TEACHER IDENTITY, EMOTION LABOR AND AGENCY IN NEOLIBERAL ACADEMIC CONTEXT: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF PART-TIME EARLY CAREER ENGLISH INSTRUCTORS IN TÜRKİYE

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ABSTRACT

TEACHER IDENTITY, EMOTION LABOR AND AGENCY IN NEOLIBERAL ACADEMIC CONTEXT: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF PART-TIME EARLY CAREER ENGLISH INSTRUCTORS IN TÜRKİYE

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Despite the increasing reliance on precarious academic labor within the neoliberal higher education context, the lived experiences of early-career, part-time English language instructors in Turkish foundation universities remain under-researched. Addressing this gap, this qualitative multiple-case study explored how these instructors perceive their professional positioning and how they navigate the interplay of teacher identity, emotional labor, and teacher agency across macro, meso, and micro contexts. Data was collected from five early-career instructors through three rounds of semi-structured interviews and reflective teacher diaries. The qualitative data was analyzed through an iterative process of thematic analysis, employing Yin's (2014) five-step method and Saldaña (2013)'s eclectic coding cycles. Findings revealed that participants suffer from economic and professional devaluation, struggling with a societal "sacred but unvalued" paradox that enhances their marginalized status. Furthermore, precarity at the macro level triggered emotional dissonance and identity tensions among the participants. However, the

interaction between emotional labor, teacher identity, and individual agency primarily took place at the meso (institutional) level, arising from tensions stemming from the clash between the participants' pedagogical self and institutional realities. As a result, the participants' navigation of the interaction between emotional labor, teacher identity, and individual agency under conditions of precariousness and institutional dissonance occurred within a limited spectrum ranging from survival-driven compliance to strategic resistance. Furthermore, this complex navigation process was also amplified by a micro-level "reality shock" concerning classroom management. The study concludes that resolving these professional tensions requires structural reforms rather than relying on the individual agency of precarious instructors.

Keywords: Precarity, Teacher Identity, Emotional Labor, Teacher Agency, English language teaching.

ÖZ

NEOLİBERAL AKADEMİK BAĞLAMDA ÖĞRETMEN KİMLİĞİ, DUYGUSAL EMEK VE FAİLLİK: TÜRKİYE'DE KARİYERİNİN BAŞINDAKİ YARI ZAMANLI İNGİLİZCE OKUTMANLARI ÜZERİNE BİR ÇOKLU DURUM ÇALIŞMASI

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Neoliberal yükseköğretim bağlamında güvencesiz akademik emeğe olan bağımlılığın artmasına rağmen, Türkiye'deki vakıf üniversitelerinde çalışan, kariyerinin başındaki yarı zamanlı İngilizce okutmanlarının yaşantısal deneyimleri literatürde yeterince araştırılmamıştır. Bu boşluğu doldurmayı amaçlayan bu nitel çoklu durum çalışması, bu okutmanların mesleki konumlandırmalarını nasıl algıladıklarını ve makro, mezo ve mikro bağlamlarda öğretmen kimliği, duygusal emek ve öğretmen failliği arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimi nasıl yönettiklerini incelemiştir. Veriler, kariyerinin başındaki beş okutmandan üç aşamalı yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve yansıtıcı öğretmen günlüğü aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Nitel veriler, Yin'in (2014) beş aşamalı yöntemi ve Saldaña'nın (2013) eklektik kodlama döngüleri kullanılarak döngüsel bir tematik analiz süreciyle analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, katılımcıların ekonomik ve mesleki değersizleşmeden muzdarip olduklarını ve marjinalleşmiş statülerini pekiştiren toplumsal bir "kutsal ama değersiz" paradoksuyla mücadele ettiklerini

ortaya koymuştur. Dahası, makro düzeydeki güvencesizlik, katılımcılar arasında duygusal uyumsuzluk ve kimlik gerilimlerini tetiklemiştir. Ancak, duygusal emek, öğretmen kimliği ve bireysel faillik arasındaki etkileşim, katılımcıların pedagojik benlikleri ile kurumsal gerçeklikler arasındaki çatışmadan kaynaklanan gerilimler sonucunda temel olarak mezo (kurumsal) düzeyde gerçekleşmiştir. Sonuç olarak, güvencesizlik ve kurumsal uyumsuzluk koşulları altında katılımcıların duygusal emek, öğretmen kimliği ve bireysel faillik arasındaki etkileşimi yönetme süreçleri, hayatta kalma odaklı boyun eğmeden stratejik direnişe kadar uzanan sınırlı bir spektrumda meydana gelmiştir. Ayrıca, bu karmaşık denge kurma süreci, sınıf yönetimine ilişkin mikro düzeydeki bir "gerçeklik şoku" ile daha da şiddetlenmiştir. Çalışma, bu mesleki gerilimlerin çözülmesinin, güvencesiz okutmanların bireysel failliklerine bel bağlamak yerine yapısal reformlar gerektirdiği sonucuna varmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güvencesizlik, Öğretmen Kimliği, Duygusal Emek, Öğretmen Failliği, İngiliz Dili Öğretimi.

To my mother, father and brother

There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in

-Leonard Cohen

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI : Artificial Intelligence

AT : Activity Theory

B.A. : Bachelor of Arts

CEFR : Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CoP : Communities of Practice

CRT : Culturally Responsive Teaching

EAP : English for Academic Purposes

EFL : English as a Foreign Language

EL : Emotion Labor

ELT : English Language Teaching

ESA : English Study Abroad

ESL : English as a Second Language

ESOL : English to Speakers of Other Languages

ILO : International Labor Organization

LTI : Language Teacher Identity

M.A. : Master of Arts

NEST : Native English-Speaking Teacher

NNEST : Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher

ÖSYM : Measurement, Selection and Placement Center (Ölçme, Seçme ve Yerleştirme Merkezi)

Ph.D. : Doctor of Philosophy

TEFL : Teaching English as a Foreign Language

YÖK : Council of Higher Education (Yükseköğretim Kurulu)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

Since the 1950s, the transition from student teacher to in-service teacher has been researched and found to be challenging, with many teachers presented to have experienced a situation referred to as “reality shock”, describing the clash in beginning teachers’ expectations of the teaching profession and their in-service experiences (Milton, 2025). Early career teachers, who have less than three years of experience, go through such a “reality shock” in their work life regardless of their contracts (Trent, 2016, p. 316). This leads to struggles in their teacher identity exploration process at the beginning of their careers. Professional identity development is challenging because it involves constant interactions between contextual and personal factors that can influence how early career teachers feel or behave (Van der Wal et al., 2019). Therefore, teacher identity construction is a dynamic professional identity development process impacted by the personal, social, and contextual experiences of early career teachers.

In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), early career English instructors are a particular group to explore, considering that their motivations to teach, beliefs, and values evolve in their initial years compared to their pre-service beliefs and values (Manuel & Carter, 2016; Trent, 2016). In this sense, De Costa and Norton (2017) dwell on language teaching and give hints about language teacher identity by arguing that it is a situation and context dependent work. As Yazan (2018) argues, it is also necessary to explore how perceptions about past and current experiences shape teachers’ current beliefs and conceptions about identity construction and reconstruction. From a post-structural lens, teacher identity can be defined as a

dynamic and socially constructed phenomenon shaped by self-understanding and societal positioning (Varghese et al., 2005).

Upon the revelation of identity work, the ongoing teacher identity negotiation process of early career teachers is also intertwined with positioning; Liontas (2020) argues that teachers' self-understanding and self-images shift as they interact with others and are positioned by others in social and professional contexts. In terms of understanding positioning in language teacher identity conceptualization, Kayi-Aydar (2019) proposed that positionality in relation to language teacher identity involves the question: "Who positions whom and what happens as a result of such positioning?" (p. 20); consequently, the experiences related to how you are positioned (by institutions and communities) are expected to navigate teacher identity. This question is relevant to the aim of exploring perceptions about how early career part-time English language instructors are positioned by others (institutions, and communities).

Besides the teacher identity construction process and positioning, early career teachers' emotional existence is also significant, as emotions are inseparable from identity work. Zembylas (2003) argues that comprehending teacher identity requires contemplating the coaction between emotions and self-awareness about identity, concerning that they always impact and reform one another on both conceptual and personal levels. English language instructors usually absorb conventional emotional norms by developing a professional identity that requires them to suppress certain emotions and isolate their personal lives from the professional setting. There is also a further aspect of this interaction considering the possible clash between the emotive nature of teaching and the challenges of realities in educational environments. Benesch (2018) claimed that teachers' engagement in emotional labor arises from the tension that stems from implicit feeling rules dictated by institutional policies. According to Benesch's (2018) understanding of emotional labor, institutional policies may contradict the emotional norms shaped by teachers' training or classroom experiences, leading teachers to experience uncertainty about how to navigate these emotional demands and resulting in dilemmas over whether to conform to or resist institutional expectations. For novice teachers, emotional labor is

particularly significant as they navigate their developing and often uncertain professional identities amidst the clash between their pre-existing navigation and expectations and their initial classroom experiences, which may induce emotional challenges and adjustments (Nichols et al., 2017). In contribution to prior research about emotional labor and teacher identity, Benesch (2017) has highlighted the decision-making choice between resisting and complying for English language teachers while responding to challenging pedagogical situations and institutional regulations, although part-time/full-time English language teachers are not usually included in decision-making under educational policies. In parallel with this, Benesch (2018) presented emotional labor as the tension between teachers' beliefs and institutional expectations, and as a possible tool for teacher-initiated reform and highlighted the correlation of agency with emotional labor. As the agency in emotional labor is indicated by Benesch's (2018) contribution, Kayi-Aydar (2019) describes teacher agency as language teacher's intentional capacity to make choices in their environment. Moreover, Kayi-Aydar (2019) proposed that language teacher agency is exercised contextually, and the contexts include micro (classroom), meso (institution), and macro (broader communities) spaces. As teacher identity and emotional labor can be situated in these contexts, teacher agency is an intertwined notion in the identity and emotional work of the language teacher.

Nichols et al. (2017) state that when there is a conflict between teachers' negotiation about their professional identity and their classroom realities, they may experience an emotional crisis, boosting identity tension, in which they reconceptualize their professional identity. This interaction facilitates the inevitable connection between early career teachers' emotional experiences and their evolving professional identities. The expectations of the classroom, institutions, and broader contexts from early career teachers regarding their professional self might lead to emotional labor if the expectations conflict with their inner navigations about their teacher identity. Therefore, the developing identities of language teachers are socially constructed through power relations in different contexts and are affected by emotional labor, which highlights the interaction between power relations, emotions, and a particular community of practice in shaping language teachers' identities (Nazari & Karimpour, 2022). These emotional challenges and adjustments may seem like a burden on early

career teachers' shoulders in their teacher identity negotiation process, as the possible emotional conflict might ignite inner tension about how to feel or act as a teacher. However, an emotional crisis might also be a fueling factor that contributes to the empowerment process of early career teachers through their agency in the professional setting. Kayi-Aydar (2019) proposed that language teacher agency can be fully comprehended by the exploration of the identity-emotions-agency triangle. Therefore, the interplay of teacher identity negotiations, emotional labor, and teacher agency becomes relevant when it comes to fully comprehending the experiences of early career instructors.

Since educational settings are professional institutions characterized by dominant ideologies and trends, how the working conditions of current institutions are shaped under these views and how these conditions intervene with the identity work of teachers require exploration. Higher education systems are under the impact of neoliberalism today, which is based on the view that a society's political and economic institutions should be strongly liberal and capitalist, "but supplemented by a constitutionally limited democracy and a modest welfare state" (Vallier, 2022, p. 1). In the context of education, neoliberal academic settings are marked by "intensifying competitiveness, individualism, rationalization, ramped up expectations, strategic aspirationalism, marketized hype, performance management, academic celebritisation, and instrumental careerism" (Horton, 2020, p. 2). Moreover, the structural, financial, and existential insecurity neoliberalism has caused normalized casual, short-term, and irregular labor under the term "precarity" (Springveld, 2017, p. 26). Giroux (2014) argues that precarity exploits part-time workers by threatening them with firing. The setting of the current study is the Turkish neoliberal academic context, especially at foundation universities, which are designed to "provide the bourgeoisie with a necessary amount of properly skilled labor, and it reproduces and disseminates the ideology of the ruling class to the educated strata of the public" (Önal, 2012, p. 126). In the context of higher education in Türkiye, neoliberal regulations led to the elimination of job security with the increase in unsecured, part-time, and project-based employment styles in higher education institutions (Aslan, 2014). According to Kouritzin et al. (2023), for part-time English instructors in higher education, precarious working conditions include

not being rewarded or paid for duties outside the classroom, not having job security or stability, the application of student evaluations as a warning mechanism about job performance, and their exploitation by the administration. In the context of this study, early career English language instructors who have worked at foundation universities as part-timers face precarious working conditions under the neoliberal academic context in Türkiye.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Earlier studies (Manuel & Carter, 2016; Trent, 2016) focused on early career English language instructors' beliefs/perceptions about the challenges in their initial years in the literature. Furthermore, the individual impacts of precarious employment on educators' health, well-being, and professional growth have been documented. For instance, research highlights how employment insecurity acts as a barrier to teacher growth (Güvercin-Seçkin, 2024), fills the early career years with turnover (Codó, 2018), and creates a crisis between how teachers are institutionally positioned and their ethical commitments (Breshears, 2023). Moreover, the interaction of identity, emotion, and agency is acknowledged in the literature, such as Kayi-Aydar's (2019) proposed identity-emotions-agency triangle. However, the complex navigation of this triangle remains under-researched, concerning early-career part-time instructors working under precarious conditions. Although recent studies point to the interaction between emotion labor (EL), agency, and language teacher identity (LTI) in early-career contexts (Aminifard et al., 2025; Banegas, 2024; Nazari et al., 2023), there is a lack of research investigating how precarious part-time instructors are positioned and how they navigate this triangle.

In Türkiye, there is gap in the literature when it comes to challenging local reality of part-time English Language Instructors. In Türkiye, English language teachers have various options regarding how to build their careers after graduation, such as working at public schools, private schools, language courses, or the preparatory departments of public or foundation universities. However, all these options come with prerequisites that create struggles for English language teachers during the early years of their professional lives. Regarding working as an English instructor, in

2016, the government gazette published the necessity of completing an M.A. degree to work in preparatory departments as language instructors at state universities (Öğretim Elemanı Atama Yönetmeliği, 2018). The fact that hiring policies in state universities require an M.A. degree guides many early-career teachers to start their profession as part-timers in foundation universities with the aim of gaining experience. This enables foundation universities to secure inexpensive employment without providing job security or other benefits, such as fair wages or paid vacation leave. Consequently, these early-career English language instructors find themselves working under precarious working conditions within the neoliberal academic context.

Despite these difficult realities, there is limited research in the Turkish context revealing how early-career, part-time English language instructors perceive their institutional and societal positioning under precarious working conditions. Moreover, although the development of language teacher identities has been studied at micro, meso, and macro levels (Taşdemir & Seferoğlu, 2024), there is limited research emphasizing the significance of the interaction between identity, emotional labor, and agency in the context of early career part-time English language instructors and how they navigate this triangle at micro, meso, and macro levels in Türkiye.

Having personally experienced and navigated these precarious working conditions as a former early-career part-time instructor, the researcher felt a necessity to problematize this issue. Experiencing the emotional labor, the restriction of agency, and the identity tensions firsthand demonstrated that this is not just a theoretical gap, but a lived reality for novice educators whose voices remain unheard. Therefore, this intertwined relationship within the teacher identity, emotional labor and agency triangle is open to more research to present various perceptions based on the real-life experiences of early career English language teachers while they navigate the triangle in micro, meso, and macro contexts. Most importantly, contextual factors in Türkiye need more exploration in relation to positioning under precarious working conditions and navigations of the triangle to give a voice to early career English language instructors' struggles in the literature.

1.3. Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Addressing a gap in the current literature by offering a nuanced, qualitative perspective on how neoliberal academic context in Türkiye impacts teacher identity negotiation, emotional labor, and teacher agency, this study aims to explore how early-career part-time English language instructors, who has work experience at the English preparatory departments of foundation universities in Türkiye, perceive how they are positioned by others (institutions and communities) under the precarious working conditions in Türkiye. Moreover, by drawing attention to the triangle of teacher identity-emotional labor- teacher agency (Kayi-Aydar, 2019), this study aims to present how they navigate the interplay of teacher identity, emotional labor and teacher agency at micro (classroom), meso (institutional) and macro (broader communities) contexts.

1. How do early-career part-time English instructors at the English preparatory departments of foundation universities in Türkiye perceive how they are positioned by their institutions and community under the precarious work conditions in Türkiye?
2. How do early-career part-time English instructors at the English preparatory departments of foundation universities in Türkiye navigate teacher identity, emotion labor and agency at the micro, meso and macro context?

1.4. Significance of the Study

Murray (2019) argues that academia has been transformed into a knowledge-intensive industry that has created a worrying employment situation for professors as inexpensive laborers. In contrast to their full-time counterparts, who enjoy more advantaged working conditions and stable job status in state and foundation universities, part-time English language instructors' working conditions at foundation universities are characterized by unstable employment, almost no opportunities for career advancement or professional development, and a lack of access to essential benefits such as medical care, paid sick leave, vacation time, or pensions (Mercer, 2023). Although the low-compensated, precarious, and contingent positions of adjuncts seem to be becoming a norm for employment in higher

education, there is little recognition or representation of this class of faculty in the literature (Murray, 2019). Given that the disadvantaged position of part-time English language instructors is observable, the current study holds significance due its marginalized group of participants in a local setting, the presentation of the interaction between these instructors' identity negotiations, emotional labor, and agency and its methodological rigor.

The significance of this study lies in addressing how a marginalized group's lived struggles against the precarious working conditions shape the way that they perceive their institutional and societal positioning under the neoliberal academic context in Türkiye. Various studies have emphasized their vulnerability, marginalization, and comparatively unfavorable working conditions, especially in the setting of private English preparatory departments (Bell, 2023). In Türkiye, part-time language instructors employed in preparatory departments at foundation universities usually struggle with precarious working conditions without the security of a formal contract, as they are typically employed on a temporary basis to fulfill institutional needs and dismissed once their services are no longer required (Arda, 2023). Moving beyond the identification of the precarious working condition, the current study could contribute to literature by exploring how these precarious working conditions shape early career part-time English language instructors' perceptions related to how they are positioned under neoliberal academic context. Also, giving a voice to this marginalized group in terms of their lived experiences at foundation university preparatory departments and in their community specifically in Türkiye holds significance. Moreover, the current study is significant for exploring the navigation of teacher identity, emotional labor, and agency of this marginalized and struggling group in Türkiye context. The interaction between emotions, identity and agency of language instructors is relatively under researched in the literature although these notions are individually important research areas (Janes & Chen, 2024; Weng, 2025). Also, earlier research indicates that early career English instructors face low wages and a lack of benefits under precarious working conditions (Arda, 2023; Bell, 2023), which consequently contributes to teacher identity tensions, emotional labor, and agency. The current study could contribute to the literature in terms of the visibility of the navigation of emotional labor, restricted agency, and identity tensions when it

comes to lived experiences of a group who struggles to survive under precarious working conditions specifically in Türkiye. For these reasons, the implications of this study could offer recommendations for more structural solutions for the conditions of early-career, part-time instructors and give them a voice in the literature by presenting their struggles under precarious working conditions. Furthermore, there are studies in literature that adopt narrative inquiry or thematic analysis approaches (Li et al., 2026; Zhang & Wu, 2025) when it comes to analysis of teacher identity, emotions and agency. However, the current study is significant with its methodological approach by utilizing a qualitative multiple-case study design that involves both semi-structured interviews and teacher diaries. This research design could capture the specific incidents of emotional labor, identity negotiations and limited agency of these instructors in Türkiye.

1.5. Definitions of Key Terms

English Language Instructor: An academic professional who teaches English to students learning it as an additional language. In this study, this role specifically refers to instructors working in university-based intensive English programs (often called preparatory schools) designed to equip students with the necessary language skills before they begin their departmental studies. The researcher used this term to describe the English language instructors specifically in Türkiye context.

Early-Career: Based on Trent's (2016) consideration in the literature, 0-5 years of experience are considered as initial years of career for English language instructors in this study.

Part-time English Language Instructor: They are employees who work in the preparatory departments of universities on short-term contracts or on a temporary basis. Unlike full-time employees, they are part-time insured workers with lower salaries and no job security.

Teacher identity: Through the interaction of personal identity and teacher identity, teacher identity can be defined as a dynamic and socially constructed phenomenon shaped by self-positioning and societal positioning (Varghese et al., 2005).

Positioning Theory: Positioning theory is about "how people use words (and discourse of all types) to locate themselves and others" (Moghaddam & Harré, 2010, p. 2).

Precarious work: It is insecure, inconsistent employment that undermines the worker's power and leaves them exposed to unsafe conditions and workplace mistreatment due to a lack of protection (Allan et al., 2021).

Emotional labor: Defined by Benesch (2018) as the tension "produced by the clash between teachers' training/beliefs and institutional regulation" (p. 63), which serves as a potential catalyst for teacher agency and activism to address and improve precarious conditions.

Teacher agency: Teacher agency is defined as a language teacher's intentional authority to both select and implement actions within their specific teaching environment (Kayi-Aydar, 2019).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Neoliberal Academic Context

Neoliberalism is a multifaceted notion that has dominated the economic system of the globalized world. The current political, social, and economic climate is characterized by adapted forms of neoliberalism, which is regarded as the most recent dominant form of the capitalist economy (Block, 2018; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021; Fairclough, 2010; Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism is associated with free market competition by enforcing privatization, free trade, international capital, and minimal government intervention in economic and social life (Smith, 2026). As a continuation of capitalist ideologies, neoliberalism is a preferred economic model by the capitalists that fails to address the needs of collective societies or the motivations of large corporations in order to prioritize individual market satisfaction (Lane, 2023). Similarly, Fleming (2021) explains neoliberalism as a notion that "refers to radical changes in the way governments organize the economy, with special priority given to private enterprise (including its memetic forms in the public sector) and expansive financialization" (p. 22).

Moreover, research indicates that neoliberalism has contributed to rising inequality, sluggish economic growth, stagnating wages, and reduced labor market mobility (Konczal et al., 2020). Lane (2023), by exploring dimensions of the neoliberalism, suggests that unregulated financialization and private ownership in neoliberalism fosters economic instability, and this economic model ignores class conflicts by fostering consumption to satisfy human requirements. In other words, neoliberalism serves as an insufficient economic model for creating fair or effective economic and social policies.

To highlight the failure of neoliberalism in terms of creating equality, Harvey (2005) perceives neoliberalism as a project that strives for the reconstitution of class power where it exists and its creation where currently absent. From Marxist approaches, neoliberalism is a ruling ideology that ignores social contradictions in favor of the dominant class (Holborow, 2015). Post-structuralist studies approach the term in relation to discursivity and power by highlighting the inevitable interaction of the self with neoliberal ideas and the power that they hold within the context. Springer (2016) claimed that through post-structuralist lenses, neoliberalism actualizes with the continuous interactions between people and their socially constructed realities that involve the rationalization of power for institutions and individuals to adapt to the norms of the market or government. As the current study stands as a critique of neoliberal ideologies, it approaches the notion from the post-structuralist lenses presented above.

When it comes to how neoliberal ideologies mirror to academia, Fleming (2021) describes the neoliberal university as the "Edu-Factory" (p. 8) that are forced by neoliberal ideologies to serve as competitive, commercialized business enterprises. According to Fleming (2021), the neoliberal academy functions through authoritarian managerialism and audit culture of performance metrics, which systematically transforms students as consumers and university community as precariously employed, hyper-competitive labor force who constantly struggle with psychological distress, such as burnout and anxiety. Similarly, according to Morrish and Sauntson (2020), the neoliberal academic context in higher education, has forced universities to transform and reposition themselves as business institutions serving as profit-making organizations. They employ practices such as "annual appraisals, audits of teaching hours, transparency reviews of work practices, peer teaching evaluation and teaching and research audits" (Morrish & Sauntson, 2020, p. 26), which simultaneously resulted in the alienation of academicians and the removal of former academic values. Furthermore, "academicians are organizing around these central concerns of funding, corporatization, marketisation, academic capitalism, audit culture, academic governance and citizenship" (Morrish & Sauntson, 2020, p. 41), which is an increasing concern in critical university studies. Similarly, Arda (2023) dwells on the main features of the neoliberal university by highlighting how

academic labor is commercialized and exploited with precarious working conditions. Moreover, student-academic interaction is problematized in such a market and profit oriented neoliberal university context. Holborow (2015) dwells on this interaction by arguing that the relationship between students and academics increasingly shifts to that of a consumer and a product provider under the neoliberal higher education context. Through this argument, Holborow (2015) considers the precarious work (low wages and job insecurity) of academics, the increasing unemployment rates for students after graduation, the increased competition market among universities through the commercialization of education, and the quantifying of educational outcomes resulting from pressures from government and stakeholders. Overall, neoliberal academic context deteriorates the working conditions of full-time academics, while simultaneously endorsing economic precarity of academic labor through the increasing employment of casual adjuncts for keeping the cost at a bare minimum (Fleming, 2021).

Furthermore, the significant impact of the broader social and economic context of neoliberal higher education (new forms of governance, performativity, and production) on academics has induced identity shock, which led to changes in their identities, roles, behaviors, reflections, and their relationships in and outside of the workplace (Mula-Falcón & Caballero, 2022). In a qualitative case study with data from document analysis, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and course observations, Şahintaş (2023) analyzed how English language teacher educators construct their professional identities under the higher education context in Türkiye and how they adapt their professional roles to the political roles assigned to them. Şahintaş (2023) found that policies and the system prioritize English language teacher educators' researcher roles and place external pressure on their performance in academic production. Moreover, her research revealed that institutional and national higher education contexts influence participants' constant professional identity formation, and she concluded that professional identities are susceptible to policies and external demands forced by neoliberal managerialism (Şahintaş, 2023). In this sense, besides the commercialization and commodification of education and the devaluing working conditions of academics, education under the neoliberal academic context has an influence on instructors' professional sense of being.

Besides the impact of neoliberalism on identity work, it is also documented that it leads to emotional tensions among teachers. Nguyen and Minh Nguyen (2024) suggested that neoliberal ideologies shape education through institutional pressures that enforce feeling rules, complicating language teacher identity formation by intensifying emotional labor, which, in turn, creates tension between teachers' self-ascribed and externally imposed identities, as they may experience pressure to conform.

Besides the emotional dimension in identity shifts under the neoliberal context, the performance and production culture isolates instructors from the broader context by compelling them to produce results at the classroom level and in professional development.

While the identity and emotional tensions that neoliberal academic context created, how it limits agentic actions leads to struggles in enacting collective actions among instructors is also documented in literature. Çiftçi and Karaman (2021) state that the neoliberal understanding of education, in which the focus is basically on micro-level classroom events or the self-development of instructors, prevents instructors from linking the school context to broader notions (economy, society, and politics), and consequently prevents them from taking actions for collective values and social justice. Although the inevitable influence of the neoliberal context on educational practices and narratives that provoke instructors to focus on their performance and productivity is a reality, this possible internalization does not prohibit their agency to produce counter-discourses and hegemony that care for collective human conditions, social justice, and resistance against technicist and managerial assaults on education (Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021).

Overall, the neoliberal academic context is characterized by the transformation of higher education institutions in such a way that universities are perceived as market-oriented business companies. Instructors are employed as service providers with unstable and declining working conditions, and education itself is assumed to be a tool to serve broader contexts (economy, power, society), all of which are integrated with the identity work of the instructors in terms of their pedagogical practices, self-assumptions, and relationships.

2.1.1. Neoliberal Academic Context in Turkish Higher Education System

The transition to neoliberal policies in Türkiye was implemented in the late 1980 when capital movements were liberalized by the choices of the government as a part of global neoliberal wave, promoted by the IMF and the World Bank as a "market-friendly" notion to be tested on developing nations (Boratav, 2019). According to Boratav (2019), Turkish governments have committed to neoliberal framework increasingly over the years by persisting on a pro-market ideology that makes economies dependent on foreign capital and vulnerable to sudden financial crashes, which forces the public to bear the cost in order to protect financial investors while blaming the government interference as the cause of economic crisis. In the current context of Türkiye, neoliberalism has been actualized with political and economic choices shaped by a deep-rooted dependence on creating the right environment for international capital and imports with the active participation of “a whole range of actors in the country—policymakers, businesses, intellectuals, and ordinary men and women too” (Tansel, 2019, p. 55). Moreover, during this neoliberal period of Türkiye, terms such as “jobless growth, wage stagnation, and job precarity, [while] household indebtedness skyrocketed” have characterized the economy” (Tansel, 2019, p. 53). Furthermore, the current context in Türkiye is characterized by economic crisis. Since 2018, the Turkish lira has been undergoing devaluation, with a gradual decrease rate following the global pandemic (Shatakishvili, 2024). This crisis affects job opportunities, living conditions, and the security rights of society as of 2026.

Neoliberal policies in Türkiye began affecting higher education with the establishment of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) in 1981. According to Cosar and Ergul (2015), YÖK was established for easy manifestation of the neoliberal trends in Türkiye. This transformation enabled the enactment of neoliberalism through authoritarianism, the establishment of foundation universities, and an increase in the number of universities (Atalay, 2017). Tülübaş and Göktürk (2020) claim that the privatization and marketization of Turkish higher education, which boost competition and performance standards for academic allocation and promotion (conference attendance, international publications, research grants), have

transformed the traditional academic context. Therefore, this shift replaces scholarly values such as academic freedom and dedication to intellectual inquiry with increased duties of mentorship, demands of the labor market, an increased ratio of students to academic staff, and increased demands for profit-based projects, all of which are shaped by market-oriented neoliberal norms (Tülübaş & Göktürk, 2020).

In this sense, the prevalence of neoliberal norms in the academic context of Türkiye has served the market-oriented ideologies of the dominant discourse by transforming the working standards of academic staff. As Önal (2012) claims, the Turkish neoliberal academic context reproduces and facilitates dominant ideologies in favor of the privileged class, especially through foundation universities. Moreover, the hiring conditions or status of academic staff have been transformed alongside the neoliberal transformation of working conditions for academic staff. With the commodification of education through neoliberal policies, the hiring of the academic workforce has also been shaped by flexible and insecure manners via temporary contracts (Arda, 2023). Therefore, the prevalence of part-time or temporary-based employment is not only a condition but also an indicator of how the neoliberal transformation of the academic context in Türkiye manifests itself. In this sense, Vatansever and Yalçın (2015) argue that the neoliberal transformation of educational institutions through market-based norms must be scrutinized under the framework of the commodification of the workforce and knowledge. Also, Vatansever and Yalçın (2015) emphasize that this framework implies serious challenges for the academic workforce in terms of employment security, job stability, opportunities for self-development and progression, and the guarantee of representation rights and beyond.

Overall, the global neoliberal academic context affects Turkish context. Furthermore, the country's current economic, political, and social crises are causing the neoliberal academic context to take a unique turn. As discussed above, the increasing vulnerability of academic labor in Turkey in the face of precarious working conditions appears to be linked to the intensification of neoliberal conditions and the restriction of broader or collective agency. In addition to these challenges in the neoliberal academic context in Türkiye, the fact that policies for hiring requirements in state universities involve completing an M.A. degree for English language

instructors leads many early-career teachers to start their profession as part-timers in foundation universities with the aim of gaining experience. This enables foundation universities to utilize inexpensive employment without providing job security or other benefits, such as fair wages or paid vacation leave.

2.1.2. Precarious Working Conditions in Neoliberal Academic Context

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) (2011), precariousness in terms of work includes "casual, part-time, seasonal contracts, pseudo self-employment, no direct or an unclear employer/employee relationship, poor protection against dismissal, and lack of…to exercise their rights at work" (para. 1). Although the definition of precariousness demonstrates the devaluing and disadvantageous working conditions for employees, the concept of precarity refers to more than a type of work, encompassing its transformation in relation to the prevalence of neoliberal norms across various contexts. Based on Bourdieu's emphasis on the increase in temporary or part-time work in 1998, Millar (2017) analyzes that precarity, a concept Bourdieu first examined in the 1960s, was originally dependent on unemployment. However, Millar (2017) argues that modern pervasiveness is a consequence of neoliberal trends that decreased the stability of full-time work and brought "flexible" employment styles, leading to Bourdieu's declaration about the increase of precarity.

With the advent of neoliberalism, structural, financial, and existential insecurity, characterized by the dismantling of welfare state provisions and the normalization of casual, short-term, and irregular labor, has emerged under the term "precarity" (Springveld, 2017, p. 26). In terms of its manifestation in practice, Standing (2011) defines the precariat, who work under precarious working conditions, as a class characterized by involvement in various short-term jobs with insecure income and without the job security that the traditional working class has. According to Standing (2011), this situation denies the precariat the chance of both having a sense of belonging to a professional community and having the ability to provide or maintain dependable relationships by decreasing the protection for their identity. In this sense, through neoliberal transformation, the increase of precarious work has resulted in

depriving working conditions for employees, which affects not only their economic life but also their relationships, social life, and identity. Therefore, precarious working conditions require context-dependent analysis for comprehending the struggles of individuals in various jobs.

As economic policies influence state perspectives on education, they also shape the objectives of national education systems, given that an educated workforce is a crucial source of power. Across various national contexts, educational institutions have become increasingly influenced by internationalization, privatization, and financialization, which exposes them to market-driven principles and the commodification of education, while an audit culture that emphasizes numerical control and performance evaluation has led to precarious working conditions for language teachers, who are expected to ensure quality and excellence despite growing job instability (Flubacher & Del Percio, 2017). Walsh (2019) claims that the precarity of the academic workforce is dependent on neoliberalism and the commercialization of higher education, where marketization transforms liberal and humanist universities into commercially oriented institutions. This throws academics into a cycle in which they get marginalized due to their part-time and hourly-paid worker status among their full-time working secure colleagues (Courtois & O'Keefe, 2015).

Similarly, in a qualitative pilot study using qualitative interviews and focus groups with 19 hourly paid lecturers and tutors across various higher education institutions in England and Scotland, Lopes and Dewan (2015) explored the impact of precarious contracts on academic work and identity. Lopes and Dewan (2015) concluded that precarity, exploitation, lack of support, and lack of career progression are notions that induce self-exploitation (performing excessive unpaid work and sick time) due to a sense of vulnerability and powerlessness, and the feeling of isolation due to exclusion from permanent workers, which prevents the construction of a stable professional identity. In the case of educators, neoliberalism, through the commodification of education, de-professionalized teachers' work and exposed them to precarious work characterized by job insecurity alongside prescribed performance demands and the limitation of teacher agency (Gupta, 2021). Therefore, the

manifestation of precarity in the academic context is relevant to the discussion of other educational notions, such as teacher well-being, teacher agency, and teacher identity.

In the context of Türkiye, Aydın (2022) explains that the increase in precarious and flexible labor practices in Türkiye was strengthened by the neoliberal governments with the aim of a complete shift to a free market through privatization and the abandonment of social state functions. This eventually led to consequences including high inflation, falling real wages, deteriorating living conditions, and an unprecedented deepening of precarity for many lives. Moreover, although a labor movement in the 1990s actualized in response to the structural shift, the rise of the neoliberal authoritarian government occurred following the 2001 economic crisis (Aydın, 2022). In the context of higher education in Türkiye, Önal (2012) dwells on the neoliberal transformation with marketization by highlighting that transformation of higher education context serves to the expectations of capitalist market and upper-class of the society. Birler (2012) focuses on foundation universities as neoliberal institutions which are "integrated into global markets through research funds, accreditation systems, ranking agencies, and the introduction of a global for-profit higher education company" (p. 148). In foundation universities in Türkiye, the working conditions of academic staff are also transformed with neoliberalism as they hire "staff either on a yearly basis or teaching hour-based payment" (Önal, 2012, p. 135). Precarious work usually involves part-time or temporary work (Breshears, 2019). According to Kouritzin et al. (2023), for part-time English Instructors, precarious working conditions include:

> …not being rewarded for qualifications (creating curricula, setting professional development goals, etc.) or not being paid for (assisting students outside of contracted contact hours, attending staff meetings or, arranging for/providing materials to substitutes when ill, etc.)…student evaluation that does not exist solely as a manner of professional assessment, but also serves as an early warning mechanism for the administration to initiate a process that likely ends in the instructor not being rehired or even dismissed…administrative interest in and benefit from being able to simultaneously discard employees and reliably exploit them. (pp. 1529-1535)

In this neoliberal academic context, precarious conditions including low wages, limited professional development opportunities, and a lack of benefits create a

common struggle for English instructors at the beginning of their careers (Arda, 2023; Bell, 2023), which consequently contributes to teacher identity tensions, emotional labor, and agency.

In a qualitative study across two Canadian universities, based on data from job advertisements and semi-structured interviews with nine mostly part-time language instructors and one administrator, all of whom had precarious contracts, Kouritzin et al. (2023) demonstrated a critical exploration of the consequences of academic precarity. In this context, the university ESL/EAP instructor's labor is made flexible, unsecured, and commodified under neoliberal pressures. Moreover, Kouritzin et al. (2023) concluded that labor exploitation through precarious conditions, intensified by neoliberal university models, directly enhances the decrease of professional solidarity and the increase of job insecurity that shapes the precarious identity of language instructors. This study demonstrates how part-time English language instructors are positioned under the neoliberal academic context and how precarious contracts affect their lived experiences by implying further connotations with teacher solidarity and teacher identity.

In a longitudinal case study, through a narrative inquiry approach based on three in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted over three months with an early-career English language instructor who worked at four temporary teaching positions (private language centers and private universities) within her first three years, Elmas et al. (2025) explored the influence of precarious work on the professional identity negotiation of an English language teacher in Türkiye based on the lived experiences of the participant under neoliberal working conditions. Elmas et al. (2025) revealed that the participant's identity negotiation was significantly negatively influenced and intertwined with frustration, uncertainty, temporariness, and otherization, which signified tension between teacher ideals and market realities. Moreover, Elmas et al.'s (2025) case demonstrated that job precarity can hinder a teacher's agency for community participation and identity development in relation to emotional conflict experienced while navigating precarious work conditions. Furthermore, they found that their participant also occasionally found herself aligning with some neoliberal discourses, strategically in pursuit of economic and professional advancement under

precarious working conditions (Elmas et al., 2025). This study demonstrates how precarious working conditions under the neoliberal academic context in Türkiye induce an early-career English language instructor to align with some neoliberal discourses just to survive, and how the lack of job security disrupts the negotiation of a strong language teacher identity.

Overall, despite the prevalence of precarious working conditions in the language teaching profession and the increasing number of studies in the literature on the topic, researchers have relatively under-explored the negotiation of language teacher identity in relation to precarity (Elmas et al., 2025; Kayi-Aydar, 2019). Therefore, how part-time English language instructors navigate their teacher identity in interaction with emotional labor and agency under precarious working conditions in the neoliberal academic context requires further exploration, especially in foundation universities as commercialized institutions in the context of Türkiye.

2.2. Early Career English Language Instructors

Formerly, early career English language instructors' perspectives about their initial years have been studied. In the literature, early career English language instructors are categorized in terms of their years of experience: Trent (2016) considered them to be 0–5 years. Earlier studies focused on how early career language instructors' motivations to teach, beliefs, and values evolve in their initial years compared to their beliefs and values before their career years (Manuel & Carter, 2016; Trent, 2016). Manuel and Carter (2016) conducted a quantitative study involving 22 early-career English instructors in Australia, which explored the initial motivations to enter the profession. However, Manuel and Carter's (2016) study demonstrated that subsequent experiences significantly decreased aspirations and undermined professional agency due to external factors and marginalization from decision-making processes, resulting in over a third of the sample expressing doubt about remaining in teaching for more than five years.

Also, the earlier body of research focused on the positioning of early career English language teachers in terms of their perceptions about how to be an effective teacher.

In a mixed-method study on 167 early career English teachers, it was found that motivation, enthusiasm, and self-confidence coupled with school support, teamwork, and shared teaching practices were perceived as factors in self-positioning in terms of effectiveness (Carmel & Badash, 2021). In another study, Himmapan et al. (2019) explored early career English teachers' perspectives on their narrative positioning in relation to how their teacher identity construction was positioned and shaped using in-depth interviews. It found that how they perceive their positioning is intertwined with challenges in their social positioning within the school context (e.g., supervisor, mentor, colleagues) and their conflicting identities (Himmapan et al., 2019). Another study, based on the experiences of 32 newly qualified English teachers in Norway, Germany, and England, focused on their positioning in relation to their teaching values and found that teachers' values about being a teacher and their teacher identities can be constructed locally despite converging tendencies at a global level (Czerniawski, 2009). These studies represent the relevance of societal, and narrative positioning in relation to identity negotiation in the field of English language teaching, as this study aims to explore how English instructors perceive how they are positioned by their administrators, institutional social environment, community, and educational policies.

Furthermore, tensions that early career English language instructors experienced in their language teacher identities at micro, meso, and macro contexts, and how they navigated this process, have been studied in the literature. In a multiple case study with three early career English teachers, findings based on semi-structured interviews showed that language teacher identities are emotionally complex, socially practiced, and constructed at meso and macro contexts, causing dilemmas, conflicts, and tensions in language teacher identity negotiations (Taşdemir & Seferoğlu, 2024). Also, how beliefs about teaching and learning, pre-service education, dynamic relations in communities of practice, and contextual factors shape the teacher identity of early career language instructors has been studied in the literature in Türkiye. In a longitudinal case study, the findings suggested that some features of contextual factors may negatively affect novice teachers' construction of a language teacher identity (LTI) due to the inability to apply their personal pedagogical perspectives in the classroom (Göktepe & Kunt, 2021). In another longitudinal case study by Huang

(2021), the teacher identity and teacher agency of early career English instructors were studied in terms of their narratives about their positioning. It was found that school and social contexts are intertwined with personal experiences and teacher agency in a teacher's decision to remain in or leave the teaching profession (Huang, 2021). These studies reflect the factors in the overlaps of teacher identity negotiations, emotions, and agency in the ELT literature.

Moreover, challenges that early career English language instructors face in terms of instruction and whether pre-service education prepared them for instruction have been explored in the Turkish context (Yazan, 2016). An earlier multiple case study of Litzenberg and Fraser (2023), with seven English language instructors, focused on the precarious conditions of the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) by reporting that recent graduates face insecure work conditions and are unable to engage in the field for which they have prepared. This puts ELT professionals into the "precariat," a socioeconomic classification in which they must accept status and income below their qualifications, impacting their agency in terms of leaving or remaining in the profession (Litzenberg & Fraser, 2023). Also, an earlier case study of Elmas (2020) with five part-time early career English instructors in Türkiye focused on how early career temporary English language teachers mediated their imagined and practiced identities in relation to their employment status. Elmas (2020) revealed that the teachers constructed positive imagined teacher identities and expected to participate in a supportive teaching community before the semester. However, in reality, the participants' practice of precarious engagement affected their practice of imagined teacher identities both at the institutional and classroom levels, as they found themselves in job uncertainty which prevented them from constructing secure teacher identities (Elmas, 2020). Another qualitative study by Abdul-Messie (2023) focused on the experiences of eight early-career English teachers dealing with difficult working conditions. The findings revealed that these teachers engaged in emotional labor primarily to meet professional expectations despite the challenges (Abdul-Messie, 2023). Their experiences were heavily shaped by the low socioeconomic status of their context and a lack of social recognition for their merit. However, the study also noted that the teachers' distinct passion for their profession helped them tolerate these adverse working conditions (Abdul-Messie,

2023). Edwards and Burns (2016) studied the agency and constraining working environments of ELT teachers in a case study based on two English teachers' experiences in action research. Edwards and Burns (2016) revealed that teacher resistance to environmental constraints can lead to resilience by empowering them with the agency to resist, which can further develop their agency and creativity against prescribed conditions. These studies focus on precarious work conditions in various contexts and countries in the field of ELT in relation to language teachers' identity, emotional labor, and agency. Overall, the initial years of English language instructors have been a topic studied in relation to various notions (identity work, emotion, motivation, agency, etc.) while being scrutinized under different theories, including positioning theory, and different contexts, such as the neoliberal academic context.

