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Department of Foreign Language Education

English Language Teaching Program

EXPLORING THE TEACHER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT TEACHERS OF  
ENGLISH IN TÜRKİYE

Hatice Kübra ÇETİN

Ph.D. Dissertation

Ankara, 2026

With leadership, research, innovation, high quality education and change,

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ENGLISH IN TÜRKİYE

TÜRKİYE'DEKİ İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLİĞİ ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN ÖĞRETMEN KİMLİĞİ  
GELİŞİMİNİN ARAŞTIRILMASI

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Ph.D. Dissertation

Ankara, 2026

### Acceptance and Approval

To the Graduate School of Educational Sciences,

This dissertation, prepared by **HATİCE KÜBRA ÇETİN** and entitled “Exploring the Teacher Identity Development of Student Teachers of English in Türkiye” has been approved as a thesis for the Degree of **Ph.D.** in the **Program of English Language Teaching** in the **Department of Foreign Language Education** by the members of the Examining Committee.

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Directors of the Graduate  
School, issued on ....../....../.....  
with the number of .....

This is to certify that this dissertation has been approved by the aforementioned examining committee members on 16/06/2026 in accordance with the relevant articles of the Rules and Regulations of Hacettepe University Graduate School of Educational Sciences, and was accepted as a **Ph.D. Dissertation** in the **Program of English Language Teaching** in the **Department of Foreign Language Education** by the Board of Directors of the Graduate School of Educational Sciences on ...../...../.....

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## Abstract

Teacher identity has long been an important area of interest in the field of English language teaching. Although previous studies have examined the professional identity development of both in-service and pre-service teachers, relatively fewer studies have focused on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student teachers at different stages of teacher education before entering the profession. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the professional identity development of EFL student teachers in Türkiye and to explore the factors that facilitate or challenge this process. The study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were collected from 204 EFL student teachers through the Early Teacher Identity Measure and analyzed using descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, correlation analysis, hierarchical regression, mediation and moderation analyses, independent samples t-tests, and one-way ANOVA. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and reflective writing and analyzed through inductive thematic analysis with the support of MAXQDA. The quantitative findings showed that participants had a moderate-to-high level of early teacher identity. Self-categorization, self-efficacy, and natural inclination were strongly related. Time of decision to become a teacher, self-categorization, and teaching experience emerged as central factors, whereas demographic variables such as age and gender had limited explanatory power. The qualitative findings revealed that identity development was shaped by role models, voluntary embrace of teaching, pedagogical confidence, classroom management concerns, emotional meanings, and future-oriented professional ideals. The study concludes that EFL student teachers' professional identity development is a dynamic, multidimensional, and negotiated process.

**Keywords:** teacher identity, student teacher identity, professional identity development, English language teacher education, thematic analysis

## Öz

Öğretmen kimliği, İngilizce öğretmenliği eğitimi alanında uzun süredir önemli bir araştırma konusu olmuştur. Önceki çalışmalar hem hizmet içi öğretmenlerin hem de öğretmen adaylarının mesleki kimlik gelişimini incelemiş olsa da, mesleğe başlamadan önce öğretmen eğitiminin farklı aşamalarındaki İngilizce öğretmeni adaylarına odaklanan çalışmalar görece sınırlıdır. Bu nedenle bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki İngilizce öğretmeni adaylarının mesleki kimlik gelişimini incelemeyi ve bu süreci kolaylaştıran ya da zorlaştıran faktörleri ortaya koymayı amaçlamıştır. Çalışmada açıklayıcı sıralı karma yöntem deseni kullanılmıştır. Nicel veriler, 204 İngilizce öğretmeni adayından Erken Öğretmen Kimliği Ölçeği aracılığıyla toplanmış; betimsel istatistikler, açıklayıcı faktör analizi, korelasyon analizi, hiyerarşik regresyon, aracılık ve düzenleyicilik analizleri, bağımsız örneklem t-testi ve tek yönlü ANOVA ile analiz edilmiştir. Nitel veriler ise yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve yansıtıcı yazma görevleri yoluyla toplanmış ve MAXQDA desteğiyle tümevarımsal tematik analiz kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Nicel bulgular, katılımcıların orta-yüksek düzeyde erken öğretmen kimliğine sahip olduğunu göstermiştir. Öz-kategorizasyon, öğretmen olma öz-yeterliği ve çocuklara ve öğretmenliğe yönelik doğal eğilim birbiriyle güçlü biçimde ilişkili bulunmuştur. Öğretmen olmaya karar verme zamanı, öz-kategorizasyon ve öğretmenlik deneyimi temel faktörler olarak öne çıkarken, yaş ve cinsiyet gibi demografik değişkenlerin açıklayıcı gücü sınırlı kalmıştır. Nitel bulgular ise kimlik gelişiminin rol modeller, öğretmenliği gönüllü olarak benimseme, pedagojik güven, sınıf yönetimi kaygıları, duygusal anlamlar ve geleceğe dönük mesleki idealler tarafından şekillendiğini ortaya koymuştur. Sonuç olarak çalışma, İngilizce öğretmeni adaylarının mesleki kimlik gelişiminin dinamik, çok boyutlu ve müzakereye dayalı bir süreç olduğunu göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** öğretmen kimliği, öğrenci öğretmen kimliği, profesyonel kimlik gelişimi, İngilizce Öğretmenliği Eğitimi, tematik analiz

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## **Symbols and Abbreviations**

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**ELT:** English Language Teaching

**ETIM:** Early Teacher Identity Measure

**L2:** Second/Foreign language

**S-Cat:** Self-categorization as a Teacher

**SEBT:** Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher

**NICT:** Natural Inclination towards Children and Teaching

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Teacher identity has become one of the central concepts in understanding teacher learning, teacher development, and professional becoming. Rather than being viewed as a fixed characteristic or a stable professional label, teacher identity is increasingly understood as a dynamic, multidimensional, and continuously developing construct shaped by personal histories, educational experiences, social interactions, institutional contexts, and future professional expectations (Yao & Slater, 2024). It influences how teachers and teacher candidates perceive themselves, interpret their roles, make pedagogical decisions, respond to challenges, and position themselves within the teaching profession (Wei & Chen, 2019). In the field of English language teaching, teacher identity is particularly significant because EFL teachers are expected not only to possess linguistic and pedagogical knowledge, but also to negotiate cultural, communicative, emotional, and contextual demands (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Therefore, understanding how teacher identity is formed and transformed is essential for gaining deeper insight into the process of becoming a teacher.

#### **Statement of Problem**

Understanding teacher identity and its development has become an important concern in the field of teacher education, as it is closely related to teachers' professional learning, pedagogical decisions, and long-term professional growth (Zhang & Hwang, 2023). Teacher identity refers to the complex interaction of personal experiences, beliefs, values, emotions, and professional roles that shape how individuals understand themselves as teachers (Sang, 2023). In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, the issue becomes even more significant because EFL teachers are expected to operate within linguistically, culturally, and pedagogically diverse contexts (Izadinia, 2013). Therefore, understanding how EFL teachers and student teachers construct their professional identities is essential for supporting their development as effective language educators.

Previous research on novice teachers has shown that the transition from being a student to becoming a teacher may create various tensions and conflicts (Wang, 2021). These conflicts often emerge from the gap between the expectations developed during teacher education and the realities encountered in actual teaching contexts. Such findings suggest that teacher identity should not be considered only after teachers enter the profession, but it should be addressed from the beginning of teacher education. Student teachers need opportunities to encounter the realities of teaching through classroom observation, reflective practice, practicum-related experiences, and other forms of professional engagement. In this way, they can participate more consciously in their identity formation process and become better prepared to negotiate the theory-practice gap.

Student teachers enter teacher education programs with certain beliefs, values, and assumptions about teaching, even when they do not have direct teaching experience. As Furlong (2013) argues, these pre-existing beliefs are shaped by their long histories as learners. Although student teachers may not yet be experienced teachers, they are experienced learners, and their previous learning experiences may strongly influence how they imagine teaching and how they position themselves as future teachers. During teacher education, these beliefs may be reinforced, questioned, or transformed. However, research on student teachers in the early stages of teacher education remains relatively limited, particularly in relation to how their pre-existing beliefs and developing professional identities interact over time (Sang, 2023). Moreover, there is still limited understanding of professional identity development among student teachers in the Turkish EFL context (Kayabaşı & Koç, 2024). This indicates a need for further research that examines how EFL student teachers construct, negotiate, and develop their professional identities throughout their teacher education.

Another limitation in the existing literature concerns methodology. Although interest in student teachers' professional identity development has increased, much of the existing knowledge has been produced through qualitative studies (Zeng & Liu, 2024). Qualitative research has provided valuable insights into the personal, contextual, and emotional

dimensions of teacher identity; however, it may remain limited in terms of systematic comparison and broader generalization (Friesen & Besley, 2013; Zeng & Liu, 2024). For this reason, recent studies have increasingly emphasized the value of quantitative and mixed methods approaches to teacher identity research (Yan, 2024). Methodological diversity can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping teacher identity by combining measurable patterns with in-depth explanations. Therefore, there is a need for studies that examine EFL student teachers' professional identity development through both quantitative measurement and qualitative exploration. Addressing this gap may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how student teachers develop their professional identities and what factors facilitate or challenge this process in the Turkish EFL teacher education context.

### **Aim and Significance of the Study**

This study aims to examine the professional identity development of EFL student teachers enrolled in English Language Teaching programs in the Turkish context. More specifically, it seeks to explore their early teacher identity levels, the factors associated with their professional identity development, and the ways in which they construct, negotiate, and make sense of becoming future EFL teachers during their teacher education process. By focusing on student teachers from different year levels, the study aims to provide a broader understanding of professional identity development before entry into the teaching profession.

The present study is significant for several reasons. First, although teacher identity has received increasing attention in teacher education research, much of the existing literature has examined the concept through qualitative approaches due to its complex and abstract nature. While qualitative studies have provided valuable insights into the personal and contextual dimensions of identity development, relatively fewer studies have investigated student teacher identity through quantitative or mixed methods designs (Zeng & Liu, 2024). Therefore, by adopting an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the present study contributes to

the literature by combining measurable patterns of early teacher identity with in-depth qualitative explanations of how this identity is experienced and constructed.

Second, the study is significant because it focuses on EFL student teachers before they formally enter the teaching profession. Previous research has often examined teacher identity in relation to novice teachers, practicum experiences, or post-practicum reflections. However, student teachers begin to develop beliefs, expectations, and professional self-understandings long before they become full members of the profession. Examining this process during teacher education can provide important insights into how professional identity is shaped by prior learning experiences, role models, pedagogical confidence, emotional meanings, and future-oriented professional ideals.

Finally, the study may offer implications for EFL teacher education programs, teacher educators, and curriculum developers. Understanding how student teachers develop their professional identities and what factors facilitate or challenge this process can help teacher education programs design more supportive, reflective, and practice-oriented learning experiences. In this sense, the study contributes not only to the literature on EFL teacher identity, but also to the improvement of teacher education practices in the Turkish context.

### **Research Questions**

The existing literature on student teachers' professional identity development has largely focused on teacher candidates who have completed their practicum or have already engaged in intensive school-based teaching experiences (Villegas et al., 2020; Yuan et al., 2019; Yuan & Lee, 2015). However, previous research also emphasizes the need to examine teacher identity formation at earlier stages of teacher education, since such examination can provide valuable insights into how teacher education programs support or shape professional identity development (Prabjandee, 2020). Considering that professional identity may be influenced by various factors, including personal learning histories, role models, teacher education experiences, pedagogical confidence, and practicum-related expectations, further research is needed to explore this process from a more holistic perspective, including student

teachers who are still in the early stages of their professional preparation (Villegas et al., 2020). In light of this background, the present study addressed the following research questions:

RQ1. What is the level of early teacher identity and its sub-dimensions among EFL student teachers?

RQ2. How are EFL student teachers' early teacher identity and its related variables associated with one another?

RQ2.1. What are the relationships between early teacher identity and its sub-dimensions?

RQ2.2. To what extent do the selected demographic variables predict early teacher identity?

RQ2.3. Do selected career-related and demographic variables interact in explaining early teacher identity?

RQ2.4. Does self-categorization mediate the relationship between time of decision to become a teacher and early teacher identity?

RQ3. Which demographic variables are associated with significant differences in EFL student teachers' early teacher identity levels?

RQ4. How do EFL student teachers develop their professional identities during their teacher education program?

RQ5. What factors facilitate or challenge the professional identity development of EFL student teachers?

### **Assumptions**

This study was based on several assumptions related to the participants, data collection instruments, and data analysis procedures. These assumptions were necessary to support the validity and consistency of both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research.

First, it was assumed that the participants, who were EFL student teachers enrolled in teacher education programs, responded to the data collection tools honestly and thoughtfully. In the quantitative phase, participants were expected to read the items of the Early Teacher Identity Measure carefully and provide responses that reflected their actual perceptions of themselves as future teachers. In the qualitative phase, it was assumed that participants provided sincere and reflective responses during the semi-structured interviews and reflective writing tasks. Since the study focused on professional identity development, participants' willingness to reflect on their beliefs, experiences, expectations, and concerns was considered essential.

Second, it was assumed that the instruments used in the study were appropriate for the purposes of the research. The Early Teacher Identity Measure (ETIM) developed by Friesen and Besley (2013) was considered a valid and reliable instrument for examining early teacher identity in the quantitative phase. Its subdimensions, including self-categorization as a teacher, self-efficacy in becoming a teacher, and natural inclination toward children and teaching, were assumed to represent relevant aspects of early teacher identity. In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews and reflective writing tasks were assumed to be suitable methods for exploring participants' developing professional identities in depth. These tools were expected to reveal meanings, experiences, and tensions that might not be fully captured through quantitative measurement alone.

Third, it was assumed that the data obtained from the participants reflected meaningful aspects of their professional identity development. The relationships identified in the quantitative data were interpreted as meaningful associations rather than causal relationships. Similarly, the themes generated through inductive thematic analysis were assumed to provide valid interpretations of participants' experiences, self-perceptions, and professional meaning-making processes. The researcher's subjectivity was addressed through careful coding, reflective engagement with the data, and methodological rigor.

Finally, it was assumed that the integration of quantitative and qualitative data would provide a more comprehensive understanding of EFL student teachers' professional identity development than either method could offer alone. While the quantitative data helped identify general patterns, relationships, and group differences, the qualitative data provided deeper explanations of how these patterns were experienced and interpreted by the participants.

### **Limitations**

The findings of this study should be interpreted considering several limitations related to the research design, sample, instruments, data collection procedures, and the nature of teacher identity as a research construct.

First, the study was conducted with a specific group of EFL student teachers enrolled in English Language Teaching programs in Türkiye. Although the quantitative phase included participants from more than one university, the sample was not equally distributed across institutions and was largely concentrated in one university. Therefore, the findings may not be fully generalizable to all EFL student teachers in Türkiye or to teacher candidates in different institutional, cultural, or geographical contexts. In addition, participation in the study was voluntary, which may have created a self-selection bias. Students who were more interested in teaching, more motivated, or more willing to reflect on their professional identity may have been more likely to participate.

Second, the study employed a cross-sectional design. Although participants from different year levels were included, the study did not follow the same student teachers over time. Therefore, the findings provide a picture of professional identity development at a particular point rather than tracing individual identity development longitudinally. Since teacher identity is dynamic and may change through ongoing experiences, practicum, graduation, and entry into the profession, longitudinal research would be needed to understand how EFL student teachers' professional identities develop and transform over time.

Third, the quantitative data were collected through a self-report scale. Although the Early Teacher Identity Measure demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability in the present study, self-report instruments may be affected by social desirability, limited self-awareness, or differences in participants' interpretation of scale items. Moreover, while the scale made it possible to identify general patterns and relationships among early teacher identity dimensions, it could not fully capture the complexity, emotional depth, and contextual nature of professional identity development.

Fourth, the qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and reflective writing tasks. These methods provided rich and contextual insights into participants' professional identity development; however, they were also dependent on participants' willingness and ability to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Some participants may have provided more detailed and reflective responses than others. In addition, as with all qualitative research, the interpretation of the data was influenced by the researcher's perspective. Although methodological rigor was maintained through careful coding, repeated engagement with the data, and systematic thematic analysis, researcher subjectivity cannot be completely eliminated.

Fifth, the qualitative participant distribution across year levels was not equal. Therefore, the qualitative findings were interpreted thematically rather than through direct comparisons among year groups. This limitation is important because differences in the number of participants across year levels may influence the frequency and density of codes. For this reason, the study avoided making strong claims about developmental differences between grade levels based solely on qualitative code frequencies.

Finally, the study was limited by the abstract, dynamic, and context-sensitive nature of teacher identity itself. Professional identity is shaped by personal histories, social interactions, institutional contexts, emotions, beliefs, and future expectations. Therefore, it cannot be fully captured through a single method, instrument, or research context. The mixed-methods design of this study provided a broader understanding of EFL student teachers' professional identity

development; nevertheless, the findings should be understood as context-bound interpretations rather than universal conclusions.

### **Definitions**

**Identity:** Identity refers to the characteristics, feelings, beliefs, and understandings that distinguish individuals from others and shape how they define themselves (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, n.d.). In this study, identity is understood as a dynamic and socially shaped construct rather than a fixed personal attribute.

**Teacher Identity / Professional Teacher Identity:** Teacher identity is a dynamic and multifaceted construct that refers to how individuals understand, position, and define themselves as teachers. It is shaped by both internal factors, such as personal conceptions of self, intentions, beliefs, and professional goals, and external factors, such as sociocultural contexts, teaching-related experiences, institutional expectations, and social narratives about teachers and teaching (Juutilainen et al., 2024). In this sense, teacher identity refers to the professional self-understanding of individuals who are already engaged in teaching.

**EFL Student Teacher / EFL Teacher Candidate:** An EFL student teacher refers to an individual enrolled in an English Language Teaching program who is preparing to become an English language teacher. In this study, the term is used for undergraduate ELT students who have not yet fully entered the teaching profession but are in the process of developing their professional knowledge, beliefs, experiences, and teacher identities.

**Early Teacher Identity:** Early teacher identity refers to the initial sense of belonging, competence, and orientation toward the teaching profession that develops before full entry into professional teaching. In this study, early teacher identity is examined through three dimensions: self-categorization, self-efficacy in becoming a teacher, and natural inclination toward children and teaching.

**Self-Categorization:** Self-categorization refers to the extent to which individuals see and define themselves as members of a particular professional group. In this study, it refers to the

extent to which EFL student teachers perceive themselves as future teachers and position teaching as part of their self-concept.

**Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher:** Self-efficacy in becoming a teacher refers to student teachers' beliefs about their capability to become effective teachers. In this study, it reflects EFL student teachers' confidence in their ability to fulfill teaching-related roles and responsibilities.

**Natural Inclination toward Children and Teaching:** Natural inclination toward children and teaching refers to student teachers' personal orientation, interest, or tendency toward working with learners and engaging in teaching-related activities. In this study, it is considered one of the dimensions of early teacher identity.

## Chapter 2

### Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter presents the theoretical and empirical background of the study. It first discusses the concept of identity in educational contexts and then narrows the focus to teacher identity and student teacher identity. Since the present study focuses on EFL student teachers before their full entry into the teaching profession, particular attention is given to early teacher identity, self-categorization, self-efficacy, teaching-related experiences, and the factors that shape professional identity development during teacher education.

Following the conceptual discussion, the chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study. Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Categorization Theory are used as complementary perspectives to understand EFL student teachers' professional identity development. Social Cognitive Theory provides a basis for understanding the role of self-efficacy, experience, and the interaction between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. Self-Categorization Theory, on the other hand, explains how student teachers begin to position themselves as members of the teaching profession and how this self-positioning contributes to their dynamic professional identities.

The chapter then reviews previous studies on student teacher identity, with particular emphasis on the factors influencing identity development, such as prior learning experiences, role models, teacher education practices, practicum, reflection, emotional meaning-making, and future professional ideals. Finally, research conducted in the Turkish EFL context is reviewed in order to identify the contextual gap addressed by the present study.

#### **Identity**

Identity is a complex and multifaceted construct that refers to how individuals understand, define, and position themselves in relation to others and to the social contexts in which they participate (Flores-Crespo, 2007). It is not a fixed or stable attribute; rather, it develops and changes over time through personal experiences, social interactions, cultural expectations, institutional practices, and future aspirations (Thomson & Gunter, 2011). In

educational contexts, identity is particularly important because it influences how individuals perceive themselves as learners, make educational and career-related decisions, interact with others, and participate in learning environments (Cummins, 2015).

Research on identity in education has increasingly moved away from viewing identity as a static personal characteristic and has instead emphasized its dynamic, relational, and context-sensitive nature (Negru-Subtirica, 2024). From this perspective, identity is shaped through the interaction between the individual and the educational environment. Students' previous learning experiences, relationships with teachers and peers, institutional expectations, and broader sociocultural conditions all contribute to how they understand themselves and their possible futures (Flum & Kaplan, 2012). Therefore, identity formation in education should be understood as an ongoing process through which individuals negotiate who they are, where they belong, and who they may become (Haugh, 2008; Kaplan et al., 2021)

This dynamic understanding of identity is especially relevant to teacher education (Shaffer, 2021). Since becoming a teacher involves more than acquiring professional knowledge and skills, identity plays a central role in how individuals begin to imagine themselves in relation to the teaching profession. Before entering the profession, student teachers bring with them personal histories, beliefs, values, and experiences as learners. These elements influence how they interpret teacher education, how they respond to teaching-related experiences, and how they begin to construct a professional self (Schachter & Rich, 2011). For this reason, identity provides a necessary conceptual foundation for understanding teacher identity and student teacher identity, which are discussed in the following sections (Baguley, 2015; Kapoor & Gardner-McCune, 2022).

### **Teacher Identity**

Teacher identity refers to the way in which in-service teachers understand, define, and position themselves as members of the teaching profession (Cross Francis et al., 2018). It is not a fixed professional label, but a dynamic and multifaceted construct shaped by the

interaction of personal, social, emotional, and contextual factors. Teachers' professional identities are influenced by their beliefs, values, prior learning and teaching experiences, institutional settings, relationships with students and colleagues, and broader sociocultural expectations about teaching (Lojdová et al., 2021). Therefore, teacher identity involves the integration of personal understandings of the self with professional roles, responsibilities, and practices.

Teacher identity has become a central area of inquiry in teacher education and professional development because it is closely connected to how teachers think, act, and make decisions in educational settings (Cheung, et al., 2015; Hong et al., 2024). The way teachers perceive themselves influences their pedagogical choices, classroom management approaches, relationships with learners, responses to institutional expectations, and commitment to professional growth (Kayi-Aydar, 2019). In this sense, teacher identity is not only an internal perception of the self, but also a practical and relational construct that becomes visible through teachers' actions, interactions, and participation in school contexts (Torres-Cepeda & Ramos-Holguín, 2019).

The review of the related literature commonly emphasizes that teacher identity is socially constructed and context-sensitive (Hong et al., 2024; Pennington & Richards, 2016). Teachers do not develop their professional identities in isolation; rather, their identities are shaped and reshaped through interaction with students, colleagues, mentors, institutional cultures, and social narratives about what it means to be a teacher (Cho, 2014; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Sercu, 2006). This perspective highlights that teacher identity continues to evolve throughout teachers' careers as they encounter new teaching contexts, professional challenges, emotional experiences, and changing educational expectations (Villegas et al., 2020). Therefore, understanding teacher identity requires attention to both individual meaning-making and the social environments in which teaching takes place.

Beliefs and past experiences play an important role in the construction of teacher identity. Teachers often bring personal beliefs about teaching, learning, students, and

classroom life into their professional practice (Sang, 2023). These beliefs are influenced by their own experiences as learners, memories of former teachers, cultural expectations, and professional training (Zembylas & Chubbuck, 2015). As teachers enter and continue in the profession, these beliefs may be confirmed, questioned, or transformed through classroom experience and reflection (Edwards & Edwards, 2017). In this respect, teacher identity is closely related to how teachers interpret their past experiences and connect them to their current professional roles.

Another important dimension of teacher identity is emotion. Teaching is not only a cognitive or technical activity, but also an emotional and relational practice (Nazari et al., 2023). Teachers' emotions, such as confidence, satisfaction, anxiety, frustration, care, and commitment, shape how they experience their professional roles and how they respond to challenges in the classroom (Kelchtermans, 2009). Emotional experiences may strengthen professional commitment, but they may also create tensions when teachers face conflicts between their ideals and classroom realities. Therefore, teacher identity should be understood as a process that includes emotional negotiation as well as professional knowledge and pedagogical practice (Furlong, 2013).

Turning to reflective practice, what is known about teacher identity is largely derived from studies conducted with novice teachers (Dimitrieska, 2024). The importance of the engagement in reflective practice is presented by Dimitrieska (2024) as the findings reveal how the reflection functions as a booster for the participant teacher's professional identity. Another significant finding of this study is that teacher identity is constructed and reconstructed in a continuous fashion as the teacher takes part in social activities such as reflective conversations.

Taken together, teacher identity is a complex, dynamic, and socially situated construct that plays a crucial role in teachers' professional lives (Cross Francis et al., 2018). It shapes how teachers understand themselves, how they teach, how they interact with learners, and how they respond to the changing demands of the profession. Since teacher identity is

influenced by prior experiences, beliefs, emotions, and professional contexts, it does not suddenly emerge after entering the profession (Chien, 2019). Rather, its foundations begin to develop earlier, during the period of teacher education. This makes it necessary to examine student teacher identity, which refers to the developing professional self-understanding of individuals before they enter the teaching profession fully (Schellings & Beijaard, 2023).

### **Student Teacher Identity**

Student teacher identity refers to the developing professional self-understanding of individuals who are enrolled in teacher education programs but have not yet fully entered the teaching profession. Unlike teacher identity, which is generally associated with in-service teachers' professional roles and experiences, student teacher identity represents a transitional and developing form of professional identity. It emerges as student teachers move from being learners toward becoming teachers and begin to make sense of what teaching means, what kind of teachers they want to become, and how they position themselves in relation to the profession (Yuan & Lee, 2015).

The development of student teacher identity is shaped by multiple personal, social, and educational factors. Student teachers do not enter teacher education programs as empty subjects; rather, they bring with them prior learning experiences (Furlong, 2013), memories of former teachers (Prabjandee, 2020), personal beliefs about teaching and learning (Sang 2023), and expectations about the profession (Villegas et al., 2020). These pre-existing beliefs and experiences may influence how they interpret teacher education, how they respond to pedagogical knowledge, and how they imagine themselves as future teachers. Therefore, student teacher identity begins to form before formal teaching experience and continues to develop throughout the teacher education process (Torres-Cepeda & Ramos-Holguín, 2019).

Teacher education programs play an important role in shaping student teacher identity (Yuan & Lee, 2015). Through coursework, classroom observations, micro-teaching, practicum, reflective practice, and interaction with teacher educators and peers, student teachers encounter different images of teaching and begin to negotiate their own professional positions

(Prabjandee, 2020; Villegas et al., 2020). These experiences may confirm their initial beliefs, challenge their assumptions, or lead them to reconstruct their understanding of teaching. In this sense, teacher education is not only a process of acquiring pedagogical knowledge and skills; it is also a space where student teachers question, reshape, and strengthen their professional identities (Villegas et al., 2020).

Reflective practice is frequently emphasized in the review of the literature as a central tool for supporting student teacher identity development (Yuan & Mak, 2018). Activities such as reflective writing, narrative inquiry, peer discussion, mentoring, and practicum reflection allow student teachers to examine their experiences, beliefs, emotions, and professional expectations more consciously (Sang, 2023; Torres-Cepeda & Ramos-Holguín, 2019). Through reflection, student teachers may become more aware of how their past learning experiences influence their current views of teaching and how their developing beliefs relate to their future professional roles. Therefore, reflective practices can help student teachers participate more actively in their own identity formation (Yuan & Lee, 2015); Yuan & Mak, 2018).

