

NEOLIBERAL COMMON SENSE AND SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD: A  
CRITICAL QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO PROSPECTIVE ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE TEACHERS' DISCOURSES AND EXPERIENCES

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
OF  
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR  
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN  
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

SEPTEMBER 2022



Approval of the thesis:

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## ABSTRACT

### NEOLIBERAL COMMON SENSE AND SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD: A CRITICAL QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO PROSPECTIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' DISCOURSES AND EXPERIENCES

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September 2022, 352 pages

In line with neoliberal discourses, most higher education students tend to participate in short-term study abroad (STSA) programs to enrich their CVs, acquire marketable skills, and have fun. On the other hand, STSA programs, such as Erasmus+, can also provide higher education students with novel challenges, triggering them to reflect on issues of power and inequalities. Therefore, these programs can be a valuable experiential and transformative opportunity to prepare prospective English language teachers (PELTs) for a socially just language education. However, STSA programs may not always guarantee transformative outcomes. Considering the scarcity of research in this respect, in this qualitative inquiry, I explored how a cohort of PELTs constructed their Erasmus experiences retrospectively. I also investigated how they framed their imagined futures and interpreted major global challenges. Having analyzed a qualitative data set through a thematic analysis process, I drew four conclusions. First, the participants constructed their STSA experiences primarily based on the neoliberal conceptions of STSA. Second, they framed their imagined futures largely through neoliberal discourses. Third, they addressed major global

challenges with strong critiques. Fourth, they demonstrated some examples of critical thinking and actions in their STSA constructions and imagined futures. That is, despite the prevalence of neoliberal elements in their constructions and framings, they were not entirely passive servants of the neoliberal common sense. Therefore, I suggested that PELTs could be receptive to exploiting transformative opportunities in STSA programs. To stimulate further research and practice in that regard, I offered an intervention framework and several attendant recommendations.

**Keywords:** Neoliberalism, Study Abroad, Erasmus, Language Teacher Education, Reflexive Thematic Analysis

## ÖZ

### NEOLİBERAL ORTAK DUYU VE YURT DIŐINDA KISA SÜRELİ EĐİTİM: İNGİLİZCE ÖĐRETMEN ADAYLARININ SÖYLEM VE DENEYİMLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR ELEŐTİREL NİTEL ARAŐTIRMA

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Doktora, İngiliz Dili Öğretimi Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. A. Cendel KARAMAN

Eylül 2022, 352 sayfa

Neoliberal söylemlerle uyumlu olarak, çoğu yükseköğrenim öğrencisi özgeçmişlerini zenginleştirmek, pazarlanabilir beceriler kazanmak ve eğlenmek için yurt dışında kısa süreli eğitim (YDKSE) programlarına katılma eğilimindedir. Öte yandan, Erasmus+ gibi YDKSE programları yükseköğrenim öğrencilerine alışılmışın dışında zorluklar sunarak onları güç ve eşitsizlik meseleleri üzerinde düşünmeye de teşvik edebilir. Dolayısıyla, bu programlar İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının toplumsal olarak adaletli bir dil eğitimine hazırlanmaları konusunda değerli bir deneyimsel ve dönüştürücü fırsat olabilir. Ancak, YDKSE programları her zaman dönüştürücü sonuçlar doğurmayabilir. Bu konuda nadir sayıda araştırma olduğunu da göz önünde bulundurarak, bu nitel araştırmada, bir grup İngilizce öğretmen adayının Erasmus deneyimlerini geriye dönük olarak nasıl inşa ettiğini araştırdım. Ayrıca, katılımcıların geleceklerini nasıl tasavvur ettiklerini ve başlıca küresel sorunları nasıl yorumladıklarını inceledim. Nitel bir veri setini tematik bir analiz süreci aracılığıyla ele aldıktan sonra bu çalışmadan dört önemli sonuç elde ettim. Katılımcılar, ilk olarak, YDKSE deneyimlerini çoğunlukla YDKSE'nin neoliberal çerçevelerine dayalı olarak



inşa ettiler. İkincisi, hayali gelecek inşalarını büyük ölçüde neoliberal söylemler aracılığıyla şekillendirdiler. Üçüncüsü, başlıca küresel sorunları güçlü eleştirilerle ele aldılar. Dördüncüsü, YDKSE inşalarında ve gelecek tasavvurlarında bazı eleştirel düşünme ve eylem örnekleri sergilediler. Yani katılımcılar, YDKSE ve hayali gelecek inşalarında neoliberal unsurlara daha çok yer vermelerine rağmen, neoliberal ortak duyuya yönelik tamamen pasif hizmetkâr bir konumda kalmadılar. Bu nedenle, İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının YDKSE programlarında yer alan dönüştürücü fırsatlardan yararlanmaya açık olabileceklerini önerdim. Aynı zamanda, bu konuda daha fazla araştırma ve uygulamayı teşvik etmek amacıyla, bir müdahale çerçevesi ve birkaç yardımcı öneri sundum.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Neoliberalizm, Yurt Dışında Eğitim, Erasmus, Dil Öğretmeni Eğitimi, Düşünümsel Tematik Analiz

*To my sister,  
who made a decent education, including student mobility, possible in my life*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My doctoral journey would not be complete without the presence and support of many people. First and foremost, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. A. Cendel Karaman. Over the past nine years, his unwavering support and intellectual prowess have helped me overcome countless challenges. Without his transdisciplinary expertise, incessant inspiration, and rare wisdom, my academic life would probably be quite short-lived. Thank you very much, Cendel Hocam, for believing in me and guiding me through the most fulfilling and productive years of my life.

My heartfelt thanks also go to Prof. Dr. Ayşegül Daloğlu and Assist. Prof. Dr. H. Necmi Akşit for their generous support, guidance, and feedback throughout this challenging as well as rewarding dissertation experience. Besides motivating me, our regular committee meetings enabled me to clarify, expand, and refine existing discussions. I am grateful for their interest in my work and their precious advice. I would like to extend my gratitude to the examining committee members Prof. Dr. İsmail Hakkı Mirici and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Perihan Savaş for their positive attitude and invaluable contributions. I am deeply thankful for their suggestions for the background, methods, and implications of this study.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Prof. Dr. Malcolm N. MacDonald for encouraging me to explore critical topics in study abroad research and to disseminate my work through international publications and conferences. I particularly enjoyed our conversations during the annual conferences organized by the International Association for Languages and Intercultural Communication (IALIC). I am truly grateful to him for his emotional and intellectual support during and after these meetings. I would also like to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. David Block for his heartening comments on the theoretical background of this study and for alerting me to the counter-hegemonic value of studying macro ideologies in language (teacher) education and applied linguistics.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hülya Yıldız Bağçe for her sincere interest in my work and her generous support for my academic growth. Working together in several practicum courses gave me many opportunities to learn from her rich expertise and experiences. Her interest, opinions, and support meant a lot to me, especially during the most challenging periods of my dissertation work.

Although I cannot disclose their names here due to human subject regulations, I am greatly indebted to the study participants, who are the true heroes/heroines behind this study. Without their enthusiasm and willingness to share their experiences and thoughts, this study would have never been completed. I am forever grateful for everything they have done for this study.

This doctoral study has direct links to my mobility history. My own international mobility experiences (funded by the European Union) inspired me to explore the value of such experiences for language teacher education, ultimately resulting in both my master's and doctoral degrees. Hence, I am glad to have participated in the Erasmus program in 2011 and the Comenius Assistantship program in 2012-2013. I am thankful for these (partially) funded mobility opportunities. It is my wish that more young people, particularly those coming from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, will be able to benefit from such valuable opportunities in the future.

I also wish to express my warmest thanks to each and every member of the Department of Foreign Language Education (FLE) at Middle East Technical University, where I have spent almost half of my life, 13 years. FLE has been a home to me since my first arrival as an undergraduate student in 2008. Whenever I think about this long journey, I find myself amazed by so many moments of joy, excitement, sadness, success, failure, anxiety, and laughter, along with a huge web of unforgettable conversations and experiences. I will always be grateful to the esteemed members of FLE for their contributions to my multidimensional development. I will always be proud to be a part of this fulfilling community.

Since I started to conduct this study, the world has witnessed several devastating events and economic downturns. In the face of this “age of crisis” and the demanding

requirements of doctoral studies, my friends have been a great blessing. I owe a lot to my friends who stood by me during those difficult times and patiently listened to my concerns. In particular, I am grateful to Elzem Nazli for his unconditional friendship over the past nine years, which has been one of the few privileges in my life. Knowing that he will show up whenever needed is actually priceless. I will miss our own ways of coping with problems and our “ethnic” ways of cheering ourselves up.

I extend my gratitude also to my favorite couple, Tugay Elmas and Yağmur Damla Elmas. They have also been an immense source of support in my difficult times. Without our “refreshing” events, this doctoral journey would definitely be much more challenging. I am especially grateful for Tugay’s interest in my academic work and his enthusiasm to discuss scholarly topics. No matter where I am, I look forward to receiving your invitations for our always much-needed “refreshing” events.

I should also thank Metin Diken, who has been my “little brother” in Ankara. Our almost daily walks were one of the few things that kept me sane and healthy during my doctoral studies. I miss his company and thought-provoking questions already.

It would, of course, be a shame not to thank my other favorite couple and colleagues, Alper Kesici and Sinem Oruç Kesici, who never hesitated to offer their help whenever I needed it. I am thankful for their friendship, joyful conversations, and timely support. I would also like to thank my lovely officemates Yağmur Kiper and Pınar Topal, whose genuine interest and support for my work meant the world to me. I will surely miss our heart-to-heart talks about our persistent concerns. I extend my special thanks to my former officemates Assist. Prof. Dr. Ufuk Ataş and Dr. Sadenur Doğan Aslantatar, who set a good example for me and always encouraged me to keep going.

As I approach the end of my graduate studies, I realize once again that my family is one of the most durable and reliable sources of my motivation and energy. Therefore, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to each and every member of my large family for their endless love and support. I will never forget, especially, how my parents were filled with pride and joy when they heard “the good news” about my thesis defense. All my struggles during my doctoral studies found meaning at that tiny

moment. I love you! I also feel very fortunate to have three wonderful brothers who have always been by my side and supported me through all my hardships. And there are no words that could adequately express my gratitude for my sister's contributions. Her everlasting emotional and material support indeed made my entire career possible. Thus, I dedicate this work to my sister. I also owe special thanks to my dear nephews and nieces, who have always filled me with joy and energy. It is my wish that when they grow up and probably read these lines, the world they inhabit will be fair, equitable, and crisis-free.

I usually conclude my writings by trying to stimulate readers to reflect on the main point(s) in the text. But here, I would like to leave readers with warm feelings. In other words, I allocate this last paragraph to my dearest Aybüke and her irreplaceable presence in my life. I am grateful for her infinite support and love, which has made my dissertation journey much easier. She, along with my family, has been the main source of my belief in the beauty of sharing life with others. My last three years certainly bear her signature and our fulfilling (in countless ways) relationship. Without her presence, my life would lack the essential colors and, most importantly, the feelings that make life worth living. Having her by my side made the challenges much more manageable and the celebrations much more enjoyable. Whenever life presented challenges in the past, I almost always panicked. Today I take a deep breath and hold her hand, knowing that the rest will be another proud story that will bind us even closer. I look forward to our upcoming challenges!

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CDS	Critical Discourse Studies
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DTA	Düşünümsel Tematik Analiz
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
ELTE	English Language Teacher Education
EPEEP	English Proficiency Exam for Exchange Programs
ERASMUS	European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
ESN	Erasmus Student Network
ESÇ	Eleştirel Söylem Çalışmaları
EU	European Union
ICO	International Cooperations Office
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
STSA	Short-Term Study Abroad
PELTs	Prospective English Language Teachers
RTA	Reflexive Thematic Analysis
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
YDKSE	Yurt Dışında Kısa Süreli Eğitim

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND KEY LITERATURE

#### 1.0. Presentation

In this introductory chapter, I start with a short discussion on the current state of the world, followed by a brief history of neoliberalism(s) in the world and Turkey. After navigating through these broad discussions, I survey the extant literature to offer a complex conceptualization of neoliberalism(s) as *common sense*. I, then, discuss how the neoliberal common sense has affected educational domains, particularly higher education and language (teacher) education. In addition, I explore the growing impact of the neoliberal common sense on short-term study abroad (STSA) programs that appear to have gained significant popularity among higher education students, including prospective (language) teachers. Following these discussions that are informed by various fields such as applied linguistics, critical theory, cultural studies, higher education, interculturality, language education, (language) teacher education, and political economy, I conclude this chapter by introducing the study aims and research questions. In this study, I focus broadly on how prospective English language teachers (PELTs) construct their STSA experiences in relation to the neoliberal common sense. I also explore how these prospective teachers negotiate the neoliberal common sense in their imagined futures and interpretations of the current state of the world.

#### 1.1. Background of the Study: The Current State of the World

As the denizens of the liquid modern world (Bauman, 2000), most of us live in highly diverse, dynamic, and interconnected societies. It is, thus, highly likely for us to encounter people coming from various backgrounds and to develop complex connections to large networks of commerce, cultures, finance, ideas, languages, and technologies (Pieterse, 2009; Vertovec, 2009). Apparently, in this multilayered

connectivity, localities hardly escape the external dimensions (Robertson, 1995). Although these liquid and networked conditions have opened up greater fields of communication and cooperation, they have not freed every individual or group from, for example, authoritarianism, conflicts, and various forms of inequalities. It can, then, be vital to examine several important statistics and alarming issues that should concern the modern world:

- In almost all world regions, income inequality has increased in recent decades. The top one percent of richest people have “captured twice as much growth as the bottom 50% individuals since 1980” (Alvaredo et al., 2018, p. 11).
- Billionaires have more wealth than ever. However, almost half of the world population tries to survive on \$5.50 a day or less (The World Bank, 2020).
- There was an estimated number of 720-811 million people who were undernourished in 2020 (United Nations, 2021).
- Four billion people worldwide are not covered by social protection (United Nations, 2021).
- Between 2014 and 2018, more than 26,000 migrant deaths occurred (UNICEF, 2018), and almost 80 million people (42% of whom were children) were exposed to forced displacement as of 2020 (UNICEF, 2021).
- Decent education and quality healthcare remain inaccessible to a large portion of the world’s population (United Nations, 2020).
- Many women from different parts of the world continue to survive under several forms of structural disadvantages and discrimination (United Nations, 2021).
- Besides several alarming consequences of climate change, the deterioration of biodiversity and environment remains a severe concern (United Nations, 2021).

The list, of course, is not exhaustive enough to cover every alarming issue or global challenge. Rather, it includes several essential issues that need to be tackled on a planetary scale for a fair, inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable world. Otherwise, the list, for example, can also include the recent war in Ukraine, which has sadly shown

how major power blocs have kept global tensions alive since the Second World War despite the alleged achievements of globalization and post-war collaborations. The recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic can be another example in that regard. The global pandemic has not only reminded us of our interconnectivity but also crystallized and augmented several forms of inequalities in terms of, for instance, job security and access to health services. In addition, especially during the initial waves of the pandemic, the interests of the general public were usually trivialized, while “saving the economy” became the priority for most governments. Nevertheless, as a direct result of the pandemic, many people in the “developing” world seem to suffer from a gradual decline in their economic capacity (The World Bank, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also given clues about the extent of our exploitative and destructive relationship with the ecosystem because such zoonotic diseases are highly likely to be triggered by ferocious industrial activities (United Nations Environment Program & International Livestock Research Institute, 2020). Moreover, it has challenged the dominant tendency toward highlighting “the positive” aspects of globalization. For example, after witnessing the superficial attempts to associate the virus with certain groups or nations, we have realized that we are still far away from developing a harmonious relationship with other human groups (Dervin et al., 2020). We have also observed that the COVID-19 vaccines are usually associated with certain profit-making companies or nations rather than with the discourses of the collective human condition (Takayama et al., 2021; Zhou, 2022). Worse, we have witnessed unequal access to these life-saving vaccines.

Unfortunately, most governments have also been caught unprepared in the face of the recent wildfires. Along with the lack of strong proactive strategies that could be developed by welfare states and global humanitarian organizations, these massive fires might be related to climate change and greedy human activities. Likewise, many nations seem to avoid taking responsibility for increasing “migration crises” despite the long-lasting celebratory discourses of globalization that many leaders have actively propagated. Even more dramatically, several influential politicians have pushed this humanitarian task off to few countries. But anyhow, the world continues to witness a



mass (yet unequal) flow of people, finance, information, services, goods, values, and ideas, similar to what Appadurai (1996) described long ago.

Globalization, then, appears to be an extremely complex and dubious phenomenon. However, the popular discussions regarding its impact on our lives may gloss over the political, economic, and historical bases. To challenge this propensity, Block (2012), for example, views globalization largely “as an economic phenomenon driven by neoliberal ideology” (p. 62). He, therefore, highlights neoliberalism as the key ideological anchor of hegemonic globalization, through which the outcomes of unequal global flows and power relations might be perceived as inevitable (Bishop & Payne, 2021; Fairclough, 2010; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Rizvi, 2017; Sorrells, 2020). At the heart of hegemonic globalization, there is, then, the philosophy and practice of neoliberalism or free market (global) economy. To explicate further the interplays between globalization and neoliberalism, I offer, next, a short history of neoliberalism in the world and discuss briefly how neoliberal policies have influenced Turkey, which is the target country context for this study.

## **1.2. A Very Brief History of Neoliberalism in the World and Turkey**

The theoretical roots of today’s complex and mutated forms of global capitalism or neoliberalism go back to, albeit not necessarily limited to, the writings of archetypal scholars such as James Buchanan, Friedrich von Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, and Karl Popper in the 1940s and 50s and also to several scholars who worked at the Chicago School of Economics during the 1950s and 60s (Block, 2018a; Steger & Roy, 2010). In his book *The Road to Serfdom*, Friedrich von Hayek ([1944] 2001), for example, raised a critique of totalitarian regimes such as Nazi Germany and Stalinism in Russia. In his view, these regimes were responsible for the world wars and innumerable tragedies that accompanied these wars. His libertarian critiques, in fact, influenced the Chicago School scholars, including Milton Friedman, and stimulated them to consider “conditions favorable to progress rather than to ‘plan progress’” (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 240).

Inspired by such ideas focusing on the free market and laissez-faire entrepreneurialism, Milton Friedman and his colleagues became the leading scholarly figures who promoted neoliberalism as a popular political economic approach in the United States (US) in the 1970s and 80s. The writings of Friedman and his colleagues became particularly influential by the late 1970s, during which the US experienced an economic swamp, also known as stagflation. Back then, consumer prices had been rising, whereas the economic growth was stagnant. In their efforts to describe the reasons behind this phenomenon, the Chicago School scholars offered strong critiques of the post-war welfare states or Keynesian social liberalism. They argued that the welfare practices contributed to stagflation by tolerating state intervention in the markets in favor of funneling taxes into social assistance such as healthcare and education. These debates against the *Keynesian hegemony* eventually paved the way for more libertarian economic approaches as a solution. Friedman and his colleagues, therefore, became successful in convincing key economists and politicians of the value of their libertarian program that sought to weaken unions and welfare services while promoting the supremacy of the market, free trade, and entrepreneurialism (Harvey, 2005; Hursh & Henderson, 2011; Steger & Roy, 2010).

Following the “success” of the Chicago School, the early 1980s in Western Europe and North America witnessed several structural changes and reforms that endorsed the free market economy and new forms of liberal governing. Ronald Reagan in the US and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom (UK) were the influential political names leading the adjustment period for their own countries and many others (Hursh & Henderson, 2011; Steger & Roy, 2010). Shaped by several policy prescriptions and organizations (e.g., The American Enterprise Institute, The Cato Institute, The Mercatus Center, The Heritage Foundation, and The Mont-Pelerin Society), various structural adjustment packages have been incorporated into the economic, political, societal, and educational structures of many “developing” countries since the 1970s (Block, 2018a; Crehan, 2016; Klees, 2020).

Having a “western birth” (Springer, 2016, p. 107) and displaying pro-capital features, this form of liberalism continues to be the dominant understanding of the political economy in most parts of the world. Although the free market fundamentalism of

classical laissez-faire liberalism has been loosened in the course of time with increasing state interferences (Brown, 2005; Dawson, 2013; Harvey, 2005; Springer, 2016; Wacquant, 2012), the notion of the free market is still indispensable to political and economic elites around the world (Steger & Roy, 2010). That is, the emphasis remains on less state intervention, more deregulation, and widespread privatization. Concurrently, individuals are held accountable for their “success” and “failure.”

Being a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Turkey comes together with 33 other market countries to tackle challenges in the globalized world economy (Keeley, 2007). Due to the malleable nature of neoliberalization (Ferguson, 2010; Ong, 2007), Turkey has been experiencing neoliberalism uniquely and intensively since the early 1980s (Yalvaç & Joseph, 2019). Particularly since the 1980 coup, the country has experienced a broad wave of austerity measures, deregulation, and privatization that facilitated participation in the globalizing economy (Bedirhanoğlu & Yalman, 2010; Emrence, 2008). By introducing structural adjustment policies and extensive privatization, the joint World Bank-IMF approach played an important role in this process and contributed significantly to the formation of a free market economy and governance in the country. Later, during the 1990s, the European Union (EU) also joined the process and influenced the domestic and foreign policymaking capability of the country. Throughout this period of financial transformation or neoliberal restructuring, Turkey, however, suffered from financial crises multiple times such as in 1994, 1998, and 2001 and remained far from political stability and financial independence (Bedirhanoğlu & Yalman, 2010; Tansel, 2018; Yalvaç & Joseph, 2019).

Paralyzing the unions and the political movements that relied on the meta-narratives of the left, the military intervention of 1980 and ensuing neoliberal reforms also contributed to the emergence of new types of sociopolitical norms in Turkey that highlighted the discourses of competition, commodification, consumerism, entrepreneurialism, and free choice (Emrence, 2008). Despite the strong emphasis on “freedom” and “choice,” several centralized decision-making mechanisms and right-wing political ideologies have also been occasionally empowered or “repurposed” during the post-coup processes (Bedirhanoğlu & Yalman, 2010; Tansel, 2018; Yalvaç

& Joseph, 2019). Nevertheless, under this unique (and perhaps contradictory) sociopolitical climate, the state has generally operated in “business-friendly ways” and facilitated foreign investments (Emrence, 2008, p. 54).

Similar to the transformation of other OECD countries, the neoliberal transformation in Turkey, therefore, has shown a pro-capital bias, contributing to unequal income distribution and precarious work conditions (Emrence, 2008). This transformation has also impeded equal public access to decent health services and educational opportunities (Emrence, 2008). For example, there has been a significant increase in the number of private schools that are accessible mostly to the wealthy segments of society. Further, several budget-cut implementations have compelled public schools to create and manage their own finances, often resulting in poor educational services for the public (Yolcu, 2014). Within this apparently business-like operation of schools, teachers and students have usually been evaluated based on the performance systems that seem to have their roots in corporate activities. Altogether, these contextualized neoliberal policies seem to have transformed the economic, political, social, and educational activities of Turkey in favor of (global) capital accumulation and self-interest rather than the public good. In the next section, with a focus on major definitions and theories of neoliberalism, I offer a more detailed and nuanced account of the complexities of neoliberalism(s) and the neoliberalization of the world.

### **1.3. Neoliberalism: Definitions and Critical Theories**

As regards a definition of neoliberalism, one of the most widely cited scholars is David Harvey (2005), who notes:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (Harvey, 2005, p. 2)

He maintains that “the neoliberal turn is in some way and to some degree associated with the restoration or reconstruction of the power of economic elites” (p. 19). From his Marxist position, neoliberalism is, then, a deliberate capitalist project aimed at

restoring the economic power of capitalist elites (such as financiers and CEOs) through austerity measures, competitive advantages, privatization of public wealth, and tax cuts. Despite the “classed” nature of this project, the Marxist camp, additionally, argues that the issues of class struggles have been marginalized or muted while the virtues of individualism have been extolled by the capitalist elites. Therefore, scholars suggest that the collective action and social foundations of solidarity have been strategically devalued, whereas the supremacy of the market, competition, consumerism, and individual has been highlighted under the neoliberal project. This way, the elites are believed to maintain and expand their power (for more comprehensive discussions, see Bauman, 2001; Bourdieu, 1998; Callinicos, 2003; Chun, 2017; Crehan, 2016; Dawson, 2013; Harvey, 2005; Holborow, 2015; Mirowski, 2013; Overbeek & Van Apeldoorn, 2012; Rehmann, 2013).

However, another approach built upon the work of Michel Foucault avoids interpreting neoliberalism as purely an ideology or a top-down political economic theory. Foucault, through his lectures on biopolitics, suggests how the modern state and the modern individual “co-determine each other’s emergence” (Lemke, 2001, p. 191). In his writings devoted particularly to neoliberalism, he notes that modern-day liberalism introduces a vigilant and expansive form of government that seeks to shape the society according to market principles, thereby permeating the fabric of everyday life (Foucault, 2008). He further argues that this intrusive and decentralized form of power necessitates a distinct form of rule (*governmentality*) and subjectivity (*homo economicus*).

By linking government and mentality (*governmentality*), Foucault contends that neoliberalism develops a form of rule through which people are led to believe that their choices are made through their own “rational calculations” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 251). Within this “art of government” (Foucault, 2008, p. 318) that originates in state control and travels through institutions, individuals are inclined to regulate their own conduct and become the entrepreneurs of their own lives (Brown, 2005; Dardot & Laval, 2014; Foucault, 2008; Lemke, 2001; Peters, 2016; Read, 2009). Neoliberal subjects, therefore, act as entrepreneurial subjects or as “homo economicus” (Foucault, 2008, p. 242) who competes and succeeds through self-interested rationalities. In case

of failure, however, they have no one to blame but themselves. Being steered to act selfishly and as “mini-replicas of corporations” (Holborow, 2015, p. 77), they are, in fact, “eminently governable” (Foucault, 2008, p. 270). As seen, in the Foucauldian perspectives, the predominant focus of analysis shifts from “ruling top-down” (as in the Marxian camp) to the micro levels of subject formation and self-regulation. Combined, Marxian political economy and Foucauldian governmentality, nevertheless, capture the multiple facets of neoliberalism (Springer, 2012).

Neoliberalism, then, can be “many things” such as “an economic regime, a ruling ideology, a rationality, a way of life, a way of self-governance and so on” (Block, 2018a, p. 74). Due to its malleable and multidimensional nature, it can also morph and adapt to different contexts by developing complex interactions with local economies, politics, states, and societies (Birch, 2015; Block, 2018a; Brenner et al., 2010; Ferguson, 2010; Fine & Saad-Filho, 2017; Mitchell, 2006; Ong, 2007; Shamir, 2008; Springer, 2012, 2015, 2016; Venugopal, 2015; Wacquant, 2012). That is, neoliberalism is not a monolithic and homogenous entity. Rather, we can find myriad forms of neoliberalization or *neoliberalisms* emerging from diverse contexts. For example, in different parts of the world, neoliberal governing mechanisms have recently tended to work with neo-conservatism or right-wing regimes, even though the conservative values and the neoliberal ideals of the free market might seem to clash *prima facie*. This marriage, in fact, seems to work for the neoliberalization of many countries (Burns, 2018; Mayo, 2015; Tansel, 2018). In short, neoliberalism is a complex, pragmatic, and adaptive practice, implicating as well as transcending the Marxian-Foucauldian binary.

Considering its protean and variegated characteristics (e.g., contingent, negotiated, processual, and polymorphic), it is indeed increasingly difficult to capture neoliberalism(s) through strict or static terms (Birch, 2015; Brenner et al., 2010; Chun, 2018; Connell & Dados, 2014; Dawson, 2013; Dean, 2014; Ferguson, 2010; Gray et al., 2018; Peck et al., 2018; Springer, 2012, 2015, 2016). However, its growing complexity does not preclude the efforts to identify its core values and purposes. It can, thus, preserve an identifiable set of ideological components while being implemented on a global scale (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2017; Springer, 2016). That is, it

contains a “common genus,” comprised of “an articulation of state, market, and citizenship that harnesses the first to impose the stamp of the second onto the third” (Wacquant, 2012, p. 71).