2.3. Identity

Scholars from various disciplines, including sociology, linguistics, psychology, and educational sciences, have devoted considerable effort to defining the term "identity" and identifying its key features (Dürüst, 2021). From sociological and interactionist perspectives, identity is viewed as a social phenomenon, constructed and negotiated through interaction with others, roles, and wider social structures. Drawing from early social interactionists, particularly Mead and Blumer's premise, Stryker (2007) articulates that society and the self are mutually constitutive. In other words, society involves complex patterns of interaction that shape identity, and in turn, identity is an important mechanism in producing social behavior and interaction (Stryker, 2007). Furthermore, from a social psychological perspective, identity is conceptualized by drawing upon an individual's self-concept in relation to group membership and examining the inner psychological processes in social relations. From a sociopsychological perspective, Santee and Jackson (1979) conceptualize identity as an integrated system, arguing that a person's goals and actions are not randomly chosen but structured based on their specific self-conceptualizations to which they are committed. These identity commitments become boundary criteria that regulate internal motivations and external pressures (Santee & Jackson, 1979). Hence, identity serves as a regulator in how an individual's personality reacts and adjusts to their social context while managing their internal desires.

Moving away from the essentialist and structural notions of identity found in early psychological and sociological theories, the post-structuralist perspective essentially changes the comprehension of identity from a stable, innate entity to a fluid, changing, and socially constructed notion. Foucault (1980) perceived identity not as a pre-given entity that is chosen but as a product of discourse, noting that "the individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces" (p. 74). As Foucault's work is one of the bases for post-structuralist theories, the approach to identity has involved the analysis of discourse and power relations, as Foucault (1980) stated: "We must attempt to study the myriad of bodies which are constituted as peripheral subjects as a result of the effects of power" (p. 98). This argument paves the way for a post-structural interpretation of identity as a constitutive and fluid notion that involves constant deconstruction of the self with constant relevance to power. According to Sweetman (1997), Derrida's concept of this continual and unstable interplay of differing and deferring suggests that identities are not innate and fixed realities; rather, they are constantly changing constructs of the mind defined by what they do and what they do not do. Another root for post-structural theories on identities is Butler's (1990) argument about the performativity of social identities and gender. According to Butler (1990), gendered and other social identities are not internal expressions but are performed through common actions and discourses constituted under a normative framework. This view highlights the construction of social identities through societal, institutional, and contextual practices under the post-structural framework.

In light of the discursive and social understanding of identity in post-structural theory, Wenger's (1998) views on identity enhance the comprehension of self in practice, which resonates with the professional self. Wenger (1998) defines identity in practice as a fluid construct characterized by self-perception, societal positioning, continuous learning process and interaction with broad social discourses. Moving beyond this, Norton (2013) defines identity as the way a person makes sense of their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person views possibilities for the future. Post-structuralist theories emphasize contextuality by arguing that identities are not only imposed social

structures but also negotiated through self-positioning in social structures (Norton, 2013). This indicates that the post-structural view of identity enables the positioning of identities at both the macro level (positioning against powerful institutions such as the education system, legal system, etc.) and the micro level (everyday social encounters between people) (Norton, 2013). Norton's (2013) approach is highly relevant for this study because it acknowledges that identity is dynamically connected to individuals' perceptions about how they make sense of the world, how they invest in their social and professional environment, and how it is constantly negotiated within external factors and environments.

2.3.1. Teacher Identity

Personal identity is deeply intertwined with teacher identity, influencing instructors' perceptions of their professional roles. This perspective aligns with the notion that teacher identity is not a fixed construct but rather a continuous process of negotiation shaped by reflections on professional experiences (Sachs, 2005). In the literature, teacher identity has evolved from a static professional role to a negotiated construct that is constantly evolving through the scope of foundational studies (Beijaard et al., 2004; Olsen, 2008; Sachs, 2001; Zembylas, 2003).

Exploring studies on teachers' professional identity formation, Beijaard et al. (2004) identified four features that are crucial for comprehending teachers' professional identity: (a) perceiving teacher identity as an ongoing and dynamic process due to lifelong learning; (b) considering teacher identity's implications for both person and context; (c) considering the correlation of teachers' professional identities and personal identities; and (d) recognizing teachers' agency, noting that professional identity is not something teachers have innately, but something they construct to perceive themselves as teachers. These features indicate that construction, instability, transformation, and contextual aspects are related notions for the analysis of teacher identity in the literature.

Wenger's (1998) framework on Communities of Practice (CoP) focuses on identity as an experience of participation in the world by arguing that identity is an ongoing,

complex process that is dependent on context and interaction with various trajectories. These features create the basis for agency in identity negotiation within discourses as in professional identity. In the context of teacher identity as a professional identity, discourses and practices of developing teacher identity have been studied by Sachs (2001) in the literature. According to Sachs (2001), teacher identity is a product of competing social discourses; she concludes that contemporary education policy is dominated by two primary discourses: managerialism and democratic professionalism. This distinction shapes teacher identities and creates the tension between entrepreneurial teacher identity and activist teacher identity in which collaborative cultures and communities are an integral part of teachers' work practices (Sachs, 2001). The emphasis on this tension displays the role of reflexive practice and agency in the constructive nature of teacher identity, which gives hints about the impacts of personal professional values and resistance to external discourses in teacher identity construction.

Zembylas (2003) provides a post-structuralist lens on teacher identity, arguing that the self is formed in a context of power relations and that emotion is constitutive of identity. In the article, Zembylas (2003) emphasizes that "the construction of teacher identity is at bottom affective and is dependent upon power and agency" (p. 214), acknowledging the role of emotion in identity formation and change, and the role of individual and group identity as social constructs in teachers' emotions. Moreover, Zembylas (2003) highlights the voice that the post-structuralist perspective gives to the concept of identity formation, as it enables naming cultural and discursive dimensions of experience while embracing the emotional domain of teachers' experiences. According to Zembylas (2003), a post-structuralist view of identity enables:

> (a) highlighting the importance of studying identity in cultural and political contexts where forming identities is constantly at stake; (b) an integrated notion of identity that eliminates a dichotomy between individual and socio-cultural components by refusing the singularity of components in identity formation; and (c) creating spaces for individuals to develop a sense of agency in their lives and to construct strategies of power and resistance. (p. 223)

Based on this, the integrated and continued nature of teacher identity is a construct of discursive practices, which involve socially constructed and maintained norms, and emotion discourses are components of such practices that influence teacher identity formation (Zembylas, 2003), which directly introduces the concepts of the emotional domain and discursive dimensions in the context of teacher identity through a post-structuralist lens.

The significance of the self and social narration of personal and social experiences in teacher identity negotiation is also discussed in the literature, with emphasis on continuity and fluidity through the acts of individuals. Olsen (2008) emphasizes that people are both products of their social histories and can somehow choose to act in specific ways assumed by them to be aligned with their own self-understandings.

Moving forward from this, "teacher identity is both a product and a process: as a product, it is the collection of influences and effects on a teacher; as a process—a way of viewing the continuous interaction among active variables" (Olsen, 2008, p. 139). This definition of teacher identity reflects the critical interplay of individuals' self-perceptions regarding their professional identity and the way they are positioned within the social environment. In other words, the concept of identity functions as a label for the complex collection of influences, including prior self-concepts, social positionings, and fluid and ever-changing meaning systems that facilitate a teacher to simultaneously react to and negotiate given contexts and human relationships (Olsen, 2008). This multidimensional view is crucial for the analysis of the lived experiences of instructors who constantly reconcile internal self-perceptions with external institutional demands.

Literature views teacher identity as a dynamic, relational, and emotional notion that is negotiated through personal conceptualizations drawn upon experiences, agency in terms of reflection, and external discourses (being positioned) across social and broader contexts. This complex understanding provides the theoretical base for the exploration of the specific nexus of teacher identity, emotions, and agency in language teacher identity studies as well.

2.3.2. Language Teacher Identity

Theorizing language teacher identity has gained more attention in the literature for a while now, with attempts to comprehend language teacher identity (LTI) and to understand the nature of teaching and teacher learning by building upon various theoretical perspectives from psychology, (socio)linguistics, general education, and philosophy (Barkhuizen, 2017; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Varghese et al., 2005; Yeni-Palabıyık, 2021). Like many other notions, language teacher identity has various definitions in the literature involving various approaches. Barkhuizen (2017) points out features of language teacher identities as: complex notions constructed in various internal and external (social, emotional, cognitive etc.) realities; dynamic constructs that are constantly negotiated through discursive interactions with learners, colleagues, administrators, and the broader community. This broad definition indicates the multi-dimensional nature of language teacher identities, which involves the narration of lived experiences and contexts. Also, it gives hints about the possible interactions of various approaches and trends that may be considered in theorizing language teacher identities.

Language teacher identity negotiation requires analysis through individual, professional, and multiple interrelated contextual realms. Karaman and Edling (2021) argue that multiple teacher identities actualize within the affective, ecosystemic, interpersonal, and professional domains by emphasizing that these multiple changing identities are interrelated across various systems, from the immediate classroom (microsystem) to broader societal policies (macrosystem). Within these complex systems, language teacher identity is constructed by integrated knowledge and skills that are interrelated to the field of language learning and teaching. Accordingly, Pennington and Richards (2016) present a comprehensive framework in their article that structures language teacher identity around developmental competencies, namely foundational competences: (a) language-related identity that refers to language background; (b) disciplinary identity that refers to knowledge of the profession; (c) context-related identity that refers to external conditions for teachers' practice; (d) self-knowledge and awareness; and (e) student-related identity that refers to awareness of students. Analyzing language

teacher identity through these contextual and competency-based lenses is necessary to capture the full spectrum of challenges and individual responses of instructors.

Through the interaction of personal identity and teacher identity, teacher identity can be defined as a dynamic and socially constructed phenomenon shaped by self-positioning and societal positioning (Varghese et al., 2005). The article by Varghese et al. (2005) is foundational for specifically linking general teacher identity to the language teaching context. Through their analysis of three main previous research studies in the article, Varghese et al. (2005) list the features to fully comprehend the recent theoretical background of language teacher identity: "(a) Identity as multiple, shifting, and in conflict; (b) Identity as crucially related to social, cultural, and political context; and (c) Identity being constructed, maintained, and negotiated primarily through discourse" (p. 35). In other words, they present the theorizing of language teacher identity as a fluid, multiple, and context-dependent construct shaped by the interplay between self-positioned and socially assigned identities. Moreover, Varghese et al. (2005), with the analysis of previous research, indicate that language teacher's professional identity is interrelated with their individual or collective agency, and it is a context dependent notion that involves the interplay of the imposition of social identities and critical reflexivity through agency.

With the emphasis on discourse, language teacher identity has been discussed as a social identity in the literature. Through a transdisciplinary framework, social identity can be explained better in various contexts when it comes to social positioning, as The Douglas Fir Group (2016) explained that second language learners are expected to respond at all levels of social, sociocultural, sociocognitive, sociomaterial, ecosocial, ideological, and emotional dimensions in terms of their social identities. In their framework, The Douglas Fir Group (2016) defined the engagement of individuals in their identity negotiation at three levels: the micro level (emotional and cognitive resources of a language learner); the meso level (where these resources are positioned and constructed by sociocultural institutions and communities and affect the creation of social identities, agency, and power); and the macro level (the largest concentric circle including society-wide ideological structures, belief systems, and cultural, political, religious, and economic values),

which are the levels that constantly interact with one another to give shape and are shaped by one another. De Costa and Norton (2017) claimed that the transdisciplinary framework of The Douglas Fir Group regarding language learners enables the adaptation of the model to teacher identity by enabling the analysis of how English language teachers respond to real-world concerns. In this sense, De Costa and Norton (2017) dwell on language teaching and give hints about language teacher identity by arguing that "language teaching is situated and attentionally and socially gated… language teaching is identity work" (p. 8).

In the literature, language teacher identity is also studied as a developing professional identity. In a longitudinal case study, through the thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews and supportive data sources, Yeni-Palabıyık (2021) focused on professional learning moments of an English language teacher who aspired to become a professional teacher. She concluded that becoming a professional teacher required taking responsibility and agency in various positions regarding the profession, and she pointed out that a change in language teacher beliefs necessitates a change in practices through constant self-reflection and intrinsic motivation to find different ideas and practices (Yeni-Palabıyık, 2021). Another significant point from Yeni-Palabıyık's (2021) article is the emphasis on the challenging career road for new graduates to find opportunities to develop a professional language teacher identity with best practices, which indicates the problematization of novice language teachers' professional identities after their graduation in the literature. Moreover, language teachers' identities in practice at micro (classroom), meso (institutional), and macro (broader context) levels have been studied in the literature. Derakhshan et al. (2024) explored how six English-L2 teachers construct their identities in practice across beginner and advanced levels of teaching through data collected from semi-structured interviews, stimulated recalls, and classroom observations. They concluded that teacher identities in practice involved three components: agentic variations, discursive realizations, and extended identities (Derakhshan et al., 2024). Based on their findings, Derakhshan et al. (2024) discussed that there is an intertwined relationship between agency and teacher identity at the practice level, contributing to one another to take the initiative at each practice level. They also noted that teachers' identities interact with various

contextual issues (institutional policies and sociocultural particularities), and teachers extend their identities both in social situations and educational settings. These findings display the understanding of language teacher identity construction across various contexts and notions in the literature.

Moving beyond the former research, in relation to poststructuralist identity and social identities, Toker-Bradshaw (2023) defined teacher identity as "process of making sense of and negotiating who they are in relation to other members of their communities (e.g., students, colleagues) at the micro level…policies at the meso and macro level of language teaching" (p. 32). This integrated definition is both an abstract of former literature related to language teacher identity and is an applicable conceptualization for the analysis of language teacher identity through participants' perceptions related to how they are positioned in various levels and contexts.

2.3.3. Teacher identity and Positioning

According to Yazan (2018), identity (re)construction needs to be explored through teachers' beliefs and conceptions that are intertwined with their perceptions about their past and current experiences. Positioning Theory is used to explore the perceptions of instructors regarding how they negotiate their identity in their own conceptualizations and how others position them in social and professional contexts.

Harré and Gillett (1994), drawing upon discursive psychology, argued that "(a) the participant's own ideas are the basis of their assessment; (b) The constructs are defined by reference to real people to whom the participant relates in everyday discourse" (p. 139). This enables researchers to understand the judgments and classifications that an individual makes about their personal identity, identity in interaction, and identity in discourse. This argument, drawn upon post-structuralist theories, emphasizes the significance of individuals' perceptions in their identity negotiations. It displays that mental structures, such as identity, are dynamic activities engaged in by people who are at a variety of positions in interacting discourses and who attempt to integrate coherent identities for themselves by determining them through their consciousness and perceptions in various contexts

(Harré & Gillett, 1994). This establishes the core of the relationship between identity and positioning.

Positioning Theory, developed by Rom Harré and collaborators, highlights that understanding what people do and what they do not do necessitates scrutinizing what is allowed in the local moral order and the positions that people believe act in a certain way to take place in that order. According to Moghaddam and Harré (2010), positioning theory scrutinizes how individuals employ language and discourse to define or position both their own and others' social standings; this involves a process of assigning obligations to others and asserting rights for themselves through verbal communication. Bamberg (1997) proposed a three-level model of narrative positioning: (1) how individuals position characters within their narratives; (2) how they position themselves in relation to their audience; and (3) how they position others in relation to their own identities.

Varghese et al. (2005) dwell on the dynamic, context-dependent, fluid nature of identity negotiation that occurs between the claimed identity and the assigned identity (the identity imposed by others, such as students, colleagues, and administrators). According to Varghese et al. (2005), this negotiation is shaped by three main dimensions: personal (individual experiences and beliefs), social (groups and discourses), and institutional (organizational roles and expectations). Accordingly, teachers' identities experience the tension emerging from the differences between enacted (negotiated) and assigned (imposed) identities, and between professional and personal selves. While managing instructional beliefs and contextual constraints, this requires constant renegotiation throughout the teachers' careers, specifically during the transitions of early career educators (Tajeddin & Yazan, 2024). This assertion highlights the importance of analyzing the negotiated and imposed identities of teachers, which are related to teachers' perceptions of discursive positionings. The interaction between teachers' perceptions and their interactions with others shapes the identity negotiation process by intertwining with how they are positioned by others in social and professional contexts (Liontas, 2020).

Moreover, Anderson (2009) dwells on positional identity negotiation, stating that "identity in the moment (i.e., specific acts of positioning) and identity over time (i.e.,

resources for positioning) interanimate each other" (p. 294). In terms of understanding positioning in teacher identity conceptualization, Yazan (2018) highlights three main commonalities that affect this interaction: (a) personal beliefs about themselves; (b) their societal positioning; (c) the fluid nature of identity dependent on context and interactions. Consequently, the experiences related to how you position yourself (your perception and beliefs about your teacher identity) and how you are positioned (by institutions, social environment, dominant ideologies, broader communities) are expected to navigate teacher identity. In this study, this question is relevant to the aim of exploring how early career part-time English perceive their positioning by others (institutions and communities).

Language teacher identity and positioning have been studied in the literature to comprehend the self and others as agents in the negotiation of teacher identity. Arvaja (2016) examined teacher identity work in terms of I-positionality and others' positionings by analyzing weekly learning diaries written by a university teacher over a one-year period. Arvaja (2016) explored the intertwined relationship between the self and others in teacher identity negotiations through a negotiation of multiple positions in relation to the self and others in the construction process. Hence, Arvaja (2016) implies that the teacher's personal biography, profession, professional contexts, social environment, and cultural conditions are tightly intertwined with the identity work of teachers. She also explored the tensions between the authentic (humanistic) voice and the voice of others (institutional and collective voices), which are crucial for renegotiations of personal and professional identities (Arvaja, 2016). These results are significant for understanding what plays a role in language instructors' identity work through their positionings on tensions and dilemmas in their daily practices in various contexts.

Furthermore, the agency that language teachers hold through their perceptions in the face of how they are positioned by others is presented in the literature. Li (2023) remarked that the role of interactional discourse and positioning others in developing their teacher identity is correlated with teachers' agentic power to take initiative and act in an educational context. This remark is significant for understanding the impact of how language teachers perceive how they are positioned by others on their

identities and agency. Arvaja (2016) claims that future studies should pay more attention to teachers' positioning by combining micro and macro analysis, which involves teacher identity negotiation through interactional relationships in everyday activities and teachers' perceptions shaped by socio-cultural conditions in order to capture the whole complexity of teacher identity. For further analysis of language teacher identity in ELT literature, the theory of positioning can provide benefits to comprehend the relationship between instructors' perceptions and being positioned by others especially under contextual factors. Although positioning theory is primarily used in this study to understand the perspectives of disadvantaged instructors regarding how they are positioned under conditions of precariousness, it also explores the relationship between their positioning and their identity by revealing how they navigate their teacher identities. Furthermore, while this study does not focus directly on self-positioning, the participants' approaches to their identities are presented in the participants section as a means of providing insight into the instructors themselves.

2.4. Emotional Labor

Hochschild (1983/2003/2012) describes feeling rules as internalized emotional guidelines that dictate which emotions are considered appropriate in various sociocultural settings, from professional environments to social interactions. In other words, when individuals must regulate their genuine emotions to align with these prescribed norms, they engage in emotional labor. In relation to this, Puckett (2022) distinguishes between deep acting and surface acting as two strategies for managing emotions: deep acting requires mental regulation of emotions through suppressing; surface acting involves changing external expressions to reflect the expected emotion.

From another perspective, Morris and Feldman (1996) focused on the organizational role of emotional labor with its multidimensional conceptualization. Morris and Feldman (1996) named the features that play a role in the emotional labor required by jobs as the frequency and variety of displayed emotions, the attentiveness to show required emotions, and the emotional dissonance resulting from displaying expected emotions rather than real feelings.

Through a post-structuralist lens, the role of social, cultural, discursive, and political domains in the actualization of emotional labor has been emphasized. Zembylas (2002), drawing upon a comparison of approaches in post-structuralist theories, dwelt on discourse analysis and power relations when it comes to emotional labor, as there are a series of complex relations among dominant ideology, institutional processes, and emotional culture which intertwine with how emotional labor takes place.

Based on the literature, emotional labor is taken into consideration with the emotional dissonance that is created by the suppression of emotions in the face of imposed emotions in professional settings, which is integrated with personal, social, cultural, institutional, and political domains. As the emotive nature of teaching is intertwined with all of these domains, the analysis of emotional labor in teaching gains attention in relation to other notions like teacher identity and agency.

2.4.1. Emotional Labor in Teaching

Teachers can guide the emotional atmosphere of the classrooms with their actions. However, there is an intertwined relationship that should be considered between personal life, in-classroom dialogues, institutional expectations, and teachers' emotions and how they display them. In a pioneer article, with data collected from interviews with 53 elementary/secondary school teachers in 15 institutions, Hargreaves (2000) concluded that a developed capacity to display emotions depends not only on personal emotional competence but also organizational realities. According to Hargreaves (2000), educational policy and administration, and most of the educational research community, paid little attention to emotions until that time because what was crucial for them were rationalized and cognitively driven priorities of knowledge, skill, standards, targets, performance, management, planning, decision-making, and measurable results. Being a caring or passionate teacher is treated as a matter of personal tendency, moral commitment, or an individual value, rather than of how factors related to teaching and organizations shape teachers' emotional experiences (Hargreaves, 2000). These argumentations display the problematization of emotions and how they are enacted in teaching. As the emotive

nature of teaching creates expectations about the emotional capacity of teachers, teachers are treated as compelled to display appropriate emotions without any rewards or validation, which displays the actualization of emotional labor in the field of teaching.

Building on the expansion of research into teacher emotions since the mid-1990s, researchers have come to agree that teaching involves emotional labor and is an emotional endeavor (Hargreaves, 1998; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Yin & Lee, 2012; Yuan & Lee, 2015; Winograd, 2003). Teachers are expected to employ emotional labor to display emotions that conform to professional norms that build interaction in organizational contexts (Bodenheimer & Shuster, 2020). Institutional rules may contradict the emotional norms shaped by teachers' training or classroom experiences, which may lead teachers to experience uncertainty about how to navigate these emotional demands, leading to dilemmas over whether to conform to or resist institutional expectations and the potential consequences of either choice (Benesch, 2018). This argumentation by Benesch (2018) provides a broad conceptualization of emotional labor in teaching by involving the role of individual, social, power-related, and institutional domains, and sheds light on teachers' role in navigating emotional labor. This enables approaching emotional labor as an igniting factor in teacher agency as well, which is linear with the aim of this study to explore navigations in terms of the triangle of teacher identity, emotional labor, and teacher agency.

In the literature, teachers' emotional labor has been studied in various educational contexts to comprehend its manifestation and its impact on teachers. Isenbarger and Zembylas (2006) utilized data from a two-year action research project to investigate the problematization of caring teaching at the intersection of positive and negative aspects of emotional labor. In Isenbarger and Zembylas's (2006) case, they found that the function of emotional labor is usually negative if the instructor has to suppress or inhibit their unpleasant emotions (frustration, sadness, and disappointment) in communication with their students or colleagues. This finding paves the way for approaching emotional labor as a multifaceted notion that can put a burden on instructors' shoulders to take agency in their professional setting.

In a quantitative study involving 262 participants, Waldbuesser et al. (2021) aimed to explore how instructors' emotional labor manifests in college classrooms and how teachers are impacted by it. Waldbuesser et al. (2021) concluded that treating emotional labor as an intentional pedagogical tool allows instructors to regulate their emotional expressions more effectively, thereby mitigating the risk of burnout. Similarly, Constanti and Gibbs (2004), in their study of four academic instructors, concluded that emotional labor is a necessary strategy for effective teaching and masking feelings, although it can lead to exploitation and tension due to administrative and student demands. Furthermore, in a case study with 20 higher education instructors, Lyndon et al. (2021) concluded that successful adaptation to professional roles enables teachers to navigate emotional labor more effectively and manage stress, though the institutional context still plays a significant role. While these conclusions demonstrate how teachers use emotional labor as a pedagogical tool to navigate their settings through their agency, they tend to locate the solution within the individual teacher's capacity to adapt. By focusing on agency and self-regulation, these perspectives risk overshadowing institutional demands and precarious conditions that necessitate this labor in the first place, rather than critiquing the system itself. Therefore, emotional labor requires further investigation through critical post-structuralist lenses that interrogate the systemic power relations and discursive practices shaping teachers' professional lives.

2.4.2. Emotional Labor in English Language Teaching

English language instructors usually absorb conventional emotional norms by developing a professional identity that requires them to suppress certain emotions and isolate their personal lives from the professional setting. These deeply ingrained emotional norms contribute to emotional labor and tensions, potentially leading to a division between two distinct identities: that of an individual with authentic emotions and that of an idealized model teacher (Yuan & Lee, 2016). Recently, a significant number of studies have investigated language teachers' emotion labor (Alshakhi & Le Ha, 2020; Benesch, 2020a, 2020b; Gkonou & Miller, 2019; Kocabaş-Gedik & Ortaçtepe Hart, 2021; Loh & Liew, 2016; Lyndon et al., 2021; Nazari & Karimpour, 2022).

Through a critical and post-structuralist perspective, while acknowledging Hochschild's (1983/2003/2012) contribution concerning emotional management used by language teachers, Benesch (2017) argues that emotional labor is often manifested as a performance to comply with "feeling rules," rather than being a display of authentic emotions. This perspective considers that emotions and their display according to social feeling rules are not solely internal states but are instead dependent on the external environments in which language teachers are involved and on the social expectations to which they must adhere (Elizabeth, 2021). Benesch (2017) has highlighted the decision-making choice between resisting and complying for English language teachers while responding to challenging pedagogical situations and institutional regulations, although part-time and full-time English language teachers are not usually included in decision-making under educational policies. In parallel with this, Benesch (2018) presented emotional labor (tension), "produced by the clash between teachers' training/beliefs and institutional regulation," (p. 63) as a social tool for teacher-initiated reform. Benesch (2018) highlighted the correlation of agency with emotional labor by emphasizing: "Emotion labor is a possible tool of activism that can be drawn upon when collaborating with students and colleagues to improve current conditions" (p. 63). According to Benesch and Prior (2023), abundant recent research on emotional labor in the field of English language teaching has led to the spread of the term across academia and popular culture. However, as it has gained popularity, it is increasingly used without critical perspectives, which highlights the necessity of reviewing emotion labor from a post-structural perspective that pays attention to various discourses, including power relations.

From the lens of a post-structuralist approach to emotional labor, studies in the literature have dwelt on the features that play a role in language teachers' emotional labor: namely, in-classroom experiences, institutional factors, social and contextual factors, and educational and political policies, while acknowledging the power that teachers and stakeholders hold for neutralizing the negative connotations of this labor. Blake and Dewaele (2023), in their critical overview of the literature on the emotional labor of language instructors, indicated that emotional labor emerges from teachers' personal beliefs that conflict with institutional or macro-level values, as well as from learner interactions. Also, it was suggested that emotional labor is

apparently influenced by the level of pressure and support for teachers in their institutions, which are mediated by societal attitudes (Blake and Dewaele, 2023). Moreover, they displayed that while emotional labor can lead to negative outcomes like burnout due to classroom interactions, institutional factors, and beyond, the application of strategies such as teacher agency, empathy, and reflection has significant potential to neutralize these negative professional costs (Blake & Dewaele, 2023).

Moreover, Loh and Liew (2016) investigated the emotion labor of 26 language teachers in Singapore drawing on semi-structured interviews. They concluded that language teachers are unable to cope with the conflicting demands of emotional caring in their institutions, which necessitates agency by school leaders, administrators, and policymakers to support the professional work of teachers (Loh & Liew, 2016).

Furthermore, in a study drawing on interview narratives with 25 teachers working in higher education institutions in the United States and the United Kingdom, Gkonou and Miller (2021) explore emotional labor as a potential source of "emotional capital". Gkonou and Miller (2021) argue that through individual and collaborative reflective practice, teachers can transform the struggle of adhering to institutional feeling rules into a sense of empowerment. This can be converted into social capital (e.g., feeling supported by colleagues) and cultural capital (e.g., increased confidence in professional development and teaching practices), thereby strengthening their teacher identity (Gkonou and Miller, 2021).

These studies indicate the entangled nature of emotional labor in the field of English language teaching. Therefore, language instructors' emotional labor requires further scrutiny in the field at various levels (micro: classroom; meso: institutional; macro: broader contexts) and various contexts in order to better comprehend the intervention of power relations, social, cultural, discursive, and political constitutions in the manifestation of emotional labor, as "the English language classroom is not impervious to the harsh material realities that impinge on teachers" (De Costa & Nazari, 2024, p. 1161) across local and international discourses.

2.5. Teacher Agency

Agency is a notion that has been investigated in literature with its various definitions. Bandura (2001) defines agency by emphasizing it as an intentional act which has key features: (a) intentionality as a "power to originate actions for given purposes" (p. 6); (b) forethought, since "foreseeable future events are converted into current motivators and regulators of behavior" (p. 7); (c) self-reactiveness involving "the ability to give shape to appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate their execution" (p. 8); and (d) self-reflectiveness as "the metacognitive capability to reflect upon oneself and the adequacy of one's thoughts and actions" (p. 10). His view of agency highlights self-efficacy in the actions of human beings by directing attention to the internal capacity for intentional actions. In this sense, according to Bandura (2001), people are not only reactors to biological, social, physical, and environmental factors, but they are producers of solutions, new models and constructs, and possible further challenges for their kind.

Moreover, agency is explored through a sociological perspective in the literature by Giddens (1984) with an emphasis on social structures, moving beyond intentionality. According to Giddens (1984), the continuity of practices and social structures are interdependent, considering that while agency is enabled and constrained by social structures, those structures are simultaneously reconstructed through the results of continuous actions. In Giddens's (1984) view, individual actions as agency are constituted discursively through structures in people's habitats, which are reciprocally monitored through ongoing individual and social actions. Moving upon this, he also emphasizes that human beings as purposive agents can also display unconscious actions that emerge from repressed social reasons and needs, group identity, and produced regularized behavior, which is acknowledged through reflexivity (knowledgeability) (Giddens, 1984). In this sense, agency is perceived as a dynamic and knowledgeable interplay between the individual and the social system that they inhabit, which involves the capacity to act for or against the system.

From a sociocultural approach, Ahearn (2001) also dwells on social and contextual factors in the definition by arguing that agency is "the socioculturally mediated

capacity to act" (p. 112), but mostly highlights the way sociocultural contexts shape personal beliefs and values, motivations, and agency. From a post-structuralist perspective, agency is an existence within the terms of available discourses (Davies, 1991), which emphasizes that collective and discursive elements are significant in the development of agency instead of comprehending individual acts as independent actions. Furthermore, drawing upon post-structuralist and post-humanist trends, Barad (2007) views agency "not as an attribute but the ongoing reconfiguring of the world as the universe is agential intra-activity in its becoming" (p. 141), by highlighting the interaction of material-discursive apparatuses. This argument enables the exploration of agency in relation not only to discursive apparatuses but also to material apparatuses such as material structures, physical space and time, technological tools, and curricular objects. Overall, agency has been explored in the literature from different lenses by emphasizing its various connotations regarding intentionality, knowledgeability, discursivity, and materiality. However, specific definitions dependent on context have also been a part of the literature review of various fields, such as educational sciences.

In the field of educational sciences, researchers have particularly focused on the conceptualization of teacher agency proposed by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) from a sociocultural perspective (Deschênes & Parent, 2022). Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) conceptualization of agency, defines agency as "a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past…oriented toward the future… and toward the present" (p. 962). This conceptualization paves the way for the perception of teacher agency as a dynamic interplay among experiences from the past, aspirations for possibilities in the future, and integration of past and future in current actions. It frames agency as reflexive acts that have the capacity to structure social contexts, as they asserted that agents can reflexively transform their actions based on the interplay of past, present, and future, which changes degrees of flexible, inventive, and critical response toward structuring contexts that actors have the capacity to mediate within which action unfolds (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

Another significant approach in the literature for the study of teacher agency is Priestley et al.'s (2015) ecological model, which proposes teacher agency as a notion

that is informed by past experiences, oriented towards the future, and constrained and supported by cultural, structural, and material resources available to teachers. In Priestley et al.'s (2015) model, agency has its dimensions: iterational (teachers' background), projective (combination of short- and long-term objectives for action), and practical-evaluative (contextual resources). Drawing upon Giddens's (1984) concept of social structure and Priestley et al.'s (2015) ecological perspective, Wilcox and Lawson (2018), in a multiple case study investigating 143 teachers' responses, framed teacher agency as "the interplay of individual and group/collective perceptions and intentions and the conditions provided by the school, district context, and surrounding community" (p. 186). In this sense, teacher agency is a notion that is intertwined with various other concepts and domains, which has gained attention in the literature across various contexts.

For example, utilizing the method of future narratives, Varpanen et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between agency and teachers' future orientations. They concluded that teachers' future narratives regarding their agency involve long-term visions of education's role within broader societal developments. In a quantitative study involving 54 teachers in Sweden, Pantić et al. (2022) explored the sense of agency of teachers and found that teachers' understanding of agency is intimately embedded within their day-to-day activities, such as student support and lesson planning. Pantić et al. (2022) also concluded that teachers tend to exercise agency toward inclusive practices, like supporting student learning and well-being, and that teachers as active agents are linked to larger, more diverse, and more collaborative social networks compared to teachers who act as role implementers. In a qualitative study using a grounded theory approach with 16 in-service public high school teachers in the U.S., Min et al. (2022) explored what enables the initial construction of positive teacher agency toward culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and what strengthens or weakens the positive agency developed. Min et al. (2022) concluded that teachers' cultural competencies, short-term and long-term visions, professional development opportunities and their experiences with CRT, their former teacher education programs, school administrators, and collaborative culture play a role in the development of social justice-oriented teacher agency.

Moreover, through a thematic analysis of their longitudinal study on three early career teachers in England, Rushton and Bird (2024) focused on the experiences of early career teachers in terms of their agency. Rushton and Bird's (2024) findings indicated that while a key barrier to the agency of beginning teachers was a strict and non-innovative curriculum at a classroom and/or department level, enablers of agency were professional trust, opportunities for professional development, and their own acknowledgment of the temporal and dynamic nature of agency. Rushton and Bird (2024) also showed that teachers were able to explore ways for agency once they were introduced to a spatial understanding of agency. Rushton and Bird (2024) concluded that "space helps us understand the non-linear entanglement of the cultural, material and relational conditions and qualities of agency made explicit in the ecological approach" (p. 267), which emphasizes the analysis of teacher agency in a contextual and discursive way at various levels, such as classroom, institutions, and broader contexts, specifically in the experiences of early-career teachers. These results highlight the analysis of personal, social, cultural, educational, institutional, and environmental domains in teacher agency research. As these domains are intertwined with specific contextual varieties, analysis of teacher agency through the experiences of teachers in their context and at various levels becomes relevant.

2.5.1. Language Teacher Agency

Moving upon the multifaceted manifestation of teacher agency, language teacher agency requires specification to comprehend the exploration of the notion in the English Language Teaching (ELT) field. Similar to all teachers, language teachers need to endure dramatic sociocultural changes, changing educational landscapes, and ongoing shifts in educational policies and curricula that put barriers to their professional practices. This has led to a subsequent increase in attempts to explore the features and challenges of this specific professional context of language teachers and their responses to them (Tao & Gao, 2021). According to Tao and Gao (2021), despite this rising interest in the topic, the concept of language teacher agency still requires clarification in terms of its definition, importance, impacts, and exploration in research and practice.

Drawing upon socio-cognitive, structural, sociocultural, ecological, and post-structuralist approaches to teacher agency, language teacher agency has also been examined through various lenses in the literature. Since language teaching involves the practice of linguistic and cultural variations in a pedagogical environment, the sociocultural approach to this specific professional context in terms of teacher agency has been studied. Drawing on a narrative analysis of data from 34 pre-service and in-service L2 teachers in California and Japan, Ishihara et al. (2018) explored how translingual practice can become a mediational tool for language teachers' agentive acts by enhancing their agency through sociocultural structures. Ishihara et al. (2018) concluded that the acknowledgement of local cultures and communication enabled language teachers' agency among professional school communities (colleagues) and their local students, which led teachers to use this rapport through sociocultural acknowledgement to take action in terms of making their pedagogies accessible and culturally relevant. These results illustrate that language teachers may use challenges as a tool for their agency, which is socioculturally mediated, as in Ahearn's (2001) assertion.

Moreover, language teacher agency has been scrutinized in light of the ecological perspective that focuses on the impacts of past experiences, future orientations, and current practices on teachers' agency, as in Priestley et al.'s (2015) ecological model. Based on an analysis of data derived from life history interviews with eight language teachers, complemented by field notes, Tao and Gao (2017) studied how teachers employ agency to boost their professional development during curricular reform at a Chinese university, parallel to the life course view. Through their findings, Tao and Gao (2017) concluded that "teachers' professional histories provide information about the agency they have enacted and can enact if relevant support is provided" (p. 354). This assertion illustrates the intertwined relationship between language teachers' personal past, current, and future experiences, and contextual factors in their environment regarding their agency, as in the ecological model.

In a case study with four language teachers in New Zealand during the online education process due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ashton (2022) examined practical-evaluative agency and the enablers and constraints for the agency of

teachers through an ecological lens. Ashton (2022) demonstrated that the future-orientations dimension of agency is lacking for teachers as they enact agency by focusing on the present. Moreover, Ashton (2022) concluded that the way language teachers achieve even a small action of agency is connected with their existing experiences related to coping with challenges, and their experiences with social structural factors facilitated by power dynamics and relationships with students, colleagues, and other stakeholders. Furthermore, in another language teacher agency study drawing upon the ecological model through a critical lens, Peña-Pincheira and De Costa (2021) framed a model for language teacher agency involving the analysis of past experiences, current practices, and future orientations at macro (national), meso (school), and micro (individual) levels to comprehend a Chilean English teacher's agency development under neoliberal education trends. Peña-Pincheira and De Costa (2021) found that the interaction of macro-level (national) beliefs adopted at the meso (school) and micro (individual) levels had an influence on the teacher's enactment of teacher agency. Additionally, the reflexivity efforts of a teacher to comprehend the wider social context and individuals support teacher's agency perceived as social justice work (Peña-Pincheira and De Costa, 2021).

Furthermore, language teacher agency through the lens of post-structuralist views has been discussed in terms of the discourses that teachers inhabit and are positioned in, which enables the analysis of the construction of teacher agency within various contexts and the discourses that teachers' actions depend on. In an interview-based case study, Leal and Crookes (2018), drawing upon ecological and post-structuralist perspectives, studied language teacher agency for social justice. Leal and Crookes (2018) concluded that the acknowledgement of contradictions between personal purposes and the educational structure in which teachers inhabited impacted teachers' agency in such a way that personal purposes changed based on the necessities of the context. This study illustrates the way that discourse shapes teachers' purposes and consequently their agency in response to the challenges and enablers in their context. In another study, Shah (2023), drawing upon post-structuralist writings on power relations and agency, examined language teacher agency regarding how 40 English language teachers in Pakistan mediate educational policies and classroom practices based on textbooks' discourses. It is found that

teachers exercise their agency by involving themselves in struggles against the institutionalized discourses that are facilitated by domination and social hegemonies in the country (Shah, 2023). This finding demonstrates the way that language teacher agency is interrelated with broader contexts and discourses, even in classroom activities involving educational materials and curriculum.

Drawing upon post-structuralist theories, language teacher agency has also been studied based on positioning theory. Kayi-Aydar (2015) explored the identity renegotiations and agency of three pre-service classroom teachers at a research university in the United States by using positioning theory as a lens. She found that participants "positioned themselves as effective, caring, and responsible teachers, but they also assigned non-powerful positions to themselves when they questioned their capacity to act and teach" (p. 101). This illustrated that conflicts between their self-understanding and how they are positioned in their context have an impact on their assumptions about the capacity for teacher agency. The results of this study indicate that how teacher agency is constructed and understood through positioning is context-dependent (Kayi-Aydar, 2015), and this agency may be constrained or enabled by different positionings within the context. Similarly, in a qualitative study involving two English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers at a research-oriented university in China, Liu and McVee (2025) investigated the interplay of teachers' experience, agency, positions, and future-oriented thinking. They used a positioning theory framework and an ecological model of agency. Their findings revealed that teachers' positionings are constantly changing, and internal and external factors such as previous research-related experiences, research-informed teaching beliefs, school structures, and available materials influenced the manifestation of teacher agency by supporting or constraining language teachers' ability to take action (Liu & McVee, 2025).

Kayi-Aydar (2019) describes teacher agency as "language teacher's intentional authority to make choices and act accordingly in his or her local context" (p. 18). Then, Kayi-Aydar (2019) proposed that language teacher agency is both individual (contribution of the teacher's past experiences, beliefs, desires, expectations, motivations, future goals, and needs) and collective (exercised through available

support network systems, such as co-workers, parents, or students). Moreover, Kayi-Aydar (2019) proposed that language teacher agency is exercised contextually, and the contexts vary as micro, meso, and macro:

> At the micro level, agency is achieved in the classroom context and affected by the local contextual factors. In this very micro level, teachers make decisions regarding pedagogical practices and options, classroom management, and interaction, which are affected by cognition, teacher knowledge, turn-taking experience, personal beliefs, values, interactions with students, along with other social dimensions. At the mezzo level, I consider the school environment. Norms and school culture, school policies and rules, relationships with administration and other teachers, and power dynamics all affect the ways teachers act, interact and respond to expectations, changes, rules and norms in the school context. At the macro level, which involves broader communities, LTA is affected by language policies and ideologies, sociopolitical and discourses, societal norms, socio-educational and values, globalization and the internationalization of language education, external demands and regulations and power dynamics. (p. 19)

Overall, Kayi-Aydar's (2019) assertion about language teacher agency involves the life-course dimension of ecological models, the collectivist dimension of sociocultural models, and various levels of context in relation to post-structuralist theories' emphasis on discourse. Therefore, it is applicable to investigate agency in alignment with the aim of this research: to explore the teacher agency of early career language instructors in relation to teacher identity and emotional labor at micro, meso, and macro contexts.

2.6. Teacher Identity, Emotional Labor, and Teacher Agency

Emotions play a crucial role in teacher identity formation, since they are inherently intertwined with both individuals' awareness about themselves and their professional experiences. Therefore, emotional labor in teaching has been studied in the educational studies literature in relation to the notion of teacher identity. According to Zembylas (2003), teacher identity needs to be understood in relation to the interplay of emotions and reflexivity about identity, since they always act and evolve simultaneously. In this sense, a conflict in the classroom setting might invoke an emotional crisis in teachers, which enhances identity work in which they re-negotiate their professional identity (Nichols et al., 2017). This interaction facilitates the

inevitable connection between teachers' emotional challenges and their evolving professional identities, as Song (2021) concluded that reflexivity on "emotional struggles serve[s] as a significant foundation for emotional growth and teacher identity construction" (p. 490).

From a post-structuralist perspective of emotions and teacher identity, teacher identity is a notion that is continuously evolving in a context interwoven in power relations, ideology, and culture (Zembylas, 2003). Through this lens, it can be said that the relationship between teachers' emotional struggles and teacher identity is intertwined with the experiences of teachers at micro (classroom), meso (institutional), and macro (broader context) levels. According to Nazari and Karimpour (2022), emotion labor is interrelated with dominant discourses, norms, and regulations, boosting the clash between teachers' internal feelings and institutional demands. Prior researchers indicated that teachers' identities are socially constructed through these power relations across various contexts and are intertwined with the effects of emotional labor, indicating an interaction between power relations, emotions, and a discourse that shapes the teachers' developing professional identities (Nazari & Karimpour, 2022).