Another important factor in student teacher identity development is practicum and teaching-related experience. Although student teachers may develop early images of themselves as teachers before practicum, real or practice-oriented teaching experiences often make the profession more concrete (Prabjandee, 2020; Villegas et al., 2020). During practicum, observation, or micro-teaching, student teachers have opportunities to test their pedagogical knowledge, interact with learners, observe mentor teachers, and experience classroom realities. These experiences may strengthen pedagogical confidence and professional commitment, but they may also reveal tensions related to classroom management, authority, student engagement, and the gap between theory and practice. Thus, practicum and field-based experiences can function both as identity-strengthening and identity-challenging spaces (Martel, 2015).

Student teacher identity is also influenced by emotional and future-oriented dimensions (Nazari et al., 2023). Becoming a teacher involves not only learning how to teach, but also developing emotional meanings attached to the profession. Student teachers may associate teaching with care, responsibility, patience, anxiety, satisfaction, or the desire to make a difference in students' lives. At the same time, they construct imagined future teacher selves by thinking about the kind of teachers they want to become. These future-oriented images may include being competent, reflective, innovative, research-informed, or technologically adaptive teachers (Torres-Cepeda & Ramos-Holguín, 2019). Therefore, student teacher identity should be understood as a process shaped by past experiences, present learning, emotional meaning-making, and future professional aspirations.

In sum, student teacher identity is a dynamic, multidimensional, and context-sensitive process that develops throughout teacher education. It is shaped by prior beliefs, learning histories, role models, teacher education experiences, practicum, reflection, emotions, and future-oriented professional ideals. Since student teachers' early professional self-understandings may influence their later teaching practices and professional commitment, examining student teacher identity is essential for understanding the broader process of becoming a teacher (Yuan et al., 2019)

### **Social Cognitive Theory**

Social Cognitive Theory, developed by Bandura (1986), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding human behavior by emphasizing the interaction among personal, behavioral, and environmental factors. The theory is based on the idea of reciprocal determinism, which suggests that individuals are influenced not only by their personal beliefs and abilities, but also by their actions and the social environments in which they participate. In this regard, Social Cognitive Theory is particularly relevant to teacher education because student teachers' professional identity development is shaped by their beliefs about themselves (Sang, 2023), their teaching-related experiences (Prabjandee, 2020), and the opportunities and constraints provided by their educational contexts (Yuan & Lee, 2015). As

Bandura (1986) explains, social cognitive theory highlights the importance of observational learning, self-efficacy, and self-regulatory processes in human learning and development. One of the central concepts of Social Cognitive Theory is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to individuals' beliefs in their capacity to perform the actions required to manage particular situations or achieve desired outcomes (Resnick, 2008). In teacher education, this concept is directly related to student teachers' confidence in their ability to teach, manage classroom situations, support student learning, and respond to professional challenges. Yoon and Goddard (2025) emphasize that teacher self-efficacy involves teachers' beliefs in their capacity to carry out the actions necessary for future teaching situations. Similarly, Yusoff, Mahfar, and Saud (2019) suggest that self-efficacy plays an important role in teachers' career choices, professional beliefs, and performance. From this perspective, student teachers who believe that they can become effective teachers may be more likely to engage actively in teacher education experiences and develop stronger professional identities.

Research has also shown that professional development and learning opportunities grounded in Social Cognitive Theory can improve teachers' self-efficacy and support their instructional practices (Lotter et al., 2018). For example, previous research indicates that professional development programs can strengthen teachers' self-efficacy, which may positively influence classroom practices and classroom management (Petridou et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2024). In a similar vein, Groenewald and Arnold (2025) argue that higher self-efficacy can support professional identity by increasing confidence in one's competencies and encouraging proactive professional behaviors. In the EFL context, examining self-efficacy before teachers enter the profession is especially important because stronger self-efficacy may contribute to more effective language teaching and better learning outcomes, as suggested by Hoca and Tavit (2024).

Social Cognitive Theory is also useful for explaining the role of career commitment in professional identity development (Lin, 2020). Career commitment refers to the emotional investment and dedication individuals show toward their profession. From the perspective of

Social Cognitive Theory, career commitment is influenced by self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Lin (2020) conceptualizes career commitment as an important motivational component in professional development, while it is suggested that teachers with stronger self-efficacy and positive occupational expectations tend to show higher levels of career commitment (Shang et al., 2022). Similarly, Deshpande and Chakraborty (2023) emphasize that confidence in one's capacity to develop new skills and competencies can reduce possible negative effects on career commitment. Therefore, for student teachers, believing that they can improve professionally may support their motivation to remain connected to the teaching profession.

Another important concept within Social Cognitive Theory is professional knowledge. Professional knowledge includes both theoretical and practical understanding that teachers need in order to perform their professional roles effectively (Zangani et al., 2021). According to a research paper, teachers' knowledge of educational theories, practices, and research can strengthen their confidence in their teaching capabilities (Pitkäniemi et al., 2024). Similarly, Yang (2020) reports that professional development opportunities that improve teachers' knowledge and skills are positively associated with self-efficacy. In teacher education, this relationship is particularly important because student teachers' developing knowledge of pedagogy, classroom management, teaching methods, and learner needs may strengthen their belief that they can become competent teachers.

The role of experience is also central to Social Cognitive Theory. Student teachers develop professional beliefs not only through formal coursework, but also through observation, practice, reflection, and interaction with teacher educators, peers, mentor teachers, and learners (Shaukat et al., 2025). Accordingly, observing role model teachers, participating in micro-teaching, engaging in practicum experiences, and reflecting on teaching-related situations may help student teachers evaluate their own capabilities and construct more realistic understandings of teaching. Zhou and Song (2022) suggest that commitment to student learning and supportive institutional environments can strengthen teachers' self-

efficacy. Similarly, Nickel and Zimmer (2019) emphasize that teachers' professional identity can be supported through ongoing professional development and the application of educational ideas in practice. These points indicate that professional identity is strengthened when student teachers have opportunities to connect knowledge, action, and reflection.

In relation to the present study, Social Cognitive Theory provides a useful basis for understanding the role of self-efficacy, pedagogical confidence, career commitment, professional knowledge, and teaching-related experience in EFL student teachers' professional identity development. Since the Early Teacher Identity Measure includes self-efficacy in becoming a teacher as one of its dimensions, this theory directly supports the quantitative part of the study. It also helps interpret the qualitative findings related to pedagogical confidence, practicum, role model teachers, classroom management concerns, and the gap between theoretical preparation and real classroom realities. Therefore, Social Cognitive Theory contributes to the holistic framework of this study by explaining how EFL student teachers' professional identities are shaped through the interaction of beliefs, experiences, actions, and educational environments.

### **Self-Categorization Theory**

Self-Categorization Theory, developed by Turner and his colleagues (1987), provides an important framework for understanding how individuals define themselves in relation to social groups and communities. The theory suggests that people do not construct their identities only as isolated individuals; rather, they also understand themselves through the social categories and groups to which they feel they belong. As Haslam and Reicher (2015) explain, self-categorization is closely related to social identity and group behavior because individuals' sense of belonging to a group influences how they think, act, and position themselves in social contexts. In the context of teacher education, this theory is particularly relevant because student teachers begin to construct their professional identities by gradually positioning themselves as members of the teaching profession (Can & Karacan, 2021).

Within the scope of this study, Self-Categorization Theory helps explain how EFL student teachers identify themselves with the teaching profession (Yermentayeva et al., 2018). Identifying oneself as a future teacher and feeling a sense of belonging to the teaching community may play a significant role in professional identity development. Can and Karacan (2021) also emphasize that professional identity is closely related to how individuals perceive themselves as members of a professional group. From this perspective, student teachers' identity development depends not only on acquiring pedagogical knowledge, but also on whether they begin to categorize themselves as future members of the teaching profession. Therefore, self-categorization functions as a bridge between teacher education experiences and the internalization of a teacher identity.

Self-Categorization Theory also provides a useful perspective for understanding the dynamic nature of student teacher identity. Professional identity is not a fixed or completed state; rather, it develops as student teachers gain experience, interact with others, and participate in teacher education contexts. Friesen and Besley (2013) similarly argue that early teacher identity involves how student teachers begin to see themselves in relation to the teaching profession before fully entering it. In this sense, self-categorization is especially important for early teacher identity because it reflects the extent to which student teachers perceive teaching as part of who they are and who they aim to become. This makes the theory directly relevant to the present study, in which self-categorization is considered one of the key dimensions of early teacher identity.

In addition to explaining social belonging, Self-Categorization Theory is also useful for understanding identity adjustment and reflection. Student teachers' participation in reflective tasks, critical events, and meaningful interactions during teacher education may influence how they categorize themselves and how they revise their professional self-understandings (Friedland, 2015). Schutz et al. (2018) point out that critical events and emotional experiences can shape teachers' professional identity by making them reconsider their roles, responsibilities, and professional positions. In this respect, reflective experiences may help

student teachers become more aware of their developing teacher identities and the social meanings attached to becoming a teacher (Bale & Anderson, 2024).

Reflective practice is therefore an important process in student teacher identity development. Bale and Anderson (2024) suggest that encouraging reflective practices can support the development of professional identity among student teachers. Similarly, Friedland (2015) emphasizes that reflection is central to teaching and teacher education because it allows educators to critically examine their practices, assumptions, and preconceptions. Ferreira (2022) also indicates that reflective practice can contribute to teacher professional identity formation by increasing confidence, supporting collaboration, and developing awareness of the need for change. From the perspective of Self-Categorization Theory, such reflective practices are significant because they allow student teachers to question how they see themselves, how they relate to the teaching community, and how they position themselves as future teachers.

In relation to the present study, Self-Categorization Theory provides a strong theoretical basis for examining EFL student teachers' professional identity development. Since the Early Teacher Identity Measure includes self-categorization as one of its main dimensions, this theory directly supports the quantitative phase of the study. It also helps interpret the qualitative findings related to role model teachers, voluntary embrace of teaching, reflective writing, professional belonging, and future teacher images. Therefore, Self-Categorization Theory contributes to the holistic framework of this study by explaining how EFL student teachers' professional identities are shaped through social belonging, self-positioning, reflective engagement, and identification with the teaching profession.

### **A Holistic Framework**

The discussion above shows that Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Categorization Theory offer complementary perspectives for understanding the professional identity development of student teachers. Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the role of internal cognitive and motivational processes, such as self-efficacy, professional knowledge, and

career-related beliefs. It also explains how identity development is shaped through the reciprocal interaction of personal factors, behaviors, and environmental conditions. From this perspective, student teachers' beliefs in their own competencies, their observations of peers and role models, their participation in teaching-related activities, and their self-regulation of learning experiences all contribute to the development of their professional identities (Polizzi et al., 2021).

Self-Categorization Theory, on the other hand, highlights the social and group-based dimensions of identity development. It explains how individuals define themselves in relation to social groups and how a shared social identity may influence group behavior, belonging, and reciprocal social influence (Haslam & Reicher, 2015). In the context of teacher education, this perspective is important because student teachers do not develop their professional identities in isolation. Rather, they construct their sense of becoming teachers through interactions with classmates, teacher educators, mentor teachers, and the broader educational environment. In this sense, Self-Categorization Theory clarifies how student teachers begin to position themselves as future members of the teaching profession through shared experiences and social participation (Friesen & Besley, 2013).

A holistic framework that brings together Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Categorization Theory makes it possible to examine teacher identity development through the interaction of individual, social, environmental, and reflective processes. While Social Cognitive Theory helps explain how student teachers' self-efficacy, beliefs, actions, and learning environments shape their professional identity, Self-Categorization Theory explains how they develop a sense of belonging to the teaching profession and negotiate their identities through social interaction. Therefore, the combination of these theories provides a more comprehensive perspective on how student teachers participate in learning communities, reflect on their experiences, negotiate professional meanings, and construct their developing teacher identities (Friedland, 2015; Goodnough, 2010; Polizzi et al., 2021).

This integrated framework is particularly useful for examining EFL student teachers' professional identity development because their identity formation involves both personal and social dimensions. On the personal level, student teachers develop beliefs about their teaching abilities, pedagogical knowledge, career commitment, and emotional readiness. On the social level, they interact with teacher educators, peers, mentors, role models, students, and institutional expectations that shape how they understand the teaching profession. By combining these two theoretical perspectives, researchers and educators can better understand the factors influencing teacher identity at multiple levels, from personal beliefs and actions to broader sociocultural contexts (Gu & Benson, 2015).

The holistic framework also supports the mixed-methods nature of the present study. The quantitative phase focuses on measurable dimensions of early teacher identity, including self-categorization, self-efficacy in becoming a teacher, and natural inclination toward children and teaching. These dimensions are closely related to the theoretical assumptions of Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Categorization Theory. The qualitative phase, on the other hand, provides deeper insight into how student teachers experience, interpret, and negotiate their developing professional identities through role models, teaching-related experiences, reflective writing, classroom-related concerns, emotional meanings, and future teacher images. In this way, the holistic framework helps connect the measurable structure of early teacher identity with the lived and meaning-based processes through which this identity develops.

In conclusion, the integration of Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Categorization Theory offers a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the complex nature of student teacher identity development. This framework brings together internal and external processes by considering how individual beliefs, self-efficacy, professional knowledge, social belonging, reflection, and contextual interactions contribute to the formation of professional identity. Therefore, it provides a comprehensive basis for examining how EFL student teachers begin to see themselves as future teachers, how they gain confidence through experience, how they

position themselves within the teaching profession, and how they construct their professional identities during teacher education (Neupane, 2024; Williams & Power, 2010).

### **Teacher Identity in the Turkish Context**

This section reviews previous studies on teacher identity development conducted in the Turkish context. Although the present study focuses on EFL student teachers, the review is not limited to English language education. Studies from other subject areas are also included in order to provide a broader picture of how teacher identity has been investigated in Türkiye.

In Türkiye, research on teacher identity has gradually expanded in parallel with the growing international interest in the concept as a dynamic, contextual, and developmental construct. Existing studies indicate that professional identity among teacher candidates is shaped by multiple factors, including prior learning experiences (Saban et al., 2007; Karabay, 2016), teacher education programs (Çelik & Kalkan, 2019; Mutlu, 2025), teaching practice (Taşdemir & Seferoğlu, 2022; Efeoğlu, 2023), career motivations and future aspirations (Ölçü, 2014; Ölmez-Çağlar, 2022), self-efficacy beliefs (Başdal & Özen, 2025), technological competence (Can & Karacan, 2021), and broader social and institutional expectations (Şahin, 2021; Mutlu, 2025). However, studies focusing specifically on English language teacher identity, particularly on the early professional identity development of student EFL teachers across different years of teacher education, are still relatively limited.

One important line of research in the Turkish context has examined teacher identity through metaphor analysis. Since metaphors can reveal implicit beliefs and tacit understandings about teaching, they have frequently been used to explore how prospective teachers conceptualize themselves and the teaching profession. For instance, Karabay (2016) investigated prospective Turkish language teachers' views of teacher identity through metaphors and found that many participants associated teaching with traditional roles such as knowledge provider, molder, authority figure, and healer. The study also reported that the metaphors did not significantly differ across academic class levels, suggesting that traditional

views of teaching may remain stable throughout teacher education unless they are explicitly challenged.

Similarly, metaphor-based studies with pre-service EFL teachers have shown that teaching experience and classroom practice may influence how teacher candidates conceptualize their future professional roles. Efeoglu (2023) examined pre-service EFL teachers' professional identity perceptions through metaphors and compared participants with different levels of teaching experience. The findings showed that as participants gained more classroom practice through microteaching or practicum, their metaphors tended to shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered understandings of teaching. This finding is important because it suggests that practice-based experiences may not only improve pedagogical skills but also transform how student teachers imagine the teacher role.

Earlier metaphor studies in the Turkish EFL context also support this pattern. Saban et al. (2007), Seferoğlu et al. (2009), Şimşek (2014), and Kavanoz (2016) demonstrated that prospective teachers' conceptualizations of teaching are influenced by culture, gender, personal experiences as students, and the amount of classroom experience they receive. In particular, Seferoğlu et al. (2009) found that the teacher-as-facilitator metaphor differentiated pre-service and in-service English teachers, while Şimşek (2014) reported a shift from teacher-as-knower to teacher-as-facilitator after an ELT-related course. Kavanoz (2016) similarly showed that pre-service EFL teachers' metaphors gradually moved from teacher-centered toward more student-centered conceptualizations as their training progressed. These studies collectively suggest that teacher identity in Türkiye is not fixed, but may be reshaped through coursework, reflection, and practice-based learning.

Another strand of research has focused more directly on pre-service English language teachers' professional identity development during teaching practice. Taşdemir and Seferoğlu (2022), for example, explored Turkish pre-service English language teachers' views on professional identity during practice teaching through reflective journals and focus group interviews. Their findings showed that professional identity development was a continuous

process involving language-related, personal, and pedagogical components. The study also found a transition from individual perspectives at the beginning of practice teaching, such as personal characteristics and role models, toward more institutional perspectives at the end of the process, such as teacher authority and professional responsibilities. This is particularly relevant to the present study because it highlights the role of teaching practice, reflection, and institutional expectations in shaping pre-service EFL teachers' developing professional identities.

A further group of studies has investigated early teacher identity through the Early Teacher Identity Measure (ETIM) developed by Friesen and Besley (2013). In a large-scale study, Çelik and Kalkan (2019) examined the early teacher identity perceptions of 1,079 pre-service teachers enrolled in a faculty of education and a pedagogical formation certificate program at Pamukkale University. Using the Turkish version of the ETIM adapted by Arpacı and Bardakçı (2015), they found that pre-service teachers had high levels of early teacher identity. Their findings also revealed significant differences according to gender, faculty type, department, and class level among education faculty students. This study is important because it shows that early teacher identity can be empirically examined in the Turkish context and that demographic and educational variables may be related to teacher candidates' professional identity perceptions.

More specifically within EFL teacher education, Babanoğlu and Agcam (2019) investigated Turkish EFL teacher candidates' early teacher identity. Their participants were senior ELT students from a state university and a private university in Türkiye, and data were collected through the ETIM during teaching practicum. The findings showed that Turkish EFL teacher candidates had high levels of early teacher identity. The study also reported some significant differences in relation to gender and university type. This study is highly relevant to the present research because it directly focuses on early teacher identity among Turkish EFL teacher candidates. However, since it was limited to senior students, it does not show how early teacher identity may differ across different years of teacher education.

Technology-oriented studies have also contributed to the understanding of early teacher identity in Türkiye. Can and Karacan (2021) examined pre-service English teachers' early teacher identity in relation to emerging ICT technologies training. Their mixed-method study found that participants reported identities such as technologically competent teacher, productive teacher, creative teacher, modern teacher, social teacher, mentor teacher, and lifelong learner. The authors concluded that ICT training broadened participants' understanding of the teaching profession and supported the development of productive, technologically competent, and global teacher identities. This study is related to the present research because it shows that teacher identity development is also shaped by changing educational realities and by the need to imagine oneself as a teacher in technology-enhanced learning environments.

Quantitative studies in Türkiye have also examined teacher identity in relation to psychological and motivational variables. Başdal and Özen (2025) investigated the relationships among pre-service teachers' professional identities, teacher self-efficacy beliefs, and teaching motivations. Using the Early Teacher Identity Measure, the Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale, and the Motivation to Teach Scale, they found that pre-service teachers had high professional identity levels, sufficient self-efficacy beliefs, and moderate-to-high teaching motivation. Their findings also showed positive and moderate relationships between professional identity, self-efficacy, and teaching motivation. This study is significant for the present research as it indicates that early teacher identity is strongly associated with student teachers' confidence in becoming teachers and their motivation to participate in the teaching profession.

Career-related studies further indicate that teacher identity development cannot be separated from professional aspirations and career decision-making. Ölçü (2014) examined senior pre-service English teachers' career plans and career choice satisfaction, showing that professional identity is related not only to teacher education experiences but also to future employment expectations. Similarly, Ölmez-Çağlar (2022) focused on career motivations as

sources of teacher identity in foreign language education and emphasized that motivations for choosing the teaching profession are closely connected to identity development. These studies are particularly important for the present research because they indicate that when and why student teachers decide to become teachers may influence how strongly they identify with the profession.

More recently, Mutlu (2025) provided one of the most comprehensive accounts of pre-service English language teachers' identity construction in the Turkish context. Her doctoral dissertation investigated senior pre-service English teachers' professional identity construction through narrative inquiry and third-generation Activity Theory. The study examined identity construction across three overlapping areas: academic engagement in the ELT program, teaching practice responsibilities, and preparation for entering the workforce. Findings showed that identity development was shaped by emotional demands, institutional contradictions, individual agency, social dynamics, and COVID-19-related disruptions. Participants also negotiated conflicting roles as students, novice teachers, and professionals-in-transition. Mutlu's study is closely related to the present research because it conceptualizes pre-service EFL teacher identity as a situated, multidimensional, and evolving process within Turkish teacher education.

In summary, studies conducted in Türkiye suggest that student teacher identity is shaped by several interrelated dimensions. Metaphor studies reveal how teacher candidates conceptualize teaching and how these conceptualizations may shift from traditional, teacher-centered views toward more learner-centered understandings. Practice teaching studies show that identity development is affected by reflection, classroom experience, role models, institutional expectations, and teacher responsibilities. ETIM-based quantitative studies demonstrate that teacher candidates in Türkiye generally report high levels of early teacher identity and that this construct may vary according to gender, department, faculty type, university type, and class level. Technology-focused studies indicate that modern teacher identity increasingly includes digital competence, creativity, productivity, and lifelong learning.

Quantitative studies further demonstrate that early teacher identity is associated with self-efficacy and motivation, while career-related research shows that professional identity is connected to future aspirations and career choice satisfaction.

However, despite these contributions, several gaps remain. First, many Turkish studies focus on either final-year students, practicum experiences, or specific variables such as technology, motivation, or metaphorical perceptions. Second, studies using the Early Teacher Identity Measure in Türkiye have generally examined either broad samples of teacher candidates or senior EFL teacher candidates, rather than encompassing EFL student teachers across all undergraduate grade levels. Third, although existing research shows that teaching practice, role models, self-efficacy, motivation, and career aspirations are important, there is still a need for studies that bring these factors together through a holistic and mixed-methods perspective. Moreover, since teacher identity is highly context-dependent, dynamic, and shaped by the interaction between personal, institutional, and sociocultural factors, it cannot be treated as a fixed or universally generalizable construct. Therefore, further research in different educational contexts is necessary to understand how EFL student teachers construct and negotiate their professional identities in relation to their specific learning environments. Accordingly, the present study contributes to the Turkish EFL teacher identity literature by examining early teacher identity among EFL student teachers from different grade levels and by integrating quantitative findings with qualitative insights. In this way, it provides a broader account of how professional identity begins to develop before graduation and how this process is shaped by educational, personal, emotional, and contextual factors.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This chapter presents the methodology of current research. In other words, the chapter provides detailed information regarding the study in terms of its research design, setting and participants, data collection, instruments and data analysis.

#### **Research Design**

This study aimed to develop an understanding of the professional identity development of EFL student teachers. For the purposes of the study, a mixed-methods approach was employed, and cross-sectional data was collected among EFL student teachers from 4 different grades. A mixed-methods design was preferred because the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data provides a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem than either approach alone (Creswell & Clark, 2017). In other words, the use of a mixed methods design was found to be appropriate as the study aimed at examining both the measurable dimensions of teacher identity development and participants' experiences, perceptions and reflections regarding this process. Accordingly, the quantitative phase provided numerical data on student teachers' professional identity development, while the qualitative phase was intended to offer a deeper understanding of how they made sense of becoming teachers.

More specifically, this study followed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. In this design, quantitative data are collected and analyzed in the first phase, and qualitative data are subsequently collected to explain, elaborate on, and provide deeper insights into the quantitative results (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In the quantitative phase of the present study, survey design was employed to obtain numerical data on student teachers' professional identity development. Survey research enables researchers to describe the opinions, attitudes, or characteristics of a sample numerically and to make inferences about the broader population based on the findings obtained from that sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Dawson, 2019). Accordingly, quantitative data were collected through the Early Teacher Identity Measure

(ETIM) developed by Friesen and Besley (2013). This phase focused on examining whether there were statistically significant differences in student teachers' professional identity development according to demographic variables and grade levels. Following the quantitative analysis, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and reflective writing tasks to provide in-depth explanations for the patterns and trends identified in the quantitative findings. Semi-structured interviews were used because they allow researchers to gain detailed insights into participants' experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making processes regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Adams, 2015). Similarly, reflective writing was included as a qualitative data collection method because it can provide rich insights into participants' personal experiences and reflections related to the research topic (Given, 2008).

### **Setting and Participants**

To meet its objectives, the study was conducted at the Departments of English Language Teaching at three state universities in Türkiye. This setting was found appropriate for the goals of the current study as the programs were designed to prepare students for the teaching profession as they receive both theoretical coursework and practice-oriented pedagogical training throughout their undergraduate education.

Firstly, a power analysis was performed using G\*Power 3.1.9.4 to determine the minimum sample size required for the quantitative phase of the study. Since one of the main purposes of the quantitative phase was to examine whether there were statistically significant differences in teacher candidates' professional identity development across grade levels, a one-way analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA) was selected as the basis for the power analysis. The analysis involved four groups, corresponding to first, second, third, and fourth year students enrolled in English Language Teaching programs at three state universities in Türkiye.

The effect size was determined by considering previous research on teacher identity development, particularly the study by Friesen and Besley (2013). Based on the effect size

values reported in the related literature, the effect size was set at Cohen's  $f = 0.39$ . With an alpha level of .05, a statistical power level of .95, and four groups, the G\*Power analysis indicated that a minimum sample size of 120 participants was required, with approximately 30 participants in each grade-level group. Therefore, the target sample size for the quantitative phase was determined as at least 120 participants.

The participants of the study were composed of 204 EFL student teachers from freshman to senior grades. Senior students constituted the largest group, accounting for 35.3% of the sample, followed by junior students with 25.5%, freshman students with 21.6%, and sophomore students with 17.6%. Regarding the gender of the participants, the majority were female, accounting for 76% of the total sample. An examination of the participants' age distribution showed that most participants were between the ages of 20 and 21, suggesting that the sample predominantly consisted of young adults. In terms of university distribution, Necmettin Erbakan University constituted the largest proportion of the sample, accounting for 81.9%, while the remaining participants were from Hacettepe University and Gazi University. Turning to the geographical background, 62.7% of the participants were from the Central Anatolia Region, while the remaining participants came from other regions of Türkiye. When it comes to the participants' teaching experience, it was seen that 41.2% had no prior teaching experience. Nevertheless, the sample also included student teachers who had various forms of teaching-related experience, including practicum and private tutoring. In terms of the timing of their career decisions, 63.7% of the participants reported that they had decided to pursue teaching English as a profession during high-school or at an earlier stage. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in detail in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Information of the Participants*

Variable	Category	f	%
Gender	Female	155	76.0
	Male	48	23.5
	Prefer not to say	1	0.5
Age	18	21	10.3

		19	24	11.8
		20	53	26.0
		21	54	26.5
		22	27	13.2
		23+	25	12.3
Region	Central Anatolia	128		62.7
	Mediterranean	21		10.3
	Aegean	20		9.8
	Eastern Anatolia	11		5.4
	Black Sea	8		3.9
	Marmara	7		3.4
	Other	9		4.4
University	Necmettin Erbakan University	167		81.9
	Hacettepe University	25		12.3
	Gazi University	12		5.9
Year of Study	1st year (Freshman)	44		21.6
	2nd year (Sophomore)	36		17.6
	3rd year (Junior)	52		25.5
	4th year (Senior)	72		35.3
Teaching Experience	No experience	84		41.2
	From internships/practice schools	44		21.6
	Private lessons (before)	37		18.1
	Currently giving private lessons	9		4.4
	Currently working as a teacher	7		3.4
	Multiple types	23		11.3
Time of Decision	In high school or before	130		63.7
	Just before starting university	31		15.2
	Haven't decided yet	23		11.3
	Not planning to teach	11		5.4
	After starting university	6		2.9
	Other	3		1.5
Influential Person	A teacher or mentor	88		43.1
	My own decision	67		32.8
	A family member	26		12.7
	Family member + teacher	10		4.9
	Teacher + friend	3		1.5
	Other combinations	10		5.0
SES	Middle	172		84.3
	Low	20		9.8
	High	12		5.9

Note. SES = Socioeconomic Status.

