışmanın amacı doğrultusunda, öncelikle katılımcılardan bir adet biyografi yazısı toplanıp ardından üç aylık süre zarfında aylık görüşmelerle bir aylık süre içerisinde yaşadığı ırk ayrımcılıklarını anlatan bir yansıtma raporu istenecektir.
- İsminizi yazmak ya da kimliğinizi açığa çıkaracak bir bilgi vermek zorunda değilsiniz/araştırmada katılımcıların isimleri gizli tutulacaktır.
- Araştırma kapsamında toplanan veriler, sadece bilimsel amaçlar doğrultusunda kullanılacak, araştırmanın amacı dışında ya da bir başka araştırmada kullanılmayacak ve gerekmesi halinde, sizin (yazılı) izniniz olmadan başkalarıyla paylaşılmayacaktır.
- İstemeniz halinde sizden toplanan verileri inceleme hakkınız bulunmaktadır.
- Sizden toplanan veriler korunacak ve araştırma bitiminde arşivlenecek veya imha edilecektir.
- Veri toplama sürecinde/süreçlerinde size rahatsızlık verebilecek herhangi bir soru/talep olmayacaktır. Yine de katılımınız sırasında herhangi bir sebepten rahatsızlık hissederseniz çalışmadan istediğiniz zamanda ayrılabilirsiniz. Çalışmadan ayrılmanız durumunda sizden toplanan veriler çalışmadan çıkarılacak ve imha edilecektir.

Gönüllü katılım formunu okumak ve değerlendirmek üzere ayırdığınız zaman için teşekkür ederim.

Çalışma hakkındaki sorularınızı Hamideh HAMDI KHOSROSHAHI'ye yöneltebilirsiniz.

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Questionnaire

Date:

Dear Participant,

The goal of this questionnaire is to gather information about your background, which will be kept confidential. Thank you in advance for your participation. Please provide the appropriate information for the following questions:

Name:

Surname:

Age:

Gender:

Ethnicity:

Email address:

Telephone Number:

Latest Educational Degree:

B.A.:

School Name:

M.A.:

School Name:

Ph.D.:

School Name:

Language Teaching Certificate(s) *if any*:

Current Employment Status:

Name of the Current Institution you are working at:

Type of the institutions you have worked at previously and how long:

Language School: Yes years/months No

Schools: Yes years/months No

Higher Education: Yes years/months No

Your Total Teaching Experience (As years): _____

APPENDIX C: BIOGRAPHY ESSAY

Biography Essay

Date:

Name:

Dear participant, in this essay you are required to write your chronological biography following the prompts below, regarding the experiences you have had with the English Language as a learner, student-teacher, and teacher. The minimum number of words may not be below 500 words.

- *Your experiences as a language learner regarding your English teachers, their behaviors, attitudes, and habits*
 - *As a language learner have you ever had a native English teacher?*
 - *If yes, do you think you were lucky and it contributed to your English knowledge?*
 - *If not, do you wish you could have had one? Do you think it would have been helpful for your English knowledge?*
- *Your experiences with the education program and your teachers in the Department of English Language Teaching at the Faculty of Education.*
- *Your experiences since the beginning of your professional life regarding the challenges you have faced as a non-native English teacher*
- *The time of deciding to be an English teacher and the motivations behind it*
- *Your experiences and difficulties during the recruitment processes.*

APPENDIX D: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Thank you very much for your time and agreement to participate in this study. My name is Hamideh Hamdi Khosroshahi, and I am a PhD candidate at Anadolu University. I am also an English teacher, but I temporarily changed my career. Today, we are going to talk about you, your experiences and reflections about your professional identity as a non-native English-speaking teacher, focusing on challenges you might have faced about native-speakerism. This interview is part of my research project that explores how Turkish non-native English teachers construct their professional identities. I would like to assure you that all the information you share will be kept confidential, and all data will be used only for academic research purposes within the scope of my doctoral dissertation. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask at any time. Before we begin, do you have any questions for me? do I have your permission to start the audio recording?

Interviewee Information

- Name:
- Position:
- Years of Experience:
- Background (Native/Non-Native English Teacher):

Interview Questions

1. Attributes of a Good Language Teacher

In your opinion, what attributes do you believe are essential for a good language teacher?

2. Competency of Non-Native English Teachers

Do you think non-native English teachers can achieve the same level of linguistic competency as native teachers? Why or why not?

3. Comparative Teaching Styles

Are there any notable similarities or differences in teaching styles between native and non-native English teachers?

4. Teacher-Student Relationship

In your opinion, how should the relationship of an English teacher be with their students?

5. Teacher-Administration Relationship

In your opinion, how should the relationship of an English teacher be with the administration?