In a small-scale qualitative research study, Teng (2017), through an analysis of narrative interactions among six pre-service English language teachers in China via positioning theory, explored the ways in which pre-service language teachers negotiated emotional flux and teacher identity in the process of their practicum. Teng (2017) found that "emotional flux and identity change are connected, and hidden 'emotional rules' are embedded in the teaching practicum" (p. 117). Also, the study found that these hidden emotional rules in the teaching practicum increase the pre-service teachers' negative emotions through contextual constraints, hierarchical structures, and a lack of support from their mentors, affecting their teacher identity constructions (Teng, 2017). This study indicates how various discourses can affect the interplay of emotional struggles and teacher identity negotiations.

Moreover, Wolff and De Costa (2017) conducted a longitudinal narrative case study through a narrative construction approach. Wolff and De Costa (2017) aimed to

explore what emotional challenges were encountered by their non-native English-speaking teacher (NNEST) participant, what their impact on her teacher identity was, and how the negotiation of emotional challenges influenced her pedagogy during the first year of her career. Wolff and De Costa's (2017) research, based on a corpus of qualitative data including semi-structured interviews, teaching observations, prompted journal entries, and verbal/written reports, indicated that the participant navigated emotional challenges (including lack of resources, high scrutiny of her status as an instructor, and professional culture shock) in a positive way. It showed that reflexivity on the successful negotiation of emotional challenges contributed to a professional teacher identity positively (Wolff & De Costa, 2017). Furthermore, Kocabaş-Gedik and Ortaçtepe Hart (2021), in a longitudinal case study through a post-structuralist approach, explored the language teacher identity construction of two novice native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) in an EFL context in relation to the emotion labor that they experienced and expressed throughout their first year of teaching at a university in Türkiye. Their data, based on weekly journal entries, semi-structured follow-up interviews, and researchers' fieldnotes, showed that novice "language teachers' identities are socially constructed through power relations within different contexts… and susceptible to emotion labor" (Kocabaş-Gedik & Ortaçtepe Hart, 2021, p. 12). Their findings also indicate that there is an interplay between emotions, power relations, and contextual factors within a particular community of practice and how this interaction shapes novice non-native language teachers' developing identity constructions (Kocabaş-Gedik & Ortaçtepe Hart, 2021).

Besides the exploration of teacher identity and emotional labor, teacher agency's dimension in this interaction has also gained attention in the literature. Although language teacher agency and emotions are both considered essential components of teacher identity, there has been an increasing focus on their possible interplay (Elizabeth, 2021). The interconnected relationship between emotional labor and agency that affects language teacher identities has been explored from various lenses, including the discursive analysis of the post-structuralist approach, which enabled its analysis at the macro level (broader contexts involving policies, discourses, power dynamics) besides the classroom and institutional levels. According to Benesch

(2020b), the discursive analysis of emotion labor focuses on the historical and cultural examination of emotional regulation of teachers by their institutions and the wider society, using emotional labor in the interest of greater teacher agency and more just policies. In this sense, emotion labor should not be considered a sign of inability in emotional regulation; instead, it should be highlighted as a signal of institutional inadequacy and unjust policies and as a facilitator for teacher agency through individual and collectivist acts (Benesch, 2020b).

Moving upon this argument, Kayi-Aydar (2019) also emphasizes that there is an intertwined relationship between emotional labor and teacher agency in such a way that emotions and teacher agency impact one another. Drawing on qualitative data from cross-sectionally sampled language teachers working in the United Kingdom's ESOL sector (serving migrants and refugees), Elizabeth (2021) aimed to explore language teachers' experiences related to co-constituted agency, emotions, and emotional labor through a post-structuralist approach. The findings of Elizabeth's (2021) study indicated that mostly good rapport with students impacts language teachers' emotions positively; teachers willingly use emotion labor as a tool to create positive learning environments and positive relationships with students. Also, the way that teachers undertook emotional labor was boosted by discourses related to "good" teaching (Elizabeth, 2021). While this study displays the usage of emotional labor for pedagogical acts, it also indicates the broader discourses that play a role in this interaction of emotional labor and agency.

Drawing on data from questionnaires (n = 30) and semi-structured interviews (n = 25) with full- and part-time language teachers in U.K. and U.S. tertiary settings, Miller and Gkonou (2018) investigated the link between emotion labor, agency, and emotional rewards of language teachers. It is found that even the language teachers who expressed satisfaction and had privileged full-time positions experienced emotional labor in their daily teaching practice, and teachers willingly used agency to reach emotional rewards (such as enthusiasm and satisfaction) emerged from positive student relationships (Miller & Gkonou, 2018). Moreover, they concluded that "emotion labor is not inherently problematic nor something to be avoided, but it is important that we recognize that the emotions and actions associated with…socially and politically fostered" (p. 8).

Moving beyond these findings, the interaction between emotional labor and agency, which are also components of teacher identity, is interwoven with the experiences of language teachers in terms of in-classroom, institutional, and broader social or political contexts. Through Benesch's (2018) post-structuralist and activist emphasis on the discursively mediated power of teachers against feeling rules, teacher agency and emotional labor can be situated in these contexts. Teacher identity can also be added to this interaction, as teacher identity is defined as inseparable from emotions in the literature. In this sense, Kayi-Aydar (2019) proposed the identity-emotions-agency triangle to better capture agency explaining that "emotions and feelings contribute to and shape language teachers' decision-making and agentic actions… the complex identity–agency relationship is affected by and reflected in one's emotions and feelings" (p. 19).

In a multiple case study focused on how three pre-service English language instructors in China constructed and reconstructed their identities based on data from interviews, field observations, and the pre-service teachers' written reflections, Yuan and Lee (2015) revealed that emotions are directive in identity construction. Consequently, Yuan and Lee (2015) concluded that emotions are directive in teachers' behaviors, interpersonal relationships, self-understanding, and power, which are also affected by external factors including political concerns, policy limits, and external prejudice. For instance, in one of Yuan and Lee's (2015) cases, the participant, stimulated by guilt and depression due to policy limits and external prejudice, used agency by reaching out to their mentor and consequently made progress in professional identity in terms of teaching skills and satisfaction. This displays an interaction between teacher identity, emotional conflict, and agency.

Moreover, in another qualitative study, Song (2016), based on data through multiple semi-structured interviews with five secondary English teachers in South Korea with varied experience (1 to 30 years) who were dealing with the challenging integration of English Study Abroad (ESA) returnee students, explored the expectations of global trends from English language teachers, and the emotional responses of teacher that impact their identities. Song's (2016) findings indicated that the way teachers experienced an emotional shift to vulnerability about their competence due to

cultural discourses initiated a change in their teacher identity through a dynamic process of reflecting about their own emotions and searching for possible actions (confronting or transforming). In other words, emotional vulnerability induced teachers to engage in agency through confronting or transforming, which resulted in reshaping professional identity. Song (2016) concludes that language teachers' agency is observable in their ability to display different models of professional identity and practice, and emotions under social or institutional context. These findings demonstrate the interconnectedness of the triangle of identity, emotional conflict, and agency in educational contexts and the implications for discourses at various levels that play a role within this triangle.

Furthermore, Nazari and Karimpour (2022), in a qualitative study grounded in activity theory (AT), explored the role of emotional labor in identity construction in relation to the institutional work of ten experienced Iranian English language teachers. Through their data, including semi-structured interviews and narrative frames designed to capture the teachers' internal feelings and external practice, Nazari and Karimpour's study (2022) study indicated that emotional labor and identity reconstruction are affected by institutional factors and restriction of teacher agency against these factors. In other words, Nazari and Karimpour's (2022) findings showed that institutional policies were more likely to problematize teachers' navigation of their emotions and identities, when there was a clash between teachers' caring beliefs and institutional expectations related to educational issues. Moreover, it is concluded that emotions and agency (ranging from complying to resistance) are interrelated when interacting with institutional demands, and this interrelation shapes personal and professional sense-making processes that shape teachers' identity (Nazari & Karimpour, 2022). These findings demonstrate the interplay in navigating emotional labor and language teacher identity at classroom and institutional levels, while highlighting the dimension of agency in this emotional and professional negotiation process.

Overall, although the complex interaction between the triangle of identity, emotions, and agency has been displayed in post-structuralist studies, there are very few recent studies that have examined the intricate relationship at different contextual levels

between identity negotiations, agency, and emotions as an important component for gaining further insights, particularly in language teacher identity studies (Kayi-Aydar, 2019). Therefore, English language instructors' experiences and perceptions related to the navigation of the interaction between teacher identity, emotional labor (as the emotional conflict), and agency (as a power to adapt or resist) at micro (classroom), meso (institutional), and macro (broader contexts) levels require more attention in the field of ELT.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Qualitative Inquiry

One of the many assertations about how to define the qualitative inquiry is presented by Denzin and Lincoln (2018):

> Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 10)

In parallel with this, the main aim of conducting a qualitative study is presented as understanding "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2002, p.5). Therefore, qualitative research in the post-modern era is interested in the interpretive process of how individuals construct and negotiate meaning, rather than seeking a singular, objective reality, which emphasizes exploration over the final products of the research (Cooper & White, 2012). To summarize the opportunities that qualitative inquiry enables, Creswell and Poth (2024) describe the main characteristics of qualitative inquiry: focus on natural settings, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection, the use of multiple data sources, the application of complex inductive and deductive reasoning, an emphasis on participants' multiple perspectives and meanings, sensitivity to context-dependent conditions, an emergent and flexible research design, and a commitment to reflexivity regarding the researcher's positionality and influence on the research process.

According to the characteristics that are listed by Creswell and Poth (2024), this study aligns with qualitative inquiry for several reasons. Firstly, this study focuses on how part-time early career English language instructors perceive their positioning under neoliberal academic context and how they navigate their teacher identity, emotional labor and agency. In this sense, qualitative study enables exploring participants' multiple perspectives and meanings about how their past and present experiences impact their current beliefs and ideas. Also, this study strives to present the experiences of early- career English language instructors during their part time employment under precarious working conditions. Therefore, sensitivity to context-dependent conditions is considered in this study, enabling the exploration of the impacts of neoliberal academic context. Moreover, qualitative researchers commonly employ diverse and interconnected interpretive practices to gain a deeper comprehension of the topic, as each source contributes to studies in a unique manner, which leads researchers to use more than one data source within a single study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Besides enabling exploration of meaning making processes based on individuals' experiences, qualitative research enables the integration of multiple data sources in the current study. Aligning with Creswell (2013), qualitative study enables the interpretation of the data instruments' (semi-structured interviews and teacher diaries) in-depth analysis in this particular study. Furthermore, the current multiple case study involves both deductive and inductive continuous reasoning through thematic analysis, which aligns with flexible and emergent nature of qualitative study. Overall, qualitative inquiry is applicable to current research due to advantages that it serves for exploring multiple perspectives, presenting context dependent experiences, using multiple data sources, applying flexible and emergent research design, and presenting researcher positionality.

3.2. Multiple Case Study

Case study research is one of the qualitative approaches that involves the comprehensive exploration of incidents in real-life context. According to Creswell and Poth (2024), it is "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of

information" (p.192). With this broad definition, they highlighted how real-life experiences turned into descriptions and themes through exploration of one or multiple cases. According to Creswell (2013), case study research is a qualitative approach that explores real-life units of analysis, whether as a single case or multiple cases, and relies on in-depth data collection from diverse sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents to ultimately generate detailed case descriptions and emergent themes. Through this definition, Creswell (2013) also reflected on how case studies are facilitated by various sources that explore real-life units of analysis. Martinson and O'Brien (2015) claim that case studies might have various purposes, including describing an event within its context, or establishing cause-and-effect relationships through incidents in local context. Drawing upon this, case study enables describing real-life events of individuals and exploring causes and effect relationships in those experiences by highlighting overlooked local experiences in real life.

This research specifically chose multiple case study approach to present a detailed exploration of variations within and across cases in relation to research topics. Stake (2024) explains applying multiple case study as "when there is even less interest in one particular case, a number of cases may be studied jointly in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition" (p. 124). In this study, it is aimed to present struggles of early career part-time English language instructors in terms of precarious working conditions under neoliberal academic context; therefore, multiple case study design enables investigating a general condition in this study, which might lead to "better under-standing, and perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases" (Stake, 2024, p.124). Moreover, Creswell (2013) states that multiple case studies enable the selection of representative cases, although researchers do not favor generalizing from one case to another because each case is context dependent. This study aims to analyze each case individually and analyze the patterns in various cases related to their general condition, which makes multiple case study design applicable in this study.

In terms of the design of case studies, Yin (2014) introduces holistic and embedded designs. According to Yin (2014), holistic design is applicable when a specific

subunit cannot be identified or when the relevant theory underlying the case study is itself of a holistic nature, which might lead to problems like the lack of clear measures for the data or the lack of sophistication of the analysis. The embedded design enables the exploration of different subunits within a case through a more complex and extensive analysis, which enhances the insights into the cases (Yin, 2014). As this study focuses on how specific group of early-career part time English language instructors are positioned by others under precarious working conditions at foundation universities within the broader neoliberal academic context, and how they navigate teacher identity, emotional labor, teacher agency triangle at micro, meso and macro contextual contexts, each case involves analytic subunits. These include relational subunits (positioning by institutions and community) and contextual subunits (classroom, institution, broader context). Therefore, it is designed as multiple embedded case study because the study investigates these embedded processes within each participant's experience rather than treating each instructor as a single undivided unit.

Yin (2014) dwells on epistemological orientations for the interpretation of case studies as "a realist perspective, which assumes the existence of a single reality that is independent of any observer, and a relativist perspective, acknowledging multiple realities having multiple meanings, with findings that are observer dependent" (p. 17). From relativist perspective, case study is concerned with capturing the perspectives of different participants and presenting how and why these different meanings give hints about the topic of study (Yin, 2014). This study focuses on the perspectives about how they are positioned under neoliberal academic context, and how they navigate teacher identity, emotional labor, teacher agency at micro (classroom), meso (institutional), macro (broader contexts) levels. In this sense, this study mainly emphasizes the individually, socially and discursively constructed realities of participants in terms of various parameters, which makes relativist perspective applicable to the design of this embedded multiple case study.

3.3. The Role of the Researcher

The researchers' positionality is a dimension of qualitative research that should be considered, as the researchers' personal background cannot be excluded from the

exploration of the subject. As postmodern influences have changed the way research is interpreted and comprehended, the questions related to researchers' positioning have evoked, such as "Where is the researcher in the research account? How does the researcher relate to his/her research? How can the researcher who reads qualitative research understand the nuances and complexities in qualitative research?" (Cooper & White, 2012, p.14). Therefore, the relationship between the researcher and their study requires emphasis in qualitative study through acknowledgement of the reflexivity of the researcher. Researcher positionality implies that the researcher's negotiations and experiences may shape data interpretation during theme construction due to the interpretative nature of qualitative studies. Therefore, from the outset of the study, clarifying the researcher's biases is important for understanding the researcher's position or assumptions that influence the research (Creswell, 2013). In this clarification, the researcher reflects on past experiences, prejudices, and orientations that have constructed the interpretation of the study (Creswell, 2013). Reflexivity acts as a rejection of independent, objective knowledge, instead demanding that the researcher turn the analytical lens inward to recognize how their presence and perspective actively shape the context and outcomes of the inquiry (Berger, 2015). Hence, it is undeniable that who I am as a researcher, as an early career English language teacher, and my present relationship to the English language teaching M.A. program have had a major influence on this thesis. In this section, I share the story of who I am, how I position myself and have been positioned under precarious working conditions, my teacher identity, emotion labor and agency navigations as an English language instructor who had experience in a higher education English preparatory department in Türkiye and works as a private tutor currently along with my motivation to conduct this study.

During my undergraduate education, I have been introduced to themes of teacher identity negotiation, emotional labor and agency. However, it was not until I graduated in 2022 that these topics became problematized for me with my experiences as a new graduate. After my graduation, I have decided to give a gap year before starting any M.A. program and I wanted to work as an English instructor. However, due to the economic crisis in Türkiye, I was not able to stay in Ankara or İstanbul by renting a house with the low wages of part-time work at a foundation

university. I had to go back to my parents' house in Eskişehir. Considering that it was not possible to work at an English preparatory department as a full-timer without completing a M.A. degree in Türkiye, I started to work at a state university's English preparatory department as a part-time English instructor. Although I did not work directly at a foundation university, my working conditions as a part-time English language instructor at a state university were poor as well, which shows that even state universities have been affected by the neoliberal academic context. During my experience, I had to work under precarious working conditions, such as very low/ hourly paid wages, no job security, no insurance, no paid holiday or medical leave. However, my full-timer colleagues had more opportunities, although we all had to work for the same job hours, workload and institutional expectations. These precarious conditions made me feel insecure, unvalued and demotivated as an English language instructor. My imagined teacher identities for being a transformative intellectual with motivating and creative practices clashed with my exhausting working conditions. I found myself being disrespected as a part-timer by the institution. I felt like the door was always open for us and we had no right to defend ourselves as employees. Ultimately, we were fired without any explanation or any payment at the end of the semester, since we were employed temporarily as part-timers. Besides my inner conflicts concerning my positioning as a language teacher and my re-negotiations about my imagined and actual teacher identities, my emotional labor was one of the significant experiences for me during that time. I remember that I was told by the institution that I will not have my wage for a month and I have no right to complain legally under current policies as we do not have full time security one day before going into the classroom. Although I was so depressed, I suppressed my emotions in front of my students. In addition to challenges in terms of institutional and broader policies, I also had in-class challenges with student behaviors. Since I am an early career language teacher, I felt disrespected when some of my students treated me like I was a naive young woman. I had one student with a history of gun possession, juvenile detention and one day made fun of me in front of the class because I said that I believed in the power of education. At that moment, I experienced emotional labor with an urge inside to do something to create change. Therefore, although I was disadvantaged as an early career part-time instructor and experienced a lot of identity and emotional crisis, I was not a victim due to the

resilience that I developed with my agency in classroom management, creating critical pedagogy lessons in the classroom, and solidarity with my part-timer colleagues.

After these experiences, when I started my current M.A. program, I found myself writing articles related to emotional labor, teacher identity and neoliberal academic contexts in the courses that I have taken. I believe that my writing has become my voice for healing myself and sharing the common pain of early-career language teachers. Furthermore, while research on teacher identity, emotional labor and agency is growing, during my readings I realized that there is not a significant number of studies based on early career part-time English instructors in Türkiye's neoliberal academic context, especially in terms of precarious working conditions.

Furthermore, in one-on-one conversations with my classmates in my graduate courses, I realized that I was not the only one experiencing the difficulty of navigating teacher identity, emotional labor, and teacher agency in these precarious conditions. Although I was an outside observer of the participants' experiences at their former or current institutions during this research, I observed my friends in the same position throughout my master's degree questioning themselves under recurring difficulties and conflicts. Familiarity with the community among insiders can provide easy and economical access and mobility within the field, as well as provide numerous levels of insight into human behaviors necessary for data collection, interpretation, and representation, and can facilitate rapport building (Chavez, 2008).

Moreover, my shared observation that these English teachers working part-time at preparatory universities at the beginning of their careers felt unable to make their voices heard also led me to make these real-life experiences the subject of my research. Therefore, my motivation for this study was to create a chance for the people who have shared the same positions as early career language teachers to have a voice in literature with their experiences under precarious conditions. I believe that this study may increase the sense of togetherness of others who experience this situation by shedding light on the experiences of early career language instructors in terms of their teacher identity, emotional labor and teacher agency. Throughout the

research period, I reflected on my actions and tried to be aware of how my own ideas, stance, and experiences interacted with the research.

3.4. Research Setting and Participants

3.4.1. Research Setting

The setting of this study is the Basic English Departments (Preparatory Programs) of foundation universities in Türkiye. As it is presented in the literature of this study, the manifestation of neoliberal trends in Türkiye enabled the privatization of education and the precarious working conditions with the prevalence of foundation universities. In this study, instructors who have working experience at preparatory schools of five different foundation universities participated. The four of the foundation universities are in Ankara, while one of them is in İstanbul. These foundation universities are the institutions that are established according to Regulation on Foundation Higher Education Institutions (Vakıf Yükseköğretim Kurumları Yönetmeliği, 2005). According to Vakıf Yükseköğretim Kurumları Yönetmeliği (2005) and based on the websites of the universities, these foundation universities spend their revenues for the purpose of developing their own universities, institutions and organizations owned by universities, provided that they are established by law as public legal entities with high-level research, education-instruction, publication, and consultancy, consisting of faculties, institutes, colleges, vocational colleges, support units, preparatory schools, or similar institutions. The placement of students in bachelor's degree programs at these foundation universities in Türkiye is carried out by the Turkish Republic Measurement, Selection, and Placement Center (ÖSYM) through a standardized examination system. In all these institutions, except for fully funded students, education is fee-based with tuition collected periodically (generally term-based). However, these foundation universities present variable scholarship models, ranging from full scholarships to partial discounts (such 50% scholarship and other competitive incentives like the Entrepreneurial University Discount 25% reduction or specific programs like the Business World Scholarship Program, etc.). Furthermore, each of these five foundation universities requires students to either pass a proficiency examination or

successfully complete the English Preparatory Program before advancing to their first-year undergraduate studies.

In the four of these foundation universities, the English preparatory programs are compulsory because they adopt English as a medium of instruction in which the language of instruction is 100% English. In one of them, there are departments that either the language of instruction is English or Turkish. However, students who do not enter the 100% English programs are still guided to participate in preparatory programs voluntarily to develop their language skills for their future careers. In these foundation universities, the compulsory preparatory program is also dependent on a standard tuition fee, except for fully funded students. This mandatory stage ensures students meet a minimum language proficiency standard, reflecting a focus on output quality and standardization. Based on their websites, the preparatory programs in these foundation universities aim to make students reach a language proficiency for enabling them to follow degree programs, access professional literature, and engage with current developments in their fields. Programs are explicitly designed to align with internationally recognized criteria, specifically the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), using levels like A1, A2, B1, B2, and C1. The academic year is typically organized into short and intensive modules (generally 8–10 weeks each). Students must successfully complete one level by achieving a minimum passing grade (e.g., 60/100) to progress to the next, which promotes a high degree of standardization and control over the curriculum pace. Moreover, in these foundation universities, failing to pass the English language proficiency exam of the program at the end of the program makes repeating the program compulsory, which is a key mechanism for ensuring quality control and financial accountability.

3.4.1.1. Work Conditions

Considering that this thesis focuses on part time early career English language instructors who have working experience at foundation university preparatory departments under neoliberal academic context, this study mainly focuses on the precarious working conditions in these foundation universities. While these

universities state their vision and mission to serve as a provider of high-quality and internationally competitive language education, they dwell on their English language instructors as self-improving academic staff. The preparatory programs at these foundation universities employ English language instructors both as full timers and part timers. There is a circulation of the employment of part-time instructors, considering that part-time employment enables these foundation universities to pay lower salary and supply half-time insurance without the guarantee of job stability or renewal of the contracts. At the same time, early career English language teachers tend to apply for part-time positions at foundation universities since they are not full time employed as instructors at preparatory departments without completing a master's degree due to regulation government gazette published (Öğretim Elemanı Atama Yönetmeliği, 2018). The differences between the working conditions of full time and part time English language instructors display the actualization of precarity in the setting. In these foundation universities, both full time and part time English language instructors are required to teach 20 hours per week and, in addition, provide feedback on midterm exams, quizzes, finals, and written assignments; prepare teaching and assessment materials when needed; proctor exams; attend institutional and departmental meetings; and hold office hours. Full-time instructors for these job descriptions receive a regular and fixed monthly salary and full insurance coverage, as well as additional compensation for extra duties such as grading exams. Furthermore, their pay is not reduced during holidays or sick leave. They are supported in activities that contribute to their professional development, such as academic pursuits and conferences, and can take leave without any pay deductions. Part-time instructors who perform the same duties as those described in full time employment receive irregular and hourly wages, and part-time insurance (usually health insurance), but do not receive additional pay for extra tasks such as grading exams. Furthermore, they are not paid for days they are absent due to vacation, illness, activities that could contribute to their professional development or for attending conferences. However, these foundation universities try to make program adjustments for the class hours of part-time employees pursuing a master's degree, and this is an influential factor in the decision of English instructors at the beginning of their careers to work part-time at foundation university preparatory departments.

The rationale behind selecting preparatory departments at foundation universities as the setting for this thesis is to demonstrate the neoliberal academic context in terms of the precarious working conditions experienced by English language instructors at the beginning of their careers. Specifically, the five foundation universities where participants currently work or have worked in the past were chosen as distinct institutions because the aim was to understand the effects of precarious working conditions, independent of institutional factors, on the positionings and navigations of English instructors in the Turkish context. Furthermore, the selection of foundation universities in Ankara and Istanbul is also intentional considering that these cities have more foundation universities and a higher circulation of part-time instructors. Parallel to the subject of this thesis, the precarious experiences of early career participants, who have worked or are working as part-time English instructors, in the preparatory departments of these foundation universities provide a suitable setting for understanding the teacher identity, the emotional labor and teacher agency.

3.4.2. Participants

The participants are in this study are early-career English language instructors who have worked as part-time English Instructors at five different foundation university preparatory departments in Türkiye (mainly in Ankara and İstanbul). This study employs purposive sampling to reach an adequate number of participants, considering this type of sampling enables the selection of individuals who are accessible and meet the study's specific criteria on purpose. Purposeful sampling, which means that researchers select individuals and sites purposefully for study as they possess the necessary characteristics to fully comprehend the research problem or the central phenomenon, is a sampling strategy used in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). There are alternatives to the kinds of purposive sampling, including criterion sampling, which is the alternative that is used in this research. According to Palys (2008), criterion sampling "involves searching for cases or individuals who meet a certain criterion, for example, that they have a certain disease or have had a particular life experience" (p. 697). In this research, the criteria for sampling were being enrolled in an M.A. program and having fewer than five years

of teaching experience at foundation universities' preparatory programs. Since this research focuses on early career English language instructors who has worked at foundation universities, there are some common characteristics about their status, including being enrolled in an M.A. program. As state universities do not employ full-time instructors without completing an M.A. degree, early career English language instructors usually tend to be enrolled in an M.A. program while working as a part-timer at foundation universities. Considering that most of the early-career English instructors with part-time work experience at foundation universities are enrolled in M.A. programs, and that those enrolled in M.A. programs might be more familiar with the literature concepts (identity, emotional labor, agency, etc.) discussed in this thesis, participants are selected from among those enrolled in MA programs. Additionally, participants have fewer than five years of teaching experience, as early-career instructors often experience reality shock and identity negotiation during the initial years of their careers (Trent, 2016), which is linear with the subject of this research. The sample size is determined according to Creswell's (1998) recommendation as 5 to 25 participants for a phenomenological study. Since this research is designed as multiple case study, the sample size is determined as 5 participants, as too many cases in multiple case study may lose the depth of information required (Sarfo et al., 2021).

Using purposive sampling, for the recruitment of suitable participants, an online data collection tool (online survey) was sent to the researcher's fellow friends registered in the MA program through online communication groups, which allowed reaching demographic and professional background information through questions related to participants' job status, years of teaching experience, and M.A. enrollment status. In this way, it was ensured that only early career, part time English language instructors who have working experiences in various foundation university preparatory programs are included in the study. These steps not only ensured the feasibility of the study but also, they facilitated voluntary participation and the efficient selection of participants who met the requirements of the research focus. The researcher knew the prospective participants personally as peers. This established a strong baseline of trust and rapport. From the volunteers, the five early career English language instructors, who met the criteria, agreed to participate in this research. The final

participants were purposively selected based on the researcher's prior knowledge of their specific struggles in the workplace, which they had previously voiced in academic discussions. The researcher believed these specific individuals would provide rich, meaningful, and in-depth data regarding precarity, emotional labor, teacher identity and teacher agency. However, one might think that this previous rapport with participants might introduce bias and impact the findings, considering that it might sound like "cherry-picking" (Brodsky, 2023), which refers to choosing an option intentionally so that an unjust outcome is created. However, I chose these participants to give voice to their struggles and to illustrate this burning issue, as this group is striving to survive under precarious working conditions. Furthermore, I acknowledged and addressed my potential biases repeatedly throughout the research process. At the same time, to minimize the effect of possible bias, all participants in the current study were from five different foundation universities. When these participants were invited, they eagerly accepted; their primary motivation was the desire to make their voices heard and to document their lived experiences regarding the precarious working conditions they face in the neoliberal academic context. This study focused on these participants because they are a group who face with the challenges of neoliberal academic context in Türkiye that requires flexibility, cost efficiency, and market-driven performance, which results in job insecurity and emotional labor for language teachers (Mercer, 2023). In terms of confidentiality, participants were requested to choose a pseudonym for themselves to protect their identity and all of them chose their own pseudonym.

Table 1. Participants and their profiles

Pseudonyms	**Gender**	**Educational Background**	**Teaching Experience**	**Experience at a Foundation University**
Freesia	Male	B.A. in ELT M.A. in ELT (in progress)	2 years	2 years and two months (actively employed)
Aylin	Female	B.A. in TEFL M.A. in ELT (in progress)	2 years	2 years (actively employed)

Table 1. (continued)

Sena	Female	B.A. in ELT M.A. in ELT (in progress)	3 years	3 and a half month (actively employed)
Eylül	Female	B.A. in ELT M.A. in ELT (in progress)	3 years	6 months
Cotton	Male	B.A. in ELT M.A. in ELT (in progress)	4 years	4 months

In the section below, more detailed information about the participants is given. Although this study does not directly question how English instructors position themselves within neoliberal academic context, as Arvaja (2016) and Yazan (2018) argued how teachers position themselves interacts with their teacher identity. Therefore, information about instructors' beliefs about their teacher identity and their self-positioning are also given below for each participant.

Freesia: Freesia is a male English language instructor in his 20s. He currently lives and works in Ankara. He graduated from a Foreign Language Education department of a prestigious state university in Ankara, Türkiye. After he graduated from bachelor's degree, he applied to master's degree programs in English language teaching. When he enrolled in his current master program in English language teaching, he also started to work at a foundation university in September 2023. He has been working at the same foundation university in Ankara for two years now as a part time English language instructor in the preparatory program. Freesia was inspired by his teachers in his educational background to be a teacher. Also, his older sister is an English language teacher, which is another factor that inspired him to become a language teacher. While he is talking about being a teacher, he also remembers his former teachers. For Freesia, an inclusive environment was so important when he was at undergraduate level. Considering his joy when he talks about his pre-service dreams about being a teacher, he imagined himself to be the initiator at creating this environment for his students. In terms of starting to work at

English preparatory department in a foundation university, he was affected by his friends who also applied to same positions after graduation. Currently, he also focuses on his master's thesis while working with a part-time contract, which is another factor to work as a part timer to spare time for his studies. Freesia entered the profession with the warm, approachable ideals inspired by his sister and former teachers. As a teacher he defines himself:

> I define myself as someone who values creating a motivating classroom environment in which each student feels safe and secure, which creates a welcoming environment where every student can flourish. The qualities I value most in teaching are fairness, empathy, and flexibility. These characteristics influence my teaching by making me pay close attention to student anxiety and adjust my approach when necessary. (Freesia_ Teacher Diary Entry 1)

Within the neoliberal academic context, Freesia seems trying to position himself as an active and engaged professional, but his stance seems suppressed as he defined his positioning indirectly by saying: "I avoided being confrontational" (Freesia_ Teacher Diary Entry 2). Despite the heavy emotional toll of precarity Freesia views his current precarity as a temporary state. Upon completing his master's thesis, he aims to secure a full-time position as a preparatory instructor to gain stability and immediately begin his PhD. In the long run, he hopes to escape the precarious cycle entirely by transitioning into a Foreign Language Education department as a teacher educator, a role where he envisions finally exercising the pedagogical agency, autonomy, and professional respect he is currently denied.

Aylin: Aylin is a female English language instructor in her 20s. She currently lives and works in Ankara. She graduated from a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) program of a prestigious state university in Ankara, Türkiye. When she graduated from bachelorette degree, she continued with her current master's degree program in English Language Teaching in Ankara. While continuing her current master's degree, she simultaneously started to teach at a preparatory program of a foundation university in Ankara, Türkiye. After working for a year in that institution, she started to teach at a different foundation university's preparatory program, again in Ankara. She is currently working in this institution as a part-time English

instructor, but she teaches English skill-based courses both at preparatory and Modern Languages departments, rather than teaching only preparatory classes for the English Proficiency Exam of the department, which she was formerly doing until 2025-2026 fall semester. Aylin stated that she was born into a family full of teachers. Therefore, she has always admired and respected the teaching profession. Also, she had an interest in languages since she was a kid. Therefore, being an English teacher was an intentional choice for her. When she graduated, she decided that she wanted to do more about her professional development and she wanted to be part of academia. Aylin looks like a person who can give extra from herself for academic ideals. She seems like she is always one step ahead when it comes to creating something that can contribute to academic purposes. For this reason, being an English language instructor was an appropriate choice for her, which induced her to study in a M.A. program, as working as a full time English language instructor requires the completion of a master's degree in Türkiye. When she started her M.A., working with a part time contract at a foundation university as an English language instructor was an appropriate choice to create a balance with her M.A. program and her work life. Aylin seems an overprepared professional who expresses her passion for pedagogical expertise while entering the profession. Aylin defines her pedagogical stance:

> My identity centers on being a guide and a facilitator in the classroom. I don't just lecture; I actively seek out and implement methods that allow me to physically move around the room, interact directly with students, and provide individualized attention and guidance. I believe my role is to remove obstacles and offer diverse pathways for students to achieve success. I am always trying to find ways to help and guide them. (Aylin_ Teacher Diary Entry 1)

Within precarious working conditions, she still expresses her stance by referring to expertise: "I position myself as a pedagogical expert focused on genuine skill acquisition" (Aylin_ Teacher Diary Entry 1). After 2 years of experience, she still aims to become an English language instructor, but only with a full-time contract after her graduation from M.A. program. She does not think that working at a foundation university with a part time contract is an option for her future career aims.

Sena: Sena is a female English language instructor, aged 24 as she started her educational life earlier than her peers. She currently lives with her family and works in İstanbul. She graduated from a Foreign Language Education program of a prestigious foundation university in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. After her graduation from bachelorette degree, she continued with her current master's degree program in English Language Teaching in Ankara. While she was taking face to face courses for her current master's degree in Ankara, she worked as a tutor for approximately two years. She did not have a problem with finding students, so she continued giving both online and face to face English lessons to students from various age groups, which was an appropriate choice for her while she was going to her classes in M.A. program. As she is working on her thesis now, she decided to go back to her parents' house in İstanbul and has started to teach at her current workplace, a preparatory program of a foundation university in İstanbul, Türkiye. Sena stated that she decided to be an English language teacher when she was in elementary school. She was inspired by/influenced by her English language teacher with her teaching style and commitment to this profession. Therefore, being an English teacher who cares and transforms the life of their students was a dream for Sena. She followed her dream in her educational background. Sena, seems cheerful when she talks about the enlightening impact of education. She approaches teaching as a wand that can contribute to students' lives. Therefore, it is easily predictable that her pre-service idealism was mostly focused on student-centeredness. When she graduated, she decided that she wanted to work at preparatory departments to teach English, which guided her to study in a M.A. program. Working as an English tutor was an appropriate choice for her while she was trying to adapt to Ankara, master's degree, and the work life. Then, going back to İstanbul, she felt like she wanted to gain experience as an English instructor at a preparatory department. Therefore, working at a foundation university (her current institution) with a part-time contract is the only choice for her. Sena approaches teaching as a journey and she defines her stance while entering the profession:

> As a 24-year-old early-career instructor working at a foundation university, I see my current teacher identity as something dynamic, negotiated, and still evolving. When I first entered the profession, I was extremely idealistic. I

> believed I could change everything through enthusiasm, creativity, and hard work. (Sena_ Teacher Diary Entry 1)

Within neoliberal academic context, she positions herself by dwelling her adaptation to institutional realities. In her words, she defines her stance: “I position myself as a competent, mature, and responsible teacher” (Sena_ Teacher Diary Entry 1). After 3 years of experience in teaching (as an English tutor before and three to four months as an English language instructor), she still aims to be an English language instructor after her graduation from M.A. program, especially with a full-time contract at a state university.

Eylül: Eylül is a female English language instructor in her 20s. She currently lives and works in Hakkari, which is a city in the east Anatolian region of Türkiye. She graduated from a Foreign Language Education program of a state university in the black sea region of Türkiye. Following her graduation from bachelorette degree, she continued with her current master’s degree program in English Language Teaching in Ankara. She moved to Ankara with her family, and she started to work as a paid teacher in Ministry of Education for a year, which enabled her to follow her courses in master’s program. However, she wanted to continue as an English language instructor at a preparatory school to gain experience and spare more time for her master’s degree. Therefore, she worked at a foundation university for 6 months with a part time contract. Although she is not currently working at a foundation university, she was included due to her experience. As she completed her necessary number of courses in master’s program and started to work on her thesis now, she decided to use her chance to be appointed by Ministry of National Education, since she entered a high-stake personnel selection exam of Ministry of National Education earlier and got a high score, but she had to wait for a year to be appointed. Currently, she is appointed by the Ministry of National Education as a permanent English language teacher with full time contract in the east Anatolian region of Turkey. Eylül lived in Australia for a while she was a teenager and she wanted to be a lawyer then. When she came back to Turkey, she could not manage to get necessary score in the standardized exam to enter a law department. Then, she chose to enter teacher education department. Although being a teacher was not aspired by her earlier, she loved her job in terms of its dependence on communication and interaction. The fact

that she mentioned how she adapted to be a teacher rather than a lawyer seems understandable as she looks like a confident young teacher, who highly respects her current profession. Eylül highlights professionalism when she talks about teaching. She perceives this professionalism as protecting both student benefit and academic standards. Eylül defines herself:

> I define myself as a reflective and adaptable early-career English language instructor who values professionalism, clarity, and continuous development. I see myself as someone who aims to create a supportive learning environment while maintaining high academic standards. I am open to learning from experience, willing to question my assumptions, and committed to improving my practice through reflection and feedback. Overall, I view myself as a teacher who tries to balance empathy with responsibility and structure with flexibility. (Eylül_Teacher Diary Entry 1)

In her experience within neoliberal academic context, she continued to be academically focused while she transformed her stance by setting boundaries. She expresses: "I positioned myself as structured, responsible, and academically focused…I also positioned myself as someone who maintains boundaries, sets expectations, and tries to motivate them academically" (Eylül_ First Teacher Diary Entry). After 3 years of experience in teaching (as a paid teacher and part time English language instructor before and as a permanent English language teacher now), she wants to find a job in a preparatory department as a full-time English Language Instructor in a state university by quitting her current position in an elementary school of Ministry of National Education. Overall, her ultimate career objective is to secure a full-time English Language Instructor role at a state university preparatory department. There, she hopes her academic rigor and structured professional boundaries will be structurally supported rather than commodified.

Cotton: Cotton is a male English language instructor in his 20s. He currently lives and works in Antalya, Türkiye. He graduated from a Foreign Language Education department of a prestigious state university in Ankara, Türkiye. After he graduated from bachelorette degree, he enrolled in his current master program in English language teaching in a prestigious state university in Ankara, Türkiye. Similar to Eylül, although he is not actively working at a foundation university, he was

included due to his experience. At the same time, he started to work as a part time English language instructor at preparatory program of a foundation university in Ankara. In this way, he was able to participate in the courses of master's degree program and make a living for the end of the term. Then, due to personal reasons, he had to leave Ankara and go back to Antalya. In this break, he started to work as an English tutor. When he came back to Ankara to complete his master courses, he again wanted to work as a part-time English language instructor at a different foundation university, but this only continued for 2 weeks due to the working conditions of a part time contract. Then, he completed his courses in master's degree program while working as an English language tutor. Currently, he lives in Antalya with his family and works in an English language course as a both education manager and English language teacher. Although Cotton did not intend to be a teacher in his educational life before the university, he perceived teachers as significant agents in students' life as he was affected by his social sciences teacher in his high school years. Therefore, he approaches his job with the intention of being a part of a dialogue with their students. The way that he highlights the importance of dialogue is not only a focus on interaction. He looks like an intellectual who approaches teaching with sociological and political implications. Therefore, creating a dialogue seems like transformative force in his eyes. At the same time, he studies on his master's thesis. The critical pedagogy studies seem to be his research interest. Therefore, he uses academic vocabulary while he is dwelling on his identity. He defines himself:

> I like to perceive myself as a transformative teacher. However, as I do believe that it is an identity not easily carried and requires constant self-evaluation, stating that I am one is not something that I can simply do. On the other hand, I truly believe that my lessons are not a mere place for the transfer of knowledge but rather a place for personal, social, and intellectual transformation both for me and my students. (Cotton_ Teacher Diary Entry 1)

In his experience within neoliberal academic context, he raised his awareness about the impact of precarity of part-time status. However, his interest in intellectualism and being transformative only changed his stance rather than destroying it. He says: "I would say yes, there are expectations from me that didn't fundamentally change my stance but did reshape it into a more passive version" (Cotton_ Teacher Diary

Entry 1). Ultimately, after 4 years of teaching experience, he wants to complete his master's degree and be able to work as an English language instructor with a full-time contract in a state university. However, he also states that he can work at foundation universities due to the difficulty of finding a job at state universities in Türkiye, especially in bigger cities like İstanbul and Ankara.

3.5. Data Collection Tools

In qualitative case study research, relying on a single data source is often insufficient to capture the profound complexities and subjective realities of human experience. The case study design usually involves collection of information via a range of data collection techniques including interview and documentary analysis of diary entries of multiple participants (Robson & McCartan, 2016). In alignment with this methodological requirement, the current study's data is collected through semi-structured interviews (three rounds) and teacher diary entries to explore participants' negotiations and navigations of teacher identity, emotional labor and agency interaction at micro, meso and macro contexts under neoliberal academic context in Türkiye.

The methodological decision to use both interviews and diaries stems from the complex nature of the phenomenon under investigation. Exploring how early-career, part-time English language instructors are positioned and how they navigate teacher identity, emotional labor, and agency across micro, meso, and macro contexts requires tools that can capture both the broad picture and the immediate perceptions of their professional lives. These internal cognitive and emotional processes are not stable; they manifest both as long-term professional trajectories and as immediate emotional crises triggered by the institutional precarity. Therefore, these two data collection tools were deliberately chosen for their complementary nature.

The semi-structured interviews provide a retrospective lens by allowing participants to holistically reflect on their career paths and explicitly articulate their pedagogical beliefs and narrate their struggles with neoliberal policies. On the other hand, teacher diaries function as an unfiltered window into the instructors' affective responses

based on their specific experiences. Diaries capture in-the-moment experiences elaborately by allowing participants to describe their experiences as they happened and reflect on those experiences with intensity that they felt. Ultimately, combining these specific tools allowed methodological triangulation and corroborating evidence for validating the accuracy of the study. (Creswell & Poth, 2024). By cross-verifying the overall beliefs expressed during the interviews with the detailed lived experiences documented in the diaries, this dual-tool approach ensured a deeper, more credible, and nuanced understanding of the perceptions of early-career, part-time instructors.

3.5.1. Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected between mid-November 2025 and the end of December 2025. An initial interview was first conducted with each participant to explore their backgrounds, identity negotiations, and initial experiences in the neoliberal academic context in Turkey. Subsequently, the first teacher diary instructions were sent to collect written data on teachers' perspectives regarding Positionality and Teacher Identity in the neoliberal academic context. A second interview was conducted two weeks after the first interview to explore navigations of the coactive interaction between teacher identity-emotional labor-teacher agency and to ask follow-up questions about the experiences mentioned in the first teacher diary. Subsequently, the second teacher diary instructions were sent to the participants to reflect on themes of teacher identity, emotional labor, and teacher agency. In the final interview, overall experiences were discussed and shifts in their perceptions were explored by reflecting on their teacher identity, emotional labor, teacher agency and the neoliberal academic context throughout the research period. All interviews were conducted in Turkish so that participants could clearly express the contextual factors of their society in their native language and reflect their perspectives, beliefs, and feelings. Teacher diaries were written in English because all participants were master's students in English language education and were proficient in the themes in an academic English context. Interviews were conducted online via a video conferencing platform and recorded as participants have a possibility of accommodating or working in different cities across Türkiye, which made the data

collection process practical for the participants. Recorded meetings were transcribed by the video conferencing platform simultaneously, and they were controlled and corrected by the researcher afterwards. Each interview lasted approximately 40-60 minutes. The data collection procedure is summarized in the table below.