A non-probability sampling strategy, namely convenience sampling, was used in the quantitative phase of the study. The sample selection was primarily guided by logistical feasibility in terms of the participants' geographical locations and the researcher's ease of access. Although this sampling method does not allow for a broad generalization of the findings, it is regarded as a useful technique when researchers target naturally formed groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were informed about the purpose of the research before data collection.

For the qualitative phase this study employed volunteer sampling as the sampling strategy. At the end of the quantitative survey they completed, the participants were asked if they were willing to take part in the qualitative part of the study. As shown in Table 2, 25 participants took part in the semi-structured interviews, and 15 of them also completed reflective writing tasks on a voluntary basis. To ensure confidentiality, the qualitative participants were assigned codes ranging from P1 to P25. The same participant codes were used for both data sources, and direct quotations were reported with the participant code and grade level. In terms of gender distribution, 19 of the interview participants were female and 6 were male. Among the participants who completed reflective writing tasks, 13 were female and 2 were male. The table below shows the distribution of the participants in the qualitative phase based on grade level and data collection tools.

**Table 2**

*Distribution of Participants in Qualitative Phase*

Grade Level	Interviews (n)	Reflection Papers (n)
Freshman	5	2
Sophomore	4	1
Junior	7	6
Senior	9	6
Total	25	15

Participants were recruited from all four grade levels because the study aimed to examine differences in student teachers' professional identity development across different stages of teacher education. This decision was informed by the need for further research on

teacher identity development in the Turkish context (Kayabaşı & Koç, 2024). Including freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior students was expected to provide insights into how teacher identity develops throughout the teacher education process and to offer implications for English language teacher education.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection process was carried out in two sequential phases in line with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design of the study. In the first phase, quantitative data were collected through an online survey, while in the second phase, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and reflective writing tasks.

The quantitative data were collected during the fall semester of the 2025–2026 academic year from EFL student teachers enrolled at three different universities. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Hacettepe University Graduate School of Educational Sciences (see Appendix F), and the necessary institutional permissions were received from the participating universities (see Appendix G). The teacher identity scale was administered online via Google Forms. At Necmettin Erbakan University, the data collection was conducted with the permission of the course instructors as the researcher visited classes during the last 15 minutes of the lessons and invited students to complete the online survey. At the other participating universities, the necessary permissions were also obtained, and the survey link was shared online with the students. Before completing the scale, all participants were presented with an informed consent form (see Appendix E), which explained the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of the data. Completing the survey took approximately 10 minutes. At the end of the survey, participants were also asked whether they were willing to take part in the qualitative phase of the study, and the contact information of volunteer participants was collected through the same form.

After the quantitative data collection and preliminary analysis were completed, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 volunteer participants to further explain and

elaborate on the emerging quantitative trends regarding student teachers' professional identity development. Although the participants were selected on a voluntary basis, particular attention was paid to including students from each grade level in order to represent different stages of teacher education. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom at scheduled times agreed upon with the participants. In line with the participants' preferences, all interviews were conducted in Turkish. Each interview lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes. With the consent of the participants, the interviews were audio-recorded for transcription and analysis purposes.

In addition to the interviews, reflective writing tasks were used as another qualitative data source. These tasks were included to complement the interview data by allowing participants to reflect more deeply and individually on their professional identity development. While the interviews enabled interactive exploration of participants' experiences, reflective writing provided a more personal and self-paced space for expressing their thoughts. The participants were provided with a Word document including reflective writing prompts. They were asked to respond to the prompts in Turkish or English and return their reflections as soon as possible. No strict time limit was imposed for the completion of the reflective writing task. In total, 15 participants completed the reflective writing task.

Scopus AI was used as an artificial intelligence-supported research assistant to identify relevant literature and to support the initial development of the semi-structured interview questions and reflective writing prompts (Elsevier, 2025). Before conducting the main qualitative data collection, the semi-structured interview questions and reflective writing prompts were piloted to check their clarity, relevance, sequencing, and suitability for eliciting detailed responses from participants. Piloting is considered an important step in qualitative research as it allows the researcher to refine the data collection tools and identify possible problems in wording, flow, or participant interpretation before the main study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Accordingly, the first interview conducted with one participant from each grade level and the first reflective writing response collected from each grade level were used for piloting

purposes. Following this process, the researcher reviewed the pilot data and made minor revisions to the questions and prompts where necessary.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

In line with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design of the study, three data collection instruments were used. The quantitative data were collected through Friesen and Besley's (2013) Early Teacher Identity Measure (ETIM), whereas the qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and reflective writing tasks. While the ETIM provided numerical data on student teachers' professional identity development, the qualitative instruments enabled a deeper exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and reflections. Each instrument is described in detail below.

#### ***Early Teacher Identity Measure***

The quantitative data of the study were collected through the Early Teacher Identity Measure (ETIM) developed by Friesen and Besley (2013). The scale was designed to measure participants' perceptions of their early teacher identity development and consists of 17 items. The items are assessed on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Disagree to 5 = Agree. The measure includes both positively worded and reverse-coded items, with the reverse-coded items, Items 5, 6, 9 and 11, marked in the original scale (see Appendix A). In the present study, the scale was administered in its original English form, as the participants were EFL student teachers enrolled in English Language Teaching programs. Permission to use the scale was obtained from the developers before the data collection process (see Appendix B).

The Early Teacher Identity Measure was considered appropriate for the present study because it was designed to assess student teachers' perceptions of their early teacher identity development. Its previous use with second-year pre-service English teachers further supports its relevance for examining teacher identity at the earlier stages of teacher education (Can & Karacan, 2021; Friesen & Besley, 2013).

The scale is organized around three sub-dimensions. The first sub-dimension, self-categorization as a teacher (S-Cat), includes five items and focuses on the extent to which participants perceive and identify themselves as teachers. These items correspond to Items 1-5. The second sub-dimension, confidence/self-efficacy in becoming a teacher (SEBT), consists of six items, Items 6-11, and measures participants' confidence in their ability to develop the necessary skills, strategies, and resources to become successful teachers. The third sub-dimension, natural inclination towards children and teaching (NICT), includes six items, Items 12-17, and reflects participants' tendency to engage with children or adolescents and their satisfaction in teaching or helping them learn (Friesen & Besley, 2013).

In the original study, the internal consistency reliability of the measure was reported to be good, with a Cronbach's alpha value of .87. Friesen and Besley (2013) also reported that the items were subjected to principal components analysis, and the results provided evidence regarding the underlying structure of the measure. However, the original notes indicate that the exploratory principal components analysis should be interpreted with caution and requires further replication, particularly through confirmatory factor analysis. In the present study, the scale demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .912 for the overall ETIM. The alpha values for the subscales ranged from .818 to .877, indicating satisfactory reliability across the three dimensions.

### ***Semi-Structured Interviews***

Semi-structured interviews were used as one of the qualitative data collection instruments in the study as interviews enable researchers to access detailed data in the most direct way in qualitative studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The interview form was used with 25 volunteer participants from different grade levels to gain a deeper understanding of student teachers' professional identity development and to elaborate on the patterns emerging from the quantitative phase. A semi-structured format was preferred because it allowed the researcher to ask predetermined questions while also providing flexibility to use follow-up and probing questions when further clarification or elaboration was needed.

The interview questions were developed based on the relevant literature on teacher identity development and the framework of the study with the support of Scopus AI during the initial question-generation process (Coşgun & Savaş, 2023; Dewi & Fajri, 2023; Elsevier, 2025; Linh & Trang; 2024; Zarrinabadi et. al., 2023; Zeng & Liu, 2024). The questions focused on several dimensions of teacher identity, including participants' self-perceptions as future English teachers, their confidence in teaching English, their readiness to take classroom responsibility, their motivations for choosing teaching as a career, their attitudes toward working with children or adolescents, and their views on continuous professional development. The interview form included both main questions and probing questions to encourage participants to provide more detailed responses.

The interview questions were reviewed and refined in the light of the feedback received during the thesis monitoring committee meetings and expert reviews. A piloting process was then carried out to examine the clarity, relevance, sequencing, and flow of the questions and prompts, as suggested in qualitative interview protocol refinement procedures (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Accordingly, the first interview conducted with one student from each grade level was used for piloting purposes. Based on this process, necessary revisions were made before the main qualitative data collection. Since the interviews were conducted in Turkish upon the participants' request, the Turkish version of the interview questions was used to enable participants to express their views more comfortably and naturally. The students who participated in the pilot interviews and pilot reflective writing process were not included in the main qualitative data set. The interview questions are presented in Appendix C.

### ***Reflective Writing Task***

Reflective writing was used as another qualitative data collection instrument in order to complement the semi-structured interview data and to obtain more personal and in-depth reflections on student teachers' professional identity development. Writing reflection papers is a valid data collection method as it provides the researchers with rich insights into the participants' lives about the issue explored in qualitative research (Given, 2008). Further,

reflection papers also present researchers rich data by inclining the participants to reflect on their beliefs and experiences (Barkhuizen, 2017). Thus, the task was designed to provide participants with an opportunity to reflect individually on their experiences, beliefs, motivations, doubts, and future expectations regarding becoming an English teacher in the current study.

Reflective writing prompts were developed based on the relevant literature on teacher identity development, with Scopus AI used as a supplementary tool to generate initial ideas (Elsevier, 2025; Ölmez-Çağlar, 2022; Salari & Farahian, 2023; Zarrinabadi et al., 2023; Zeng & Liu, 2024). The prompts were then reviewed and revised by the researcher in line with the purpose of the study. The reflective writing task consisted of three prompts. Similar to the interview questions, the prompts were also piloted with one participant student from each grade level in order to check their clarity. The first prompt focused on becoming a teacher, identity, and self-perception; the second prompt addressed confidence, doubt, and classroom responsibility; and the third prompt focused on motivation, commitment, and the kind of teacher participants hoped to become in the future. The participants were informed that the task was not an exam or an assessment and that there were no right or wrong answers. They were encouraged to express their thoughts sincerely and to support their reflections with examples from their own experiences. A minimum length of 300 words was suggested for the reflective writing task.

Although the participants were allowed to write in either Turkish or English, all participants preferred to complete the reflective writing task in Turkish. In total, 15 participants completed the reflective writing task. The reflective writing prompts are presented in Appendix D.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis process was conducted separately for the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study in line with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were analyzed through statistical procedures in order to examine student teachers' professional identity development and to determine whether there were significant differences

according to demographic variables and grade levels. Qualitative data, on the other hand, were analyzed through an inductive thematic analysis approach to gain a deeper understanding of the patterns emerging from the quantitative phase and to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and reflections in greater detail. The following sections describe the quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures respectively.

### ***Quantitative Data Analysis***

In order to meet the objectives of the study, the quantitative data gathered through the survey form were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27. The normality of the scale items was evaluated by examining skewness and kurtosis values. Values within the range of  $\pm 1.5$  were considered to indicate that the normality assumption was met (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Accordingly, parametric statistical methods were used in the analysis. Demographic variables were reported through frequency and percentage distributions, whereas mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values were calculated for continuous variables. Before conducting the analyses, the reverse-coded items in the ETIM were recoded so that higher scores consistently indicated stronger early teacher identity development.

To test the construct validity of the scale, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted. The suitability of the data for factor analysis was evaluated using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. Principal axis factoring was used for factor extraction, and Varimax rotation was employed for rotation (Hair et al., 2019). The number of factors was determined based on eigenvalues and the total explained variance. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, while composite reliability was evaluated through CR and AVE values (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

For group comparisons, independent samples t-tests were conducted for independent variables with two categories, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for variables with more than two categories. At this point, ANOVA was considered appropriate because it allows researchers to determine whether the mean differences among three or more

groups are statistically significant (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). Homogeneity of variance was checked using Levene's test. When significant ANOVA results were obtained, Tukey HSD post-hoc tests were used to identify the groups between which significant differences existed (Field, 2018).

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationships among variables, whereas hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to examine predictive relationships. In the hierarchical regression models, the variables were entered into the model in four stages based on theoretical considerations, and  $R^2$  change and F statistics were reported at each step (Cohen et al., 2003). Standardized beta coefficients were interpreted to evaluate the relative contribution of each predictor.

In the moderation analyses, the variables were mean-centered before being entered into the model, and interaction terms were created by multiplying the centered variables (Aiken & West, 1991). The mediation relationship was tested in R using the mediation package and the bootstrap method with 500 resamples.

Prior to the quantitative analyses, the dataset was screened to ensure data quality and analytical validity. Although responses were initially obtained from 238 EFL student teachers, 34 cases were removed during the data cleaning process. The exclusion criteria included incomplete responses and response patterns indicating possible careless responding. Since the ETIM includes reverse-coded items, participants' responses to these items were examined carefully in order to identify inconsistent response patterns. Cases showing substantial inconsistency across positively worded and reverse-coded items, as well as cases displaying straightlining, were excluded from the dataset. As a result, the final dataset included 204 valid responses. This cleaned dataset was used in all subsequent quantitative analyses.

### ***Qualitative Data Analysis***

The qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews and reflective writing tasks were analyzed through an inductive thematic analysis approach with the support of the MAXQDA software. Since the aim of the qualitative phase was to provide an in-depth

understanding of student teachers' professional identity development, the analysis was not based on a predetermined coding framework. Instead, the data were examined in a bottom-up manner, allowing themes and categories to emerge from the participants' own accounts.

Following the qualitative data analysis procedures suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2017), the qualitative data were first organized and prepared for analysis. The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the reflective writing texts were compiled for analysis. The researcher then read the interview transcripts and reflective writings several times to become familiar with the data and gain an overall sense of the participants' accounts. Meaningful units related to student teachers' professional identity development were identified and coded. Similar codes were grouped under broader categories, and conceptually related categories were organized into overarching themes. The emerging codes, categories, and themes were then reviewed and refined in relation to the research questions, the purpose of the study, and the overall data set. This analytical process resulted in six main themes, thirteen categories, and thirty-five codes, representing the major dimensions of EFL student teachers' professional identity development.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis, the researcher followed a systematic and recursive approach consistent with thematic analysis procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition to the researcher's continuous engagement with the data, the refinement of the qualitative interpretation was supported by regular feedback from the thesis advisor, discussions during the thesis monitoring committee meetings, and expert opinions from a field specialist. These procedures served as a form of peer debriefing and external review, which are recommended to strengthen the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of qualitative findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017).

The themes that emerged from the qualitative data were external sources of identity, the transformation process of identity, self-efficacy and confidence, classroom management and the teacher education program, the emotional dimension of teaching, and continuous professional development and the image of the ideal teacher. The codes and categories were

organized in a codebook, and code matrices were used to examine the distribution of themes and codes across grade levels. Direct quotations from participants were used to support the interpretation of the findings and to preserve participants' voices in the presentation of the qualitative results.

Since the findings of the study are presented in English, the selected quotations from the participants were translated from Turkish into English by the researcher. In order to enhance the credibility of the translated excerpts, participant validation, also referred to as member checking, was carried out. Accordingly, the English translations of the selected quotations were shared with the relevant participants, and they were asked to confirm whether the translated versions accurately reflected their intended meanings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical principles were carefully followed throughout the study. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Hacettepe University Graduate School of Educational Sciences, and the necessary institutional permissions were received from the participating universities (see Appendix F & G). The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences.

Before completing the online survey, all participants were presented with an informed consent form (See Appendix E). In the qualitative phase, consent was also obtained from the participants before conducting the semi-structured interviews and collecting reflective writing tasks. The interviews were audio-recorded only after receiving participants' permission. All data was used solely for research purposes and was kept confidential.

In order to protect participants' identities, no real names were used in the reporting of the qualitative findings. Instead, the qualitative participants were assigned codes ranging from P1 to P25. The same participant codes were used for both interview and reflective writing data.

When direct quotations are presented, the participant code, grade level, and data source are indicated. Any information that could reveal the identity of the participants was avoided in the presentation of the findings.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings, Comments and Discussion**

This chapter presents the findings, comments, and discussion of the study in relation to the research questions. Since the study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the findings are reported in two main phases. First, the quantitative findings are presented to provide a general picture of EFL student teachers' professional identity levels, the relationships among the dimensions of early teacher identity, and the differences in professional identity according to selected demographic and educational variables. In this quantitative phase, preliminary analyses are first reported, followed by descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, group comparison analyses, regression analysis, and mediation and moderation analyses.

Following the quantitative findings, the qualitative findings are presented to provide a deeper and more interpretive understanding of EFL student teachers' professional identity development. The qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews and reflective writing tasks were analyzed through inductive thematic analysis. The findings are first organized around the six themes that emerged from the data: external sources of identity, transformation of identity, self-efficacy and confidence, classroom management and curriculum, emotional dimension of teaching, and continuous professional development. Each theme is discussed with reference to its related categories, codes, and participant excerpts. Then, an overall evaluation of the qualitative findings is provided in relation to the two qualitative research questions.

In this chapter, the quantitative and qualitative findings are not presented as isolated sets of results. Rather, they are interpreted together to explain how EFL student teachers construct their professional identities and what factors facilitate or challenge this process. Therefore, the chapter moves from statistical patterns to qualitative meanings, allowing the numerical results to be supported, clarified, and extended through participants' own accounts.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the major findings that emerged from both phases of the study.

### **Findings based on the Quantitative Data Analysis**

This section presents the quantitative findings in line with the research questions. Before addressing the research questions, preliminary analyses were conducted to examine the reliability and validity of the scale. Then, descriptive statistics were reported to determine the overall level of early teacher identity and its sub-dimensions. Next, correlation, regression, mediation, and moderation analyses were presented to examine the relationships and predictive mechanisms among the study variables. Finally, group differences were reported based on selected demographic variables.

#### ***Preliminary Analyses: Validity and Reliability of the ETIM***

Before addressing the research questions, preliminary analyses were conducted to examine the validity and reliability of the Early Teacher Identity Measure (ETIM) in the present sample. For this purpose, exploratory factor analysis was performed, and the internal consistency of the scale and its sub-dimensions was examined. The validity and reliability results of the ETIM are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Exploratory Factor Analysis Results for the ETIM (Varimax Rotation)*

<b>Items</b>	<b>F1 - NICT</b>	<b>F2 - SEBT</b>	<b>F3 - S-Cat</b>
SCat1			.713
SCat2			.807
SCat3			.605
SCat4			.422
SCat5		.550	
SEBT1		.721	
SEBT2		.561	
SEBT3		.439	
SEBT4		.389	
SEBT5		.438	
SEBT6		.825	
NICT1	.502		
NICT2	.808		

NICT3	.676		
NICT4	.733		
NICT5	.794		
NICT6	.696		
Eigenvalue	3.708	2.907	2.509
Variance Explained (%)	21.81	17.10	14.74
Total Variance (%)			53.65
KMO / Bartlett	0.89 / $\chi^2=1861.69$ , $p<.001$		
AVE	0.502	0.342	0.408
CR	0.856	0.742	0.769
Cronbach's Alpha	0.877	0.818	0.838

Note. Factor loadings < .10 are omitted. KMO = Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; CR = Composite Reliability.

The suitability of the data for factor analysis was first assessed through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The KMO measure evaluates sampling adequacy, while Bartlett's test examines whether the correlation matrix significantly differs from an identity matrix, which would indicate that the factor model is appropriate (Kaiser, 1974; Kaiser & Rice, 1974). As presented in Table 3, the KMO value was 0.89, indicating a meritorious level of sampling adequacy for factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity was also statistically significant,  $\chi^2 = 1861.69$ ,  $p < .001$ , showing that the correlations among the items were sufficient for factor extraction.

Exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation revealed a three-factor structure. Varimax rotation was used to obtain a more interpretable simple structure, as recommended in exploratory factor analysis procedures (Kaiser, 1958; Costello & Osborne, 2005). The first factor represented Natural Inclination towards Children and Teaching (NICT) and included the items NICT1, NICT2, NICT3, NICT4, NICT5, and NICT6. The factor loadings for this dimension ranged from .502 to .808. The second factor represented Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher (SEBT) and included SEBT1, SEBT2, SEBT3, SEBT4, SEBT5, and SEBT6, with factor loadings ranging from .389 to .825. The third factor represented Self-Categorization (S-Cat) and included SCat1, SCat2, SCat3, SCat4, and SCat5, with factor loadings ranging from .422 to .807. Since the obtained loadings were mostly above commonly used minimum interpretive thresholds for factor loadings, the items were considered to cluster largely under their theoretically expected dimensions (Costello & Osborne, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

The eigenvalues also supported the three-factor structure of the scale. In exploratory factor analysis, factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 are commonly retained according to Kaiser's criterion, although this criterion should be interpreted together with theoretical meaningfulness and the factor loading pattern (Kaiser, 1960; Fabrigar et al., 1999). The eigenvalue for the NICT factor was 3.708, explaining 21.81% of the variance. The SEBT factor had an eigenvalue of 2.907, explaining 17.10% of the variance. The S-Cat factor had an eigenvalue of 2.509, explaining 14.74% of the variance. Together, these three factors explained 53.65% of the total variance. Since retained factors are generally expected to explain at least around 50% of the total variance in exploratory factor analysis, this result can be considered an acceptable level of explained variance for a multidimensional psychological construct (Samuels, 2017; Streiner, 1994).

The reliability and convergent validity indicators provided partial support for the adequacy of the scale. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.342 to 0.502, while Composite Reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.742 to 0.856. Specifically, the AVE and CR values were 0.502 and 0.856 for NICT, 0.342 and 0.742 for SEBT, and 0.408 and 0.769 for S-Cat, respectively. Although an AVE value of .50 or higher is generally recommended as evidence of convergent validity, AVE values below .50 may still be considered acceptable when composite reliability is adequate, since CR values above .70 indicate sufficient construct reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019). In terms of internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were above the commonly accepted threshold of .70 for all factors (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The highest alpha coefficient was observed for NICT ( $\alpha = .877$ ), followed by S-Cat ( $\alpha = .838$ ) and SEBT ( $\alpha = .818$ ). These values indicate that all three sub-dimensions demonstrated satisfactory to high internal consistency, while convergent validity was fully supported for NICT and partially supported for SEBT and S-Cat.

Taken together, the exploratory factor analysis and reliability results indicate that the ETIM demonstrated an acceptable three-factor structure in the present sample. The items largely loaded on their theoretically expected factors, the total variance explained was

satisfactory, and the reliability coefficients were strong. Therefore, the ETIM was considered a valid and reliable instrument for measuring early teacher identity among Turkish EFL student teachers.

Following the preliminary validity and reliability analyses, the first research question focused on the overall level of early teacher identity and its sub-dimensions among EFL student teachers.

***RQ1. What is the level of early teacher identity and its sub-dimensions among EFL student teachers?***

The first research question aimed to determine the overall level of early teacher identity among EFL student teachers and to examine the levels of its three sub-dimensions. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the Early Teacher Identity Measure (ETIM) and its sub-dimensions: Self-Categorization, Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher, and Natural Inclination toward Children and Teaching.

As presented in Table 4, the mean score for the overall ETIM was 3.81 out of 5, with a standard deviation of 0.63. Since Likert-scale data are commonly summarized using descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations when multiple items are combined into a scale score, this result suggests that participants' early teacher identity scores were above the midpoint of the scale (Boone & Boone, 2012; Norman, 2010). Accordingly, EFL student teachers reported a moderately high level of early teacher identity. In other words, participants generally tended to perceive themselves as developing members of the teaching profession.

Among the three sub-dimensions, Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher had the highest mean score ( $M = 3.88$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ), suggesting that participants felt relatively confident in their ability to become effective teachers. This was followed by Self-Categorization ( $M = 3.83$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ), indicating that participants also showed a moderately high tendency to identify themselves as teachers. The lowest mean score was observed in Natural Inclination toward

Children and Teaching ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ), although this value still reflects a moderately high level of natural orientation toward teaching and working with children.

At the item level, SEBT4 had the highest mean score, whereas NICT1 had the lowest mean score. This item-level pattern supports the subscale-level finding that self-efficacy was the strongest component, while natural inclination toward children and teaching was relatively less pronounced.

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Statistics for the ETIM and Its Subscales*

Scale / Item	N	M	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
ETIM (Total)	204	3.81	0.63	2.06	5.00	-0.32	-0.25
Self-Categorization (S-Cat)	204	3.83	0.73	1.60	5.00	-0.44	-0.03
Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher (SEBT)	204	3.88	0.68	2.33	5.00	-0.07	-0.91
Natural Inclination towards Children and Teaching (NICT)	204	3.73	0.82	1.33	5.00	-0.47	-0.17

Note. All items scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Disagree, 5 = Agree). \* Reverse-coded items (SCat5, SEBT1, SEBT4, SEBT6) have been recoded prior to analysis. Skewness and kurtosis values within  $\pm 1.5$  indicate normality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

In summary, these findings suggest that EFL student teachers in the present study possessed a generally positive and moderately strong sense of early teacher identity. The relatively higher score in self-efficacy implies that participants' confidence in becoming teachers was slightly more developed than their natural inclination toward children and teaching. However, all three sub-dimensions remained above the midpoint of the scale, indicating a consistent tendency toward teacher identity formation.

***RQ2. How are EFL student teachers' early teacher identity and its related variables associated with one another?***

The second research question examined the relationships among early teacher identity, its sub-dimensions, and selected demographic and educational variables. To answer this question, Pearson correlation analysis, hierarchical regression analysis, moderation analysis, and mediation analysis were conducted. First, Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the associations among the ETIM total score and its three sub-dimensions. Then,

hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which selected demographic and educational variables predicted early teacher identity. Finally, moderation and mediation analyses were performed to examine more complex relational mechanisms among the study variables.

***RQ2.1. What are the relationships between early teacher identity and its sub-dimensions?***

**Table 5**

*Pearson Correlations Among ETIM and Its Subscales*

	S-Cat	SEBT	NICT	ETIM
S-Cat	1			
SEBT	.703**	1		
NICT	.568**	.475**	1	
ETIM	.870**	.840**	.833**	1

Note. S-Cat = Self-Categorization; SEBT = Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher; NICT = Natural Inclination towards Children and Teaching; ETIM = Early Teacher Identity Measure. \*\*  $p < .01$ .

To examine the relationships among early teacher identity and its sub-dimensions, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. Pearson correlation is commonly used to assess the direction and strength of linear relationships between variables (Schober et al., 2018). As presented in Table 5, all correlations among the ETIM total score and its three sub-dimensions were positive and statistically significant.

The strongest relationship among the sub-dimensions was observed between Self-Categorization and Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher ( $r = .703$ ,  $p < .01$ ). According to commonly used guidelines, correlation coefficients around .50 and above may be interpreted as large effects, although such benchmarks should be applied cautiously and in relation to the research context (Cohen, 1988; Brydges, 2019). Therefore, this finding indicates a strong positive association between participants' self-categorization as teachers and their perceived self-efficacy in becoming teachers. In other words, participants who were more likely to categorize themselves as teachers also tended to report higher confidence in their ability to become teachers.