6. Diverse Relationships with Students

Do native and non-native English teachers form different types of relationships with students? If so, why do you think this happens?

7. Diverse Relationships with the Administration

Do native and non-native English teachers have different types of relationships with the administration? If yes, why?

8. Self-Comparison with Native Teachers

How do you compare your teaching abilities with those of native English-speaking colleagues, particularly in terms of student achievement?

9. Perception of Native vs Non-Native Teachers

Do you believe native English-speaking teachers are generally better teachers than non-native ones? Can you justify your answer?

10. Sharing Groups or Classes

- Have you shared any groups or classes with native teachers?
- If yes, how did you feel about it?

11. Students' Comparison of Teachers

- Do you think students compare non-native and native teachers in terms of competency?
- If yes, how does this make you feel?
- How does it affect your motivation and classroom practices?

12. Benefits and Adversities in Cooperation

- What are the benefits and challenges of working with native English-speaking teachers in an educational context?

13. Experiences of Tension or Conflict

- Have you experienced any tension or conflict with a native English-speaking teacher?

14. Witnessing Tensions

- Have you witnessed any tensions between local teachers and native English-speaking teachers?

15. Job Finding Challenges

- Have you faced challenges in finding a job as a non-native English teacher?
- If yes, how has this affected your feelings and motivation?

16. Discrimination in Employment Terms

- Have you experienced discrimination in terms of salary, workload, or other compensatory aspects?
- If yes, how has this impacted you emotionally and motivationally?

17. Additional Challenges

Are there any other challenges you face as a non-native English teacher that we haven't discussed?

Additional Notes:

SECOND ROUND OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: FOCUS ON NNEST'S CAREER CHOICES, PERCEPTIONS, AND CHALLENGES

1. Career Choice

- Why did you choose the career of teaching English?

2. Reflecting on Career Choice

- If you could go back in time, would you choose this career again? Please explain your reasons.

3. Alternative Career Opportunities

- If offered a new career with better income, would you consider leaving the teaching profession? Why or why not?

4. Self-Assessment of Competence

- As a non-native English teacher, do you consider yourself a competent teacher?

Please elaborate.

5. Strengths and Weaknesses

- What are your perceived strengths and weaknesses as an English teacher?

6. Self-Perceived Value

- Do you consider yourself a valuable teacher in your current workplace? What factors contribute to your perception?

7. Perception by Administration

- Do you feel that your current administration values and appreciates your contributions? Please share your reasons.

8. Students' Perception

- In your opinion, how are non-native English teachers perceived by their students?

9. Colleagues' Perception

- How do you think you are perceived by your colleagues?

10. Expectations vs. Reality

- How would you like to be treated at your current institution, and are there discrepancies between your expectations and the actual situation?

11. Evolution as a Teacher

- Compared to your first year of teaching, how have your beliefs, emotions, and motivation changed?

12. Specific Challenges

- Do you face specific challenges as a non-native English teacher? If so, what are these challenges, and how do you address them?

13. Support from Administration

- Have you received support from your administration to aid in your professional development? Can you give examples?

14. Support for Local Teachers

- In your view, should school administrations provide more support to their local

English teachers? If yes, in what ways?

Additional Notes:



APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Introduction

- Facilitator's Name:
- Date and Time:
- Location:
- Brief Overview of the Session's Purpose

Participant Introduction

1. Personal Introduction

- Please introduce yourself, including your background and experience as a non-native English teacher.

Discussion Questions

2. Evaluating the Profession in Turkey

- How do you evaluate the profession of being a non-native English teacher in Turkey?

3. Comparison with Native English-Speaking Teachers

- What do you think your career would be like if you were a native English-speaking teacher?

4. Teacher-Training Programs

- Do you believe your teacher-training program adequately prepared you for your career? In what ways could it have been better?

5. Changing Perceptions of Teaching English

- Have your perceptions about teaching English changed during your career? If yes, how?

6. Self-Image Evolution

- Have your perceptions about your “self-image” as a teacher evolved during your career? How has this affected your teaching practices?

7. Preference as School Administration

- If you were in charge of a school's administration, would you prefer to employ native speakers or local English teachers? Please justify your choice.