Table 2. Data Collection Procedure

Date	**Data Collection Instrument**	**Focus on the Data Collection Instrument**
Mid-November 2025	1st Interview (Background Interview)	This interview explored participants' backgrounds, identity negotiations, and initial experiences in neo-liberal academic context in Türkiye.
Late November 2025	First Teacher Diary Entry (Positionality and Teacher Identity in neo-liberal academic context)	Participants were expected to dwell on their beliefs/perceptions/experiences/challenges and emotions by reflecting on themes of teacher identity negotiation, positionality and neo-liberal academic context in Türkiye.
Early December 2025	2nd Interview (In-depth Experiences)	The second interview explored participants' navigations of the coactive interaction between teacher identity-emotional labor-teacher agency. Also, there were further questions based on the emerging themes from their diary entries if it was necessary.
Mid- December 2025	Second Teacher Diary Entry (Teacher Identity-Emotional Labor-Teacher Agency)	Participants were expected to dwell on their beliefs/perceptions/experiences/challenges and emotions by reflecting on themes of teacher identity, emotional labor, teacher agency.
Late December 2025-Early January (Member-Checking)	3rd Interview (Close Up)	In the conclusion interview, participants dwelled on their overall experiences and discuss shifts in their perceptions by reflecting on their teacher identity/emotional labor/teacher agency and neoliberal academic context throughout the research period.

The data collection procedure took five weeks in total, which included three interviews and two teacher diaries. The two weeks between the interviews are

intentionally given as a gap that might create a self-reflecting process for the participants. The collected qualitative data per participant and in total are presented in the table below.

Table 3. Collected Qualitative Data per Participant

Participants	Total Interview Duration (Minutes)	Total Diary Word Count (Words)
Freesia	[130]	[1345]
Aylin	[80]	[1440]
Sena	[98]	[2016]
Eylül	[113]	[1319]
Cotton	[135]	[2285]
Total	[556 mins / 9 hours]	[8405 words]

3.5.2. Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews in a qualitative study provide benefit of permitting interviews to be focused while still giving the researcher the autonomy to explore ideas that may come up during the interview (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). Interviews enable the use of the perspectives of individuals about their direct and personal experiences as a data source, considering that what people have to say reveals their mental worlds, perceptions, and the logic they apply to their experiences, which provides researchers to capture the complexity of individuals' feelings, thoughts, and perceptions in a spontaneous and flexible way (Goodman, 2001). Seidman (2013) proposes an effective procedure for interview rounds to reach applicable data for study purposes, consisting of interview one (focused on background/life history), interview two (the details of experience) and interview three (reflection). In this research, three semi-structured interview rounds allowed for creating in-depth analysis about the complex themes of identity, emotional labor, agency and neoliberal academic context in Türkiye, considering that interviewing focuses on gaining insight into individuals' lived experiences and the meanings they attributed to those experiences (Seidman, 2013).

The semi-structured interview, includes open ended or yes/no questions with further clarifications and examples, provides participants “to develop their thoughts and ideas in depth, expressing their views on the subject matter from their own personal perspectives, talking about their experiences, and using their own words” (Karatsareas, 2022, p. 100). In this study, semi-structured interviews followed a flexible protocol that provides an opportunity for participants to elaborate on their experiences while keeping a structured focus on teacher identity, emotional labor, and neo-liberal pressures for the objectives of the research. Also, the semi-structured interviews were conducted in Turkish, considering that communicating in the respondent's native language enables flexibility, good interaction and understandability of the statements with cultural understanding (Welch & Piekkari, 2006). The interviews were translated into English with the use of AI tools (DeepL and Gemini) and repeatedly revised by the researcher.

For the collection of the data, the interview protocols were developed, reviewed, and piloted before the actual data collection process began. Initially, the drafts for the three rounds of interviews were developed based on the readings and reflections of the researcher related to literature review regarding the neoliberal academic context, teacher identity, emotional labor and teacher agency. Following the initial drafting, the interview questions were subjected to review process. They were first examined by the two supervisors of this thesis, followed by expert review conducted by two external specialists in the field of English Language Education. Based on their expert feedback, the interview protocols were refined to ensure clarity, neutrality, and practical applicability. To increase the focus on qualitative reflections during the actual interviews, basic demographic and career-span inquiries were separated and gathered via a preliminary participant questionnaire. To avoid leading the participants or biasing their responses, academic jargon related to "neoliberalism" and "precarity" was changed into accessible, everyday teaching language. Rather than asking direct theoretical questions, the prompts were designed to natural reflections about the participants' lived experiences. For instance, theoretical inquiries regarding "emotional labor" were translated into relatable scenarios, asking teachers to describe specific moments when they felt emotionally challenged and how they managed those emotions. Furthermore, to capture a holistic picture of their

professional identities, the scope of the questions was balanced to ensure participants reflected not only on their institutional difficulties but also on the positive and empowering aspects of their teaching careers. Finally, before finalizing the protocols, a pilot study was conducted in June 2025 with two English instructors currently working in preparatory departments. The primary objective of this pilot study was to test the comprehensibility, flow, and pacing of the questions in a real-world interview setting. The pilot confirmed the overall effectiveness of the tool but led to minor vocabulary adjustments, such as replacing overly academic verbs with more natural conversational terms to ensure participants could express themselves fluidly. Ultimately, this systematic procedure of expert review and pilot testing ensured that the finalized interview protocols were reliable, engaging, and aligned with the research objectives.

The aim of the first semi-structured interviews, which took place in mid-November and included 19 questions, was to learn about the participants' personal and professional backgrounds, teacher identity negotiations in terms of their positioning, and initial experiences in neo-liberal academic context in Türkiye in relation to how they view the way they are positioned by institutions and community (see Appendix D). Then, the second semi-structured interviews, including 18 questions, were conducted in the first week of December. This interview aimed to learn about participants' navigations of the coactive interaction between teacher identity-emotional labor- teacher agency, especially in micro (classroom), meso (institutional) and macro (broader contexts) levels. Also, there were questions related to their teacher diary entries for further discussion when it was necessary (see Appendix E). The third semi-structured interviews, including 11 questions, were carried out in late December. As the last interview, it aimed participants to talk about their overall experiences and discuss shifts in their perceptions by reflecting on their teacher identity/emotional labor/teacher agency and neoliberal academic context throughout the research journey (see Appendix F).

3.5.3. Diary Entries

Moreover, teacher diary entries (two per participant), where instructors documented their reflections on their experiences and views in terms of their positioning under

neoliberal academic context and how they navigate teacher identity, emotional labor and agency interaction at micro, meso, macro contexts, were used as the other data collection instrument. Hyers (2018) asserts that written diary enables reflection and self-objectification for the individual, while it also becomes "a window into a psychological moment" (p. 9) in the hands of others, which gives an opportunity to comprehend one's perspective. In the research context, diaries are usually solicited (controlled) instruments that involve purposive sampling of participants who are expected to write in diaries about very specific experiences for a structured time period with a former awareness that the diary will serve the analysis of researchers and perhaps even the participants themselves (Hyers, 2018).

With the controlled instructions, teacher diary entries contributed to the analysis of the perceptions and reflections of the participants in this research. While semi-structured interviews were conducted in Turkish for the enhancement of cultural understanding of interviewee's statements about their contextual experiences, the diary entries were documented in English. Because all participants completed their undergraduate studies in English-Medium Instruction (EMI) programs and are currently enrolled in M.A. programs in English Language Teaching, they are accustomed to writing academic and pedagogical reflections in English. In their professional and academic context, where English is the scientific lingua franca (Demeke & Ryan, 2021), documenting their diaries in English provided a natural medium. This allowed the participants to articulate their professional cognition and theoretical alignments more comfortably and fluidly than they might have in Turkish related to ELT context.

Similar to interview protocol preparation process, teacher diary entries that could address the research topic were prepared and finalized to collect the data needed for the thesis based on the researcher's conclusions emerged from her readings. The first teacher diary template included four questions, including two questions related to participants' views about their personal identity and current teacher identity and two more questions related to their perspective on how they are positioned as teachers by others (students, colleagues, administration, etc.) especially in the foundation university context (see Appendix G). The second teacher diary template included

four questions to learn about how participants' experiences related to emotional labor and agency interact with their teacher identity at various levels (classroom, institution, etc.) under precarious work conditions at foundation universities (see Appendix H). Subsequently, the research questions and teacher diary templates were sent to two experts in the field of English Language Education, who reviewed them and provided their opinions, in addition to comments of the supervisors. Based on expert opinions, changes were made to teacher diary questions. To reduce the academic tone in the interview questions and teacher diary questions, were converted into simpler language related to classroom, institutional, and community experiences. Afterwards, pilot studies were conducted with two English instructors.

This preparation process ensured that the diaries would effectively reveal detailed descriptions of participants' experiences and their detailed perceptions. Also, this procedure allowed me to make changes to my data collection tools, making them more understandable, clearer, and more effective by removing or adding questions and making word changes. It also enabled me to demonstrate the actual data collection process. Ultimately, these diaries served as a crucial tool for triangulation, allowing verification of the beliefs expressed in the interviews with the specific lived experiences in the precarious workplace.

In the current study, the first teacher diary entry templates were sent in late November and participants were given one week to write their reflections. teacher diary entries aimed to reach more specific examples about the views of participants about their positioning in terms of their experiences at foundation universities, which contributed to this research by demonstrating experiences that may have been overlooked during the interview or that the participant remembers not mentioning in the first interview. Following the week of second interview, the second teacher diary templates were given to participants with one week span for them to write their reflections about their beliefs/perceptions/experiences/challenges and emotions by reflecting on themes of teacher identity, emotional labor, teacher agency. Teacher diary entries contributed to this study by reaffirming the data obtained in interviews and demonstrating experiences that can be revisited with additional questions during interviews.

3.6. Data Analysis

According to Yin (2014), multiple case study research process consists of three main stages: Define and Design, involving selecting cases, and designing a data collection; Prepare, Collect, and Analyze, involving conducting individual case studies, followed by writing separate reports for each case; Analyze and Conclude, includes cross-case conclusions ultimately culminating in a comprehensive cross-case report. While this study employs multiple case study design through the light of this procedure, the overall data is interpreted through iterative coding of the negotiations of the participants in terms of the positionality of their teacher identity under neoliberal academic context and related navigations about teacher identity, emotional labor and agency in micro, meso, macro contexts. Miles et al. (2014) propose that within-case sampling follows an iterative, progressive approach, evolving in successive stages throughout the study, while multiple case study sampling involves examining both similar and contrasting cases to contextualize and validate single-case findings, thereby enhancing the precision, validity, stability, and trustworthiness of the research outcomes. Relatedly, cross-case conclusions through continuous and flexible iterative coding of cases created the basis for the thematic analysis of the overall data. The iterative coding process allowed themes to emerge both inductively (from the data) and deductively (based on existing literature on teacher identity, emotional labor, agency and neo-liberal academic context). Braun and Clarke (2013) argue that thematic analysis, distinguished by its flexibility, is relatively unique among qualitative analytic methods as it offers an approach to analyzing data rather than dictating specific data collection methods, theoretical perspectives, or epistemological and ontological frameworks, or, themes emerged in a data-driven, bottom-up manner based on the content of the data itself. In this sense, Braun and Clarke (2013) further argued that themes can be identified through combining bottom up (inductive) and top-down (deductive) approaches in one analysis. For the data analysis in this study, following Braun and Clarke's (2013) approach, thematic analysis was used to systematically identify, code, and interpret patterns in the narratives of participants' negotiations and navigations related to themes of the study. For the systematic identifying, coding and interpreting of patterns in cross-case conclusions, five phase cycle is applied: "(1) compiling data; (2) disassembling

data; and (3) reassembling data; (4) interpreting; (5) concluding" (Yin, 2014, p.171; Yin, 2016, p. 185).

Step 1: Compiling: At this stage, the data was transcribed to make it usable and organized to answer the research questions. In this phase, according to Castleberry and Nolen (2018), the researcher is expected to transcribe the interviews, compile the responses, and organize other textual data to be included in the analysis. In addition, the researcher must read and re-read the data to become familiar with it. This stage strengthens subsequent steps in the data analysis process by enabling the researcher to closely familiarize themselves with the data, understand its integrity, and evaluate it within its context.

Step 2: Disassembling Data: At this stage, after the data has been collected and organized, it was broken down into smaller pieces for more detailed analysis. In qualitative research, data can be broken down by assigning codes to words, sentences, and expressions in the transcribed data, allowing the raw data to be used gradually in the formation of themes. According to Saldana (2013), in qualitative research, data may include interview transcripts, diaries, documents, field notes, etc., and "a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 3). Saldana (2013) also proposes two coding processes: a) first cycle of coding, in which initial coding of data ranging from a single word to a paragraph can be actualized; b) second cycle of coding, which involves the restructuring of analytical notes related to the data and even codes developed up to that point and their evaluation and examination across categories, themes, and concepts.

Step 3: Reassembling Data: At this stage, the researcher attempted to create themes by linking recurring codes in the data or the categories associated with each concept. According to Castleberry and Nolen (2018), a theme represents a certain level of patterned responses and meaning related to the research questions, and in doing so, qualitative researchers use two common ways to reassemble the data into themes: hierarchies and matrices. Hierarchies are created by grouping similar

codes to form higher-level codes, and these higher-level codes provide the researcher with an overview of the thematic appearance of the data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

Step 4: Interpreting: In this step, researcher tried to use her craft in order to give meaning to reassembled data. According to Creswell (2013), interpretation in qualitative research involves expressing the broader meaning of the data beyond the codes and themes by transforming the codes into themes and the themes into broader abstractions, and the researcher can relate their own interpretation to the broader research literature developed by others. According to Yin (2014), the predefined research questions, propositions, unit of analysis, and findings of the study guide the interpretation of the case study and indicate what needs to be done. Therefore, interpretations of cases are considered in relation to research questions, literature review and background of the research.

Step 5: Concluding: In this step, the researcher arrived at conclusions based on the identified themes and resulting interpretations. These conclusions are answers to the research questions or the purpose of the study, and the results obtained from qualitative research generally do not allow for generalization or the conditions under which the qualitative research was conducted cannot be replicated (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Overall, Yin (2016) views conclusion as a type of general statement that elevates the findings of a study to "a higher conceptual level or broader set of ideas" (p. 235).

In this study, these five steps are applied for the analysis of the study by going back and forth between steps as these steps are in a non-linear interaction (Yin, 2016), throughout the data analysis. Firstly, video and audio recorded semi-structured interviews (three rounds) were transcribed verbatim. During the translation process from Turkish to English, slight linguistic adjustments were made to the transcripts where necessary to ensure better clarity and accuracy. Teacher diary entries were submitted by participants as electronic files in which they expressed their reflections in writing. All data were organized electronically. Secondly, initial coding was performed after repeated readings to become familiar with the written data. During

the initial coding, multiple coding types were used in the name of eclectic coding, as suggested by Saldana (2013). These types were identified by Saldana (2013): descriptive coding, which refers to “assigning labels to data to summarize in a word or short phrase – most often as a noun” (p. 262); emotion coding, which “labels the emotions recalled and/or experienced by the participant, or inferred by the researcher about the participant” (p. 263) ; in vivo coding, which involves “using words or short phrases from the participant's own language in the data record as codes” (p. 264); process coding, through “using gerunds (“-ing” words) exclusively to connote observable and conceptual action in the data” (p. 266). By examining the codes assigned in the third step, code patterns were clustered into categories and then these categories were grouped into themes. Also, during this process of theme formation through the first cycle and second cycle of coding, the researcher simultaneously took memos reflecting her interpretations and ideas. Memos are brief phrases, ideas, or key concepts that come to mind for the researcher, and writing memos under transcripts and similar data sources supports the discovery of the database (Creswell, 2013). According to Saldana (2013), in electronic coding, coding the data is still the researcher's responsibility, but the software efficiently stores, organizes, manages, and reorganizes the data to ensure it reflects human analytics. In this study, MAXQDA, coding software, was used throughout the data analysis process. In the fourth step, novel interpretations were generated using the theoretical framework, literature, and research questions. In the final step, the researcher sought to draw conclusions and present the broader significance of the study.

3.7. Trustworthiness of the Study

Depending on their transferability and trustworthiness, some protocols can contribute to the reliability and validity (i.e., credibility) of qualitative research (Saldana, 2013). According to Miles et al. (2014), there are five main, partially overlapping issues regarding the transferability and reliability of qualitative research: “(1) the objectivity/confirmability of qualitative work, (2) reliability/dependability/auditability, (3) internal validity/credibility/authenticity, (4) external validity/transferability/fittingness, and (5) utilization/application/action orientation” (p. 274).

Confirmability is a criterion that concerns the researcher explicitly stating their inevitable biases, avoiding biases they are not reasonably aware of, and maintaining relative impartiality (Miles et al., 2014). According to Lincoln and Guba (2013), confirmability corresponds to the criterion of objectivity in positivism and indicates that findings and interpretations are the result of a reliable research process, and techniques such as auditing, triangulation, and reflexive journaling can be used to evaluate this confirmability.

Another concern is dependability which "corresponds to the reliability criterion of positivism and addresses how the findings and interpretations could be determined to be an outcome of a consistent and dependable process" (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 105). According to Creswell (2013), dependability is sought regarding the variability and instability of results, and both dependability and confirmability are ensured through auditing the research process. Moreover, to achieve dependability, the congruence between the research design and research questions, the parallelism between the findings and data sources and the review of data collection protocol and data findings by a peer or a colleague should be considered (Miles et al., 2014).

Credibility is another issue that questions "Are the results an accurate interpretation of the participants' meaning?" (Creswell, 2013, p. 207). At this stage, the researcher examines repeated behaviors or actions and considers contradictory evidence and conflicting interpretations (Creswell, 2013). Credibility refers to the trustworthiness of a research study's findings and interpretations, and techniques such as triangulation of sources, methods, theories, and researchers, peer review, reference adequacy, and member checks can be used to ensure it (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Similarly, Miles et al. (2014), mention some points to consider achieving credibility as triangulation among complementary methods and data sources, linking data presentation to former theories, and approval of the accuracy of the data by the original participants.

Transferability is another issue that should be taken into consideration for trustworthiness in a qualitative study. According to Lincoln and Guba (2013), in interpretive science, transferability corresponds to positivism's criterion of external

validity, but it does not aim for findings to be generalizable to different contexts or subjects as in traditional research; instead, the applicability of findings and interpretations is determined by those who wish to apply the findings and interpretations. To ensure transferability, according to Creswell (2013), researchers use thick description, which means providing details when explaining a case or writing about a theme, thereby enabling readers to transfer the information to other settings and understand whether the findings are transferable due to common characteristics.

Utilization is concerned with what the study does for its participants, and it can be achieved through presenting value-based or ethical concerns explicitly in the report and making sure that the findings are accessible to potential users (Miles et al., 2014).

Creswell (2013) suggest the use of at least two validation strategies for corresponding to reliability issues in qualitative research. For ensuring trustworthiness, this study employed data triangulation, member checking, building rapport with participants, presentation of the role of the researcher and peer debriefing strategy. Lincoln and Guba (2013) define data triangulation as a criterion whereby the researcher attempts to ensure reliability by using multiple methods, sources, and theories. For confirmability, data sources were diversified into three semi-structured interviews and teacher diaries seeking answers to research questions in relation to data triangulation of methods in this study. In this study, I observed that the participants' diaries complemented the interviews and enriched the data, as they provided richer and more specific details in their diaries regarding the content, timing, and context of the experiences they described during the interviews. Moreover, I explained my possible biases and presented in detail with the role of the researcher section to acknowledge the impact of the researcher bias on the development and presentation of the research. For dependability and credibility, besides data triangulation, firstly member checking is employed, which refers to reviewing and verifying of the accuracy of the transcribed interviews and diary interpretations by the participants themselves. Creswell (2013) dwelled on member checking as participants' views on credibility of the findings and interpretations

which involve giving data and conclusions back to the participants. Also, member checking plays a major role in case studies to have critical observations and accurate interpretations with the direction of the participants on the language of the study (Stake, 1995). By taking members checking preliminary analysis consisting of description or themes enables taking participants' view and dwelling on what was missing (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, I shared the transcripts of the interviews, debriefing form and the summary of the interpretations of data sources with each participant to get their approval in terms of accuracy of the interpretations and to receive their feedback. Moreover, Creswell and Poth (2024), having a peer review or debriefing of the data, provides an external check by a student or colleague, who is accustomed to phenomenon explored and has no connection to study, through hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations by creating a sense of interrater reliability to study. In this study, I shared my data and data analysis process with two colleagues of mine. One of them is an English Instructor at a preparatory department and a Ph.D. student in the field of English Language Teaching. The other is an English teacher at a private school and a M.A. student in the field of English Language Teaching. Peers went over emerging codes and themes, findings, interpretations, and conclusions throughout the analysis process of the research to achieve dependability and credibility. Also, supervisor and co-advisor reviewed this study from the beginning of the research process by checking research questions, research design, data analysis, findings and conclusions. Furthermore, according to McGrath et al. (2019), building rapport and initiating interaction is very important to create a relationship of trust with participants, which enhances the comfort of the participant during the data collection process. Although I am not an observer at the workplaces of the participants, I am also familiar with neoliberal academic culture, which made me relatively acknowledged about their possible struggles beforehand. Since participants are my peers from an English Language Teaching master program, I also had a chance to have conversations with them before and after the data collection process, which built trust between me and the participants. For transferability, I tried to give specific details related to research's participants by giving slightly thick descriptions about each case besides elaborating on the details of the setting and data procedures. Lastly, ethical considerations were taken into

account in this study with voluntary basis participation forms and the presentation of ethical approval documents.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

Taking ethical standards into consideration is essential in research involving human participants. For assuring ethical standards, formal approval was initially obtained from the Human Subjects Ethics Committee of Middle East Technical University. After receiving ethical approval, participants were provided with an informed consent form before data collection process. This form debriefed participants about the study's purpose, procedures and potential risks. Also, they were given debriefing form to make them reach an overview about the nature of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary; subjects were explicitly informed of their right to refuse to answer specific questions or withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. To guarantee confidentiality and anonymity, the specific research settings was masked, and pseudonyms were chosen by all participants in the final report. In addition, this study utilized AI-powered tools (Gemini, ChatGPT, Grammarly, NapkinAI, DeepL) to improve the clarity, transferability, reader-friendliness, comprehensibility and fluency of the overall text, to correct grammatical errors, diversify vocabulary, and to address punctuation and spelling errors, as well as citation errors in in-text and end-text references, and to create figures and to translate Turkish interviews into English.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings based on three semi-structured interviews and two teacher diary entries of each participant are presented. The data is organized thematically under the research questions guiding this study. The thematic findings are systematically concluded by direct data excerpts and the researcher's analytical comments.

4.1. Positioning of Early Career Part-Time English Instructors

This section will respond to the following research question:

1. How do early-career part-time English instructors at the English preparatory departments of foundation universities in Türkiye perceive how they are positioned by their institutions and community under precarious work conditions?

The first research question of this thesis aimed to explore participants' views on how they are positioned by their institutions and communities. Through Springveld (2017)'s conceptualization of precarity as financial and existential insecurity, both deductive and in-deductive analysis after two-cycle coding revealed two main themes regarding positioning by their institutions and one main theme regarding positioning by the community. Regarding positioning by their institutions, the two main themes are "economic devaluation" and "professional devaluation". Under the theme of economic devaluation, participants stated that they experienced a positioning categorized by "replaceability" and "unpaid labor". Under the second theme, participants believed they were professionally devalued by the organization through being perceived as an "undervalued professional entity". Regarding their

positioning by the community, the “sacred but unvalued paradox” emerges as a theme, and participants state that they experience exploitation through sanctity despite unimproving working conditions. The figure below summarizes the themes that emerged.

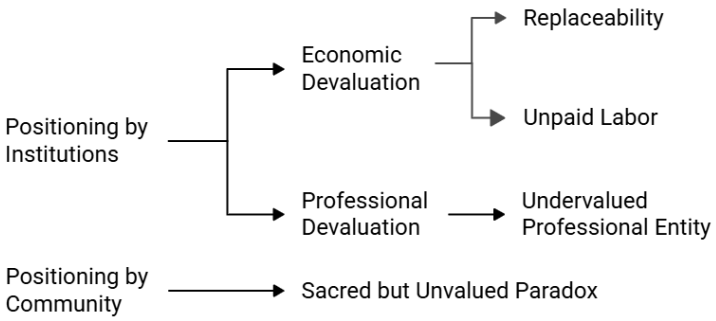

Figure 1. Positioning by Institutions and Community

In this section, Positioning Theory (Harré & Gillett, 1994) is utilized to comprehend how early-career, part-time English language instructors who have experience at foundation universities perceive their positioning by the institutions and the broader community. The data indicates that the precarious working conditions common in foundation universities have an impact on how these instructors perceive and reflect on their assigned roles. Throughout the interviews and diary entries, Aylin, Sena, Eylül, Freesia and Cotton expressed a shared view of being assigned to positions that are undervalued and disadvantaged. All participants dwelled on the economic, professional and societal devaluation of their profession.

A recurring theme through which participants realized this devaluation was the institutional differentiation between full-time and part-time staff. For instance, early-career instructors like Eylül, Aylin and Sena expressed a sense of inequality regarding assigned workload. Although they share equal teaching duties and responsibilities with their full-time colleagues, the lack of equal pay and clear definitions of working hours created emotional burden on their shoulders. Similarly, Freesia and Cotton highlighted how this inequality diminished their sense of belonging, as they observed full-time instructors being rewarded for their commitment while part-timers were pacified and marginalized. Based on these

experiences of the participants, their perceptions of their institutional positioning are categorized into two forms of devaluation: economic devaluation (characterized by replaceability and the assignment of unpaid labor) and professional devaluation (characterized by the underestimation of their professional entity).

4.1.1. Economic Devaluation by Institutions: "Disposable Commodity"

Economic devaluation emerged as a theme in how the participants perceived their institutional positioning. Instead of being viewed as professional English language instructors, the participants felt they were positioned by the institution as if they were disposable commodities. This sense of devaluation was boosted by the precarity of their employment contracts, part-time insurance status, and the institutional expectation of uncompensated effort. In the eyes of the participants, the administration framed their existence through the lenses of replaceability and unpaid labor.

4.1.1.1. Replaceability

The data demonstrates that part-time English instructors are perceived as a temporary and renewable workforce by their former or current institutions. The constant threat of dismissal, precarity of employment contracts, and their utilization as “cheap labor” shaped the participants' perceptions of being replaceable. Eylül, for instance, articulated that the institution viewed her not as a developing instructor, but as a “renewable resource” (easily replaceable) due to the high turnover rate of part-time instructors. When she said, “renewable source,” she meant that their positions at the institution can be easily terminated and other part-time instructors can be quickly hired to replace them. Recognizing that her job security was tied to unquestioning compliance, she expressed her frustration regarding the administration's short-term, disposable perspective about part-time English language instructors:

> As a part-time instructor, you can be replaced easily. You leave and the next person comes in; you leave and the next person comes in. It’s how it is in part-time work. People come and go because there’s no fixed contract or anything like that. That’s why they see you as replaceable. Didn’t follow the

> rules? Not doing what you are expected? Bye-bye, part-time instructor. They made us feel that in every ounce of our being. (P4_Eylül, Interview 1)

Similar to Eylül's thoughts, Cotton elaborated on the constant anxiety of being treated as an "extra" at his former institution. Cotton remembers the inequality in payment and insurance at his former institution. He also remembers how he has been pacified in the face of how he has been treated as replaceable compared to his full-time colleagues. He emphasized how institutional regulations, such as the dismissal of a part-time teacher due to a reduction in the number of classes resulting from a large number of students passing the mid-term proficiency, positioned him under a constant threat of contract termination. Moreover, he reflected on the way his pedagogical efforts were grasped as irrelevant to his job security:

> I feel like a part-time English teacher at a foundation university is constantly at risk of being fired. It doesn't even have to be because of anything you did. Ultimately, if midterm exams are held and a large number of students pass during the midterm period, your role effectively comes to an end. Your chances of being fired are high... And no matter how much effort you put in, they can just say, 'Sorry, it's not working out for us' and fire you. Besides that, compared to the permanent staff, you're essentially an extra. They always keep that feeling hanging over us. (P5_Cotton, Interview 1)

To demonstrate this temporal and precarious positioning, Cotton employed the noteworthy metaphor of a "seasonal worker" (temporary teacher), which meant that he felt like they are positioned as short-term based employees. He noted that the institution positioned them simply to meet immediate temporary employee needs: "In other words, we're seasonal workers. That is, in the eyes of institutions and society. As I said, teaching is now seen as being on the same level as unemployment" (P5_Cotton, Interview 1).

Similarly, Freesia highlighted how the absence of labor rights and full insurance framed them as the most easily sacrificed units in the institutional hierarchy: "The people who are easiest to let go of...the ones who can be replaced most easily are the part-timers, since our insurance is based on part-time hours, and we don't have any rights or benefits" (P3_Freesia, Interview 1). Consequently, Freesia perceived that the marketization of higher education and fluctuating student numbers reduced part-

time instructors to only "short-term problem-solving tools", completely detaching their presence from professional teaching identities.

Overall, Eylül, Cotton and Freesia reported their experiences with the threat of replaceability. These experiences reveal that the issue of replaceability plays a role in the economic devaluation of part-time instructors early in their careers by leaving them under constant threat of dismissal and constantly reminding them of their precarious working conditions.

4.1.1.2. Unpaid Labor

Alongside the threat of replaceability, the extraction of uncompensated labor was another mechanism through which institutions economically devalued these early-career instructors. The data indicate that the participants felt their former or current institutions weaponized their precarious status to demand extra administrative and pedagogical duties, such as grading, writing detailed feedback, and attending meetings, etc., without any economic rewards or compensation.

For instance, Aylin, as an early-career part time English language instructor, contemplates on how she is positioned while expressing her sadness about unfairness. She wishes to receive the deserved equality between part-time and full-time instructors considering that the only difference between her and full-time instructors is that she has not completed her master's thesis. She repeatedly emphasized sharing the same workload with full-time instructors; yet, they didn't receive equal payment, which decreased her motivation and shaped her perception about her place in the institution. Aylin described this positioning, utilizing the metaphors of "easy prey" and "slave" to conceptualize how she felt exploited by the administration. She underlined the systemic injustice of performing the same demanding tasks as full-time staff without the corresponding financial compensation:

> Both full-time and part-time staff handle all exam supervising and grading. But for example, in the prep groups I work with, I don't get paid for grading exams, even though I'm required to do it because I am an employee.…But why don't I get paid for this? Grading a writing exam isn't easy when you

> think about it... While a full-time staff member can have this grading work included in their salary, I can't. (P1_Aylin, Interview 1)

Furthermore, Aylin explicitly framed this dynamic as a deliberate institutional strategy to maximize output while minimizing costs, stating: "They perceive us as easy prey...they get the same work done by paying lower wages, contributing less to insurance…paying lower salaries... I think it's beneficial for them. It's harmful for us" (P1_Aylin, Interview 1).

This institutional disregard for the part-time instructors' working hours and boundaries was also prominent in Freesia and Sena's accounts. Freesia dwells on economic segregation like the other participants and realizes his devalued positioning in the sense of belonging in his institution. The way that he is perceived as inexperienced and devalued as a part-timer decreases his motivation to put extra effort into his work. When he observes commitment of full-timers to their jobs, he associates this with how they are rewarded for their efforts. Freesia recounted instances of unpaid marking and mandatory staff meetings, noting how the institution positioned them not as respected colleagues, but as subordinates who could be disciplined. He expressed the sadness he felt because of being scolded by the administrators like a student for requesting online meetings to avoid unpaid waiting hours on campus:

> I'm waiting at the office from 1:00 to 3:30. After that, there's a one-hour meeting... It's like we're just sitting there, like students or something…We get scolded. They say, 'You're not participating, you're not coming, we won't do an online meeting. We'll do it in person, and you'll have to come...'. So, we're grading papers without getting any payment. (P3_Freesia, Interview 1)

Similarly, Sena talks about the way that she is expected to serve as if she is a full-time worker although she is not paid equally. Sena works for the same amount of time with her full-time colleagues and she is responsible for the same duties although she is a part-timer. She feels exhausted due to unclear definitions of working hours and responsibilities (demand of extra preparation for lesson plans, grading, feedback), which puts stress on her shoulders while keeping up with the curriculum

timing, and yet not receiving the payment for it. Sena reflected on the lack of respect for her working hours and the constant demand for extra tasks with an internal awareness of this exploitation, stating: “Especially as a teacher working at a foundation university, the institution have a lot of demands on us. They don’t pay respect to our working hours” (P2 _Sena, Interview 3).

Overall, Aylin, Sena and Freesia expressed their experiences due to unpaid labor. Taken as a whole, these experiences reveal that the issue of unpaid labor is not only a matter of administrative negligence, but a systematic exploitation mechanism that reinforces the economic devaluation and marginalization of part-time instructors early in their careers.

4.1.2. Professional Devaluation by Institutions: “De-professionalized”

Building upon the economic devaluation presented previously, the participants also faced professional devaluation. This condition was ignited by the intersection of their part-time status and their identity as early-career instructors. The data indicate that the manifestation of this professional devaluation occurred through the underestimation of their professional entity. Rather than being recognized as qualified English language instructors, these part-time instructors were downgraded to the status of de-professionalized subordinates.

A mechanism of de-professionalized positioning was the undervaluation of the participants' academic credentials and pedagogical expertise. Although they hold degrees in English Language Teaching and pursue graduate studies, the participants reported being treated as professionally unsatisfactory. In some of the incidents, the institutions disregarded their teacher identities, positioning them as passive deliverers of the curriculum.

Eylül recalled an incident in which an administrator explicitly attacked her professional status at her former institution. The appointed principal underestimated part-time instructors’ professional beings by highlighting their lack of permanent status. Despite her extensive academic background in foreign language education,

being subjected to such remarks deeply demotivated her and felt like an attack on her identity as a teacher at the start of her career: “The principal had the audacity to tell part-time teachers, ‘You’re not considered as real teachers’... As someone who graduated from a faculty of education, hearing —‘You’re not a real teacher’— is absolutely demotivating” (P4_Eylül, Interview 2). Eylül reflects on this experience by remembering that her experience at the foundation university was presented as a favor by the administration to make them feel professionally unsatisfactory.

Aylin similarly conceptualized this de-professionalization through the institution's disregard for her extra pedagogical efforts. She experienced identity tension when her aspiration to be a “hands-on teacher” clashed with the administration's expectation that she should only "stick to the curriculum". She articulated how this restrictive positioning made her professional creativity invisible:

> The “just implement the curriculum” mindset really takes over here in the administration... The moment I switch into “hands-on teacher” mode—which comes naturally to me—I can’t help but think, I have to pay extra pedagogical effort, contributing to the curriculum. There’s a clash between my view and institution’s perspective. But in the end, I give extra from myself. My efforts are not really being recognized by the administration. (P1_Aylin, Interview 2)

Perhaps the clearest example of an underappreciated professional identity had befallen Cotton. He recalled an incident in which, completely disregarding the requirement for pedagogical qualifications, he was asked to teach Russian in the Modern Languages Department at the Foundation University in addition to his duties in the preparatory program, simply because Russian was his second language. When he stated that he was unqualified for the position, the administration rejected him not because of a lack of qualifications, but because his name sounded “too Turkish” to be marketed as a Russian language teacher. This incident deeply highlighted how meaningless his educational efforts and initiative were perceived to be:

> ‘So, do you know Russian?’ Yes, I do, sir. ‘Oh, okay, then you can teach Russian... Oh, what’s your name?’ It’s Ahmet Burak (*A Turkish pseudonym assigned to Cotton by the researcher*). ‘Well, then you can’t be a Russian teacher. Your name is too Turkish.’ I mean my agency doesn’t matter anyway. Do I want to do this job, or don’t I?... All the hard work we put in

> over the years at the education faculty is being disregarded... In this system, they're just using you for the moment because you're the most suitable cog in the machine. Your qualifications and your competence don't matter at all to the institution. (P5_Cotton, Interview 3)

By utilizing the metaphor of a "suitable cog in a rotating system", Cotton summarized how the institution positioned him not as a pedagogical identity, but as a temporal utility. Three of the participants, Eylül, Aylin and Cotton, reported that they are undervalued professionally by their institutions. Consequently, the systematic devaluation of their educational backgrounds and teacher identities shaped how these instructors perceived their institutional positioning.

4.1.3. Positioning by Community: The "Sacred but Unvalued" Paradox

Participants had to navigate conflicts related to the status attributed to them by the broader Turkish society, going beyond the boundaries of their institutions. The devaluation experienced within the institution was often reflected in societal perceptions of the teaching profession, further complicating the situation. The data shows that participants' experiences with everyday conversations, assumed stereotypes, and precarious working conditions in Turkey shaped how their perceptions about how they were positioned by society. A common experience expressed by four of the participants was the "sacred but unvalued" paradox. Historically and discursively, the teaching profession in Turkey has been raised to a "sacred" position, intrinsically linked to emotional commitment and self-sacrifice. However, the data reveal that this emotional social narrative often serves as a veil, actively masking the exploitation and precarious working conditions faced by part-time English teachers early in their careers. Highlighting how this economic and professional devaluation permeates the broader community, Vatansever and Yalçın (2015) argue that the commodification of academic labor and knowledge poses threats far beyond the erosion of job security and professional rights; rather, it represents the uncontrolled entrance of capitalist market logic into all social spheres, driven by the theoretical pursuit of limitless capital accumulation.

Cotton noted that society increasingly equates the teaching profession with economic instability and expressed the view that the profession has lost its social prestige. He

argued that the erosion of this "sacred" status is directly related to the decline in teachers' economic value. Although Cotton believed that the profession itself did not need to be perceived as sacred and that such respect must be earned through personal effort, society's devaluing positioning led him to feel that he had studied Foreign Language Education in vain. Cotton felt that teachers were no longer viewed as respected intellectuals but rather as minimum-wage workers or even the unemployed:

> I feel like teaching is no longer respected as a profession in Turkey. To put it frankly, there are many people who view education graduates as future police officers or as unemployed. Or as people who will have to work for minimum wage. It's as if we'd spent four years studying to become teachers for nothing. (P5_Cotton, Interview 2)

Cotton's excerpt illustrates an example of social devaluation in which, in the eyes of a society that measures professional value solely by economic stability, the intense academic effort devoted to foreign language education is viewed as meaningless.

Eylül explicitly exposed this social hypocrisy by introducing the concept of "weaponized sanctity". She emphasized that the discourse of "sanctity" is not only a cultural tradition but also a manipulative tool used by both society and institutions to legitimize labor exploitation. She also noted that if she continues her doctoral studies, she wishes to focus on teachers' well-being; given that many teachers worldwide are leaving the profession, she believes the value placed on teachers must be reestablished in parallel with the need to improve working conditions. She expressed deep disappointment regarding how the emotional and caring nature of the profession is exploited to silence demands for better working conditions:

> I feel like my labor is being exploited to an extreme degree. It goes like this: conversations always start with, 'Teaching is a sacred profession', and then they make you do everything (…) Yes, teaching is a sacred profession. But it's still a job… And the exploitation is there—and the thing they use to justify it is that it's a sacred profession. (P4_Eylül, Interview 2)

Similar to Eylül's perspective, Sena highlighted the dilemma between verbal respect and material reality. She noted, "As you know, in our society, teaching is a

profession that's held in very high regard... It's spoken of with great respect. But how much are teachers' working conditions actually improving? That's the question" (P2_Sena, Interview 1). When taken together, these anecdotes reveal how the "sacred teacher's" social status functions as a mechanism of oppression; this mechanism compels teachers to accept poor material conditions in exchange for superficial verbal respect.

Furthermore, Freesia's experiences have shown that even this superficial social respect is largely contingent on one's employment contract. He has observed that the community's approval is inevitably linked to job security; the teacher's "sacred" aura vanishes the moment it becomes known that they work part-time:

> What do you do for a living? I say I'm a teacher. Immediately, people go, 'Oh, hello, teacher! Welcome! You have such a great job,' and so on. Then they ask if I'm a tenured teacher. Are you a tenured teacher? No, I'm not. Then they're like, 'Oh, well, that's too bad,' you know. But really, what we do is the same job… Yes, we're doing almost the same profession, but it's probably perceived differently because of the economic situation. (P3_Freesia, Interview 1)

Freesia's experience reveals how the community intertwines professional respect with economic instability. The data shows that when participants engage with their communities, their professional identities are devalued due to their precarious circumstances.

The four of the participants, Cotton, Eylül, Sena, Freesia, reported their experiences with exploitation through sanctity. Ultimately, the community places them in a paradox: they are ideologically elevated as "sacred" figures yet devalued as financially unstable part-time employees.

4.2. Navigating Teacher Identity, Emotional Labor, and Agency

The second research question this thesis explored was the following:

2. How do early-career part-time English instructors at the English preparatory departments of foundation universities in Türkiye navigate teacher identity, emotional labor, and agency at the micro, meso, and macro contexts?

To answer the second question, the analysis focused on how participants navigated the phenomena of emotional labor, teacher identity, and agency. Although emotional labor, teacher identity and agency are interdependent, these concepts are analyzed separately at first, then the interaction is highlighted for analytical reasons. After presenting the themes within each of these concepts, the section on navigation of the spectrum illustrated the relationships between them. Under emotional labor, there are two main themes: tension under precariousness and tension due to institutional dissonance. In the teacher identity section, there are two main themes: identity tension due to organizational realities and emotional dissonance under precariousness, and teacher identity at the micro-context level. The navigation of the spectrum theme, under the subthemes of compliance and resistance, illustrates each participant's navigation process of emotion-identity-agency triangle.

4.2.1. Emotional Labor

In this study, the concept of emotional labor was analyzed using the framework defined by Benesch (2018) as the conflict between institutional expectations or educational policies and instructors' personal beliefs. The analysis resulted in two themes at the macro and meso levels. The first theme highlights the conflict between teachers' precarious conditions and their own teaching identities and pedagogical beliefs, which creates emotional dissonance. The second theme demonstrates that the conflict between institutional expectations and pedagogical beliefs manifests in subcategories such as curriculum rigidity, ethically compromising absenteeism policies, the commodification of educational materials, and profit-driven assessment mechanisms.

4.2.1.1. Tension as Emotional Dissonance under Precarity

All participants expressed demotivation stemming from job insecurity, low wages, and administrative exploitation. The constant anxiety of being easily replaceable hindered their ability to actualize their desired teacher identities. In alignment with Benesch's (2018) framework, this emotional dissonance manifested as intense emotional labor, which refers to a direct conflict between the demands of macro level policies and the instructors' own professional well-being.

Aylin, Sena, and Eylül dwelled on the demotivation they experienced when institutional "feeling rules" conflicted with their own beliefs. Driven by the fear of easy replacement, Aylin and Sena engaged in surface acting (Hochschild, 1983/2003/2012) to project a compliant and positive external mask.