In addition, Self-Categorization was positively and significantly related to Natural Inclination towards Children and Teaching ( $r = .568, p < .01$ ), suggesting that identifying oneself as a teacher was also associated with a stronger natural orientation toward teaching and working with children. The relationship between Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher and Natural Inclination towards Children and Teaching was also positive and significant ( $r = .475, p < .01$ ), although it was relatively weaker than the other relationships among the sub-dimensions.

The correlations between the ETIM total score and its sub-dimensions were also strong and statistically significant. The highest correlation was found between ETIM and Self-Categorization ( $r = .870, p < .01$ ), followed by ETIM and Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher ( $r = .840, p < .01$ ) and ETIM and Natural Inclination towards Children and Teaching ( $r = .833, p < .01$ ). These findings indicate that all three sub-dimensions were strongly associated with the overall construct of early teacher identity. However, these correlations should be interpreted as evidence of association rather than causation, as correlation coefficients do not establish causal relationships (Schober et al., 2018).

Overall, the correlation results suggest that early teacher identity is a multidimensional but internally coherent construct in which self-categorization, self-efficacy, and natural inclination are closely interrelated. It should also be noted that the correlation pattern became more theoretically coherent after the data cleaning process. Before data cleaning, the Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher (SEBT) dimension displayed a relatively disconnected profile from the other sub-dimensions. However, after inconsistent response patterns were removed, the relationships among the sub-dimensions became more consistent with theoretical expectations. This improvement in the covariance structure indicates that inconsistent responses can substantially influence the psychometric behavior of the scale. Therefore, the data cleaning process contributed to obtaining a more valid and theoretically meaningful correlation structure among the ETIM sub-dimensions.

**RQ2.2. To what extent do the selected demographic variables predict early teacher identity?**

**Table 6**

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting ETIM Scores*

Predictor	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Gender	.109	.073	.072	.046
Age	-.006	-.067	-.038	.004
SES	.051	.044	.042	.026
Region		-.036	-.028	-.011
Teaching Experience		.181*	.195*	.203*
Year of Study			-.052	-.125
Time of Decision				.395**
R <sup>2</sup>	.016	.042	.043	.195
ΔR <sup>2</sup>	.016	.026	.001	.152**
F	1.068	1.723	1.468	6.787**

Note. Standardized beta ( $\beta$ ) coefficients are reported. Model 1: Gender, Age, SES. Model 2: + Region, Teaching Experience. Model 3: + Year of Study. Model 4: + Time of Decision.  $\Delta R^2$  = change in  $R^2$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

To examine the unique predictive contribution of selected demographic variables to early teacher identity, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. In hierarchical multiple regression, predictors are entered into the model in theoretically or conceptually determined blocks, allowing researchers to examine whether each newly entered set of variables explains additional variance in the dependent variable beyond the variables entered in previous steps (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Field, 2018). Unlike group comparison analyses, hierarchical regression shows which variables statistically predict the overall ETIM score while controlling for the variables entered in earlier steps.

As presented in Table 6, the predictors were entered into the model in four steps. In the first model, gender, age, and socioeconomic status were included as demographic control variables. This model explained only a small proportion of the variance in early teacher identity and was not statistically significant ( $R^2 = .016$ ,  $F = 1.068$ ). In this model, none of the demographic variables emerged as a meaningful predictor of ETIM scores.

In the second model, region of residence and teaching experience were added to the analysis. The explained variance increased slightly ( $R^2 = .042$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .026$ ). In this step, teaching experience emerged as a significant predictor of early teacher identity ( $\beta = .181$ ,  $p <$

.05), indicating that participants with teaching-related experience tended to report higher ETIM scores when gender, age, socioeconomic status, and region were controlled.

In the third model, year of study was added to the regression equation. However, this variable did not make a meaningful contribution to the prediction of early teacher identity. The explained variance remained almost unchanged ( $R^2 = .043$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .001$ ), suggesting that students' year of study did not significantly predict ETIM scores after the previously entered variables were controlled.

The fourth model included time of decision to become a teacher. This step produced the most substantial increase in explained variance ( $R^2 = .195$ ,  $\Delta R^2 = .152$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and the overall model became statistically significant ( $F = 6.787$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In the final model, time of decision to become a teacher was the strongest predictor of early teacher identity ( $\beta = .395$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Teaching experience also remained a significant predictor ( $\beta = .203$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Other variables, including gender, age, socioeconomic status, region of residence, and year of study, did not significantly predict ETIM scores in the final model.

In short, the hierarchical regression results indicate that early teacher identity was not strongly predicted by general demographic variables. Instead, career-related variables, particularly teaching experience and time of decision to become a teacher, appeared to play a more meaningful role. The sharp increase in explained variance after the inclusion of time of decision suggests that deciding to become a teacher earlier is an important factor in explaining stronger early teacher identity among EFL student teachers.

### ***RQ2.3. Do selected demographic variables interact in explaining early teacher identity?***

**Table 7**

*Moderation Analysis Results*

	B	B	SE	t	P
Moderation 1: Time of Decision $\times$ Teaching Experience $\rightarrow$ ETIM					
Teaching Experience	0.192	0.151	0.081	2.373	.019*
Time of Decision	0.443	0.386	0.073	6.055	<.001**
Experience $\times$ Decision	-0.222	-0.096	0.147	-1.514	.131
$R^2 = .191$ , $F(3, 200) = 15.78$ , $p < .001$					

Moderation 2: Gender × Year of Study → ETIM					
Year of Study	0.008	0.014	0.039	0.195	.845
Gender	0.183	0.124	0.105	1.741	.083
Gender × Year of Study	0.098	0.075	0.092	1.058	.291
$R^2 = .019, F(3, 200) = 1.284, p = .281$					

Note. B = unstandardized coefficient;  $\beta$  = standardized coefficient; SE = standard error. Predictors were mean-centered prior to computing interaction terms. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

To examine whether selected variables moderated the relationships predicting early teacher identity, two moderation models were tested. Moderation analysis is used to determine whether the strength or direction of the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable changes depending on the level or category of a third variable, namely the moderator (Aiken & West, 1991; Hayes, 2018). In regression-based moderation analysis, this conditional effect is typically tested through an interaction term between the predictor and the proposed moderator. In the first model, the interaction between teaching experience and time of decision to become a teacher was examined. In the second model, the interaction between gender and year of study was tested. In both models, ETIM overall score was used as the dependent variable. The moderation models were limited to theoretically meaningful interaction terms rather than testing all possible combinations of demographic variables. This decision was made to avoid unnecessary model complexity and to focus on interactions that were conceptually relevant to early teacher identity development.

As seen in Table 7, in the first moderation model, teaching experience significantly predicted early teacher identity ( $B = 0.192, \beta = .151, SE = 0.081, t = 2.373, p = .019$ ). Time of decision to become a teacher was also a significant predictor of ETIM ( $B = 0.443, \beta = .386, SE = 0.073, t = 6.055, p < .001$ ). The overall model was statistically significant and explained 19.1% of the variance in early teacher identity ( $R^2 = .191, F(3, 200) = 15.78, p < .001$ ). However, the interaction between teaching experience and time of decision was not statistically significant ( $B = -0.222, \beta = -.096, SE = 0.147, t = -1.514, p = .131$ ). This indicates that time of decision did not significantly moderate the relationship between teaching experience and early teacher identity. In other words, although both teaching experience and

decision time independently contributed to ETIM scores, their combined interaction did not produce a significant additional effect.

In the second moderation model, the interaction between gender and year of study was examined. The results showed that year of study did not significantly predict early teacher identity ( $B = 0.008$ ,  $\beta = .014$ ,  $SE = 0.039$ ,  $t = 0.195$ ,  $p = .845$ ). Gender also did not reach statistical significance ( $B = 0.183$ ,  $\beta = .124$ ,  $SE = 0.105$ ,  $t = 1.741$ ,  $p = .083$ ). Similarly, the interaction between gender and year of study was not statistically significant ( $B = 0.098$ ,  $\beta = .075$ ,  $SE = 0.092$ ,  $t = 1.058$ ,  $p = .291$ ). The overall model was not significant and explained only a small proportion of the variance in ETIM scores ( $R^2 = .019$ ,  $F(3, 200) = 1.284$ ,  $p = .281$ ).

To sum up, the moderation analyses showed that neither of the tested interaction effects significantly predicted early teacher identity. Although teaching experience and time of decision were significant independent predictors in the first model, time of decision did not change the strength or direction of the relationship between teaching experience and ETIM. Similarly, year of study did not moderate the relationship between gender and early teacher identity. These findings suggest that the selected demographic and educational interaction terms had limited explanatory power in predicting early teacher identity among EFL student teachers.

***RQ2.4. Does self-categorization mediate the relationship between time of decision to become a teacher and early teacher identity?***

Turning to the mediation analysis, Self-categorization was examined as a mediator because it represents the most identity-centered sub-dimension of ETIM. While self-efficacy in becoming a teacher reflects participants' confidence in their ability to become teachers, and natural inclination towards children and teaching reflects their orientation toward teaching and working with children, self-categorization more directly captures the extent to which student teachers define themselves as teachers. Therefore, it was theoretically meaningful to examine whether the relationship between time of decision to become a teacher and early teacher identity operated through student teachers' self-categorization as teachers.

**Table 8***Mediation Analysis: Time of Decision → S-Cat → ETIM*

Effect	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p
ACME — Indirect Effect (Decision → S-Cat → ETIM)	0.421	0.294	0.551	<.001**
ADE — Direct Effect (Decision → ETIM)	0.036	-0.074	0.154	.516
Total Effect	0.457	0.328	0.586	<.001**
Proportion Mediated	0.922	0.700	1.197	<.001**

Note. Bootstrap confidence intervals based on 500 resamples (nonparametric percentile method). ACME = Average Causal Mediation Effect; ADE = Average Direct Effect. Proportion Mediated = .922 indicates 92.2% of the total effect is transmitted through Self-Categorization. \*\* p < .001.

To test this relationship, a mediation analysis was conducted with time of decision to become a teacher as the independent variable, self-categorization as the mediator, and overall ETIM score as the dependent variable. Mediation analysis is commonly used to examine whether the relationship between an independent variable and an outcome variable is transmitted through an intervening variable, or mediator (Hayes, 2018; Imai et al., 2010). In this study, the indirect and direct effects were estimated using bootstrap confidence intervals, which are widely recommended for testing indirect effects because the sampling distribution of indirect effects is often non-normal (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

As shown in Table 8, the indirect effect of time of decision on early teacher identity through self-categorization was statistically significant (ACME = 0.421, 95% CI [0.294, 0.551],  $p < .001$ ). This result indicates that self-categorization significantly mediated the relationship between time of decision and early teacher identity. In other words, participants who had decided to become teachers earlier tended to identify themselves more strongly as teachers, and this stronger self-categorization was associated with higher levels of early teacher identity.

The direct effect of time of decision to become a teacher on early teacher identity was not statistically significant after self-categorization was included in the model (ADE = 0.036, 95% CI [-0.074, 0.154],  $p = .516$ ). However, the total effect was statistically significant (Total Effect = 0.457, 95% CI [0.328, 0.586],  $p < .001$ ). The proportion mediated was 0.922, suggesting that a large proportion of the total effect was transmitted through self-categorization. However, this estimate should be interpreted cautiously because the

confidence interval exceeded 1.00, indicating some uncertainty around the exact size of the mediated proportion.

This finding should also be interpreted cautiously because self-categorization is one of the sub-dimensions of the overall ETIM score. Since the mediator is also part of the dependent variable, there is a potential part-whole overlap. Therefore, the mediation result should not be interpreted as evidence that self-categorization is completely independent from early teacher identity. Rather, it suggests that the identity-defining component of ETIM was particularly important in explaining the link between early career decision and overall early teacher identity.

Overall, the mediation analysis indicates that self-categorization functioned as a key identity-related mechanism in the relationship between time of decision to become a teacher and early teacher identity. The findings suggest that deciding to become a teacher earlier may be associated with stronger early teacher identity development largely through student teachers' internalization of the teacher role and their tendency to define themselves as future members of the teaching profession. However, because the data is non-experimental, the mediation findings should be interpreted as evidence of an indirect statistical association rather than definitive causal evidence.

### ***RQ3. Which demographic variables are associated with significant differences in EFL student teachers' early teacher identity levels?***

The third research question examined which demographic variables were associated with significant differences in EFL student teachers' early teacher identity levels. To answer this question, independent samples t-tests were conducted for binary variables, including gender, teaching experience, and region of residence, while one-way ANOVA analyses were conducted for multi-category variables, including age group, year of study, time of decision to become a teacher, socioeconomic status, and influential person in choosing the teaching field.

#### ***Differences Based on Binary Variables***

To answer the third research question, independent samples t-tests were first conducted to examine whether early teacher identity and its sub-dimensions differed according

to variables coded as two-category variables. Independent samples t-test is commonly used to compare the mean scores of two independent groups on a continuous dependent variable (Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020). In the present study, these variables included gender, teaching experience, and region of residence. For each comparison, the overall ETIM score and its sub-dimensions were used as dependent variables.

**Table 9**

*Independent Samples t-Test by Gender*

Group	n	M	SD	t	df	p	Dependent Variable
Female	155	3.85	0.63	1.447	201	.150	ETIM
Male	48	3.70	0.61				
Female	155	3.88	0.70	1.284	201	.201	S-Cat
Male	48	3.72	0.79				
Female	155	3.89	0.69	0.086	201	.932	SEBT
Male	48	3.88	0.67				
Female	155	3.80	0.84	2.135	201	.034*	NICT
Male	48	3.51	0.72				

Note. Equal variances assumed. \*  $p < .05$ .

As presented in Table 9, the results showed that there was no statistically significant gender difference in the overall ETIM score ( $t(201) = 1.447, p = .150$ ). Although female participants reported a slightly higher mean score ( $M = 3.85, SD = 0.63$ ) than male participants ( $M = 3.70, SD = 0.61$ ), this difference was not statistically significant. Similarly, no significant gender differences were found for Self-Categorization ( $t(201) = 1.284, p = .201$ ) or Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher ( $t(201) = 0.086, p = .932$ ). However, a statistically significant gender difference was observed in Natural Inclination towards Children and Teaching ( $t(201) = 2.135, p = .034$ ). Female participants reported higher scores on this dimension ( $M = 3.80, SD = 0.84$ ) than male participants ( $M = 3.51, SD = 0.72$ ). This finding suggests that male and female participants did not differ significantly in their overall early teacher identity, self-categorization, or self-efficacy in becoming a teacher; however, they differed in their natural inclination toward children and teaching.

**Table 10***Independent Samples t-Test by Teaching Experience*

Group	N	M	SD	t	df	p	Dependent Variable
No	87	3.69	0.61	-2.483	202	.014*	ETIM
Yes	117	3.91	0.64				
No	87	3.68	0.74	-2.582	202	.011*	S-Cat
Yes	117	3.95	0.71				
No	87	3.75	0.65	-2.435	202	.016*	SEBT
Yes	117	3.98	0.69				
No	87	3.63	0.77	-1.450	202	.149	NICT
Yes	117	3.80	0.85				

Note. Equal variances assumed. \*  $p < .05$ .

As seen in Table 10, teaching experience was associated with significant differences in several dimensions of early teacher identity. Participants with teaching experience had significantly higher overall ETIM scores ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) than those without teaching experience ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ), and this difference was statistically significant ( $t(202) = -2.483$ ,  $p = .014$ ). Significant differences were also found in Self-Categorization ( $t(202) = -2.582$ ,  $p = .011$ ) and Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher ( $t(202) = -2.435$ ,  $p = .016$ ). Participants with teaching experience reported higher scores in Self-Categorization ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ) than those without experience ( $M = 3.68$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ). Similarly, they reported higher Self-Efficacy scores ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ) than participants without teaching experience ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ). However, the difference in Natural Inclination towards Children and Teaching was not statistically significant ( $t(202) = -1.450$ ,  $p = .149$ ), although experienced participants had a slightly higher mean score ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ) than those without experience ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ). These findings indicate that teaching experience was meaningfully associated with overall early teacher identity, self-categorization, and self-efficacy, but not with natural inclination toward children and teaching.

**Table 11***Independent Samples t-Test by Region of Residence*

Group	N	M	SD	t	df	p	Dependent Variable
Central Anatolia	128	3.80	0.64	-0.339	202	.735	ETIM

Other regions	76	3.83	0.62				
Central Anatolia	128	3.85	0.74	0.514	202	.608	S-Cat
Other regions	76	3.80	0.72				
Central Anatolia	128	3.87	0.70	-0.331	202	.741	SEBT
Other regions	76	3.90	0.66				
Central Anatolia	128	3.69	0.81	-0.849	202	.397	NICT
Other regions	76	3.79	0.83				

Note. Equal variances assumed. Central Anatolia vs. Other regions. \*  $p < .05$ .

As shown in Table 11, no statistically significant differences were found according to region of residence. Participants from Central Anatolia ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) and participants from other regions ( $M = 3.83$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ) had similar overall ETIM scores ( $t(202) = -0.339$ ,  $p = .735$ ). Likewise, no significant regional differences were observed in Self-Categorization ( $t(202) = 0.514$ ,  $p = .608$ ), Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher ( $t(202) = -0.331$ ,  $p = .741$ ), or Natural Inclination towards Children and Teaching ( $t(202) = -0.849$ ,  $p = .397$ ). Therefore, region of residence did not appear to be associated with significant differences in early teacher identity or its sub-dimensions.

In short, among the binary variables examined, teaching experience emerged as the most relevant factor associated with differences in early teacher identity. Gender was associated only with Natural Inclination towards Children and Teaching, while region of residence was not associated with any significant differences. These results suggest that practical teaching-related experience may contribute more strongly to early teacher identity development than basic demographic characteristics such as gender or region of residence.

### ***Differences Based on Multi-Category Variables***

One-way ANOVA analyses were conducted to examine whether early teacher identity and its sub-dimensions differed according to multi-category demographic variables. One-way ANOVA is commonly used to compare the mean scores of three or more independent groups on a continuous dependent variable (Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020). In the present study, the multi-category variables included age group, year of study, time of decision to become a teacher, socioeconomic status, and influential person in choosing the teaching field. For each analysis, the overall ETIM score and its three sub-dimensions were used as dependent variables. When

a statistically significant ANOVA result was obtained, post-hoc comparisons were examined to identify which groups differed from each other.

**Table 12**

*One-Way ANOVA by Age Group*

Group	n	M	SD	F	df	P
18	21	3.68	0.65	0.393	5, 198	.853
19	24	3.86	0.86			
20	53	3.84	0.54			
21	54	3.77	0.58			
22	27	3.82	0.68			
23+	25	3.90	0.62			

Note. No statistically significant differences were found ( $p > .05$ ).

As presented in Table 12, no statistically significant difference was found in overall ETIM scores according to age group ( $F(5, 198) = 0.393, p = .853$ ). The mean scores across age groups were relatively close to each other, ranging from 3.68 for 18-year-old participants to 3.90 for participants aged 23 and above. This result indicates that age was not associated with significant differences in early teacher identity among the participants.

**Table 13**

*One-Way ANOVA by Year of Study*

Group	n	M	SD	F	df	p	Post-hoc	DV
1st year (Freshman)	44	3.70	0.71	1.142	3, 200	.333		ETIM
2nd year (Sophomore)	36	3.96	0.58					
3rd year (Junior)	52	3.83	0.56					
4th year (Senior)	72	3.80	0.64					
1st year (Freshman)	44	3.69	0.83	1.189	3, 200	.315		S-Cat
2nd year (Sophomore)	36	3.95	0.73					
3rd year (Junior)	52	3.78	0.70					
4th year (Senior)	72	3.90	0.69					
1st year (Freshman)	44	3.82	0.72	0.688	3, 200	.560		SEBT
2nd year (Sophomore)	36	4.01	0.66					
3rd year (Junior)	52	3.91	0.62					
4th year (Senior)	72	3.83	0.72					

1st year (Freshman)	44	3.58	0.89	1.194	3, 200	.313	NICT
2nd year (Sophomore)	36	3.91	0.76				
3rd year (Junior)	52	3.78	0.78				
4th year (Senior)	72	3.69	0.83				

Note. DV = Dependent Variable. No statistically significant differences were found ( $p > .05$ ). Equal variances assumed.

Table 13 presents the ANOVA results for year of study. The findings showed that there was no statistically significant difference in overall ETIM scores across year levels ( $F(3, 200) = 1.142, p = .333$ ). Similarly, no significant differences were found in Self-Categorization ( $F(3, 200) = 1.189, p = .315$ ), Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher ( $F(3, 200) = 0.688, p = .560$ ), or Natural Inclination towards Children and Teaching ( $F(3, 200) = 1.194, p = .313$ ). Although second-year students had the highest mean score on the overall ETIM ( $M = 3.96, SD = 0.58$ ), the differences among first-, second-, third-, and fourth-year students were not statistically significant. Therefore, year of study did not appear to be associated with meaningful differences in early teacher identity or its sub-dimensions.

**Table 14**

*One-Way ANOVA by Time of Decision to Become a Teacher*

Group	n	M	SD	F	df	p	Post-hoc	DV
Not planning / not decided <sup>a</sup>	35	3.33	0.62	7.673	7, 196	<.001**	a < c	ETIM
Just before university <sup>b</sup>	31	3.55	0.55					
After starting university <sup>b</sup>	6	3.88	0.53					
In high school or before <sup>c</sup>	130	3.98	0.57					
Not planning / not decided <sup>a</sup>	35	3.23	0.74	9.582	7, 196	<.001**	a < b, c	S-Cat
Just before university <sup>b</sup>	31	3.56	0.68					
After starting university <sup>b</sup>	6	3.93	0.41					
In high school or before <sup>c</sup>	130	4.06	0.63					
Not planning / not decided <sup>a</sup>	35	3.46	0.74	4.093	7, 196	<.001**	a < c	SEBT
Just before university <sup>ab</sup>	31	3.72	0.65					

After starting university <sup>ab</sup>	6	3.92	0.49					
In high school or before <sup>b</sup>	130	4.01	0.65					
Not planning / not decided <sup>a</sup>	35	3.33	0.84	3.936	7, 196	<.001**	a < c; b < c	NICT
Just before university <sup>b</sup>	31	3.38	0.79					
After starting university <sup>ab</sup>	6	3.81	0.76					
In high school or before <sup>c</sup>	130	3.89	0.77					

Note. DV = Dependent Variable. Superscript letters indicate homogeneous subsets based on Tukey's HSD post-hoc test. Groups sharing the same letter do not differ significantly. \*\* p < .01.

In contrast, time of decision to become a teacher was associated with significant differences in early teacher identity and all of its sub-dimensions. As shown in Table 14, there was a statistically significant difference in overall ETIM scores according to time of decision ( $F(7, 196) = 7.673, p < .001$ ). Significant differences were also found for Self-Categorization ( $F(7, 196) = 9.582, p < .001$ ), Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher ( $F(7, 196) = 4.093, p < .001$ ), and Natural Inclination towards Children and Teaching ( $F(7, 196) = 3.936, p < .001$ ). Post-hoc comparisons indicated that participants who had decided to become teachers in high school or before reported the highest scores across the overall scale and its sub-dimensions. In contrast, participants who were not planning to teach or had not yet decided generally reported the lowest scores. This finding suggests that earlier commitment to the teaching profession was associated with stronger early teacher identity.

**Table 15**  
*One-Way ANOVA by Socioeconomic Status*

Group	n	M	SD	F	df	p	DV
Low	20	3.84	0.59	1.563	2, 201	.212	ETIM
Middle	172	3.79	0.64				
High	12	4.12	0.58				
Low	20	3.90	0.72	0.978	2, 201	.378	S-Cat
Middle	172	3.81	0.73				
High	12	4.10	0.78				
Low	20	4.02	0.60	1.691	2, 201	.187	SEBT
Middle	172	3.84	0.69				
High	12	4.17	0.62				
Low	20	3.62	0.88	1.347	2, 201	.262	NICT

Group	n	M	SD	F	df	p	DV
Middle	172	3.71	0.81				
High	12	4.08	0.73				

Note. No statistically significant differences were found ( $p > .05$ ).

As presented in Table 15, socioeconomic status was not associated with significant differences in early teacher identity. No statistically significant differences were found in overall ETIM scores ( $F(2, 201) = 1.563, p = .212$ ), Self-Categorization ( $F(2, 201) = 0.978, p = .378$ ), Self-Efficacy in Becoming a Teacher ( $F(2, 201) = 1.691, p = .187$ ), or Natural Inclination towards Children and Teaching ( $F(2, 201) = 1.347, p = .262$ ). Although participants from the high socioeconomic status group had relatively higher mean scores, the differences were not statistically significant. Therefore, socioeconomic status did not appear to differentiate early teacher identity levels in this sample.

**Table 16**

*One-Way ANOVA by Influential Person in Choosing Teaching Field*

Group	n	M	SD	F	df	p	DV
My own decision	67	3.83	0.67	0.627	11, 192	.804	ETIM
A teacher or mentor	88	3.82	0.65				
A family member	26	3.74	0.59				
Other combinations	23	3.82	0.63				
My own decision	67	3.85	0.77	0.768	11, 192	.672	S-Cat
A teacher or mentor	88	3.84	0.74				
A family member	26	3.86	0.76				
Other combinations	23	3.80	0.65				
My own decision	67	3.94	0.69	0.924	11, 192	.519	SEBT
A teacher or mentor	88	3.89	0.72				
A family member	26	3.76	0.62				
Other combinations	23	3.85	0.67				
My own decision	67	3.70	0.84	0.552	11, 192	.865	NICT
A teacher or mentor	88	3.74	0.86				
A family member	26	3.63	0.76				
Other combinations	23	3.72	0.79				

Note. No statistically significant differences were found ( $p > .05$ ).

Finally, Table 16 presents the ANOVA results for the influential person in choosing the teaching field. The findings showed that this variable did not produce statistically significant differences in overall ETIM scores ( $F(11, 192) = 0.627, p = .804$ ). Similarly, no significant differences were found across the sub-dimensions, indicating that whether participants were

influenced by their own decision, a teacher or mentor, a family member, or other combinations did not significantly differentiate their early teacher identity levels.

To sum up, among the multi-category variables examined, time of decision to become a teacher was the only variable associated with significant differences in early teacher identity and all of its sub-dimensions. Age group, year of study, socioeconomic status, and influential person in choosing the teaching field did not produce statistically significant differences. These findings suggest that early teacher identity was more strongly related to the timing of participants' career decision than to general demographic or educational background variables.

Overall, the group comparison analyses showed that only some of the demographic variables were associated with significant differences in early teacher identity. Among the binary variables, teaching experience was the most relevant factor, as participants with teaching experience reported significantly higher overall ETIM, Self-Categorization, and Self-Efficacy scores. Gender was associated only with Natural Inclination towards Children and Teaching, while region of residence did not produce any significant differences. Among the multi-category variables, time of decision to become a teacher emerged as the strongest differentiating variable, producing significant differences in overall ETIM and all three sub-dimensions. In contrast, age group, year of study, socioeconomic status, and influential person in choosing the teaching field were not associated with significant differences. Taken together, these findings suggest that early teacher identity among EFL student teachers was more strongly differentiated by career-related variables, particularly teaching experience and time of decision, than by general demographic characteristics.

### **Findings based on the Qualitative Data Analysis**

The qualitative phase of the study aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of EFL student teachers' professional identity development. In line with this aim, the qualitative findings were organized around two main research questions:

How do EFL student teachers develop their professional identities during their teacher education program?

What factors facilitate or challenge the professional identity development of EFL student teachers?