Due to its common as well as situated characteristics, researchers have been urged to develop “more flexible and circuitous understandings of neoliberalism” rather than remaining loyal to one side of the Marxian-Foucauldian binary (Springer, 2012, p. 133). Instead of struggling in a deadlock or “a false dichotomy” that desperately separates these centers of gravity, we may, then, seek strategic and reasonable ways to connect them and bring a more comprehensive ground for the analysis and countering of neoliberal ideology/discourse/power (see also Ekers & Loftus, 2008; Lepori, 2019; Rehmann, 2013; Schulzke, 2015; Springer, 2012, 2016; Sum, 2015). While appreciating the critiques regarding the issues of incompatibility (for a succinct summary of these critiques, see Lepori, 2019), I am, in fact, drawn to the ideas of several scholars who argue that the Marxian understandings of neoliberalism may not preclude the Foucauldian analyses of power, subjectivity, and governmentality (Block, 2018a; Schulzke, 2015; Springer, 2012, 2016; Sum, 2015). Therefore, in this study, I align with both Foucauldian and Marxian approaches “without privileging either” (Springer, 2012, p. 134). Both approaches, after all, share a fundamental understanding: global capitalism as a central problem penetrating our existence, (re)producing systems of power or hegemony, and naturalizing uncritical perspectives (Springer, 2016).

As regards the tenets of my “flexible” position or “political imagination” (Springer, 2016, p. 8), I acknowledge that the neoliberal project contributes to the elite power and to “structuring structures” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). This way, it benefits the elite and constrains the acts of individuals coming from disadvantaged segments of societies (Lepori, 2019). I also note that neoliberal discourses and practices, which are orchestrated by the elite, state, institutions, and media, strive to (re)produce neoliberal subjects who seek meaning, satisfaction, and identity in consumerist, entrepreneurial, and self-interested practices (Brown, 2005; Foucault, 2008; Hursh & Henderson, 2011; Lepori, 2019; Ratner, 2019; Scharff, 2016; Skilling, 2021; Sum, 2015; Türken et al., 2016). In other words, I endorse the idea that the neoliberal condition, through

material and non-material elements, extends into subjectivities, influencing how people “understand and conduct themselves” (Courtois, 2020, p. 242). In the final analysis, however, I put forward that neoliberal subjectivities sustain the power and hegemonic constellations of (transnational) elites.

At this juncture, to clarify further my flexible and mediational theoretical position, I turn to the theory of *hegemony* that is usually associated with the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci. Political and civil society, according to Gramsci (1971), can be regarded as “the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its domination but manages to win the active consent of those over who it rules” (p. 244). Although this understanding of “domination” may imply a Marxian binary of ruling and ruled classes, Gramsci’s approach to “winning consent” or ensuring hegemony is more sophisticated than the traditional Marxist critiques of capitalism (Crehan, 2016; Schulzke, 2015; Sum, 2015). In an effort to explain how the elites ensure their dominance through hegemony, Gramsci (1971) suggests that the ruling classes or the elites construct powerful alliances and venture to win the consent of the public through a complex combination of coercion and enticement. Therefore, for him, legitimation of dominance cannot be reduced only to a form of economic determinism. It also involves leadership in moral and intellectual domains (Schulzke, 2015; Torres, 2013).

Gramsci (1971) maintains that powerful elites or groups strive to engineer the public through multiple institutions and covert strategies so that the “subaltern” classes acquiesce to the demands of the capitalist economy and the worldviews of the ruling classes. As a result, the masses give their consent to be ruled by the privileged segments. Moreover, the masses develop propensities to naturalize the complex and unequal relations of power, usually without direct intervention by the powerful groups (Fairclough, 2010; Gramsci, 1971; Mayo, 2015; Schulzke, 2015). However, he adds that such hegemonic capitalist projects are also susceptible to contestation and, thus, to resistance because of their open systemic nature (Donoghue, 2018; Fairclough, 2010; Hall et al., 2013). He, therefore, suggests that although several systems of capitalism have achieved a hegemonic status in particular points of historical



complexity, multiple forms of counter-hegemonic discourses, visions, and practices have also co-existed and challenged the capitalist hegemonies or *common sense*.

Thanks to its complex approach to *domination* and *resistance*, Gramsci's theory of *hegemony*, then, appears to be capable of addressing the material, collective, and historical conditions of capitalist hegemonies (the Marxist camp) as well as the complex processes of subject formation and power in capitalist regimes (the Foucauldian camp). In fact, in addition to acknowledging the Marxist legacy in Gramsci's work, Marcus Schulzke (2015) suggests that both Gramsci and Foucault are "concerned with the way institutions exert power through invisible mechanisms" (Schulzke, 2015, p. 64). Gramsci, then, appears to share common understandings with both camps (Ekers & Loftus, 2008; Schulzke, 2015).

Gramsci's ideas, however, should not be evaluated only within the scope of the reconciliation between the Marxian and Foucauldian camps. His account regarding the power capacity of individuals, in fact, is argued to be much more developed compared to the perspectives offered by these two centers of thought (Schulzke, 2015). While the Marxian camp, for example, offers a "rough" understanding of bipolar class struggle, the Foucauldian camp does not generate clearly the "how" of the resistance but "characterizes individuals as being so overwhelmed by various manifestations of power that they have little capacity for independent thought and action" (Schulzke, 2015, p. 15). Gramsci (1971), however, provides a powerful understanding of resistance by, for instance, pointing to everyone's potential as an "intellectual" or a "philosopher," which can be harnessed for collective action. He, thus, offers profound arguments that can be inspiring and instructive while attempting to turn dispersed counter-hegemonic or *good sense* discourses into larger and more coherent counter-narratives (Crehan, 2016; Schulzke, 2015).

Based on the discussions in this section, I conclude that the Gramscian concepts (discussed in detail in the next section) can be helpful in addressing the core concerns of both Marxist and Foucauldian camps about neoliberalism. In fact, as illustrated roughly in Figure 1, his concepts can help cut across these camps and develop complex strategies to oppose global capitalism or neoliberalism. In the next section, with a

Gramscian orientation, I extend the discussions to the conceptualization of neoliberalism as *common sense*. Besides, I discuss how counter-perspectives or *good sense* discourses can co-exist with the neoliberal hegemony and challenge its *common sense* status.

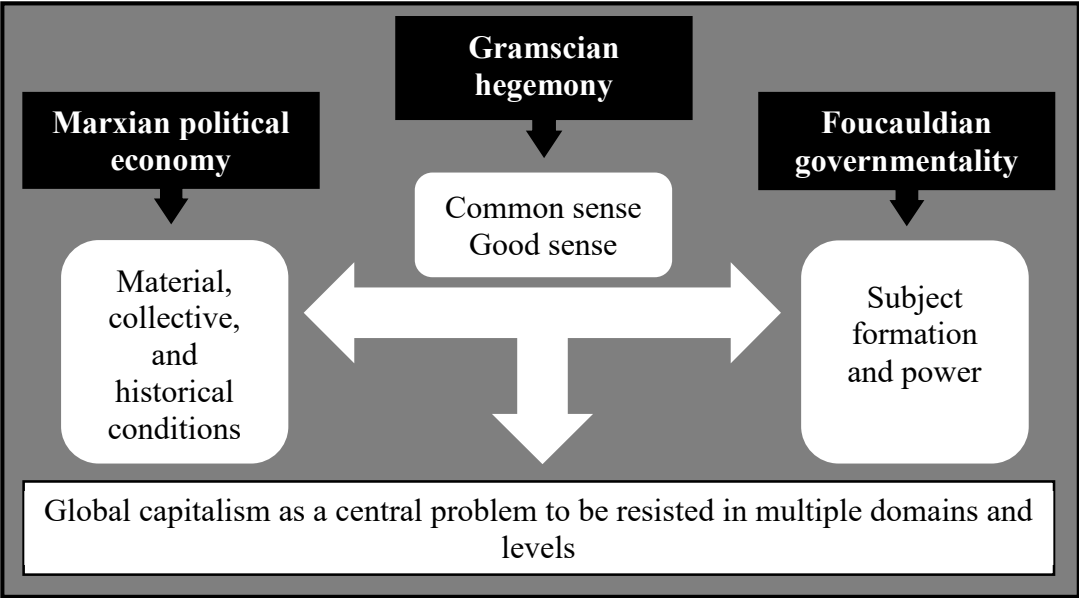


Figure 1. Gramscian concepts, Marxian and Foucauldian camps, and global capitalism

**1.4. Neoliberalism as Common Sense**

As discussed so far, neoliberalism is complex, multifaceted, pragmatic, and adaptive. Due to its status as an incomplete hegemonic capitalist project, it can also exhibit contradictory or incoherent elements. Hence, people can often observe a gap “between what it proclaims and what its promoters actually do” (Holborow, 2012, p. 14). Neoliberal policies, for instance, have increased the state power for the interests of corporate enterprises, although prominent neoliberal discourses generally oppose state intervention in the market (Brown, 2005; Harvey, 2005; Holborow, 2015). Despite the prevailing discourses of the free market and competition, neoliberal practices, therefore, have brought significant advantages to the elites through state regulations (Harvey, 2005; Chun, 2017). This favorable approach toward privileged segments or classes, then, contradicts “the supreme worth of the individual,” one of the major ideas extolled in popular neoliberal discourses (Harvey, 2005, p. 25).

In contrast with the promises of the neoliberal project, unemployment rates and economic inequality are also on the rise (Block, 2018a; Chun, 2016, 2017; Connell & Dados, 2014; Dawson, 2013; Hursh & Henderson, 2011; Piketty, 2014). Additionally, several major economic crises (including the global financial crisis of 2007-8) have occurred worldwide in the last 30 years (Chun, 2017; Fine & Saad-Filho, 2017; Springer, 2015), while “the one percent” have accumulated their wealth and property in unprecedented rates (Alvaredo et al., 2018; Duménil & Lévy, 2011; Harvey, 2014; Piketty, 2014). Despite (and perhaps due to) these clichés and myths, neoliberalism continues to be consolidated as a globally hegemonic project, and its prominent ideals have been promoted as “the new common sense” across the globe (Block, 2018b; Hall & O’Shea, 2013; Harvey, 2005; Klees, 2020; Ratner, 2019; Read, 2009; Torres, 2011, 2013). To further clarify the *common sense* status of neoliberalism, I discuss, next, what this Gramscian term refers to.

In Gramsci’s renowned prison notebooks, “common sense” (*senso comune*) does not have the positive connotations or neutrality that the English equivalent may have (Crehan, 2011, 2016). For Gramsci (1971), *common sense* is basically “the incoherent set of generally held assumptions and beliefs common to any given society” (p. 323). However, it is an “easily-available knowledge which contains no complicated ideas, requires no sophisticated argument and does not depend on deep thought or wide reading” (Hall & O’Shea, 2013, p. 9). People who align well with the neoliberal common sense, therefore, may tend to develop uncritical conceptions of the world and view power, domination, and inequality as part of a natural order instead of complex historical processes of domination. This way, they may contribute to the reproduction of domination and subordination in multiple domains (Block, 2018b, Chun, 2017; Donoghue, 2018; Fairclough, 2010; Gramsci, 1971; Hall & O’Shea, 2013; Holborow, 2015; Torres, 2011, 2013; van Dijk, 2011).

Disparaging pro-social or collective conditions, the neoliberal common sense venerates and naturalizes capital accumulation, competition, consumerism, free market, self-interest, and self-management. It, thus, aims to exclude or erase alternative forms of thought that may challenge its *common sense* status (Read, 2009). However, as argued before, such capitalist projects are always challenged due to the

open-ended nature of hegemonic struggles involved in the construction of *common sense* (Fairclough, 2010; Gramsci, 1971; Hall et al., 2013). Although some people may find it futile to oppose hegemonic currencies, the neoliberal common sense, then, is not secure in its current guises. In fact, as reported and discussed widely in the literature, it is frequently opposed in multiple domains of human lives due to its growing controversies or fissures. That is, counter-hegemonic discourses and alternative subjectivities are increasingly possible and visible in the fluid and complex universes of the neoliberal common sense (Ball, 2016; Chun, 2017; Courtois, 2020; Crehan, 2016; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Dawson, 2013; Donoghue, 2018; Fairclough, 2010; Fisher & Ponniah, 2015; Gramsci, 1971; Hall et al., 2013; Kumashiro, 2015; Mayo, 2015; McElhinny, 2016; Mitchell, 2006; Rizvi, 2017; Skilling, 2021; Sum, 2015; Willis et al., 2008). For example, the neoliberal discourses that attempt to seduce people into selfish rationalities and consumerism may not be internalized by every individual. Rather, many (young) people contest the discourses (or pressures) of individual competition and economic success (see, for example, Reddy, 2019 and Skilling, 2021). Many people, especially during the times of the COVID-19 pandemic, have also shown empathy for others and a sense of social justice, at least on the discursive level. People, thus, can resist neoliberal discourses and become more than *homo economicus*, the idealized figure in the neoliberal common sense. Apparently, people have the potential to develop critical conceptions and resistance toward the neoliberal common sense. It, thus, remains vulnerable to critiques and perhaps transformation.

When *common sense* is critically examined, Gramsci (1971) asserts that “good sense” emerges (p. 423), which is “the healthy nucleus that exists in ‘common sense’” (p. 328). Since Gramsci is mainly concerned with more equal societal conditions, he, in fact, places a prominent emphasis on *good sense*. He contends that *good sense* deserves “to be made more unitary and coherent” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 328). He further argues that “new modes of thought” can emerge from *good sense* (p. 9), giving birth to “a new common sense and with it a new culture and a new philosophy” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 424). Building on *good sense* discourses, people can, then, collectively construct coherent revolutionary narratives and acts (Crehan, 2016; Gramsci, 1971). In other

words, researchers or intellectuals can contribute to the gradual construction of larger and coherent narratives that may dispel the *common sense* status of neoliberalism in favor of more just societies.

One caveat, however, is needed in that regard. These Gramscian concepts should not be seen as a “simple template” but as a “helpful guide” in constructing alternatives to the neoliberal hegemony. Gramsci himself, in fact, did not intend to prescribe fixed ways to tackle hegemonic struggles. He, rather, recommended developing dialogue between “the subalterns” and “the intellectuals” (Crehan, 2016, p. 198). In this study, my broadest intention, then, is to listen to certain individuals (i.e., prospective language teachers) and to construct patterns of neoliberal elements as well as the patterns of *good sense* in their discourses and experiences with regard to the study aims (discussed in more detail in the last section of this chapter). Through these patterns, it might be possible to suggest focal points or issues that can be addressed in the future for the expansion of *good sense* discourses and experiences.

As I indicated at the very beginning of this chapter, in this study, I focus broadly on complex and evolving connections between the neoliberal common sense and educational domains (i.e., language teacher education and STSA). Hence, next, I discuss how the neoliberal common sense has penetrated educational activities and school curricula. I also briefly demonstrate how education has become an important site in the (re)production of neoliberal discourses and subjectivities.

### **1.5. Neoliberalism, Education and School Curricula**

School curricula and education have always been the target of hegemonic projects (Apple, 2004; Pinar, 2004; Savage, 2017). But, with the global neoliberal restructuring processes since the 1970s, school curricula and education have largely been transformed into economic instruments and exposed to reduced state funding and increasing privatization efforts (Goodwin, 2020; Kumar, 2019; Kumashiro, 2015). Therefore, strong connections have been established among (global) markets, high-tech industries, education, and school curricula. Although not at the same intensity all over the world, schools today mainly aim to train a flexible workforce and contribute

to the formation of “human capital” that can meet corporate needs and compete in the global market (Ayers, 2005; Block, 2018a; Holborow, 2015; Keeley, 2007; Rizvi, 2017; Savage, 2017; Vargas, 2017; Urciuoli, 2008).

Gary S. Becker, one of the Chicago School economists, popularized the theory of *human capital* in economics. Becker (2002) argues that the success of individuals, economies, and countries depends largely on “how extensively and effectively people invest in themselves” (p. 3). He, thus, fortifies one of the most prominent neoliberal ideals: individuals are responsible for the acquisition of marketable knowledge, skills, and information through a lifelong learning orientation (Block, 2018b; Keeley, 2007; Peters, 2016; Pimlott-Wilson, 2017; Rizvi, 2017; Vargas, 2017). Learners of the neoliberal age, then, are expected to anticipate future (global) job markets, self-regulate to meet market demands, pursue endless self-development, and compare themselves with others in entrepreneurship. This is, in fact, not peculiar only to learners. Schools, parents, and even teachers are also expected to compete and act like an entrepreneur so that they can gain the best economic and social outcomes through education (Savage, 2017). Under this neoliberal framing, “learning for learning” has been trivialized, and the moral purposes of schooling have been undermined (Kumar, 2019; Rizvi, 2017). Therefore, knowledge and skill attainment have largely been linked with the spirit of human capital theory or the realm of the free market economy.

Despite the naturalized discourses of the free market and attendant “equal competition,” people, however, may not have equal access to decent education and promising career opportunities because of several structural barriers, unequal economic conditions, and privatization of educational services (Klees, 2020; Kumar, 2019). Even if people coming from disadvantaged segments manage to increase their “employability,” they may still end up with precarious and low-waged work conditions (Standing, 2011). Neoliberal forms of education, then, also appear to be a significant factor contributing to “highly skilled but lower waged economies” (Holborow, 2018, p. 527). In other words, neoliberal education can feed growing inequalities and feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and depression, particularly among young people (Ayers, 2005; Hall & O’Shea, 2013; Pimlott-Wilson, 2017; Standing, 2011).

In spite of the growing gap among students regarding access to quality education, student achievement continues to be connected to the standardized tests that are being administered to every student regardless of their origin. The content and structure of these tests are generally informed by the scripted and impersonal forms of curriculum that are largely disconnected from local epistemologies and reduced to the demands of the market and business (Ayers, 2005; Burns, 2018; Denzin & Giardina, 2017; Kumar, 2019; Kumashiro, 2015; Pinar, 2004; Reeves, 2018; Slater & Seawright, 2019). With a predominant focus on the market demands and subjects such as technology, engineering, and math, curricula, thus, remain oriented to narrow quantifiable or testable skills. This way, schools fall short of addressing multidisciplinary concerns and complex transnational problems (Burns, 2018; Hursh & Henderson, 2011; Kumar, 2019; Kumashiro, 2015).

For the governance of this instrumentalist and test-oriented process, the educational conducts have been primarily regulated through externally-imposed standards, quantifiable outputs, comparisons on different scales, and meta-narratives of “best practices” or “good education.” Neoliberal education, therefore, is secured through managerial control systems, accountability metrics, standards, tests, and rankings (Ball, 2016; Baltodano, 2012; Buchanan, 2015; Burns, 2018; Fenwick, 2003; Giroux, 2013; Jenlink, 2017; Kumar, 2019; Kumashiro, 2015; Mooney Simmie et al., 2019; Skerritt, 2019; Slater & Seawright, 2019). Schools, for example, have gradually adapted to the corporate culture that prioritizes customer satisfaction and implements measures of surveillance and accountability. School principals also often act like company managers and try to offer the best “products” for parents. Feeling discontent with public education and concerned about their children’s future, parents themselves (who are wealthy enough) usually consider private schooling as a better option and, therefore, “purchase” education and better employability for their children.

Due to the decrease in freedom and criticality under the neoliberal common sense, teachers, as can be anticipated, find themselves forced to implement the prescribed curricula and technological aids instead of being critical agents who can provide meaningful and transformative education (Gupta, 2021; Kumar, 2019; Kumashiro, 2015). Therefore, many teachers struggle with the psychological consequences of such

mechanical forms of education, in addition to dealing with job insecurity or precarious conditions (Barnawi, 2020; Flubacher & Del Percio, 2017; Gupta, 2021; Mercer, 2021; Standing, 2011; Walsh, 2019). Nevertheless, key decision-makers seem to remain loyal to neoliberal beliefs in “measurement, comparison, and competition” (Kumar, 2019, p. 257).

Before moving to the next section, where I discuss the neoliberal incursion into the higher education domain, I caution that neoliberalism has not achieved a full hegemonic status. That is, as I argued before, it is opposed by many people who can envision alternative realities and conceptions of society. This is an important reminder because focusing disproportionately on the domination of the neoliberal hegemony may curb the hopes for alternative conceptions of the world. Thus, I hereby restate that the neoliberal hegemony may not always achieve to produce individuals who align completely/blindly with the neoliberal common sense and its educational conceptions and practices. It is, then, perfectly possible to design educational realms where “students find their passions, learn deeply, grow holistically and live as just, democratic, and compassionate human beings” (Kumar, 2019, p. 249). After all, there is always *good sense in common sense* (Gramsci, 1971).

In what follows, I discuss how the neoliberal common sense has influenced higher education in particular. I allocate certain space for this educational domain as it is the target educational context for this study. Besides, it is one of the major domains backing up the neoliberal common sense (Ward, 2012).

## **1.6. Neoliberal University**

Before the wide/wild implementation of neoliberal policies, state-funded university education used to be an important public good (Ward, 2012). By referring to the past, however, I do not intend to portray a romantic view of the past. I am also aware that educational discourses and practices have always been wedded to the implicit values and agendas of dominant or ruling groups (Apple, 2004). But with “neoliberalism’s decades-long impact” (Denzin & Giardina, 2017, p. 12), what we witness today is an increasing influence of market fundamentalism on higher education (Bamberger et al.,



2019; Giroux, 2002; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Ward, 2012). In other words, with the neoliberal transformation of higher education, universities have closely aligned with the knowledge economy, the ideologies of the ruling elite, and the notions of *human capital* (Giroux, 2002; Henderson, 2020; Kumar, 2019; Mayo, 2015; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Ward, 2012).

Since public funding has been decreasing for universities, they have been gradually plunged into an audit culture that operates according to market logic and principles (Denzin & Giardina, 2017; Henderson, 2020). For instance, largely subscribed to the notions of *human capital* rather than the common good and social justice, universities nowadays give prominence to English-medium instruction, internationalization, (global) ranking tables (such as QS and Times Higher Education), campus attractions, research funds, performance indicators, and sponsors and industry partnerships (Barnawi, 2020; Collins, 2018; De Costa et al., 2019; Giroux, 2002; Holborow, 2013, 2015; Phan & Barnawi, 2015; Piller & Cho, 2013; Torres, 2011). Under this neoliberal influence, academic activities, including teaching, are usually associated with quantifiable outputs, while students, mostly viewed as customers and consumers, are fast prepared for employment (Giroux, 2002; Kumar, 2019). Graduates, nevertheless, often face unemployment problems or precarious employment, accompanied by debilitating psychological consequences (Holborow, 2013, 2015; Standing, 2011). This precarious condition inevitably also influences researchers and teachers of all sorts, who face increasing precarity, stress, emotional instability, lack of union representation, and intensified workload, especially if they are employed by the profit-driven private industry (Barnawi, 2020; Flubacher & Del Percio, 2017; Gupta, 2021).

At this juncture, it might be useful to share some observations that I have made while working as a research assistant at a higher education institution. The university administration, for instance, has recently intensified efforts to increase the publicity of the university and attract both “domestic” and “international” students. As part of the efforts, the administration has disseminated several advertisement videos and brochures that included catchy mottos and easily remembered/recognized logos. In addition, the university has opened a souvenir shop (also available for online shopping) in a very central location on campus and started to sell products that are crafted with

those mottos and logos. In fact, these commercialization and marketization efforts seem to bear striking similarities to the way the corporations promote themselves to attract “customers” and secure a position within the market.

Through personal communication with several faculty members working in this higher education context, I have also noted that the university and the industry have forged strong connections through several agreements, including research tailored to the needs of the industry and sponsorship for the renovation or construction of buildings on campus. Recently, I have also observed that faculty members have been exposed to tighter regulations or performance/accountability measures for job security and promotion. Through these regulations, the university administration expects to achieve a better position in the (global) ranking tables and increase the revenues in the knowledge economy. Based on these observations, my overall conclusion is that the university has demonstrated a close alignment with the neoliberalization of higher education. This alignment, however, should not be perceived as an unconditional or complete submission. That is, I have also frequently observed opposing/criticizing voices among many academics in the same university context.

Nevertheless, higher education across the world seems to have been tied to neoliberal discourses and policies shaped by market fundamentalism or free market ideology. One of these policy frameworks, as suggested, includes *internationalization*. Being pressured to promote an “international” outlook, universities nowadays strive to attract “international” students, offer English-medium instruction, raise a globally-competent workforce, publish in high-impact international journals, chase international research grants, and compete for higher positions in the global ranking tables (Barnawi, 2020; Collins, 2018; De Costa et al., 2019; Giroux, 2002; Holborow, 2013, 2015; Phan & Barnawi, 2015; Piller & Cho, 2013; Torres, 2011). Among these internationalization efforts, international student mobility programs, in particular, have received extensive attention, especially from university students (e.g., Cairns, 2019; Cairns et al., 2017, 2018; Courtois, 2020; Devlin, 2020; Dvir & Yemini, 2017; Gao & Park, 2015; Ikonen & Nikunen, 2019; Krzaklewska, 2013; Paige et al., 2009; Yoon, 2014). In the next section, I discuss further how neoliberal discourses and policies have impacted

international student mobility programs, as the focus in this study is on short-term international student mobility or STSA.

### **1.7. Neoliberalism and International Student Mobility**

As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, globalization needs to be situated and evaluated within historical, political, and economic processes, not as an inevitable historical stage free from power or hegemonic work (Bishop & Payne, 2021; Block, 2012; Fairclough, 2010; Rizvi, 2017). Although student mobility is an ancient practice, recent forms of it should also be evaluated within the complex processes of globalization and neoliberalization (Rizvi, 2011). With the neoliberal emphasis on globally qualified human capital, young individuals today are thought to maximize their economic and social gains through internationalized higher education. (Bamberger et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2003; Courtois, 2020; Reddy, 2019; Yoon, 2014). Through various forms of international mobility opportunities, they may, therefore, endeavor to craft themselves into a specific form of *homo economicus* who “is voluntarily mobile geographically in response to the needs of global capitalism (in addition to being flexible, entrepreneurial and ‘agile’)” (Courtois, 2020, p. 238).

In fact, an emerging discourse of “hyper-mobility” or “super-mobility” is highly visible among young people nowadays (Courtois, 2020; Cuzzocrea & Krzaklewska, 2022). In particular, short-term mobility programs (typically ranging from two weeks to an academic year) and attendant employability narratives/discourses have become quite common (Cairns, 2019; Cairns et al., 2017, 2018; Courtois, 2020; Dvir & Yemini, 2017; Gao & Park, 2015; Ikonen & Nikunen, 2019; Jacobone & Moro, 2015; Krzaklewska, 2013; Petzold & Peter, 2015; Trower & Lehmann, 2017; Yoon, 2014). These temporary mobility programs are usually seen by students as a cost-effective means for acquiring globally marketable skills and increasing employability in the local and global labor market. Through their participation in such programs, students may think that they develop several “soft” (but often amorphous) individual skills that could be valued by potential employers. These skills, for example, include global awareness, multilingual communication (though mainly in English), autonomy, intercultural sensitivity, and adaptation (Cairns et al., 2017, 2018; Devlin, 2020;

Ikonen & Nikunen, 2019; Jacobone & Moro, 2015; Juvan & Lesjak, 2011; Lesjak et al., 2020; Murphy-Lejeune, 2008; Papatsiba, 2009; Reddy, 2019; Yoon, 2014). By adding a study abroad experience to their curriculum vitae (CV), program alumni, thus, may sense a feeling of distinction and expect “better” career opportunities and economic returns, even though their expectations do not always match with the market realities (Courtois, 2019; Cuzzocrea & Krzaklewska, 2022; Ikonen & Nikunen, 2019; Nerlich, 2021; Petzold & Peter, 2015; Prazeres, 2019; Schmidt & Pardo, 2017; Tran, 2016; Yoon, 2014).

Several STSA program policies and practices also bear significant elements from neoliberal discourses of consumerism (Courtois, 2019; Michelson & Alvarez Valencia, 2016; Zemach-Bersin, 2009). Higher education students, therefore, may also choose to participate in STSA programs to have a break from their everyday lives and experience leisure travel and entertainment (Courtois, 2019; Juvan & Lesjak, 2011; Lesjak et al., 2015, 2020; Lipura & Collins, 2020; Zemach-Bersin, 2009). However, I caution that STSA programs should not be restrained only to such *common sense* motives or neoliberal framings, which are heavily oriented to individual growth, consumerism, and employability. That is, certain *good sense* outcomes can also be associated with such mobility programs.

STSA programs can also provide higher education students with unfamiliar environments and novel adaptation challenges, triggering them to question worldviews, conflicts, privilege, and power. Hence, students (at least those who can afford to participate in these programs) can also develop critical reflexivity and understandings as a result of their STSA participation (e.g., Brown, 2009; Cairns et al., 2017, 2018; Chiocca, 2021; Frieson et al., 2022; Jackson, 2014a; Krzaklewska, 2013; Larsen & Searle, 2017; Li & Costa, 2022; Nada & Legutko, 2022; Perry et al., 2012; Reddy, 2019; Tochon & Karaman, 2009). In other words, STSA experiences can be conducive to critical transformation and agency. Due to this multiplicity of possibilities, participants, then, may reach different outcomes depending on which discourses and experiences they draw on before, while, and after an STSA period (Bodinger de Uriarte & Di Giovine, 2021; Courtois, 2020; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021a; Goldoni, 2021; Jackson, 2018b; Klose, 2013; Sharma, 2020; Zemach-Bersin, 2009).