In her diary, Aylin articulated how the lack of a long-term contract fostered hyper-vigilance. Besides, precarious conditions (low hourly payments, unpaid labor) boosted her surface acting. Surface acting refers to her effort to comply with feeling rules (expectation of professionalism) at her institution while she felt demotivated intrinsically (Hochschild, 1983/2003/2012):

> The unfavorable aspects of working as a part-time instructor, including job insecurity, low and hour-based payments, and administrative exploitation, created a constant state of internal emotional labor and distress. The lack of a long-term contract fostered persistent anxiety and the need for hyper-vigilance, making me feel like an outsider constantly needing to prove my worth to justify contract renewal. Furthermore, the low, hour-based pay led to feelings of being devalued and exploited, especially when performing crucial but unpaid tasks like detailed lesson planning or feedback; this resentment often clashed with the professional expectation to maintain a positive, compliant exterior (surface acting), resulting in emotional exhaustion and frustration. (P1_Aylin, Teacher Diary Entry 2)

Sena contributed to this by identifying the hidden cost of this emotional compliance: the normalization of exploitation. She mentioned that the administration assigned her extra responsibilities, such as participating in foundation support club activities and taking on additional instructional hours, which were framed in a way that made refusal feel impossible for her. When she masked her exhaustion to appear "cooperative", the administration capitalized on her compliance by assigning further unpaid duties:

> While I outwardly accepted these tasks with professionalism, internally I experienced emotional exhaustion and a growing sense of being taken advantage of. Suppressing discomfort in order to appear cooperative gradually created a disconnect between my authentic emotions and my professional performance... This experience has sharpened my awareness of emotional labor as a structural, rather than purely individual, challenge within neoliberal academic settings. (P2_Sena, Teacher Diary Entry 2)

For Eylül, the emotional dissonance of precarity during her foundation university experience manifested through existential crisis. She experienced internal questioning regarding her career choice, highlighting the inescapability of the emotional dissonance due to precarious condition for an early-career teacher: “That thing they call ‘emotional labor’ these days... Did I really choose the right career? I wish I’d done something else... It’s really upsetting” (P4_Eylül, Interview 1). Freesia’s experienced macro-level precarity through the fluctuation in his teaching hours between semesters (from 20 hours down to potentially zero), which generated financial anxiety that demolished his pedagogical motivation. He realized that under such precarious conditions, investing emotionally in teaching was useless. Consequently, he engaged in emotional dissonance: “While working during the fall semester, you start to worry about the future at some point—what if they don’t give me any hours next semester? What will I do? My motivation definitely drops” (P3_Freesia, Interview 3).

While the other participants focused on the emotional and institutional symptoms of precarity, Cotton provided a structural diagnosis of the macro context that led to emotional labor in his experience. He explicitly traced the root of their emotional labor and lack of agency back to national higher education policies and regulations. Cotton argued that foundation universities do not invent these exploitative practices; rather, they exploit the vulnerabilities deliberately created by state-sanctioned neoliberal policies:

> The main reason we teach part-time at the university is due to a regulation enacted in 2018 to allow universities to hire part-time staff and instructors. And at its core, the main factor limiting our ability to teach—and our agency—is actually this...The lack of job security restricts us in every way when it comes to dealing with administration. At the same time, the administration, thanks to the restrictions this country imposes on us—or rather, because of these restrictions—ends up in a position where they can exploit us. (P5_Cotton, Interview 2)

Overall, all the participants experienced emotional labor due to their precarity and lack of agency as they expressed the tension between their pedagogical being and macro level policies that led to precarious working conditions for part-time English language instructors.

4.2.1.2. Tension due to Institutional Dissonance

Drawing on Benesch's (2018) framework, emotional labor in this study is operationalized as the emotional tension arising from the conflict between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and institutional realities. The data displays that part-time, early-career English language instructors experience demotivation and emotional labor due to institutional dissonance at the meso level. This dissonance is driven by the institutional expectations of foundation universities, manifesting through issues such as curriculum rigidity, ethically compromising absenteeism policies, the commodification of educational materials, and profit-driven assessment mechanisms.

4.2.1.2.1. Curriculum Rigidity: Performativity versus Pedagogy

Aylin, Sena, Freesia, and Cotton experienced emotional tension between their student-centered pedagogical beliefs and the institutions' demand to strictly adhere to the curriculum. The rigidity of the curriculum was the trigger for a loss of motivation; this situation limited instructors' sense of initiative and prioritized institutional efficiency over the actual benefit of students.

Aylin recounted a critical incident that encapsulated this tension. To address her students' specific needs, she designed an interactive portfolio project. However, the administration criticized the project as too time-consuming and pressured her to adopt faster, standardized methods to "cover the curriculum". This conflict between her commitment to pedagogical quality and the institution's demand for performance-oriented outcomes led to a deep sense of devaluation:

> Even after being told how much work my interactive portfolio required, and that curriculum could be finished more quickly without extra sources, I still implemented it in my class... I didn't want the project to go to waste after preparing it because it had come about from an idea the students had suggested... However, I felt discouraged when they said, 'Don't apply it', and 'Let's make it faster.' (P1_Aylin, Interview 2)

In her diary, Aylin explicitly labeled this experience as emotional labor, noting that it forced her to consciously resist being treated as "just a cog in the machine". She notes:

> I felt deeply demoralized and conflicted. It made me revisit my belief that good pedagogy automatically equals institutional value. It triggered a strong feeling of devaluation (emotion labor). It forced me to consciously decide that my identity as a quality, hands-on teacher was more important than aligning perfectly with administrative efficiency metrics, reinforcing my resistance (agency) to being treated as just a cog in the machine. (P1_Aylin, Teacher Diary Entry 1)

This emotional tension was shared by other participants as well. Sena expressed her exhaustion stemming from the constant, anxiety-inducing pressure of having to "keep up" with a rigid, exam-oriented curriculum, despite her desire to teach active, communication-focused lessons:

> The curriculum expectations and the emphasis on assessment may conflict with my pedagogical beliefs. Based on my own beliefs, I prefer a classroom environment where students are more active, but I've realized that this isn't really possible when we're told what curriculum we must follow. So, I am feeling conflicted. Sometimes I feel torn. When I think, 'Let's do this activity,' I feel the pressure inside me that the students are falling behind the curriculum. And this creates a sense of emotional exhaustion. (P2_Sena, Interview 2)

Similarly, Freesia complained that the inflexible curriculum forced him to teach irrelevant topics simply because they were on the syllabus, preventing him from addressing his students' actual learning gaps:

> I'd like to focus on the areas where students struggle the most, but I can't focus on that because we have a program, and we need to finish that program within this week. Let's say that program includes a section that won't be very useful to the students, I can't remove it or assign that part as homework. I can't explain something that might be more helpful to students—perhaps something that would benefit them more on the exam—because the program is very rigid, and I have to follow it. (P3_Freesia, Interview 1)

Cotton summarized this shared frustration by emphasizing how the denial of pedagogical autonomy inherently hinders a teacher's professional identity:

> Because the curriculum is so rigid... when I made small changes in class the way I wanted... there was a lot of criticism. The administration said 'Let's stick to the curriculum more, teacher'(...) They were hindering your initiative and your work. So, as a teacher, being so restricted in making the decisions you want in the classroom was problematic. (P5_Cotton, Interview 1)

Aylin, Sena, Freesia and Cotton experienced the tension with the institutional pressure through curriculum rigidity, as they believe that their teacher beliefs and their entity are disregarded and prevented.

4.2.1.2.2. Absenteeism Policies: The Ethical Dilemmas of Administration

Absenteeism emerged as another factor of organizational dissonance that led participants into ethical and emotional dilemmas. The conflict stemmed from the tension between the instructors' empathetic and context-sensitive decisions and the organization's inflexible—or, conversely, overly flexible—bureaucratic rules.

Eylül and Freesia experienced emotional labor when they were unable to exercise their humanistic pedagogical initiatives due to the organization's strict micromanagement. Eylül faced an ethical dilemma regarding a student who had exceeded the absenteeism limit to care for her hospitalized mother. Under pressure to act professionally, she felt an emotional tension regarding her values. Choosing empathy over bureaucracy, Eylül passed the student; this decision created internal conflict because it contradicted the institution's "professional" rules:

> We had to follow the rules. For example, I had a student whose mother was in the hospital (...) As he exceeded the absenteeism limit, I experienced a dilemma. Should I fail him or should I help him pass? But it was a life-or-death situation... I let that student pass the class, out of a sense of conscience. Sometimes I do things that go against the rules set by the institution (...) Situations like that happened sometimes. (P4_Eylül, Interview 1)

Freesia found himself in a similar situation involving a student who had suffered severe burns but came to class to avoid failing the course due to absences. When Freesia realized he had no authority to excuse the student because the institution's strict micromanagement approach prioritized attendance records over student well-being. He felt a deep sense of helplessness:

> 'I was in pain, but I came anyway' he said. 'I came here so I wouldn't fail the course for absences.' (…) This student realized that if he told me, nothing would happen. I mean, I don't have that much power there… He came straight to class because he knew I couldn't do anything about it. And then in

> the first class, he asked, ‘Can you not mark me absent?’ My personal feelings were telling me not to mark him absent, but… I mean, there’s just so much going on. There’s way too much micromanagement from above. If something like that were noticed, I’d be in big trouble. (P3_Freesia, Interview 1)

On the contrary, Aylin engaged in emotional labor due to the institution's lack of transparency regarding absenteeism. Believing that regular attendance is pedagogically necessary, Aylin was disappointed by the administration's constant disregard for excessive absences, likely to maintain customer (student) satisfaction. She noted, “This is actually one of the most challenging aspects of working at a private university... It often leads me to find myself doing things I tell myself I shouldn’t be doing” (P1_Aylin, Interview 1). Whether through excessive rigidity or customer-focused tolerance, the way institutions dealt with absenteeism contradicted Eylül, Freesia and Aylin’s professional values.

4.2.1.2.3. Educational Materials: Commodification and Standardization

The data indicates that the selection and implementation of educational materials served as a means for the neoliberal commodification of education, causing significant emotional distress.

Aylin fought a “war” against her institution's attempt to standardize education by prohibiting the use of external/supplementary materials in previous terms. Aylin expressed that she wanted to present extra materials to her students for the benefit of students against the standardization expectations of her institution. For Aylin, the ability to provide extra resources was a core component of her teacher identity, and she had to actively advocate against the administration to preserve her pedagogical autonomy. She said:

> I’ve never been the type to like a lot of interference in my classroom. I wanted to be able to do whatever I wanted in my class, of course, while still sticking to the materials. For example, one of the biggest challenges I faced was the use of supplementary materials. They wanted to minimize the use of external materials so that everyone could use the same materials. I actually fought hard on these issues. So, I said, ‘I’m preparing these materials, and I can give them to everyone, and the teaching assistants can use them too.’ This was actually another battle I fought for the students—to give them as much as

> I possibly could. I think I can say this is part of my identity as a teacher. (P1_Aylin, Interview 1)

For Sena and Cotton, the emotional labor emerged from being forced into the role of corporate enforcers. They experienced tension between their pedagogical beliefs and customer-oriented approach of their institutions. Both participants experienced ethical tension when their institutions demanded that they force students to purchase expensive, institutionally produced textbooks or digital devices. Sena, drawing on her public university background, found it unethical to mandate a book set, knowing the financial burden it caused her students. She said, "The school asked them to buy the books and told them they had to get them from the school. Frankly, as a teacher, I didn't think it was right to make this mandatory or to say that in class" (P2_Sena, Interview 1). Cotton detailed an example of this commodification, where the institution ordered teachers to exclude students who did not buy the school's tablets with expensive educational materials in it:

> I believed that those tablets were extremely inefficient, terrible, and completely non-functional. But they also restricted access to the educational materials for students who didn't have those tablets. If students hadn't bought the book the school was selling, they didn't want us to include those students in the course. It was like, 'Just warn the ones with the alternative copies of the book, don't let them into the class.' They started taking their profit concerns into the classroom—to the point of saying, 'Don't educate this child'… After all, I'm here to teach them something… Whether they pay for tablets to the institution or not doesn't concern me much. (P5_Cotton, Interview 1)

Aylin, Sena and Cotton's examples indicate the tension that teachers experience between their values and expectations related to education at foundation universities. Teachers were forced to become agents of commercial publishing houses or profit-seeking foundation universities. They were mandated to police students if they have the original copies or not.

4.2.1.2.4. Exam Scores: Assessment as a Profit Mechanism

The manifestation of institutional dissonance occurred within assessment policies as well. Sena and Eylül articulated how exam scores were manipulated by the

administration, not as measures of student learning, but as tools for financial gain or rigid standardization.

Sena experienced the limitation of her agency when she was forbidden from using her initiative to pass a hardworking student who failed by a few points due to personal distress. The institution's refusal to acknowledge the student's process and the teacher's professional judgment regarding process-oriented assessment resulted in a "deep sense of disappointment and powerlessness" (P2_Sena, Interview 2).

> Having observed the student for two months, I felt I had a good grasp of her performance in class—her language level and proficiency. I believed she deserved to pass the module. In other words, I believe I should have been allowed to exercise my initiative as her instructor. I was actually a bit disappointed there because, as a teacher, I think this decision should be left to us to some extent. (P2_Sena, Interview 2)

Eylül highlighted the underlying motive behind these strict assessment rubrics. She realized that the foundation university's "customer-oriented" approach paradoxically required failing students through strict assessment rubrics, as proficiency exams generated additional revenue for the institution. This realization triggered emotional labor, as she was forced to participate in an unethical system that she did not consider pedagogically correct:

> I believe that there is an issue of not letting students pass indirectly. The institution wanted us to use strict rubrics that they prepared. The rubrics were so detailed that I thought they wanted to make the students take that exam again (...) At our private universities, I believe the only reason for this is actually to make money. It's not about the students passing, you know—it's more like they shouldn't pass. And that's part of the challenges and experiences at foundation university. (P4_Eylül, Interview 2)

Overall, the participants experienced tension as emotional labor, since their pedagogic values collided with the institution's neoliberal expectations. The rigid standardization of curricula, ethically conflicting absenteeism rules, the forced implementation of commodified materials, and profit-driven assessment rubrics denied their individual presence and professional agency, leaving them to navigate institutional dissonance at the meso context. Consequently, emotional labor is displayed as tension due to institutional dissonance in the data.

4.2.2. Teacher Identity

This study adopts Toker-Bradshaw's (2023) conceptualization of teacher identity as a making sense of themselves in relation to their communities at micro and broader discourses at meso and macro levels. All participants reported experiencing identity conflicts at the macro, meso, and micro levels. The analysis revealed two main themes regarding the concept of teacher identity. The first theme showed that the emotional dissonance they experienced under precarious conditions and the conflict between organizational realities and pedagogical idealism fueled identity tensions. The second theme indicated that classroom management and student misbehaviors caused identity tension and, consequently, led them to adapt their identities at the micro level.

4.2.2.1. Identity Tension due to Organizational Realities under Precarity

With emotional dissonance playing constantly in the background, all participants were compelled to experience a tension in their teacher identities in response to the precarious working conditions and organizational identities at foundation universities. The data indicates that all participants intrinsically positioned themselves against this precarity, which invoked tension between their imagined identities and practiced identities. This was aligned with the tension at the institutional level as all of the participants experienced a tension that display shifting from idealism to realism due to organizational realities.

Aylin felt the sting of economic and professional devaluation, explicitly recognizing that the administration treated her as a highly replaceable resource to fill scheduling gaps. When her pedagogical expertise was questioned by administrators who prioritized speed over the quality of her extra materials, she experienced demotivation. She felt like her hands were tied due to part time status. She experienced precarity and institutional dissonance, which created a dilemma between her student-centered pedagogical idealism and administrative mandates. She maintained a functional identity under the complexities of institutional expectations. She acknowledged the emotional exhaustion of this dual existence, describing it as playing the "three monkeys" to protect her professional well-being:

> You can't really let the children or the administration know too much about what you are going through at institution. It feels like you're tarnishing something you're trying to build alongside your professional identity. Because you're playing the three monkeys—hearing nothing, knowing nothing, seeing nothing. That's why it's hard; I feel like my emotional labor is going to waste. At the same time, while trying to give so much, I'm also still trying to maintain my identity as a teacher in the same way. (P1_Aylin, Interview 3)

For Sena, precarity manifested through institutional exploitation, such as working uncompensated extra hours, being forced to pay for the campus shuttle like a student. To cope with the overwhelming emotional labor, Sena felt compelled to reluctantly internalize these exploitative conditions without vocalizing her objections. Initially believing that an ideal teacher was primarily "approachable and empathetic", Sena soon realized that working within a foundation university required navigating complex power relations. Reflecting on an incident where the administration prevented her from using her initiative regarding a student's absenteeism, she understood the limits of her agency:

> The moment I thought I needed to take the initiative, I ran into a barrier. That's why it reminded me that I can't always be flexible… Since I work for an organization, I realized I also have to take into account the institution's expectations and the guidelines it has established. That's how it influenced me. (P2_Sena, Interview 2)

Similar to Aylin and Sena, working under the constant threat of job insecurity, low hourly pay, and institutional silencing induced emotional dissonance for Eylül. Eylül experienced the tension between idealism-to-realism by accepting the conflict between her role as an instructor and the institution's customer-oriented approach. Eylül felt the tension in her teacher identity due to the emotional and the institutional dissonance:

> Working at a foundation university deeply influenced how I understand my former, current, and future teacher identity. The emphasis on performance indicators, student satisfaction, and institutional image made me confront the realities of being an early-career, part-time instructor in Türkiye. There were moments that made me revisit my beliefs: When students expected leniency because of the "customer-oriented" environment I struggled with aligning my sense of professionalism with the institutional pressure to keep students satisfied. When scheduling, workload, and contract insecurity created

> emotional labor These moments made me reflect on the precariousness of foundation universities and how this shapes one's sense of stability, motivation, and agency. (P4_Eylül, Teacher Diary Entry 1)

Freesia recalled explicit threats from administrators, such as warnings that "Ankara is a small place" and that a bad reputation could ruin his career if he resisted unfair working conditions. This extended to the lowest levels of the institutional hierarchy, where even non-academic support staff degraded him due to his part-time status (e.g. not giving extra board marker or A4 paper to part-timers). The compounded weight of job insecurity, low pay, and humiliation led to surrender:

> The staff at that institution—whether they're office workers or kitchen staff—even they know the difference between part-timers and full-timers. They make a distinction between part-time and full-time positions. This has a negative impact on my motivation. Without motivation, there's nothing left—no sense of agency, no sense of identity. Nothing remains. (P3_Freesia, Interview 2)

Also, like the other participants, before starting his career at the foundation university, Freesia's ideal teacher identity centered on flexibility, building rapport, and treating students as individuals. However, he experienced a tension in the process of shifting from idealism to institutional realism:

> Working at a foundation university has significantly shaped how I view my career choices. Before entering this setting, I believed that my teacher identity would be shaped by my classroom decisions, my rapport with students, and my professional values. However, several experiences within the institution shaped these views. I feel heavy negative washback which is reflected upon my teaching and my views on being a teacher. (P3_Freesia, Teacher Diary Entry 1)

Cotton's experience represents the breaking point of identity tension under precarity, the emotional and institutional dissonance. For example, he had to work seven days of the week to survive low-hourly payments at foundation university and to feel financially secure. Taking breaks and experiencing medical emergencies resulted in pay cuts and he could not afford it due to the country's economic conditions and his family's financial situation. Therefore, he endured extra working hours, but this situation created damage in his ideal teacher identity in a position where he had limited agency.

> Working seven days a week while feeling that I had neither agency nor a voice as a teacher significantly damaged my perception of my teacher identity... The accumulated frustration that I was unable to express gradually wore me down... Being unable to voice one's concerns proved deeply corrosive; the frustration continued to grow despite the passive resistance I attempted to display. Ultimately, I felt trapped by my own choices. (P5_Cotton, Teacher Diary Entry 2)

Like the other participants, Cotton's realized that teacher identity is intertwined with institutional power, which led to tension between his former pedagogical idealism and institutional realism. He experienced two critical incidents that shattered his pedagogical ideals. First incident was the time he was forced to act as a "sales representative" for the institution's faulty tablets in his former institution. Secondly, he was offered to give Russian courses for extra payment at Modern Languages Department besides his class at preparatory department. However, this offer was related to his national background. The fact that administrators perceived teaching a language as a something that you can do without the competence to teach, and being rejected for a Russian teaching position simply because his name was "too Turkish" demotivated Cotton. These events proved to him that marketability surpassed competence:

> Prior to this incident, I largely believed that teacher identity was something grounded in academic qualifications, pedagogical competence, and professional ethics. I believed that the legitimacy of a teacher stemmed from the teacher's formal training and subject expertise. However, this showed me that teacher identity is not solely shaped by the teacher; it is also shaped and constrained by institutional needs and power relations. Both being considered suitable for teaching this language... and being rejected solely on the basis of my name being 'too Turkish' showed me how administrative perceptions overrule professional competence and teacher agency, which unfortunately reshaped my understanding of 'legitimate' language teachers in our country. (P5_Cotton, Teacher Diary Entry 2)

Overall, the simultaneous precarity and institutional dissonance led to identity tensions at the meso and macro level. All participants felt the tension between their former understanding of teacher identity and the identity that is required under precarious working conditions. This tension also occurred at the institutional level in terms of the necessity of a shift from pedagogical idealism to realism in terms of their teacher identities due to organizational realities.

4.2.2.2. Identity Tension due to Classroom Realities

Although this study examines the interaction between emotional labor, teacher identity, and agency, as well as the broader structural consequences of precariousness, the exploration of teacher identity necessarily begins at the micro level (in the classroom setting). Since this study approaches emotional labor in line with Benesch's (2018) framework, emotional labor is addressed at the institutional level. However, alongside findings at the meso and macro levels, the participants' classroom experiences also pose additional stress on their developing teacher identities, particularly because they are early-career instructors. The data indicates that four of the participants (Aylin, Sena, Cotton, and Freesia) experienced a significant identity conflict between the humanistic, student-centered pedagogical beliefs they acquired during their undergraduate education and the behavioral realities of the classroom setting. In contrast, Eylül experienced a unique form of tension; although she entered the profession with rigid, academically focused ideals, she was confronted with the emotional nature of being a teacher. Despite these different starting points, the conflict between the "imagined" teacher identities and classroom realities compelled all participants to experience identity tension and ultimately to reconstruct their pedagogical selves.

Classroom management and student behaviors became stress factors for some of the participants even before they started the profession. For example, Aylin and Cotton remember their anxiety about how to manage crowded preparatory classrooms when they first received the student list. Sena mentioned that she experienced anxiety about classroom management because she feared being underestimated due to her age and not being able to control classroom management. Freesia and Eylül also experienced anxiety over classroom management due to the fear of student discipline problems. Some of these fears actualized in various ways for some of the participants as they faced classroom realities. As early-career instructors, Aylin, Sena, Freesia, and Cotton graduated with strong student-centered ideals, maintaining genuine care for their students. They initially sought to establish their teacher identities upon approachability and sincerity. However, the realities of classroom management and student behavior forced a renegotiation of these identities.

For Sena and Freesia, a source of identity tension was the exploitation of their pedagogical goodwill. Both instructors initially adopted a relaxed, sincere approach, hoping to build warm rapport. However, they soon realized that their students misinterpreted this sincerity as a lack of authority. Freesia articulated how his attempt to be the "approachable teacher" backfired, positioning him as an easily manipulated figure in the eyes of his students:

> I wanted to shape my identity as a teacher by becoming the kind of sincere instructor who builds personal relationships with students like this... You know, there's that thing where people take advantage of your good intentions? Well, I've encountered that a lot. The more I tried to be friendly with these students... the more they'd say, 'Freesia is a laid-back teacher. Let's not study too much.' Are you saying 'we don't have to study' with other teachers either? 'No, we're not saying that to other teachers, sir. They make us do it by force,' they'd say. (P3_Freesia, Interview 2)

Sena experienced a similar trajectory. In her diary entries and interviews, she reflected on how her initial belief that "good teaching" equated to emotional availability and warmth was shattered by students crossing professional boundaries. For example, she mentioned her initial warm attitude affected her classroom management negatively in students' use of lesson breaks exploitatively: "Because they saw me as approachable and sincere, they were too relax. There were times when they'd leave the classroom. They'd say, 'Ms. Sena will let us in anyway,' and they come late to class" (P2_Sena), Interview 2). This forced her to consciously mask her inherent friendliness and to set strict boundaries:

> Before these experiences, I viewed teacher identity primarily through a pedagogical and relational lens... I valued closeness and care. However, emotionally challenging incidents—such as students misinterpreting my openness or attempting to cross professional boundaries—made me realize that teacher identity is not only about caring and connection, but also about clearly defined boundaries and self-protection. (P2_Sena, Teacher Diary Entry 2)

For Aylin and Sena, the tension was boosted by disruptive classroom dynamics. Aylin's idealistic vision of a cooperative learning environment clashed with instances of student disrespect, or even changing clothes during lessons. Similarly, she expressed the emotional exhaustion of trying to manage a generation that tested

the limits of her authority: “Let’s just say the current generation does everything in class. They play games. They do their makeup, too. If necessary, I’ve even seen students change their sweaters right there in class—it’s that bad” (P1_Aylin, Interview 2). Sena experienced tension when she felt like her teacher presence was disregarded. The two of her students get into an argument with each other over a topic unrelated to the lesson in the classroom. She expressed her frustration about how her control over managing classroom was lost suddenly:

> There was a moment when two students were arguing in class. Without my knowledge or control, they started arguing the moment I turned my back. The words they were saying to each other were really harsh. And I couldn’t figure out how the conversation had gotten there so suddenly in a classroom setting. The fact that they used those kinds of words without even considering my presence really annoyed me. (P2_Sena, Interview 2)

These incidents illustrate how the participants' initial, purely pedagogical identities (as Aylin noted: “focused almost exclusively on teaching excellence”) were inadequate for surviving the relational complexities of the preparatory classroom, necessitating an involuntary shift from idealism to authoritative control. In addition to boundary issues, the participants' status as early-career instructors introduced unique identity tensions. Cotton faced overt underestimation based on his age. In a culture where authority is often correlated with seniority, he had to navigate students openly questioning his competence: “When I had students who were older than me, they would say, ‘Aren’t you a bit too young? Are we really supposed to be taking classes from you?’ because in Turkey, age is so closely associated with respect” (P5_Cotton, Interview 1). Unlike the others who struggled with establishing boundaries, Cotton navigated this tension not by becoming overly strict, but by relying on pedagogical competence and flexible dialogue to gradually earn his students' respect, thereby adapting his practiced identity to the needs of the classroom.

Eylül presented a contrasting case. While the others mourned the loss of their “friendly teacher” ideal, Eylül mourned the absence of the “ideal student”. Entering the profession with high academic expectations, her emotional labor stemmed from accepting student irresponsibility:

> It wasn’t the ideal teacher I had in mind at first—it was the ideal student. I was like, ‘I’ll explain it, and they’ll just pick it up.’ But it wasn’t like that at all... There are some very irresponsible students, and after a while, you just think: I’m doing everything. Still not working? You start questioning yourself a lot at some point. (P4_Eylül, Interview 1)

Eylül's narrative demonstrates that identity tension at the micro level is not strictly about classroom management; it is also about the process of lowering academic expectations and coming to terms with the existence of irresponsible students who do not aim high academic success. Overall, all of the participants expressed the tension that they experienced with their pre-service ideals and in-service classroom management experiences.

4.2.2.3. Reconstructing the Pedagogical Self in Classroom Realities

The data indicates that the harsh classroom realities and resultant identity tension compelled all participants to resolve their tensions by actively reconstructing their pedagogical selves. However, the trajectories of this reconstruction varied in the data.

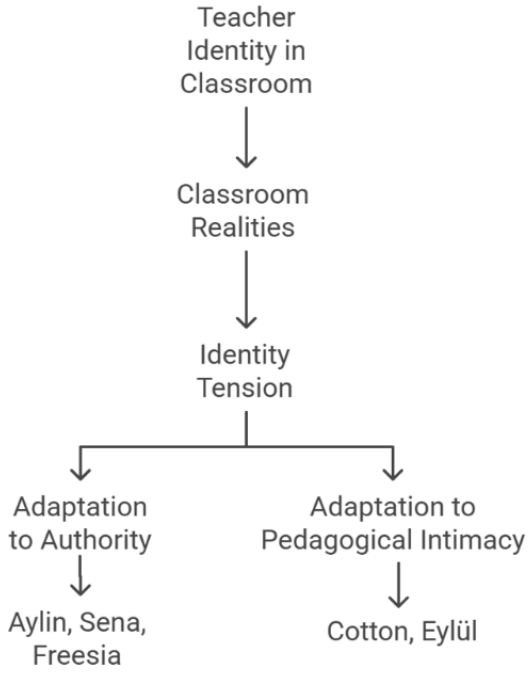

Figure 2. Identity Reconstruction at Classroom Context

Aylin, Sena, and Freesia navigated their identity tensions by adopting more boundary-driven, authoritative, and sometimes performative personas. Conversely, Cotton and Eylül resolved their tensions by moving toward greater pedagogical intimacy and softening their initial rigidity through strategic flexibility, respectively. Although there are commonalities within these two divergent paths, each case illustrates a unique process of identity transformation. The figure below shows these divergent paths.

4.2.2.3.1. Adaptation to Authority

To survive classroom management, boundary violations, and the exploitation of their goodwill, Aylin, Sena, and Freesia felt compelled to construct a protective, authoritative mask over their student-centered ideals.

For Aylin, this reconstruction manifested as a “maternal authoritative” identity. While she maintained her deep commitment to her students' well-being, she realized that maintaining order required decisive, unapologetic leadership: “For me, the ideal teacher is definitely… I’d say a teacher who is self-aware and can manage the classroom with a maternal sensibility” (P1_Aylin, Interview 1). In her diary, she identified herself as a "problem-solver" who manages the gap between "high ideals and day-to-day realities" in the face of classroom realities: “I am deeply committed to my students’ well-being and success, striving to understand the challenges they face, both academic and personal. However, I also recognize the practical constraints of the system (large class sizes, strict curricula, time limits)” (P1_Aylin, Teacher Diary Entry 1). During interviews, she articulated how this maternal authority operated in practice; she learned to ignore minor disruptions (e.g. changing seats during lesson) but intervened strictly when the core respect of the classroom was threatened: “This generation in the classroom, they do everything in classroom… So I don’t intervene as long as they don’t disrupt the class’s peace. But when I sense that this order, this peace, is being disrupted… I intervene” (P1_Aylin, Interview 2). Aylin recounted a specific incident where a student disrupted a group activity by shouting among 30 students in the lesson. Instead of yielding or losing her temper, she firmly removed the student from the classroom, waited for the situation to de-

escalate, and laid down a non-negotiable rule: “Everyone is free to think what they want. But we have to show respect... As long as we don’t disrupt that order, everyone can do as they please” (P1_Aylin, Interview 1). This event demonstrates her transition from an idealistic educator to a maternal authoritative figure who establishes non-negotiable boundaries to protect the learning environment.

Sena similarly navigated her identity tension by constructing a “performed identity”, encapsulating it with the term “bitter-sweet”. To combat the underestimation of her youth and the exploitation of her approachability, she resorted to strategic masking (even fabricating her age), and limiting her emotional accessibility. She regretted sharing her personal phone number with students after receiving inappropriate late-night messages, an experience that altered her pedagogical stance:

> A little friendlier, but not exactly friends—to put it in more Turkish terms, I’d describe it as a bit of a ‘sweet and tough’ approach [meaning bittersweet] … When it comes to midnight messages and such… I don’t think I’ll share it [my phone number] in my next class. I’ve learned my lesson. (P2_Sena, Interview 1)

In her diary, Sena conceptualized this shift as a conscious, protective performance. She noted, “My teacher identity has evolved into a more conscious and reflective one…I intentionally perform professionalism more visibly—through my language, demeanor, and boundaries—to maintain authority and legitimacy in the classroom” (P2_Sena, Teacher Diary Entry 2). For Sena, the "sweet-tough" persona became a necessary emotional armor, allowing her to balance her innate empathy with the professional distance required to survive the micro-context.

Freesia's reconstruction followed a similar trajectory. His intrinsic ideals for warm and open attitude toward students led to some discipline issues. He noted, “I am still having some issues when it comes to finding the balance between authority and sincerity” (P3_Freesia, First Teacher Diary). Attempting to balance sincerity with authority, he found his goodwill repeatedly exploited. He mentions:

> I used to have this flexible, student-centered mindset where I could instantly change the flow of the lesson if needed. Actually, that’s the kind of teacher I

> was, but I'd say I've had to tone that down a bit over the past two years. Well, especially in situations like this. Sometimes I'd say you shouldn't trust the student, but that sounds bad. Like this: Sometimes a student might say, 'Hey, teacher. What's this? Why are we doing this activity? Why are we covering this?' Sometimes they're right, and sometimes they're just trying to disrupt the lesson. (P3_Freesia, Interview 1)

These experiences led him to resolve identity tension by navigating his teacher identity. Although he still aspires to be a teacher with good student rapport, as a defense mechanism, he suppressed his flexible, humanistic ideals and went into a "robotic, success-oriented" persona, he mentioned: "So, more results-oriented, focused on getting the student to pass. Well, I guess I could describe as a more robotic kind of teacher" (P3_Freesia, Interview 1).

Freesia's narrative highlights that sometimes the reconstructed pedagogical self is not an ideal achievement, but a compromised, "robotic" survival mechanism born out of necessity and classroom realities.

4.2.2.3.2. Adaptation to Pedagogical Intimacy and Strategic Flexibility

Unlike the previous three participants who built boundaries to protect themselves, Cotton and Eylül navigated their micro-level identity tensions by sticking to student-centered focus on teaching. They resolved their pedagogical conflicts by leaning into deeper communication and strategic flexibility.

Cotton, who faced the specific tension of age-based underestimation, refused to adopt a strict, traditional authority figure persona. Instead, he used "pedagogical intimacy" through dialogue. He realized that treating students as equals and explaining the emotional impact of their actions was more effective than demanding hierarchical respect:

> In one-on-one interactions, as long as you see the other person not as an authority figure—not as the authority or the owner of that place—underestimating attitudes are naturally prevented. People with whom you engage in one-on-one dialogue, share your thoughts, and try to understand

> their feelings do not react to you in disrespectful way. (P5_Cotton, Interview 2)

Cotton navigated his identity with more pedagogical intimacy. He focused on dialogue with students to resolve the tension. He felt like he could solve this tension without giving up from student centered ideals by being even more pedagogically intimate through dialogue. By adapting his discourse to the specific needs of each classroom, Cotton transformed his initial anxiety related to age into a highly relational and communicative teacher identity, proving that authority could be earned through empathy and communication rather than age or strictness.

Eylül set aside her initial rigid attitudes and rediscovered her identity. She underwent a major transformation, evolving from a strict, academically focused teacher into an empathetic and versatile educator. She realized that her initial rigid approach—demanding that every subject be mastered immediately—was detrimental to both her own well-being and that of her students. She resolved this tension by developing "strategic flexibility":

> I guess I was stricter. I was way too strict about conducting the lesson. But then I said to myself, 'Teaching isn't really like that. Sometimes, being a teacher might just be about sharing life experiences.' (...) Sometimes it felt like everything was in my hands. I really like being eclectic—you shouldn't be a bit of this and a bit of that. You shouldn't be too strict. (P4_Eylül, Interview 1)

In her diary, Eylül summarized this newly reconstructed identity, noting her goal to "balance empathy with responsibility and structure with flexibility". By actively integrating her students' real lives into the curriculum (e.g. adding students' photos to PowerPoint presentations, adding input related to students' daily life problems) and lowering her rigid academic expectations, Eylül successfully navigated her identity tension, emerging as a more inclusive and resilient early-career instructor, as she noted: "I see myself as someone who aims to create a supportive learning environment while maintaining high academic standards…I view myself as a teacher who tries to balance empathy with responsibility and structure with flexibility" (P4_Eylül, Teacher Diary Entry 1).

4.2.3. Navigating the Compliance-Resistance Spectrum: Struggles in Enacting Agency and Resolving Emotional and Identity Tensions

Like it is stated before, to comprehensively address this research question, this study adopts Toker-Bradshaw's (2023) conceptualization of teacher identity as a dynamic process in which teachers negotiate who they are in interaction with people at micro, and with broader policies at meso and macro level. Furthermore, emotional labor is displayed through Benesch's (2018) definition, framed as the emotional tension arising between a teacher's pedagogical beliefs and institutional/structural realities.

The dynamics in emotional labor, teacher identity and agency do not occur in a vacuum; they are shaped by the broader macro context. The neoliberal academic context in Turkish foundation universities exposes early-career, part-time English language instructors to precarious working conditions. The analysis thus far indicated that all participants experienced emotional dissonance emerged from this macro-level precarity. Throughout their experience at foundation universities, this emotional dissonance originated from a conflict between their internal pedagogical emotions and external power structures. As the economic and professional devaluation ignited an emotional crisis, it forced the participants to construct and navigate their teacher identities against a constant background of precarity, where their underprivileged status restricted them to take greater or collective agency.

Moreover, the emotional labor ignited by institutional dissonance runs parallel to the participants' navigation of their teacher identities. All participants found themselves constantly negotiating their professional ideals against rigid organizational realities. Consequently, the data revealed a shift in the teacher identities of these early-career, part-time instructors: a forced transition from pedagogical idealism to institutional realism. However, while all participants became more "realistic," their navigation styles varied. While Freesia and Sena navigated this shift by conforming to institutional rules to escape the risk of being fired, Aylin, Cotton, and Eylül navigated their identities by protecting their core pedagogical beliefs, adopting strategies of performativity, resistance, or even resignation to find a balance.

While the emotional labor and identity tensions stemming from institutional dissonance limit participants from taking structural or collective agency at broader contexts, they do not prevent all their agency. At the micro level (in the classroom), they struggle to exercise teacher agency in parallel with the resolution of their emotional and identity tensions. The data reveals that although participants are structurally constrained by the tension between institutional expectations and their pedagogical beliefs, and precarity, they navigate their emotional labor, reconstruct or shift their teacher identities and take initiatives in their own classrooms. This navigation is not uniform; instead, it manifests across on a spectrum ranging from compliance for survival at one to resistance at the other.

Overall, the data reveals that for part-time, early-career English language instructors, emotional labor and teacher identity are experienced constitutively. These experiences are shaped by institutional dissonance at the meso level and precarious employment conditions at the macro level. To navigate these structural and relational tensions, participants showed varying degrees of agency at the micro level (the classroom), exhibiting responses that range on a continuum from compliance to resistance. Within this spectrum, the ways in which participants navigate their teacher identities and emotional labor also align with the individual agency they exercise. The interaction is displayed in the figure below.

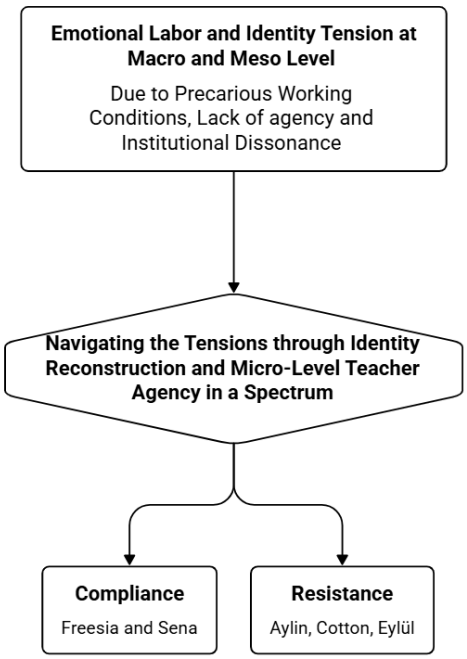

Figure 3. Navigating Emotional and Identity Tensions

4.2.3.1. The Compliance End: Survival and Performative Professionalism

This section examines, under the theme of compliance, how Freesia and Sena demonstrate identity reconstruction in response to tensions at the macro and meso levels, and what actions they take at the micro level. The data indicates that these two participants underwent identity reconstruction characterized by the erosion of idealism and strategic compliance to administrative rules as they sought to survive under institutional dissonance at meso level and precarious working conditions at macro level; it also shows that, in parallel, they took actions aligned with compliance within their classroom. At the compliance end of the spectrum, agency is exercised through strategic acquiescence at micro level.

4.2.3.1.1. Freesia: Distancing and Hope

Freesia's experienced macro-level precarity was to mentally fade away from it. The fluctuation in his teaching hours between semesters (from 20 hours down to potentially zero) generated financial anxiety that demolished his pedagogical motivation. He realized that under such precarious conditions, investing emotionally in teaching was useless. Consequently, he engaged in emotional distancing, redirecting his remaining agency toward escaping the system by focusing on his graduate studies:

> Because of working conditions, I wasn't thinking about how to teach my class well, about preparing extra materials or figuring out how to make the class more interesting. Instead, I was thinking, 'I should focus on my thesis as soon as possible… finish it so I can finally get out of this part-time job (…)' Because, as I said, you end up feeling more like someone working just for the money than a teacher. (P3_Freesia, Interview 3)

Freesia's diary entry further demonstrated this stance, noting that to survive the resentment of unpaid service and job insecurity, he "developed distance from the institution in my thoughts and feelings, and recognizing that I only temporarily held this job" (P3_Freesia, Teacher Diary Entry 2). Despite feeling the loss of his agency, he still had hope. He mentally detached from the present, choosing to view his current compromised state as a transitional phase: "I position myself as a facilitator...

At this stage of my career, my teacher identity feels still evolving as I gain more experience and adapt to institutional expectations" (P3_Freesia, Teacher Diary Entry 1). Freesia's story is an example how precarity can force an educator into surrender, leaving them with nothing but the hope of a future, uncompromised aspired identity.

Before starting his career at the foundation university, Freesia's ideal teacher identity centered on flexibility, building rapport, and treating students as individuals. However, the pressure of standardized testing (TOEFL ITP) and a rigid curriculum transformed him into a "robotic teacher". In a diary entry, he utilized a metaphor to describe the loss of his pedagogical autonomy, comparing his former ideal of an influential teacher to his current reality as a "train conductor":

> Under the light of all these, my identity has greatly changed. Before, I viewed myself as a teacher who could influence my students' language learning processes. However, now, I feel like the conductor of a train whose predetermined destination is passing the exam. This is the main reason why I am having some problems with being a rather flexible teacher in the classroom, which is in line with my actual teacher identity. (P3_Freesia, Teacher Diary Entry 1)

During his interviews, Freesia elaborated that this shift led him to lose his belief in teacher autonomy. Recognizing that "the decision-making mechanism is above, and you apply what comes from above" (P3_Freesia, Interview 2), he reconstructed his identity to avoid institutional trouble, ultimately acknowledging a decrease in his professional enthusiasm.

Furthermore, Freesia navigated emotional and identity tensions due to institutional dissonance and precarity by mostly complying with administrative expectations, driven by the need to protect his precarious employment status. The emotional and identity tension he experienced induced a state of self-silencing. Although he is not content about it, Freesia felt compelled to mask his emotions and adapt his teacher identity to ensure professional survival. Consequently, he adapted to the rigid curriculum—even applying activities he saw pedagogically unnecessary—and marked an injured student absent out of fear of institutional micro-management. He articulated this compulsion to perform compliance as a survival mechanism:

> I realized that I wasn't doing the things I truly felt and genuinely believed were right... I had to mask my feelings so that they would think, 'This teacher gets along well with us... he doesn't cause any trouble, so let's not fire him and stick with him.' I had to steer them in this kind of a direction. (P3_Freesia, Interview 3)

In general, Freesia overcomes the emotional dissonance caused by precarity by creating emotional distance. At the same time, he reconstructs his identity by surrendering and sticking to the aspired identity due to this precarity. Furthermore, the emotional tension and identity tension stemming from institutional dissonance have led to a shift in his identity with the erosion of idealism. Furthermore, while experiencing a lack of autonomy at the meso and macro levels, Freesia demonstrates autonomy at the micro level by adhering to organizational rules.