The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews and reflective writing tasks were analyzed through an inductive thematic analysis approach. After the interview transcripts and reflective writings were read in detail, meaningful units were coded, similar codes were grouped into categories, and conceptually related categories were brought together under broader themes.

As a result of this process, six main themes, thirteen categories, and thirty-five codes were identified. The six themes were External Sources of Identity, Transformation Process of Identity, Self-Efficacy and Confidence, Classroom Management and Curriculum, Emotional Dimension of Teaching, and Continuous Professional Development. The general structure of the themes, categories, and codes is presented in the codebook below in Table 17.

In the following sections, each theme is first presented in detail with reference to its related categories, codes, and participant excerpts. This is followed by an overall evaluation of the qualitative findings, in which the main patterns emerging across the themes are synthesized in relation to the two qualitative research questions. This organization allows both a detailed presentation of the thematic findings and a broader interpretation of how EFL student teachers constructed their professional identities and what factors facilitated or challenged this process.

**Table 17***The Codebook for Qualitative Findings*

Theme	Category	Code
External Sources of Identity	The Decisive Influence of Role Model Teachers	A specific teacher shaping the career decision Modeling the teacher's extra-curricular humane attitude University professors reinforcing professional identity
	The Guiding Role of Family and Social Environment	Having teachers in the family leading to teaching as a career Career choice through family pressure or encouragement Social environment shaping the perception of professional identity
Transformation Process of Identity	Initial Resistance and Voluntary Adoption	Starting teaching reluctantly or with alternative plans Voluntarily adoption during the education process
	The Effect of Systemic Factors on Identity Motivation	Appointment issues and economic concerns weakening motivation Disappointment regarding the social status of the profession Maintaining commitment to teaching despite systemic uncertainty
Self-Efficacy and Confidence	Concerns about Language Proficiency	Fear of being unable to transfer knowledge to students Shifting confidence in language teaching based on the age group Questioning one's own English proficiency
	Confidence and Doubt toward Pedagogical Competence	Micro-teaching and presentations boosting self-confidence Pedagogical confidence becoming stronger with experience Awareness of the gap between expectations and actual classroom environment The identity-reinforcing effect of the practicum experience
Classroom Management and Curriculum	Concerns regarding Classroom Management	Concerns about establishing authority and discipline Uncertainty stemming from changing student profiles Difficulty of showing individual attention in crowded classrooms Concerns about responsibility toward students with special needs

Theme	Category	Code
	Perceived Inadequacy of the Educational Curriculum	Theory failing to prepare for actual classroom settings Demand for earlier observation and practice
Emotional Dimension of Teaching	Satisfaction derived from Student Learning	Meaning and pride derived from observing the moment of comprehension The sense of touching students' lives making the profession meaningful Observing students' independent use of what they have learned
	Emotional Burden Caused by the Inability to Teach	Self-questioning following an unsuccessful lesson Difficulty in maintaining patience and emotion management Reframing negative experience as a development opportunity
	Feelings regarding Working with Children and Adolescents	Finding it rewarding to connect with younger age groups  Authority and motivation concerns regarding adolescents Positioning the teacher as a parental and guiding figure
Continuous Professional Development	Adaptation to Change and Technology	Awareness that artificial intelligence will transform the profession Desire to integrate technology into lesson Critical view of teachers who cannot keep up with technology
	Maintaining Research and Learning	Intention to follow current methods and research Conference and seminar experiences shaping motivation
	Ideal Teacher Image	Goal of becoming a patient, understanding, student-centered teacher Desire to become a role model and source of inspiration Commitment to the profession despite systemic constraints

Rather than separating the findings strictly under each research question, the themes are reported as an integrated thematic structure, with references to the relevant research questions where appropriate. In this way, the qualitative findings reflect both the process through which EFL student teachers developed their professional identities and the factors that facilitated or challenged this development.

## Theme 1. External Sources of Identity

Figure 1

Code Matrix for the External Sources of Identity Theme

Code System	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade
External Sources of Identity				
Decisive influence of the role-model teacher				
A specific teacher shaping the career decision	2	3	3	7
Modeling the teacher's extra-curricular humane attitude		2	2	4
University professors reinforcing professional identity	1	1		1
Guiding role of family and social environment				
Having teachers in the family leading to teaching as a career	1	1	1	
Career choice through family pressure or encouragement	1	1	1	2
Social environment shaping the perception of professional identity			1	

The first theme of the study focuses on the external sources that contributed to the professional identity development of student teachers. As seen in Figure 1, when the data within this theme were examined, the code with the highest number of references was “a specific teacher shaping the career decision” ( $n = 15$ ), followed by “modeling the teacher’s extra-curricular humane attitude” ( $n = 8$ ). Within the category of family and social environment, the code “career choice through family pressure or encouragement” stood out ( $n = 5$ ), whereas “social environment shaping the perception of professional identity” remained the least represented code, with only one reference. In terms of year of study, the codes related to the influence of role model teachers were represented more strongly among fourth-year participants. Among first-year students, however, this influence was expressed more at an emotional and intuitive level.

### Category of The Decisive Influence of Role Model Teachers

The personal influence of previous teachers played a highly determining role in shaping student teachers’ identities toward the teaching profession. Most participants directly associated their career choices with the presence and attitude of a teacher. This relationship involved not only professional orientation but also a deep sense of identification and belonging. Such interaction often began in primary school and continued over a long period, extending into participants’ career decisions. It is noteworthy that first-year students’ narratives carried a particularly strong emotional tone. The fact that these early impressions still occupied a central

place in their identity narratives during the first years of university reveals how lasting the influence of primary or middle school teacher figures could be.

*“My primary school teacher was a very sweet woman. I really liked the feeling of being the person standing in front of the class rather than the one sitting in the classroom.”*  
(P21, Freshman)

*“There is a teacher who guided me toward this path. If I can be such a light for my young students, if I can give them an idea, that would make me very happy.”* (P1, Senior)

This influence was also observed to continue during the university process. Especially participants in the upper years described in detail what kind of people their high school teachers were and what kind of relationship they had established with them. They positioned these experiences as the cornerstone of their career decisions. Among second-year participants, this influence appeared to be combined with a more cognitive and professional evaluation, producing clearer answers to the question of “why that teacher.”

*“My teacher in the 11th and 12th grades contributed to me in terms of manners, life, and many other things. I chose English language teaching because I wanted to contribute to my students in the same way, taking this as an example.”* (P19, Sophomore)

It was seen that the role model was remembered as a person who touched the student’s life. The qualities participants emphasized while describing these teachers were related more to their humane stance than to their subject-matter competence. Respect, affection, individual attention, and trust were repeated in almost every narrative. P9, a fourth-year participant, approached this relationship in a much more systematic way. He emphasized that the teacher who led him to his career choice was not originally a graduate of a faculty of education, but she constantly improved herself by attending conferences. He clearly stated that he wanted to

model this attitude. This example concretely demonstrates how the role model shaped both identity and the way participants viewed the profession.

*“She was such a well-equipped woman... Although she was not a graduate of a Faculty of Education, she improved herself by attending every conference. Maybe she is over 60 now, but I know that she still goes from conference to conference.”* (P9, Senior)

In addition to shaping the career decision, the influence of teachers also directly shaped participants' own ideals of teaching. While listing the qualities of the teachers who were important to them, participants were also revealing what kind of teachers they wanted to become. These two dimensions were mostly intertwined in the narratives. This overlap suggests that the role model teacher's function in identity development was not limited to career choice; rather, the role model served as an ongoing reference point in the construction of the student teacher's professional self.

*“Since I chose this field thinking that I wanted to be a teacher like her, I can see myself in the future as a good teacher like her, someone loved by students. First of all, her attitude toward her students was very good; she was truly a very good teacher in terms of personality.”* (P10, Junior)

The influence of university instructors emerged as another dimension. Especially from the second year of undergraduate education onward, instructors' attitudes, approaches to courses, and professional models played an important role in reinforcing student teachers' professional identity. Considering that the “student” position is still more dominant in the first year, instructors' positioning of students with expressions such as “you are teachers now” appeared to create a transformative effect on their identity perceptions. This effect was observed more clearly in the second and third years, a period in which student teachers began to internalize the intellectual and pedagogical dimensions of the profession.

*“When I came to university, one of the things that increased my motivation for teaching was seeing my teachers. Seeing that they had academic careers was really*

*impressive... I put myself in their place, and they are truly in a very respectable position.” (P24, Freshman)*

*“I started the department, and our instructors’ attitudes toward us were completely like, ‘Yes, you are teachers now.’ From that moment on, I began to think, ‘I am studying teaching now, and I guess I will become a teacher.’” (P4, Senior)*

### **Category of The Guiding Role of Family and Social Environment**

Although the influence of family and social environment on orientation toward the teaching profession was not as prominent as that of role model teachers, it emerged as another external source with a clearly guiding function. This influence appeared across a wide range, from the presence of teachers in the family to parent pressure and social guidance

*“My father is a teacher, and my aunt is a teacher. Since I grew up with them, I did not hesitate much about choosing teaching when I saw the profession.” (P25, Freshman)*

*“My father is also an English teacher and has been doing this job for about 24 years. This motivated me a lot because I was very impressed by the communication he established with his students and the opportunities he provided for them.” (P12, Junior)*

Having teachers in the family also enabled student teachers to gain concrete impressions of the profession. This everyday exposure made the profession more familiar and reduced the anxiety created by uncertainty. On the other hand, there were also cases in which the family directly intervened in career choice through pressure or encouragement. In such cases, it was noteworthy that the initial resistance often gave way to acceptance over time. The influence of the social environment operated in a more indirect way, shaping identity choices through peer relationships or surrounding models.

*“My mother always used to tell me, ‘You will become a teacher.’ At that time, I would say, ‘No, I don’t want to be a teacher.’ But then, what mothers say really happens. Looking back now, I think this was a source of motivation.” (P24, Freshman)*

*“My family said things like, ‘Rely on the state,’ so that is why I chose it. But as I saw it from my surroundings and spent some time with children myself, I realized that I liked teaching.” (P15, Junior)*

Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the effect of family pressure on identity was not one-directional. For some participants, the initial pressure later turned into an internalized motivation. This transformation process indicates that identity is reconstructed through the individual’s own experiences. It shows that the influence of the social environment functions as a starting point, but the main factor determining identity development is how the individual interprets and internalizes this influence.

*“I chose the teaching department with my family’s encouragement. At first, I struggled a little; I did not want it because of presentations. However, as I gave presentations, I got used to them; as I got used to them, I realized that I liked it, and as I liked it, my belief that I could do this profession increased.” (P7, Senior)*

*“I also like teaching people in my friendships. Then I met someone whose dream was to become an English teacher. Since I got along well with that person, I said, ‘I will also enter English language teaching.’” (P14, Junior)*

Taken together, these findings show that the external sources of identity operated through both teacher figures and family and social environment. Rather than excluding each other, these two sources sometimes reinforced and sometimes balanced each other in shaping the individual’s professional orientation. Among first-year participants, both sources were largely based on emotional and subjective narratives. Among fourth-year participants, however, these influences were reinterpreted through increasing experience and practice, gaining a more complex meaning structure.

## ***Theme 2. Transformation Process of Identity***

### **Figure 2**

Code Matrix for the Transformation Process of Identity Theme

Code System	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade
Transformation Process of Identity				
Initial resistance and voluntary adoption				
Starting teaching reluctantly or with alternative plans	1	2	2	9
Voluntary adoption during the education process	2	3	4	6
Effect of systemic factors on identity motivation				
Appointment issues and economic anxieties weakening motivation	1	1	1	2
Disappointment regarding the social status of the profession	1			2
Maintaining commitment to the profession despite systemic uncertainty		1	1	1

The second theme focuses on how teacher identity changes and is reshaped over time. As presented in Figure 2, within this theme, the most frequently cited codes were “voluntarily adoption during the teacher education process” (n = 15) and “starting the program reluctantly or with alternative plans” (n = 14). The fact that these two codes had very similar frequencies shows that this process reflected two overlapping sides of identity development: initial distance from teaching and gradual acceptance over time. In particular, the code “starting the program reluctantly or with alternative plans” was especially prominent among senior participants (n = 9), suggesting that retrospective narratives became clearer and more integrated as year of study increased. In the category of systemic factors, the number of references remained relatively limited. The code “appointment issues and economic concerns weakening motivation” (n = 5) emerged as the most frequently cited code in this category.

### ***Category of Initial Resistance and Voluntary Adoption***

When student teachers’ narratives about teacher identity were examined, it was seen that, for many participants, this identity did not develop in a straight or uninterrupted line. Rather, it followed a fluctuating process involving resistance, hesitation, and gradual acceptance. Many participants described teaching as an alternative plan or as a path chosen after another dream did not come true. This starting point reveals how closely identity development is intertwined with external conditions and how individuals come to embrace teacher identity by experiencing and making sense of it themselves. This pattern was strongly observed among freshman and sophomore participants, but it was also frequently encountered in the retrospective narratives of senior participants.

*"I never wanted teaching as a department. In my preference list, I wanted to be a translation student. Then, when my score was not enough, I chose this department. When I came to the department, I still had thoughts like, 'I won't become a teacher; I will continue with translation.' But as I took the courses and saw our instructors teaching us something, I said, 'Maybe I can give teaching a chance.'" (P23, Freshman)*

*"When I am asked, 'Do you like teaching? I mean, do you like teaching something?' to be honest, I would say I do not like it... because I think the process is difficult. Do I like this job? I do not. But what do I like? I like the feeling of leaving a lasting mark on a student after achieving something." (P9, Senior)*

Although the factors that transformed initial resistance into voluntary embrace differed from participant to participant, several common patterns stood out. Courses, the attitudes of instructors, small experiences with children, and symbolic moments such as Teachers' Day were among the factors frequently mentioned in this transformation. Among freshman participants, the process of embracing teaching was still at a very early stage, whereas among senior participants, identity acceptance appeared to have been completed or placed on a much firmer ground through practicum experience.

*"When I first started, I was a little confused in the first semester. Most of the students in my class had come from the language track. Since I came from the science track, I sometimes felt left behind. So, during that period, I was confused; I wondered whether I would not be sufficient or whether this profession was not right for me. But after the second semester, when I realized how enthusiastic I had become, I understood that this was the right profession for me." (P11, Junior)*

*"At first, I honestly did not see myself in the field of teaching that much. But after I saw myself in the field, my ideas changed. Going there, teaching, seeing the students' looks, and seeing that I could teach them gave me a lot of motivation. And I found myself saying, 'Yes, I want to teach.' Because at the beginning, I was not saying that; I was thinking, I cannot do this profession." (P4, Senior)*

Perhaps the most striking examples of identity development as a fluctuating process were found in the narratives of participants who initially did not want to become teachers at all but later deeply embraced the profession. While reconstructing their identities, these participants often pointed to a specific turning point. This moment was usually described as an experience, a piece of feedback, or a moment of awareness. Such turning points show how suddenly yet deeply identity development can occur. They respond not so much to the question of “how one becomes a teacher,” but rather to the question of “what the moment of embracing teaching was.” In this respect, the pattern of initial resistance and voluntary adoption clearly demonstrates that teacher identity is not imposed; rather, it is acquired through lived experience and meaning making.

### ***Category of Effect of Systemic Factors on Identity Motivation***

Student teachers’ professional identity development was also deeply affected by structural factors such as the appointment system, economic conditions, and perceptions regarding the social status of the teaching profession. The findings in this category were concentrated particularly among junior and senior participants. While freshman students were largely distant from these concerns, awareness of systemic issues clearly began to put pressure on professional motivation in the later years of the program.

*“Now, definitely, besides my love for English, the second option was of course economic welfare. But when I look at the current situation, I do not think there is much selectivity in the teaching career anymore. I think the importance of the Faculty of Education has greatly decreased. If I were choosing now, I might want to change my preference, honestly. I have experienced a very, very serious loss of motivation, and I still continue to experience it, but of course this does not prevent me from studying.”*

(P1, Senior)

*“As a teaching profession, we may experience some difficulties in the future, such as finding a job or appointment issues. But these are problems that can be overcome. I think that if a person makes some effort, the rest will follow.”* (P18, Sophomore)

Even in cases where systemic concerns weakened motivation, it was noteworthy that most participants did not completely lose their commitment to the profession. At this point, the will to continue despite uncertainty can be interpreted as an indicator of how firmly teacher identity was grounded. Participants openly expressed their concerns about systemic limitations, but they tended to frame these concerns as a reality to be overcome. This reframing shows how professional identity can remain sustainable even while struggling with structural pressures. Taken together, these findings suggest that systemic factors have the power to shape teacher identity, but they are not the sole determining force. Intrinsic motivation and the sense of professional meaning function as important balancing forces against structural obstacles.

*“There has not been much change, but because the National Education Academy (NEA) was introduced, I feel a little more stressed. Sometimes I think, if I had known about NEA before, would I have chosen teaching? But then, since I cannot imagine myself in any other profession, I do not regret it.” (P13, Junior)*

### Theme 3. Self-Efficacy and Confidence

#### Figure 3

Code Matrix for the Self-Efficacy and Confidence Theme

Code System	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade
Self-Efficacy and Confidence				
Concerns about language proficiency				
Questioning the proficiency of one's own English level				1
Fear of being unable to transfer knowledge to the student	1	1	2	2
Shifting confidence in language teaching based on the age group	1		1	3
Confidence and doubt toward pedagogical competence				
Micro-teaching and presentations boosting self-confidence	1	2	1	5
Strengthening of pedagogical confidence as experience increases	2	2	2	8
Awareness of the gap between expectations and the actual classroom environment	1	2	1	8
The identity-reinforcing effect of the practicum experience				10

As shown in Figure 3, the present theme, which covers participants' perceptions of confidence regarding their own teaching competence and language skills, shows that the code "strengthening of pedagogical confidence as experience increases" was the most frequently cited code in the category of pedagogical competence ( $n = 14$ ). This was followed by

“awareness of the gap between expectations and actual classroom settings” (n = 12) and “identity-reinforcing effect of the practicum experience” (n = 10). It is noteworthy that all three codes were strongly concentrated among senior participants, indicating that the development of self-efficacy was largely gained through practice and became meaningful in the final year of teacher education. In the category of language proficiency, “fear of being unable to transfer knowledge to students” emerged as the most frequently cited code (n = 6), whereas “questioning one’s own English proficiency” was the least represented code, with only one reference.

### **Category of Concerns about Language Proficiency**

A significant dimension of EFL student teachers’ concerns about professional self-efficacy was their insecurity regarding their own language proficiency. This concern appeared from the early stages, when participants began to conceptualize their teacher identities, and became particularly visible when teaching different age groups was considered. Concerns about language proficiency were also closely intertwined with the fear of “whether I can transfer the English I know to students.” The distinction between these two dimensions shaped how participants evaluated themselves both as language users and as language teachers.

*“I have really thought about this a lot, actually. Sometimes it comes to my mind before I go to sleep. After graduation, when I work at the Ministry of National Education and if I am appointed to a primary school, I wonder how I will teach English from the beginning to students who have never seen English before. And honestly, I do not feel confident about this at all.” (P24, Freshman)*

*“Sometimes, even though we know some things, we cannot answer. I am afraid of this: in the future, if I enter a primary school class and a primary school student comes and asks me something, what if I cannot explain it even though I know it? I mean, I know it, but because what I know has become something settled through use, I worry about not being able to give my students a sufficient answer or about transferring something incorrectly.” (P10, Junior)*

It was observed that concerns about language proficiency varied considerably according to the age group to be taught. When teaching younger learners, especially primary school students with no prior knowledge of English, anxiety became more evident because this level required both teaching the language from the very beginning and adapting to students' level. In contrast, participants expressed greater confidence in teaching middle school and high school students, assuming that students' existing basic knowledge would facilitate the teaching process. This pattern appeared similarly among both freshman and senior participants; however, among senior participants, these evaluations were supported by concrete observations based on actual teaching experiences.

*“Yes, it is like this: when we are appointed, we can go to a primary school or a high school. In terms of language knowledge, frankly, I think I can come down to their level; right now, I am at the middle school level. Sometimes classroom management can be difficult during this process. Being able to manage the class and give something at their level can actually be difficult.” (P2, Senior)*

Concerns about language proficiency appeared to have a paradoxical function that both challenged and strengthened participants' teacher identities. On the one hand, these concerns kept their motivation for professional development alive; on the other hand, they carried the risk of damaging self-confidence. Participants who were able to cope with these concerns constructively framed the process as an opportunity for growth and seemed to have an internal motivation to continue improving themselves. Overall, these concerns about language proficiency reveal the multidimensional nature of teacher identity and show that subject-matter knowledge alone is not sufficient for identity construction.

### ***Category of Confidence and Doubt toward Pedagogical Competence***

When participants' perceptions of self-efficacy were examined, confidence and doubt regarding pedagogical competence did not appear as two independent extremes. Instead, the same individual could simultaneously feel confident in some areas and doubtful in others. This

intertwined structure suggests that self-efficacy is a process-oriented construct that changes over time. Micro-teaching practices and presentations emerged as the most visible catalysts of this transformation. Many participants stated that these activities gave them the opportunity to experience themselves as teachers and created a major turning point in their identities.

*“Before the practicum, I think I started to like it this much in the second year. I was very anxious during my presentations in the first year, but in the second year we had a presentation assignment, and in that presentation I learned how to control my voice. After that presentation, something inside me broke, in a way. I was a very shy child when I was little; I could not speak up.”* (P7, Senior)

*“Taking on that role in the classroom made me feel good. I mean, I did not experience any negative feelings. In fact, I liked that people, I mean my friends, listened to me and responded, and that they listened to what I explained with great attention. I honestly felt good.”* (P17, Sophomore)

In addition to the positive effect of micro-teaching and presentations on self-confidence, participants also showed a critical awareness that these activities could not fully represent the real classroom environment. Senior participants in particular acknowledged the value of micro-teaching while also clearly expressing its limitations. This dual perspective shows that the deepening of pedagogical knowledge in later years also brings a clearer awareness of its limits. As experience increases, self-efficacy becomes stronger; however, this strengthening is accompanied by the ability to perceive reality in more complex ways.

*“We do micro-teaching, and this is a very good thing; we gain small experiences, but it is never equivalent to a real classroom environment. Because you are acting there, and your friends are also acting there. How much does it reflect reality? You start to experience it little by little in the fourth year. I wish we could experience these things gradually earlier, from the first or second year.”* (P9, Senior)

The function of practicum experience in reinforcing teacher identity constituted one of the strongest emphases in this theme. Time spent with real students in real classrooms became a turning point for many participants, where previously theoretical knowledge gained meaning, teacher identity became concrete, and earlier doubts were largely overcome. This transformation was particularly visible among senior participants; the initial uncertainty seemed to be replaced by a much stronger and more established sense of identity.

*“Right now, especially as a practicum student, I can say that I feel quite confident. With students, I realized that you should not be too friendly, but you should not be too strict either. When you find the balance, I realized that classroom management can also be achieved very well.”* (P8, Senior)

Awareness of the gap between real classroom settings and expectations constituted a critical dimension of self-efficacy development. This awareness emerged when participants compared their pedagogical knowledge with real classroom situations, and it often triggered an important process of re-evaluation. Among freshman participants, this gap remained mostly at an intuitive level, whereas among senior participants with practicum experience, it turned into a deeper and more concrete understanding of reality grounded in lived experience.

*“In theory, everything actually seemed easier before we moved into practice. Now, at the practice stage, I have learned that we need to be more patient; I have understood better that not every student has the same perspective or that not every class is the same. Micro-teachings contributed something to us, but I learned that they are not the same as practice.”* (P6, Senior)

#### **Theme 4. Classroom Management and Curriculum**

##### **Figure 4**

Code Matrix for the Classroom Management and Curriculum Theme

Code System	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade
Classroom Management and Curriculum				
Concerns regarding classroom management				
Anxiety over establishing authority and discipline	2	3	5	10
Uncertainty stemming from changing student profiles		1	1	3
Difficulty of showing individual attention in crowded classrooms	2	1	3	3
Responsibility anxiety toward students with special needs				1
Inadequacy of the educational curriculum				
Theory failing to prepare for the actual classroom environment	2	1	3	9
Demand for early observation and practice	1	1	1	4

As shown in Figure 4, the theme of classroom management and curriculum, which addresses both participants' concerns about classroom management and their evaluations of the extent to which the teacher education program responded to these concerns, provided that the most frequently cited code was "concerns about establishing authority and discipline" ( $n = 20$ ). This code was especially prominent among senior participants ( $n = 10$ ), yet it was also present across all year levels starting from the freshman year. Within the category of perceived inadequacy of the educational curriculum, the code "theory failing to prepare student teachers for actual classroom settings" was strongly represented ( $n = 15$ ), while "demand for early observation and practice" was more limited in frequency ( $n = 7$ ) but was concentrated particularly among senior participants. The code "concerns about responsibility toward students with special needs" was the least represented code in this theme, with only one reference.

### ***Category of Concerns regarding Classroom Management***

Classroom management emerged as one of the areas about which student teachers felt the most intense concern. This concern covered a broad framework that could not be reduced only to discipline or authority. Rather, it included multiple layers such as students' individual differences, crowded classrooms, changing student profiles, and a sense of responsibility toward students with special needs. The intensity and nature of these concerns varied noticeably according to year of study. Among freshman and sophomore participants, these concerns were largely based on imagination and intuition, whereas among senior

participants, they had turned into concrete knowledge of reality supported by practicum experiences.

*“Honestly, I cannot really trust myself right now. I still have questions in my mind about how to fully control the classroom environment... how to make yourself clearly recognized as the authority figure there...”* (P22, Freshman)

*“I am afraid of not being able to give equal opportunity and equal attention to all students. That makes me a little nervous. Because in real life, if someone around me understands me better, I tend to spend more time with that person. Maybe I will overcome this as I progress in teaching, but I think I may have difficulty with this when I first start.”* (P16, Junior)

Concerns about establishing authority and discipline were observed in almost all participants, although in different forms. While some participants stated that they had a natural tendency in this area, others defined classroom management as their weakest point. P9, a senior participant, provided a striking example by describing classroom management as the area in which he still felt the least competent, even at the end of four years.

*“It is frightening. Controlling the class, establishing authority... It still feels frightening to me. I am at the end of my senior year, but if they asked me, ‘Where do you feel the most inadequate?’ I would probably say classroom management, honestly. Without any doubt.”* (P9, Senior)

*“Well, the new generation... I really think the student profile has changed a lot. For example, my sibling is in high school now. Based on what he tells me or when I see high school students, of course one wonders whether I will really be able to manage the class, whether they will listen to me.”* (P20, Sophomore)

Concerns about changing student profiles can also be read as an indication of a perceived generational gap. When participants talked about changes in student profiles, they often referred to media news, accounts from relatives, or brief observation experiences.

Regardless of the actual reality of this picture, the concern itself already placed a concrete pressure on identity. The difficulty of providing individual attention in crowded classrooms emerged as another dimension. Participants referred to understanding students according to their general characteristics and developing methods suitable for the group as possible solutions to this problem. Although concerns about responsibility toward students with special needs had the most limited representation, for the participants who expressed them, this issue appeared as a highly concrete and urgent concern.

*“I have some difficulty explaining to them that they need to be quiet. Because the class is very crowded, I cannot reach everyone. In some classes, there are students with special needs. For example, in classroom management, they sometimes fall into the background. We need to pay extra attention to them as well.”* (P2, Senior)

*“I think it is very risky. Because during the lesson, especially young children have a very short attention span. Due to their age, they have a lot of physical contact, and they cannot regulate the level of contact either. For example, I had students who used disproportionate force yesterday at my practicum school. Children can unintentionally hurt their classmates because they are not aware of their own strength. I was so scared at that moment.”* (P5, Senior)

It is noteworthy that most classroom management concerns were shaped not around the question of “how can I manage the classroom?” but rather around “will I be able to manage it?” This distinction is important because the question of “how” points to a technical problem, whereas the question of “whether I can” reflects a more fundamental identity-related concern. This existential anxiety about classroom management became particularly intense during periods when professional identity was not yet firmly established or was still in development. When participants encountered real experiences such as practicum, this anxiety both became more concrete and was partly resolved. Therefore, classroom management concerns can be interpreted as both an indicator and a trigger of professional identity development.