The ERASMUS program (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students), the largest credit mobility scheme for European higher education, is one such STSA program that deserves further attention, particularly with regard to its interactions with the neoliberal common sense. The program, known as Erasmus+ since 2014, offers temporary credit mobility experiences to higher education students in 33 fully participating countries (27 EU member states plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey). Under Erasmus+, undergraduate students (the target group of students in this study) can spend one semester or two semesters in a different country and higher education context.

Through a learning agreement between the sending and receiving universities, Erasmus students can claim credit recognition for their academic work once they return to their original university. During their Erasmus period, they may also engage in informal activities such as entertainment, learning language(s), meeting people, and traveling (Cairns et al., 2018; Devlin, 2020; Krzaklewska, 2013). In other words, academic orientation may not be the single focus in an Erasmus experience (Juvan & Lesjak, 2011; Kosmaczewska & Jameson, 2021; Lesjak et al., 2015, 2020). Due to its multidimensional approach to student mobility, the Erasmus program, therefore, may contribute to “cultural learning, personality development, international understanding, foreign language proficiency, general academic achievement, and subsequent mobility, as well as career enhancement” (Teichler, 2015, p. 21). Since the program promises potentially rich spaces for the exchange of ideas and knowledge, it can also be conducive to increasing communication across the participating countries and institutions. In fact, the program was originally intended to contribute to the construction of a European identity, a highly skilled transnational workforce, and common European values (Cairns et al., 2018; Courtois, 2019, 2020; Devlin, 2020; Klose, 2013; Jacobone & Moro, 2015; Lesjak et al., 2020; Papatsiba, 2009). A brief historical overview of the program might be useful at this point.

After the Second World War, the political and economic elite in Europe wished for a united Europe, as an antidote to extreme nationalism. However, particularly until the early 1980s, the elite had difficulty in achieving large-scale European integration, intra-continental economic collaboration, and transnational European labor markets.

In fact, the idea of European integration was considerably opposed by young people in Europe (Feyen, 2013). Seeking to construct “A People’s Europe,” the elite, therefore, needed to find strategies to promote a common European identity and encourage young people to develop a European citizenship. One particular vision in that regard involved the cooperation of higher education institutions and the mobility of students across Europe (Feyen, 2013). In 1985, acting with this vision, the European Council requested the European Commission to propose an action plan for the smooth mobility of higher education students in Europe. Through the action plan, the Council hoped to facilitate temporary student exchanges between higher education institutions in member states, thereby enabling students to learn more about Europe, master other European languages, gain intercultural skills, and develop a European citizenship. The Erasmus proposal, which encapsulated these expectations or recommendations, eventually came into action in July 1987 and later became a “success story” in Europe (Feyen, 2013, p. 32).

Since 1987, the Erasmus exchange mobility scheme has facilitated around five million mobility experiences (European Commission, 2019). While it continues to attract a significant number of students, its policy discourse, however, has undergone a subtle change over time (Courtois, 2019, 2020; European Commission, 2020, 2021; Klose, 2013). With an estimated budget of €26.2 billion for the 2021-27 period (€14.7 billion for 2014-20), the Erasmus program nowadays emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge and skills that would be valuable assets in today’s knowledge economies and societies (European Commission, 2021). Despite this direct connection to the neoliberal common sense, Erasmus policy discourse has recently also focused on “social inclusion, the green and digital transitions, as well as on promoting young people’s participation in democratic life” (European Commission, 2021). Hence, the program, in its current form, is also expected to contribute to civic engagement, social justice, sustainability, democracy, and youth unemployment in Europe (Cairns, 2017, 2019; Cairns et al., 2017; European Commission, 2021).

However, despite the discourses of inclusion and a modest financial subsidy granted to eligible students, the Erasmus mobility may have links to social inequality and class-based differences. In fact, mobility opportunities of this kind might be more affordable

and accessible for certain privileged segments of societies due to their accumulated capital in various forms, including economic, social, and cultural capital (Brooks & Waters, 2011; Cairns, 2017, 2019; Cairns et al., 2017; Courtois, 2018, 2020; Devlin, 2020; Goldoni, 2021; Heger, 2013; Kubota, 2016; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002, 2008; Prazeres, 2019; Tran, 2016; Trower & Lehmann, 2017; Waters et al., 2011). For example, in the higher education context where this study is located, students are selected based on their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) and English proficiency. That is, the selection criteria do not take into account the possible economic disparities among applicants. Nevertheless, despite such inclusion concerns and the prevalence of neoliberal elements in its original and evolving policy discourses, the Erasmus program can stimulate higher education students to identify unjust sociopolitical and economic structures. Through their experiences in unaccustomed contexts, students, therefore, can develop more interest in issues related to critical interculturality and social justice. At this point, it is worth noting that my understanding of social justice “includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure” (Bell, 2007, p. 1).

To summarize the discussions in this section, I suggest that current Erasmus discourses and practices allude to both neoliberal discourses and the discourses of civic engagement, social justice, and democracy. Nevertheless, the neoliberal discourses of employability, consumerism, and self-management seem to dominate the program policies and actual student experiences (Brown et al., 2003; Cairns, 2017, 2019; Cairns et al., 2017, 2018; Courtois, 2019, 2020; Dvir & Yemini, 2017; Jacobone & Moro, 2015; Kosmaczewska & Jameson, 2021; Krzaklewska, 2013; Petzold & Peter, 2015; Yoon, 2014). However, the dominance of neoliberal discourses should not be taken for granted, as we may not observe it in every population benefiting from the program. In fact, as I argued before, STSA programs are contested fields on which multiple macro and micro discourses might exert an influence. Therefore, further research focusing on the discourses and experiences of Erasmus alumni might be a worthwhile effort. This way, clear patterns of *good sense* discourses and practices can also be identified and expanded over time.

Based on these points, in this study, I mainly aim to analyze the discourses and experiences of a group of PELTs who benefited from the Erasmus program (I discuss the study aims in more detail in the last section of this chapter). In what follows, I turn to the neoliberal influences on (language) teacher education programs. I also delve into the potential critical value(s) of STSA experiences in (language) teacher education.

### **1.8. Neoliberalism, (Language) Teacher Education, and Short-Term Study Abroad Programs**

As I discussed earlier, most governments have developed inspection and professionalism schemes for educational institutions. With these schemes, they aim to ensure that educational discourses and practices are aligned with market principles and attendant notions of competition, human capital, and knowledge economy (Apple, 2011; Baltodano, 2012; Kumar, 2019; Kumashiro, 2015; Mooney Simmie et al., 2019; Sleeter, 2009). Under these accountability regimes that impose test-oriented school content, performance benchmarks, and simplistic narratives of “successful” or “good” teaching, teachers are usually encouraged to practice what has been described and decided by external bodies. As a result, their roles have been identified mainly with references to the technical, managerial, and instrumental conceptions of education. Many teachers, thus, have been tempted to serve the neoliberal agendas and develop thought frameworks and habits similar to *homo economicus* (Attick, 2017; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021b; Fenwick, 2003; Gupta, 2021; Hara & Sherbine, 2018; Kumashiro, 2015; Loh & Hu, 2014; Mooney Simmie et al., 2019; Reeves, 2018; Slater & Seawright, 2019). That is, while monitoring their acts and thoughts with regard to the performance criteria and quantifiable student achievements, teachers across many different contexts may find themselves disregarding their possible moral and transformative roles. In addition, through the accomplishment of these criteria, they may seek “better” social and economic opportunities and neglect responsible acts that may contribute to social justice and democracy.

Teacher education programs themselves, in fact, appear to be under pressure to remove reference to social justice and exclude the political issues (Clarke & Morgan, 2011; Kumashiro, 2015; Sleeter, 2009). However, the lack of critical topics in teacher



education does not preclude questioning or resistance toward the neoliberal impact on teacher education. Quite the contrary, there are clear examples in the literature that demonstrate the possibility of challenging neoliberal practices in this domain (e.g., Ball, 2016; Forgasz et al., 2021; Hara & Sherbine, 2018; Karaman & Edling, 2021). Teacher education programs or teacher educators, therefore, can find ways to help (prospective) teachers understand their positions in society, challenge structural inequalities, work with the students and families coming from underserved communities, and contribute to social justice (e.g., Freire, 2005; Kasun & Saavedra, 2016; Kumashiro, 2015; Larsen & Searle, 2017; McDonald & Zeichner, 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In other words, they can guide (prospective) teachers to:

be aware of the global nature of societal issues, to care about people in distant places, to understand the nature of global economic integration, to appreciate the interconnectedness and interdependence of peoples, to respect and protect cultural diversity, to fight for social justice for all, and to protect planet earth – home for all human beings. (Zhao, 2010, p. 426)

To assist the work toward such critical aims, several keywords or concepts, such as *culturally responsive teaching*, *culturally relevant or sustaining pedagogy*, *equity*, *global teacherhood*, *teaching for diversity and social justice*, and *critical and reflexive interculturality*, have been increasingly highlighted within the teacher education literature (e.g., Adams et al., 2007; Amsler et al., 2020; Cochran-Smith et al., 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2013; Dervin & Jacobsson, 2021; Gay, 2000; Goodwin, 2020; Karaman & Tochon, 2007; Kumashiro, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012; Smolcic & Arends, 2017; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

As one of the important domains in teacher education, and also as the target context of this study, language teacher education programs also grapple with similar issues such as *social justice*, *equity*, *diversity*, and *interculturality* under the neoliberal climate (Clarke & Morgan, 2011; Doğançay-Aktuna, 2006; Gao, 2019; Gray, 2019; Gray & Block, 2012; Hawkins, 2011; Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2020; Karaman & Edling, 2021; Kasun & Saavedra, 2016; Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016; Nguyen, 2019; Ordem, 2022; Ortaçtepe Hart & Martel, 2020; Tezgiden Cakcak, 2019). In fact, language teacher education programs, particularly English language

teacher education (ELTE) programs, are argued to be “shaped by neoliberal ideology and exposure to market forces” (Gray & Block, 2012, p. 120). As the neoliberal common sense is often expressed in the English language (Barnawi, 2020; Flores, 2013; Holborow, 2006, 2013; Majhanovich, 2013), these programs are also thought to be “one of the main gateways to the construction of neoliberal hegemony” (Ordem, 2022, p. 171).

The English language, the core subject in ELTE, is today regarded “as a natural and neutral language of academic excellence” (Piller & Cho, 2013, p. 24) and as an asset to boost one’s cultural, economic, social, and mobility capital (Barnawi, 2020; Park, 2010; Rizvi, 2017; Tajima, 2020; Urla, 2019; Zimmermann & Muth, 2020). However, despite such cooperation between English and the neoliberal common sense, few scholars in the fields of applied linguistics and language education have contemplated “alternative visions for our societies” (Chun & Morgan, 2019, p. 1094) or “alternatives to neoliberalism in foreign language education” (Bori & Canale, 2022, p. 7). Nevertheless, there is now a growing body of scholarship that discusses the repercussions of neoliberalization in language education and language teacher education (e.g., Babaii & Sheikhi, 2018; Barnawi, 2020; Bernstein et al., 2015; Block & Gray, 2016; Block et al., 2012; Bori, 2020; Chun, 2009; Chun & Morgan, 2019; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021a, 2021b; De Costa et al., 2019, 2021; Flores, 2013; Flubacher & Del Percio, 2017; Goldoni, 2021; Karaman & Edling, 2021; Litzenberg, 2020; Nguyen, 2019; Ordem, 2022; Park, 2010; Phan & Barnawi, 2015; Phillipson, 2008; Phyak & Sharma, 2021; Reeves, 2018; Shin, 2016; Simpson, 2018; Tajima, 2020; Tezgiden Cakcak, 2019; West, 2019; Xiong & Yuan, 2018; Zimmermann & Muth, 2020).

These (mostly recent) studies have focused on several aspects of the growing links between neoliberalization and English language (teacher) education. De Costa et al. (2019, 2021), for example, discuss how major language education policies can emanate from *linguistic entrepreneurship*, defined in one of their earlier studies as “an act of aligning with the moral imperative to strategically exploit language-related resources for enhancing one’s worth in the world” (De Costa et al., 2016, p. 696). They

claim convincingly that policies of this kind reflect the neoliberal ethos that prioritizes learning certain “elite” and marketable languages such as English. By looking closer at this “profitability” perspective, they explicate how individuals are under pressure to improve their language repertoires and contribute to the economic growth of profit-making conglomerates. Since the privilege has been assigned to learning “elite” languages in this neoliberal atmosphere of companies, they also suggest that minority languages are in grave danger.

With similar concerns, Phan and Barnawi (2015) demonstrate how neoliberalism has influenced the language policies of higher education institutions in the Saudi Arabian context. To illustrate the neoliberal impact in that context, they offer clear examples that suggest the “unregulated market of English medium institutes” (p. 561), “the overindulgence of English” (p. 561), and “uncritical adoption of English and its overreliance on international training providers” (p. 561). That is, they are concerned that the profit-driven educational acts and English-only policies may endanger the moral and authentic purposes of teaching in higher education.

West (2019) is another researcher who tackles the issue of “morality” and investigates how several English language teachers negotiate it while working at a private language institution. Through narrative analysis, he shows how teachers do not place a desirable level of emphasis on social justice but highlight “individual” sides of morality. He maintains that teachers do not make remarkable efforts to question their privileged backgrounds, thereby constructing their moral selves on such privilege. His study participants, however, are not the only English language teachers who negotiate their selves or identities in favor of neoliberal principles. Reeves (2018) has also investigated how test-oriented standardized instruction influences an English language teacher’s identity work. Despite having an initial commitment to the “ethics of care” (p. 104), her focal participant aligns her teaching practices gradually with her school’s view of teaching, which is constructed mainly on a prescribed program and intended to improve students’ test results. Clearly, she is pulled into a neoliberal conception of “successful teaching” that prioritizes self-management and quantifiable indicators of

“success” over social justice concerns and moral purposes of teaching (Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021b).

Chun (2009) and Litzenberg (2020), on the other hand, show how intensive English programs at the US universities tend to function as a neoliberal educational context. Chun (2009), in particular, illustrates how his target program expects economic returns by attracting international students and treats these students as rational consumers or customers. He also demonstrates that the English teaching materials in the program incorporate certain neoliberal discourses that view language learners “as consumers and entrepreneurs of self and others” (p. 118). This finding is actually consistent with several other studies that investigate the relationship between neoliberal discourses and English teaching materials.

Babaii and Sheikhi (2018), for example, reveal that several highly popular English teaching textbooks used in the Iranian context prioritize neoliberal values such as free market, consumerism, and self-branding. Xiong and Yuan (2018), likewise, report that the English teaching materials in China primarily promote the neoliberal traits of entrepreneurship, competition, and individual success. Employing the perspective of Foucauldian governmentality, Bori (2020) also examines “two best-selling global UK-produced textbooks.” Along a similar line, he reveals that these textbooks entrench neoliberal hegemony and support the formation of neoliberal subjectivities such as “entrepreneurial individuals and responsible consumers” (p. 159). The findings emerging from these textbook studies, in fact, confirm the following argument by Shin (2016):

[...] it is not just that neoliberalism has an impact on the language education industry, but the language education industry has also become an instantiation of the ideologies of neoliberalism by developing and selling packaged products that make the projects of self-management seem more achievable and desirable. (p. 511)

The language industry, then, seems to frame language learning as an endless self-management project, allowing it to be “fetishized as something the atomized homo economicus produces for herself” (Simpson, 2018, p. 509). Park (2010), in fact, points out how the stories of “successful” English learners in the South Korean press have

erased the unequal conditions of accessing English language education, thereby promoting the neoliberal discourses of self-management. The industry, therefore, lays the groundwork for “blaming” those who fail to acquire “necessary” linguistic capital rather than acknowledging the unequal structural conditions in societies as well as in language learning.

As evidenced by Tajima (2020), English language learning can also be a tool in companies to keep employees under control and push them to follow incessant development. Learning English, therefore, can be “a neoliberal endeavor” that prioritizes instrumental reasons over an authentic learning experience (Tajima, 2020, p. 297). However, Tajima (2020) observes that certain employees have an enthusiastic attitude toward such instrumental and controlled learning processes. She, therefore, also points to the productive and regulatory role of the neoliberal common sense in the construction of language learner subjectivities, as Foucauldian and Gramscian understandings predict.

Relying on these studies and ongoing discussions, I suggest that the English language education industry worldwide has become an important medium or infrastructure for the neoliberalization processes. While actively promoting neoliberal discourses, the industry tends to mask growing inequalities in access to English. Additionally, it tries to obscure the precarious employment, leaving the language teaching profession in many places insecure, low-paid, and detached from social protections (Barnawi, 2020; Flubacher & Del Percio, 2017; Gupta, 2021; Litzenberg, 2020; Mercer, 2021; Walsh, 2019). By associating learning English with employability and socioeconomic returns, the industry may also threaten the existence of minority, indigenous, and heritage languages that do not seem to offer economic advantages in the first place. Overall, based on this brief review of the recent literature, I indicate a strong entanglement between the neoliberal common sense and English language (teacher) education. However, I also caution that the literature contains several tropes of “hope” or counter-discourses that point to the possibility of resisting the neoliberal common sense in English language (teacher) education.

Block and Gray (2016) and Litzenberg (2020) provide examples of how language teachers or program administrators resist the neoliberal pressure on English language teaching. Some of the teachers in Block and Gray's (2016) study, for instance, "try to subvert at least some aspects of the top-down, rule-laden educational culture in which they worked" (p. 492). Although these scholars "remain pessimistic about the ultimate worth of such actions" (p. 492), they, nevertheless, invite researchers and teachers to seek powerful ways to challenge the neoliberalization processes and bring "systemic changes" (p. 493). Through their critical engagement in policy issues, De Costa et al. (2019) also inspire researchers and educators to maintain critical work in order to undo the neoliberal effects on language policies and education. Chun (2009), as a language teacher himself, problematizes the ideal conceptions of neoliberalism in his classes by implementing "pedagogical interventions through critical interrogations of neoliberal discourses" (p. 119). Thanks to these interventions, he shows the possibility of creating "spaces for alternative subjectivities" in language classrooms and serves as a critical model for other teachers. West (2019), likewise, encourages practitioners to challenge the hegemonic status of neoliberalism in language teaching and to respond to it with resistance rather than with "resignation" (p. 39). In a similar manner, Reeves (2018) heartens language teachers to take a suspicious stance toward neoliberal policies and develop a critical professional agency. Through their critical examination of textbooks, Xiong and Yuan (2018) also help us envision critical ways to evaluate English language education with connections to "social, cultural, political and economic dynamics in globalization" (p. 113).

By leading the way and motivating further critical studies, these researchers, therefore, contribute to the efforts needed for developing comprehensive as well as powerful counter-discourses against the neoliberal common sense in English language (teacher) education. Encouraged by these *good sense* discourses, we can indeed continue to challenge and resist the dominant neoliberal discourses and practices in different areas and domains of English language education, including ELTE programs. Otherwise, this major educational field may continue to marginalize the discourses of social justice and contribute to profit-making entities. STSA programs within the scope of ELTE can be one such area to target.

For the construction of inclusive and democratic English language classrooms that are not dominated by neoliberal elements such as external performance criteria, selfish rationalities, test content, uncritical materials, and standardized instruction, English language teachers need to develop critical dispositions and inclusive understandings (Clarke & Morgan, 2011; Doğançay-Aktuna, 2006; Gao, 2019; Gray & Block, 2012; Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016; Ortaçtepe Hart & Martel, 2020). As I argued before, STSA experiences, in particular, can be valuable in that regard. To be more specific, STSA programs, such as the Erasmus program, can help PELTs experience otherness or confront “being an outsider” in an environment largely unfamiliar to them in terms of society, culture, politics, higher education, and language. These programs, therefore, can act as a trigger for prospective language teachers to question/test their habituated ways of thinking and established identity dimensions. As a result, they may grasp unjust sociopolitical and economic structures and develop responsibilities related to social justice. In other words, they may expand their capacity for critical reflexivity and start to work against marginalizing, silencing, and delegitimizing certain profiles or segments of the societies. Developing an appreciation of diversity and multiplicity of voices through STSA experiences, in fact, seems to be possible for (prospective) teachers (e.g., Alfaro & Quezada, 2010; Arthur et al., 2020; Byker & Putman, 2019; Cacciattolo et al., 2020; Cushner, 2011; Dockrill et al., 2016; Dunn et al., 2014; Elmas, 2021; Frieson et al., 2022; Hauerwas et al., 2017; Jacobs & Haberlin, 2022; Karaman & Tochon, 2007, 2010; Kasun & Saavedra, 2016; Larsen & Searle, 2017; Li & Costa, 2022; Menard-Warwick & Palmer, 2012; Nieto, 2006; Phillion & Malewski, 2011; Pilonieta et al., 2017; Talbot & Thomas, 2021; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Yuan et al., 2021).

However, there is no guarantee that every prospective language teacher will return from an STSA period with a heightened or critical understanding of the world and significant professional development. Even in the cases of powerful STSA experiences, the participants may not evaluate them in that regard, mainly because of the highly complex, contextualized, and individual nature of STSA experiences (Coleman, 2015; Dockrill et al., 2016; Enriquez-Gibson & Gibson, 2015; Hauerwas et al., 2017; Jackson, 2010; Klein & Wikan, 2019; Li & Costa, 2022; Menard-Warwick & Palmer,

2012; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002, 2008; Nieto, 2006; Santoro & Major, 2012; Yuan et al., 2021). In addition, as I highlighted before, competing or contradictory macro discourses can influence such experiences, contributing to multifarious outcomes ranging from hedonistic pleasures to critical transformation (Bodinger de Uriarte & Di Giovine, 2021; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021a).

A critical, qualitative, and in-depth focus on the STSA discourses and experiences of PELTs, thus, can be a valuable contribution to ongoing discussions in the field, especially in terms of identifying *good sense* patterns that can be expanded over time. A research focus in that respect can also respond to one of the research calls in language teacher education. Plews (2019), recently, has pointed out that “[p]re- and in-service language teachers are a distinct population in [study abroad] that remains significantly under-researched” (p. 156). In fact, having conducted a careful examination of the extant literature, including several review studies (e.g., Çiftçi & Karaman, 2019; Kang & Pacheco, 2021; Lipura & Collins, 2020; Morley et al., 2019; Smolcic & Katunich, 2017), I could not identify any study that adopts a critical lens toward the neoliberal common sense and investigates the STSA discourses and experiences of PELTs. With this lacuna in mind, I discuss, in the next section, the aims of this study and present the research questions. However, as a prelude to the study aims and associated research questions, I offer a short summary of the discussions so far and clarify my position.

### **1.9. Aims of the Study and Research Questions**

Aligning with both Foucauldian and Marxian approaches to neoliberalism, in this study, I postulate that neoliberal discourses and practices uphold a regime of subject formation that (re)produces individuals as self-focused entrepreneurs and rational consumers, or as *homo economicus* (Foucault, 2008). I also posit that the neoliberal project, which has been actively supported by governments, corporations, institutions, media, think tanks, and universities, ensures the restoration of elite power and leads to growing inequalities in access to food, shelter, health, and education (Harvey, 2005). Based on these assumptions, I argue that neoliberalism has acquired a hegemonic status through *common sense* (Gramsci, 1971). As a hegemonic project with the “new”



common sense status, neoliberalism naturalizes ongoing inequalities, mutes social justice demands, favors those in power, and holds individuals responsible for every dimension of their lives, though it might be experienced uniquely in specific contexts. In short, mainly drawing on Gramscian perspectives, I suggest that the neoliberal common sense is predicated on free market, competition, corporatism, consumerism, and self-interested individuals (Block, 2018a, 2018b; Dardot & Laval, 2014; Hall & O’Shea, 2013; Harvey, 2005; Holborow, 2015; Ratner, 2019; Read, 2009; Torres, 2011, 2013).

As one of the major domains of the neoliberal edifice, higher education has not been able to escape the neoliberal common sense. Under the influence of neoliberal agendas such as *(global) knowledge economy*, *internationalization*, and *privatization*, higher education has also been under pressure to contribute to the neoliberal market. As part of fulfilling these agendas, higher education institutions are expected to raise a flexible and mobile workforce that would be able to meet market needs beyond boundaries. To align with such neoliberal agendas and visions, higher education students themselves tend to act as hyper-mobile, hyper-competitive, and entrepreneurial subjects. In return, they expect improvements in their human capital or an increase in job prospects and economic gains (Brown et al., 2003; Courtois, 2019, 2020; Cuzzocrea & Krzaklewska, 2022; Ikonen & Nikunen, 2019; Yoon, 2014). They may, thus, view various forms of studying abroad, including STSA programs, as a valuable means of acquiring marketable assets (e.g., adaptation, intercultural competence, and languages), enriching CVs, and also having adventure and fun (Cairns, 2019; Cairns et al., 2017, 2018; Dvir & Yemini, 2017; Gao & Park, 2015; Goldoni, 2021; Ikonen & Nikunen, 2019; Jacobone & Moro, 2015; Juvan & Lesjak, 2011; Kosmaczewska & Jameson, 2021; Krzaklewska, 2013; Lesjak et al., 2020; Paige et al., 2009; Petzold & Peter, 2015; Yoon, 2014; Waters et al., 2011; Zemach-Bersin, 2009). Despite the prevalence of such *commonsensical* tropes or neoliberal framings of studying abroad, STSA experiences may also help higher education students experience otherness and attendant questioning processes within a context that can be different from their everyday lives. That is, STSA experiences may render the fissures in the neoliberal

common sense more visible for their critical examination, whereby the possibilities for experiencing critical transformation can emerge.

This multiplicity of STSA discourses and experiences, overall, indicates that STSA programs carry the potential to support the reproduction of neoliberal subjects as well as the development of critical views that can be conducive to developing agency toward various forms of inequalities and social justice (Back et al., 2021; Bernardes et al., 2021; Dockrill et al., 2016; Goldoni, 2021; Henderson, 2020). Therefore, as I repeatedly highlight, competing or contradictory discourses can be at work in such experiences (Bodinger de Uriarte & Di Giovine, 2021; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021a). Thus, STSA programs may not always be “benign phenomena” (Courtois, 2020, p. 251) or “something positive” (Dervin & Jacobsson, 2021, p. 136), which invites critical empirical inquiries.

On the other hand, the English language has become “the current lingua franca of the modern [neoliberal] world” (Majhanovich, 2013, p. 93). In addition, English lessons have become a commodity with a high marketplace value (Soto & Pérez-Milans, 2018). That is, access to English language education can be a gatekeeping mechanism and affect social mobility and life opportunities of students (Darvin, 2017). Thus, English language teachers should be prepared to address inequalities arising from English language education. Otherwise, if these teachers too remain mainly oriented to the uncritical conceptions of the neoliberal common sense, they risk naturalizing inequalities in English language education.

Risks of this kind are indeed possible because prospective language teachers may step into teacher education programs with superficial motivations such as expanding their human capital and job prospects. In fact, language teacher education programs themselves tend to place insufficient emphasis on developing complex critical views and actions toward unequal power distributions and relations in societies (Block & Gray, 2016; Gray, 2019; Gray & Block, 2012; Ordem, 2022). If these programs do not interrupt the self-interested social and economic motivations, prospective language teachers may continue to hold selfish rationalities and self-regulate around market principles and accountability regimes once they enter the profession. They, therefore,

may continue to entrench the neoliberal hegemony in language education. In addition, they may lack sophisticated critical tools to understand the precarious forms of employment and psychological outcomes of working in a language education industry (Barnawi, 2020; Flubacher & Del Percio, 2017; Litzenberg, 2020).

Although STSA programs, such as the Erasmus program, have been critically assessed for their alignment with neoliberal agendas (Courtois, 2020; Klose, 2013; Krzaklewska, 2013; Zemach-Bersin, 2009), they might be one effective experiential means to help prospective language teachers question their positions in societies and existing structural barriers. Thanks to such potentially transformative experiences, prospective language teachers may develop complex and deep understandings of social justice. Consequently, they may envision helping language learners, especially those from disadvantaged communities, develop necessary language skills and take strategic actions to gain a legitimate position within the socioeconomic fabric. When they step into the profession, they, therefore, can contribute to the transformation of societies into more collective and equal forms. However, all these potential critical outcomes of STSA programs are not guaranteed for them. There is, therefore, a need for further empirical research investigating how these programs are framed and experienced by prospective language teachers. STSA, in fact, is an underexplored domain in language teacher education research (Plews, 2019). To address this research gap, in this study, I focus on the STSA discourses and experiences of a cohort of PELTs who completed their STSA period within the Erasmus exchange scheme and undertook the last semester in their teacher education program.