4.2.3.1.2. Sena: Reluctant Conformity

Sena noted that the temporary nature of her position forced her into emotional conformity to maintain smooth relationships and secure her job, as she noted, "The temporary nature of my position created constant anxiety and a sense of being easily replaceable. I often feel pressured to comply with expectations without questioning them, as job security depended largely on being seen as adaptable" (P2_Sena, Teacher Diary Entry 2). This emotional compliance contributed to professional survival considering that her agency was restricted due to her disadvantaged position, she noted, "Being perceived as "easy to work with" and adaptable reduced the risk of conflict and helped me secure my position as a part-time, early-career instructor with limited institutional power" (P2_Sena, Teacher Diary Entry 2). For Sena, precarity manifested through institutional exploitation, such as working uncompensated extra hours, being forced to pay for the campus shuttle like a student. To cope with the overwhelming emotional labor, Sena felt compelled to reluctantly internalize these exploitative conditions without vocalizing her objections. Setting her initial ideals aside, she constructed a "realist teacher" identity as a survival mechanism:

> I need to stop internalizing the extra work hours, having to pay to use the shuttle like a student at the institution where we work (…) This feeling of being easily replaceable might be what drives people to feel like we can't really question these conditions. These realities, the conditions in my current

> environment, clash with the teacher identity I envision. And as a result, it's definitely pushing me toward developing a more realistic teacher identity. (P2_Sena, Interview 3)

However, this shift from an idealist to a realist was not Sena's dream; it was a performed identity due to necessity. To protect her well-being from being entirely crushed by these conditions, she navigated her identity by framing her current compliance as temporary: "I think it will be a short-term experience for me. Do I plan to work at a Foundation University in the long term? I don't think so" (P2_Sena, Interview 1). Sena's case demonstrates how neoliberal academic conditions crash the dreams of early-career instructors, forcing them into reluctant conformity while they secretly plan their escape.

Moreover, in terms of institutional dissonance, although Sena also faced the necessity of shifting her identity toward institutional realities, her navigation was driven more by a forced awakening to power dynamics rather than only the fear of dismissal. For Sena, the shift to realism meant accepting that pedagogy is bound to institutional politics. In her diary, Sena summarized this evolution:

> My experiences reshaped my understanding of teacher identity... Being a teacher is not only about transmitting knowledge or facilitating learning; it is also about navigating power relations, managing emotions, and asserting one's professional self in the face of institutional and societal expectations (P2_Sena, Teacher Diary Entry 2).

Positioned toward the compliance end, Sena attempted to negotiate a balance. As an early-career instructor, Sena felt disempowered by institutional limitations. Believing that her novice status supplied her little room for overt agency, she largely engaged in performative compliance. This was evident when she stuck to institutional grading policies, failing a student she pedagogically believed deserved to pass due to personal circumstances. In her diary, Sena explicitly reflected on how the exhausting realities of the institution forced her to abandon her initial idealism in favor of a "realistic" survival stance:

> As a 24-year-old early-career instructor working at a foundation university, I see my current teacher identity as something dynamic, negotiated, and still

> evolving. When I first entered the profession, I was extremely idealistic... Over time, however, my identity became more grounded and realistic, shaped by the institutional dynamics, the workload, and the emotional labor behind teaching. (P2_Sena, Teacher Diary Entry 1)

During her interview, she further explained that this "realistic" stance required constant emotional masking to meet the institution's superficial expectations of professionalism: “They really do expect us to be professional, even in a corporate setting... No matter what you go through, you have to find a way to mask it... so all of that influences our emotional responses” (P2_Sena, Interview 2). However, Sena's compliance was not absolute; in a rare act of emerging resistance, she allowed her students to use alternative copies of textbooks despite institutional prohibitions. This indicates that while she primarily performs compliance, her evolving pedagogical beliefs are fostering awakening forms of agency.

Overall, Sena channels the emotional dissonance stemming from precariousness in order to survive. At the same time, she constructs a temporarily realistic teacher identity by demonstrating reluctant compliance due to precarity. Furthermore, the emotional and identity-related tensions stemming from institutional dissonance, coupled with the erosion of idealism, have led to a shift in her identity toward adapting to institutional realities. Additionally, while experiencing a lack of autonomy at the meso and macro levels, she demonstrates performative compliance with organizational rules, thereby exercising agency at the classroom level.

4.2.3.2. The Resistance End: Covert Action, Passive Resistance, and Strategic Hardening

In contrast to Freesia and Sena, the data indicates that Aylin, Cotton, and Eylül navigated their shift from idealism to realism by resisting institutional assimilation. In other words, they navigated their teacher identities while sticking strong to their pedagogical ideals, which is in line with how they take agency in the face of emotional labor and identity tension due to institutional dissonance. They developed strategies, including strategic performativity (Aylin), passive resistance and quitting (Cotton), hardening and boundary maintenance (Eylül), to maintain their core pedagogical ideals in the face of institutional realities.

Moving along the spectrum away from compliance, Aylin, Cotton, and Eylül navigated their emotional labor through varying degrees of resistance, prioritizing their pedagogical identities over institutional rules.

4.2.3.2.1. Aylin: Strategic Performativity

Under precarious conditions (low hour payments, unpaid labor) Aylin engaged in surface acting. Surface acting refers to her effort to comply with feeling rules (expectation of professionalism) at her institution while she felt demotivated intrinsically (Hochschild, 1983/2003/2012). Moreover, she recognized that the institution rewarded "emotional obedience" with short-term survival, while punishing authenticity with marginalization:

> Continuous pressure was amplified by poor working conditions, such as a lack of dedicated resources, signaling that part-time staff were marginalized and not fully integrated into the academic community. The primary reward for a part-time instructor obeying expected emotions, such as projecting compliance, enthusiasm, and flexibility, is short-term professional survival...Conversely, the consequences of disobeying these expectations (e.g., voicing professional criticism or frustration) are severe: the instructor risks being labeled as 'difficult,' leading directly to marginalization and the potential for contract non-renewal. (P1_Aylin, Teacher Diary Entry 2)

However, rather than surrendering to this devaluation, Aylin navigated her precarious status by doubling down on her expertise. She transformed her anxiety into a drive for professional perfection, utilizing "hyper-preparedness" as a shield against institutional degradation: "I generally try to resist the 'replaceable resource' label from the administration by being hyper-prepared, seeking out training, and delivering high-quality, engaging lessons that demonstrate my commitment and expertise" (P1_Aylin, Teacher Diary Entry 1).

Moreover, Aylin's identity construction did not stop at individual survival. Her exposure to precarious conditions triggered a shift in her aspired identity. Recognizing that individual hyper-preparedness was insufficient against systemic precarity, she aspired to become a "strategist-advocate", who is an empowered

academic fighting for economic stability not just for herself, but to mentor newcomers and actively challenge exploitative policies:

> My aspired identity has shifted from merely being a great instructor to becoming a secure, empowered academic-advocate. I now understand that achieving stability (e.g., a full-time contract) is not just a personal goal but a prerequisite for having the agency to influence policy, mentor other early-career instructors, and advocate for more humane conditions. (P1_Aylin, Teacher Diary Entry 2)

Aylin's case illustrates how an early-career English language instructor can frame tensions for the necessity for both individual and collective agency for the improvement of the precarious working conditions.

In institutional context, Aylin's identity shifted from an idealistic educator to a "resilient realist". She navigated institutional dissonance through strategic performativity (outwardly playing along with administrative mandates while covertly prioritizing her students). She maintains a functional identity under the complexities of institutional expectations, which created emotional exhaustion. Despite this emotional exhaustion, Aylin remained strong-willed. She concluded by maintaining a student-centered identity beneath an institutional mask.

> They're trying to fit us into a mold. But that's not more important than the students in any way. Without caring what anyone says—of course, within the rules and ethical guidelines—I want to be a teacher who keeps doing what's best for the students… I'll keep doing this. That's the direction my identity is heading because it's my teacher identity. And that's how it will go. (P1_Aylin, Interview 2)

In parallel, Aylin engaged in the negotiated middle-ground through covert action in classroom. While outwardly projecting compliance to avoid direct confrontation with the administration, she secretly reclaimed her agency within the classroom to align with her student-centered beliefs. For example, she outwardly stuck to the rigid curriculum but strategically utilized her paid class time and authorized office hours to implement an unapproved portfolio of extra materials. She remembered an incident in which she wanted to facilitate an anxious student with extra materials and coaching outside of class hours. However, when she expressed this to her

administrators, she was responded by the institution not to give extra support to student due to their policy about standardized education for each student and Aylin's part-time status, which limits her enacting agency towards institutional policies. In her diary, she conceptualized this strategy as balancing "surface acting" with covert pedagogical support:

> My identity as a dedicated, hands-on teacher was challenged when the administration, citing policy and the limits of my unpaid, part-time status, forbade me from offering individualized coaching to a struggling, anxious student outside of class hours. This rule created moral distress; my profound emotion was anger and guilt at having to prioritize job security over my student's needs...I resolved this emotional conflict by outwardly complying with the rule (surface acting) but covertly adjusting my teaching within the paid class time to meet the student's needs...an action that reinforced my professional worth and helped me regain a sense of agency. (P1_Aylin, Teacher Diary Entry 2)

In summary, Aylin manages the emotional dissonance stemming from precariousness by demonstrating strategic performance. At the same time, due to this precariousness and emotional dissonance, she aspires to resist and to build a "Strategist-Advocate" teacher identity. Furthermore, the emotional and identity-related tensions stemming from institutional dissonance have caused her to find balance, leading to a shift toward a teacher identity that appears to conform to institutional realities from the outside but actually prioritizes her students. Additionally, while experiencing a lack of autonomy at the meso and macro levels, she demonstrates strategic compliance with organizational rules and exhibits agency by taking covert actions at the classroom level.

4.2.3.2.2. Cotton: Passive Resistance as Ultimate Exit

Cotton's critical reflection that is presented in tension due to emotional dissonance frames the macro-level findings: emotional labor and the suppression of teacher agency are not only the results of poor institutional management. They are the outcomes of a broader neoliberal academic policy that institutionalizes precarity, making early-career English language instructors vulnerable and structurally disempowered. Although he was feeling numbness and burnout due to precarity and emotional conflicts that he had gone through at his former institution, he continued

his acts of passive resistance. However, this was not enough for him to feel like he could collect his pieces for his idealized teacher identity. The nature of part-time contracts—where taking a break or experiencing a medical emergency resulted in immediate pay cuts—induced mental and physical exhaustion. Although Cotton initially attempted to navigate this dissonance through passive resistance, the relentless commodification of his labor and the denial of his professional voice created irreparable damage to his idealized teacher identity. He realized that staying in the system meant losing his core pedagogical values piece by piece to numbness and burnout: "Leaving the position I had once entered with enthusiasm came to feel like the only viable option... to reclaim and actualize my teacher identity" (P5_Cotton, Teacher Diary Entry 2).

For Cotton, the emotional conflict of precarity could not be resolved through performativity or partial resistance. He ultimately rejected compliance entirely. By resigning from the foundation university, Cotton showed the most definitive act of teacher agency available to him under precarious conditions: he exited the system to reclaim his power, his pedagogical beliefs, and his authentic teacher identity.

In his experience at his former institution, Cotton's realization that teacher identity is intertwined with institutional power led him down a path of passive resistance, playing a role in his resignation. Faced with an institution that commodified both education and instructors, Cotton engaged in passive resistance, such as secretly allowing students to use alternative copies instead of buying the tablets. He navigated this realization and his experiences related to institutional dissonance by rejecting institutional expectations through passive resistance and sticking to his own pedagogical beliefs so not to lose his core teacher identity piece by piece under neoliberal institutional expectations. In the end, his desire to protect his teacher identity was so strong that he decided to resign not to lose more pieces. Framing his resignation not as a defeat, but as the final protection for his teacher identity, he stated:

> By refusing the institution's demands, practicing passive resistance, and choosing not to actively oppose them, I made decisions that reflected my

> education and values. But in the end, I actually resigned because I had opposed it so much (…) One of the reasons for my resignation was that institutional expectations went against my values and, in a way, took away from my own identity. (P5_Cotton, Interview 1)

Furthermore, Cotton navigated institutional dissonance through passive resistance in classroom decisions. Clinging to his identity as a transformative intellectual, he subverted the administration's rigid curriculum by dedicating class time to discussing social issues and student problems. Furthermore, he overtly rejected the institution's attempt to position him as a "salesperson". By explicitly permitting the use of alternative copies and utilizing sarcasm to distance himself from the institution's profit-driven digital device mandates, he refused to be positioned as a salesperson. He interacted with students about the tension:

> Whether it was the curriculum or the formats they wanted us to use for our lessons, we were constantly back and forth between them. We were showing passive resistance. At that point, since they weren't actively observing us or trying to shape or guide us, we were trying to do things our own way... In Turkey, no one really interferes with someone who doesn't speak up. Under that assurance, we could take refuge and continue to exist. (P5_Cotton, Interview 2)

In general, Cotton channels the emotional dissonance stemming from precariousness through intellectualism by offering a systematic critique. At the same time, due to precariousness, he rejects conformity in his identity and upholds his pedagogical values by resigning. Furthermore, the emotional and identity-related tensions arising from institutional dissonance have been attempted to be resolved through passive resistance. Furthermore, while experiencing a lack of autonomy in the meso and macro contexts, he demonstrated agency by engaging in passive resistance through class-level actions against organizational rules.

4.2.3.2.3. Eylül: Boundary Setting and Ethical Resilience

Working under the constant threat of job insecurity, low hourly pay, and institutional silencing induced emotional dissonance for Eylül. Although she lacked the structural power to take macro-level action against the foundation university, she refused to let

this emotional labor destroy her professional dignity. Instead, she turned her demotivation into a fierce determination by her resilience. She navigated her identity with her belief that sometimes you need to resist to be a good teacher. In her eyes, Eylül transformed into a resilient instructor, utilizing boundary setting and emotional discipline to protect her ethical core:

> Over time, however, these conditions contributed to my emotional maturation. I became more resilient, more self-regulated, and emotionally stronger... I learned when to invest emotionally and when to distance myself from the system to protect my well-being. At the same time, I became stricter toward the overall institutional system not in an openly confrontational way, but through a clearer internal boundary between my professional values and institutional demands. I observed that obeying expected emotional norms—such as appearing compliant, calm, and agreeable—often led to being perceived as more professional... This taught me that emotional regulation in foundation universities operates subtly: professionalism is often measured not by ethical action but by emotional alignment with institutional expectations. (P4_Eylül, Teacher Diary Entry 2)

Eylül realized that the institution's version of "professionalism" was a code for silent obedience. Rejecting this, she navigated her teacher identity in the belief that being a truly "good teacher" sometimes necessitates internal, ethical resistance against what the institution demands her. Eylül's case shows how an early career part time instructor turns into a "fighter without weapons" at macro level due to precarity.

Eylül navigated the idealism-to-realism shift by accepting the conflict between her role as an instructor and the institution's customer-oriented approach. Interestingly, while the micro context (the classroom) made her more flexible and empathetic toward her students, the meso context (the institution) made her significantly harder and stricter. She built boundaries to protect herself from being crushed by administrative demands:

> I guess I've become stricter in my role as a teacher. I became more tolerant toward the students, but tougher toward the administration. Because if I let them push me around, it would just keep going that way. I had it programmed in my head like that, so I became tough (...) I'd look around and ask myself, "Is this really my job?"—like, am I the only fool doing this? (P4_Eylül, Interview 2)

This hardening led to redefinition of professionalism. She navigated her identity by maintaining the standards she believed in, which she noted: “This negotiation allows me to stay true to my teaching philosophy while still responding to the realities of the classroom and the institution” (P4 _Eylül, First Teacher Diary Entry). When forced to choose between failing a grieving student based on strict attendance rules or passing him based on empathy, she chose the latter. In her diary, she powerfully articulated this identity resolution:

> Previously, I perceived professionalism mainly as adherence to institutional rules and expectations. However, this incident reshaped my understanding of teaching as a moral and ethical practice rather than a purely procedural one. It reinforced my belief that teacher identity cannot be separated from values such as fairness, care, and social responsibility. While I became more aware of institutional constraints, I also became more confident in trusting my professional judgment. As a result, my aspired teacher identity is now shaped by the idea that being a 'good teacher' sometimes requires resisting rigid systems when they conflict with human realities. (P4_Eylül, Teacher Diary Entry 2)

Eylül’s narrative serves as a testament to how early-career, part-time instructors can reconstruct their identities. By redefining professionalism not as an obedience, but as an ethical commitment to students, she navigated her teacher identity against the institutional dissonance.

At the furthest end of the resistance spectrum is Eylül, who navigated her agency through strategic hardening and overt boundary setting. Unlike the other participants who utilized covert or passive strategies, Eylül directly addressed institutional rules that clashed with her ethical and pedagogical compass. Rejecting the institution's customer-oriented approach and rigid micro-management, she manipulated assessment scores to help students pass and deliberately ignored strict absenteeism policies when she perceived them inhumane. In a diary entry, she detailed the emotional and ethical conflict of not failing a student for absenteeism because her mother was hospitalized, actively choosing the identity of an “ethical educator” over a “rule-abiding instructor”:

> I was aware of an unspoken institutional reality: in foundation universities, failing students often results in additional income for the institution through

> repeated tuition payments. This awareness created a deep ethical and emotional conflict for me. My profound emotions were empathy, moral responsibility, and a strong sense of injustice. In contrast, the expected emotion was emotional neutrality and rule-based decision-making, detached from students' personal circumstances. I felt torn between being a 'rule-abiding' instructor and being an ethical educator. Regulating my emotions in this situation did not mean suppressing empathy but rather choosing to act upon it. I consciously decided not to follow the rule and allowed the student to pass the course. (P4_Eylül, Teacher Diary Entry 2)

She elaborated on this overt resistance during her interview, noting that true professionalism sometimes requires violating institutional rules to protect the student: "Should I act professionally, should I adapt to every situation? (…) I guess I still ended up acting on my emotions. I marked that as if the student was there even though he weren't, which wasn't professional" (P4_Eylül, Interview 2).

In summary, Eylül channeled the emotional dissonance stemming from precariousness by recognizing that compliance is inevitable while experiencing an existential crisis. At the same time, she reconstructed her identity by developing a resilient teacher identity—driven by the understanding that a good teacher must resist for students—in response to precariousness and emotional dissonance. Furthermore, emotional tension and identity conflict stemming from organizational dissonance were resolved through hardening against institutional expectations and boundary-setting. Moreover, while experiencing a lack of autonomy in the meso and macro contexts, she demonstrated agency by occasionally exhibiting overt resistance to organizational rules at the classroom level.

Overall, the data demonstrates that emotional and identity tensions due to precarity at macro level and institutional dissonance at meso level led to identity shifts and reconstructions in parallel to the micro level teacher agency. In other words, the navigation of emotional labor and identity tension is intertwined with the exercise of micro-level agency. While this spectrum, from Freesia's self-silencing compliance to Eylül's ethical resistance, highlights how they navigate identity reconstructions and agency, it also highlights a critical limitation: their agency remains confined to the micro (classroom) level, as meso and macro-level constraints continue to prevent broader empowerment.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is divided into four parts. First, discussion of the findings in relation to relevant literature is presented. In the second part, conclusion is presented. The third part offers recommendations for future research. The final part offers implications and recommendations to improve the conditions of early-career part-time English language instructors.

5.1. Discussion

This study aimed to explore how English language instructors in Türkiye, who have part-time work experience at foundation universities at the beginning of their careers, are positioned by their institutions and the community under precarious working conditions, and how they navigate emotional labor, teacher identity, and teacher agency within micro, meso, and macro contexts.

RQ1: How do early-career part-time English instructors at the English preparatory departments of foundation universities in Türkiye perceive how they are positioned by their institutions and community under precarious work conditions?

RQ2: How do early-career part-time English instructors at the English preparatory departments of foundation universities in Türkiye navigate teacher identity, emotional labor, and agency at the micro, meso, and macro contexts?

5.1.1. Precarity and Positioning

As mentioned earlier, the first question of the current study aimed to explore the perceptions of early-career part-time English instructors about how they are positioned by their institutions and community under precarious work conditions.

The findings showed that participants perceived economic and professional devaluation as the recurring mechanisms through which they were positioned by the institutions. This aligns with Kahn (2020), who indicated that the positioning of part-time teachers innately and inevitably entails both economic and professional devaluation. Similarly, the broader literature supports that these early-career instructors are positioned as economically and professionally devalued laborers within the neoliberal higher education system, deprived of the recognition served to their full-time colleagues (Carney, 2013; Çomak, 2021; Levin, 2006). Moreover, their disadvantaged position, especially when compared with full-time instructors, played an important role in how the current study's participants perceived their institutional positioning. This finding aligns with Whitsed and Volet (2013), who emphasized that institutions positioned part-time English language instructors through the lenses of commodification and disempowerment when compared to their full- time employees. While supporting the concept of devaluation discussed in earlier literature, the current study extends beyond echoing this literature through illustrating how this devaluation manifests through the shared perceptions of five different part-time English language instructors who constantly emphasize their precarious status when it comes to their institutional positioning. Most importantly, moving beyond the acknowledgement of a status difference, this study reveals that the perceived dichotomy between part-time and full-time staff shapes the participants' understanding of their own institutional positioning, even if they are not aware of the exact working conditions and institutional positionings of their full-time counterparts.

The current study indicates that the threat of replaceability was one of indicators for participants to reflect on how they are economically devaluated. Regarding replaceability, Eylül's conceptualization of herself as a "renewable resource", Cotton's use of the metaphor of a "seasonal worker", Freesia's perception about himself as "short-term problem-solving tools" showed that how precarity plays a role in the economically devaluated positioning of participants. The current study's findings support Kouritzin et al. (2023), who demonstrated this precarity is actualized through the chronic anxiety surrounding the constant need to reapply for the same position. Also, the findings echo with Carney (2013), who found that

university lecturers viewed themselves as a “teaching commodity” rather than as true colleagues of tenured faculty at institutional level. Moreover, based on the finding of the current study, it can be argued the neoliberal commodification of education reduces early-career, part-time English language instructors to disposable components within the foundation university setting in Türkiye. This is supported by Çomak (2021), who indicated that part-time English language instructors in Türkiye suffer from financial instability driven by hourly wage systems, discontinuous contracts, and unpredictable course allocations that perpetuates the financial hardship and the fear of job loss among instructors. This aligns with the anxieties expressed by the participants in the present study in terms of the fear of the constant risk of replaceability under neoliberal academic context.

Additional to the threat of replaceability, the extraction of uncompensated or unpaid labor emerged as another indicator through which these early-career, part-time instructors perceived themselves economically devalued by their institutions in the current study. The data indicates that the participants felt their former or current institutions weaponized their precarious status to demand extra administrative and pedagogical duties, such as grading, writing detailed feedback, and attending meetings, without providing any economic rewards or compensation. Aylin, for instance, emphasized sharing the equal workload as full-time instructors without receiving equal payment, utilizing the metaphors of “easy prey” and “slave”. She framed this dynamic as an intentional institutional strategy to maximize output while minimizing costs. This perception resonates with Courtois and O’Keefe (2015), who found that casualized academics frequently describe themselves as exploitable, which illustrate the legal and professional vulnerability of contingent workers, whose experience, performance, and commitment offer no help against institutional abuse. In the current study, these findings reveal that unpaid or unpaid labor is a systemic tool that reinforces the economic devaluation and temporary positioning of early-career instructors through the imposition of daily pedagogical tasks. The resulting stress and feelings of exploitation align closely with Bourassa (2026), who conceptualizes teacher demoralization as a shared condition rooted deeply in exploitative labor practices and broader capitalist relations. Furthermore, Kahn (2020) aligns with this sentiment by arguing that English departments suffer from a

discursive devaluation of teaching that directly facilitates the economic exploitation of faculty who perform their profession under uncompensated labor. Ultimately, the findings of this study support the literature regarding how early-career, part-time English language instructors perceive themselves as economically devalued subjects through replaceability and the extraction of unpaid labor under precarious contracts within the neoliberal higher education system. However, extending beyond the identification of economic devaluation in the existing literature, the current study reveals how this neoliberal precarity is systematically institutionalized across five different foundation universities in the Turkish context. This research demonstrates that this devaluation is not only a working condition, but also it actualizes through everyday administrative actions and daily discourses. The participants' constant fear of replaceability perpetuated by concrete institutional practices, such as reductions in teaching hours, insecure contracts, and normalized unpaid labor, dictates how they perceive their own positioning. Thus, these daily interactions and actions seem to transform working as a part-timer from a status difference into an internalized and marginalized institutional positioning among part-time English language instructors.

Additional to the economic devaluation discussed previously, the participants also faced professional devaluation. Similar to their economic marginalization, this condition was boosted by the intersection of their precarious contracts and their early-career status. Rather than being recognized as qualified English language instructors, participants perceived that they were assigned the status of de-professionalized subordinates. This goes in line with Van Arsdale's (1978) assertion that institutions marginalize part-time instructors by denying them the basic recognitions supplied to their full-time colleagues, thereby diminishing their professional identities. Particularly, the current finding of the present study displayed that this de-professionalization was experienced through the underestimation of participants' expertise in English Language Teaching and their professional entities. For example, Eylül recounted how her employment at the foundation university was framed by the administration as a "favor" or a training opportunity, designed to make her feel professionally inadequate. Aylin experienced this devaluation through the administration's disregard for her pedagogical creativity, reducing her to a passive deliverer of a standardized curriculum. In Cotton's experience, he was asked to teach

Russian simply because he possessed linguistic proficiency, entirely bypassing the necessity for pedagogical mastery. These collective experiences indicate that despite possessing the necessary academic degrees and delivering essential instruction, part-time English instructors remain trapped in devalued positions that erode their professional authority and entity. The current study's finding is supported by Moore (2008), who argues that institutional positional identities often overlook authentic teacher professional identity in favor of one-size-fits-all models which make professional development meaningless. The finding of this study also echoes with Benson (2022), who observed that teachers globally have witnessed an erosion of their professional autonomy over the past forty years, as corporatism and neoliberalism have fundamentally reshaped the realities of the profession. Specifically, within the Turkish context, Mutluer and Yüksel (2019) confirmed that the majority of teachers perceive the underestimation of their pedagogical initiatives as damaging to the intellectual aspect of their profession, which is in line with the current study's findings. Although the professional devaluation found in global and Turkish settings echoes the existing literature, the current study reveals the manifestation of this devaluation through the eyes of early-career, part-time English language instructors at foundation universities in Türkiye. Having experiences within the same neoliberal framework, the different cases in this study go beyond economic concerns to emphasize professional devaluation in terms of their positioning. By expressing how their professional selves are shaken at the beginning of their careers, the participants' experiences might also demonstrate how the identified challenge of negotiating a professional role during socialization into the profession (Yazan, 2016) in the literature is shaped and deteriorated by precarious neoliberal conditions.

Moving beyond institutional positioning, the findings reveal a paradox in the societal positioning of part-time English language instructors: their work is recalled as "sacred" by their community, while their lived financial and professional realities are characterized by devaluation under precarious working conditions. Although society verbally constructs teaching as a moral profession, framing instruction as sacrificial rather than an economic and professional position underestimates the requirement of fair financial and professional compensation. Essentially, this discourse weaponizes the affective dimensions of teaching to demand self-sacrifice while simultaneously

veiling and justifying precarious working conditions. The four of the participants (Cotton, Eylül, Sena, Freesia) of this study themselves recognize this hypocrisy, noting that while their profession is labeled “sacred”, they are not valued by their working conditions. For example, Eylül explicitly expressed that discourse of “sacredness” is not just a cultural tradition, but a manipulative tool used by both the community and institutions to justify labor exploitation. This finding of the current study is supported by Yılmaz (2018), who noted that while society verbally affirms teachers’ professional identity through the sacredness lens of the historical Turkish Republic, the lived reality of these instructors’ contrasts with this revered status due to the impact of worldwide neoliberal educational policies, which have commodified the profession. Similarly, the current finding supports Beck (2002), who noted that while society and institutions might verbally praise teaching as “sacred” to extract unpaid labor, the reality is that universities and state policies actively decrease the autonomy of instructors, reducing them to commodified employees. Illustrating the broader societal implications of this devaluation like the findings of this study, Vatansever and Yalçın (2015) assert that the complete indexing of academic labor to the market extends its destructive impact beyond the erosion of individual employment rights, leading an unchecked capitalist drive that subjects all social and communal spheres to commodification. While the current study aligns with the existing literature regarding the weaponization of pedagogical affection, it also reveals that part-time instructors at foundation university context in Türkiye recognize and articulate this manipulation in how they perceive their societal positioning, which visualizes the interaction between neoliberal academic framework and social positioning.

Ironically, the current study indicates that despite this sacred calling in terms of social positioning, participants also expressed the loss of respect and prestige of teaching profession, which they viewed parallel to their economic devaluation. Cotton’s excerpt illustrated that the academic effort invested in Foreign Language Education is grasped meaningless in the eyes of a community that measures professional worth by economic stability. Similarly, Freesia observed that the community's validation is inevitably linked to job security; the “sacred” aura of the teacher instantly vanished upon the revelation of his part-time status as an instructor.

Therefore, the paradox of the “sacred but unvalued” instructor serves to exploitation, demanding professional sacrifice from part-time English language instructors while devaluating them parallel to their the economic and professional precarity at foundation universities. This loss of social standing is supported by Turkish educational research. In similar vein, a study by Ünsal et al. (2017) indicated that teaching as a profession in Türkiye is prone to lose its professional prestige and reliability as teachers face various problems boosted by the loss of financial and professional status. Durdukoca (2019) similarly observed that the social respect attributed to the teaching profession across regions with different socio-economic characteristics in Türkiye has decreased in parallel with the deterioration of economic and professional conditions. Aligning with the current study, Mutluer and Yüksel (2019) found that teachers believe precarious conditions deteriorate the social status of the profession. Although the literature supports the premise that teachers' perceptions of their societal positioning are intertwined with precarious working conditions, the current study demonstrates the specific manifestation of this dynamic within the context of foundation universities in Türkiye. Particularly, it reveals that economic devaluation plays a role in shaping how early-career, part-time instructors view and internalize their own societal positioning.

5.1.2. Navigating Emotional Labor, Teacher Identity, Teacher Agency

Building upon the discussion of institutional and societal positioning, this section dwells on the interplay between emotions, teacher identity, and agency under precarious conditions and institutional dissonance. The macro-level factors that enforce a disadvantaged status do not remain structural; they impact the psychological and professional realities of early-career, part-time English language instructors. With the lack of institutional power and macro-level agency, these instructors experience emotional labor, which compels them to navigate and reconstruct their teacher identities to survive within the neoliberal academic context. In addition, this section addresses the meso-level interactions between emotional labor, teacher identity, and teacher agency, alongside the effects of precarious conditions at the macro level and the neoliberal academic context. It discusses how the conflict between institutional expectations and pedagogical beliefs gives rise to

emotional labor and simultaneous identity conflict, leading participants to demonstrate agency, ranging from compliance to resistance, and to navigate their identities in parallel. Therefore, this interaction is analyzed in subheadings, under precarious working conditions and under institutional dissonance. Furthermore, in addition to navigations at the macro and meso levels, the study also addresses how participants at the beginning of their careers navigate their teacher identities at the micro level under the stresses of classroom management and student behaviors.

5.1.2.1. Under Precarious Working Conditions

The current study's findings indicate the cycle starts with the emotional conflicts or tensions that are experienced due to precarious conditions and lack of agency at macro level. The lived experiences of the participants display that emotional labor and the limitation of broader or collective teacher agency are not the results of only institutional dissonance, but the inevitable outcomes of broader neoliberal academic policies that normalize precarity, making early-career, part-time English language instructors insecure and disempowered. These findings align with Benesch and Prior's (2023) assertion that the emotional tensions of teachers are intertwined with hierarchical power dynamics and institutional "feeling rules" that commodify and exploit the pedagogical role of teachers. Similar to the findings of the current study, Banegas (2024)'s case study indicated that when an English teacher navigate emotional labor, agency, and motivation under economic instability, they face conflicting "feeling rules", which inevitably leads to demotivation and a loss of professional agency. Moreover, the current study's findings showed how participants navigated emotional dissonance through a spectrum of agencies, ranging from emotional compliance (like in the experience of Sena) or distancing to meta-reflection on the power systems (like in the experience of Cotton). This finding in the current study seems to reveal how the five different cases manage to develop individualized strategies in their own setting, even when their personal agencies are constrained at broader context by highlighting the tensions early-career part-time instructors experienced under precarious working conditions. This finding is supported by Lau et al. (2022), who discovered that macro-level burdens, including government policies and a lack of professional agency, lead to internal emotional

conflicts for early-career teachers, and these teachers employ coping strategies ranging from passive tolerance and emotional distancing to reflection.

In the current study, with the constant emotional dissonance played in the background, all participants were compelled to renegotiate and reconstruct their teacher identities in response to the precarious working conditions at foundation universities. Navigating the neoliberal academic context at macro level forced them into various trajectories, ranging from reluctant compliance to the ultimate rejection of the system. Freesia's case, for instance, exemplifies how extreme precarity can force a teacher into surrender, by forcing him to abandon his previously aspired identity. Sena constructed a "realist teacher" identity as a survival mechanism, which illustrates how neoliberal academic conditions lead a teacher into reluctant conformity. Aylin navigated her precarious status by focusing on professional survival, sticking to professional perfectionism, and transforming her emotional tension into an aspiration for individual and collective agency to challenge exploitative conditions in the future. Unlike the other participants, Eylül and Cotton navigated their emotional dissonance and the constant threat of precarity through counter-positioning, involving passive resistance or quitting to protect the core belief in being a "good teacher". These findings indicate that although their trajectories diverge, early-career, part-time English instructors experience reconstruction of identity ignited by emotional dissonance, limited agency, and structural precarity at macro level. The current study's findings about identity reconstruction aligns with Yazan (2025), who asserts that the emotional dimensions of teachers intersect with identity tensions, forming a link for understanding the relationship between identity, agency, and ideologies. Furthermore, like findings of the current study, O'Keeffe and Skerritt (2021) displayed that many teachers work within neoliberal frameworks experience constant emotional tensions, which lead to the active and continuous (re)interpretation of teachers' identities in response to their experiences. Similarly, aligning with the findings of the current study, Wang (2025) observed that university-based language practitioners constantly (re)construct their teacher identities in the face of professional challenges, a lack of professional agency, and conflicts between their pedagogical ideals and professional roles under neoliberal academic context. This constant reconstruction of identity under the precarity in the

findings of the current study is also supported by the recent Turkish educational contexts. Taşdemir and Sefereoğlu (2024) found that three early-career English teachers working within the Turkish public school system survived emotional conflicts by employing coping strategies, such as shifting their focus to values education or attributing instructional failures to systemic constraints, which aligns with Cotton's strategy of referring to broader neoliberal policies as a meta reflection to combat with precarity through developing a critical identity in current study. Supporting current study's findings, Elmas et al. (2025) revealed, the professional identity negotiation of English language teachers under precarious conditions is intertwined with frustration, uncertainty, temporariness, and a sense of otherization emerged from the tension between teacher education ideals and neoliberal academic conditions that mandates constant teacher identity adaptation while hindering teacher agency. Consequently, like Freesia and Sena in the current study, Elmas et al.'s (2025) participant occasionally found themselves reluctantly complying with neoliberal discourses simply as a survival mechanism.

Ultimately, the emotional labor, compliance, and identity tensions experienced by the participants in this study might be understood as the outcomes of a broader ideological context. The current study's findings related to macro level emotional and identity tensions echo with Giroux (2023), who argued that contemporary neoliberal educational ideologies have reformed schools and universities as market-driven factories through corporatization, hinderance of teacher autonomy, and reducing them to deskilled technicians who are forced to prioritize standardized metrics and institutional efficiency over critical thought and pedagogical care. As this study highlighted the lack of greater or collective agency, the findings also go in line with Giroux (2002, 2019), who argued that by dehumanizing insecure academic populations, current neoliberal political discourses and policies weaponize education to normalize inequality and suppress collective agency, which leaves instructors (including higher education context) with limited options: to adjust, ignore, accept, or fall into hopelessness. However, despite this systemic suppression, the current study demonstrates that complete hopelessness is not the only result. While participants like Freesia stayed on the edge of surrender, others, such as Aylin, with her aspiration toward advocacy, and Eylül, with her ethical boundary-setting,

demonstrated resistance. This echoes with Daddow et al. (2024), who indicated that by critically reflecting on their emotional dissonance, early-career, part-time instructors can develop resilience against deskilling and precarity, assigned identities within shifting global policies. Extending beyond the established literature, the current study highlights the unique ways individuals respond to the macro level pressures (the lack of greater or collective agency, precarity) of the neoliberal context in Türkiye. It reveals that part-time instructors continuously develop unique, individualized paths to manage tensions, which implies that individual resilience might be a possible notion that should be associated with the neoliberal academic context and the specific triangle (emotional labor, teacher identity, teacher agency) in future research.

5.1.2.2. Under Institutional Dissonance

After highlighting how emotional labor, teacher identity, and agency are affected by precarious working conditions within a neoliberal academic context, it becomes clear that institutional realities are where participants are truly confronted with macro-level realities. In other words, although emotional dissonance due to precarity plays in the background, the experiences of part-time English language instructors early in their careers demonstrate that the main interaction within the triangle of emotional labor, teacher identity, and agency occurs within the institutional reality. The data reveals a cyclical process: this process begins with emotional labor triggered by the conflict with the institution. This institutional dissonance also triggers parallel shifts in teachers' professional identities. Consequently, guided by these emotional conflicts and restructured identities, teachers struggle with enacting agency in the classroom across a spectrum ranging from strategic compliance to resistance.

The current study's data displays that part-time, early-career English language instructors experience demotivation and emotional labor due to institutional dissonance at the meso level. This dissonance is usually driven by the neoliberal paradigms of foundation universities, manifesting through recurring issues: curriculum rigidity, absenteeism policies, the commodification of educational materials, and profit-driven assessment mechanisms. This finding also emphasizes

how macro level neoliberal policies and values actualize in institutional policies for instructors, which supports Benesch (2019)'s assertion that correlate high power dynamics, institutional policies and emotional tension of teachers against these notions. For example, Aylin, Sena, Freesia, and Cotton experienced significant emotional tension when their pedagogical beliefs clashed with the institutional expectations for rigid curriculum appliance and standardized teaching methods, limited pedagogical autonomy, absenteeism policies, the selection and imposition of educational materials, assessment. In other words, the participants experienced emotional labor at meso context because their core pedagogical values clashed with profit-driven institutional expectations that ignored their individual presence and teacher agency. The findings of the current study are supported by Benesch (2018), who conceptualizes emotional labor as the result of the clash between implicit or explicit institutional expectations and a teacher's professional values, which highlights a significant disconnect between the legalistic mandates of an institution and the empathic, pedagogical responses teachers employ (e.g., in grading or attendance). Similarly, Smith et al. (2025), displayed the tension between emotional harmony, derived from meaningful student connections, and emotional exhaustion caused by institutional pressures and constraints, which reflects the experiences of the participants in the current study. While supporting the concept of "feeling rules" established in the literature, the current study illustrates how these expected rules are actualized in the lived experiences of early-career, part-time English language instructors. Especially, it demonstrates how feeling rules manifest through concrete educational issues, such as rigid absenteeism policies, rigid curricula, profit-driven assessment, the commodified educational materials. Furthermore, these findings reveal that rather than being limited to broad institutional conflicts, emotional labor as a concept is actively experienced as a daily reality in education-related matters across different foundation universities in Türkiye.

Besides the emotional dissonance, the current study's findings imply teachers' professional entities seem trapped in the background, which elevates the tension. This aligns with Yazan (2022), who argues that becoming an educator is a continuous process of negotiating multiple roles and internal identities through pedagogical beliefs while facing the necessities of institutional professional

identities. Also, the current study focuses on how these emotional and identity tensions are navigated by the participants, rather than presenting the notions that trigger them. The emotional labor and identity tensions induced by institutional dissonance in the current study do not totally leave the participants powerless; rather, they serve as the triggering factor for identity reconstructions. In the current study, the emotional labor arising from the conflict between institutional expectations and pedagogical beliefs, and teacher identities navigated by participants are intertwined and proceed in parallel. The cycle, which begins with emotional tensions, is accompanied by an identity tension arising from the necessity to shift from pedagogical idealism to institutional realism for these early-career, part-time instructors. All participants found themselves constantly negotiating their professional ideals against rigid organizational realities. This aligns with the recent findings by Li (2025), who demonstrated that the way of novice language instructors reconstruct their identities as the shift from an imagined identity to a practiced identity is shaped by the harsh realities of the workplace, highlighting an identity conflict caused by the emotional tension between a teacher's pedagogical responsibilities and the institution's bureaucratic aspirations. In the current study, while all participants became more “realistic”, their specific navigation styles and identity trajectories varied. The data displays that Freesia and Sena navigated the tension between their pedagogical beliefs and organizational realities by largely complying to institutional expectations. For these instructors, navigating institutional dissonance required a reconstruction as an adaptation to the rules dictated by the administration in order to escape the constant risk of dismissal. In contrast to Freesia and Sena, the data indicates that Aylin, Cotton, and Eylül navigated their shift from idealism to realism by resisting total institutional assimilation. They tried to protect their imagined teacher identities by holding tightly to their core pedagogical ideals. The necessary identity reconstruction in the light of intertwined emotional and identity tensions is supported by contemporary ELT literature early-career educators. For example, like the findings of the current study, Valentine and Song’s (2025) autoethnographic study validates these reconstructions, illustrating how the emotional labor of navigating marginalized professional roles and seeking institutional validation forces novice English teachers to constantly reshape a fragmented sense of self, which reflects the experiences of all of the participants in

the current study. Narrowing the focus to the context of the current study, the current findings go align with Dürüst (2021), who investigated the intersection of emotional labor and professional identity specifically among English language instructors at a Turkish foundation university, and explored that the institutional dissonance at foundation universities forces teachers to renegotiate who they are and who they want to become, establishing correlation between emotional tension and teacher identity. Moving beyond only confirming the concept of identity reconstruction found in global and Turkish literature, the current study highlights the deeply individualized nature of this process. It reveals that despite identity reconstruction due to emotional and institutional dissonance under precarity being a requirement for all participants, these instructors develop unique pathways to reconstruct their professional selves across five distinct institutions. By conceptualizing these reconstructions as a trajectory, moving from survival driven alignment with institutional rules to resistance through pedagogical idealism, this research also seems to reveal the intersection of identity reconstruction with teacher agency through displaying the parallelism between participants' navigation of reconstructions and agency. Thus, the current study emphasizes that the complex interaction between identity reconstruction and agency under feeling rules and neoliberal precarity is an important subject for ongoing investigation.