### ***Category of Perceived Inadequacy of the Educational Curriculum***

Most participants stated that although the teacher education program was theoretically sufficient, it contained serious gaps in preparing them for real classroom settings. This criticism was especially evident among senior participants. Through practicum experience, the problem of theory not being reflected in practice became both more visible and more concrete. Since freshman participants were still at the very beginning of the program, they expressed this criticism more cautiously, whereas at higher year levels, the discourse became much clearer and more categorical.

*“It does not prepare us. It definitely does not prepare us. Let me put it this way: maybe we do more micro-teaching than other departments, and this is a very good thing. We gain small experiences, but this is never equivalent to a real classroom environment. Because you are acting there, and your friends are also acting there. How much does it reflect reality?” (P9, Senior)*

*“Honestly, yes, but not for skills. I mean, for classroom management, yes. In this sense: we are given rules, and we are aware of what we need to do, but unfortunately, there is no setting where we can practice this until the senior year.” (P1, Senior)*

The demand for earlier observation and practice was voiced strongly across all year levels. Although freshman students were still inexperienced, they sensed a need for earlier practice. Among sophomore and junior participants, this demand became more concrete and justified. Among senior participants, the expression “I wish we had started earlier” almost became a recurring motif. The solutions proposed by participants varied widely, including short-term school observations, elective practicum opportunities, holiday-period practices, or early field experience during the summer of the junior year. In short, these findings indicate that participants clearly identified a structural problem regarding the theory-practice balance in the teacher education program.

*“I think it does not prepare us, to be honest. Maybe students should be sent to practicum starting from the second year. I do not know, maybe even from the first year;*

*it could progress gradually as a transition period. Suddenly throwing us into micro-teaching feels strange. I mean, we are also unfamiliar students, and they are unfamiliar to us; we do not know how to approach them.” (P6, Senior)*

### **Theme 5. Emotional Dimension of Teaching**

**Figure 5**

Code Matrix for the Emotional Dimension of Teaching Theme

Code System	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade
Emotional Dimension of Teaching				
Satisfaction derived from student learning				
Meaning and pride derived from observing the moment of comprehension	2	3	2	5
The sense of touching a student's life making the profession meaningful	2	3	4	10
Observing the student's independent use				2
Emotional burden caused by the inability to teach				
Self-questioning following an unsuccessful lesson		2	1	5
Difficulty in maintaining patience and emotion management	2	1		2
Reframing negative experience as a development opportunity			1	1
Feelings regarding working with children and adolescents				
Finding it rewarding to connect with young age groups	2		3	7
Authority and motivation concerns regarding adolescents		1	4	7
Positioning the teacher as a parent and guide figure	2	2	2	1

The fifth theme obtained from the analysis examines the emotional experiences generated by teaching practice and the influence of these experiences on professional identity. As presented in Figure 5, within this theme, the code with the highest number of references was “the sense of touching students’ lives making the profession meaningful” ( $n = 19$ ), and this code was particularly concentrated among senior participants ( $n = 10$ ). The codes “meaning and pride derived from observing the moment of comprehension” ( $n = 12$ ) and “finding it rewarding to connect with young age groups” ( $n = 12$ ) also had strong representation. In the category of the emotional burden caused by the inability to teach, “self-questioning following an unsuccessful lesson” stood out ( $n = 8$ ), while “reframing negative experiences as a development opportunity” was the least represented code in this category, with only two references. In the category of feelings regarding working with children and adolescents, “finding it rewarding to connect with young age groups” and “authority and motivation concerns regarding adolescents” received equal numbers of references ( $n = 12$  each), whereas “positioning the teacher as a parental and guiding figure” ( $n = 7$ ) came to the fore especially among freshman and sophomore participants.

### ***Category of Satisfaction derived from Student Learning***

One of the strongest emotional sources feeding student teachers' professional identities was the experience of observing that a student had learned something. Participants described this experience as a feeling that could not be fully expressed in words and positioned it as the moment that most concretely revealed the meaning and value of the profession. For a student teacher, observing the moment of understanding was either not yet fully experienced or only partially experienced; nevertheless, even imagining this moment appeared to strengthen professional commitment. While this feeling appeared more as a speculative future vision among freshman participants, it became a lived, remembered, and meaningfully interpreted reality among junior and senior participants who had gained experience.

*"Seeing students who understand what I teach is really something that gives pride and satisfaction. It would make me very happy. I think the feeling of touching people's lives cannot be obtained through anything else. The fact that they know that subject and will remember us whenever they use it is really wonderful."* (P22, Freshman)

*"The most rewarding part is observing the student's success in a visible way. I mean, they learn, and then you can definitely see that they have learned through exams and small quizzes, and you say, 'I taught this!' They can do it now; they have learned, and then the feeling of pride comes in."* (P6, Senior)

The sense of touching students' lives and making the profession meaningful was strongly represented among both freshman and senior participants. This feeling was often positioned as a concrete expectation and source of meaning. When participants explained their motivation for teaching, they returned to this point almost every time. This repetition suggests that this feeling formed the emotional core of professional identity. Even among participants who initially did not want to become teachers, this feeling of "touching" students' lives gradually became an attractive force and triggered identity transformation.

*"Touching a person's life is already one of my ultimate life goals. I think there cannot be a better way than teaching for this."* (P15, Junior)

*“When I am asked, ‘Do you like teaching?’ to be honest, I would say I do not... But what do I like? I like the feeling of leaving a lasting mark on a student after achieving something. I mean, at least to the extent that you can touch a student’s life, that feeling is very different for me.” (P9, Senior)*

Observing students’ independent use of what they had learned appeared as a more advanced and refined form of satisfaction. This code was especially visible among participants with more teaching experience. It referred not only to students’ giving a correct answer to an immediate question, but also to their use of learned knowledge in different contexts on their own initiative. For participants, this moment was considered the strongest evidence that the teaching process had truly worked.

*“I can describe the most rewarding situation like this: I have taught a topic, and I think my student has understood it. But testing it at that moment would not be very rewarding for me. What really motivates me is seeing my student refer to that topic and use it while another topic is being covered during the normal flow of the lesson.” (P9, Senior)*

*“If they can really use what they have learned in their daily lives, or if what I taught them is still in their minds after some time, that is very pleasing. Because you really receive certain feedback; they participated in the lesson, they made an effort, and you also made an effort as a teacher.” (P5, Senior)*

The reinforcing effect of satisfaction from student learning on professional identity was also clearly felt in participants’ tone and word choices while describing this experience. Compared to other issues, these narratives were more vivid, fluent, and personal. Overall, satisfaction from student learning can be positioned as one of the most central emotional experiences that both produces and sustains teacher identity.

### ***Category of Emotional Burden Caused by the Inability to Teach***

The fact that student teachers also described in detail the experiences in which they felt unsuccessful is highly illuminating for understanding the emotional layers of professional identity. The feeling left by a student’s not understanding or by a topic that could not be taught

appeared for many participants as a two-stage process: first questioning oneself and then searching for different ways.

*“When they do not learn, the opposite happens; I think there must be something lacking in me because I could not teach it. First, I think about myself, what I did wrong or what I did right. Then I think about the individual, what is missing or what is too much in them that I could not teach.”* (P19, Sophomore)

*“In the opposite scenario, there would be two stages for me. First, there would be a stage of questioning my abilities. Second, I would turn to how I can explain this better, how I can explain it differently, and how I can get different outcomes. And I try to keep the self-doubt part as short as possible.”* (P8, Senior)

The difficulty of maintaining patience and emotional regulation became an even heavier burden when the specific conditions of language teaching were considered. Participants frequently referred to the feeling of being stuck when teaching students who had little interest in language learning or limited language aptitude. This deadlock also turned into a deeper questioning of how much the profession could actually reach students. These concerns about patience and emotional management overlapped with classroom management concerns; however, in terms of content, they carried a more individual and emotionally intense dimension.

*“When I think about the challenging part, what comes to my mind is teaching a child who does not have language aptitude or interest in language. I mean, a person gets a little stuck; if someone does not want it, how much can you teach someone who does not want to learn? That may be the challenging part.”* (P25, Freshman)

Although the tendency to reframe negative experiences as opportunities for growth was observed among many participants, the sustainability and realism of this reinterpretation may also be questioned. At this point, it is noteworthy that senior participants made much more practical and experience-based reframing compared to freshman participants. For the former, this was a concrete coping strategy grounded in experience, whereas for the latter it remained

more of a hope. When considered in all its dimensions, the emotional burden of not being able to teach shows that teacher identity is also built on the capacity to cope with failure.

### ***Category of Feelings regarding Working with Children and Adolescents***

Emotions related to working with children and adolescents constituted an important dimension that directly shaped student teachers' career preferences, teaching aspirations, and perceptions of self-efficacy. A clear pattern emerged in this area: most participants had a positive attitude toward younger age groups, whereas they adopted a much more cautious or openly anxious stance toward adolescents, especially high school students. This difference in preference was closely related to participants' classroom management concerns, personal histories, and meaning frameworks regarding the profession.

*"Apart from teaching, I am also very interested in psychology. So, honestly, I think that for a child, especially because the environment they see outside the home is the educational environment, it is extremely important. I think the teacher has a very great role here."* (P25, Freshman)

*"I think working with children is more fun. They are younger, and they can be taught more through games. That is why working with children attracts me more; therefore, I would prefer to work in primary school. There are more varied methods, and since they have no prior knowledge, wanting to build their foundation myself also affects this preference."* (P6, Senior)

Concerns about adolescents were fed by various sources. For some participants, the emotional fluctuations and motivation problems associated with adolescence were the main concern. For others, the risk of authority being questioned or the fear of identification connected to their own personal past formed the basis of these concerns. One of the participant's hesitations about teaching adolescents, which she linked to her own high school experience, offers a particularly striking example.

*"Honestly, working with children attracts me. I can work with adolescents to some extent, but working with high school students definitely frightens me a lot. Because*

*even when I was in high school, I could not get along with my peers. In that case, I would feel like that adolescent girl again. Of course, my role would be different, but I know that I could not get along with them.”* (P1, Senior)

*“When it comes to adolescents, I think I can get along better with them because each of them now has a goal. Unlike young learners, they are not thinking vaguely about what will happen in the future... I do not include all of them, but many adolescents now have a goal. Because they have goals, I think it will be easier for me to work with them. And I can already see that this is the case in my practicum program.”* (P9, Senior)

The tendency to position the teacher as a parental and guiding figure constituted one of the most thought-provoking dimensions of this category. A significant number of participants defined the teaching role as a figure who complements, and at times substitutes for, parents in the lives of children and adolescents. This positioning reflects a deep awareness of the emotional and moral responsibilities of teaching and a strong belief that the profession is not merely an intellectual or technical occupation, but also a human matter. Taken together, these findings clearly show that emotions toward children and adolescents are a critical dimension shaping both personal and professional identity.

*“I think I should actually treat them like a mother or father. Because when they are at school, since their mothers or parents are not there, I think I need to treat them like a parent.”* (P19, Sophomore)

*“Taking responsibility for a class means, I think, being responsible for what they will learn, but at the same time, we also shape some of their views about life. They can be affected even by the smallest thing we say, especially younger age groups. Maybe they spend more time at school than they do at home.”* (P2, Senior)

## **Theme 6. Continuous Professional Development**

### **Figure 6**

Code Matrix for Continuous Professional Development Theme

Code System	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade
Continuous Professional Development				
Adaptation to technology and change				
Awareness that artificial intelligence will transform the profession		2	1	6
Desire to integrate technology into the lesson	1	1	3	11
Critical perspective on the teacher who cannot keep up with technology	1		1	9
Maintaining research and learning				
Intention to follow current methods and research	1	4	7	11
Conference and seminar experiences shaping the motivation				4
Ideal teacher image				
Goal of becoming a patient, understanding, and student-centered teacher	1	2	3	3
Desire to be a role model and source of inspiration	2	1	3	3
Commitment to the profession despite systemic constraints	1			1

In addition to the previous five themes, the sixth theme addresses how student teachers positioned themselves for the future, how they defined professional development, and how they constructed their ideal teacher images. As it was visible in Figure 6, within this theme, the code with the highest number of references was “intention to follow current methods and research” ( $n = 23$ ), which showed a particularly strong concentration among senior participants ( $n = 11$ ). In the technology category, “willingness to integrate technology into lessons” was strongly represented ( $n = 16$ ), followed by “critical view of teachers who cannot keep up with technology” ( $n = 11$ ). Both of these codes were largely based on the narratives of senior participants. In the ideal teacher image category, “goal of becoming a patient, understanding, student-centered teacher” and “desire to become a role model and source of inspiration” had equal numbers of references ( $n = 9$  each), whereas “commitment to the profession despite systemic constraints” was the least represented code in this theme, with only two references.

### ***Category of Adaptation to Technology and Change***

In the context of continuous professional development, the framework most frequently referred to by student teachers was the issue of technology and adaptation to change. The integration of artificial intelligence into education, the changing learning styles of student generations, and the use of digital tools in classroom environments were clearly present in the narratives of most participants. This awareness was deeper and more concrete especially among senior participants, whereas among freshman participants it remained more at the level of a general awareness of being contemporary.

*“Professional development is really important. Especially today, with the speed of technology, teachers who cannot keep up with it will definitely be replaced by teachers who can. This can be considered a definite judgment. Maybe technology can never replace teachers, but teachers who keep up with technology can replace teachers who cannot.”* (P24, Freshman)

*“Even very young children know and use artificial intelligence now; they get help from it and even have it do their homework. Since there are children like this, a method should not be applied by ignoring artificial intelligence. There should be a learning environment that includes these as much as possible.”* (P5, Senior)

The explicit mention of tools such as Kahoot, H5P, and Google Classroom indicates that participants both followed this area and were ready to adapt these tools to their lessons. Particularly during the practicum process, participants who used such tools stated that they personally observed the concrete contribution of technology integration to learning processes through the feedback they received from students.

*“For example, there is H5P, there is Kahoot. When I use these, the children like them so much. Of course, there should be a balance. I mean, part of the lesson can be taught from the book, and part of it can be taught through games. But teachers over the age of 40 do not do this much. In that case, I think it means not being able to improve oneself.”* (P1, Senior)

*“One of our instructors tells us this year, for example, ‘We will become teaching designers,’ rather than just teachers. I really like this term. I definitely do not think teaching is a profession that will be completely left to artificial intelligence, but I believe that by working together with artificial intelligence, we can do our profession much better.”* (P7, Senior)

The critical view of teachers who cannot keep up with technology became a strong source of motivation for many participants, based on their own negative experiences as

students. Participants compared teachers who influenced them with those who did not, stating that teachers who were able to use technological tools kept their classrooms much livelier. They also displayed a clear determination not to repeat the same mistakes. This perspective clearly shows that the motivation for professional development is also nourished by personal experience and by what participants themselves experienced as students. Taken as a whole, the theme of adaptation to technology and change is positioned as a critical axis shaping the future orientation of teacher identity.

### ***Category of Maintaining Research and Learning***

In addition to adapting to technology, conducting research, following current literature, and sustaining professional learning emerged as an important dimension emphasized by participants. This awareness of the never-ending nature of learning reflected an orientation that had either already turned into concrete actions, such as attending seminars, applying for an Erasmus project, or reading articles in the field, or was intended to be transformed into such actions.

*“I think it is always, always about being a researcher. We can never say that we have completely ‘become’ something. I do not think a teacher can ever say, ‘I am done.’ A teacher must always be researching on the way. When they come home, they should not say, ‘I taught my lesson today, and that is it.’ They should ask, ‘How can I improve myself more today?’” (P24, Freshman)*

*“To stay up to date, frankly, there are many seminars and such events. Attending them is really the easiest way to access that knowledge. But of course, in an environment where we cannot attend such seminars, since internet use is very widespread today, I think we can read newly published articles and research or look at what new teachers are doing.” (P5, Senior)*

The most striking example of how conference and seminar experiences shaped professional motivation was seen in a narrative about how a single sentence a participant heard at the GlobELT conference in Batumi turned into systematic research on artificial

intelligence. This example concretely demonstrates how an external stimulus can transform into an internal research motivation and contribute to professional identity development. The fact that most participants similarly regarded professional development as a process through which they produced personal meaning clearly shows how deeply this orientation was integrated with teacher identity.

*“If I had not heard that sentence, frankly, I would not have started researching the existence of different AI tools. My whole motivation was based on a single sentence I heard from that instructor at the conference. In fact, following this, we conducted and presented a systematic review with one of our instructors on the role of artificial intelligence in teaching language skills.” (P9, Senior)*

The dimension of continuing research and learning also showed meaningful qualitative differences between freshman and senior participants. Freshman participants tended to adopt a more general and principled stance on this issue, whereas senior participants made more concrete plans regarding which resources they would follow, through which platforms, and how frequently. This difference shows that professional identity development involves a transition from the question of “what do I want to do?” to “how will I do this?” It also indicates that the motivation for research becomes deeper and more practical with experience. In all these respects, continuing research and learning reflects a strong awareness that teacher identity is an ongoing project.

### ***Category of Ideal Teacher Image***

Student teachers’ images of the kind of teacher they wanted to become in the future displayed a multilayered structure shaped by both concrete pedagogical preferences and the meaning and value they attributed to the profession. These images carried traces of the teacher models they had experienced during their own school years and established strong continuity with the theme of role model teachers. The aim of becoming a patient, understanding, and student-centered teacher appeared consistently in almost every participant’s narrative, although expressed in different words.

*“What kind of teacher do I want to be in the future? I would really like to be a patient and consistent teacher who is always in cooperation with students.”* (P25, Freshman)

*“For me, taking responsibility for a classroom is not just about making the class quiet or putting it in order. Taking responsibility for a classroom also means being able to establish one-to-one communication with students, understand them, and meet their needs.”* (P8, Senior)

Many participants clearly stated that they wanted to leave a lasting mark on others, just like the teachers who had influenced their own lives. This desire functioned as a strong source of meaning that sustained identity continuity. It can be interpreted as the desire to transform the inspiration received from the past into a legacy to be passed on to the future.

*“I want to be the first thing people remember when they think about their school life. For example, I still celebrate Teachers’ Day with my high school teachers. They are very happy about it. Of course, I would like to be celebrated like that too.”* (P20, Sophomore)

*“There is a teacher who guided me toward this path. If I can be such a light for my young students, if I can give them an idea, that would make me very happy. That role model profile attracts me to this profession even more. In a way that would make this possible, I want to teach in small village schools rather than in big cities.”* (P1, Senior)

Commitment to teaching as a profession despite systemic constraints was an important dimension showing that the ideal teacher image was grounded in a realistic framework. Although participants were aware of the limitations created by the current education system, they tended to use these constraints as a reference point for developing their own unique approaches. This attitude reveals the resilience of professional identity. In other words, structural difficulties did not collapse identity but rather tested it and sometimes reinforced it. When considered in all its dimensions, the ideal teacher image reflects a mature identity aspiration extending from external references, such as role model teachers, to internalized

values, such as patience, understanding, and inspiring others, while also realistically confronting systemic constraints.

*“As a teaching profession, we may experience some difficulties in the future, such as finding a job or appointment issues. But these are problems that can be overcome. I think that if a person makes some effort, the rest will follow.”* (P18, Sophomore)

### **Overall Evaluation of Qualitative Findings**

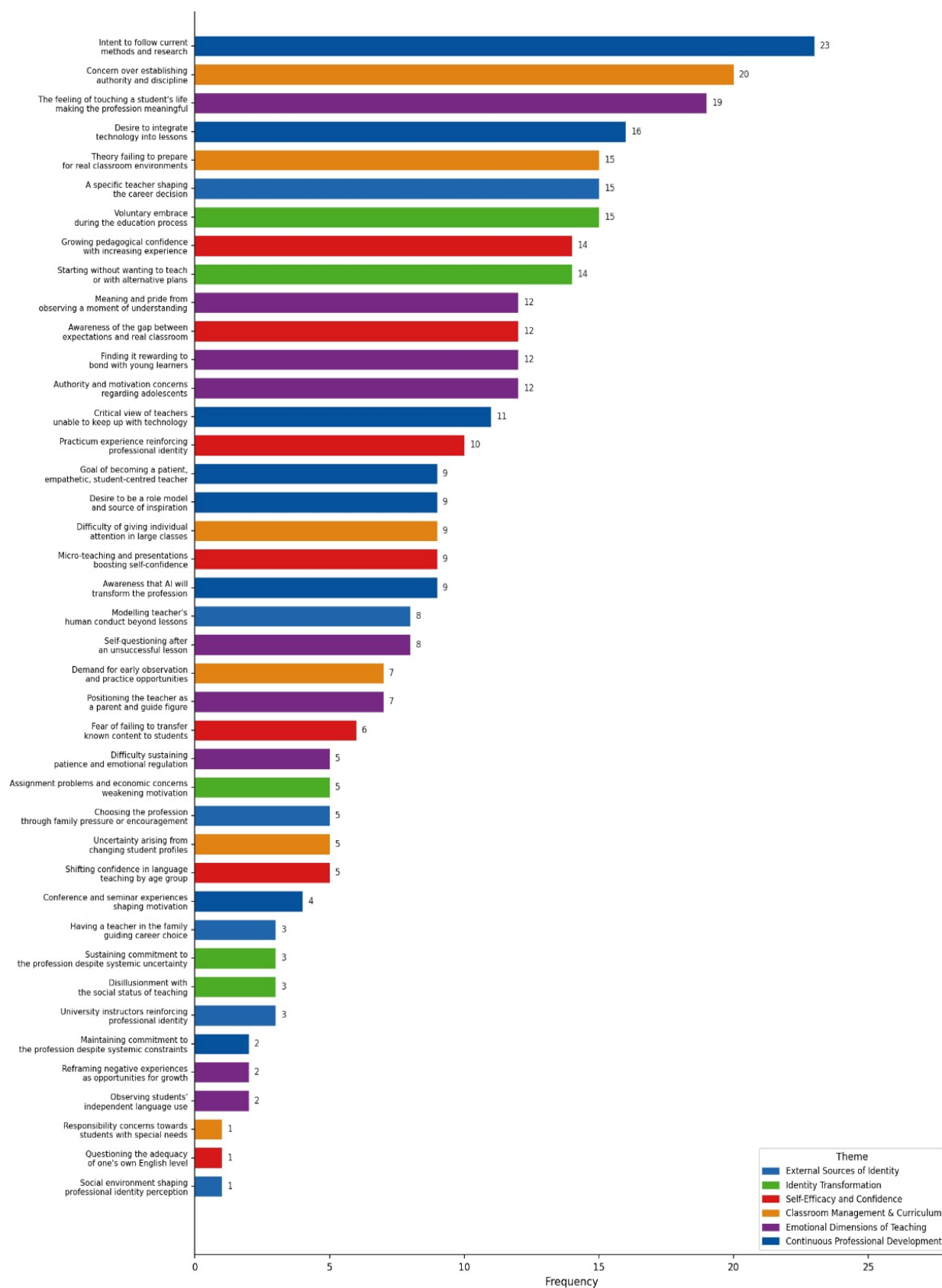
Before presenting the overall interpretation of the qualitative findings, it is important to note that the findings in this section are discussed thematically rather than comparatively across year levels. Since the number of participants varied across year groups, direct comparisons among grade levels may not provide a fully balanced interpretation of the data. Therefore, the emphasis in this section is placed on the overall patterns emerging from the semi-structured interviews and reflective writing tasks. This approach allows the qualitative findings to be interpreted in relation to the research questions without overemphasizing differences that may partly result from unequal participant distribution. Also, as participant excerpts have already been used to illustrate each theme in the preceding sections, the purpose of this final section is to synthesize the broader patterns emerging across the qualitative data.

### **Findings Related to the First Qualitative Research Question**

The first qualitative research question aimed to explore how EFL student teachers developed their professional identities during their teacher education program. When the interviews and reflective writings were evaluated as a whole, professional identity appeared not as a fixed, static, or linear construct, but as a dynamic and multilayered process shaped by various sources of influence. This overall pattern is visible in Figure 7, which presents the total frequency of all codes by theme. The figure shows that the 35 codes varied considerably in frequency, suggesting that professional identity development involved both shared concerns and more individualized experiences.

Figure 7

## Total Frequency of All Codes by Theme



**Figure 8**

Distribution of Categories by Total Frequency Weight



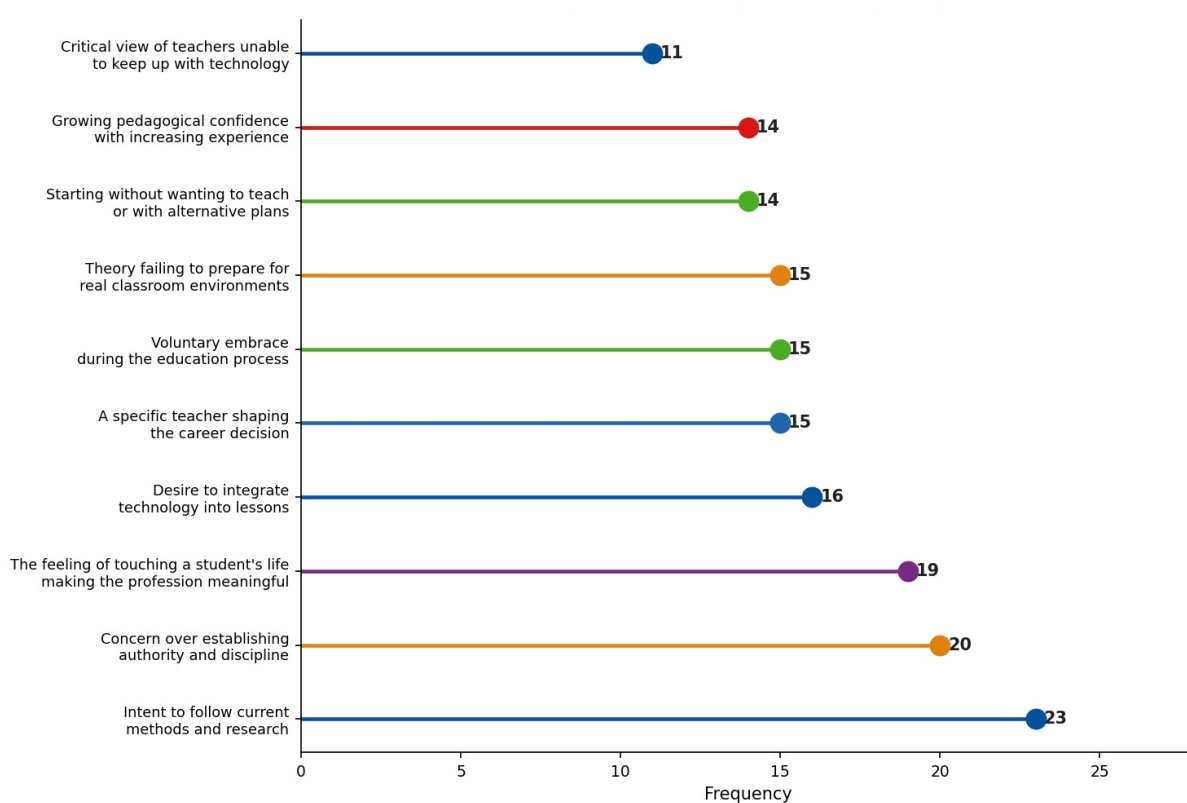
One of the most visible starting points of professional identity development was the influence of external sources. In particular, role model teachers emerged as significant figures in participants' narratives. As shown in Figure 8, the Role Model Teacher category had a stronger overall weight than Family and Social Environment. This suggests that participants' professional identity was shaped more strongly by educational figures they encountered than by broader social or familial expectations. These role models did not merely affect participants' initial career decisions; they also shaped their images of the kind of teachers they wished to become. In this sense, professional identity development appeared to begin with externally provided models, which were gradually internalized, questioned, and reinterpreted through the participants' own experiences within the teacher education program.