In practice, STSA is divided into three main phases: (1) preparation, (2) sojourn, and (3) re-entry (Holmes et al., 2016; Jackson, 2010, 2018a; Karaman & Tochon, 2007; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002, 2008; Vande Berg et al., 2012). Re-entry, however, appears to be the least explored phase within the study abroad as well as the teacher education literature (Arthur et al., 2020; Back et al., 2021; Brubaker, 2017; Jackson, 2018a; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Marx & Moss, 2016; Moorhouse, 2020; Plews & Misfeldt, 2018; Szkudlarek, 2010; Young, 2014). The under-researched status of the re-entry phase is actually both surprising and heartening because it can be a highly promising domain for investigating program alumni's reflections and meaning-making

processes about STSA experiences, imagined futures, and worldviews (e.g., Alfaro & Quezada, 2010; Arthur et al., 2020; Back et al., 2021; Dunn et al., 2014; Elmas, 2021; Hauerwas et al., 2017; Jackson, 2014a; Kasun & Saavedra, 2016; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Larsen & Searle, 2017; Marx & Moss, 2016; Moorhouse, 2020; Nada & Legutko, 2022; Santoro & Major, 2012; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). The richness of this period has also not gone unnoticed by the official Twitter account of *Erasmus+*. It posted: “The end of Erasmus is only the beginning” (Erasmus+, 2020).

Each year, a significant number of PELTs at the target research setting (a major state university located in central Turkey), in fact, participate in the Erasmus program. Their post-Erasmus discourses about, for example, STSA experiences, employment concerns, life plans, and the current state of the world can reveal important initial patterns to consider in evaluating the complexities, values, and roles of STSA programs in language teacher education. In this study, therefore, I aim to explore the STSA discourses and experiences of a cohort of Erasmus alumni who underwent their last semester (re-entry period) in the target language teacher education program. To be more precise, I intend to reveal the patterns of neoliberal (*common sense*) as well counter-hegemonic (*good sense*) discourses and experiences in their (1) STSA constructions, (2) imagined futures, and (3) interpretations of the current state of the world. In order to construct these patterns, I mainly delve into their personal backgrounds, STSA motivations, STSA experiences, self-perceived STSA outcomes, re-entry experiences, future plans, immediate post-graduation experiences (jobs, graduate programs, mobility, and so on), and views on several global challenges. Ultimately, I explore the following research questions in this study:

1. Having returned from an STSA (Erasmus) period and approaching their graduation from university, how do the participants construct their STSA experiences retrospectively?
  - a. What were their pre-program motivations?
  - b. What did they hope to gain and, from their perspectives, what did they gain as a result of their participation in the STSA program?
  - c. What type of STSA experiences do they highlight?

- d. From their perspectives, how did their STSA experiences influence their undergraduate studies or language teacher education processes?
    - e. How do they engage with neoliberal discourses and elements in their constructions of STSA?
- 2. How do they construct their (near and distant) future imaginatively and experience the immediate post-graduation period?
  - a. What are their future plans?
  - b. How do they envision and tackle job-seeking processes and/or applications to graduate studies?
  - c. How do they evaluate their STSA experiences with regard to their future plans and immediate post-graduation experiences?
  - d. How do they engage with neoliberal discourses and elements in their constructions of the future and immediate post-graduation period?
- 3. How do they interpret the current state of the world and associated challenges?
  - a. What are their views on major global challenges?
  - b. How do they engage with neoliberal discourses and elements in their worldviews?

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

#### 2.0. Presentation

Every empirical study sets out to reach its goals through a convenient mixture of research methodologies and methods. Researchers, therefore, are accountable for setting up sound and coherent research projects that would satisfy the target academic communities and accomplish particular research aims. Although a plethora of methodological options are available for research projects, the point is to generate an amalgam that matches the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of a study. In other words, the research design should align with researchers' inclination toward particular understandings of knowledge construction (Mirhosseini, 2020).

In this study, I aim to explore the discourses and experiences of a group of prospective English language teachers (PELTs) with respect to their short-term study abroad (STSA) experiences, imagined futures, and worldviews. During this exploration, I do not remain solely in the realm of *the individual* or *the group* but also attempt to display how these micro dimensions dovetail with larger ideological landscapes such as the neoliberal common sense. To put it another way, in this study, I am interested in detailed analyses and multilevel interpretations and, therefore, opt for complexity, depth, and critical interpretation. To meet these interests, I embrace the paradigm of *Qualitative Research* or *Qualitative Inquiry* that inherently eschews quantification or uncritical generalization but favors complex, contextualized, and in-depth interpretations (Creswell, 2012). However, there is no single ideal approach in this research paradigm. That is, a qualitative inquiry can combine multiple approaches as long as there is a convincing conceptual ground justifying the choices and mixtures (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Creswell, 2012; Mirhosseini, 2020; Saldana, 2011).

Before elaborating on the methodological choices that I made in this qualitative inquiry, I offer a distinction between *methodology* and *method*. In doing so, I mainly draw on the definitions suggested by Braun and Clarke (2021a). These oft-cited scholars in the field of *Qualitative Inquiry* define methodologies as “theoretically informed frameworks for research,” while methods refer to “theoretically independent tools and techniques” (p. 38). Therefore, *methodology* deals with an underlying set of theoretical assumptions that inform how knowledge can be generated through research. It has, then, the power to guide how research takes place, or in other words, what methods or research “tools and techniques” can be employed. Based on this distinction, I identify the *methodology* for this study as *Qualitative Inquiry* that is “theoretically informed” by *Critical Discourse Studies* (CDS). As regards the method, I deploy *Reflexive Thematic Analysis* (RTA), which is guided by an amalgamation of *Qualitative Inquiry* and CDS, as illustrated in Figure 2.

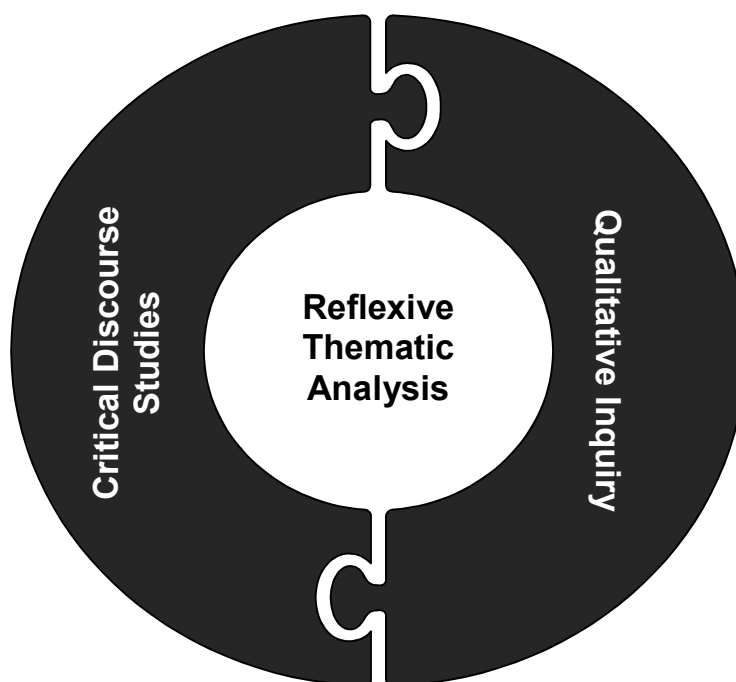


Figure 2. RTA informed by a mixture of Qualitative Research and CDS

CDS, as a methodological heuristic and paradigm, explores the interplay of diverse discursive issues in economic, educational, cultural, political, and social realms. It can, therefore, be a pertinent methodological approach for this critical qualitative inquiry

in which I aim to explore possible interplays and tensions between the neoliberal common sense and the discourses and experiences of a cohort of PELTs. Although it is not a common practice to combine CDS and RTA (the method of analysis in this study) in a qualitative inquiry, no obstacle exists to such cooperation (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021a, 2022; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). RTA, in fact, is a theoretically independent method or “a transtheoretical tool” (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 3), posing no objection to such cooperation as long as “the theoretical position of a thematic analysis is made clear” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81).

To clarify further “the theoretical position” of RTA in this qualitative inquiry, I provide, in the next section, more detailed discussions about the paradigm of CDS. I also explain how this paradigm has influenced my understanding or conceptualization of the neoliberal common sense. In the subsequent sections of this chapter, informed by CDS and *Qualitative Inquiry*, I discuss RTA in further detail and show its merits for the theoretically informed thematic analysis in this study. After clarifying and justifying the methodological choices, I introduce the research setting and participants. Then, I explain the data generation tools and procedures. Toward the end of this chapter, I explicate the data analysis processes in detail. Lastly, I discuss the issues of *quality* in this study, including ethical issues and my role(s) and perspective(s) as a researcher.

## **2.1. Theoretical Background of the Method of Analysis: Critical Discourse Studies**

Reality includes discursive and non-discursive dimensions. That is, “discourse is an irreducible part of the reality” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 545). *Discourse* is broadly about the social constitution of the world with implications for both material and non-material realities. Through semiotic mediums such as language, media, gaze, clothing, and body, it has, therefore, the power to incorporate our various ways of being, including meaning-making, acts, values, identities, and attitudes (Gee, 2018). Although *discourse* cannot be confined to language or linguistic symbols, *Discourse Analysis* is generally regarded as a field of study that analyzes what humans do with language and how they do it (Gee, 2018). Due to its enormous scope of work,



*Discourse Analysis* is actually a big field with multiple approaches. In this study, I focus particularly on the critical approaches to discourse analysis due to their underlying assumption that language use can have connections to ruling ideologies and, therefore, to the neoliberal common sense.

*Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA), a broad theoretical and research framework, emerged in the 1980s and 90s thanks to several influential studies conducted by eminent scholars such as Gunther Kress, Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Teun A. van Dijk, and Theo van Leeuwen. As a research framework, CDA has been influenced by several critical theories that can be located in multiple fields such as sociology, anthropology, and political economy (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). With a rich intellectual background, CDA has focused, in particular, on the nexus among social structure, discourse, and language. That is, it has explored a wide range of issues regarding how power interacts with discourses and how attendant inequalities, domination, and oppression emerge and endure. Consequently, it has contributed significantly to our understanding of how power relations and ideologies are constituted and reproduced through discourse at different scales such as local, national, and global (Fairclough, 2010; Rogers, 2009; Waugh et al., 2016; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Since language is influenced by –and influences– power relations and ideologies, it can play a key role in reproducing as well as challenging various forms of inequalities and structures of dominance (Donoghue, 2018; Fairclough et al., 2011; Holborow, 2015; MacDonald-Vemic & Portelli, 2020; Massey, 2013). Because of this strong and productive assumption about language, CDA has been in a close relationship with linguistic theories, which seem to have cast a significant influence on the analyses of how ideologies and power are represented in discourse (or language in use) (Rogers, 2009; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). CDA, however, does not remain only within the realm of (linguistic) analysis. Through critical analyses, it also strives to stir social change in favor of the oppressed (Fairclough et al., 2011; Rogers, 2009; Waugh et al., 2016; Wodak & Meyer, 2016; Zotzmann & O’Regan, 2012).

As seen, CDA has undertaken a loaded research program and social transformation agenda. Concomitantly, it has drawn upon diverse intellectual resources as well as

research methods to tackle complex discursive phenomena. Today, it accommodates many different (evolving) approaches or groups within its paradigmatic universe (Donoghue, 2018; Fairclough et al., 2011; Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018; Forchtner & Wodak, 2018; Rogers, 2009; Waugh et al., 2016; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). In an edited book on the methods of CDS, Wodak and Meyer (2016), for instance, bring together the following major CDA strategies: discourse-historical approach, corpus-linguistics approach, social actors approach, dispositive analysis, sociocognitive approach, and dialectical-relational approach (p. 18). Despite their significant divergences, these approaches, however, are suggested to share several common characteristics. They all, for example, imply that sociopolitical issues and social relations are mainly (re)produced through discourse. Additionally, they all share an interest in denaturalizing the systems of power and domination through systematic investigations of discursive data such as spoken, written, and visual (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). CDA, therefore, should not be regarded as a particular method of discourse analysis “but rather a critical perspective, position or attitude” (van Dijk, 2014, p. 389). To describe this vast field of research and intellectual endeavor, Teun A. van Dijk (2014), in fact, suggests using a more general term: “Critical Discourse Studies.” I concur with him that the critical approaches to the study of discourse and language constitute a paradigm that is way beyond being a method. Therefore, I also prefer to use the term CDS in this study while referring to this critical field of research.

Considering its rich intellectual background, diverse research strategies, and common concerns for social transformation, I conclude that CDS can be a useful theoretical heuristic for the analytical trajectory of this critical qualitative inquiry in which I mainly aim to explore and critically analyze how a group PELTs negotiate neoliberal discourses in their STSA constructions, imagined futures, and interpretations of the current state of the world. Therefore, in this qualitative inquiry, I draw on CDS as the theoretical or research paradigm when conducting the method of analysis, RTA. Before discussing RTA in detail, I discuss, in the next section, how CDS influenced my approach to the investigation of the neoliberal common sense. By doing so, I aim to provide further details on the methodological and theoretical underpinnings of the thematic data analysis (i.e., RTA) that I employed in this study (see *Data Analysis*).

## 2.2. Critical Discourse Studies and Neoliberal Common Sense

Since language is at the heart of human communication, it can be a reliable medium to grasp traces of dominant discourses along with other cooperative or competing discourses (Block, 2018a; Holborow, 2015; MacDonald-Vemic & Portelli, 2020). In fact, it is mainly discourse (or language in use) in which “consent is achieved, ideologies are transmitted, and practices, meanings, values and identities are taught and learnt” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 531). Therefore, analyzing how neoliberal discourses are evoked or negotiated in the language of particular individuals or groups can be a valuable research endeavor, especially to understand to what extent and how these discourses are internalized or resisted (e.g., Ayers, 2005; Block, 2018a; Holborow, 2007; MacDonald-Vemic & Portelli, 2020; Massey, 2013). As I discussed in the previous chapter in detail, this is what I mainly aim to achieve in this study with a focus on a certain domain (language teacher education) and research topics (STSA, imagined futures, and worldviews). Before further discussing how CDS can inform the analysis in that regard, a short discussion regarding the dialectic relationship between *social structure* and *agency* can be useful.

In social sciences, there is this perennial discussion of whether human actions are determined largely by social structures or whether human beings are rational and free agents who can act without serious social constraints (Block, 2013; Fairclough, 2010). The appealing common opinion, in that regard, is that structures pre-exist social agents and interact with the agents in a dialectic fashion. These structures, therefore, can be (re)produced or transformed by the agents (Archer, 1995; Block, 2015; Fairclough, 2010). Since structures often achieve a relatively durable or “relative permanence” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 444), they may take different forms or “key types”:

- “1. The material, economic bases of societies, as well as the legal and political superstructures composing the state (Marx, [1857–1858] 1904).
2. More concrete institutions, such as religion, education, employment and family.
3. Psychologically based, embodied dispositional formations, such as Bourdieu’s (1977) *habitus* or Layder’s (2006) *psychobiography* or Lahire’s

(2013) “embodied, individualized folds of the social,” which act as internalized structures.

4. Socio-cultural configurations which emerge in the ongoing interactions among individuals acting collectively in social formations, e.g. fields (Bourdieu, 1984), and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

5. The ongoing interactions that people engage in on a moment-to-moment basis.” (Block, 2019, p. 8)

Despite their endurance to change, these structures, however, may not be completely protected against change, especially in the case of opposition, unwillingness, and dissidence by individual agents or groups. Nevertheless, amid the complexity of multiple structures and agents, exercising full agency can be challenging (Archer, 1995; Block, 2013, 2015; Fairclough, 2010). Since agents do not function in a structural vacuum and a power-free society, their thinking, acting, and use of language, in fact, can often be skewed toward the interests of particular groups of power, such as “the *symbolic elites* that control the access to public discourse and hence have the means to manipulate the public at large” (van Dijk, 2011, p. 381, italic in original).

In fact, Pierre Bourdieu, through his extensive work on social structures, placed important constraints on individuals’ capacity to act and speak. He is particularly known for his concept of *habitus*, given as internalized, durable, and yet transposable dispositions that an agent acquires as a result of her/his engagement with structures. According to Crehan’s (2011) interpretation, *habitus* can be likened to a particular language that allows its speakers to utter an infinite number of sentences based on a finite number of grammar rules. Due to this inherent primacy on *structural determinism*, Bourdieu has not been able to escape criticism.

Influenced by Roy Bhaskar’s *critical realism*, Margaret Archer (1995) criticized Bourdieu on the ground that *structure* and *agency* are mutually constitutive. According to her position, *habitus* downplays the dynamic interplay between *structure* and *agency* and the attendant possibilities of social transformation (Archer, 1995; Crehan, 2011). She, therefore, asserts that individuals are highly capable of reflecting on their lifeworlds and their relations to the structures that offer constraints as well as affordances. That is, individuals can transform their lifeworlds and society

simultaneously. However, Archer (1995) also suggests that unless agents consciously reflect and act on structural properties and barriers, these structures are highly likely to remain durable. Challenging the structural determinism of *habitus*, Archer (1995), then, points to the complexity of interactions or tensions between structures and agents, thereby framing the interplay between them as a valuable “focus for analysis” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 357).

As I discussed in the previous chapter, neoliberal ideology has gained a *common sense* status or structure in today’s economies, politics, and societies. Therefore, in many contexts, neoliberal discourses continue to celebrate and naturalize the notions of the free market, consumerism, and self-interest, thereby contributing to the structuration of neoliberal practices and subjectivities. However, as Gramsci (1971) suggests in a similar way to Archer (1995), the neoliberal structures are also frequently contested by many agents or groups, especially because of the open-ended nature of hegemonic struggles and the possibilities of nurturing *good sense* in *common sense* (Fairclough, 2010; Gramsci, 1971; Hall et al., 2013). Therefore, far from being structurally deterministic, the Gramscian intellectual tools are well equipped to analyze such complex reciprocal relations between the neoliberal structures and agents and to envisage how the neoliberal *common sense* can be transformed through *good sense* discourses and practices (Crehan, 2011; Donoghue, 2018). Thus, in this study, I employ these Gramscian concepts and explore how a group of PELTs negotiate the neoliberal common sense or structures in their discourses and experiences with regard to STSA, imagined futures, and worldviews.

Since the neoliberal common sense and *counter-hegemony* might appear differently within the discourses and experiences of different agents, it can also be important to take into account the background, identities, and trajectories of individuals in critical analyses of the relationship between the *structure* and *agency* (e.g., Arthur et al., 2020; Reddy, 2019). The individual dimensions are of a particular significance because the discursive and experiential constructions of, for example, STSA might be shaped by personal/familial history, contextual factors, and certain identity dimensions such as age, class, gender, ethnicity, language, nationality, race, and religion (Andreotti et al., 2013; Cairns, 2019; Cairns et al., 2018; Courtois, 2020; Jackson, 2010; Kubota, 2016;

Murphy-Lejeune, 2002, 2008; Reddy, 2019; Tran, 2016). Therefore, there can be diverse individual factors to consider while interpreting the garnered data with regard to the consolidation and/or contestation of the neoliberal structures. For this reason, in this study, I also aim to explore individual backgrounds, identities, and trajectories that can be associated with the research topics in this critical qualitative inquiry.

In the light of these discussions that explore how agents (their thinking, acting, and language use) and structures interact, I return to the theoretical viability of CDS for the method of analysis (RTA) in this study. As I suggested earlier, CDS is a complex theoretical paradigm that can host researchers when exploring the existence and/or contestation of the neoliberal common sense (*structure*) in the discourses and experiences of individuals (*agency*). Informed by this sophisticated tradition of critical research that can also accommodate the Gramscian concepts, I deploy RTA in this critical qualitative inquiry to construct several meaning-oriented patterns of neoliberal influences (*common sense*) and counter-discourses (*good sense*). That is, I do not conduct a micro linguistic analysis of discourse (e.g., describing actors, argumentation, time, modality, tense, voice, and so on). Rather, I interpret the statements of the study participants (mainly interview data) through a meaning-oriented critical thematic analysis (see the next section and *Data Analysis* for details). In what follows, I provide more details about my method of analysis, RTA, which is informed by the tenets of *Qualitative Research* and CDS (accommodating the Gramscian tools) in this study.

### **2.3. The Method of Analysis: Reflexive Thematic Analysis**

*Thematic Analysis* is one of the widely used methods in qualitative studies, mainly utilized to construct patterns or themes based on particular research aims and theoretical orientations (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lawless & Chen, 2019; Nowell et al., 2017). Despite sounding like a unified method with clear rules or guidelines, there are, however, different approaches to thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2021b) assemble these varied approaches under three main headings: (1) *coding reliability*, (2) *codebook*, and (3) *reflexive*. As defined in this typology or spectrum, the *coding reliability* approach is rooted in “neo-positivist” ideas because it seeks to conduct an

“objective” and “unbiased” analysis via a structured codebook. Although both deductive and inductive analyses are commonly carried out by the proponents of this approach, it tends to favor deductive analysis, as the target of analysis is usually identified through a pre-defined list of codes and themes.

Braun and Clarke (2021b) suggest that the second approach, *codebook*, can be located somewhere between *coding reliability* and *reflexive* approaches. This second approach uses “some kind of structured coding framework” to deal with data in similar ways to the *coding reliability* approach (p. 333). However, at the same time, it acknowledges certain elements of interpretive approaches (such as the subjective resources and skills) for coding and analysis, thereby also sharing a common point with the *reflexive* approach. Finally, Braun and Clarke (2021b) point out that the *reflexive* approach:

captures approaches that fully embrace qualitative research values and the subjective skills the researcher brings to the process [...]. Analysis, which can be more inductive or more theoretical/deductive, is a situated interpretative reflexive process. Coding is open and organic, with no use of any coding framework. Themes should be the final ‘outcome’ of data coding and iterative theme development. (pp. 333-334)

In fact, the *reflexive* approach has been developed by these same authors, who have been influential scholars in qualitative thematic analysis. In their seminal paper published in 2006, they initially described their approach as thematic analysis, but recently changed it to *Reflexive Thematic Analysis* (RTA). This shift, they suggest, might enable them to position their approach as a distinct method and to prevent several misuses or misconceptions of it (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, 2022; Braun et al., 2022). As its name implies, their approach is centered on *researcher reflexivity*, *transparency*, and *theoretical flexibility*.

By rejecting the post-positivist orientations to qualitative research, RTA allows researchers to incorporate their subjectivity and theoretical understandings into the thematic analyses of data (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021a, 2022). However, the incorporation of researcher subjectivity and reflexivity does not necessarily mean that RTA is a “whatever goes” approach. Rather, the originators of this approach encourage researchers to be rigorous and combine it with other qualitative research approaches and theoretical perspectives. They also expect researchers to disclose the theoretical

motivations that have brought them to this interpretive and reflexive method of analysis. Researchers utilizing RTA, thus, need to justify their choices of data generation and analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021a, 2021b, 2022).

As suggested, RTA is not wedded to CDS or any other established paradigm of research (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021a, 2021b, 2022). Thanks to its theoretical flexibility and close alignment with critical approaches to *Qualitative Inquiry*, it can, nevertheless, enable researchers to construct meaning-based patterns and connect these patterns to larger or macro discourses through creative and theoretically informed interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, 2022). RTA, in fact, has an ongoing interest in “wider socio-cultural contexts” (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, p. 42) or in “the effects of a range of discourses operating within society” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). In other words, the originators suggest that RTA can offer a pattern-based critical discursive analysis if implemented within a critical paradigm of (qualitative) research such as CDS (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). RTA, therefore, is convenient for this exploratory critical qualitative inquiry in which I aim to document the recurrent meaning-based patterns of how the neoliberal common sense is evoked or resisted/contested in individual meaning-making (discourses) and experiences.

As regards data analysis (discussed in detail later in this chapter), RTA follows six major recursive phases:

- 1) data familiarisation and writing familiarisation notes; 2) systematic data coding; 3) generating initial themes from coded and collated data; 4) developing and reviewing themes; 5) refining, defining and naming themes; and 6) writing the report. (Braun & Clarke, 2021b, p. 331)

Through this recursive process of analysis and constant researcher reflexivity, researchers can construct a set of themes that address particular research aims. In RTA, a *theme* has been defined as “something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Since themes unite certain fragments of the whole data set around a central concept, they are inevitably multifaceted (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, 2021b, 2022). A theme, therefore, cannot simply be viewed as “a data topic” or “a summary of topics.” In other words, RTA effectuates a rigorous analytical



process involving creativity, reflexivity, and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, 2021b, 2022).

While undertaking a complex RTA journey to construct themes, researchers can choose between *deductive* or *inductive* analysis, depending on what their theoretical underpinnings allow (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021a, 2021b). In *inductive* analysis, the themes, for example, are not primarily grounded in the theoretical interests of researchers but premised on the data, although researchers can still be informed by their “theoretical and epistemological commitments” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). On the other hand, *deductive* analysis is given as “theoretical thematic analysis” due to its explicit and dominant orientation to the theoretical understandings of researchers.

In this study, I privilege the deductive analysis because of my predominant reliance on the extant literature and the theorizations of the neoliberal common sense and *counter-hegemony*. This priority, however, does not entail the codes to be constructed prior to the analysis or “tested” along the way (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Rather, RTA permits an *abductive* construction of a list of codes through both theoretical framework and data, thereby allowing an exploratory critical analysis informed by theoretical perspectives. The themes that I discuss in the next chapter, therefore, are an outcome of an abductive coding process (see *Data Analysis* for further details) that enabled me to generate plausible explanations based on data, literature, and theory (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, 2021b; Thompson, 2022). In fact, researchers are the heart of the RTA process because, as Braun and Clarke (2021b) suggest, “[i]nterpretative depth lies in the skill of the analyst, not the method” (p. 340). Considering how vital this point is, I actually allocate a section at the end of this chapter to discuss, in detail, my role(s) and perspective(s) in this study (see *The Role(s) and Perspective(s) of the Researcher*).

Prior to the construction of themes through RTA, researchers need to consider another decision: whether to choose *semantic* or *latent* analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the former kind of analysis, researchers focus on the “surface meanings of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). Therefore, they do not seek connections with larger issues but attempt to construct some themes that would describe and discuss the content of the data. The *latent* analysis, however, “goes beyond the semantic content

of the data, and starts to identify or examine the *underlying* ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations -and ideologies- that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84, emphasis in original). This type of analysis, then, appears to be compatible with the principles of CDS and my study aims. Therefore, in addition to adopting a theory-oriented abductive analysis, I conduct a latent analysis in this study (see *Data Analysis* for further details).

Overall, informed by the tenets of *Qualitative Inquiry* and CDS (particularly the Gramscian concepts), I employ RTA (abductive and latent) to construct meaning-oriented themes in this study. That is, I aim to offer several themes that show how the study participants sustain and/or challenge certain elements of the neoliberal common sense (e.g., competition, consumerism, economic rationality, entrepreneurship, flexibility, self-interest, self-management, personal responsibility, and precarity) in their STSA constructions, imagined futures, and worldviews. In the upcoming sections, I offer, respectively, (1) a detailed description of the research setting and participants, (2) generation tools and procedures, (3) data analysis, and (4) my role(s) and perspective(s) as a researcher.

#### **2.4. Research Setting and Participants**

The target research setting, an English language teacher education (ELTE) program, is located at one of the state universities in central Turkey. The university is one of the leading higher education institutions in Turkey in terms of research projects, international partnerships, and graduate employability. The ELTE program claims, on its official website, that it provides PELTs with a foundation in the English language, English literature, language teaching methodologies, educational sciences, and linguistics through a 4-year long undergraduate program. Further, it explains that the alumni can teach English at different levels, from primary to higher education. A considerable number of the alumni, in fact, teach at various higher education institutions and prestigious schools in Turkey. A notable number of the program alumni also pursue graduate studies. While studying in the program, PELTs also have a chance to study abroad for a temporary period, especially through the Erasmus program.

To apply for the Erasmus program, PELTs must complete at least one semester in the undergraduate program. Once eligible to apply, they can submit their application for the next academic year. During the application, applicants use a digital online system to list their university preferences for the Erasmus period. At the time of data generation for this study, the available country contexts were Croatia (one university), Germany (three universities), Italy (three universities), Netherlands (one university), Spain (two universities), and Sweden (one university). Following their preferences, the applicants are required to take a language proficiency test, or *The English Proficiency Exam for Exchange Programs* (EPEEP), offered by the university. They, then, are ranked according to 50% of their CGPA and 50% of their EPEEP score. Depending on the available number of grants, a certain number of the applicants with the highest scores are eventually nominated for one of their university preferences.