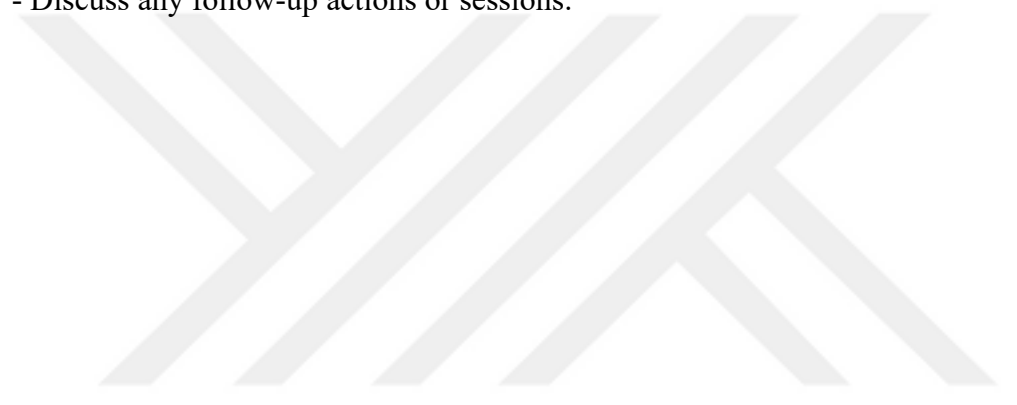
8. Preference as a Parent

- As a parent, would you prefer to hire a native-speaking language tutor or a Turkish NNEST? Please explain your reasoning.

Closing Remarks

- Thank the participants for their time and insights.

- Discuss any follow-up actions or sessions.



APPENDIX F: REFLECTIVE EMAIL

Reflective Email–Murat

Date: December 4, 2023

Hi,

I really don't know what to say, but I'll try. These days I'm just teaching Turkish and honestly it feels good. It's not perfect, of course, but I feel more free. I work with nice students, I decide my own hours, and I don't have to deal with school problems anymore. Before, I was always busy, always trying to do better, show that I'm good enough. Now, I don't feel that stress. I just teach and go on with my day. It's simple, but it's enough for now.

Sometimes I think about those years and I don't know how I did it. Maybe I was pushing too hard. Now I feel more calm. I don't think too much about the future, but for the first time I feel like I'm not running after anything. Maybe I needed this break. Maybe it's not a break, maybe it's just a new way. I'm not sure yet. But it's okay.

Best,

Murat

APPENDIX G: ETİK KURUL BELGESİ BEYANNAMESİ

Evrak Kayıt Tarihi: 13.06.2022	Protokol No: 329012	Tarih: 24.06.2022



ANADOLU ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERÎ BİLİMLER BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMA VE YAYIN ETİĞİ KURULU
KARAR BELGESİ

ÇALIŞMANIN TÜRÜ:	Doktora Tez Çalışması
KONU:	Eğitim Bilimleri
BAŞLIK:	Yerlililiğin Türkiyedeki İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Kimlik Gelişimlerindeki Etkisi
PROJE/TEZ YÜRÜTÜCÜSÜ:	Doç. Dr. Ali MERÇ
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Ph.D. – Anadolu Üniversitesi, Türkiye (İkinci Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi, 2018–2025)

Yüksek Lisans – Shahid Madani Azarbaycan Üniversitesi (İkinci Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi, GPA: 4.00, 2008–2011)

Lisans – Tebriz Üniversitesi (İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı, GPA: 4.00, 2003–2007)

İş Deneyimi

Editör – BROAD (The British Journal of Learning and Teaching) (2024–Devam)

UNHCR Jakarta, Endonezya – Farsça/Darice Tercümanı ve Eğitim Sorumlusu (2021–2023)

American Culture School, Eskişehir – İngilizce Öğretmeni (2018–2021)

Ficosa International Automotive Company, Bursa – İngilizce Eğitmeni ve Tercüman

Ek Öğretim Deneyimi

Sınav Koleji, Bursa – İngilizce Öğretmeni

UKLA Academy, Bursa – İngilizce Öğretmeni

Payam Noor Üniversitesi, Tebriz – Öğretim Görevlisi

Goldis Language Institute – İngilizce Öğretmeni

Sertifikalar

TKT – Cambridge Üniversitesi (2007–2009)

TTC – Cavendish College of London (2004–2009)

Projeler

Communication WITH Communities, UNHCR: Jakarta'daki yerinden edilmiş topluluklarla iletişimi ve bilgi paylaşımını geliştiren projeler yürüttü.

Gönüllülük

Teach a Man to Fish: UN Volunteers aracılığıyla 2023'te School Enterprise Challenge iş planlarını değerlendirdi.

Yayınlar

"Study Skills for Students of English" kitabının Farsçaya çevirisi (Richard Yorkey)

"A Cross-Linguistic Transfer Study..." makalesi, International Journal of Language and Linguistics

"A corpus study on topic shifting discourse macro markers in TED talks", e-Kafkas Eğitim Araştırmaları Dergisi

"Listening Self-Efficacy Beliefs..." makalesi, ELT Forum: Journal of English Language Teaching