The findings also showed that professional identity development involved a process of transformation. Some participants entered the program without a strong initial desire to become teachers or with alternative career plans. However, the presence of the code related to voluntarily embracing teaching during the education process indicates that initial uncertainty

did not necessarily prevent the construction of a teacher identity. This pattern can be observed in Figure 9, where both “starting without wanting to teach or with alternative plans” and “voluntary embrace during the education process” appear among the top-frequency codes. The coexistence of these two codes suggests that professional identity development was not simply a matter of confirming an already existing desire to teach. Rather, it involved negotiation, reconsideration, and gradual commitment.

**Figure 9**

Top 10 Codes by Total Frequency



Another important dimension of identity development was emotional meaning-making. As shown in Figure 9, the code “the feeling of touching a student’s life making the profession meaningful” was one of the most frequently represented codes in the overall data. This finding suggests that participants did not construct their professional identities only through pedagogical knowledge, institutional experiences, or career expectations. They also associated teaching with emotional and moral meanings. The idea of making a positive difference in students’ lives functioned as a central motivational ground for becoming a teacher.

Therefore, professional identity was shaped not only by what participants learned about teaching, but also by what they believed teaching could mean for others.

The construction of professional identity was also future-oriented. As presented in Figure 9, “intention to follow current methods and research” was the most frequently represented code across the entire data set. This indicates that many participants imagined their future teacher identity as professionally updated, open to innovation, and committed to continuous learning. Similarly, the presence of “desire to integrate technology into lessons” among the top-frequency codes shows that participants’ ideal teacher images were influenced by contemporary educational expectations. These findings are also supported by Figure 8, where Research and Development and Technology and Adaptation appear as visibly represented categories. In this respect, professional identity development was not limited to past experiences or present concerns. It also involved imagined future selves through which participants positioned themselves as competent, adaptive, and continuously developing teachers.

Overall, the findings related to the first research question suggest that EFL student teachers’ professional identity development was constructed through the interaction of external influences, personal transformation, emotional meanings, and future professional ideals. Rather than following a single developmental path, participants’ identity construction emerged as a complex process in which they moved from externally shaped images of teaching toward more personally meaningful and professionally informed understandings of themselves as future teachers.

### ***Findings Related to the Second Qualitative Research Question***

The second qualitative research question focused on the factors that facilitated or challenged EFL student teachers’ professional identity development. The overall qualitative findings showed that professional identity was shaped through the interaction of supportive and challenging factors. This interaction is particularly visible in Figure 8, which presents the distribution of categories by total frequency weight. In this figure, Pedagogical Competence

occupies the largest area, while Classroom Management Concerns, Technology and Adaptation, Satisfaction from Students, and Children and Adolescents also appear as strongly represented categories. This distribution suggests that participants' identity development was shaped by both professional growth areas and areas of concern.

Among the facilitating factors, pedagogical competence appeared as one of the most central dimensions of professional identity development. As shown in Figure 8, Pedagogical Competence had the highest total frequency weight among all categories. This suggests that participants' most sustained and multidimensional reflections on the teaching profession were concentrated around pedagogical knowledge, classroom practices, instructional decision-making, and the development of professional confidence. The importance of this dimension is also supported by Figure 9, where "growing pedagogical confidence with increasing experience" appears among the top-frequency codes. Therefore, pedagogical competence functioned not only as a technical skill area, but also as a core component of professional identity construction.

Practicum and real classroom experience also played a significant role in supporting identity development. Although not all participants had the same level of direct teaching experience, the data showed that experiences related to practice helped participants connect theoretical knowledge with classroom realities. This finding is indirectly supported by Figure 9, where the code "theory failing to prepare for real classroom environment" appears among the top-frequency codes. The presence of this code indicates that participants became increasingly aware of the limitations of theoretical preparation when imagining or experiencing real classroom contexts. Through practice-oriented reflections, participants began to evaluate teaching less as an abstract profession and more as a situated, relational, and demanding practice.

However, the same process also revealed important challenges. Classroom management emerged as one of the strongest challenging factors in the data. As shown in Figure 9, the code "concern over establishing authority and discipline" was the second most

frequently represented code. This finding indicates that participants often associated teaching with the difficulty of maintaining classroom order, establishing authority, and managing student behavior. The importance of this challenge is also visible in Figure 8, where Classroom Management Concerns appears as one of the major categories. Such concerns show that professional identity development was accompanied by anxiety as well as confidence. Participants were not only imagining themselves as effective teachers; they were also questioning whether they would be able to handle the demanding realities of classroom life.

Another major challenge was the perceived gap between theoretical preparation and real classroom conditions. As indicated in Figure 9, the code “theory failing to prepare for real classroom environment” was among the top-frequency codes. This suggests that teacher education provided important conceptual and pedagogical foundations, yet participants also felt that real classrooms could present unpredictable situations that were difficult to fully prepare for through theory alone. This awareness did not necessarily weaken their professional identity. Rather, it made their understanding of teaching more realistic. In this sense, the theory-practice gap functioned as both a challenge and a developmental turning point.

The emotional dimension of teaching also functioned in two directions. On the one hand, emotional meaning facilitated identity development. As shown in Figure 9, the feeling of touching students’ lives was one of the most frequently represented codes. In addition, Figure 8 shows that Satisfaction from Students and Children and Adolescents were strongly represented categories. These findings suggest that helping learners, building positive relationships, and becoming a meaningful figure in students’ educational journeys strengthened participants’ commitment to teaching. On the other hand, emotional burden, fear of failure, the need for patience, and concerns about not being able to teach effectively created tension within their identity construction. Therefore, professional identity was not built only through positive motivation. It was also shaped through the management of doubts, anxieties, and emotional responsibilities.

Continuous professional development and technology adaptation appeared as additional facilitating factors. As shown in Figure 9, “intention to follow current methods and research” was the most frequently represented code, while “desire to integrate technology into lessons” also appeared among the top-frequency codes. These findings are supported by Figure 8, where Research and Development and Technology and Adaptation are visible as important categories. This suggests that participants saw good teaching as an ongoing process of learning, renewal, and adaptation. Their willingness to follow current research and integrate technology indicates that they connected professional competence with openness to change and responsiveness to contemporary learner needs.

In summary, the findings related to the second research question indicate that EFL student teachers’ professional identity development was facilitated by pedagogical growth, emotional commitment, professional ideals, and openness to innovation. At the same time, it was challenged by classroom management anxiety, the theory-practice gap, emotional burden, and awareness of practical limitations. Therefore, professional identity development emerged as a process of balancing confidence and uncertainty, ideals and realities, and motivation and concern. This balance appears to be central to understanding how EFL student teachers make sense of themselves as future members of the teaching profession.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

This study aimed to examine EFL student teachers’ professional identity development through an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. For this purpose, the quantitative phase first explored student teachers’ early teacher identity levels, the relationships among the dimensions of early teacher identity, and the effects of particular demographic variables on professional identity. The qualitative phase then provided a deeper understanding of how EFL student teachers constructed their professional identities during their teacher education program and what factors facilitated or challenged this process. In this section, the quantitative and qualitative findings are discussed together in order to provide an integrated interpretation of the results. Rather than presenting the discussion separately according to each research

question, the findings are synthesized around the major patterns that emerged from both phases of the study. Based on this organization, the discussion of the integrated findings is presented under five main headings:

- Career decision and self-categorization as the strongest pathway to teacher identity
- Experience and pedagogical confidence as the main strengthening forces
- The tension between professional confidence and classroom realities
- Identity development beyond demographics through emotional and future-oriented meaning-making
- Overall synthesis of the integrated findings

### ***Career Decision and Self-Categorization as the Strongest Pathway to Teacher Identity***

The timing of professional decisions is important. Early career choices, affected by personal experiences and social situations, frequently coincide with the formation of professional identity. For example, pre-service teachers' narratives show that their decision to pursue teaching is connected with their goal for social reform and love for education, which reinforces their teacher identity (Dominguez et al., 2015; Nigar et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2025). One of the most striking integrated findings of this study is that EFL student teachers' professional identity was shaped more strongly by career decision and self-categorization than by general demographic or academic variables. The quantitative findings showed that the time of decision to become a teacher was one of the strongest predictors of early teacher identity. In the hierarchical regression analysis, the inclusion of time of decision in the final model produced the most substantial increase in explained variance, and this variable emerged as the strongest predictor of ETIM scores. In addition, the mediation analysis revealed that the effect of time of decision on early teacher identity was largely transmitted through self-categorization. This indicates that deciding to become a teacher becomes meaningful for

professional identity development when it is internalized as part of the self; in other words, when student teachers begin to define themselves as future teachers.

This quantitative pattern gains deeper meaning when considered together with the qualitative findings. The qualitative data showed that professional identity development did not always begin with a clear and stable desire to become a teacher. Some participants entered the teacher education program without initially wanting to teach or with alternative career plans. However, the presence of voluntary embrace during the teacher education process suggests that initial uncertainty did not necessarily prevent identity development. On the contrary, for some participants, the program became a space in which they reconsidered their relationship with teaching and gradually began to position themselves more willingly within the profession. This interpretation is supported by the literature suggesting that experiential activities can enhance the emotional, communicative, and practical components of professional identity by allowing student teachers to engage more directly with teaching-related roles and responsibilities (Rudneva & Kozyreva, 2025). In this sense, experiential engagement within teacher education may help student teachers transform uncertainty into a more internalized sense of professional belonging. Therefore, aligning with the literature, the qualitative findings explain that career decision should not be understood as a single fixed moment, but as a process of negotiation, reconsideration, experiential engagement, and internalization (Belyakova & Bykov, 2022; Sun et al., 2025)

The role of self-categorization is particularly important in this process (Kim & Kwon, 2025). The quantitative findings showed that the relationship between career decision and early teacher identity was not direct in a simple sense; rather, it was largely mediated by self-categorization. This indicates that deciding to become a teacher contributes to professional identity development when student teachers begin to perceive themselves as belonging to the professional category of teachers. In other words, the career decision becomes an identity-related process only when it is transformed into self-definition. This interpretation is consistent with the view that teacher identity is constructed through ongoing self-positioning, in which

individuals continuously negotiate who they are and who they want to become within the teaching profession (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Uras Eren & Atay, 2025). The qualitative findings support this interpretation by showing that participants gradually moved from external, uncertain, or alternative orientations toward more personally meaningful teacher identities. Role model teachers were especially influential in this movement, as they did not only affect participants' career choices but also shaped their images of the kind of teachers they wished to become (Basalama & Machmud, 2018). Thus, external influences became meaningful when they were internalized and reinterpreted through participants' own developing professional self-understandings.

In short, these findings suggest that teacher identity development is not shaped merely by being enrolled in a teacher education program or by progressing through academic years. Rather, it depends on whether student teachers come to identify teaching as part of who they are and who they aim to become. This interpretation is consistent with the literature that conceptualizes teacher professional identity as a dynamic, negotiated, and non-linear process rather than a fixed outcome of formal teacher education (Cui et al., 2025; Barrow & Xu, 2023; Figueroa-Céspedes, 2023). This view is also supported by the quantitative finding of the present study that year of study did not create a statistically significant difference in ETIM scores, whereas time of decision and self-categorization played a much stronger role. Therefore, the central issue appears to be not how long student teachers have been in the program, but how deeply they have internalized teaching as a professional self-position (Chen, et al., 2024).

### ***Experience and Pedagogical Confidence as the Main Strengthening Forces***

Another major integrated finding of the study is that teaching-related experience and pedagogical confidence functioned as central strengthening forces in EFL student teachers' professional identity development (Adarlo, 2024; Opoku et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2025). The quantitative findings showed that student teachers who had teaching experience obtained significantly higher scores in ETIM total, self-categorization, and self-efficacy compared to

those without experience. This indicates that experience was not only related to practical familiarity with teaching, but also to a stronger sense of belonging to the teaching profession and greater confidence in becoming a teacher. In this respect, teaching experience appears to support professional identity by helping student teachers move beyond an abstract understanding of teaching and develop a more concrete perception of themselves as capable future teachers.

The qualitative findings help explain why experience was associated with stronger professional identity. In the qualitative data, pedagogical competence emerged as one of the most central dimensions of identity development. Participants' reflections showed that their sense of becoming a teacher was closely connected to their growing ability to understand teaching methods, make instructional decisions, and imagine themselves managing real classroom situations. This interpretation is supported by recent studies showing that pre-service teachers' professional identity develops through teacher education experiences, practical exposure, and direct engagement with classroom realities. For example, Lestari et al. (2024) emphasize that the knowledge and practical exposure gained during teacher education programs significantly contribute to pre-service English teachers' professional identity construction. Similarly, Iwai (2025) found that early field experiences helped pre-service teachers develop stronger teacher identity and self-efficacy by enabling them to observe mentors, teach lessons, reflect on classroom experiences, and begin to think and act like teachers. In the EFL context, another study also indicates that pre-service English language teachers' perceived competence is shaped by teacher training, practicum, and experience, while lack of practice and experience may lead to feelings of incompetence (Yıldız et al., 2026). In line with these studies, the codes related to growing pedagogical confidence and practicum reinforcing identity in the present study suggest that professional identity became stronger when student teachers had opportunities to transform abstract pedagogical knowledge into more concrete teaching-related self-understandings. Therefore, experience strengthened

identity by making teaching more visible, attainable, and personally meaningful for student teachers.

The importance of practicum and field-based experience in the present study also suggests that professional identity becomes stronger when student teachers have opportunities to test their developing pedagogical knowledge in real or practice-oriented teaching contexts. Recent studies emphasize that practicum does not only provide technical teaching experience, but also creates a space in which teacher candidates observe mentors, enact teacher roles, reflect on classroom events, and gradually reconstruct their professional identities. For example, Ardi et al. (2025) found that reflective mentoring during teaching practicum supported EFL student teachers' professional identity construction by helping them connect practical teaching experiences with their inner professional selves. Similarly, Cania et al. (2024) showed that EFL student teachers' self-efficacy beliefs developed throughout the teaching practicum, particularly through their engagement with classroom-based responsibilities. In the Turkish EFL context, Kaya's study on pre-service language teachers also indicates that practicum can function as a critical space for identity reconstruction and agency development (2023). In line with these studies, the findings of the present study suggest that practicum and teaching-related experiences strengthened professional identity by enabling student teachers to move from knowing about teaching to seeing themselves as teachers who can act, decide, and respond in classroom contexts.

However, the strengthening role of experience should not be interpreted only as a smooth increase in confidence. The qualitative findings showed that as student teachers became more aware of teaching practice, they also became more conscious of the complexities of real classrooms. In particular, the codes related to the gap between expectations and real classroom environments and concerns about classroom management suggest that experience contributed to professional identity by making teaching more realistic rather than merely more idealized. This interpretation is consistent with recent studies indicating that practicum and field-based experiences may simultaneously increase pre-

service EFL teachers' self-efficacy and reveal areas of uncertainty, especially in classroom management, instructional decision-making, and student engagement. For example, Cania et al. (2024) examined EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs during teaching practicum and focused on efficacy in instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. Similarly, another study on pre-service English language teacher readiness found that practicum experience significantly increased perceived teacher self-efficacy and attitudes toward teaching (Korkmaz & Keçik, 2024). Therefore, in the present study, pedagogical confidence appears to have developed together with a more realistic awareness of classroom demands, suggesting that experience strengthened identity not by eliminating uncertainty, but by helping student teachers understand and negotiate it.

### ***The Tension Between Professional Confidence and Classroom Realities***

Another important integrated finding of the study is that EFL student teachers' professional identity developed through a tension between growing professional confidence and increasing awareness of classroom realities (Zhu, 2017). The quantitative findings showed that the participants reported a relatively high level of self-efficacy in becoming a teacher, with this subscale having the highest mean score among the ETIM dimensions. This indicates that many student teachers had a tendency to perceive themselves as capable of becoming teachers. However, the qualitative findings revealed that this confidence was not free from concern. Participants' reflections showed that their developing sense of competence was accompanied by doubts about classroom management, authority, discipline, and the unpredictability of real classroom environments. Therefore, the integrated findings suggest that professional identity was shaped not only by confidence, but also by the process of confronting and negotiating practical challenges.

This tension was particularly visible in relation to classroom management. In the qualitative findings, concern over establishing authority and discipline was one of the most frequently represented codes, indicating that classroom control was a central source of anxiety for many participants. This finding is important because it shows that student teachers'

professional identity cannot be understood only through their positive beliefs regarding themselves or motivation to teach. Even when they imagined themselves as future teachers, they were also aware that teaching required the ability to manage student behavior, maintain authority, and respond to unexpected classroom situations. Recent studies show that practicum and field-based experiences often make classroom management one of the most salient concerns for EFL teacher candidates. For example, Korkmaz and Keçik (2024) found that classroom management was a major issue for pre-service English language teachers during practicum, even though practicum also contributed to increases in perceived teaching self-efficacy.

The theory-practice gap also contributed to this tension (Perrow, 2013). The qualitative findings showed that some participants felt that theoretical preparation alone was not sufficient to prepare them fully for real classroom environments. This does not mean that theoretical knowledge was unimportant; rather, it suggests that professional identity becomes more realistic when theoretical learning is tested against classroom-based demands. In this sense, the awareness of the gap between expectations and real classrooms can be interpreted as a developmental moment. It pushed student teachers to move beyond idealized images of teaching and to recognize the complexity of actual teaching practice. This interpretation is consistent with previous research on pre-service EFL teachers' practicum experiences, which suggests that practicum can reveal both growth in self-efficacy and areas of uncertainty related to instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement (Paker, 2011).

Thus, professional confidence and classroom-related anxiety should not be treated as contradictory findings. Rather, they appear to represent two interconnected dimensions of professional identity development. The quantitative results showed that student teachers generally had a positive sense of self-efficacy, while the qualitative data explained that this confidence was continuously negotiated through concerns about real teaching conditions. Similar findings have been reported in studies indicating that practicum may strengthen self-efficacy while also exposing pre-service teachers to the psychological and practical demands

of teaching. For instance, a recent study describes teaching practicum as a demanding phase of professional development that may produce varied self-efficacy outcomes among EFL student teachers (Matsumura & Tatsuyama, 2024).

To sum up, the findings suggest that EFL student teachers' professional identity developed through a continuous negotiation between idealized teacher images and classroom realities. Their confidence in becoming teachers was strengthened through pedagogical learning and teaching-related experience, but it was also challenged by concerns about classroom management, authority, and the limits of theoretical preparation. This tension should be seen not as a weakness in their professional identity, but as an important part of becoming a teacher. By becoming aware of the realities of classroom life, student teachers began to construct a more grounded, reflective, and professionally realistic understanding of themselves as future EFL teachers (Busher et al., 2015).

### ***Identity Development Beyond Demographics: Emotional and Future-Oriented Meaning-Making***

Another important integrated finding of the study is that EFL student teachers' professional identity appeared to be shaped less by demographic background and more by how they emotionally and professionally made sense of teaching (Sun et al., 2024). The quantitative findings showed that several demographic variables, including age, region of residence, socioeconomic status, and year of study, did not create statistically significant differences in ETIM scores. Similarly, gender did not lead to a significant difference in overall early teacher identity, self-categorization, or self-efficacy, although a significant difference was observed in the natural inclination toward children and teaching subscale in favor of female participants. These findings suggest that professional identity cannot be explained sufficiently through demographic categories alone. Rather, the more decisive issue seems to be how student teachers position themselves in relation to teaching, how they experience teaching-related roles, and what meanings they attach to the profession (Chen et al., 2022).

This interpretation is supported by the qualitative findings, which showed that professional identity development involved strong emotional and moral meanings. One of the most frequently represented codes in the qualitative data was the feeling of touching students' lives and making teaching meaningful. This finding indicates that participants did not view teaching only as a technical occupation based on instructional knowledge or classroom performance. Instead, they associated teaching with the possibility of making a positive difference in students' lives. In this sense, emotional meaning-making functioned as an important source of commitment. This is consistent with the broader teacher identity literature, which emphasizes that teacher identity is not only cognitive or professional, but also emotional, relational, and value-laden (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Day & Gu, 2010; Hargreaves, 1998). Therefore, the qualitative findings help explain why professional identity should be understood as a personal and emotional construction, not merely as a measurable professional orientation.

At the same time, the emotional dimension of teaching was not limited to positive feelings. The qualitative findings also showed that participants experienced concerns about patience, failure, and the possibility of not being able to teach effectively. This suggests that emotional meaning-making operated in two directions. On the one hand, the desire to touch students' lives strengthened participants' commitment to teaching. On the other hand, the emotional responsibility of teaching created uncertainty and concern. This dual structure is important because it shows that professional identity develops through the coexistence of motivation and anxiety. In other words, student teachers' emotional attachment to teaching did not eliminate their concerns; rather, both positive meaning and emotional burden became part of how they constructed their future teacher identities. This interpretation is in line with studies suggesting that teacher identity is continuously shaped through the interaction of personal values, emotions, and professional expectations (Beijaard et al., 2004; Flores & Day, 2006).

Aligning with the literature, the findings also suggest that professional identity was strongly future-oriented (Duan et al., 2025). In the qualitative data, the intention to follow

current methods and research was one of the most frequently represented codes, while the willingness to integrate technology into lessons also emerged as an important component of the ideal teacher image. These findings indicate that participants imagined themselves not only as individuals who would become teachers, but as teachers who would continue learning, adapt to changing educational needs, and remain professionally updated. This future-oriented dimension is important because it shows that identity development was not constructed only through past career decisions or present teaching-related concerns. It was also shaped through imagined future selves. Student teachers appeared to position themselves as adaptive, research-informed, and technologically competent future EFL teachers.

In short, the quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that demographic variables had a limited explanatory role in understanding EFL student teachers' professional identity, whereas emotional commitment and future-oriented professional meaning-making provided deeper insight into how this identity was constructed. The quantitative results showed that teacher identity was not strongly differentiated by general background characteristics. The qualitative results explained this pattern by showing that identity development was more closely connected to participants' values, emotional expectations, professional ideals, and imagined future roles. Therefore, EFL student teachers' professional identity can be understood as a process shaped not simply by who they are demographically, but by how they emotionally, pedagogically, and professionally position themselves in relation to teaching (Beijaard et al., 2004; Flores & Day, 2006; Duan et al., 2025).

### ***Overall Synthesis***

Overall, the integrated findings of the study suggest that EFL student teachers' professional identity development is best understood as a dynamic, multidimensional, and negotiated process. (Thomson & Gunter, 2011; Flum & Kaplan, 2012). The quantitative findings revealed that participants had a moderate-to-high level of early teacher identity and that the subdimensions of early teacher identity were strongly related to one another. In particular, self-categorization, self-efficacy in becoming a teacher, and natural inclination

toward children and teaching appeared as interconnected components of professional identity (Friesen & Besley, 2013). However, the findings also showed that professional identity was not equally shaped by all demographic or educational variables. Instead, time of decision to become a teacher, self-categorization, and teaching experience emerged as more central factors in explaining early teacher identity.

The qualitative findings deepened this quantitative pattern by showing how these statistical relationships were experienced and interpreted by student teachers. Career decision time was not always a fixed or stable starting point; for some participants, professional identity developed through uncertainty, reconsideration, and gradual voluntary embrace of teaching. Similarly, teaching experience and practicum-related awareness strengthened identity by helping student teachers transform abstract pedagogical knowledge into more concrete professional self-understandings. At the same time, the qualitative data revealed that identity development was accompanied by classroom management concerns, awareness of the theory-practice gap, emotional responsibility, and future-oriented professional ideals (Perrow, 2013; Busher et al., 2015; Cheng, 2021).

Taking everything into account, the quantitative and qualitative findings show that EFL student teachers' professional identity cannot be explained only by their progression through the teacher education program or by demographic background characteristics. Rather, it is shaped by how they internalize teaching as part of the self (Kim & Kwon, 2025), how they experience and interpret teaching-related practices (Khalid, 2014), how they negotiate confidence and uncertainty (Paker, 2011), and how they imagine their future teacher selves (Duan et al., 2025). Thus, the main contribution of the integrated findings is that they present teacher identity development as both measurable and meaning-based. The quantitative phase identified the structural patterns of early teacher identity, while the qualitative phase explained the personal, emotional, and experiential processes underlying these patterns. This integration suggests that becoming an EFL teacher is not merely a matter of acquiring pedagogical knowledge or completing a teacher education program. It is also a process of gradually seeing

oneself as a teacher, testing this self-understanding through experience, managing the tensions of classroom reality, and constructing an ideal future professional self.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion and Suggestions**

This study examined EFL student teachers' professional identity development through an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. By combining quantitative data obtained through the Early Teacher Identity Measure with qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews and reflective writing tasks, the study aimed to provide both a general picture of early teacher identity and a deeper understanding of how this identity was constructed, experienced, and negotiated by student teachers.

The findings of the study indicate that EFL student teachers' professional identity should be understood as a dynamic, multidimensional, and meaning-based process rather than a fixed outcome of teacher education. This conclusion is consistent with the broader teacher identity literature, which conceptualizes professional identity as an evolving and negotiated construction shaped by personal, social, emotional, and professional dimensions (Beijaard et al., 2004; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). In the present study, professional identity was shaped not only by students' perceptions of themselves as future teachers, but also by their career decisions, teaching-related experiences, pedagogical confidence, emotional meanings, and imagined future teacher selves.

The quantitative findings showed that the participants had a moderate-to-high level of early teacher identity. Among the dimensions of early teacher identity, self-categorization, self-efficacy in becoming a teacher, and natural inclination toward children and teaching were strongly interconnected. However, the findings also showed that professional identity was not strongly explained by general demographic variables such as age, region, socioeconomic status, or year of study. Instead, the time of decision to become a teacher, self-categorization, and teaching experience emerged as more central factors. This suggests that professional identity development is shaped less by demographic background and more by the extent to which student teachers internalize teaching as part of their self-concept and engage with teaching-related experiences (Friesen & Besley, 2013).

The qualitative findings deepened this interpretation by showing that professional identity development did not follow a single or linear path. Some student teachers entered the program with a clear desire to teach, while others began with uncertainty, alternative plans, or limited commitment to the profession. Nevertheless, the process of teacher education, role model teachers, pedagogical learning, practicum-related experiences, and emotional meanings helped many participants reconsider and gradually embrace teaching. Therefore, becoming an EFL teacher appeared to involve negotiation, reflection, and gradual internalization rather than a simple transition from student to teacher (Beltman et al., 2015).

To sum up, the study concludes that EFL student teachers' professional identity development is best understood as a process of becoming. This process involves seeing oneself as a teacher, gaining confidence through experience, confronting the realities of classroom life, managing emotional responsibilities, and constructing a future-oriented professional vision. In this sense, teacher education programs do not merely transmit pedagogical knowledge; they also provide spaces in which student teachers form, question, and strengthen their professional identities.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study have several implications for EFL teacher education programs. First, the strong role of career decision and self-categorization suggests that teacher education programs should not focus only on pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills, but also on professional identity formation. Since the findings showed that student teachers' sense of becoming a teacher was closely related to how strongly they positioned themselves within the profession, teacher education programs should create more opportunities for students to reflect on why they want to teach, what kind of teachers they want to become, and how they perceive themselves as future members of the teaching profession. Identity-oriented reflective tasks, autobiographical writing, professional vision activities, and guided discussions about teaching beliefs may help student teachers develop a clearer and more internalized sense of professional belonging.