The entire application period takes place in February each year, and final placements are announced toward the end of March. In April, the candidates decide on the duration of their Erasmus period. They have two options in this regard: either one semester or two semesters. If they decide to spend only one semester, they need to specify their semester choice as either the Fall or the Spring semester. At the end of mid-April, the candidates have the exact information regarding where, when, and how long they will study. Except for Croatia, successful applicants are promised 500€ (300€ for Croatia) per month during their stay abroad. In addition, they are not required to pay any tuition fees to receiving institutions. When they finalize their decision, they start to fill out a learning agreement form in which they list the courses they plan to take in the receiving context along with the equivalent courses in the original program. They also start to consider other necessities such as accommodation, air tickets, health insurance, leave of absence, passport, and visa (e.g., Çiftçi & Karaman, 2018).

Each year, from the research context, a considerable number of prospective language teachers are selected to study at another university within the Erasmus program. According to the information provided by the university's International Cooperations Office (ICO), 35 PELTs benefited from the Erasmus program for the 2015-16 academic year, 26 for 2016-17, 20 for 2017-18, and 23 for 2018-19. In this study, I focused on the last cohort. After these 23 students returned from their period abroad,

15 were third-year students, while eight were fourth-year or final-year students. When I was granted the ethical approval for data generation (see *Ethical Issues* and Appendix C), six of these final-year students were about to undertake their last semester before graduation, and they had already spent one semester in the teacher education program after their Erasmus period, which was an important sampling criterion in this study.

I focused on this group of six students for three reasons or assumptions. First, the fact that they had already spent one semester after the Erasmus period may have allowed them to reflect more on their Erasmus period or “[make] sense of it in order to learn and grow, and [imagine] its relevance for their future lives” (Barkhuizen, 2017, p. 105). In other words, thanks to the reflective possibilities afforded by such a reasonable time span, they could provide rich accounts of STSA experiences and imagined futures (e.g., Arthur et al., 2020; Clarke et al., 2020; Dockrill et al., 2016; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Larsen & Searle, 2017; Nada & Legutko, 2022). Second, as they were just one semester away from graduation, they could think or imagine more seriously about their future trajectories. They, therefore, also appeared to be a cohort that could provide substantial data related to, for example, job market, competition, and employment. Third, this cohort had to extend the duration of their teacher education experience, as they were unable to take certain compulsory courses during their Erasmus period (the fall semester 2018-19). They, therefore, had to take one additional semester (the fall semester 2019-20) to complete these courses in their original program. As they were experiencing an “unusual” semester, they seemed a relevant cohort for eliciting rich data with regard to the links among their STSA experiences, teacher education processes, imagined futures, and worldviews. They also stood out for the possibility of providing rich data on motivations for participating in the Erasmus program because they knew at the time of their application that STSA would result in late graduation from the undergraduate program. Further, their coursework in this last semester was lighter than their regular load, as they had to take only two or three courses. They, therefore, seemed to have sufficient time to attend multiple interviews throughout the semester without feeling a disturbing level of stress. To fulfill the study aims, I, therefore, used a criterion-based sampling strategy (Creswell, 2012), employing the following criteria:

- having returned from the Erasmus program and spent considerable time (i.e., one semester) during the re-entry period,
- being a fourth-year student and undertaking the last semester before graduation.

Premised on these assumptions and criteria, I contacted each student from this cohort at the beginning of their last, additional semester. I invited them to participate in this study through a detailed e-mail. All of them, namely Ayşe, Dilara, Gözde, Marco, Melis, and Zeynep (all individual and institutional names in this study are pseudonyms), accepted my invitation, and we arranged our first meeting based on their preferences (day, time, and place). I turn next to a detailed description and discussion of the data generation tools and procedures (I offer a detailed account of each participant's background in the next chapter before discussing the analysis outcomes).

## **2.5. Data Generation Tools and Procedures**

In this critical qualitative inquiry, I embrace a *critical reflexive* approach to the generation and thematic analysis of data. Consistent with the theoretical framework, research focus, and data topics in this study, the *critical reflexive* approach helps remain open, flexible, and reflexive while gathering and analyzing data (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2022; Holliday & MacDonald, 2020). In addition, it does not marginalize the existence of the researcher. On the contrary, it acknowledges and values the subjective resources and skills brought by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2022; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Edwards & Holland, 2020; Holliday & MacDonald, 2020; Mirhosseini, 2020). Similar to RTA, this data generation approach also holds researchers accountable for their possible influences on knowledge construction in a study (see also *The Issues of Quality* and *The Role(s) and Perspective(s) of the Researcher*). Developing researcher reflexivity and acute awareness of contextual conditions, therefore, is vital for researchers orienting themselves to the *critical reflexive* approach.

Although CDS or RTA expresses no particular preference for data generation, I employ *reflexive interviewing* in this study as the main data generation tool, which is informed by the *critical reflexive* approach to data generation. *Reflexive interviewing*,

in fact, appears as one of the major forms of data generation for identifying recurrent patterns of discourses in people's lifeworlds and language (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2022; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). In fact, qualitative researchers usually prefer such open-ended interactive means that are believed to allow research informants to "discuss matters and concepts important to them, rather than to the researcher" (Oberhuber & Krzyżanowski, 2008, p. 188). Interviews are also known as one of the most appropriate mediums that can help researchers establish rapport with informants (Creswell, 2012). Thanks to the rapport established, researchers, in return, can construct complex knowledge of informants, address data topics in relevant ways, and construct sophisticated and encapsulating themes (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Edwards & Holland, 2020; Hong & Cross Francis, 2020; Mirhosseini, 2020; Roulston & Choi, 2018). The openness of *reflexive interviewing*, however, does not mandate unstructured ways of data generation and analysis.

In theoretically informed inquiries, including this study, certain pre-determined interview topics, in fact, can help direct an informant's attention to the issues relevant to research aims (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2022). To have "privileged access to people's basic experience of the lived world" (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 32), researchers, therefore, can construct fluid interview structures with several pre-determined topics for discussion. However, as I discussed earlier, researchers also need to remember to monitor their possible direct influences on knowledge construction during an interview. This type of reflection can help interviewers diminish their influence on the generation of data. It may also prevent interviewers from being authority and judgmental during an interview. It can, thus, create a safe communication environment that can allow informants to provide relevant data and even to offer unexpected issues or unplanned avenues (Braun & Clarke, 2021a; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Hong & Cross Francis, 2020; Mirhosseini, 2020; Roulston & Choi, 2018). Apparently, conducting reflexive interviews can be challenging for researchers. In fact, several practical strategies have been offered to help researchers in that regard. Informed by several influential scholars in the field of *Qualitative Interviewing*, in this study, I synthesize and employ four important strategies for reflexive interviews.

First, researchers are recommended to follow their interview structures or guides flexibly and ask well-planned probing and prompting questions based on what the informant has communicated (Braun & Clarke, 2021a; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Rädiker & Kuckartz, 2021; Roulston & Choi, 2018). However, they are also cautioned to deploy prompts and probes carefully and moderately because, otherwise, informants may have the impression that they are overtly controlled and restricted to certain issues. Researchers, thus, should not give the impression that they have prepared a rigid set of interview questions to be asked in a strict order. In other words, they should not sound “like an inspector” (Mirhosseini, 2020, p. 97) and avoid viewing informants as “data producing machines” (Mirhosseini, 2020, p. 103). Focusing on data topics flexibly and strategically, researchers should also demonstrate a genuine interest in what informants say, thereby “[promoting] opportunities where participants’ voices are heard and communicated” (Hong & Cross Francis, 2020, p. 210). To prevent an overly mechanical and one-sided conversation, researchers themselves may occasionally and carefully share their own experiences or thoughts that can contribute to the rapport-building and discussion of data topics. Consequently, researchers can elicit detailed responses for their interview topic(s) while enabling informants to experience a genuine form of communication “[resembling] the ‘messier’ flow of real-world conversation” (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 13).

Second, one interview may not be sufficient to establish rapport with informants and elicit informed responses. Therefore, it is highly recommended for researchers to conduct multiple interviews with each informant (Seidman, 2006). Having a chance to interview informants on multiple occasions, researchers, in fact, can clarify the issues emerging over time, or they may identify some contradictions within data and request informants to clarify them. Thanks to multiple interviews, researchers can, thus, increase the possibility of garnering in-depth data that can adequately address research questions.

Third, researchers’ identities or status may bring an unequal power dimension to an interview. In fact, even the concept of research can be threatening for some participants. To prevent such possible stress, researchers, therefore, can resort to several “relieving” strategies. For example, they may pay extra attention to the way

they dress and introduce themselves. They may also use non-intimidating gestures and language in addition to assuring privacy (King & Horrocks, 2010). That is, they can use simple language and provide a relaxing environment during an interview. Otherwise, informants may feel threatened or under stress, which can truly be one of the worst scenarios for researchers, as stress can negatively influence the opinions and feelings of an informant.

Fourth, the setting of an interview can play a significant role in the interview process. Interviews, thus, should take place in a setting familiar to informants, or in other words, should conform to these three criteria: *comfort*, *privacy*, and *quietness* (King & Horrocks, 2010). Otherwise, if not consulted regarding these criteria, informants may feel, again, under stress and, therefore, may not respond well to the efforts for rapport building and data generation. As a result, researchers would make compromises regarding the *quality* of their studies.

The key for researchers is, then, to remain critical and reflexive to the issues of co-construction and power before, during, and after an interview. Loyalty to such issues can enable researchers to set up a relaxing environment, build rapport with informants, and help them talk openly and in detail about data topics. Assisted by these recommendations/strategies, I conducted seven reflexive interviews with each participant in this study.

Using the reflexive interviews as the primary means of data generation, I identified several data topics and main questions (including potential probes and prompts) prior to each interview and helped the participants share their experiences and views with regard to these topics and questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Mirhosseini, 2020; Roulston & Choi, 2018). Except for the last interview, we conducted all the interviews face-to-face. The last interview, however, took place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions. I audio-recorded all the interviews with the permission granted by the participants (see also *Ethical Issues* and *The Role(s) and Perspective(s) of the Researcher*). The participants preferred the interviews to be conducted in Turkish, which was their mother tongue. Therefore, I translated the quoted statements into English and asked two colleagues to verify their accuracy. In Table 1, I summarize



the focus areas and purpose(s) of the interviews (see Appendix A for the interview guides).

Table 1. Focus areas and purpose(s) of the reflexive interviews

<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Focus areas</b>	<b>Main Purpose(s)</b>
<b>Interview 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal background (socioeconomic, educational, and language)</li> <li>• Identity dimensions</li> </ul>	To establish rapport with the participants and learn about their personal history and identity dimensions
<b>Interview 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision-making process and motivations for the Erasmus program</li> <li>• Preparation experiences for the Erasmus period</li> </ul>	To gain a detailed account of the participants' motivations and readiness for the Erasmus program
<b>Interview 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed opinions on the Erasmus program</li> <li>• Self-perceived outcomes of the participation in the Erasmus program</li> <li>• Notable Erasmus experiences</li> </ul>	To inquire into how participants frame and construct the Erasmus program and how they evaluate the outcomes of their participation
<b>Interview 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-entry experiences</li> <li>• Possible contributions of the Erasmus experiences to language teacher education processes</li> </ul>	To develop a detailed understanding of what they experienced after their mobility period
<b>Interview 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life and career plans</li> <li>• Imagined futures</li> <li>• Possible influences of the Erasmus experiences on plans and imagined futures</li> </ul>	To understand how the participants envision and construct their future and evaluate the role of Erasmus experiences in their imagined futures
<b>Interview 6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Views on the current state of the world and the associated problems or challenges (climatic, cultural, economic, educational, environmental, political, and societal)</li> </ul>	To explore the participants' salient discourses or worldviews regarding major global challenges

Table 1 (continued)

<p><b>Interview 7</b> (remote online; a different interview guide for each participant with common points)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-graduation experiences</li> <li>• Clarification of the points that emerged from the previous interviews</li> </ul>	<p>To learn about the participants' significant experiences in the immediate post-graduation period and to clarify the issues that emerged from the previous interviews</p>
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While, in the first interview, I focused on establishing rapport with the participants and learning about their background, I addressed different phases of STSA (i.e., preparation, sojourn, and re-entry) in the rest of the interviews (except the last two). In addition, through these interviews, I scrutinized possible connections among STSA experiences, teacher education processes, imagined futures, and worldviews. In the sixth interview, I explored, in particular, the participants' views on major global challenges. In the last interview, which I conducted five months after the participants' graduation from the teacher education program, I clarified issues that emerged from our previous interviews, and I inquired into their immediate post-graduation experiences. Thanks to these seven reflexive interviews, I could, overall, explore the participants' discourses and experiences with regard to the research aims. In Table 2, I compile the duration and word count of the whole interview data, while I provide the dates for each interview in Table 3.

Table 2. Duration and word count of the interview data

Participants	Interview 1		Interview 2		Interview 3		Interview 4		Interview 5		Interview 6		Interview 7 (remote online)		Total	
	Length of time count (min)	Word count	Length of time count (min)	Word count	Length of time count (min)	Word count	Length of time count (min)	Word count	Length of time count (min)	Word count	Length of time count (min)	Word count	Length of time count (min)	Word count	Length of time count (min)	Word count
<b>Ayşe</b>	44 min	6280	59 min	8737	93 min	14632	53 min	7718	80 min	10220	93 min	7523	86 min	9595	508 min	64705
<b>Dilara</b>	72 min	8816	72 min	8475	63 min	7852	44 min	5254	66 min	6910	131 min	12300	98 min	9394	546 min	59001
<b>Gözde</b>	54 min	6307	55 min	7781	71 min	9116	74 min	8803	72 min	8065	110 min	10737	115 min	12516	551 min	63325
<b>Marco</b>	79 min	10101	115 min	13958	61 min	8728	58 min	7511	78 min	7904	119 min	13125	109 min	11144	619 min	72471
<b>Melis</b>	61 min	8118	65 min	8069	80 min	10834	78 min	9036	69 min	6032	115 min	8299	119 min	10687	587 min	61102
<b>Zeynep</b>	66 min	7757	71 min	8171	72 min	8737	62 min	7781	74 min	8259	104 min	8797	75 min	6122	524 min	55624

Table 3. Dates of the interviews

<b>Participants</b>	<b>I-1</b>	<b>I-2</b>	<b>I-3</b>	<b>I-4</b>	<b>I-5</b>	<b>I-6</b>	<b>I-7 (remote online)</b>
<b>Ayşe</b>	17 Oct. 2019	24 Oct. 2019	12 Nov. 2019	29 Nov. 2019	12 Dec. 2019	2 Jan. 2020	17 June 2020
<b>Dilara</b>	22 Oct. 2019	1 Nov. 2019	12 Nov. 2019	28 Nov. 2019	9 Dec. 2019	9 Jan. 2020	16 June 2020
<b>Gözde</b>	25 Oct. 2019	12 Nov. 2019	15 Nov. 2019	6 Dec. 2019	13 Dec. 2019	6 Jan. 2020	18 June 2020
<b>Marco</b>	17 Oct. 2019	24 Oct. 2019	14 Nov. 2019	28 Nov. 2019	12 Dec. 2019	2 Jan. 2020	19 June 2020
<b>Melis</b>	18 Oct. 2019	1 Nov. 2019	8 Nov. 2019	29 Nov. 2019	13 Dec. 2019	3 Jan. 2020	17 June 2020
<b>Zeynep</b>	22 Oct. 2019	25 Oct. 2019	8 Nov. 2019	27 Nov. 2019	10 Dec. 2019	9 Jan. 2020	18 June 2020

In addition to the interview data, all six participants also provided a sample of their curriculum vitae (CV). Additionally, they shared the portfolios that they created for their two practicum courses which required them to experience a school environment and practice their teaching skills for two consecutive semesters. In these courses, they completed a variety of observation and reflection tasks, wrote and executed lesson plans, and read several texts dealing with various theoretical and practical aspects of language teaching. Alongside these written forms of secondary data, the participants also submitted many social media posts that they believed characterized their STSA experiences.

Finally, I requested their job/graduate program application forms, if they had any. Only half of the participants were able to provide an intention letter that they submitted to a graduate program, while the other half did not create such a form or letter throughout the data generation period. As none of them had to submit a job application form or letter, I could not obtain any data on that front. Nevertheless, the interview data, which was the primary source of data, were eventually accompanied and enriched by several secondary forms of qualitative data such as social media posts, practicum portfolios, CVs, and graduate program application forms and/or intention letters. In Table 4, I

provide an overview of these secondary forms of qualitative data. In what follows, I discuss the data analysis process.

Table 4. Secondary forms of the qualitative data

<b>Participants</b>	<b>CVs</b>	<b>Social Media Posts</b>	<b>Practicum Portfolio</b>	<b>Graduate Program Application Forms</b>
<b>Ayşe</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Dilara</b>	✓	✓	✓	X
<b>Gözde</b>	✓	✓	✓	X
<b>Marco</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Melis</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Zeynep</b>	✓	✓	✓	X

## 2.6. Data Analysis

In this critical qualitative inquiry, I am primarily interested in constructing patterns that explicate how the neoliberal common sense is evoked and/or challenged in the participants' discourses and experiences with regard to STSA, imagined futures, and worldviews. As I discussed before, theme-based discursive analyses, such as RTA, allow for such critical interpretive analyses to be performed (e.g., Block, 2019; Chun, 2017; Menard-Warwick & Palmer, 2012). However, I caution that the thematic analysis of discourses and experiences is not a simple commentary (O'Regan & Betzel, 2016; Willig, 2014). Rather, in this study, I carefully sorted out the discursively insignificant features and centered my attention on the semantic meaning of the statements that "require[d] careful judgment and argument as well as reference to wider theoretical and empirical frames" (O'Regan & Betzel, 2016, p. 292).

In more specific terms, I conducted the rigorous process of RTA (i.e., an abductive and latent thematic analysis) to explore how particular neoliberal discourses, such as competition, consumerism, economic rationality, entrepreneurship, flexibility, personal responsibility, precarity, self-interest, and self-management, aligned with the participants' language, lived experiences, imaginings, and worldviews. Since *common sense* can manifest in various forms in different individuals' languages and lifeworlds (Sum, 2015), individual differences were also important for the analysis. Therefore, I initiated the theme construction process with the analysis of individual accounts and,

then, worked on the construction of several final themes (the word “final” here refers to the outcomes of the analytical journey, not to the finality or fixation of meanings). By means of this theoretically informed and methodologically viable effort, I was eventually able to construct three final themes, each of which corresponded to a research question and shed light on “the reaches and limits of neoliberalism” within the scope of this study (Allan, 2018, p. 464). I offer and discuss these final themes in the next chapter. But before that, I clarify more details about the data analysis process.

As I discussed earlier (see *The Method of Analysis: Reflexive Thematic Analysis*), I employed RTA in this study to analyze the whole data set and construct several final themes. In particular, I followed Braun and Clarke’s (2021b) six-phase recursive process (illustrated in Figure 3):

*Phase 1: Data familiarization and writing familiarization notes:*

In this phase, researchers transcribe the data and immerse themselves in the data by reading and re-reading the data. They also take notes of initial ideas about the data.

*Phase 2: Systematic data coding:*

Based on their theoretical framework and analytical decisions, researchers code the entire data set and collate the data under each code.

*Phase 3: Generating initial themes from the coded and collated data:*

Researchers attempt to turn the collated codes into potential themes.

*Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes:*

Researchers control if the potential themes work with the coded segments and the whole data set. They can also resort to visual maps and inspect the suitability of the themes in light of the connections among various codes that come from different parts of the data set. During this particular phase, researchers can also revise the set(s) of codes that do not correspond to the themes and decide whether to integrate/discard them.

*Phase 5: Refining, defining, and naming themes:*

Researchers hone the themes and generate encapsulating names and thoughtful discussions for each theme.

*Phase 6: Writing the report*

Researchers disclose the final forms of the themes with clear extracts from the data. They discuss the themes with references to research aims, theoretical framework, and literature. This phase, in fact, is interwoven into the whole process of data analysis, reflecting the recursive characteristics of RTA.



Figure 3. Braun and Clarke's (2021b) six-phase recursive data analysis process (p. 331)

In RTA, researchers, therefore, start with a neat organization of the data and proceed gradually from *description* to *interpretation*. Eventually, they construct several final themes and discuss them in relation to the literature and, if possible, practical matters

(Braun & Clarke, 2006). As I discussed before, these phases are not meant to be followed linearly and rigidly. Rather, they are recursive and should be perceived as guidelines, not as rules (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2022).

To implement and facilitate the recursive phases of RTA in this qualitative inquiry, I used a qualitative data analysis software, MAXQDA. Especially after generating a large amount of interview data (see Table 2 in *Data Generation Tools and Procedures*), as well as several secondary forms of qualitative data, I decided to use a software program for data analysis. MAXQDA, in fact, proved useful in coding the data, collating code lists, retrieving the coded segments, recording memos, searching among the files, creating visual maps, and generating themes (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019; Rädiker & Kuckartz, 2021). That is, I did not use it for its “charm” but rather because of its usefulness for an interpretive thematic analysis of a large data set (Gibbs, 2014; Nowell et al., 2020). Apart from being a valuable aid in organizing and analyzing the data, the software also allowed me to increase the transparency of the analysis process by providing an overview of the codes, coded segments, code lists, memos, and initial and final themes (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019; Rädiker & Kuckartz, 2021).

Employing Braun and Clarke’s (2021b) RTA process, I started the analysis in this study with the transcription of the interview data, which is, in fact, seen as a valuable strategy to develop familiarity with data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Within the intensive period of data generation (the participants’ last semester in the teacher education program), I conducted and transcribed 36 interviews (six interviews with each participant). Thus, before we held our seventh interview in June 2020 (six months after their graduation), I had already transcribed all the previous interviews and compiled substantial memos. Shortly after the last interview, I completed the transcription and organization of the entire data set. Since data transcription was one of the foundational phases of data analysis in this study, I offer further details in that regard.

While it may seem like every researcher uses a simple universal method of data transcription, the reality is much more complex than that (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gee, 2018). Similar to the planning phase of a qualitative inquiry, several practical and



theoretical concerns come to the fore before and while transcribing the interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gee, 2018). This kind of data, in fact, can be transcribed in varying levels of detail depending on what researchers intend to do with it (Roulston, 2014). The main concern, however, is to keep the transcribed format as close as possible to its original context so that researchers can retain the details of the original utterances and contextual background when analyzing and reporting the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Since I conducted a semantic thematic analysis in this study, I did not give priority to the transcription of minute linguistic details. Therefore, in addition to transcribing the verbal elements, I noted or marked only the significant prosodic and paralinguistic features such as hesitations, laughter, pauses, repetitions, re-starts, silences, stress, tone, and overlapping talk.

While transcribing the data verbatim for each individual, I also made numerous notes for later phases of coding and theme construction. As I immersed myself in the transcription phase for a long period, I was able to weave in and out of various ideas that allowed me to generate several initial themes at this earliest phase of data analysis. During those epiphany-like moments, I recorded my thoughts, or in other words, created analytic memos. Saldana (2011) defines an *analytic memo* as “a ‘think piece’ of reflexive freewriting, a narrative that sets in words [the] interpretations of the data” (p. 98). The analytical memos that I created during the transcription phase, in fact, proved helpful in later phases of data analysis, particularly while generating initial themes. After all, if the transcription phase had been fulfilled by someone else, it might not have been possible for me to achieve such a productive level of immersion. Therefore, as both the interviewer and the transcriber, I was able to dive into several facets of the data and generate a substantial number of analytical memos.

After the transcription phase, I started to immerse myself in coding the data. In RTA, “a code is conceptualized as an analytic unit or tool, used by researcher to develop (initial) themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2021b, p. 340). Themes, then, are constructed through a systematic process of coding that can be guided by certain theoretical notions. In RTA, the coding process, however, does not have to follow pre-defined codes or themes because of its predominant emphasis on *construction* and *reflexivity* (see also *The Method of Analysis: Reflexive Thematic Analysis*). In light of the research

aims and questions, I, therefore, strived to undertake an open, interpretive, and theory-informed coding process that involved labeling the data at the sentence or paragraph level and “immersion in the data, reading, reflecting, questioning, imagining, wondering, writing, retreating, returning” (Braun & Clarke, 2021b, p. 332).

To be more specific, I immersed myself in the data and labeled the participants’ statements (either in the form of a sentence or paragraph) through an abductive coding process (both deductive and inductive). Throughout this complex interpretive coding process, which also involved numerous analytical memos, I kept reminding myself of the research questions and generated many codes based on multiple resources. For instance, while I derived some codes from the theoretical framework (the neoliberal common sense), such as “entrepreneurial visions and flexibility” and “self-interest and self-management,” I constructed some others based on the data itself, such as “missing the Erasmus period” and “shaking the comfort zone.” I also developed several codes from the extant literature, such as “re-entry process,” “teacher wellbeing,” and “language teacher identity and professional development.”

As I went through this complex coding process to construct a number of initial and final themes, I also mapped the connections among the codes with the help of the analytical memos (both free and attached to particular codes). While working on turning the codes into larger themes, I actually deployed several questions such as:

- What is said about certain topics or probes/prompts?
- What attitudes are taken toward certain topics?
- What type of topics/experiences are highlighted?
- Which topics/experiences are absent or avoided/downplayed?
- Which topics/experiences are mentioned together?
- Which words and metaphors stand out?
- How diverse are the opinions on particular topics/experiences?
- What is relevant to the research questions, and what is not?
- What initial patterns can be constructed?
- What are the possible connections among the codes, memos, and initial patterns?

- What connections can be made between the initial patterns and the neoliberal common sense and *counter-hegemony*?
- Do the initial patterns provide a meaningful explanation for the research questions and make compelling arguments?
- How can the initial patterns be synthesized into larger or final themes?
- Do the final themes sufficiently address the research questions?

As a result of this inquisitive, interpretive, and recursive analytical journey that occupied a significant part of my life for almost one year, I was able to construct a several initial themes and eventually transform them into three final themes (see Appendix B for an overview of the codes and initial themes underlying each final theme). I discuss the final themes in the next chapter with certain data extracts.

A final theme in RTA is “like the sun in our solar system – everything is related to that central point” (Braun et al., 2022, p. 428). That is, a final theme brings together several key points scattered across different parts of the data set and organizes them around a “central point” that addresses research question(s). Themes, thus, “are creative and interpretive stories about the data, produced at the intersection of the researcher’s theoretical assumptions, their analytic resources and skill, and the data themselves” (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 594), thereby differing from “a topic summary” (Braun et al., 2022, p. 428). In other words, themes “do not passively emerge from data” (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 591), but come to exist as a result of a reflexive and interpretive analytic process.

Likewise, since this study is predicated on certain theoretical discussions such as the *common sense* status of neoliberalism, I needed to go beyond the surface meanings and construct the patterns of discourses and experiences with links to hegemonic neoliberal discourses. Throughout this creative, interpretive, and reflexive process of data analysis, I, therefore, relied on my previous knowledge, theoretical positions, life experiences, and accumulated skills (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2022; Willig, 2014). However, I also constantly revised my assumptions, codes, memos, and initial themes in order to address the issues of *interpretation*, *knowledge construction*, and *researcher subjectivity*. In other words, I always reminded myself of the issues of

*quality*. In fact, acknowledging the theoretical merits of RTA that highlight *construction, interpretation, reflexivity, and analytical engagement* over post-positivist discourses of qualitative research such as *discovery* and *finality* (Braun & Clarke, 2022), I preferred to use “Analysis” (rather than “Findings” or “Results”) for the title of the next chapter, where I discuss the research questions through the analysis outcomes. In the next section, I elaborate on the issues of *quality*.

## **2.7. The Issues of Quality**

As I often underscore in this chapter, RTA is not a simple commentary on qualitative data. Nor is it about following rigid methodological stages in a (post-)positivist sense. Rather, it requires thoughtful and reflexive engagement on the part of researchers, especially during sampling, data generation, and data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021a). That is, RTA, with a constructivist orientation to *Qualitative Inquiry*, acknowledges and values the subjective resources of researchers in terms of theme construction (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 591). However, the acknowledgment of subjective resources in RTA should not be interpreted as complete freedom in analyzing data and reporting the resulting themes. As one of the widely used methods in qualitative research, RTA, therefore, is also subject to the issues of *quality* (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021b; Creswell, 2012; Nowell et al., 2017).