As mentioned earlier, the findings of the current study indicate that emotional and identity tensions are also directly in interaction with the teacher agency. Besides reconstructing their teacher identities, participants are exercising teacher agency in the classroom, as they are mostly constrained at taking broader or collective actions at the meso and macro levels. This finding of the current study is supported by Bodenheimer and Shuster (2020), who displayed those institutional pressures, such as rigorous curriculum, standardized teaching, and standardized testing, force teachers to navigate emotional tensions through teacher agency in classroom, as their agency at the broader contexts are limited by institutional constraints. The finding of the current study also echoes with Pillen et al. (2013), identified institutional tensions, which teachers manage through coping strategies like taking individual agency at classroom. Diao and Cheng (2026) explored how early-career teachers in China navigated the emotional labor emerged from the duality of administrative

scrutiny and their pedagogical ideals by taking micro-level actions as tools for survival and identity formation within a rigid educational system, which again supports the findings of the current study. Moreover, the participants in the current study navigate their emotional labor, and pedagogical beings within their own classrooms across a spectrum, ranging from strict compliance at one end to resistance at the other. At the compliance end of this spectrum, agency is exercised through strategic compliance. Freesia navigated his institutional dissonance by almost entirely complying with administrative expectations in a state of self-silencing, driven by the need to protect his precarious employment status. Similarly positioned toward the compliance end, the harsh realities of the institution forced Sena to adopt a "realistic" survival stance; she performs compliance, although her evolving pedagogical beliefs are beginning to foster her agency. Moving along the spectrum, Aylin, Cotton, and Eylül navigated their emotional labor through varying degrees of resistance, actively prioritizing their pedagogical identities over institutional rules. Aylin outwardly projected compliance to avoid direct administrative confrontation, yet she secretly reclaimed her agency within the classroom to actualize her student-centered beliefs through covert action. Cotton navigated his institutional dissonance through passive resistance; sticking to his identity as a transformative intellectual, he subverted the rigid curriculum by dedicating class time to discussing social issues. At the furthest end of the resistance spectrum is Eylül, who navigated her agency through strategic hardening and overt boundary setting. Unlike the others who utilized covert or passive strategies, Eylül directly contradicted institutional rules that clashed with her ethical and pedagogical being. The trajectory in the current study aligns with Huddleston et al. (2025), who argues that when teachers experience ethical or emotional tensions at institutional level, they take strategies driven by pedagogical commitments to student benefit, which range from strategic compromise to overt rejection, and even the decision to leave the profession entirely. Also, the current study echoes with Lau et al. (2022), who found that teachers employ coping strategies ranging from passive tolerance to emotional distancing when their personal values conflict with rigid school hierarchies and administrative burdens. Specifically at neoliberal higher education context, Duarte and Brewer (2022) suggested that instructors at universities under the stress of neoliberal policies and feeling rules navigate tensions in a spectrum from resistance to compliance to

professionally survive within the structure, which echoes with the experiences of the participants in the current study. Extending beyond the strategic compliance to resistance spectrum cited in the literature, this research brings light to the unique stories of individual adaptation and resistance demonstrated at the micro level. As a contribution to the literature, the findings highlight the actualization of this spectrum in Türkiye by demonstrating how part-time instructors are stripped of greater or collective agency in the Turkish context, and how they exercise individual agency within the borders of their classrooms. This micro level agency is continuously navigated at the intersection of institutional-neoliberal realities of Türkiye and their personal pedagogical beliefs. Therefore, the current study also illuminates the complex and dynamic interplay between macro, meso, and micro levels in terms of teacher identity-emotional labor-agency within the Turkish neoliberal academic context.

Continuous identity renegotiation and agency of the participants in the current study confirms the interaction between the identity-emotion-agency triangle within macro-meso-micro contexts. The current study displays the interaction between emotion, identity and agency by supporting Kayi-Aydar (2019), who conceptualized the identity-emotions-agency triangle. Kang (2025) highlighted this interaction by revealing that educators negotiate their roles through behaviors ranging from proactive and reactive, balancing the micro-system of classroom interactions with the meso-system of institutional policies of higher education institutions, which go in line with the findings of the current study. Similarly, a study by Gao et al. (2026) in China highlighted this identity-emotion-agency interaction, revealing that while some teachers exercise agency through resistance to find new professional resources (similar to Aylin and Eylül in the current study), others face a loss of pedagogical identity and emotional dissonance due to institutional pressures (aligning to Freesia in the current study). Moving beyond the acknowledgment of the interaction among emotional labor, teacher identity, and agency, the current study conceptualizes this relationship as a dynamic cycle. It illustrates how this cycle is triggered by emotional and identity tensions and decisively resolved through parallel identity reconstruction and agency. Particularly, while existing literature sets contextual levels apart, this research indicates that this cycle inevitably associates the macro, meso, and micro

contexts with one another. Moreover, even though the macro and meso level tensions align with literature, the present findings illuminate the unique agencies of five distinct part-time, early-career English language instructors in Türkiye. By showcasing how they navigate this cycle through individualized identity reconstructions and micro-level agency within the Turkish neoliberal framework, the study confirms that instructors generate diverse responses to precarity and feeling rules. Ultimately, the findings might suggest that individual agencies and identity reconstructions serve as a voice. Rather than reducing part-time English language instructors to victims of dictating macro and meso conditions, this study highlights their potency by portraying them as active subjects who navigate their own paths through survival driven adaptation or resistance with deliberate individual choices in spite of the restriction of their agency at broader context.

5.1.2.3. Teacher Identity in Classroom Realities

While this research explores the broader structural implications of precarity at the macro and meso levels, it should be recognized that for early-career instructors, the navigation of teacher identity begins at the micro level (the classroom). As they are in the early years of their profession, the realities of classroom management and student behavior create extra emotional stress besides to meso and macro level conditions. This echoes with Pennington and Richards (2016), who argue that becoming a teacher involves continuous negotiation between one's autobiographical self, personal values and the practical demands of the classroom. The data indicates that four of the participants (Aylin, Sena, Cotton, and Freesia) experienced identity tension between the student-centered pedagogical ideals they acquired during their undergraduate education and the behavioral realities they encountered in the classroom. Conversely, Eylül experienced a unique tension: entering the profession with academically-oriented ideals, she was confronted with the emotive and often unacademic reality of her students. Despite these differing starting points, the clash between their imagined teacher identities and the realities of their classrooms forced all participants to experience identity tension. This aligns with what the ELT literature describes as "praxis shock" or "reality shock", which refers to the erosion of missionary ideals formed during teacher training when confronted by the harsh

realities of classroom life (Farrell, 2006; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Xu, 2012). In the current study, for Aylin, Sena, Freesia, and Cotton, who graduated with student-centered ideals and genuine care for their students, this shock was legitimate. These findings support Taşdemir and Seferoğlu's (2024) study, who demonstrated that early-career English language teachers in Türkiye experience identity (re)negotiation due to the emotional complexities of transitioning from an idealistic student to a practitioner by facing classroom realities. Similarly, Farrell's (2006) case study in Singapore highlighted that early-career language teachers struggle to balance their student-centered beliefs against the rigid, practical demands for traditional instruction and strict behavioral control, which again echoes with the experiences of four of the participants in the current study. In the current study, Eylül presented a contrasting case. While the others mourned the loss of their "friendly teacher" ideal, Eylül mourned the absence of the "ideal student". Her tensions stemmed from the process of lowering her academic expectations and accepting student irresponsibility. While the current study supports the literature on how student-centered ideals are challenged by the "praxis shock" in the classroom context, it also reveals a relatively surprising result: the shift from rigid rules toward student-centeredness, as illustrated by the Eylül case. This finding might suggest that, in some cases, classroom realities extend beyond academic ideals, and that in-service experience shifts the teacher's focus from their own ideals to the students' situation and needs.

The current study's findings show that all participants had to reconstruct their pedagogical selves to survive, since they faced harsh classroom realities (e.g., disrespect, the exploitation of goodwill by students). However, the trajectories of this micro-level reconstruction varied. This divergence aligns with Xu's (2012) longitudinal case study of novice English teachers in China, which found that most of the participants saw their aspirations collapse into an "authoritarian practiced identity" focused on compliance, one of them managed to evolve by exercising personal agency, maintaining flexible, student-centered pedagogies. Furthermore, the differentiating trajectory of the participants in the current study can be supported by Nichols et al. (2017), who reveals that unpleasant emotional episodes, often emerged from a lack of classroom control or boundary violations, force teachers to confront their initial beliefs and navigate identity adjustments to professionally survive the

micro context. In the current study, Aylin, Sena, and Freesia navigated their identity to survive classroom management struggles, boundary violations, and the exploitation of their pedagogical goodwill. They needed to construct performatively authoritative, "sweet-tough," or "robotic" personas over their innately student-centered ideals. This relatively boundary driven trajectory is supported by Pennington and Richards (2016), who observed that when novice teachers' student-centered identities fail to maintain classroom discipline, they might lean on to a structured, formal, and authoritative identity to survive. By investigating how pre-service English teachers in Türkiye perceive and manage disruptive classroom behaviors, Çimen and Çepik-Kiriş (2015) found that disrespect and student disinterest induced novice teachers to favor the establishment of strict rules over passive pedagogical methods, which echoes with the findings of the current study. This dynamic is also captured by Qoyyimah and Bargallie (2026), who found that while English language teachers conceptually embrace student-centered methods, they adapt to authoritative control in the moment they are faced with student disengagement or behavioral challenges, which again goes in line with the current study's finding. Unlike the previous three participants who built boundaries to survive at micro-context struggle, Cotton and Eylül navigated their identity tensions by clinging more tightly on the student-centeredness. They resolved their pedagogical conflicts not through performing authoritative personas, but by leaning into dialogue and strategic flexibility. This direction of proactive flexibility is in line with, Hong et al. (2018), who explored that teachers managed professional identity tension by dropping their rigid personas in favor of emotional responsiveness, friendliness, and strategic flexibility. Ultimately, the current study confirms the literature by displaying that whether through building walls or building bridges, identity reconstructions are navigation ways of survival, which are created to adapt to the emotional and professional requirements of the micro-context (classroom). Furthermore, by presenting the reconstructions of English language instructors across five different settings with precarious working conditions, this study demonstrates that dialogue and strategic flexibility can also be possible options, just as much as hardening, in the face of classroom realities and praxis shock. Most importantly, this study demonstrates that these micro-level identity shifts are also occurring within the neoliberal higher education context in Türkiye. This situation highlights that part-

time early-career English language instructors, who need to make their voices heard, undergo changes not only due to systematic and institutional stresses but also under the pressures of classroom realities.

5.2. Conclusion

The current multiple-case study focused on the relatively under-researched group of early-career English language instructors who have part-time work experience within foundation universities in the Turkish higher education setting. The first aim of this research was to explore how these instructors perceive how they are positioned by their institutions and the broader community under precarious working conditions. Furthermore, the study aimed to examine how these instructors navigate the complex triangle of teacher identity, emotional labor, and teacher agency across macro, meso, and micro contexts.

Addressing the first research question, the findings revealed that participants perceived themselves as both economically and professionally devalued by their institutions. Economically, this devaluation is characterized by their replaceability and the extraction of unpaid labor. Professionally, participants perceived that institutions disregarded the instructors' academic credentials, pedagogical abilities, and initiatives, which deeply shaped their marginalized self-perceptions. Moving beyond the institution, the study also uncovered a societal paradox regarding how these instructors are positioned by their community. While society verbally elevates the teaching profession to a “sacred” status, the instructors feel unvalued when confronting the deteriorating material realities of their jobs. This "sacred but unvalued" paradox masks a broader loss of respect and prestige for the profession, running parallel to their economic marginalization.

Addressing the second research question, the study demonstrated that precarity within the neoliberal academic context interplays with emotional labor, teacher identity, and the restriction of greater or collective agency. Because this interaction remains an under-researched phenomenon among part-time instructors, the current study demonstrated how macro-level neoliberal conditions actualize as meso-level

(institutional) realities. With precarity playing in the background, the interaction of this triangle actualizes as a cyclical process. This cycle initiates with emotional dissonance, triggered by the clash between the instructors' part-time status, their pedagogical beliefs, and top-down institutional expectations. Inevitably, these emotional tensions induce identity tension, forcing a shift from pre-service pedagogical idealism to institutional realism. To navigate this identity tension, participants reconstructed their identities by either conforming to the institution or attempting to balance the tension through strategic performativity, passive resistance, and emotional hardening. Running parallel with identity reconstructions, participants' teacher agency manifests across a spectrum, ranging from survival-driven compliance to strategic resistance in micro level (classroom) for navigation of emotional and identity tensions under precarity, institutional dissonance and the restriction of greater or collective agency. Finally, apart from these macro and meso-level impacts, this research highlighted that instructors simultaneously experience identity tension stemming from the conflict between their initial pedagogical ideals and actual classroom management struggles. To resolve this tension, they developed distinct paths: either adapting to more traditional, authoritarian roles to establish boundaries, or holding onto pedagogical intimacy through dialogue, empathy, and strategic flexibility.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that precarious working conditions in Turkey are not only a systemic reality but also play a role in how participants perceive their own positioning, leading them to view themselves as a devalued and marginalized group. Furthermore, this perception of devalued positioning, particularly through economic devaluation, influences their views on how they are perceived by society, thereby creating the perception of a sacred yet devalued profession. Alongside the sense of devaluation participants experience regarding their own positioning, navigating the emotional labor–teacher identity-teacher agency cycle stands as another stress factor. This cycle reveals that, within Türkiye's neoliberal academic context, a vulnerable group is striving to survive amidst restricted actions and constant emotional and identity tensions across various settings. Furthermore, it demonstrates the inevitable interaction between contexts by highlighting the connections between macro, meso, and micro levels within the foundation

universities in Türkiye. Moreover, this study indicates that for early-career instructors, navigating classroom management and student misbehaviors amplifies the emotional stress induced by institutional tensions and precarious status. Most importantly, given the tensions faced by part-time, early-career English language instructors at foundation universities in Türkiye, who grapple with precarious working conditions, institutional dissonance, and classroom realities, it seems essential that their voices should be more frequently heard in the literature. This would raise awareness among future teacher candidates and teacher educators, encouraging them to develop resistance, and induce education authorities to take action to improve their working conditions.

5.3. Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and previous research, recommendations are given to improve the experiences of early-career, part-time English language instructors at foundation universities. It should be noted that the findings of this study particularly highlight that emotional labor, identity tension, and the constrained teacher agency are not individual problems but structural ones. Therefore, the solution cannot be left to teachers' individual "coping" strategies. Hence, recommendations are built on the requirement of broader changes at the macro, meso, and micro levels.

1. To help early-career, part-time English language instructors at macro level, ending the “seasonal worker” status, which refers to their insecure contracts, seems like an urgent requirement. Although the use of part-time contracts in foundation universities must be prevented completely in an ideal world, it might be naive to think that such a cost-cutting tool will be ended permanently in a neoliberal setting. Therefore, there can be at least policy changes related to hiring conditions. It can be suggested that The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) might establish legal frameworks that oversee the job security and transparency of contract renewals for part-time employees in order to reduce the stress related with their easily replaceable status. Furthermore, although the requirement of completing a master's degree to work as an English language instructor at universities cannot be fully eliminated,

steps could at least be taken to ensure that part-time English language instructors can transition to full-time status upon completing their master's degree.

2. While the neoliberal academic context allows for the prevalence of precarious working conditions, inequalities between full-time and part-time employees become a stress factor, both in how instructors perceive their positioning and, indirectly, in the cycle of emotional labor, teacher identity, and teacher agency. Regarding the fact that part-time employees share the same workload but receive unequal pay, audits by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) could be conducted in foundation universities to improve job descriptions and hourly wages. It can be proposed that the hourly wage system needs to be eliminated and a minimum academic salary standard can be introduced for part-time instructors who share the same teaching load and stress levels as full-time instructors.

3. Although many socio-economic factors play a role in how a profession is perceived by society, the perception of teaching as sacred rather than professional should be addressed. The state and policymakers, teachers, teacher associations, parent organizations, intellectuals, teacher educators, teacher candidates, education faculties need to take steps to change this myth of the sacredness of teaching. Instead of supporting rhetoric that portrays teaching as a sacred and self-sacrificing profession, professional boundaries can be defined regarding instructors' working conditions and job descriptions. It can be emphasized that the state and policymakers might stop positioning teachers as sacred and self-sacrificing figures and instead grant them the rights of professional workers by improving their working conditions.

4. Apart from policy level recommendations, institutional level recommendations for foundation universities and administrators are necessary, particularly in terms of compensation for unpaid labor. Tasks outside of class hours, such as exam grading, office hours, material preparation, and meetings, could be compensated or completely removed from the job descriptions of part-time instructors. While foundation universities may not be able to reduce unpaid labor hours due to student density and workload, they could adapt their contracts to accommodate these regulations. It can be suggested that the extra workload could be added to the hourly wage system and adjusted to comply with legal part-time working hours.

5. While part-time status inherently restricts teacher agency and autonomy, the impact of rigid and exam-focused curricula on this restriction is undeniable. Participants expressed feeling powerless due to a lack of choice in the curriculum and inability to make changes to teaching materials. Therefore, foundation universities could support teachers in taking initiatives that prioritize student needs, trusting in their pedagogical competence and professional credentials. Although abandoning rigid, exam-oriented curriculum impositions might not be possible for institutions under neoliberal academic context, they should create opportunities for strategic flexibility where instructors can bring extra materials and methods according to student needs to enhance English language instructors' professional confidence and well-being.

6. Attendance and exam grading are also among the issues that cause tension for English language instructors. Foundation universities seem to either decide with a customer-student approach, in line with the neoliberal academic context, or disregard human factors through strict institutional policies. This situation appears to have an impact on the emotional labor and identity tensions of part-time English language instructors at the beginning of their careers by limiting their agency. The disregard of teachers' autonomy and agency, in addition to teachers' disadvantaged status, creates extra stress. Institutions could place more value on pedagogical credentials and increase support for instructors' voices. Process-oriented exam evaluations, or at least the introduction of participation grades, could be considered for facilitating teachers' agency. Furthermore, regarding absenteeism, human factors should be taken into account, and instead of a profit-driven pass/fail system, perhaps activities such as board evaluations could be introduced. Thus, the balance between institutional expectations and instructors' considerations can be enhanced for supporting professional identity development process for instructors at the beginning of their career.

7. The reality shock at micro (the classroom) level is also among the factors affecting the process of navigating the teacher identity for English language instructors at the beginning of their careers. Part-time English language instructors express particular anxiety about classroom management and student misbehaviors and feel inadequate

in terms of practical knowledge in these issues. Therefore, adding new courses to teacher training programs could be an option. While English language teacher training programs already offer courses that support the formation of pedagogical beliefs, developing critical courses that reveal the realities of national and institutional education policies could be beneficial for reduce the stress of reality shock for instructors. Overall, a curriculum update is necessary in ELT undergraduate programs. It can be suggested that they could offer elective critical courses such as "English Language Teaching and Neoliberal Education Policies in Türkiye". In such a course, by raising their awareness about possible future struggles related to emotional labor, teacher identity and teacher agency, teacher candidates can be emotionally and intellectually prepared for the precarious and challenging real-world classrooms, not ideal laboratory in-service teacher training.

8. Considering that teaching is a profession based on experience and practice, a review of the practicum process seems like an important necessity. During their internship, prospective teachers have very few opportunities to practice teaching, and they also lack the ability to observe the connections between teaching and the institutional and broader communities. Therefore, revisions could be made to the relationships and activities with mentor teachers. Activities or assessment scales could be included to allow mentor teachers to share their experiences with future teachers regarding classroom management, taking action or setting boundaries within the institution, national education policies, and teachers' working conditions. These kinds of mentoring systems should be established during the practice process to enable prospective teachers to confront real-world scenarios such as classroom management, boundary violations within institution, and precarious working conditions, and to equip them with proactive strategies to empower future English language instructors.

5.4. Limitations of the Study

Although this study provides important insights, it has several limitations. Firstly, this multiple case study focuses on the experiences of early-career, part-time English language instructors in a short span; therefore, this study only presented a snapshot

of their current perceptions about their experiences under precarious working conditions. This does not allow for capturing the transformation of participant English language instructors' perceptions related to their institutional and societal positioning, and their navigation strategies in terms of the emotional labor, teacher identity, and agency at micro, meso and macro contexts. Additionally, this short time span of data collection procedure does not capture how their struggles and responses to precarity, lack of greater or collective agency, and institutional dissonance evolved over a long-term period. Also, the research setting is limited in this study due to the inclusion of English preparatory schools in only foundation universities within two major cities in Türkiye. Therefore, the present study's findings do not capture how neoliberal academic context manifests itself, or how the triangle of emotional labor, teacher identity, and agency is navigated in smaller cities and other institutions, such as public universities. Consequently, instructors' experiences in different institutional or regional settings may differ. Moreover, the current study is only based on the perceptions of the part-time English Language instructors through self-reported data. The absence of the direct insights of administrators, policymakers, and community surrounding these part-time English language instructors may have limited the comprehensiveness of the study.

5.5. Recommendations for Future Research

In this section, ideas for future research directions are presented by taking limitations and research findings into account.

1. Future research can be designed longitudinally for exploring how perceptions related to institutional and societal positioning, and how the navigation of emotional labor, teacher identity and agency of part-time instructors evolve over a long-term period. What the professional identities of those who aspire to become advocates like Aylin, or those who leave the system like Cotton will be after 3-5 years can be investigated. Furthermore, how the navigation of emotional labor change within the years of experience can be explored. When part-time insecurity persists for years, whether the resistance transform into burnout or individual/collective agency at broader contexts can be explored. Longitudinal studies should be conducted to follow this.

2. Although the precarity effect is felt more in Turkey's major cities, future studies could include a larger number of institutions and samples from more diverse cities across Türkiye. Comparative studies can be conducted by comparing the experiences of part-time English language instructors in state universities with those in private universities. How neoliberal academic context in the state universities and in the foundation universities shape the teacher identity, emotional labor, or agency differently could be studied. This situation can also be investigated in the context of private K-12 schools (colleges), considering that neoliberal policies boost precarity at those institutions as well. Lastly, international studies can also be conducted to compare the conditions of part-time English language instructors across countries.

3. The study is based on the perceptions of participants and reflects only the "teacher" perspective as previously mentioned. Multiple perspectives can be included in future research. For example, studies can be conducted that include meso-level administrators. How administrators justify precarious working conditions or whether they are also helpless due to macro-level policies could be explored. Moreover, studies on how students perceive the authority of part-time and early-career instructors could expand on findings of age stigma and exploitation pedagogical care. Furthermore, future studies might include the perceptions of the members from Turkish community to present how the positioning of teaching profession has been transformed in the eyes of the society.

4. This research utilized interviews and diaries to collect the data. Future research might vary the data collection to improve self-reported data, in which teachers describe what they do in the classroom as they perceive it. Future studies could incorporate classroom observations or video-recorded tools to match teachers' perceptions with their actual actions in the classroom and to understand how their experience would appear to an outside observer through video analysis. Also, field notes could be used in future research to capture the institutional experiences of instructors from a holistic perspective.

5. Lastly, while the current study explored the restrictive impacts of precarity, future research may aim to affect structural change rather than observing the situation. It is

recommended that future researchers design participatory action research (PAR) or critical action research studies. By implementing collaborative interventions, such as establishing critical reflection circles focused on the impacts of neoliberal academic context, researchers can investigate whether guided interventions can have a transformative impact on early-career instructors. These action-oriented designs would attempt to empower teachers by exploring how collective reflection can strengthen teacher agency, reduce emotional labor, and help teachers to develop empowered professional identities despite the constraints of the neoliberal academic context.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
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ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu 20.08.2025
Gönderen : ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu
İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Başvurunuz

Sayın Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Müge Gündüz,
Sayın Merve Duraklar,

"Teacher Identity, Emotion Labor and Agency in Neoliberal Academic Context: A Multiple Case Study of Part-time Early Career English Instructors in Türkiye" başlıklı araştırmanız ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek 0378-ODTÜİAEK-2025 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Bilgilerinize sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan

Prof. Dr. İ. Semih AKÇOMAK
Üye

Doç. Dr. Ali Emre TURGUT
Üye

Doç. Dr. Aslı KILIÇ ÖZHAN
Üye

Doç. Dr. Çağrı TOPAL
Üye

Doç. Dr. Pınar AYKAÇ LEIDHOLM
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ
Üye

B. INFORMED CONSENT FORMS

INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This is a thematic analysis study conducted by the researcher Merve Duraklar and supervised by Assist. Prof. Dr Müge Gündüz, co-supervised by Lecturer Yasemin Tezgiden Cakcak, the Department of Foreign Language Education at Middle East Technical University. This study aims to present a multiple case study design with thematic analysis of how five part-time early career English instructors, who has worked at foundation university preparatory departments in Turkey, position themselves and how they are positioned under precarious work conditions, and how they navigate teacher identity-emotional labor- agency triangle at micro, meso and macro contexts. Participants are expected to take part in three semi-structured interviews, which will take approximately 40-60 minutes. Interviews will be conducted through an online application and will be recorded, and data and the files will be stored in password-protected computers belonging only to the researcher. Participation in the study must be on a voluntary basis. No personal identification information is required in the interviews, and the researcher will use pseudonyms throughout the study to ensure participants' anonymity where needed. Your answers will be kept confidential and evaluated only by the researcher. The collected data will only be used for scientific purposes.

The interviews might contain questions that make participants recall their unpleasant memories at the workplace. During the interviews, if you feel uncomfortable for any reason, you are free to quit at any time. In such a case, it will be sufficient to tell the interviewer that you want to wait.

After the interviews are conducted, your questions related to the study will be answered. Thank you in advance for your participation in this study. For further information about the study, you can contact Assist. Prof. Dr Müge Gündüz (Room: ;Tel: ; E-mail:) and Researcher Merve Duraklar (Tel: ;) from the department of Foreign Language Education.

Hereby I declare that I am participating in this study totally of my own will and am aware that I can quit participating at any time I want. I give my consent for the use of the information I provide for scientific purposes.

Name Surname: Date: Signature:

TEACHER DIARY INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This is a thematic analysis study conducted by the researcher Merve Duraklar and supervised by Assist.Prof.Dr Müge Gündüz, co-supervised by Lecturer Yasemin Tezgiden Cakcak, the Department of Foreign Language Education at Middle East Technical University. This study aims to present a multiple case study design with thematic analysis of how five part-time early career English instructors, who has worked at foundation university preparatory departments in Turkey, position themselves and how they are positioned under precarious work conditions, and how they navigate teacher identity-emotional labor- agency triangle at micro, meso and macro contexts. Participants are expected to write their reflections in two teacher diary entries. Participants will be given two weeks span for completing the each diary entries. Teacher diary instructions will be sent through an online application and data files will be stored in password-protected computers belonging only to the researcher. Participation in the study must be on a voluntary basis. No personal identification information is required in the interviews, and the researcher will use pseudonyms throughout the study to ensure participants' anonymity where needed. Your answers will be kept confidential and evaluated only by the researcher. The collected data will only be used for scientific purposes.

Teacher diary instructions might contain questions that make participants recall their unpleasant memories at the workplace. During the process, if you feel uncomfortable for any reason, you are free to quit at any time. In such a case, it will be sufficient to tell the researcher that you want to wait.

After the teacher diaries are completed, your questions related to the study will be answered. Thank you in advance for your participation in this study. For further information about the study, you can contact Assist.Prof.Dr Müge Gündüz (Room: ;Tel: ; E-mail:) and Researcher Merve Duraklar (Tel: ;) from the department of Foreign Language Education.

Hereby I declare that I am participating in this study totally of my own will and am aware that I can quit participating at any time I want. I give my consent for the use of the information I provide for scientific purposes.

Name Surname: Date: Signature:

C. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

Neoliberal Akademik Bağlamda Öğretmen Kimliği, Duygusal Emeği ve Failliği: Türkiye'de Yarı Zamanlı Erken Kariyer İngilizce Okutmanları Üzerine Çoklu Vaka Çalışması

Bu yüksek lisans tezi araştırması, ODTÜ İngilizce Dili Eğitimi Bölümü yüksek lisans öğrencisi Merve Duraklar tarafından yürütülmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'deki vakıf üniversitelerinin İngilizce hazırlık bölümlerinde çalışan kariyerinin başındaki yarı zamanlı İngilizce okutmanlarının, Türkiye'deki güvencesiz çalışma koşulları altında kendilerini nasıl konumlandırdıklarına ve başkaları (öğrenciler, meslektaşlar, yöneticiler, kurumlar, sosyal çevre, topluluklar, eğitim politikaları, vb.) tarafından nasıl konumlandırıldıklarına bağlı olarak öğretmen kimliklerini nasıl yeniden şekillendirdiklerini, yeniden yapılandırdıklarını ve yeniden çerçevelendirdiklerini keşfetmektir. Ayrıca bu çalışma, öğretmen kimliği-duygusal emek-öğretmen failliği üçgenine (Kayi-Aydar, 2019) dikkat çekerek, Türkiye'deki vakıf üniversitelerinin İngilizce hazırlık bölümlerinde çalışan kariyerinin başındaki yarı zamanlı İngilizce okutmanlarının deneyimlerini anlamlandırmayı ve mikro (sınıf), mezo (kurumsal) ve makro (daha geniş topluluklar) bağlamlarda öğretmen kimliği, duygusal emek ve öğretmen failliği arasındaki etkileşimi nasıl yönlendirdiklerini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Size kişisel bilgilerinizle ilgili bir dizi soru sorulacaktır. Cevaplarınız ve bilgileriniz sadece araştırma amacıyla kullanılacak ve üçüncü taraflarla paylaşılmayacaktır. Anketten çıkmak isterseniz, bunu herhangi bir aşamada yapabilirsiniz. Araştırma ile ilgili başka sorularınız varsa, adresinden araştırmacıya, adresinden tez danışmanı Müge Gündüz'e veya adresinden tez eş danışmanı Yasemin Tezgiden Cakcak'a ulaşabilirsiniz. Katıldığınız için teşekkür ederiz!

Kişisel Bilgiler Formu

Bu kısımda kişisel bilgileriniz hakkında sorular sorulacaktır. Lütfen size uygun seçenekleri işaretleyip gerekli yerlerde açıklamalarınızı ekleyiniz.

1. Adınız ve soyadınız: …….
2. Eğitim bilgilerinizi belirtiniz.

Lisans: Üniversite: ……/Bölüm: ……/Mezuniyet Yılı: .....
Yüksek Lisans: Üniversite: ……. /Bölüm: ……/Eğitim Durumu: Hala programa kayıtlıyım/ Kayıtlı değilim.

3. Şu andaki iş durumunuz nedir?
4. Cinsiyetiniz: Kadın () Erkek () Diğer:……
5. Kaç yıldır öğretmenlik yapıyorsunuz? (Lisans mezuniyetinizden sonrasını belirtiniz)
6. Daha önce ya da halen hangi vakıf üniversitelerinin hazırlık bölümünde çalıştınız/çalışmaktasınız?
7. Ne kadar süre part-time İngilizce öğretmeni olarak vakıf üniversitesinin hazırlık bölümünde çalıştınız?
8. Araştırma süresince kullanacağınız pseudonym (takma ad) seçebilir misiniz?

D. 1st SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1st Interview:

1. Biraz kendinizden ve eğitim geçmişinizden bahsedebilir misiniz?
2. İngilizce öğretmeni olmaya nasıl karar verdiniz? Bu mesleği seçmenizdeki motivasyonunuz neydi?
3. Bir vakıf üniversitesinin hazırlık bölümünde çalışmaya nasıl karar verdiniz?
4. Part-time olarak vakıf üniversitesinde çalışmanın avantajları ve dezavantajları nelerdir? Devlet üniversitesinde çalışmak ile benzerlik ve farklılıkları hakkında neler düşünüyorsunuz?
5. Uzun vadede vakıf üniversitesinde part-time ya da full-time çalışmayı planlıyor musunuz? Neden?
6. Kariyerinin başında bir öğretmen olarak, mesleğe başlamadan önce öğretmenlik mesleği hakkındaki düşünceleriniz ve duygularınız nelerdi? Kafanızdaki ideal öğretmeni nasıl tanımlardınız?
7. Kariyerine yeni başlayacak bir öğretmen olarak karşılaşacağınızı düşündüğünüz zorluklar var mıydı? Varsa, bu zorlukları lütfen açıklayın.
8. Kariyerinin başında bir öğretmen olarak, geçtiğimiz süre içinde neler hissettiniz ve tecrübe ettiniz? Bu hisler ve tecrübeler öğretmenlik ile ilgili düşüncelerinizi ve duygularınızı nasıl şekillendirdi? Lütfen örneklerle açıklayınız.
9. Kariyerinin başında bir öğretmen olarak, mesleki deneyiminizde hoşunuza giden, size heyecan veren ya da mesleğinize dair kolaylık olarak gördüğünüz ne gibi deneyimler oldu? Lütfen örneklerle açıklayınız.
10. Kariyerinin başında bir öğretmen olarak, kurumunuzda ya da sınıfta ne tarz problemlerle karşılaştınız? Bu problemleri nasıl çözdünüz? Lütfen örneklerle açıklayınız.
11. Kariyerinizde geçen süre içerisinde yaşadığınız zorluklar ve tecrübeler öğretmen kimliğinizi nasıl yönlendirmenize sebep oldu? Öğretmen kimliğinizi nasıl konumlandırıyorsunuz?

12. Kendinizi nasıl bir öğretmen olarak tanımlarsınız?

13. Hayalinizdeki öğretmen kimliğini hayata geçirebildiğinizi düşünüyor musunuz? Evetse nasıl, hayırsa neden?

14. Eğitim geçmişinizin, aldığınız öğretmen eğitiminin, çalışmış olduğunuz kurum/kurumların, öğrenci profilinizin ve yaşadığınız toplumun/sosyal çevrenin sizin öğretmen kimliğinize olan etkisi/katkısı hakkında ne hissediyorsunuz?

15. Öğretmen kimliğinizin, daha önce çalıştığınız kurumda/şu anda yaşadığınız toplum ve özel hayatınızdaki bireyler arasında herhangi bir varsayım/klişe veya stereotip taşıdığını düşünüyor musunuz? Eğer öyleyse, bununla nasıl baş ediyorsunuz? Bu durum şu andaki öğretmen kimliği algınızı nasıl etkiliyor? Lütfen deneyimlerinizi örneklendiriniz.

16. Kariyerinizde geçen süre içerisinde kişisel duygularınızın aksi yönünde duygular sergilemek zorunda kaldığınız durumlar oldu mu?

a) Olduysa, bu durum öğretmen olarak benliğinizi nasıl etkiledi?

b) Bu durum karşısında, büyük veya küçük çapta, kişisel mesleki değerlerinizi ya da eğitim amaçlarınızı yansıtan ne kararlar/eylemler aldınız? İstediğiniz şekilde eylem almanızı destekleyen ya da engelleyen faktörler nelerdi?

17. Vakıf üniversitesinde çalışırken bir öğretmen olarak yapmayı amaçlayıp/isteyip de herhangi bir nedenle yapamadığınız şeyler oldu mu?

18. Türkiye'de vakıf üniversitesinde part-time olarak çalışmanın iş koşulları açısından kolaylıkları ve zorlukları hakkındaki düşünceleriniz nelerdir? Bu kolaylıklar ve zorluklar, kariyerinin başında bir İngilizce öğretmeni olarak öğretmen kimliğinize bakış açınızı nasıl etkilemektedir?

19. Part time çalışma üniversite yönetimi için ne anlam ifade ediyor sizce? Tam zamanlı çalışanlarla part time çalışanların benzerlik ve farkları nelerdir? Bu iki çalışma türünü ve öğretme pratiklerini kıyaslarsanız neler söylersiniz?

E. 2nd SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

2nd Interview:

1. Son mülakatımızdan bu yana nasılsınız?

2. Daha önce çalıştığınız vakıf üniversitesindeki meslektaşlarınız ile nasıl ilişkiler kurdunuz? Yönetimle olan ilişkilerinize dair görüşleriniz neler? Bu faktörlerin çalışma koşullarında belirleyici olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Bu faktörler duygusal dünyanızı nasıl etkiledi?

3. Daha önce çalıştığınız vakıf üniversitesindeki sınıf içi deneyimleriniz (öğrencilerinizle olan ilişkileriniz, sınıf yönetimi, vb.) öğretmen kimliğiniz hakkındaki düşüncelerinizi ne şekilde etkiledi/dönüştürdü? Lütfen örneklendiriniz.

4. Daha önce çalıştığınız vakıf üniversitesindeki sınıf dışı kurumsal faktörler (performansa dair beklentiler, müfredat, çalışanlar ve yöneticilerle ilişkiler, vb.) öğretmen kimliğinizi ne şekilde etkiledi/dönüştürdü? Lütfen örneklendiriniz.

5. Ülke genelindeki politik-ekonomik ve sosyokültürel ortam öğretmen kimliğinizi etkiliyor mu? Etkiliyorsa nasıl?

6. Daha önce çalıştığınız vakıf üniversitesindeki öğretmenlik deneyiminizden aklınızda kalan belirli bir ânı anlatın.

a) O anda kendinizi bir öğretmen olarak nasıl görüyordunuz? Başkalarının sizi nasıl gördüğünü düşünüyordunuz?

b) Hangi duygular söz konusuydu? Rolünüzü yerine getirirken herhangi bir duyguyu saklamak veya yönetmek zorunda kaldınız mı?

c) Bu durumda hangi eylemleri veya kararları aldınız? Öğretmen failliğinizi ne şekillendirdi veya kısıtladı?

d)Bu an, gelişmekte olan öğretmen kimliğinizi nasıl etkiledi?

7. Son görüşmemizden bu yana, kariyerinin başında bir öğretmen olarak mesleğinizin yakın çevrenizde/toplumda saygınlık veya önem gördüğünü/görmediğini düşündüğünüz bir durum oldu mu? Buna ilişkin deneyimleriniz öğretmen kimliğinizi nasıl şekillendiriyor?

8. Öğretmen kimliği algınızda duygularınızın rolü nedir?

9. Duygularınızı sınıf içerisinde göstermek size ne hissettirir ve öğretmen kimliğinize bakış açınızı nasıl şekillendirir?

10. Vakıf üniversitesinde çalıştığınızda, öğretmen kimliğinizi deneyimlerken duygusal gerilim yaşadığınız oldu mu, duygularınızı bastırdınız mı?

11. Kurumun beklentileri ile kendi pedagojik inançlarınız arasında gelgit yaşadığınız oluyor muydu? Deneyimlerinizi örneklendiriniz.

12. Vakıf üniversitesinde çalışırken öğrencilerinizle, kurum yöneticileriyle, iş arkadaşlarınızla olan ilişkilerinize ya da kurum politikalarına, çalışma koşullarına veya kurumun eğitim öğretime yaklaşımlarına ya da ülkedeki eğitim politikalarına dair deneyimlerinizi göz önünde bulundurduğunuzda, bu faktörlere ilişkin:

a) Sınıf içinde ya da dışında duygularınızı yönlendirdiğiniz/maskelediğiniz oldu mu? Lütfen örneklendirin. Olduysa, bu durumu nasıl çözümlediniz? Ne tür tepkiler/eylemler/davranışlar gösterdiniz? Öğretmen failliğinizi ne şekillendirdi ya da kısıtladı?

b) Duygusal olarak yaşadığınız çelişkiler öğretmen kimliğinizi nasıl şekillendirdi? Lütfen açıklayın.

13. Gerçek duygularınızı yönlendirmeniz/maskelemeniz ile oluşan çelişkiden doğan duygusal emeğinizde, duygularla ilgili kurumsal beklentilerin (profesyonellik ve performans beklentileri) / kurum kültürünün /öğrenci profilinin rolü nedir? Bu sizin öğretmen kimliğinizi nasıl yönlendiriyor? Lütfen açıklayınız.

14. Vakıf üniversitesinin hazırlık bölümünde part-time çalışma koşulları, kariyerinin başında bir İngilizce öğretmeni olarak sizin öğretmen kimliğinizi ve duygusal emeğinizi ne yönde şekillendirdi? Lütfen açıklayınız ve örneklendiriniz.

15. Günlüğünüzde belirttiğiniz ….. olay sizin için neden önemli?

16. Günlüğünüzde belirttiğiniz ….. olay size ne hissettirdi?

17. Günlüğünüzde belirttiğiniz ….. olayın öğretmen kimliğinizi konumlandırmanızda veya öğretmen kimliğinizin konumlandırılmasında olan etkilerini açıklar mısınız?

18. Günlüğünüzde belirttiğiniz …..

zorlukların/deneyimlerin/algıların/fikirlerin/olayların öğretmen kimliğinizi nasıl şekillendirdiğini düşünüyorsunuz?

F. 3RD SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

3rd Interview:

1. Son mülakatımızdan bu yana nasılsınız?
2. Geçirdiğimiz süreçte öğretmen kimliğiniz açısından kendinizi konumlandırmanız ve algılayışınız da herhangi bir değişiklik oldu mu? Olduysa nasıl ve neden? Lütfen detaylandırır mısınız?
3. Geçirdiğimiz süreçte daha önce çalıştığınız kurum, toplum veya yakın çevrenizin mesleğinizi konumlandırışının öğretmen kimliğinizi şekillendirişi konusundaki algılayışınız değişti mi? Neden, nasıl? Lütfen açıklayınız.
4. Geçirdiğimiz süreçte, kariyerinin başında part-time olarak bir vakıf üniversitesinin hazırlık bölümünde çalışmış İngilizce öğretmeni olarak, çalışma koşullarının/zorluklarının öğretmen kimliğinize etkilerini algılayışınızda değişiklik oldu mu? Lütfen açıklayınız.
5. Geçirdiğimiz süreçte, gerçek duygularınızı yönlendirmeniz/maskelemeniz ile oluşan çelişkiden doğan duygusal emeğiniz ve bu durumun öğretmen kimliğiniz ile karşılıklı etkileşimi konusundaki algılayışınız değişti mi? Lütfen açıklayınız.
6. Geçirdiğimiz süreçte, öğretmen kimliğiniz-duygusal emeğiniz-öğretmen failliği etkileşimi hakkındaki algılayışınız değişti mi?
7. Sizinle 5/6 haftadır yaptığımız çalışma sürecindeki diyaloğumuzun/yazdığınız reflectionların öğretmen kimliğinize/duygularınıza/karar alma süreçlerinize herhangi bir etkisi olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
8. Günlüğünüzde belirttiğiniz ….. olay sizin için neden önemli?
9. Günlüğünüzde belirttiğiniz ….. olay size ne hissettirdi?
10. Günlüğünüzde belirttiğiniz ….. olayın öğretmen kimliğinize /duygusal emeğinize/öğretmen failliğinize etkilerini/katkılarını açıklar mısınız?
11. Günlüğünüzde belirttiğiniz ….. olayın öğretmen kimliğiniz, duygusal emeğiniz ve öğretmen failliği arasındaki etkileşimi nasıl yönlendirdiğini düşünüyorsunuz?

G. FIRST TEACHER DIARY TEMPLATE

Teacher Diary Instructions

1st Teacher Diary

This Master's Thesis is carried out by Merve Duraklar, a graduate student of the Department of Foreign Language Education at Middle East Technical University, under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Müge Gündüz and co-advisor Lecturer Dr. Yasemin Tezgiden Cakcak. This study aims to explore how early-career part-time English instructors, who has worked at the English preparatory departments of foundation universities in Türkiye, position themselves and are positioned under the precarious working conditions in Türkiye. Also, it scrutinizes how early-career part-time English instructors, who has worked at the English preparatory departments of foundation universities in Türkiye, navigate teacher identity, emotion labor and agency at the micro, meso and macro context. This diary will be administrated to better understand the role of your experiences in how you position yourself and you are positioned under the neoliberal academic context in Türkiye as an early-career English Instructor who has worked as a part-timer at the English preparatory departments of foundation universities. You will be asked to reflect on your teacher identity negotiation process in micro, meso, and macro level based on your pleasant and unpleasant experiences/emotions/ideas arising from your interaction with your students, colleagues, administrators, dominant discourse (community, society, family, etc.), or dominant education ideologies and policies. As your personal information will not be revealed in this study, please feel comfortable expressing how you define/shape/ negotiate your teacher identity and how you navigate your emotions. I would like to thank you for your time and contribution to this study. If you have further questions, please send them to me at

Merve Duraklar

Guidelines

Your Pseudo-Name:

1. How would you elaborate on your perspective about your current teacher identity?

2. How would you define yourself?

3. Have you ever realized any difference between how you position yourself as a teacher and how others (students, colleagues, administration, etc.) position you? If yes, did you try to resist, adjust to, or reshape your teacher's identity based on the expectations placed on you?