Second, the findings indicate that teaching-related experience plays a central role in strengthening professional identity. Student teachers with teaching experience reported higher levels of early teacher identity, self-categorization, and self-efficacy, while the qualitative findings showed that practicum and practice-oriented experiences helped participants develop pedagogical confidence and a more concrete understanding of teaching. Therefore, EFL teacher education programs should provide earlier, more frequent, and more structured opportunities for field experience. Rather than limiting school-based experience to the final years of the program, observation, micro-teaching, peer teaching, tutoring, service-learning, and guided school visits can be integrated into earlier stages of teacher education. Such experiences may help student teachers connect theoretical knowledge with classroom practice and begin to see themselves more realistically as future teachers.

Third, the findings also have implications for curriculum developers in terms of addressing the theory-practice gap more systematically within EFL teacher education curricula. The challenges reported by the participants suggest that professional identity development should not be treated merely as an implicit outcome of pedagogical courses or practicum experiences. Instead, curriculum developers may consider integrating a separate course or a structured module on teacher identity into EFL teacher education programs. Such a course may provide student teachers with opportunities to critically examine the relationship between theoretical knowledge, classroom realities, personal beliefs, career motivations, and professional expectations. It may include reflective journals, autobiographical narratives, analysis of critical incidents, guided discussions on the transition from being a student to becoming a teacher, and school-based reflection tasks linked to practicum or observation experiences. By making teacher identity an explicit component of the curriculum, EFL teacher education programs may better support student teachers in connecting theory with practice and in developing a more coherent, realistic, and sustainable sense of themselves as future teachers.

Fourth, the findings point to the need for stronger support in classroom management and real classroom preparedness. Although the participants generally reported a positive sense of self-efficacy, the qualitative findings showed that concerns about authority, discipline, classroom management, and the theory-practice gap were among the major challenges in their professional identity development. This suggests that classroom management should be addressed not only as a theoretical course topic, but also as a practical and reflective component of teacher education. Programs may include scenario-based activities, case discussions, classroom simulations, video-based analysis of teaching situations, and mentor-guided reflections on classroom management. These practices can help student teachers develop more realistic expectations about classroom life and feel better prepared to respond to challenging teaching situations.

Fifth, the findings suggest that emotional meaning-making should be recognized as an important part of EFL student teachers' professional identity development. The desire to touch students' lives and make a positive difference appeared as a strong motivational source, while concerns about failure, patience, and emotional responsibility also shaped participants' views of teaching. Therefore, teacher education programs should create spaces where student teachers can discuss not only what they know and can do, but also how they feel about becoming teachers. Reflective seminars, mentoring sessions, peer discussions, and teacher identity workshops may support student teachers in understanding the emotional dimensions of teaching and in developing resilience, patience, and professional commitment.

Finally, the findings have implications for supporting future-oriented professional identity. The qualitative findings showed that many participants imagined themselves as teachers who would follow current methods and research, integrate technology into lessons, and continue learning throughout their careers. This suggests that teacher education programs should strengthen student teachers' awareness of continuous professional development. Courses and activities that encourage engagement with current research, technology-enhanced teaching, innovative methods, and professional learning communities may help

student teachers construct more adaptive and sustainable professional identities. In this sense, EFL teacher education should not only prepare student teachers for their first teaching experiences, but also support them in becoming reflective, research-informed, and lifelong-learning professionals.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Future research may extend the findings of this study by adopting longitudinal designs to examine EFL student teachers' professional identity development over time. Since the present study showed that professional identity is not a linear process shaped only by year of study, longitudinal studies could provide a deeper understanding of how student teachers' self-categorization, pedagogical confidence, emotional commitment, and professional concerns change from the beginning of teacher education to graduation and even into the first years of teaching. Such studies would make it possible to trace identity development as an ongoing process rather than as a snapshot taken at a single point in time.

Future studies may also investigate the role of practicum and teaching-related experience in greater detail. The findings of this study indicated that teaching experience was associated with stronger early teacher identity, self-categorization, and self-efficacy. Therefore, further research could compare student teachers before, during, and after practicum in order to explore how real classroom experience influences professional identity. In particular, studies focusing on the quality of practicum, mentor support, school context, and opportunities for reflection may provide richer insights into how practice-based experiences contribute to or challenge teacher identity development.

Another suggestion for future research is to focus more specifically on classroom management concerns among EFL student teachers. In this study, concerns about authority, discipline, and classroom control emerged as important challenges in the qualitative findings. Future research could examine why classroom management becomes a major source of anxiety for EFL teacher candidates and how teacher education programs can better prepare them for this dimension of teaching. Experimental or intervention-based studies may also

explore the effects of classroom simulations, case-based learning, micro-teaching, or mentoring on student teachers' classroom management self-efficacy and professional identity.

Additionally, further research may also examine the emotional dimension of EFL teacher identity more deeply. The present study showed that student teachers associated teaching with the desire to touch students' lives and make a meaningful difference, while they also experienced concerns related to failure, patience, and emotional responsibility. Future qualitative studies could investigate how emotional experiences, professional commitment, resilience, and teacher well-being interact in the formation of EFL teacher identity. Such research may contribute to a more holistic understanding of becoming a teacher by considering not only cognitive and pedagogical dimensions, but also emotional and relational aspects.

In addition, future studies may explore the relationship between technology integration, continuous professional development, and teacher identity. The qualitative findings of this study showed that many participants imagined themselves as future teachers who would follow current methods, engage with research, and integrate technology into their lessons. Further research could examine how digital competence, attitudes toward educational technology, and engagement with professional learning communities influence EFL student teachers' ideal teacher images and future-oriented professional identities.

Finally, future research may be conducted with larger and more diverse samples from different universities and institutional contexts. Since professional identity development is influenced by personal, educational, and contextual factors, studies involving participants from different regions, university types, and teacher education programs may provide a more comprehensive understanding of EFL student teacher identity in Türkiye. Comparative studies across institutions or countries could also help reveal how local teacher education contexts shape the ways in which student teachers construct, negotiate, and strengthen their professional identities.

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## Part 2 Early Teacher Identity Measure – ETIM (Friesen & Besley, 2013)

Dear participant,

The following questionnaire aims to examine English language teacher candidates' early teacher identity and their perceptions of becoming a teacher. It includes demographic questions and scale items related to different dimensions of teacher identity. We kindly ask you to complete the questionnaire with sincere and honest responses. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.


The data collected will be used only for the thesis study titled "Exploring the Teacher Identity Development of Student Teachers of English in Türkiye", conducted by Hatice Kübra Çetin under the supervision of Prof. Dr. İsmail Hakkı Mirici at Hacettepe University, with the ethical approval granted by the Hacettepe University Graduate School of Educational Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The data will be accessible only to the researcher and the supervisor and will be used solely for scientific research purposes.

**Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree with it by selecting the option that best reflects your opinion.**

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I see myself as a teacher (either currently or one day).
2. I feel comfortable identifying myself as a teacher.
3. I am a natural teacher.
4. I can easily see myself working with children/adolescents and helping them to learn and develop.
5. I find it difficult to see myself in charge of teaching a group of children/adolescents.
6. I often doubt if I am the right person to become a teacher.
7. I have confidence in my ability to one day be a good teacher.
8. I am satisfied with the progress I am making in my teacher education.
9. I have no idea what it means to be a good teacher.
10. I am confident that I will develop the resources and strategies necessary to be a good teacher.
11. I often doubt my ability to be a good teacher.
12. I look for opportunities to work with children/adolescents in my own time.
13. I enjoy helping out with children's activities.
14. Family and friends often look to me when it comes to caring for or working with children/adolescents.
15. If I had more time to volunteer my services, I would choose to work with children.
16. I enjoy helping children discover and learn.
17. Helping a child learn something new is very rewarding.

**APPENDIX-B: Permission to Use ETIM**

 EarlyTeacherIdentityMeasure ...  
329 KB

Yanıtı şununla başla:

Thank you!

Received, thank you.

This is great, thank you so much!

Kia ora Hatice,

Thank you for contacting me and for your interest in this work. Please find attached to this email a file with all the items for the teacher identity measure along with some additional psychometric information that was not reported in the original study.

I hope it is helpful for your research.

Myron

\*\*\*\*\*

*Myron D. Friesen (he/him)*

*Faculty of Education | Te Kaupeka Ako*

*University of Canterbury | Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha*

## **APPENDIX-C: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol**

Dear participant,

The purpose of this interview is to examine English language teacher candidates' professional identity development and to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and factors that shape this process. You are invited to participate in this interview on a voluntary basis. The interview is expected to last approximately 15–20 minutes and will be audio-recorded with your consent.

The interview includes questions designed to explore in more detail the issues addressed in the questionnaire you previously completed, including your perceptions of teacher identity, your views on the teaching profession, your experiences during teacher education, and your understanding of your future role as an English language teacher. You may answer the questions in either Turkish or English, depending on the language in which you feel more comfortable expressing yourself.

The data collected will be used as part of the thesis study entitled “Exploring the Teacher Identity Development of Student Teachers of English in Türkiye”, conducted by Hatice Kübra Çetin under the supervision of Prof. Dr. İsmail Hakkı Mirici. The necessary ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Hacettepe University Graduate School of Educational Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable, add further comments whenever you wish, or withdraw from the interview at any point. Your responses will be used solely for academic research purposes. Any personal information that may reveal your identity will be kept confidential, and participant codes or pseudonyms will be used when reporting the findings.

You are kindly asked to answer the questions as sincerely as possible and based on your own experiences. Thank you very much for your valuable contribution to this study.

### **Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

1. At this stage of your education, how do you perceive your relationship with the teaching profession, and how comfortable do you feel identifying yourself as a future English teacher?
  - Do you already feel like a teacher, or do you think that will happen later? When and why?
  - Has this feeling changed since you started the ELT program?
  - Are there situations in which you feel more or less like a “real teacher”?
  
2. How confident do you feel about your ability to teach English effectively? Think about classroom management and maintaining a productive learning environment.
  - What aspects of teaching do you feel most confident about?
  - What aspects make you feel uncertain or anxious?
  - Can you describe a moment when you doubted your suitability for the teaching profession?
  
3. How easy or difficult is it for you to imagine yourself being fully responsible for a classroom? What does “being in charge” of a class mean to you as a future teacher?
  - What excites you most about this responsibility?
  - What concerns or challenges do you associate with classroom authority?

- Do you think your teacher education program has prepared you for this role?
4. What initially motivated you to choose teaching English as a career? How have your motivations changed since you began your teacher education program?
    - Was teaching your first career choice?
    - When did you decide to become a teacher?
    - How do you think the timing of this decision has influenced your sense of being a teacher?
  5. How do you feel about working with children or adolescents as part of your future profession, and what are the most rewarding and/or challenging aspects of helping students learn?
    - Do you seek opportunities to work with learners outside of formal requirements?
    - How do these experiences affect your motivation and sense of belonging to the profession?
  6. How important is continuing professional development for you as a future teacher?
  7. How do you plan to stay updated with new teaching methods and educational research?
    - What kind of teacher do you hope to become in the long term?
    - How do you think continuous learning shapes a teacher's professional identity?

## **APPENDIX-D: Reflective Writing Protocol**

Dear participant,

This reflective writing task is conducted as part of a thesis study aiming to examine English language teacher candidates' professional identity development in greater depth. In this part of the study, you are asked to write a reflective text about your experiences, perceptions, and thoughts regarding the process of becoming an English language teacher and how you see yourself as a student teacher.

This writing task is not an exam or an assessment. Your text will not be graded, and you are not expected to strictly follow academic writing conventions. There are no right or wrong answers. What is important is that you express your own experiences, feelings, and thoughts in a sincere, personal, and reflective way.

In your reflective writing, you are expected to respond to the guiding questions provided and reflect on issues such as your perception of becoming a teacher, your confidence in your future teaching role, your possible uncertainties or concerns, your motivation for the profession, and the kind of teacher you would like to become in the future. Providing examples from your own experiences, observations, and thoughts will be particularly valuable for the purposes of the study.

You may write your reflective text in either Turkish or English, depending on the language in which you feel more comfortable expressing yourself. Your text should be at least 300 words in total. You may write more if you wish; however, it is important not to write below the minimum word limit. You may complete the task in one sitting or at different times.

The data collected will be used as part of the thesis study entitled "Exploring the Teacher Identity Development of Student Teachers of English in Türkiye", conducted by Hatice Kübra Çetin under the supervision of Prof. Dr. İsmail Hakkı Mirici. The necessary ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Hacettepe University Graduate School of Educational Sciences Research Ethics Committee. All information you share will be kept confidential. The data will be used only for scientific research purposes, and no information that may reveal your identity will be reported. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Thank you very much for your participation and valuable contribution to this study.

### **Reflective Writing Prompts**

#### **Prompt 1**

Reflect on how your educational background, learning experiences, and teacher education program have shaped the way you see yourself as a teacher. To what extent do you currently identify as a teacher, and how has this sense of identity changed over time? Consider moments when you felt like a "real teacher" as well as moments when you did not. How do these experiences influence your understanding of what it means to be a teacher?

#### **Prompt 2**

Reflect on your confidence in your ability to teach English effectively and to manage a classroom in the future. What aspects of teaching make you feel competent, and which aspects cause uncertainty or self-doubt? In particular, think about how you imagine yourself being responsible for a classroom. What excites you about this role, and what challenges or concerns do you anticipate?

**Prompt 3**

Reflect on your initial motivation for choosing a career in teaching English and how this motivation has evolved during your teacher education. How does your motivation influence your commitment to the profession and your willingness to continue developing as a teacher? Finally, describe the kind of teacher you hope to become in the future and explain how ongoing professional learning may shape your professional identity.

## APPENDIX-E: Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

This survey is carried out to collect data for the doctoral dissertation of Hatice Kübra Çetin, a PhD candidate at Hacettepe University, Department of English Language Education, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. İsmail Hakkı Mirici. The main aim of this study is to examine the development process of the professional identities of teacher candidates studying in the English Language Teaching department in Türkiye and the factors affecting this process. To achieve this aim, Early Teacher Identity Measure (ETIM) consisting of 17 items (Friesen & Besley, 2013) will be used. The required permission for conducting the research has been obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Hacettepe University Graduate School of Educational Sciences.

It takes approximately ten (10) minutes to complete the survey. It is very important for the validity and reliability of the research that you sincerely evaluate the statements in the survey. The study is entirely based on voluntary participation, and the right to choose whether or not to participate is entirely yours. Additionally, after you start answering the survey form, you can stop answering at any time without any obligation. Even if you decide to quit the research after completing the survey, your responses will be taken out of the research data.

At the end of the survey, participants who are willing to take part in the qualitative phase of the study will be invited to leave their contact information. This contact information will be used only for the follow-up phase of the study and will be kept confidential. In the qualitative phase, semi-structured online interviews lasting approximately ten (10) minutes will be conducted. During these interviews, participants will be expected to share their experiences and thoughts regarding their professional identity development. Additionally, each participant will be asked to write short reflective pieces of approximately three hundred (300) words in total, in which they express their personal experiences and views related to their professional identity. Participation in this process is entirely voluntary, and participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. If you experience any discomfort during the study, you can withdraw at any time or contact the researcher to address this discomfort; you will be provided with the necessary assistance. The information you provide will be kept confidential by the researchers and will not be shared with any third parties. It will only be used to complete the research. If the participant is interested, the findings obtained after the research can be shared with them. Thank you for participating in our study. For more information about the study, you can contact Hatice Kübra Çetin.

Researcher:

Hatice Kübra Çetin

(signature)

### Participant Consent

I have been informed about the purpose, scope, and participation process of this research. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research. I understand that I can pause the study whenever I want or withdraw completely, that all my information will be kept confidential, and that all my data will be deleted when I leave the study.

Date:

Name and signature of the participant:

## APPENDIX-F: Ethics Committee Approval



T.C.  
HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ  
Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Araştırma Etik Kurulu

Tarih: 10/06/2025 15:48  
Sayı: E-51944218-050-00004267058



Sayı : E-51944218-050-00004267058  
Konu : Etik Kurul (Prof. Dr. İsmail Hakkı MİRİCİ ve Hatice Kübra ÇETİN)

10/06/2025

## YABANCI DİLLER EĞİTİMİ ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞINA

İlgi : 15.05.2025 tarihli ve E-48490341-300-00004222405 sayılı yazınız.

Ana Bilim Dalınız İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Doktora Programı öğrencisi **Hatice Kübra ÇETİN**'in, **Prof. Dr. İsmail Hakkı MİRİCİ** danışmanlığında yürüttüğü "*Türkiye'deki İngilizce Öğretmenliği Öğrencilerinin Öğretmen Kimliği Gelişiminin Araştırılması (Exploring the Teacher Identity Development of Student Teachers of English in Turkey)*" başlıklı tez çalışması, Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Araştırma Etik Kurulunun **28.05.2025** tarihinde yapmış olduğu toplantıda incelenmiş olup, etik açıdan uygun bulunmuştur.

Bilgilerinizi ve ilgiliye tebliğini rica ederim.

Prof. Dr. İsmail Hakkı MİRİCİ  
Kurul Başkanı

Bu belge güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

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Belge Doğrulama Adresi: <https://www.turkiye.gov.tr/hu-ebys>

Adres: Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü 06800  
Beştepe-ANKARA

Bilgi için: Gulgün İLKDOĞAN (EBE ARAŞTIRMA  
ETİK KURUL ÜYESİ)

E-posta: Elektronik Ağ: [www.hacettepe.edu.tr](http://www.hacettepe.edu.tr)

Kurul Üyesi

Telefon: Faks:

Telefon: 2978571

Kep:



## APPENDIX-G: Institutional Approvals for Data Collection

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 05.11.2025-E.1375482



T.C.  
GAZİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ  
Gazi Eğitim Fakültesi Dekanlığı

Tarih: 06/11/2025 15:13  
Sayı: E-044.00004577725



00004577725



Sayı : E-78797627-044-1375482  
Konu : Anketler (Hatice Kübra ÇETİN)

05.11.2025

### REKTÖRLÜK MAKAMINA (Öğrenci İşleri Daire Başkanlığı)

İlgi : a) 17.10.2025 tarihli ve E-17311665-044- 1361371 sayılı yazı.  
b) 04.11.2025 tarihli ve E-20911470-044- 1374960 sayılı yazı.

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Ana Bilim Dalı, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Doktora programı öğrencisi Hatice Kübra ÇETİN'in, Prof. Dr. İsmail Hakkı MİRİCİ danışmanlığında yürüttüğü "Türkiye'deki İngilizce Öğretmenliği Öğrencilerinin Öğretmen Kimliği Gelişiminin Araştırılması (Exploring the Teacher Identity Development of Student Teachers of English in Turkey)" başlıklı tez çalışması talebi ile ilgili Fakültemiz Bölüm / Ana Bilim Dalı Başkanlığının görüşü alınarak Dekanlığımızca uygun görülmüştür.

Bilgilerinizi ve gereğini arz ederim.

**Prof. Dr. Bilal GÜNEŞ**  
Dekan

Belge Doğrulama Kodu :BSRP8Y0AE3

**Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.**

Belge Takip Adresi : <https://belgedogrulama.gazi.edu.tr/belgedogrulama.aspx>



Gazi Üniversitesi Gazi Eğitim Fakültesi 06500 Beşevler Ankara  
Tel:202 8005 Faks:223 8693  
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Kep Adresi: gaziuniversitesi@hs01.kep.tr

Bilgi için :Erdal ÜMÜTLÜ  
Veri Hazırlama ve Kontrol İşletmeni  
Telefon No:2028006





T.C.  
NECMETTİN ERBAKAN ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ  
Ahmet Keleşoğlu Eğitim Fakültesi Dekanlığı



Sayı : E-46826381-100-763719  
Konu : Araştırma İzni (Hatice Kübra ÇETİN)

27.10.2025

REKTÖRLÜK MAKAMINA  
(Öğrenci İşleri Daire Başkanlığı)

İlgi : 21.10.2025 tarihli ve E-48178250-100-761250 sayılı yazınız.

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Doktora Programı öğrencisi Hatice Kübra ÇETİN'in "Türkiye'deki İngilizce Öğretmenliği Öğrencilerinin Öğretmen Kimliği Gelişiminin Araştırılması (Exploring the Teacher Identity Development of Student Teachers of English in Turkey)" adlı tez çalışması kapsamında Fakültemiz İngilizce Öğretmenliği programı öğrencilerine uygulama yapma isteği Dekanlığımızca uygun görülmüştür.

Bilgilerinizi ve gereğini arz ederim.

Prof. Dr. Mürsel BİÇER  
Dekan

Ek: İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Ana Bilim Dalı Üst Yazısı

**Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.**

Belge Doğrulama Kodu : 8I2E-B8KG-0GMU

Belge Doğrulama Adresi : <https://www.turkiye.gov.tr/necmettin-erbakan-ebys>

Adres: Meram Yeni Yol Meram/KONYA  
Telefon No : 0332 323 82 20

Fax No : 0332 323 82 25

Bilgi İçin : İlhan ÖZTÜRK  
Sürekli İşçi

e-Posta :

İnternet Adresi : <http://www.erbakan.edu.tr>

Telefon No: 0332 323 82 20



**APPENDIX-H: Declaration of Ethical Conduct**

I hereby declare that...

- I have prepared this thesis in accordance with the thesis writing guidelines of the Graduate School of Educational Sciences of Hacettepe University;
- all information and documents in the thesis/dissertation have been obtained in accordance with academic regulations;
- all audio visual and written information and results have been presented in compliance with scientific and ethical standards;
- in case of using other people's work, related studies have been cited in accordance with scientific and ethical standards;
- all cited studies have been fully and decently referenced and included in the list of References;
- I did not do any distortion and/or manipulation on the data set,
- and **NO** part of this work was presented as a part of any other thesis study at this or any other university.

16/06/2026

Hatice Kübra ÇETİN

## APPENDIX-I: Thesis/Dissertation Originality Report

18/06/2026

HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY  
 Graduate School of Educational Sciences  
 To The Department of Foreign Language Education

Thesis Title: Exploring The Teacher Identity Development of Student Teachers of English in Türkiye

The whole thesis that includes the *title page, introduction, main chapters, conclusions and bibliography section* is checked by using **Turnitin** plagiarism detection software take into the consideration requested filtering options. According to the originality report obtained data are as below.

Time Submitted	Page Count	Character Count	Date of Thesis Defense	Similarity Index	Submission ID
03/06/2026	125	215714	16/06/2026	13	2975461134

Filtering options applied:

1. Bibliography excluded
2. Quotes included
3. Match size up to 5 words excluded

I declare that I have carefully read Hacettepe University Graduate School of Educational Sciences Guidelines for Obtaining and Using Thesis Originality Reports; that according to the maximum similarity index values specified in the Guidelines, my thesis does not include any form of plagiarism; that in any future detection of possible infringement of the regulations I accept all legal responsibility; and that all the information I have provided is correct to the best of my knowledge.

I respectfully submit this for approval.

**Name Lastname:** Hatice Kübra ÇETİN  
**Student No.:** N20140522  
**Department:** Foreign Language Education  
**Program:** English Language Education  
**Status:**  Masters  Ph.D.  Integrated Ph.D.

Signature

### ADVISOR APPROVAL

APPROVED

Prof. Dr. İsmail Hakkı MİRİCİ

## APPENDIX-J: Yayınlama ve Fikrî Mülkiyet Hakları Beyanı

Enstitü tarafından onaylanan lisansüstü tezimin/raporumun tamamını veya herhangi bir kısmını, basılı (kâğıt) ve elektronik formatta arşivleme ve aşağıda verilen koşullarla kullanıma açma iznini Hacettepe Üniversitesine verdiğimi bildiririm. Bu izinle Üniversiteye verilen kullanım hakları dışındaki tüm fikri mülkiyet haklarım bende kalacak, tezimin tamamının ya da bir bölümünün gelecekteki çalışmalarda (makale, kitap, lisans ve patent vb.) kullanım hakları bana ait olacaktır.

Tezin kendi orijinal çalışmam olduğunu, başkalarının haklarını ihlal etmediğimi ve tezimin tek yetkili sahibi olduğumu beyan ve taahhüt ederim. Tezimde yer alan telif hakkı bulunan ve sahiplerinden yazılı izin alınarak kullanılması zorunlu metinlerin yazılı izin alınarak kullandığımı ve istenildiğinde suretlerini Üniversiteye teslim etmeyi taahhüt ederim.

Yükseköğretim Kurulu tarafından yayınlanan "**Lisansüstü Tezlerin Elektronik Ortamda Toplanması, Düzenlenmesi ve Erişime Açılmasına İlişkin Yönerge**" kapsamında tezim aşağıda belirtilen koşullar haricince YÖK Ulusal Tez Merkezi / H.Ü. Kütüphaneleri Açık Erişim Sisteminde erişime açılır.

- Enstitü/Fakülte yönetim kurulu kararı ile tezimin erişime açılması mezuniyet tarihinden itibaren 2 yıl ertelenmiştir. <sup>(1)</sup>
- Enstitü/Fakülte yönetim kurulunun gerekçeli kararı ile tezimin erişime açılması mezuniyet tarihimden itibaren ... ay ertelenmiştir. <sup>(2)</sup>
- Tezimle ilgili gizlilik kararı verilmiştir. <sup>(3)</sup>

16/06/2026

Hatice Kübra ÇETİN

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"Lisansüstü Tezlerin Elektronik Ortamda Toplanması, Düzenlenmesi ve Erişime Açılmasına İlişkin Yönerge"

- (1) Madde 6. 1. Lisansüstü teze ilgili patent başvurusu yapılması veya patent alma sürecinin devam etmesi durumunda, tez danışmanının önerisi ve enstitü anabilim dalının uygun görüşü üzerine enstitü veya fakülte yönetim kurulu iki yıl süre ile tez in erişime açılmasının ertelenmesine karar verebilir.
- (2) Madde 6.2. Yeni teknik, materyal ve metotların kullanıldığı, henüz makaleye dönüşmemiş veya patent gibi yöntemlerle korunmamış ve internetten paylaşılması durumunda 3 şahıslara veya kurumlara haksız kazanç; imkânı oluşturabilecek bilgi ve bulguları içeren tezler hakkında tez danışmanının önerisi ve enstitü anabilim dalının uygun görüşü üzerine enstitü veya fakülte yönetim kurulunun gerekçeli kararı ile altı ayı aşmamak üzere tez in erişime açılması engellenebilir.
- (3) Madde 7. 1. Ulusal çıkarları veya güvenliği ilgilendiren, emniyet, istihbarat, savunma ve güvenlik, sağlık vb. konulara ilişkin lisansüstü tezlerle ilgili gizlilik kararı, tezin yapıldığı kurum tarafından verilir\*. Kurum ve kuruluşlarla yapılan işbirliği protokolü çerçevesinde hazırlanan lisansüstü tezlere ilişkin gizlilik kararı ise, ilgili kurum ve kuruluşun önerisi ile enstitü veya fakültenin uygun görüşü üzerine üniversite yönetim kurulu tarafından verilir. Gizlilik kararı verilen tezler Yükseköğretim Kuruluna bildirilir.

Madde 7.2. Gizlilik kararı verilen tezler gizlilik süresince enstitü veya fakülte tarafından gizlilik kuralları çerçevesinde muhafaza edilir, gizlilik kararının kaldırılması halinde Tez Otomasyon Sistemine yüklenir

\*Tez danışmanının önerisi ve enstitü anabilim dalının uygun görüşü üzerine enstitü veya fakülte yönetim kurulu tarafından karar verilir.