*Quality* considerations for a qualitative inquiry, in fact, can help researchers ensure that their analyses or themes are persuasive and noteworthy for themselves, their readers, and the wider literature (Creswell, 2012; Mirhosseini, 2020; Nowell et al., 2017; Saldana, 2011). One typical caveat in that regard is that the outcomes of a qualitative analysis may not be generalizable to larger populations because of its predominant concern with *complexity, context, interpretation, and depth*. Rather, a qualitative inquiry is suggested to be evaluated based on its *theoretical transferability*. That is, despite their contextual boundedness, the outcomes of the analysis can still be meaningful or helpful for different contexts with characteristics comparable to the original research context (Creswell, 2012; Mirhosseini, 2020; Saldana, 2011). In fact, through the accumulated qualitative analyses that focus on similar issues, researchers can identify meta-patterns that can be used for theory building and practical

applications in different contexts (Walsh & Downe, 2005). Since a single qualitative inquiry can have such far-reaching consequences or implications, researchers should offer convincing arguments and thick descriptions. They, therefore, should demonstrate that their implications and conclusions are verifiable and trustworthy. Several well-known techniques, in fact, already exist for researchers to ensure the *quality* of their analyses or themes. Creswell and Miller (2000), for instance, offer certain techniques through the lenses of different people (researchers, participants, and people external to the study). I discuss, next, some of these techniques and lenses with examples from this study.

Regarding the lens of *the researcher*, I, first of all, adopted a *reflexive* approach in this study to sampling, data generation, and data analysis. In other words, throughout the whole study period, I constantly questioned my assumptions, interests, and beliefs through a complex self-conversation. For this purpose and to ensure *traceability*, I kept a reflexive journal during the entire research process, through which I was able to assess and tackle my potential biases (see also *The Role(s) and Perspective(s) of the Researcher*). Second, I strived to *triangulate* the analysis of the interview data with other secondary forms of qualitative data (see Table 4 in *Data Generation Tools and Procedures*). Thanks to these multiple data sources, I could enrich the analysis of the interview data. Third, during the analysis, I searched the whole data set several times for *disconfirming evidence* that would contradict the conclusions under each final theme.

With regard to the lens of *the participants*, I found *member checking* to be the most useful technique, as it allowed me to discuss the interpretations of the data and construction of the final themes with the participants themselves. As part of this communication, I shared the analysis outcomes with the participants and asked for their opinions. That is, I invited them to become collaborators or partners in the research process rather than marginalizing them as “neutral others” who provided the data and vanished (Hong & Cross Francis, 2020, p. 216).

As regards the lens of the people external to the study or *the external audit*, I primarily benefited from the *audit trail* technique, through which I had a chance to discuss the

interview guides and final themes with my thesis supervisor. After each regular meeting with him, I always uncovered important points that I would otherwise have missed. The dialogue between us (as well as with other committee members), thus, allowed me to construct grounded and relevant arguments when discussing the final themes. By involving a variety of people, I actually framed the study broadly as a collective and democratic effort representing multiple voices and perspectives. Therefore, my engagements with the ideas from other people throughout the research process should not be regarded simply as a *quality* criterion or a positivist effort to improve “the validity” of the themes. Rather, they should be understood as an ethical responsibility that emphasizes the collective or democratic accountability of the researcher to the people who found a place in the study. Even if the final themes largely reflect my complex world of experiences and thoughts (e.g., aspirations, assumptions, attitudes, commitments, knowledge, and values), they cannot be viewed as the product of a single individual who is detached from the overwhelming realm of social relations (see also *The Role(s) and Perspective(s) of the Researcher*).

In addition to employing these *quality* strategies that involved the *lens* of different people, I also used several other common strategies to enhance the *quality* of this study. For example, I strived to generate a substantial amount of interview data over a long period (almost nine months) and transcribed all of them myself (in almost six months) (see *Data Generation Tools and Procedures* and *Data Analysis*). In addition, I immersed myself in the entire data set for almost a year to construct the final themes. Furthermore, throughout the research process, I spent a considerable amount of time maintaining a close and prolonged engagement with the extant literature. In this way, I was well-equipped to check the main arguments against the existing as well as evolving literature.

Since the reflexive interviews were the main data generation tool in this study, I disclose further issues regarding the *quality* of these interviews before concluding this section (see also *Data Generation Tools and Procedures*). As I discussed before in detail, researchers can contribute to the co-construction of knowledge by, for example, assisting the interviewees in sharing their opinions on certain data topics. Because of this potential mutuality in knowledge construction, I paid close attention to my role(s)

in the interviews, especially when analyzing the data and constructing the themes (see also *The Role(s) and Perspective(s) of the Researcher*). Therefore, for the statements or quotes from the participants, I tried to explain the contextual background, as well as my role(s), whenever possible in this study. That is, I was particularly attentive to how I influenced the conversations and what preceded the particular quotes. As I mentioned before in this section, I submitted these interpretations to the participants for approval through the process known as *member checking*.

After all, guided by the theoretical framework, methodological considerations, and constant reflexivity, I remained committed to the issues of *quality* and aimed to explicate how the participants interacted with the neoliberal common sense regarding the research topics. Thanks to this sensitivity to major *quality* concerns, similar contexts may consider benefiting from the insights provided here in the future (see also Chapter 4 for further discussions regarding the *transferability* of the analysis outcomes). In what follows, I briefly discuss several ethical issues that can also be important when evaluating the outcomes and *quality* of this qualitative inquiry. Thereafter, I conclude the chapter by discussing my role(s) and perspective(s) as the researcher.

## **2.8. Ethical Issues**

I commenced the data generation process for this study after receiving the approval of the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects (Appendix C). Before engaging in any form of data generation, I obtained written consent from each participant. In the consent form, I informed the participants about the purpose of the study and the data generation procedure. I assured them that they were free to terminate their contributions at any time. In addition, I told them that their personal information and data would remain confidential to anyone except the researcher and the thesis supervisor. However, I did not fully disclose the aims of the study at the beginning of the data generation process because it might have influenced their responses during the interviews. Instead, I informed them partially, stating that the study aimed to learn about their Erasmus experiences and plans for the future. Nonetheless, once the data generation process was complete, I briefed them fully on the aims of the study in a

discussion format prompted by a debriefing form. They, thus, had a chance to ask questions about the study aims and share their concerns/opinions at the end of the data generation period. I also shared a book chapter (see Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021a) with the participants. By doing so, I aimed to inform the participants about the theoretical underpinnings of the study. After they read the chapter, we had another short meeting for their possible questions. Finally, I invited them to share their opinions on my interpretations of their data after I had constructed the final themes (see also *The Issues of Quality* for details about the *member checking* process).

## **2.9. The Role(s) and Perspective(s) of the Researcher**

The researcher's *subjectivity* is always an integral part of the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, 2021b, 2022). Researchers, for example, decide on a research topic, prepare a research plan, and generate and analyze data based on their evolving knowledge and experience repertoire. Therefore, “the human factor” seems to be nearly impossible to overcome during a research process. But, as I underscore repeatedly, researchers can maintain a reflexive state in which they question their assumptions, beliefs, values, interests, and so on. They are, then, permitted and indeed advised to share transparently, wherever and whenever possible in qualitative inquiries, their questioning processes and how they might have influenced, for instance, data generation, data analysis, and theme construction (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, 2021b, 2022; Mirhosseini, 2020). Consequently, such reflexive discussions can help readers evaluate the *quality* of the study and see in detail how researchers have fleshed out the complexities of the research topic and process. In fact, in this study, I adopted the following broad definition and practice of *researcher reflexivity*:

[Reflexivity is] a process and a construct [that] requires us to be *aware* at every stage of the research (from engaging with theoretical concepts and their relationship with methodological and analytical practice to the researcher's (researchers') identities, contexts, and linguistic choices when representing data—from generation to communication). (Byrd Clark & Dervin, 2014, p. 15, my emphasis)

With this definition in mind, I conducted critical, complex, and long conversations throughout the research process, not only with myself but also with the participants,



data, literature, and examining committee. Still, as the researcher, I was at the center of all these conversations. Therefore, while I am *aware* that one section in a report cannot fully capture the impact of a researcher on a particular study, I allocate this section to discuss my role(s) and perspective(s) in this study and help readers evaluate my impact on the analysis outcomes. Although I try to bring this important issue to the fore whenever possible in this study, in this section, I reveal and explain in-depth my theoretical assumptions, perspectives, interests, and beliefs that might have influenced the research process. I also share several details regarding how I conducted the interviews, which were the main data generation tool in this study.

To begin with, I view myself as another researcher “who is highly critical of the current economic situation dominated by neoliberal rationality” (Block, 2018c, p. 18). A large part of my discontent is rooted in my ongoing quest to understand and challenge the various forms of social and economic inequalities around the world. Particularly since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, these inequalities have become more evident. For example, a recent World Bank report shows that the pandemic has contributed significantly to already high levels of income inequality and job insecurity across the world (The World Bank, 2020). Additionally, during the most intense periods of the pandemic, “saving the economy” was the main concern instead of “saving the public good.” That is, I have been consistently confronted with how neoliberal mechanisms persist and contribute to inequalities.

I have also been stunned by the intensity of the efforts that attempted to marginalize the discourses of social justice and common good that can be essential for developing complex solutions for our (including non-human beings) major challenges or problems. Therefore, I hold the belief that it is more important than ever to reinforce collective responsibilities and put aside selfish rationalities. Otherwise, we may fail to help everyone feel “physically and psychologically safe and secure” (Bell, 2007, p. 1).

Language teachers are not an exception to such responsibilities while we go through an “age of crisis” (Saad-Filho, 2021). For the promotion of inclusive and democratic English language classrooms that are currently dominated by instrumental motivations, test content, standardized instruction, and uncritical materials, I believe

that English language teachers need to develop critical conceptions of the neoliberal common sense and embrace diverse learners. Besides, as I discussed in the first chapter, the language teaching profession itself seems to be suffering from privatization, intensified work, deskilling, precarity, and surveillance. Therefore, language teachers also need to develop a critical understanding of certain neoliberal mechanisms that contribute to increasing anxiety and insecurity in the profession. Despite the strong neoliberal incursion into the higher education domain, I assume that language teacher education programs can still be a valuable sphere for developing resistance against the neoliberal common sense. Through these programs, prospective language teachers can learn democratic values, value the public good, engage in global problems, and develop dispositions, knowledge, and skills that can support them in the pursuit of social justice and humane working conditions.

STSA opportunities, in particular, can be helpful for prospective language teachers to question their positions within societies and develop critical awareness and skills that might prepare them to tackle the issues of diversity and inclusion. Although STSA programs may not always yield such desired critical dispositions, knowledge, and skills because of the complexity and variation involved in such experiences, the high potential of these programs to trigger critical transformative processes is still evident (see the first chapter). I experienced one such program (the Erasmus program) eleven years ago as a prospective language teacher, and I vividly recall how the unfamiliar contexts abroad often provoked me to reflect upon my position in the world or my previous ways of thinking about the world. In the long run, I believe these Erasmus experiences, as well as my subsequent mobility experiences, helped me develop a complex understanding of ongoing inequalities among particular individuals and societies.

However, I am concerned that the neoliberal common sense, which has apparently infiltrated the discourses and practices of mobility programs, might hamper the emergence of critical reflections during and after such program experiences. That is, I worry that these programs may mainly promote self-focused career motivations along with consumerist elements. With these concerns, I, therefore, find this empirical journey valuable, whose outcomes can help illuminate over time what discourses and

experiences are dominant in the STSA constructions of prospective language teachers. With accumulating research outcomes and attendant discussions, I also hope that the critical transformative dimensions of STSA programs in language teacher education may acquire a *common sense* status. After all, while tackling these domain-specific issues, I expect to synchronize with other efforts in different fields that aim to “denaturalize neoliberal processes and uncover their influences” (Bernstein et al., 2015, p. 6). A collective synergy in that regard may pave the way for social and political changes in favor of those who are currently marginalized and disempowered due to various oppressive structures.

On the other hand, given the importance of the context and power in qualitative research, I offer some discussions regarding my possible role(s) in the data generation and analysis. Since reflexive interviews were the main data source for this study, I focus particularly on issues related to *reflexive interviewing* and the analysis of interview data (see also *Data Generation Tools and Procedures*, *Data Analysis*, and *The Issues of Quality*). First of all, during the entire research process, I felt a necessity to reflect on my departmental roles because I worked as a research and teaching assistant at the same department where the participants were about to complete their teacher education program. In fact, I had already been acquainted with three of the participants prior to the study, as I assisted one of the courses they took in the previous semester, *Practice Teaching*. Over the course period, we met weekly to discuss their practicum experiences that took place in a secondary school. However, throughout the research process, I had no professional links to their coursework or any other aspects of their teacher education process. Nevertheless, due to my ongoing departmental roles at the time, I frequently tried to address their possible concerns by reminding them of my ethical responsibilities as a researcher and using a variety of strategies to ensure cordial communication between us (see also *Data Generation Tools and Procedures* and *The Issues of Quality*).

As the interviewer, I was also aware of the fact that I was in a power position, which enabled me to present data topics or provide initial discursive frames for later interview conversations. Therefore, to tackle this issue of power and communication, I tried to establish rapport with the participants through a number of strategies and techniques,

such as sharing detailed information about the research, being an attentive listener, disclosing my own relevant experiences, and choosing a relaxing setting (see also *Data Generation Tools and Procedures*). In fact, our relationship was not defined or shaped only by the confines of the interviews.

In addition to the interview meetings, we also had several opportunities to talk casually in the department building. We, thus, found many chances to discuss the mundane details of our ongoing lives. Furthermore, all participants often approached me (physically or virtually) and asked for my advice on certain issues in their lives, particularly regarding their coursework and post-graduation plans. After all, I believe that these conversations made significant contributions to our rapport-building. During all these “informal” instances of communication, however, I remained cautious regarding possible interferences with the study. For instance, in order to estimate whether our informal or any other conversations had an impact on the data, I kept a reflective research journal recording the details of our conversations. Later, during the data analysis process, I revisited my notes periodically and assessed the potential interferences in that regard.

The physical setting of reflexive interviews can be another important factor in terms of the researcher's influence on data generation and analysis. To prevent any significant influence in that regard, I did not decide on the setting on my own. Rather, we made the decision together with the participants and chose a convenient location for data generation. Before the data generation period began, I asked each participant if they had any suggestions for the interview location. But before sharing their own preferences, they all asked me about the available options, which I shared as (1) the interview room in the department building, (2) any café of their choice, and (3) anywhere where they would feel comfortable and relaxed. In the end, all chose the interview room in the department building because of the “privacy” and “noise” concerns that might arise in other possible options. In addition to providing comfort and privacy, the room also allowed the participants to stop by easily before or after their class meetings. Nevertheless, before each interview, I continued to ask about their preferences, but they always assured me that the interview setting was appropriate.

The interview room, in fact, is originally designed for conducting such interviews or small meetings in the department building. It is well-lit and air-conditioned, as well as spacious thanks to large windows on the walls. The room, therefore, fulfills the criteria of *comfort*, *privacy*, and *quietness* (King & Horrocks, 2010). Besides, we conducted the interviews during the daytime, usually in the late morning or late afternoon, during which the participants indicated that they would be more relaxed and willing to share information. During the interviews, we usually had tea or coffee and enough water to help us relax and keep hydrated. For the interviews, we sat across a round table in the middle of the room. I also placed a recorder on the table between us during each interview. I reassured the participants before each interview that there were no right or wrong answers and that all their answers would be relevant and valuable to the researcher (see Appendix A for the interview guides). On occasion, I also reminded them that they would have a chance to review my interpretations of their data before they appeared in the dissertation.

During the interviews, I kept the questions open and short in order to avoid any significant impact on the answers (Roulston & Choi, 2018). Using such general questions allowed me to use probes and prompts appropriately when the participants needed them. I also had an interview guide with me during each interview (see also *Data Generation Tools and Procedures* and Appendix A). However, I rarely looked at them due to the possibility of distracting the participants or disrupting the flow of the conversation. Instead, to gain confidence with *reflexive interviewing* and develop familiarity with the questions (including probes and prompts), I spent considerable time before the interviews studying and rehearsing the guides. As I had regular opportunities to discuss possible interview topics and questions with my thesis supervisor, I was also able to reflect on possible issues of relevance, implementation, context, and power (see also *The Issues of Quality*). In addition, soon after each interview, I listened to each recording in order to reflect on my possible influences and consider emerging points for other interviews. Thus, throughout the data generation period, I remained responsive to emerging and evolving issues and revised the guides accordingly (Roulston & Choi, 2018). That is, I was able to avoid imposing the research agenda in a strict manner.

Before proceeding to the next chapter, where I introduce each participant in detail and discuss the final themes, I offer a few quotes that might substantiate my claims about how I established rapport with the participants and helped them voice their experiences and opinions comfortably. When the data generation period neared the end, all the participants, without being requested to do so, commented that they valued the interviews as an opportunity to express their opinions and concerns with regard to a variety of important issues. While three of them, Dilara, Marco, and Melis, shared their opinions on this issue during our informal conversations, the other three, Ayşe, Gözde, and Zeynep, did so either during the sixth or seventh interview. Therefore, only the quotes below, which belong to the latter group, could appear in the transcriptions:

One of my favorite things about the last semester was meeting with you. It was like a mini therapy. We could talk about important things at a time when we were worried about life. It really felt good. (Ayşe, 7th Interview)

I thank you very much. They [referring to the interviews] were really good for us. I'm glad you did such research and cared about us. Thank you very much indeed. (Gözde, 7th Interview)

Thank you very much. They [referring to the interviews] were like therapy for me. I mean, I had the opportunity to think about the things that I hadn't thought of before. Sometimes, after talking to you here, I also had the opportunity to reconsider some of my thoughts. You know, I was saying, "I should think about this when I get home" (laughs)... (Zeynep, 6th Interview)

Normally, you may feel some tension or something in a study. You know, you may feel stressed about things like "how should I answer this question?" ... It actually never happened [in this study]. So, I think you will get really reliable results if this has not happened to other participants as well. (Zeynep, 6th Interview)

## CHAPTER 3

### ANALYSIS

#### 3.0. Presentation

In this study, I focused on three main research questions or three overarching aims. With the first question, I set out to explore and understand how the participants constructed their short-term study abroad (STSA) experiences retrospectively. Through the second question that placed an elongated emphasis on the re-entry period of STSA, I intended to explicate how the participants constructed their imagined futures (near and distant) and engaged in the post-graduation period (work and graduate studies). With the help of the last research question, I aimed to construct certain patterns regarding how the participants interpreted the current state of the world. Within these focal points of analysis, I also aimed to show how the participants negotiated neoliberal discourses. Further, I sought to map out how the answers to these questions complemented or contradicted each other with regard to neoliberal elements.

Having analyzed the entire data set (i.e., interviews, CVs, graduate program application forms, practicum portfolios, and social media posts) through Braun and Clarke's (2021b) six-phase recursive analysis process, I constructed three main themes corresponding to each research question: (1) *Constructing the short-term study abroad: A polydimensional and disproportionate experience*, (2) *Constructing the future: Flexibility, multiplicity, precarity and uncertainty*, and (3) *Interpreting the current state of the world: (Critical) views and counter-discourses*. To open a transparent window into the analytical process and to show what particular codes underlied the main themes, I provided three visuals as an appendix (see Appendix B). These visual maps illustrate the codes and initial themes under each main theme.

On the other hand, as I also discussed in the previous chapter, different individuals may offer different patterns of discourses and experiences regarding a certain phenomenon. Therefore, detailed participant accounts can offer further insights into

the common patterns or themes constructed based on individual data. Before dwelling on the three main themes, therefore, I provide detailed information about each individual and offer points of reference that can be revisited for certain individuals during later discussions. That is, I initiate this chapter with a fine-grained account of each participant's background. After explicating the individual accounts, I offer a synopsis in which I synthesize several points about the individual backgrounds and trajectories. By doing so, I aim to go beyond the atomistic descriptions of the participants and move closer to the main themes. However, I caution that the individual accounts focus largely on (1) childhood experiences, (2) educational histories, (3) main identity dimensions, (4) self-perceived personal characteristics, (5) previous mobility experiences, (6) socioeconomic profiles, and (7) language repertoires. Therefore, in the following section, I give brief information about their teacher education, study abroad, and post-graduation experiences. I treat such focal dimensions in much more detail under the main themes that follow the synopsis of the participants' backgrounds.

### **3.1. Introducing the Participants: A Detailed Account of Each Participant's Background**

#### **3.1.1. Ayşe: "I try to be happy wherever I go"**

Ayşe was a 22-year-old prospective English language teacher when she decided to participate in this study in 2019. When I asked about her childhood experiences in the first interview, Ayşe noted that she was born in a small town in the central region of Turkey. Her father was a retired farmer, and her mother was a housewife. Together, they raised Ayşe and her older brother in the same small town until she completed the sixth grade. At that time, the family decided to move to "another small town nearby" because of her brother's acceptance to a high school there. Having completed the eighth grade in this "new" town, Ayşe started to study at the same high school where her brother had already been studying for three years. Ayşe depicted her high school as "uncrowded" because there were "almost 60 students" in the school; only five of them, including her, were students who focused on studying English for university preparation.



As to her interest in English, she stated that she started to develop a close connection to English when studying in the sixth grade. Back then, her English language teacher was “quite successful” because she could “always make the lessons enjoyable for students.” Thanks to her, Ayşe found herself gradually drawn to the English lessons and also to the English books that were made available by the same teacher. Due to their move to another town, she, however, had to continue learning English with another teacher whose English lessons “were not as enjoyable as in the previous school.”

In her new school environment, she also experienced several social challenges. For instance, she was often excluded from social activities or friendship circles. She, thus, felt lonely for almost two years. This feeling, however, did not disappear in her later years of education, including her undergraduate years. She remarked in one of the interviews that she felt “a deep impact” of those years on her later social behaviors and increasingly individualized lifestyle. Nevertheless, she added, she had always been “one of the most successful and motivated students,” especially in English lessons. Thus, her “success” continued throughout her high school years, culminating in her decision to concentrate on English for her university preparation, although “[she] was equally successful in other subjects.” Having passed the university entrance exams with high scores, she earned the right to study at one of the most prestigious English language teacher education (ELTE) programs in Turkey. By that time, her brother had also been studying at an engineering program in another major city in Turkey. In the wake of Ayşe’s departure, her parents finalized their decision to stay in the same town because, to them, “life [was] easy and cheap there.”

Once admitted to the program, similar to most of the other participants, Ayşe decided to take a one-year language preparation program offered by the university in order to elevate her English language proficiency, particularly her speaking skills, to a higher level. However, her self-perceived incompetence in speaking English continued to erode her self-confidence even after she transitioned to the teacher education program. During the initial years of her teacher education, she also experienced several challenges with regard to the coursework. She, then, started to question her career choice and found herself spending much more time on leisure activities, thus allocating

insufficient time for her studies. However, despite her growing doubts regarding her career choice, she did not have “a quit option.” She believed that she would not be able to explain such a radical decision to her parents, whose economic capacity, she suggested, might not have been sufficient enough to enable her to initiate “another tiresome and costly preparation period.” Having eliminated this option, she, therefore, decided to persevere and “sought for something to cling to in the program.”

Having taken several courses on linguistics in the second and third years in the program, she realized that she had been drawn to the theoretical aspects of language learning. With “a pressing desire” to learn more about these aspects, she took several other courses from another department, *Cognitive Science*. After realizing that her interest in linguistics would be incessant, she wanted to keep her CGPA high so that she could pursue a graduate program or an academic career in this field. In the midst of this contemplation, Ayşe realized that the Erasmus program could serve as another source of motivation to perform better in the program, as admission to this international exchange program also required a high CGPA. The Erasmus program, thus, turned out to be “another branch to hold on to.” Having achieved to increase her CGPA to a significantly higher point, Ayşe applied for the Erasmus program and gained the right to benefit from it for the fall semester of 2018, during which she studied at a university in Spain together with Gözde, another study participant. Throughout her STSA period, she stayed in a shared apartment with several other Erasmus students.

As regards her mobility capital prior to the Erasmus experience, which was her first experience abroad, Ayşe suggested that she and her parents had not been actively mobile. The family, for instance, did not have “a habit of going away for a vacation.” She, thus, had visited only a couple of cities in Turkey before her STSA period. Referring to her trips during the Erasmus period, she even noted that “[she] visited more cities in Europe than in Turkey.” On the other hand, her brother had been experiencing a higher level of mobility in comparison to other family members. As an engineer, he had been working on ships and traveling frequently. While studying at the university, Ayşe, therefore, was often exposed to his stories of mobility and even suggestions regarding where to study for the Erasmus program.

Having returned from her STSA period, Ayşe spent one more year in her language teacher education program and graduated in January 2020 as a “High Honor” student (in this particular university context, a CGPA of 3.00-3.49 is considered “Honor,” while a CGPA of 3.50-4.00 is considered “High Honor”). Toward the end of the program, she re-assessed her enthusiasm toward teaching English and realized that “[she] was not feeling the same negative feelings as in the first year of the program.” With her renewed interest in teaching English, she, thus, began to consider language teaching as another career option, in addition to her plans to study linguistics at a graduate level. Since she had generally been “successful” in finding “an exit strategy,” she, after all, stated that she would “try to be happy wherever [she goes].” Her priority, however, remained with an academic career in the field of linguistics or cognitive science.

Shortly after her graduation, Ayşe attempted to work at a foundation university as a part-time language instructor. However, despite her significant efforts and appropriate profile, she was not offered a position for the immediate post-graduation period. Feeling a bit disappointed, she did not want to push it further. She, instead, decided to spend a few months with her parents and prepare for other job positions and possible graduate programs in linguistics or cognitive science. Following the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, she was eventually accepted to a master’s program in *Cognitive Science* at the same university where she completed her undergraduate program. Having been admitted to her “target” graduate program, she decided to focus only on her studies and, therefore, not to work in any part-time or full-time job position. For her expenses throughout the graduate studies, she depended on family support that was “sufficient for [her] to survive.” For the next step, she planned to pursue a doctoral program abroad, again in the field of linguistics or cognitive science. When I reached out to her for the member-checking process in March 2022, she was working on her master’s thesis and working as a language teacher at a state school.

Regarding her socioeconomic and sociocultural background, Ayşe depicted herself as a member of “a middle class family” that owned a residential place and counted on savings and a moderate amount of regular income. As her father was retired and needed to support Ayşe and her brother throughout their undergraduate studies, the

family had to maintain a balance between their income and expenditures. Due to these economic conditions in the family, Ayşe, in fact, received several scholarships while studying at the university. Thanks to the family support and the scholarships, she did not experience “any major challenge regarding the financial issues” during the teacher education program and also the Erasmus period. She, nevertheless, remarked that she did not have “a high-standard lifestyle” throughout her undergraduate years.

As to her consumption patterns, Ayşe, similar to the other participants, underscored that she was not fond of “expensive” or “fancy” products. Rather, she chose to “manage her budget wisely” and avoided spending money on the products that would drain her “already limited budget.” Therefore, she did not declare “any brand obsession.” She also indicated her preference for healthy food offered by “budget-friendly” restaurants in the vicinity. In addition, during her undergraduate studies, she stayed at an affordable student dormitory managed by the university.

Ayşe described her favorite leisure activity as watching movies in the cinema alone. Photography was among her hobbies, too. In case she sought refreshment, she also preferred to walk or run in the university campus. Further, she highlighted her interest in going to the theater if she could find “anything worth seeing.” Ayşe was actually one of the few participants who particularly liked “being with herself.” Despite her openness to meeting different people and “learning something different about each of them,” she, nevertheless, highly valued her “individual life” and preference for transient but diverse friendships. In her largely individualized life, she also highlighted the vitality of “planning and organizing things.”

With respect to her existing as well as evolving linguistic repertoire, Ayşe listed Turkish as her mother tongue. She also viewed herself as highly proficient in English, thanks to her schooling years and language teacher education that involved a semester abroad as well. However, she was still not completely satisfied with her English-speaking skills, which she hoped to improve through her upcoming job experiences and graduate studies. In addition to her varied proficiency in these languages, she noted her basic proficiency in German, which she developed through her enrolment in several courses during her high school and university years. She, however, shared her

regret that she could not take sufficient advantage of the opportunities to learn Spanish during her Erasmus period. She, thus, viewed her Spanish skills as “very basic.”

### **3.1.2. Dilara: “I’m not a person who has problems with adaptation”**

Dilara was a 23-year-old prospective English language teacher when she decided to take part in this study in 2019. In our first interview, Dilara stated that she came from a family of two working parents and three siblings. She had a brother and a sister; both were younger than her. In response to a question about her early childhood experiences, she explained that she was born in a region on the southern coast of Turkey, where people mostly relied on tourism for a living. Since her childhood, Dilara maintained, her parents had been working in different types of work that targeted the local touristic market. Although their work did not result in a high level of regular income for the family, her parents, nevertheless, were able to build a house and enhance “the standards of the family.”