4. How has working at a foundation university influenced the way you view **former/current/ aspired** teacher identity as an early career English Language

Instructor? Try to **reflect briefly on what made you revisit your beliefs and perceptions about your teacher identity in those moments. What happened? How did it make you feel?**

H. SECOND TEACHER DIARY TEMPLATE

Teacher Diary Instructions

2nd Teacher Diary

This Master's Thesis is carried out by Merve Duraklar, a graduate student of the Department of Foreign Language Education at Middle East Technical University, under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Müge Gündüz and co-advisor Lecturer Dr. Yasemin Tezgiden Cakcak. This study aims to explore how early-career part-time English instructors, who has worked at the English preparatory departments of foundation universities in Türkiye, position themselves and are positioned under the precarious working conditions in Türkiye. Also, it scrutinizes how early-career part-time English instructors, who has worked at the English preparatory departments of foundation universities in Türkiye, navigate teacher identity, emotion labor and agency at the micro, meso and macro context. This diary will be administrated to better understand the role of your experiences in how you position yourself and you are positioned under the neoliberal academic context in Türkiye as an early-career English Instructor who has worked as a part-timer at the English preparatory departments of foundation universities. You will be asked to reflect on your teacher identity, emotional labor and agency navigation process in micro, meso, and macro level based on your pleasant and unpleasant experiences/emotions/ideas arising from your interaction with your students, colleagues, administrators, dominant discourse (community, society, family, etc.), or dominant education ideologies and policies. As your personal information will not be revealed in this study, please feel comfortable expressing how you define/shape/ negotiate your teacher identity and how you navigate your emotions. I would like to thank you for your time and contribution to this study. If you have further questions, please send them to me at

Merve Duraklar

Guidelines

Your Pseudo-Name:

In your reflection, you should **reflect on and describe specific situations or emotional experiences** that made you think deeply about how you needed to regulate your emotions during the time that you worked at the foundation university preparatory department by giving details about **how you felt required to regulate, suppress, or amplify your emotions to fit professional, institutional, or societal expectations.** Try to **reflect briefly on why you chose those moments. What happened? What were your profound and expected emotions? How did it make you feel? How did you guide the emotional conflict?**

1. Please tell me an anecdote/ anecdotes when you felt emotionally challenged and felt identity tensions teaching at a foundation university. What happened? How did you feel? What did you do? Did you take any action to resolve your emotional tensions?

2. Did experiencing such an event had an impact on your **former/current/aspired teacher identity**. In what ways, have your views of teacher identity been reshaped?
3. How did the **unfavorable aspects** of working as a part-time instructor (*job insecurity, working under poor conditions, low and hour-based payments, administrative exploitation, etc.)* impact your emotions as an early-career English language instructor? What did you do to cope with them?
4. What were **the rewards** of obeying the expected emotions as a part-time early-career English language instructor? What were **the consequences** of disobeying them?

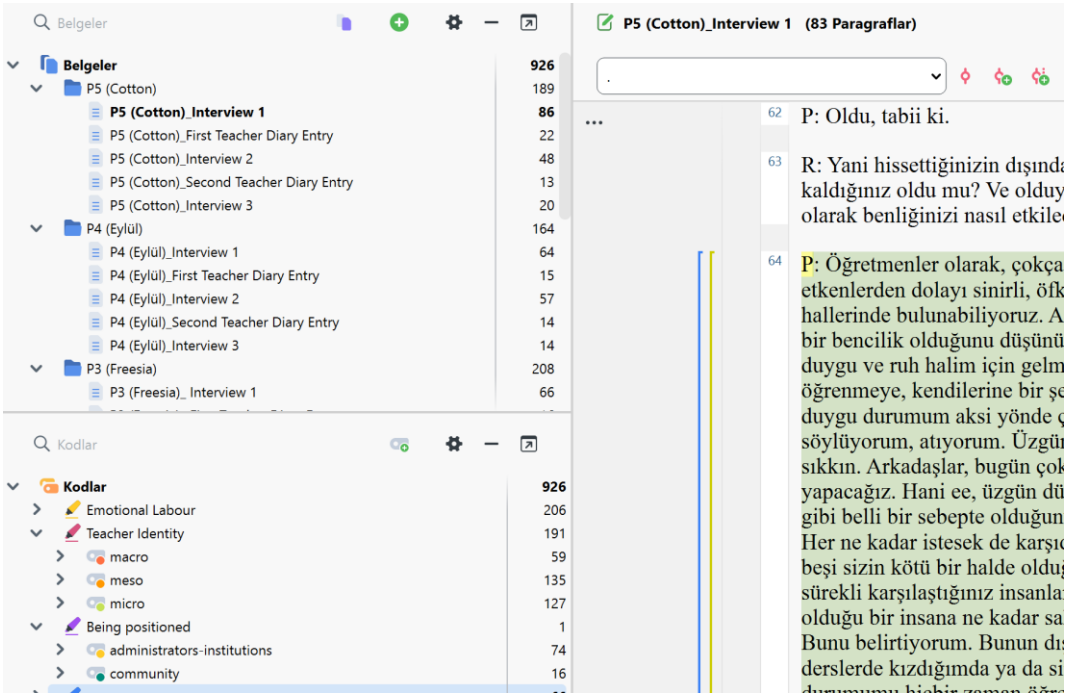
I. THE LIST OF EXAMPLE INITIAL CODES

"a person who works for money rather than a teacher"	hatred toward being part of neoliberal commodification
"a robotic teacher"	having dialogue with students
acknowledging institutional expectations	helplessness due to conflict in absenteeism
adapting to absenteeism	hope for actualizing imagined teacher identity
adjusting while resisting	hope for full time employment
anxiety over classroom management	hope for gaining teacher autonomy
anxiety over crowded classrooms	hope of actualizing preferred teacher identity more
"as tool of transmitting"	hyper-preparedness
"awareness of employment and power relations"	"I am a laborer"
awareness and dissatisfaction of complying	ignoring pressure of appointment
awareness of professional self	impact of institutional needs
balancing between self and institution	implicit wording against it
Battling for student benefit	intellectualization as reaction
"being from the herd"	"less institutional support"
"being part of wheel"	limiting material development
"being a teacher is the change"	"losing identity piece by piece"
being a teacher requires practice	loss of respectful reputation
buffering Institutional Failure	loss of teacher autonomy
clash between pedagogical beliefs vs profit based approach	negative impact of social and economic devaluation
clash between pedagogical vs institutional self	negative washback of standardized exam
clash between student benefit and institution benefit	negotiating teacher identity due to institutional expectations
clash between student teacher vs institution's teacher	no certain work hours
clash between teacher autonomy vs institutional expectations	no extra rights
commitment to maximum effort	no personal office
commodification vs pedagogical beliefs	no stabile payment
compliance depended on the situation	no tolerance for exploitation
compliance due to expectations	no tolerance for unprofessionalism
compliance due to precarity	not reflecting emotions to anyone
compliance due to protect position	numbness due to repression
compliance not to be problem	open to exploitation
compliance related to exam score of student	pacifying teacher identity
compliance to expected teacher	passive resistance due to being part-timer
compliance to feeling rules	passive resistance due to harsh economic reality
compliance to hierarchy	passive resistance to purchased teaching materials
compliance to institutional expectations	passiveness due to precarity
compliance to marking hierarchy	"paying atonement"
compliance to program	Perceiving labor inequity
compliance to rigid curriculum	performing extra energy
compliance with institutional realities	"playing three monkeys"
complying to performance expectations	precarity in tension
"conductor of a train"	prioritizing care over policy
conflict due to absenteeism	professional awareness
conflict due to curriculum	projecting suppression
	protecting identity in conflict
	protecting students from administrators

conflict due to participation note	providing material against institutional
conflict in classroom authority	expectation
conflict with institution	quitting as a reaction
continuing in spite of demotivation due to	raising awareness
devaluation	rapport with students
controlling classroom management	rebellion due to care for students
covering emotional exhaustion	recalibrating intimacy
covering part time status	"reflective teaching"
curriculum expectation of institution	reshaping teacher identity beliefs
dedicated teacher vs institutional self	resigning for teacher identity
degradation through observation	resigning as resistance
demand of teacher authority	"resilient realist"
demotivation due to being part timer	resisting absenteeism
demotivation due to economic devaluation	resisting against absenteeism
demotivation due to inequity	resisting financial exploitation of students
demotivation due to precarity	through exams
demotivation due to professional devaluation	resisting part time status
desiring classroom autonomy	resisting to absenteeism
devaluation due to being part timer	resistance to sell of digital books
devaluation of teaching profession	resistance to devaluation
devaluation through neoliberal transformation	responding to devaluated teacher presence
emotional compliance for protecting status	responding to extra work
emotional conflict due to absenteeism	responding to questioning of teacher authority
emotional distress due to precarity	risk aversion
emotional neutrality as professionalism	sacred but unvalued paradox
emotional obedience due to contract renewal	sacrificing teacher presence
emotional removal from institution	sarcasm against institutional expectation
emotional stress due to positioning but still	sarcasm as resistance
paying effort	sarcastic dialogue
emphasis on student-teacher dialogue	self-reflection
empowerment through resister role models	sense of empowerment through aspirations
evolving based on class interaction	setting boundaries
evolving identity	shifting from idealism to realism
exhaustion due to tense curriculum	shifting to strict identity at foundation university
expectation of compliance by institution	showing passive resistance
exploitation of position as if a salesperson	speed instead of good pedagogy
extra non-teaching related duties	standardized teaching
extra performance for evaluation	starting from emotional labor to teacher identity
fabricating age for classroom management	strategic compliance
facilitator role	strategic hardening due to student exploitation
facing with institutional expectations	strict curriculum
falling into pieces as a teacher	struggling to reach ideal teacher identity
fear of losing job	student centeredness rather than authority
Feeling compelled to produce extra	student-centeredness
"Feeling like a slave"	"success oriented teacher"
feeling rules	supplementing insufficient curriculum
feeling rules and extra energy	suppression due to classroom argument
feeling storms inside due to devaluation	suppression of anger to administration
fighting for instructional autonomy	suppression of anger due to disrespect
flexible teacher	suppression due to disrespect
focusing on making students pass the exam	suppression of personal traits
framing identity through student interaction	surface acting
"friendly but not friends"	surface acting in spite of economic distress
from "Friendly" to "Sweet-Tough"	surface acting toward students about it
from strict to eclectic	surrender due to demotivation
future oriented self-actualization	surrender due to fear of losing job
gaining authority through dialogue	"teacher as a comprador"
gaining professional control	teacher as a guide

gaining professional foresight getting flexible by understanding students giving time to student's personal problems "hands-on, proactive educator" hands are tied due to hierarchy happiness through student interaction hardening toward institutional relationships harm of profit based approach to teaching maintaining pedagogical standards despite demotivation mandatory credentialing for full time "marketability surpass the legitimacy of a hard-earned degree" masking due to being part timer memorizing rather than teaching "micro management" mitigating exploitation with external appreciation mitigating exploitation with social bonds at work monotone rather than flexible more student centered motivation for institutional approval "my ideals or quitting"	teacher who takes initiative teaching as a maternal feeling tension due to devaluation tension due to hierarchy culture tension due to institutional dissonance tension due to precarity tension due to rigid curriculum tension due to speed expectation tension in teaching beliefs terminological distinction (Teacher vs. Hoca) the former identity the ideal teacher thinking different career paths due to ethical tension "transformative intellectual" trying to not to lose teacher identity unwillingness to create extra material using sarcasm over suppression validation through administrative approval validation through student appreciation validation through student interaction validation through student response validation through student success voice assertation "we should be on our tiptoes" in spite of sincerity wheel of demotivation "why did not you become a doctor" "you are not teachers"

J. SAMPLE CODING IN MAXQDA



K. TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

NEOLİBERAL AKADEMİK BAĞLAMDA ÖĞRETMEN KİMLİĞİ, DUYGUSAL EMEK VE FAİLLİK: TÜRKİYE'DE KARİYERİNİN BAŞINDAKİ YARI ZAMANLI İNGİLİZCE OKUTMANLARI ÜZERİNE BİR ÇOKLU DURUM ÇALIŞMASI

GİRİŞ

Öğretmen kimliği, öğretmenin kendini algılayışı ile konumlandırılışı arasındaki sürekli etkileşimle şekillenen, dinamik ve sosyal olarak inşa edilen bir olgu olarak kabul edilmektedir (Varghese vd., 2005). Öğrencilikten hizmet içi öğretmenliğe geçiş süreci özellikle zorludur ve sıklıkla kariyerinin başındaki eğitimcilerin mesleki kimlik gelişimini derinden etkileyen bir "gerçeklik şoku" tetiklemektedir (Trent, 2016). İngilizce okutmanları için bu ilk yıllar, hizmet öncesi pedagojik inançlarının gerçek dünyadaki eğitim ortamlarına yanıt olarak sürekli evrilmesi nedeniyle kritik bir öneme sahiptir. Bu süreçte duygular, kimlik inşasından ayrı düşünülemez. Öğretmenler sürekli olarak kurumsal "duygu kuralları"nı (feeling rules) yönetmekte ve pedagojik eğitimleri ile kurumsal düzenlemeler arasındaki gerilimden doğan duygusal emek sarf etmektedirler (Benesch, 2018). Bu duygusal uyumsuzluk da onların mesleki failliklerini (agency) ve kimlik müzakerelerini büyük ölçüde etkilemektedir.

Dil öğretiminde kimlik, duygu ve faillik arasındaki bu kritik etkileşime rağmen, kariyerinin başındaki yarı zamanlı İngilizce okutmanlarının özgün deneyimleri ve mücadeleleri literatürde yeterince araştırılmamıştır. Türkiye'de neoliberal eğitim politikaları, iş güvencesi veya yan haklar sağlamadan ucuz ve esnek emek elde etmek amacıyla giderek artan bir şekilde yarı zamanlı okutmanlara bel bağlayan vakıf üniversitelerinin çoğalmasına yol açmıştır (Arda, 2023; Aslan, 2014). Sonuç olarak

bu eğitimciler; düşük saatlik ücretler, temel hakların eksikliği ve sistemli bir marjinalleşme ile karakterize edilen güvencesiz çalışma koşullarına maruz kalmaktadırlar. Tam zamanlı meslektaşları kurumsal istikrarın ayrıcalıklarını yaşarken, yarı zamanlı okutmanlara genellikle gözden çıkarılabilir bir iş gücü muamelesi yapılmakta; bu durum ciddi bir mesleki değersizleşmeye ve yoğun bir duygusal sıkıntıya yol açmaktadır.

Kayı-Aydar'ın (2019) da vurguladığı gibi, dil öğretmeni failliğini tam olarak anlamak; mikro (sınıf), mezo (kurum) ve makro (daha geniş toplumsal) bağlamlardaki karmaşık "kimlik-duygu-faillik üçgeni"ni incelemeyi gerektirmektedir. Türkiye'deki yarı zamanlı okutmanlar için insancıl pedagojik idealleri ile vakıf üniversitelerinin kısıtlayıcı ve kâr odaklı gerçekleri arasındaki bu çatışma, onları sürekli bir duygusal emek ve kimlik gerilimi döngüsüne sürüklemektedir. Güvencesiz statüleri nedeniyle kısıtlanmış olmalarına ve gerilimler yaşamalarına rağmen; kurumsal beklentilere uyum sağlama, bu beklentileri müzakere etme veya onlara direnme konusunda bilinçli seçimler yapmak üzere faillik sergileme mücadelesi vermektedirler. Bu nedenle, bu katılımcıların güvencesiz çalışma koşulları altında kurumları ve toplum tarafından nasıl konumlandırıldıklarını algılayış biçimleri; onların duygusal emeği, öğretmen kimliğini ve öğretmen failliğini nasıl yönettiklerini de kaçınılmaz olarak şekillendirmektedir.

İngiliz Dili Öğretimi (ELT) literatüründeki bu önemli boşluğu ele alan bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki vakıf üniversitelerinin hazırlık bölümlerinde çalışan, kariyerinin başındaki yarı zamanlı İngilizce okutmanlarının güvencesiz çalışma koşulları altında kurumsal ve toplumsal konumlandırmalarını nasıl algıladıklarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca çalışma, öğretmen kimliği, duygusal emek ve öğretmen failliği arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimi makro, mezo ve mikro bağlamlarda nasıl yönettiklerini inceleyerek bu öğretmenlerin yaşantısal deneyimlerini anlamlandırmayı hedeflemektedir. Nihayetinde bu araştırma, neoliberal akademik bağlamın kısıtlayıcı etkileri üzerine nüanslı ve nitel bir perspektif sunarak, öğretim iş gücünün bu marjinalleşmiş kesimine çok ihtiyaç duyduğu sesi vermektedir.

Bu amaçlar doğrultusunda, mevcut çalışma aşağıdaki araştırma sorularına yanıt aramaktadır:

1. Türkiye'deki vakıf üniversitelerinin İngilizce hazırlık bölümlerinde görev yapan ve kariyerinin başında olan yarı zamanlı İngilizce okutmanları, Türkiye'deki güvencesiz çalışma koşulları altında kurumları ve toplum tarafından konumlandırılmalarını nasıl algılamaktadırlar?
2. Türkiye'deki vakıf üniversitelerinin İngilizce hazırlık bölümlerinde görev yapan ve kariyerinin başında olan yarı zamanlı İngilizce okutmanları; mikro, mezo ve makro bağlamlarda öğretmen kimliğini, duygusal emeği ve öğretmen failliğini nasıl yönetmektedir?

YÖNTEM

Daha önce belirtildiği gibi, bu çalışma Türkiye'deki vakıf üniversitelerinde çalışan, kariyerinin başındaki yarı zamanlı İngilizce okutmanlarının kurumsal ve toplumsal konumlandırmalarını nasıl algıladıklarını ve mikro, mezo ve makro bağlamlarda öğretmen kimliği, duygusal emek ve öğretmen failliği arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimi nasıl yönettiklerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda çalışma, görececi (relativist) ve yorumlayıcı (interpretivist) bir perspektife dayanan nitel bir araştırma deseni benimsemiştir. Nitel araştırma, bireylerin öznel deneyimlerini ve belirli bağlamlar içinde sosyal olarak inşa ettikleri gerçekliklere atfettikleri anlamları derinlemesine anlamaya olanak tanıdığı için tercih edilmiştir (Creswell ve Poth, 2024; Merriam, 2002). Araştırma, birden fazla farklı deneyimin derinlemesine ve bağlamsal analizini gerektirdiğinden, iç içe geçmiş çoklu durum çalışması (embedded multiple case study) yaklaşımı kullanılmıştır (Yin, 2014). Bu desen, beş bireysel durumun detaylı bir şekilde incelenmesini sağlamış; araştırmacının her bir okutmanın kendine özgü yönetim (navigation) sürecinin bağlamsal bütünlüğünü koruyarak güvencesizlik (precarity) olgusunu kapsamlı bir şekilde araştırmasına imkân tanımıştır.

Araştırmanın ortamı, Türkiye'nin Ankara ve İstanbul illerinde bulunan beş farklı vakıf üniversitesinin Temel İngilizce Bölümlerini (Hazırlık Programları) kapsamaktadır. Bu kurumlar, yükseköğretimin piyasalaşması ve güvencesiz istihdam koşulları ile karakterize edilen neoliberal akademik bağlamı yansıtmaktadır. Katılımcılar, araştırma problemini aydınlatmak için gereken belirli özelliklere sahip

olduklarından emin olmak amacıyla amaçlı ölçüt örnekleme (purposeful criterion sampling) yöntemiyle seçilmiştir (Palys, 2008). Seçim kriterleri, katılımcıların İngiliz Dili Öğretimi alanında bir yüksek lisans (M.A.) programına kayıtlı olmalarını, beş yıldan daha az öğretmenlik deneyimine sahip olmalarını ve vakıf üniversitelerinde aktif olarak yarı zamanlı okutmanlık yapıyor veya yakın zamanda yapmış olmalarını gerektirmiştir. Bu doğrultuda, Freesia, Aylin, Sena, Eylül ve Cotton takma adları verilen, kariyerinin başındaki beş İngilizce okutmanı çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. Araştırmacının aynı yüksek lisans programındaki bir akran olarak "içeriden" (insider) statüsü; güçlü bir güven, empati ve uyum zemini oluşturarak katılımcıların iş yeri mücadelelerinin daha derinlemesine incelenmesini kolaylaştırmıştır.

Veri toplama süreci, 2025 yılı Kasım ayı ortası ile Aralık ayı sonu arasındaki beş haftalık bir dönemde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Olguların karmaşık doğasını yakalamak ve metodolojik üçgenlemeye (triangulation) olanak tanımak amacıyla veriler, birbirini tamamlayan iki nitel araç kullanılarak toplanmıştır: yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve yansıtıcı öğretmen günlükleri. Her bir katılımcıyla, Türkçe olarak çevrimiçi ortamda gerçekleştirilen (her biri 40-60 dakika süren) üç tur yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yapılmıştır. Birinci tur, katılımcıların geçmişlerine ve ilk konumlandırmalarına odaklanmış; ikinci tur, duygusal emek ve faillik konularındaki derinlemesine deneyimlerini incelemiş; üçüncü tur ise genel kimlik değişimleri üzerine bir kapanış işlevi görmüştür. Ek olarak, katılımcılar İngilizce yazılmış iki adet yansıtıcı günlük yazısı teslim etmişlerdir. Bu günlükler, okutmanların güvencesiz kurumsal gerçekliklerine dair duyuşsal tepkilerine ve içsel kimlik müzakerelerine anlık, filtrelenmemiş bir pencere açmıştır.

Toplanan veriler, tümevarımsal ve tümdengelimsel tematik analizin döngüsel (iterative) bir süreci kullanılarak sistematik bir şekilde değerlendirilmiştir (Braun ve Clarke, 2013). Bu süreç, Yin'in (2014) beş aşamalı analitik çerçevesi etrafında yapılandırılmıştır: derleme, parçalara ayırma, yeniden bir araya getirme, yorumlama ve sonuca bağlama. Parçalara ayırma aşamasında, Saldaña'nın (2013) iki döngülü kodlama (two-cycle coding) yaklaşımından yararlanılmıştır. İlk döngüde, katılımcıların deneyimlerinin çok boyutluluğunu yakalamak amacıyla, yazıya

dökülen görüşmelere ve günlük girişlerine betimsel, duygu, in vivo, süreç ve değerler kodlamasını içeren eklektik bir kodlama yöntemi uygulanmıştır. İkinci döngüde ise bu ilk kodlar daha geniş kategorilerde toplanmış ve ekonomik değersizleşme, kurumsal uyumsuzluk ve boyun eğme-direniş spektrumu gibi kapsayıcı temalar altında birleştirilmiştir. Tüm kodlama ve veri yönetimi süreci MAXQDA nitel analiz yazılımı kullanılarak yürütülmüştür.

Çalışmanın inandırıcılığını, güvenirliğini (credibility) ve tutarlılığını (dependability) sağlamak için çok sayıda doğrulama stratejisi titizlikle uygulanmıştır (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Metodolojik üçgenleme; geriye dönük görüşme anlatılarının, günlüklerde yer alan anlık, bilişsel yansımalarla karşılıklı olarak doğrulanmasıyla sağlanmıştır. Görüşme transkriptleri ve ön yorumlar katılımcılarla paylaşılarak bulguların doğruluğunu teyit etmek amacıyla üye kontrolü (member checking) gerçekleştirilmiştir. Ayrıca, meslektaş değerlendirmesi (peer review) ve bilgilendirme (debriefing) kullanılmış; ELT alanındaki dışarıdan iki meslektaş, kodlayıcılar arası güvenirliği sağlamak için ortaya çıkan kodları ve temaları sürekli olarak gözden geçirmiştir. Araştırmacı ayrıca kendi konumlandırmasıyla (positionality) ilgili katı bir düşünümsellik (reflexivity) sürdürmüş ve bulguların aktarılabilirliğini (transferability) artırmak için yoğun betimlemeler (thick descriptions) sunmuştur. Son olarak, araştırma sıkı etik kurallara bağlı kalarak yürütülmüş; Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'ndan onay alınmış, tüm katılımcılardan bilgilendirilmiş onam formu sağlanmış ve takma adlar (pseudonyms) kullanılarak gizlilik güvence altına alınmıştır.

BULGULAR, TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇ

Birinci araştırma sorusuna ilişkin olarak bulgular, kariyerinin başındaki yarı zamanlı İngilizce okutmanlarının kendilerini oldukça dezavantajlı ve marjinalleşmiş pozisyonlarda algıladıklarını ortaya koymuştur. Kurumsal düzeyde bu konumlandırma, derin bir ekonomik ve mesleki değersizleşme ile karakterize edilmektedir. Ekonomik açıdan katılımcılar, "gözden çıkarılabilir bir meta" muamelesi gördüklerini, sürekli bir yerinin doldurulabilirliği (replaceability) kaygısı yaşadıklarını ve karşılığı ödenmeyen, görünmez bir emeğe zorlandıklarını

bildirmişlerdir. Mesleki açıdan ise akademik yeterlikleri ve pedagojik uzmanlıkları sıklıkla küçümsenmiştir. Kurumun ötesinde, bu çalışma öğretmenliğin söylemsel olarak "kutsal" ve fedakârlık gerektiren bir meslek seviyesine yükseltildiği toplumsal bir paradoksu da ortaya çıkarmıştır. Ancak katılımcılar, bu "kutsal ama değersiz" anlatının esasen bir örtü işlevi gördüğünü; neoliberal akademik bağlamdaki sistemli sömürüyü ve yetersiz maddi koşulları meşrulaştırmak için pedagojik özenlerini silah olarak kullandığını belirtmişlerdir.

İkinci araştırma sorusuna yanıt olarak veriler, bu makro düzeydeki güvencesizliğin ve mezo düzeydeki kurumsal uyumsuzluğun sürekli olarak yoğun bir duygusal emeği tetiklediğini göstermiştir. Okutmanların insancıl pedagojik inançları ile vakıf üniversitelerinin kâr odaklı gerçekleri (katı müfredatlar, etik açıdan taviz verdiren devamsızlık politikaları, materyallerin metalaşması ve kâr merkezli değerlendirme ölçütleri aracılığıyla kendini gösteren) arasındaki çatışma, katılımcıları döngüsel bir kimlik müzakeresi sürecine zorlamıştır. Bu uyumsuzlukta hayatta kalabilmek için tüm katılımcılar pedagojik idealizmden kurumsal realizme zorunlu bir geçiş yaşamıştır. Ancak bu kimlik inşasının yörüngeleri önemli ölçüde farklılık göstermiştir. Freesia ve Sena gibi bazı okutmanlar, güvencesiz istihdamlarını korumak amacıyla duygusal mesafe koyma ve isteksiz bir boyun eğme yoluyla bu gerilimleri yönetirken; diğerleri çeşitli direniş biçimleri aracılığıyla temel pedagojik ideallerini korumaya çalışmıştır. Tartışma bölümü, duygu, kimlik ve faillik (agency) arasındaki etkileşimi bir "boyun eğme-direniş spektrumu"na (compliance-resistance spectrum) haritalandırarak bu bulguları sentezlemiştir. Güvencesiz yarı zamanlı sözleşmeler bu okutmanları makro düzeydeki yapısal güçten yoksun bıraktığı için, öğretmen faillikleri büyük ölçüde mikro düzeyle sınırlı kalmaktadır. Bu faillik; hayatta kalma odaklı performatif boyun eğmeden (Sena ve Freesia), stratejik performatiflik ve örtülü sınıf içi eylemlere (Aylin), pasif direniş ve nihayetinde sistemden çıkışa (Cotton) ve açık etik sınır koymaya (Eylül) kadar uzanmaktadır.

Dahası, bu çalışma, sınıf yönetimi, sınır ihlalleri ve öğrenci olumsuz davranışlarına (misbehavior) ilişkin bir "gerçeklik şoku" nedeniyle mikro (sınıf) düzeyde de kimlik gerilimi yaşandığını vurgulamıştır. Bu mikro düzeydeki uyumsuzluğu yönetmek için katılımcılar, farklı yollarla pedagojik benliklerini aktif bir şekilde yeniden inşa

etmişlerdir. Aylin, Sena ve Freesia, pedagojik iyi niyetlerinin sömürülmesini engellemek için daha otoriter, sınır odaklı ve bazen performatif "robotik" veya "tatlı-sert" personalar benimsemek zorunda hissetmişlerdir. Buna karşılık Cotton ve Eylül, sınıf içi gerilimlerini ilk baştaki katılıklarından vazgeçerek; bunun yerine öğrenci merkezli öğrenme ortamlarını teşvik etmek amacıyla pedagojik yakınlığa, diyaloğa ve stratejik esnekliğe yönelerek çözmüşlerdir.

Vakıf üniversitelerinde deneyim sahibi olan, kariyerinin başındaki yarı zamanlı İngilizce okutmanlarının kurumlar ve daha geniş toplum kesimleri tarafından nasıl konumlandırıldıklarına dair algılarını anlamak amacıyla Konumlandırma Teorisi'nden (Harré ve Gillett, 1994) yararlanılmıştır. Veriler, vakıf üniversitelerinde yaygın olan güvencesiz çalışma koşullarının, bu okutmanların kendilerine atanan rolleri nasıl algıladıkları ve bu roller üzerine nasıl düşündükleri üzerinde bir etkiye sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Görüşmeler ve günlük girişleri boyunca Aylin, Sena, Eylül, Freesia ve Cotton, değer görmeyen ve dezavantajlı konumlara getirildiklerine dair ortak bir görüş ifade etmişlerdir. Tüm katılımcılar mesleklerinin ekonomik, mesleki ve toplumsal olarak değersizleşmesi üzerinde durmuşlardır. Vakıf üniversitelerinde düşük saatlik ücretler, kısmi süreli sigorta, zayıf iş sözleşmeleri ve karşılığı ödenmeyen emek gibi güvencesiz çalışma koşulları altındaki ekonomik ve mesleki olarak değersizleştirilmiş konumlandırma, katılımcılar dezavantajlı konumlarını tam zamanlı meslektaşlarının nispeten avantajlı haklarıyla karşılaştırdıklarında daha görünür hale gelmiştir. Bu bulgu, neoliberal yükseköğretim ortamlarında tam zamanlı ve yarı zamanlı okutmanlar arasındaki ayrımın akademik topluluğun birliğini önemli ölçüde zayıflattığını ve yükseköğretimin neoliberalleşmesine ile sektör genelinde çalışma koşullarının kötüleşmesine karşı potansiyel kolektif direnişi azalttığını ortaya koyan Courtois ve O'Keefe (2015) ile örtüşmektedir. Katılımcılar mesleki değersizleşme ile de karşı karşıya kalmışlardır. Ekonomik marjinalleşmelerine benzer şekilde bu durum, güvencesiz sözleşmeleri ile kariyerlerinin başındaki statülerinin kesişmesiyle daha da artmıştır. Veriler, bu mesleki değersizleşmenin, mesleki varlıklarının (professional entity) küçümsenmesi yoluyla kendini gösterdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Katılımcılar, nitelikli İngilizce okutmanları olarak tanınmak yerine, mesleksizleştirilmiş astlar (de-professionalized subordinates) statüsüne atanmışlardır. Bu durum, Van Arsdale'in (1978) kurumların

yarı zamanlı okutmanları tam zamanlı meslektaşlarına sağlanan temel tanınmalardan mahrum bırakarak marjinalleştirdiği ve böylece mesleki kimliklerini zayıflattığı yönündeki iddiasıyla uyumludur.

Kurumsal konumlandırmanın ötesine geçildiğinde bulgular, yarı zamanlı İngilizce okutmanlarının toplumsal konumlandırmasında bir paradoksu ortaya çıkarmaktadır: Yaptıkları iş toplumları tarafından "kutsal" olarak anılırken, yaşantısal mali ve mesleki gerçeklikleri güvencesiz çalışma koşulları altında değersizleşme ile karakterize edilmektedir. Mevcut çalışmanın bulguları literatürü desteklemektedir. Yılmaz (2018), geleneksel olarak Türkiye'de öğretmenliğe, "toplumu ve yeni nesli yetiştirme" şeklindeki idealist misyonu aracılığıyla bir kutsallık atfedildiğini; ancak bunun dünya çapındaki neoliberal eğitim politikaları tarafından aşındırıldığını açıklamaktadır. Bu değersizleşmenin daha geniş toplumsal sonuçlarını örneklendiren Vatansever ve Yalçın (2015), akademik emeğin tamamen piyasaya endekslenmesinin, yıkıcı etkisini bireysel istihdam haklarının aşınmasının ötesine taşıdığını ve tüm sosyal ve toplumsal alanları metalaşmaya maruz bırakan kontrolsüz bir kapitalist yönelime yol açtığını ileri sürmektedir.

Bu zorlu bağlamları yönetirken okutmanlar, makro düzeydeki güvencesizlik ve mezo düzeydeki kurumsal uyumsuzluğun tetiklediği yoğun bir duygusal emek deneyimlemişlerdir. Benesch (2018) ile Benesch ve Prior'ın (2023) çerçeveleriyle uyumlu olarak veriler; vakıf üniversitelerinin katı müfredatlar, etik açıdan taviz verdiren devamsızlık politikaları ve eğitimin metalaşması şeklinde kendini gösteren neoliberal ve kâr odaklı gerçeklerinin, okutmanların insancıl pedagojik inançlarıyla keskin bir şekilde çatıştığını göstermektedir. Bu çatışma, sürekli bir kimlik müzakeresi döngüsünü zorunlu kılmış ve katılımcıları hizmet öncesi pedagojik idealizmlerinden sert bir kurumsal realizme geçmeye zorlamıştır. Duygusal gerilimlerin mesleki kimliği nasıl belirlediğini kavramsallaştırmak için, dil öğretimini yalnızca öğretimsel bir aktarım olarak değil, aynı zamanda bir kimlik inşası (identity work) kaynağı olarak görmek gerekir. De Costa ve Norton (2017), "dil öğretiminin bağlama dayalı olduğunu, dikkat bağlamında ve sosyal olarak sınırlandırıldığını... dil öğretiminin bir kimlik inşası olduğunu" (s. 8) öne sürerek dil öğretmeni kimliğini çerçevelemişlerdir. Bu postyapısalcı perspektiften yola çıkan

Toker-Bradshaw (2023), öğretmen kimliğini "öğretmenlerin, mikro düzeyde topluluklarının diğer üyeleriyle... mezo ve makro düzeylerde ise dil öğretimindeki baskın söylemler, ideolojiler ve politikalarla ilişkili olarak kim olduklarını anlamlandırdıkları ve müzakere ettikleri sürekli bir süreç" (s. 32) olarak tanımlamıştır. Mevcut çalışmada, kurumsal beklentiler ile pedagojik inançlar arasındaki çatışmadan doğan duygusal emek ile katılımcıların yönettiği (navigate) öğretmen kimlikleri iç içe geçmiş durumdadır ve birbirine paralel olarak ilerlemektedir.

Bu uyumsuzlukta hayatta kalabilmek için okutmanlar, sınırlı öğretmen failliklerini bir "boyun eğme-direniş spektrumu" boyunca sergilemişlerdir. Macro ve mezodaki gerilimler, öğretmenlerin sınıfta bireysel faillik sergilemek gibi başa çıkma stratejileri yoluyla yönettikleri duygusal sıkıntı, çaresizlik ve öfkeyi tetiklemiştir. Özellikle mezo düzeyi inceleyen Benesch (2019), katı üniversite devamsızlık politikalarının İngilizce öğretmenlerini nasıl bir boyun eğme veya direniş spektrumuna zorladığını göstermek için "duygu kuralları" ve "duygusal emek" kavramlarından yararlanmıştır ki bu durum mevcut çalışmadaki okutmanların deneyimlerini yansıtmaktadır. Dahası, Diao ve Cheng (2026), Çin'de kariyerinin başındaki öğretmenlerin, idari denetim ile pedagojik idealleri arasındaki ikilikten doğan duygusal emeği nasıl yönettiklerini incelemişlerdir. Araştırmacılar, öğretmenlerin katı bir eğitim sistemi içinde hayatta kalma ve kimlik inşası araçları olarak duygusal yatırımlarını yeniden ayarlayarak ve mikro düzeyde eylemler gerçekleştirerek mesleki faillik sergilediklerini bulmuşlardır. Kayı-Aydar'ın (2019) kimlik-duygular-faillik üçgeni aracılığıyla kavramsallaştırdığı gibi, yarı zamanlı statüleri nedeniyle yapısal güçten yoksun bırakıldıkları için katılımcıların failliklerı büyük ölçüde mikro düzeyle sınırlı kalmıştır. Spektrumun bir ucunda bazı katılımcılar, iş güvencelerini sağlamak amacıyla kurumsal baskıları duygusal mesafe koyma ve performatif boyun eğme yoluyla yönetmişlerdir. Diğer uçta ise katılımcılar; örtülü sınıf içi eylemler, pasif direniş ve açık etik sınır koyma yoluyla temel pedagojik değerlerini aktif bir şekilde koruyarak direnç göstermişlerdir. Bu farklı yörüngeler, duygusal emek ve güvencesizliğin, öğretmen failliği ve kimliği müzakeresini nasıl doğrudan şekillendirdiğini göstermektedir. Dahası, bu sürekli müzakere, makro-mezo-mikro bağlamlar dahilindeki kimlik-duygu-faillik üçgeni

arasındaki etkileşimi teyit etmektedir. Benzer şekilde, Gao ve diğerleri (2026) tarafından Çin'de yapılan bir çalışma, bazı öğretmenlerin yeni mesleki kaynaklar bulmak için direniş yoluyla faillik sergilerken (mevcut çalışmadaki Aylin ve Eylül'e benzer şekilde), diğerlerinin kurumsal baskılar nedeniyle pedagojik kimlik kaybı ve duygusal uyumsuzlukla karşı karşıya kaldıklarını (mevcut çalışmadaki Freesia ile örtüşecek şekilde) ortaya koyarak bu kimlik-duygu-faillik etkileşiminin altını çizmiştir. Bu etkileşime ek olarak, katılımcılar İngiliz Dili Öğretimi (ELT) literatüründe öğretmen eğitimi sırasında şekillenen idealist görev bilincinin (missionary ideals) sınıf hayatının sert gerçekleriyle karşılaşıldığında aşınmasını ifade eden "praksis şoku" veya "gerçeklik şoku" tanımlamalarını (Farrell, 2006; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013) deneyimlemişlerdir. Sınıfın gerçekleriyle yüzleşen katılımcılar, pedagojik benliklerini aktif bir şekilde yeniden inşa etmek zorunda kalmışlardır.

Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki vakıf üniversitelerinde çalışan, kariyerinin başındaki yarı zamanlı İngilizce okutmanlarının güvencesiz çalışma koşulları nedeniyle oldukça marjinalleşmiş konumlandırmalar (positionings) deneyimledikleri sonucuna varmaktadır. Kurumsal düzeyde bu marjinalleşme; sürekli yerinin doldurulabilirliği (replaceability), karşılığı ödenmeyen emek ve pedagojik uzmanlığın küçümsenmesi ile karakterize edilen derin bir ekonomik ve mesleki değersizleşme olarak kendini göstermektedir. Toplumsal düzeyde ise bu okutmanlar, öğretmenlik mesleğinin söylemsel olarak yüceltilmesinin sistemli sömürüyü ve kötüleşen maddi koşulları maskeleyen bir örtü işlevi gördüğü bir "kutsal ama değersiz" paradoksuyla karşı karşıya kalmaktadır.

Çalışma; duygu, kimlik ve faillik (agency) arasındaki etkileşime ilişkin olarak, makro düzeydeki güvencesizliğin ve katı müfredatlar ile kâr odaklı politikalar gibi mezo düzeydeki kurumsal uyumsuzluğun yoğun bir duygusal emeği tetiklediğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu duygusal uyumsuzluk, okutmanları döngüsel bir kimlik müzakeresi sürecine zorlayarak, hizmet öncesi pedagojik idealizmden kurumsal realizme doğru zorunlu bir geçiş yapmalarına neden olmaktadır. Güvencesiz statüleri onları yapısal ve kolektif güçten yoksun bıraktığı için, öğretmen faillikleri büyük ölçüde mikro (sınıf) düzeyle sınırlı kalmakta ve bir "boyun eğme-direniş spektrumu"

(compliance-resistance spectrum) boyunca kendini göstermektedir. Bazı okutmanlar hayatta kalmak için performatif boyun eğmeye (compliance) başvururken, diğerleri stratejik performatiflik, pasif direniş veya etik sınır belirleme gibi yollara yönelmektedir. Bu spektrum (spectrum) içerisinde kimlik dönüşümü ve öğretmen failliği paralellik göstermektedir. Dahası çalışma, öğrenci olumsuz davranışları (misbehavior) gibi sınıf içi gerçekliklerin, kimlik inşasını (identity work) daha da karmaşıklaştıran bir "gerçeklik şoku" (reality shock) yarattığını vurgulamaktadır.

Kariyerinin başındaki yarı zamanlı İngilizce okutmanlarının karşılaştığı zorlukların bireysel değil yapısal olduğu öncülünden hareketle, bu çalışma makro, mezo ve mikro düzeylerde kapsamlı öneriler sunmaktadır. Makro düzeyde, politika yapıcılar ve Yükseköğretim Kurulu (YÖK); iş güvencesini, şeffaf sözleşme yenilemelerini, adil saatlik ücretleri ve yüksek lisans sonrası tam zamanlı statüye geçiş yollarını güvence altına alacak yasal çerçeveler oluşturmalı ve böylece güvencesiz "mevsimlik işçi" dinamiğine son vermelidir. Toplumsal düzeyde, romantize edilmiş "kutsal ve fedakâr öğretmen" efsanesi yıkılmalı; bunun yerine net mesleki sınırlar ve somut işçi hakları tanımlanmalıdır.

Kurumsal (mezo) düzeyde, vakıf üniversiteleri sınıf dışı görevler (örn. notlandırma, toplantılar, materyal hazırlama) için okutmanları adil bir şekilde ücretlendirerek veya bu görevleri yarı zamanlı iş tanımlarından tamamen çıkararak görünmez emeğin sömürülmesini ortadan kaldırmalıdır. Dahası, öğretmen failliğini (agency) ve iyi oluşunu (well-being) desteklemek için kurumlar; katı, kâr merkezli müfredatlardan ve müşteri odaklı değerlendirme politikalarından uzaklaşmalıdır. Bunun yerine okutmanlara pedagojik özerklik tanınmalı, stratejik esnekliğe izin verilmeli ve insani faktörleri hesaba katan süreç odaklı değerlendirmeler uygulanmalıdır. Mikro (eğitimsel) düzeyde ise, İngiliz Dili Öğretimi (ELT) lisans programları ve staj (practicum) deneyimleri önemli güncellemeler gerektirmektedir. Mesleğin "gerçeklik şoku"nu (reality shock) hafifletmek amacıyla müfredatlar, neoliberal eğitim politikaları üzerine eleştirel dersler içermeli; ayrıca gerçek dünya sınıf yönetimi ve kurumsal sınırların belirlenmesi konularında güçlü bir mentorluk sunmalıdır.

Son olarak çalışma, gelecekteki araştırmalar için kritik yönlendirmeler sunmaktadır. Gelecekteki araştırmalar, güvencesizlik (precarity) yıllar boyunca devam ettikçe

kimliğin ve duygusal emeğin uzun vadeli evrimini izlemek için boylamsal desenler (longitudinal designs) benimsemelidir. Araştırmaların kapsamı; devlet üniversitelerini, K-12 özel okullarını ve uluslararası bağlamları kapsayacak karşılaştırmalı çalışmaları içerecek şekilde genişletilmelidir. Metodolojik olarak, birden fazla perspektifi (yöneticiler, öğrenciler) sürece dâhil etmek ve etnografik, gözlemsel araçlar kullanmak çok daha bütüncül bir anlayış sağlayacaktır. En önemlisi, gelecekteki araştırmalar salt gözlemin ötesine geçmek için Katılımcı Eylem Araştırmasını (Participatory Action Research - PAR) benimsemeli; kariyerinin başındaki okutmanları neoliberal akademik bağlamın kısıtlayıcı yapılarına meydan okumaları ve bu yapıları reforme etmeleri için aktif olarak güçlendiren (empower) yansıtma çemberleri (reflection circles) ve akran mentorluğu gibi iş birlikçi müdahaleleri teşvik etmelidir.

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