As Dilara’s parents worked much of the time during her early childhood, her grandmother, who lived in a village, took care of her. She recounted those years as “generally happy” because, she believed, she had been cared for well by everyone in the family and vicinity. She also had chances to immerse in pastoral life and develop first-hand connections with nature and farm animals. She, thus, expressed her overall contentment with her early childhood. Despite her satisfaction, Dilara, nevertheless, wished that she had grown up with her parents during those years because, she believed, she struggled to develop strong and intimate relations with her own parents later on. Still, she believed that she became “a caring individual” thanks to her childhood experiences. Marco, another participant who spent the Erasmus period with her in Germany, confirmed this claim by jokingly introducing Dilara as “[his] mother” in one of our informal conversations.

Dilara also mentioned that her early childhood lacked mobility or traveling. In her words, her family “had no connection to the external world.” Except for her father’s “secret” attempt to work abroad, which involved a short trip to Germany when Dilara was only five, their lives had been defined largely by a busy work schedule and immobility. For example, her mother left their hometown for the first time when she

accompanied Dilara for her enrollment in the undergraduate program. Dilara herself was a high school student when she found her first chance to visit another city in Turkey. In general, Dilara, nevertheless, cherished her early childhood experiences, particularly with regard to developing adaptability and compassion skills. Since she had to experience a slight form of physical mobility while moving between her parents and grandmother, she suggested that she had developed certain adaptation skills at a very early stage, which enabled her to adapt to certain circumstances without experiencing much discomfort: “I'm not a person who has problems with adaptation, so maybe it's because I grew up in a village when I was very little without my parents always around. So, I didn't have an environment that I could call a permanent home.” At first glance, what Dilara experienced may seem like a tiny form of mobility. But these mobility experiences seem to have a *butterfly effect* on her later life, as she claimed to have benefited much from her childhood experiences in terms of adapting to new environments, including her primary school.

Dilara noted that she was one of the most successful students in her primary school. Thanks to her hard work during primary as well as secondary education, Dilara actually earned the right to study at a state-funded high school offering relatively better educational services compared to most of the other high schools in the same region. While studying there, she, however, experienced two major issues that might have impeded her social development. First, she found it difficult to develop close relationships with her classmates because most of them were boarding students and, therefore, had plenty of time to spend together, whereas Dilara stayed with her family outside the school time. Second, she grappled with some health issues at the time, mainly caused by a long-lasting recovery process after an unfortunate accident. When Dilara was just eight, a big pot of boiling water was accidentally spilled on her, leaving several scars on her body. To restore her health, she needed to take several medicines, which, however, caused her to gain significant weight in a short time. Unfortunately, her condition negatively impacted her self-esteem and social relations during her high school years.

Dilara claimed that her health condition also influenced her choice of the study area in high school. In her opinion, science and mathematics lessons and related prestigious

career options (e.g., engineering, medicine, and pharmaceuticals) required a high level of hard work, a healthy mind, and academic and social achievements. She believed, however, a language-oriented subject did not require an extreme amount of effort. Added to that, she associated language classes with “fun.” She, thus, eventually found herself studying English for university preparation. Thanks to her hard work in the remaining years in high school, she achieved to gain a valuable opportunity to study at one of the most prestigious ELTE programs in Turkey.

Before starting her teacher education process, Dilara, too, decided to improve her English language skills to a “more sufficient” level. Therefore, she enrolled in the one-year language preparation program offered by the university for free. After completing the preparation program and two years of coursework in her teacher education program successfully, she took a trip with her friends and traveled across Europe for 22 days with an *Interrail Global Pass* that allows people to travel on trains for a certain period. The financial support needed for the trip came from her savings, family, and boyfriend (husband later on). Eventually, it turned out to be “an amazing experience.” Exactly one year after this memorable summer trip, she commenced her Erasmus period in the fall semester of 2018, during which she studied at a university in Germany with another study participant, Marco. Throughout her Erasmus period, she stayed in a shared apartment with several other undergraduate students.

Having completed the Erasmus period, Dilara spent one more year in the language teacher education program and graduated in January 2020 as an “Honor” student. Shortly after her graduation, she was hired as a temporary language instructor at a foundation university, where she worked for a semester during the COVID-19 pandemic. Then, she moved to another foundation university for a similar position. She was still working at the same institution when I contacted her for the member-checking process in March 2022. During this post-graduation period, she was also admitted to a master’s program in *Educational Administration and Planning* at the same university where she received her undergraduate degree.

As regards to her socioeconomic and sociocultural profile, Dilara suggested that her family gradually acquired a middle class position through time and work. Thanks to

the improved conditions of the family and also to the several scholarships she received, Dilara was glad that she could lead a satisfactory life throughout her undergraduate years. In fact, due to her limited economic capacity, an accommodation scholarship had been granted to her by the university, enabling her to stay in a student dormitory for free. To expand her budget, she, nevertheless, engaged in different part-time jobs during her university education. However, she also reported that she occasionally ran into financial problems as she progressed through the different stages of her Erasmus experience. But she managed to overcome them thanks to the Erasmus grant, family support, and her own savings. Shortly, in her words, she “just had the right amount of money to survive each month.”

Her consumption patterns also reflected her moderate socioeconomic status. For example, she asserted that she had almost never consumed any luxury items or expensive brands but generally looked for “durable” and “affordable” items for her needs. She further noted that she had rarely consumed expensive food but instead followed a healthy diet consisting of “traditional meals,” often prepared by her. In addition, she liked reading books and going to the gym but found it challenging to afford some other enjoyable activities such as going to the cinema.

Regarding her linguistic repertoire and communicative skills, Dilara indicated that she acquired Turkish as her mother tongue and had a good command of English thanks to her years of formal and informal study, including language teacher education and international mobility experiences. She also started to learn German during her Erasmus period. In fact, she mentioned that she took several German courses there and completed them with “great success.” Further, she highlighted her extra efforts in Germany to improve her German skills outside the classroom and mentioned that her learning process continued once she returned to Turkey. As a result, she believed, she improved her German skills to a significant, self-satisfying level.

### **3.1.3. Gözde: “I used to think that the whole world was Circassian”**

Gözde was a 23-year-old prospective English language teacher when she decided to participate in this study in 2019. When I asked her to introduce herself briefly, she began by emphasizing her ethnic background and associated mother tongue:



I am [Gözde]. I was born into a Circassian family. So, my mother tongue is Circassian. At first, I was speaking Circassian with my parents. But then, my brother was born. And about the same time, the TV entered our house (she implies that she spent time watching TV in Turkish while her mother was looking after her brother). The main language of communication at home eventually became Turkish (especially after Gözde started primary school). (1st Interview)

This particular emphasis on her ethnic background, in fact, highlighted one of the most salient elements in her identity construction. As implied in her statements, Gözde developed a strong ethnic identity during her childhood to such a point that “[she] used to think that the whole world was Circassian.” The village where Gözde spent her early childhood was located in the central region of Turkey and consisted mostly of people identifying themselves as Circassian. Despite their pre-dominant identification with the Circassian language, she and other children in the village were also being encouraged to speak Turkish so that they could integrate into the larger networks in the country and also to the mainstream education that was being conducted only through Turkish. As a consequence, she and her brother grew up bilingually acquiring both Circassian and Turkish.

Gözde completed the first two grades of primary school in the same village. She described the school as “so old” that they had to use a heating stove to cope with the cold during “harsh winters.” Nevertheless, she seemed completely satisfied with the quality of education there. In fact, she realized how qualified the school was when her family moved to a small town, where she completed the rest of her primary education. The decision to move was actually made by Gözde’s father, who was an imam with various responsibilities such as leading prayers and delivering sermons.

In her new school, Gözde found herself to be “one of the best students” because “the level of other students was quite low.” However, similar to Ayşe and Dilara, she experienced an adaptation challenge or a mild version of social isolation there. Since she was “hardworking” and came from a relatively higher social class (most of the other kids were coming from “working class” families), she often sensed social rejection by other students. Despite this social challenge, she achieved to complete her

primary education successfully and started her secondary education in the same school.

During her secondary school years, she noted, her teachers tapped into her imagination, asking her to envision what she hoped to accomplish in the future. Back then, “being a doctor” seemed the most pertinent option because of its popularity among teachers and parents. She, therefore, started to prioritize mathematics and science lessons with a particular motivation to enroll in a science high school whose successful graduates usually studied medicine to become a doctor. She, however, could not get a sufficient score to gain entry to this prestigious type of high school. She was instead placed at a regular high school, which was also known to be “a good one” in the region.

For her high school education, she was supposed to live in a nearby town as a boarding student. Although her mother was not happy with this option or “distance,” Gözde started to study there thanks to her father’s support. She thought that she made a good start there because “people were like her,” meaning that the other students were also hardworking and approachable. She claimed that thanks to her high school experiences, she had already learned how to fend for herself by the time she enrolled in the teacher education program. Otherwise, she suggested, she would have been “raised like a princess.” While studying at high school, she also found a chance to meet many different people coming from different parts of the country. She, therefore, also believed that she had developed valuable communication skills before entering the university.

Despite these valuable experiences she gained during her high school years, Gözde, however, struggled to follow certain lessons during her initial years at the high school. She, in particular, experienced difficulties in following mathematics and geometry lessons. Consequently, she usually remained “silent” during those lessons. Being “silent” was indeed an important signal for her to re-assess her career options. Toward the end of her first year, she discovered how “successful” she was in English lessons. Her English language teachers, too, realized her “success” and encouraged her to enroll in the study group focusing on the English language for university preparation.

After considering her future options for a while and also discussing them with her parents, she eventually decided to take this option and go further with studying English.

Having managed to find six people, which was the minimum number required, Gözde and her peers were able to form a language study group led by several “enthusiastic” and “devoted” language teachers. In Gözde's opinion, the teachers were very helpful, as they guided her to envision certain possible scenarios in the future. In retrospect, she actually viewed this preparation period as highly “enjoyable” and “productive.” She added that thanks to hard work, teacher support, and a productive learning environment, she achieved to gain a place in one of the most prestigious ELTE programs in Turkey.

Once her university life started, Gözde, too, decided to improve her English skills to an advanced level before initiating her teacher education process. She, thus, took the one-year language preparation program offered by the university. Having completed the preparation year, she moved to her target program. She reported no major issues regarding her transition to the teacher education program. Later on, she found herself interested in STSA opportunities, especially after being exposed to several mobility narratives in her social groups. With growing interest, she applied to the Erasmus program in her second year. Her first attempt, however, was not “successful.” It was through her second attempt that she obtained the right to benefit from the program. Finally, she could commence her Erasmus period in the fall semester of 2018, during which she studied at a university in Spain with another study participant, Ayşe. Throughout her Erasmus period, she stayed in a shared apartment with five other students, most of whom were also studying abroad.

Like most of the other participants, Gözde had limited mobility experiences prior to the Erasmus program. Her father, in fact, was the most mobile member of the family. As part of his job, he frequently accompanied pilgrim groups to Saudi Arabia. Unlike her father, Gözde had visited few cities in Turkey. She even stated that her conception of mobility was so limited that “she thought it would take years even by plane to go to another country.”

Having completed her Erasmus period, Gözde spent one more year in her language teacher education program and graduated in January 2020 as a “High Honor” student. Between her graduation moment and the Erasmus period, she also visited France for an international academic conference where she presented a paper on a short novel. Shortly after her graduation, she started to work at a private language institution in her hometown. As she had a low level of job security and income there, after a while, she attempted to move to a well-known private school in the same city. Her attempt actually resulted in a contract offer. Soon after accepting the term of employment, she started to deliver English lessons to young learners in her new school. When I made contact with her for the member-checking process in March 2022, she was working as a temporary language instructor at a foundation university in the same city where she received her undergraduate degree. During the post-graduation period, she also attempted to study in a master’s program in *English Literature*. Her application, however, was turned down by the selection committee. She was actually the only participant who did not start to study in a graduate program during the time span allocated for this study.

Regarding her socioeconomic and sociocultural profile, Gözde stated that they, as a family, had never experienced a severe economic hardship thanks to her father’s regular income. The financial power he had, however, was not always sufficient to cover the expenses of both Gözde and her brother, as the two were studying at the university in different cities at the same time. Mainly because of this reason, she received several scholarships that truly helped her during her university life. But, both still needed to be careful with their expenditures. To alleviate this condition and also to gain teaching experiences, Gözde worked at private language institutions as a private tutor during her undergraduate studies. It is worth noting that she also worked as a grocery worker in order to save some money for her Erasmus period. The family, nonetheless, never hesitated to support her throughout her educational life, even though there were times when they had to “tighten their belts” or even borrow money.

During most of her time as an undergraduate student, Gözde stayed at a student dormitory which “was slightly more expensive” compared to other dormitory options. In fact, she did not choose to stay there, but she was placed there automatically by the

accommodation services run by the university. However, later on, she managed to change her dormitory and started to stay at a cheaper option until her graduation. Like the other participants, Gözde also had a healthy diet, including “almost no sugar.” She preferred to cook her own food and tried to manage her budget “wisely and healthily.” As might be expected, she did not have any “obsession” with particular expensive brands or luxury items.

As to her leisure interests, Gözde mentioned a range of hobbies and activities. For instance, she shared her favorite hobby as camping due to her “love with nature.” She also had an emerging passion for cinema, which led her to take an elective course on “video production” in her last semester. Further, she mentioned how she seized opportunities to do sports such as running. Especially after the Erasmus period, Gözde also allocated a significant amount of time to hang out or party with friends. Lastly, she noted her interest in photography and books, particularly “the books from the English literature.”

When I asked about her social activities and choices, Gözde specifically highlighted her active membership in one of the Circassian associations. As part of her engagement, she undertook several responsibilities that mainly involved discussing the problems of the Circassian people in Turkey and organizing social or cultural events and panels. In our last interview, she also shared her intention to become a language activist, as she regarded herself as a member of the youngest generation who spoke Circassian as the mother tongue.

As I reported earlier, while growing up, Gözde acquired two languages: Circassian and Turkish. Later on, she also developed a high level of mastery in her English skills thanks to her mainstream education and undergraduate studies. She, in fact, greatly appreciated her Erasmus experiences for improving her speaking skills in English. In addition to her varied proficiency in these languages, she reported that she developed basic proficiency in French and Spanish, thanks to her Erasmus experiences and several courses that she took during her university life.

### **3.1.4. Marco: “If people need my help, I come to their aid no matter who they are”**

Marco was a 22-year-old prospective English language teacher when he decided to participate in this study in 2019. When I asked about his early childhood experiences in our first interview, Marco explained that he was born in the largest urban area in Turkey, where he had lived until he was accepted into his current teacher education program in another major city in Turkey. He maintained that the neighborhood in which he grew up “consisted mostly of middle or low-middle class families,” including his own family. He also emphasized that his parents belonged to different ethnic backgrounds. While his father’s family had been living in Turkey for many generations, he said that his mother’s family migrated to Turkey from the Balkans in 1989, though he did not disclose the reason for this move. During his childhood, his parents worked at different jobs. His mother was an accountant at a company in the farming industry, and his father had been working as a driver in a private transportation company. Thanks to growing up with two working parents, Marco noted, he did not experience any serious economic challenges in his childhood.

When Marco was just seven, the family confronted a serious moment. His parents decided to divorce. After remaining separate for five years, they, however, decided to remarry. In the meantime, Marco reported, he had been experiencing several psychological consequences due to these “ups and downs between [his] parents.” Further to that, he had to confront the next upcoming challenge. His parents decided to divorce again after a two-year remarriage. Since then, his father had remained unmarried. However, just before Marco started high school, his mother got married to his current stepfather, who worked in the shipping industry. Since these decisions might be “a big issue” in a child’s life, Marco inevitably found himself occasionally depressed and often unmotivated toward his ongoing education, particularly during the period after “the second divorce.” He, therefore, struggled to demonstrate his “potential” and cope with the school demands. Nevertheless, he appreciated his parents’ efforts to support him through these years of schooling. After all, he believed that his parents tried to do their best for him.

Thankfully, Marco made “a healthy start” when he transitioned to the high school. Throughout his high school years, he stayed with his father. At that time, Marco felt a need to work and support himself financially. He, thus, worked at several part-time jobs for low wages and somehow achieved “to make extra money.” Aside from the economic benefits, his work experiences also helped him learn more about different profiles of people. Through these experiences, he believed, he developed certain communication skills and “broad” perspectives at an early age.

During those high school years, he also confronted an obesity problem. With a decision to become healthier, Marco “devoted [himself] to sports” and started to play basketball and cycle for long distances. Although he managed to bring his weight to a healthier level, it did not last long because he re-gained significant weight while undertaking an intensive preparation program for the university entrance examinations. But, having passed this “stressful period successfully,” he managed to reach a healthy and stable weight again, especially in the second year of his university education.

While studying in high school, like most of the other participants, Marco realized that he was not a “bright” or “passionate” student in subjects such as mathematics and science. Meanwhile, he had discovered his interest in learning English thanks to his regular engagement with recent technological developments and multiplayer online games, which, according to him, required a certain level of competence in English. Having coupled his personal interests with English, he found himself imagining a career in which he could utilize his English skills. He, therefore, decided to lead a small group of students to form a study group and concentrate on learning English for university education. Although they achieved to form the group, they “had no idea where [their] English knowledge would exactly lead to or what exact options [they] had in the future.” That is, they were struggling to identify a certain study area for their university education. He, therefore, suggested a lack of guidance on this matter. Nevertheless, he managed to maintain his motivation and aimed to score a high point in the university entrance exams.

Thanks to his hard work spanning particularly over the last two years of high school, he achieved to receive a high score in the university entrance exams. He, thus, gained

a chance to study at one of the most prestigious ELTE programs in Turkey. Interestingly, however, it was only after he received the score that he decided to study in a language teacher education program. Due to the “insufficient guidance,” he reported, he had to evaluate available options on his own. Following a complex process of thinking and researching, he eventually decided to study either at a linguistics program in the same city with his parents or study alone at his current program in another city. Based on his score, he was placed in the latter option. In fact, he had a third option as well, which he had to discard because of the insufficient financial capacity of his parents.

At the same university where he completed his teacher education program, there was also a language teacher education program that offered a dual diploma in *Teaching English* and *Liberal Studies*. This four-year program allowed students to spend a certain academic period at two different universities; one in Turkey and the other in the US. Unlike the other cohort who were enrolled in the state-funded program, students of this dual program, however, were required to pay a high amount of fee each year. Marco, in fact, received a sufficient score for this joint program and had a strong desire to enroll in it, largely due to its international dimension. Although he was offered a 50% scholarship for the program, he could not convince his parents, who were unsure about how to afford the remaining fee. Feeling highly disappointed, Marco enrolled in his current fee-free language teacher education program. After all, Marco did not choose to study in a language teacher education program “in order to become a language teacher at an average state school.” Through his enrollment, he, rather, wanted to take courses on different subjects, such as English literature, linguistics, and language education. Taking a wide range of courses, he, thus, intended to increase the spectrum of his job options for post-graduation.

Unlike most of the other participants, Marco decided to skip the one-year language preparation program and made a direct start with his 4-year teacher education process. However, he struggled for a while at the very beginning due to his disproportionate involvement in social activities, which usually included home partying. Later, however, he could establish a balance between his social life and the program demands. In the summer break after his second year in the program, Marco also found



a chance to work as a bartender at a restaurant in a large town in England. When he started to work at the restaurant, which was owned by a close friend of his stepfather, he became uneasy with his “broken English.” Nevertheless, thanks to his interactions in England, especially with his co-workers, he claimed to have improved his English-speaking skills to a much higher level. Upon his return, he noted, even one of his course instructors noticed his significant improvements.

Having accumulated satisfying experiences in England, he decided to spend his next summer there as well. Unlike his previous experience, Marco, however, did not plan to return to Turkey when the summer ended. Instead, he would initiate his Erasmus period, for which he had already been accepted to a university in Germany. Considering the possible financial challenges that could be triggered during his STSA period, Marco placed a strong emphasis on “saving money” this time.

It is worth noting that Marco had already visited Germany before his STSA period. When he was in his second year in the undergraduate program, Marco, together with his mother, paid a short visit (almost a month) to his relatives in Germany. In Marco’s words, the trip “[helped] him greatly when shaping [his] expectations for the Erasmus period.” His mother's support also played an important role in motivating him to study abroad because she had been a frequent traveler to Europe and viewed such mobility experiences as a valuable opportunity for Marco’s growth. In fact, Marco was able to travel to other countries in Europe without needing a visa since his mother held dual citizenship in Bulgaria and Turkey. He, thus, skipped the visa application process for the Erasmus program that was, however, compulsory for the other study participants due to their single Turkish citizenship. Marco commenced his Erasmus period in the fall semester of 2018, during which he studied at a university in Germany with another study participant, Dilara. Throughout his Erasmus period, he stayed at a large, shared house with six other undergraduate students who were also studying abroad. Thanks to his “work abroad” experiences, family support, and ongoing scholarships, he did not experience any serious financial difficulties during his mobility period.

Having completed his Erasmus period, Marco spent one more year in his language teacher education program and graduated in January 2020 as a “High Honor” student.

Shortly after his graduation, he was accepted into a temporary language instructor position at a foundation university, where he worked for a semester during the COVID-19 pandemic. Then, he moved to another foundation university for the same position. He was still working at that university when I reached out to him to complete the member-checking process in March 2022. During this post-graduation period, he was also admitted to a master's program in *English Language Teaching* at the same higher education institution where he completed his teacher education program.

As I mentioned at the beginning, Marco viewed his parents' class position as middle, which he believed allowed him to lead "a prudent and moderate life." Even though both parents worked, Marco, nevertheless, occasionally experienced difficulties in allocating money for his needs, hobbies, and desires. He, therefore, worked in several part-time jobs (both in Turkey and England) during his high school and university years in order to make an extra budget. He, however, still faced certain financial issues. While studying at high school, he, for instance, felt the need to take extra private courses in order to receive a high score in the university entrance exams. However, he could receive only few hours of private lessons due to his limited budget. Further, he decided not to take the language preparation year once he entered the university, mainly because of his parents' reluctance to provide financial support for one extra year in the undergraduate program. As I explained before, he could not pursue another language teacher education program for similar reasons. What rendered STSA a viable option both for the family and Marco was actually the Erasmus grant provided to him. Otherwise, he suggested, this opportunity might also have been impossible. For him, after all, "money played a very big role."

Throughout his undergraduate studies, Marco stayed at an affordable student dormitory offered by the university. Regarding his diet, like the other participants, he also preferred to consume healthy as well as "reasonably priced" food. However, due to his limited budget, he usually tried to eat at the school cafeteria, which offered a low-priced food menu. Since his high school years, Marco had also been interested in recent technological developments, particularly in mobile phones and associated accessories. He, thus, often tried to allocate some money to buy new phones and accessories. But he was extremely careful about spending his budget on affordable

items rather than on “luxurious” or expensive ones. Similar to his technological preferences, he added, he had never developed an “obsession” with high-priced brands for his other needs.

When it came to his social habits, Marco pointed to his sports activities at the university as the main area of socialization. For instance, he played with the American football team, which, he suggested, facilitated his adaptation to university life. He also mentioned how he enjoyed running with his friends on the weekend mornings. Thanks to being part of the team and his regular physical activity, he made several friends and gradually gained self-confidence. In addition, he achieved to receive “the rookie of the year award” in his first year in the team.

When I asked about his most prominent traits, Marco, first, highlighted his extreme sensitivity to the needs of others: “if people need my help, I come to their aid no matter who they are.” This sensitivity, in fact, brought him a reputation among his friends as someone who was “extremely caring.” He, for example, offered free private lessons to some high school students to help them prepare better for their university entrance exams. He explained that these people could not afford extra support for their preparation despite their potential to gain entrance to top universities in Turkey (note that he experienced similar challenges during his own preparation). On the other hand, Marco was also known among his friends as a “very talkative” person because of his willingness to “learn new things” and tendency to talk a lot about them.

Regarding his linguistic repertoire, Marco reported that he acquired Turkish as his mother tongue. Because he had developed a close engagement with English since his childhood, including his language teacher education and experiences abroad, he also highlighted his strong language skills in English. He also reported a basic level of proficiency in German and Chinese. He stated that he developed his basic German skills mainly through his Erasmus experiences and learned basic Chinese thanks to a course offered by his university in Turkey.

### **3.1.5. Melis: “I can’t tolerate being restricted at all”**

Melis was a 22-year-old prospective English language teacher when she decided to take part in this study in 2019. In the early moments of our first interview, she shared

that she was born in a small northwestern city in Turkey, where she completed her primary, secondary, and high school education before she was accepted to her current ELTE program in a major city in central Turkey. She described her primary and secondary education overall as “average” but referred to her high school as “one of the best schools in the city.” As she could not think of “remarkable stories” with regard to her initial schooling years, she did not talk much about her primary and secondary education during our interviews. Nevertheless, she noted briefly that during her early years of schooling, she developed a growing interest in “the world beyond Turkey” and also a desire to learn English.

In our first interview, Melis often underscored her lingering “success” in English throughout her formal education before attending the university. She, in particular, mentioned how she and her closest friends had been usually curious about “what the life [was] like abroad.” For instance, they would sometimes imagine themselves in different countries as a way to have fun. They were especially interested in the lives of several “world-renowned singers.” Having immersed herself in popular music culture that was available through TVs and, later on, the internet, Melis also highlighted, “[she] wanted to learn English so that [she] could sing in English.” Motivated by such desires and her ongoing “success” in English, she eventually decided to pursue the English language track at high school and started to prepare for relevant university programs. She reported that she worked so hard during those preparation years that she finally obtained the right to study at her current prestigious department. When she initiated her teacher education process, she was actually the first family member to live and study in another city. Two years after her departure, her brother also started to study at a university in another city, thereby contributing to the mobility history of the family.

Once her university education began, similar to Marco, Melis skipped the one-year language preparation program after taking an English proficiency test. In making her decision, she, too, was motivated mainly by the possible financial burden that an extra year could cause. She, thus, made a direct start with her language teacher education. In her third year, she decided to apply to the Erasmus program to learn more about “life beyond Turkey,” although she was not entirely sure about her decision to study

abroad. She simply wanted to see if she could pass the application process and become eligible to study abroad. Luckily, her attempt resulted with the chance to spend a semester at a university in Spain. However, when she shared the news with her family members, she faced strong resistance, especially from her father. The family was mainly concerned about possible financial issues because, as Melis suggested, their financial capacity was “not too good.” Thanks to her mother’s support, she, nevertheless, achieved to convince her father and received approval for her semester abroad. Besides being the first person in the family to study in another city for university education, she, then, was also the first person in the family to go abroad. Before that, “[she had] never even boarded a plane.”

After such a complex and, in her words, “psychologically wearing” process, Melis studied at a university in Spain in the fall semester of 2018. During her STSA period, she lived in a shared flat with another study participant, Zeynep, along with four other flatmates who were also studying at a university. None of them had Spanish citizenship, though. Having completed her Erasmus period, she spent one more year in her language teacher education program and graduated in January 2020 as a “High Honor” student.

Shortly after graduating, Melis returned to her hometown, where she started to work at a private language institution as a language instructor with a temporary contract. Although she felt dissatisfied with her monthly income, which was around the minimum wage, living with the family allowed her to meet her needs. By staying with the family, she also hoped to help them with their expenditures. When I checked back with her to complete the member-checking process in March 2022, she was, however, working as a language teacher at a state school in a different city. During the post-graduation period, she was also admitted, in her second attempt, to a master’s program in *English Language Teaching* at the same institution where she completed her initial teacher education program.

As mentioned briefly before, Melis viewed the class position of her family as middle: “they are neither rich nor poor, just the middle.” She explained that her father worked as a construction foreman while her mother managed the household and took care of

the children. She suggested that her father, with a moderate amount of income, was taking care of a relatively large family that included two members (she and her brother) studying in different cities. As mentioned earlier, she also noted that the family had a limited repertoire of mobility experiences. Similar to most of the other participants, her family, for example, “[did] not have a culture of going away for vacation.”

Due to her economic (in)capacity, like most of the other participants, Melis worked as a part-time language instructor at a private institution while pursuing her teacher education coursework. Viewing it as “the most convenient option for [her] budget,” she stayed at an affordable student dormitory offered by the university. As might be expected, she, too, reported no “obsession” with an expensive brand. Rather, she said that she strived to manage her budget to “survive the month.” Regarding it as a more affordable option, she also emphasized that she was fond of cooking her own meals that often included “healthy ingredients” rather than “exotic” or “luxury” foods. However, she added, she did not always prioritize “the health dimension” in her diet, admitting her sporadic consumption of fast food or sweets.

As part of her social activities or consumption, she liked going to concerts or theater with her friends and sitting at a café with them. Although going to the cinema with friends had also been among her favorite activities, she complained about not being able to afford it anymore because of the increasing economic downturns across the whole country. As to her individual leisure activities, Melis noted that she particularly enjoyed watching “a lot of TV series” and listening to her favorite songs. She also stated that she actively followed, through some channels on social media, national and international news and often pondered the country’s “fast-changing political agenda.” She, lastly, reported her growing interest in taking photographs, which started during her Erasmus period.

When I asked about her salient characteristics, she immediately listed several characteristics that she deemed “negative.” First, she identified herself as a “procrastinator” and “not too disciplined.” She, however, claimed that she could produce better results thanks to her “last-minute efforts” than spanning the work over a longer period. She also viewed herself as “indecisive,” suggesting that she often

found it difficult to generate clear goals and work toward achieving them. Contrary to my impression of her, she, in addition, portrayed herself as “someone unstable.” Following this, she particularly emphasized her intolerance toward restrictions: “I can’t tolerate being restricted at all. It really gets on my nerves when someone says, ‘you won’t do this or that’....” With these sentiments, she, in fact, alluded to the struggles she endured when she wanted to study at a university in another city or when she planned to participate in the Erasmus program.

In response to a question about her linguistic repertoire, Melis stressed, first, her native speaker competency in Turkish. She, then, highlighted her advanced skills in English, thanks to her years of involvement with it. In addition to her competency in these languages, she also underscored her growing competence in Spanish thanks to her Erasmus experiences and also the courses she took after she returned to Turkey. In our last interview, she proudly shared that her Spanish skills were “praised” by one of her colleagues whose mother tongue was Spanish. She also noted that during her re-entry period, she continued to use English and occasionally Spanish over virtual mediums to maintain her friendships that she established during her Erasmus period. As the last point about her language skills, she said that she took a course during her undergraduate program to learn basic French.

### **3.1.6. Zeynep: “I had to learn to take responsibilities at a very early age”**

Zeynep was a 23-year-old prospective English language teacher when she decided to participate in this study in 2019. When I inquired about her early childhood experiences in our first interview, she answered that she was born in the city where she completed her undergraduate program. However, right after her birth, her father received a job offer, which resulted in their move to a touristic town on the southwestern coast of Turkey. She, in fact, noted that her father had always been involved in jobs related to tourism. When she was born, his father, for instance, had been working at an upscale hotel. His new job in the south also required him to work at a hotel.

She maintained that her mother had always been an active worker as well. According to Zeynep, she, however, usually worked at temporary jobs such as shop assistance

that offered low wages and long hours of work. Zeynep, therefore, suggested that her parents usually had to accept poor job conditions and low wages, which meant that they often faced financial difficulties. Striving to manage the economic challenges, her parents could not escape a stressful lifestyle. The family, for instance, had such a busy life that “Sunday was [their] only day to spend together.” As an indirect consequence of these challenges, Zeynep found herself often experiencing psychological tensions, and she, as a child, even assumed that “this was the normal functioning of life.”

Zeynep was not the only child in the family. She also had a younger sister, who was two and a half years younger than her. While growing up, they both, for instance, wished to spend more time with their father. Because their parents usually came home late and tired, the siblings often tried to help their parents with the daily chores. As Zeynep was the older one, she also “had to learn to take responsibilities at a very early age.” For a long time, she had to take care of her sister while her parents were away. Since this was a salient feature in her life, her teacher at the primary school even sometimes called her “little mother.”

Later, her father decided to launch his own restaurant with a shareholder who used to be a co-worker. As Zeynep suggested, this was actually “the best move in his life,” even though he had to borrow “a large quantity of money.” As a result of this initiative, the family actually achieved to increase their overall financial capacity. The financial improvement had also made it easier for her mother to quit working and take a rest. Her mother, in fact, had been experiencing growing health conditions due to her “thorny” labor. She, for instance, used to work at jobs that required her to stand the whole day.

Having completed her primary and secondary education under a stressful familial climate, Zeynep succeeded in enrolling in the best high school in her town thanks to her earlier efforts. During her high school years, Zeynep pointed out, her goals were unstable and “always changing.” For a while, she, for example, wanted to become a dancer in the future. During those years, she also took an interest in ice skating and gymnastics. In addition, she “discovered” her talent in acting. Hoping to improve her acting skills, she even contacted a professional artist in the town but could not afford



the amount requested by her. As a result, she had to give up on this “dream,” which “eventually left a scar on her soul.” Nevertheless, she continued to improve her acting skills by watching professionals on TV and imitating them. After all, she remarked that she could have pursued a professional career in one of those areas if the opportunities in the town had been accessible to everyone rather than “few elites.”

Although Zeynep had been interested in a professional career in dance and theater for a while, her mother, knowing that Zeynep was "successful" in more than one subject, encouraged her to pursue a path that would result in "a more established profession." Despite responding positively to her mother's encouragement in that regard, Zeynep's struggle to stay focused on clear goals was still prevailing. For instance, one day she would imagine being a pediatrician, and the next day she was a math teacher. Common to all these imaginations, however, was a desire to “help others,” possibly because of her early responsibility in caring for her sister.

Surprisingly, English was Zeynep's least favorite subject in primary school. But, once she stepped into high school, she encountered “a very good English language teacher” who was “speaking a good English” and “interested in improving herself intellectually.” Thanks to her enthusiasm, Zeynep found herself enjoying English lessons more than ever. As a result, “[she] felt being drawn to studying English,” although she was also interested and “successful” in science and mathematics. Additionally, one of the teachers at the school explained that she could "work at different jobs" in the future because of her English proficiency. Having realized this possibility of “career flexibility” as well, she made her final decision to enroll in the English study group for her university preparation. After enrolling in the study group, Zeynep, however, could not continue with the same “enthusiastic” teacher for “some unknown reasons.” Having gone through a “mechanical” preparation that involved “certain test strategies,” she, nevertheless, achieved to obtain high scores in the university entrance exams and eventually gained a place in one of the most prestigious ELTE programs in Turkey.

Once she began studying at the university, Zeynep decided to improve her English skills to “a sufficient level.” Like most of the other participants, she, thus, also took

the one-year language preparation program offered by the university. Having completed the language preparation, she moved to her target language teacher education program. While studying at the program, along with her “success” in ongoing program requirements, Zeynep also achieved to join a theater or drama club affiliated with the university. Further, she found a chance to enroll in a dancing course and improve her dancing skills. After all, she somehow managed to sustain links to acting and dancing that had a long, complex history in her life.

While tackling the coursework in the program, she also became interested in the Erasmus program. Having been influenced primarily by the stories told by one of her close friends, she eventually found herself applying to the program. Despite her readiness to experience the program, she was, however, unable to benefit from it in her first attempt because of the high number of applicants. But she was admitted to the program in her second attempt. She was nominated to study at a university in Spain in the fall semester of 2018. During her Erasmus period, Zeynep stayed at a shared flat with another study participant, Melis, along with four other flatmates who were also studying at the university level. However, while she was abroad, Zeynep was unable to participate in social activities much, as she was taking medicines that negatively affected her mood and indirectly her socialization. In fact, she had already begun to take these medicines in order to cope with the psychological effects of a traumatic series of events that occurred before she undertook her STSA period (I do not disclose the details upon Zeynep’s request).

Having completed her Erasmus period, Zeynep spent one more year in her language teacher education program and graduated in January 2020 as a “High Honor” student. Before she graduated, she had already decided to become a language teacher at a state school. For this reason, she took a centralized placement exam and received a sufficient score. Almost eight months after graduating, she was finally placed at a state-funded primary school in a small disadvantaged town in the southeast region of Turkey. In the meantime, she had also been admitted to a master’s program in *Linguistics* at a university in central Turkey. Additionally, she married her boyfriend, who studied in the same undergraduate program with her. After marriage, both started to work in the same town as English language teachers. When I contacted her to

complete the member-checking process in March 2022, she was still working at the same school and working on her master's thesis.

As regards the details of her socioeconomic and sociocultural background, Zeynep noted that she needed to draw on multiple financial resources, such as scholarships, family support, and part-time work, in order to survive throughout her university education. While the scholarships and family support were usually sufficient for her main needs, she also often faced certain economic challenges. To deal with these challenges, Zeynep, for instance, worked in part-time jobs, especially in her last year in the program. In addition, she stayed at an affordable shared flat in her last year with four other people, one of whom was her boyfriend.

I also asked Zeynep to speak about the mobility history of her family, as this might be another relevant indicator of her socioeconomic and cultural background. In response to the inquiry, she immediately noted, “although I embarked on a journey as soon as I was born, it took a very long time to take the next journey” (referring to their move to another city right after her birth). She added, as a family who lived in a town attracting many tourists each year, they rarely took vacations to other places because her parents worked during summers in the same town. Zeynep and her sister, however, made significant contributions to the mobility repertoire of the family. Both, for example, studied at a university in another city. Zeynep, particularly, was the first member of the family to travel abroad through the Erasmus program. But Zeynep also underscored that until the second year of her university education, she had been convinced about “the impossibility of going abroad,” mainly because of the insufficient examples in her family or close social ties. When she achieved to break this “impossibility,” she actually made the other family members “happy” and “proud,” who supported her financially during her Erasmus period.

With regard to her consumption patterns, similar to the other participants, Zeynep also highlighted her preference for the most affordable products. She, thus, tried to be “a prudent consumer” by turning toward the products that could bring maximum benefits in terms of cost, use, and durability. As might be expected, she reported no “obsession”

with an expensive brand. However, like the other participants, she mentioned how she had been experiencing growing financial challenges due to the rising prices in Turkey.

Parallel to her strong interest in different forms of arts or acting, her favorite social activities included watching theater performances and movies with friends. Further, she often went to a dance club to have fun, as she enjoyed dancing. Although she used to do it more often in the past, Zeynep also liked going out occasionally with her friends.

Referring to her “artistic side” and “overall creativity,” Zeynep regarded herself as “competent when it comes to learning and using languages.” Regarding her linguistic repertoire, she, first, highlighted her native speaker status and creative skills in Turkish. She also underscored her advanced English skills that she acquired thanks to her educational history and experiences abroad. During her teacher education process, Zeynep added, she took several courses to learn German. She, thus, viewed herself as a basic user of German, as well. Further, she completed two courses during her Erasmus period to learn Spanish and tried to immerse herself in the local context in Spain. As a result, she claimed to have improved her Spanish skills to the point that she could hold a basic conversation with local people there. During her re-entry period, she actually continued to learn Spanish by taking two more courses. Therefore, she suggested, she would soon reach an intermediate level of proficiency in Spanish.

### **3.2. A Synopsis of the Participants’ Backgrounds**

Having offered detailed information about each participant's background, I offer a brief discussion or synopsis of several convergent and divergent points in the participants’ backgrounds. Therefore, this section will serve as a transition point into scrutinizing larger themes that address research questions. Since the individual accounts focused mainly on childhood experiences, educational histories, main identity dimensions, self-perceived personal characteristics, previous mobility experiences, socioeconomic profiles, and language repertoires, I tackle similar points here and synthesize them into larger patterns. As I highlighted before, I reserve more detailed and complex discussions about their STSA experiences, imagined futures, and

interpretations of the current state of the world for the next section, where I discuss the final themes.

At first glance, participants seemed to come from unique family backgrounds. While the families differed in terms of, for example, ethnic background, household members, job profiles, level of education, place of residence, and marital history, they, however, converged on several salient features. The first point of convergence was the socioeconomic capacity of the families. Looking closely, I could see that none of the families occupied a privileged position in the economic and social structure of the country, although they might represent different strata of the middle class. But, despite their modest economic capacity, they never ceased to provide financial support to their children's educational activities, including undergraduate education and STSA participation. These periods, nevertheless, posed several economic challenges for the participants, mostly because of their moderate financial background.

Throughout their teacher education studies, most participants, in fact, needed to depend on other economic resources in addition to the family support. Otherwise, they suggested, economic concerns would occupy a larger space in their lives than their academic concerns, possibly endangering their personal and professional growth. Therefore, they appreciated the scholarships granted to them by several organizations. Despite the family support and scholarships, they still frequently found it necessary to create an extra financial resource to meet their needs, save some money, or "survive each month," as Dilara highlighted. Thus, all of them (except for Ayşe) worked at casual jobs during the course of their university education, and Marco even did so during his high school education. However, despite all their efforts, I could still observe that their economic concerns were being exacerbated by the "rising prices in Turkey," especially as they approached graduation.

With long-lasting and growing economic concerns, all of them actually reported having developed certain economic rationalities that included such strategies as "using the existing resources wisely" and "saving money." They, therefore, generally highlighted their preference for "affordable" activities and products. They, for instance, clearly stated that they had never developed any obsession with certain

brands that would exceed their already limited budget. All of them also preferred low-cost and small-sized accommodations that could be shared with some other students. In addition, they usually opted for affordable and healthy food and chose to cook their own meals, which cost a lot less than the meals “eaten outside.”

Similar economic rationalities could also be observed in their preferred social activities. They reported, for example, that they could only come together with their friends once in a while, so long as their budgets and schedules allowed. Nevertheless, most of them seemed to have spent significant time on their desires, hobbies, and social gatherings while studying at the university. Marco, for instance, played in an American football team; and Zeynep became a member of a student theater club. Even though the other participants did not engage with such specific youth groups, they could also spend time on their (social) interests such as going to the gym, reading books, singing, watching movies or plays, and so on. Despite several economic challenges, they, therefore, could still find time and resources to enjoy their (social) hobbies and interests.

Combined with their work schedules, the teacher education requirements, however, often seemed “more stressful than it should have been,” as Melis suggested. In fact, throughout the research process, I had the impression that they had gone through a highly stressful undergraduate life. That is, they had been trying simultaneously to meet their basic needs, learn or improve necessary skills for the job market, and enjoy personal interests or social activities. Nevertheless, they noted that they had already become “adept” at navigating such challenges thanks to several hurdles that they had overcome previously. For example, in the past, they had to “deal with the economic hardships in the family,” “experience certain health issues and social marginalization,” “go through a stressful period of university preparation,” and “move to different cities.” They, therefore, suggested that they had already developed a certain level of resistance toward potential economic and social challenges thanks to their previous trajectories.

On the other hand, based on their statements, I noticed that the level of mobility capital in the families influenced how the participants experienced the application processes

for the Erasmus program. For example, Dilara and Marco had visited abroad before their Erasmus period. Mainly because of these previous experiences, they did not confront any doubt or resistance from either their family or themselves when they made the decision to study abroad. Similarly, Ayşe did not hold any serious concerns about applying to the program thanks partly to her brother's previous experiences abroad that "normalized the idea of abroad in the family." Gözde and Melis, however, were a bit nervous about their upcoming Erasmus experience mainly due to the limited mobility repertoire of themselves and/or family members. Melis, in particular, had to spend a considerable amount of time convincing her parents to let her go abroad. Zeynep also had some reservations about the Erasmus period because she was the first member of her family to go abroad. Nevertheless, she was supported by her family members in her decision and application.

In addition to identifying the notable role of mobility capital in their STSA participation, I was also able to discern several noteworthy patterns in the participants' educational trajectories that could be linked to certain neoliberal elements. One of these patterns was about their decision to enroll in the language track or in the English study group for university preparation. Most of the participants clearly indicated that they chose this track mainly because of their self-perceived incompetence in other subject areas such as mathematics and natural sciences. In the meantime, they also had been enjoying studying English. Despite their enjoyment, most of them, however, also implied that they would have considered concentrating on those other subjects if they had felt competent enough. Thus, they would have been able to pursue more "prestigious" and/or "well-paying" careers (e.g., dentistry, engineering, law, medicine, and pharmacy) than the options available in the language track (e.g., English language teaching, English literature, linguistics, and translation). In other words, they suggested that a career in language teaching might not be associated with affluence and societal respect.

Based on these points, I contend that the participants tended to test possible career options against their existing capacities and also dominant neoliberal discourses of employability, social prestige, and income generation. Based on the interview data, in fact, I was able to observe that some participants perpetuated similar neoliberal

discourses in the rest of their educational trajectories. While preparing for the university entrance exams, Zeynep, for example, was pleased to find out that her career options would not be restricted to language teaching once she graduated from an ELTE program. Marco, similarly, decided to study at an ELTE program because, he thought, it would help him develop acquaintance with a wide range of fields, including English language teaching, English literature, and linguistics. Thus, he would be able to choose from multiple career paths after graduation. In general, even prior to their university education, the participants were acquainted with the neoliberal discourses of employability and flexibility, which I discuss further under the main themes.

Having engaged with such instrumental discourses and rationalities that prioritized economic dimensions, employability, and prestige, most participants did not seem to have developed a language teacher identity prior to their university education. In fact, Zeynep was the only participant whose interest was skewed toward the teaching profession while studying at high school, but her interest was still not clearly oriented toward “teaching English.” All the participants, then, did not consider “teaching English” as a possible career for a long time, including the initial period in their language teacher education program. Gözde, for example, suggested that her high school teachers encouraged her to imagine herself studying at “the best universities” in Turkey but not as a student of a particular language teacher education program. Guided by such broad imaginings that centered on “studying at a prestigious university,” they, therefore, mainly aimed to receive high scores from the university entrance exams. As a result, I note that they spent, as Zeynep described it, “a mechanical preparation period” characterized by high-stakes examinations, competition, employability concerns, insufficient guidance, and naïve career imaginings.

Despite their apparently scarce engagement with developing language teacher identities, all of them, nevertheless, achieved to graduate from the language teacher education program with a high CGPA. As they approached the end of their teacher education processes, they also found themselves attracted to certain language teaching positions at various types of institutions. In fact, I discuss this point in detail under the



second main theme (see *Constructing the Future: Flexibility, Multiplicity, Precarity and Uncertainty*).

Last but not least, I identified several salient features with regard to the participants' linguistic repertoire and their engagement with certain language learning activities. First, all the participants navigated a complex and evolving repertoire of linguistic skills to communicate in various contexts. Second, the English language occupied a significant role in their lives, while Turkish was the dominant language of communication in their daily lives (also Circassian in Gözde's case). As they were preparing to become an English language teacher, they used mainly English in their undergraduate studies and also during their STSA period. Once they returned from the Erasmus program, they used English to stay in contact with their friends abroad. Despite their long-lasting and frequent engagement with English, I also noted that most participants still had reservations about their English proficiency, particularly about their speaking skills. They usually attributed this self-perceived weakness to the assessment methods employed in the university entrance examinations and also to their own "insufficient" efforts.

Although they appreciated their STSA experiences in terms of improving speaking skills in English, they also complained about the limited opportunities for "practicing English" in those countries (Germany and Spain) where English was not the primary medium of communication. As to the dominant language(s) spoken in their STSA contexts (German and Spanish), participants reported varying levels of engagement or efforts of learning. Ayşe and Gözde, for instance, did not spend much time improving their Spanish skills, whereas Dilara, Melis, and Zeynep noted several significant self-initiated efforts in learning and practicing these languages. Marco also shared several (yet few) experiences that highlighted his efforts to use German in his daily life during his STSA period. Overall, their linguistic repertoire was not limited to their native tongue(s) and English. They also sought to learn other languages for reasons such as compulsory coursework, STSA, personal interest, and better job prospects. In fact, I explore these STSA-related language issues in greater detail under the first main theme. As a conclusion to this synopsis, through which I aimed to facilitate the transition into the larger themes, I offer a brief biodata of the participants (Table 5).

Table 5. Biodata of the participants

Participant (pseudonym)	Age (in 2019)	Gender	Study Abroad Destination (in the fall semester of 2018)	Experiences Abroad Before the Erasmus Program	Linguistic Repertoire	Current Affiliation (in 2022)	Current Graduate Program and Stage (in 2022)
<b>Ayşe</b>	22	Female	Spain	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish (native tongue)</li> <li>• English (proficient user)</li> <li>• German (basic user)</li> <li>• Spanish (basic user)</li> </ul>	English language teacher at a state-funded primary school	MSc in Cognitive Science (thesis stage)
<b>Dilara</b>	23	Female	Germany	Took an Interrail trip one year before the Erasmus period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish (native tongue)</li> <li>• English (proficient user)</li> <li>• German (independent user)</li> </ul>	Temporary language instructor at a foundation university	MSc in Educational Administration and Planning (thesis stage)
<b>Gözde</b>	23	Female	Spain	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Circassian and Turkish (native tongues)</li> <li>• English (proficient user)</li> <li>• French (basic user)</li> <li>• Spanish (basic user)</li> </ul>	Temporary language instructor at a foundation university	None

Participant	Age	Gender	Country	Erasmus Experience	Language Proficiency	Current Role	Education
<b>Marco</b>	22	Male	Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid a one-month visit to his relatives in Germany one year before the Erasmus period</li> <li>• Worked in England as a bartender for two consecutive summers before the Erasmus period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish (native tongue)</li> <li>• English (proficient user)</li> <li>• German (basic user)</li> <li>• Chinese (basic user)</li> </ul>	Temporary language instructor at a foundation university	MA in English Language Teaching (coursework stage)
				None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish (native tongue)</li> <li>• English (proficient user)</li> <li>• Spanish (independent user)</li> <li>• French (basic user)</li> </ul>	English language teacher at a state-funded primary school	MA in English Language Teaching (coursework stage)
<b>Melis</b>	22	Female	Spain	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish (native tongue)</li> <li>• English (proficient user)</li> <li>• Spanish (independent user)</li> <li>• French (basic user)</li> </ul>	English language teacher at a state-funded primary school	MA in English Language Teaching (coursework stage)
<b>Zeynep</b>	23	Female	Spain	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish (native tongue)</li> <li>• English (proficient user)</li> <li>• Spanish (independent user)</li> <li>• German (basic user)</li> </ul>	English language teacher at a state-funded primary school	MA in Linguistics (thesis stage)

### 3.3. Themes

#### 3.3.1. Constructing the Short-Term Study Abroad: A Polydimensional and Disproportionate Experience

[Erasmus] was a plus in every respect, plus academically, plus... I don't know, I thought it would help me improve my speaking skills in English, though I couldn't achieve it much... It would appear on the CV... There would be an opportunity to live in another country, visit abroad, travel, have fun... For me, Erasmus had many advantages in every sense. (Ayşe, 2nd Interview)

So, my motivations were... my close friends who went abroad before... to visit a foreign country, see Europe, meet different cultures, make new friends... And I was also wondering about the education system in a different country, although such academic concerns were not on the top of my list. Also, it looks good on the CV, which was another motivation for me... (Gözde, 2nd Interview)

Erasmus is a huge plus because you are studying abroad... Speaking of our conditions here in Turkey, I think it's very difficult to go abroad, and studying in another country is even more difficult... I delay my graduation due to such a large plus... (Marco, 2nd Interview)

As these quotations may attest, the participants, through their statements, constructed a multifaceted or polydimensional STSA experience. During our interviews, they often mentioned that before applying to or “competing” for it, the Erasmus program appeared as a highly attractive experience, mainly because of its imagined affordances for adventure, fun, travel, and employment. They also suggested that their actual Erasmus experiences confirmed this attractive image of the program, especially in terms of fun and adventure. They, thus, described an overall “satisfying” or positive STSA experience, although all of them delayed their graduation and most of them mentioned several challenges that they faced during and after their Erasmus period.

Behind the positive, entertaining image of the program, they, then, constructed a complex Erasmus experience with multiple dimensions or discourses (but varying in weight). In fact, based on their multidimensional constructions, I constructed eight distinct as well as overlapping dimensions of their STSA experiences (Figure 4). I generated these dimensions particularly through the analysis of the statements that captured how the participants described and framed their STSA experiences under different data topics, such as decision-making, motivations, preparation, self-

perceived outcomes, notable incidents, and re-entry (for more information about the data generation and analysis, please refer to the previous chapter).

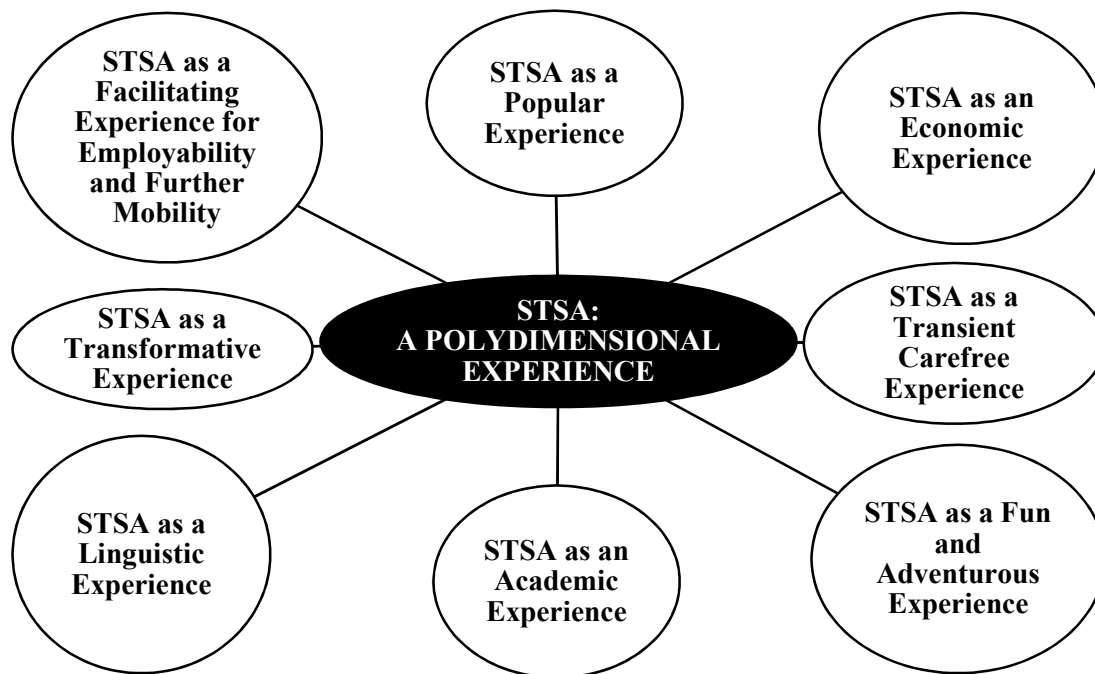


Figure 4. The participants’ polydimensional STSA construction

Although all the participants provided statements that indicated their involvement with each dimension given in Figure 4, I also revealed that only certain dimensions acquired a dominant status in their overall STSA discourses and experiences. Therefore, I concluded that the participants constructed STSA as a polydimensional as well as a disproportionate experience in which certain dimensions had a dominant status while other dimensions received a relatively marginal status. In what follows, I explore each of these dimensions in turn. Then, I revisit the participants’ polydimensional and disproportionate construction of STSA from a holistic interpretive perspective.

### 3.3.1.1. STSA as a Popular Experience

Based on a close analysis of their statements regarding how they heard and decided to apply for the Erasmus program, I realized that the participants sought after any affordable opportunity for “going abroad” in the first place, rather than targeting a single program. They suggested that their desire for an international experience emerged especially after noticing the possibility as well as popularity of such

experiences for university students. For example, when Zeynep first stepped into her university life, she started to hear about several “famous” opportunities for going abroad such as “*Erasmus and Work and Travel*.” Impressed by several “fun” stories attached to these opportunities, she started to consider applying to them. Several other participants, such as Melis and Marco, also heard about “the possibility of going abroad” at an earlier stage. They were told at high school that “university students have chances to go abroad thanks to some international programs.” In fact, after a while, the participants began to see concrete examples of “going abroad” in their close social networks at the university. Ayşe provided one such example:

The people around me started to go abroad. Tuğçe, for example, was one of them. She was my best friend at the time. She had an incredible travel experience (laughs), had a lot of fun... She went to Poland [for Erasmus] by the way... She talked about her experiences so wonderfully that, I think, I got some inspiration from her... (Ayşe, 2nd Interview)

Like Ayşe’s “inspiration,” Gözde also mentioned that almost all of her close friends had somehow gone abroad before she decided to apply for the Erasmus program. Having been influenced by their experiences, she also desired to experience an available form of international mobility:

Çisem went to the Netherlands [for Erasmus]. She was my best friend. Although I got a little upset when she left, I felt better when I saw she was happy and having fun there. Then I said to myself, “I’ll do this too.” I mean, I looked at the people and saw how they could do that... Another friend of mine also went to the US via Work and Travel, so everyone around me went abroad at once, and I felt as if I was the only one who stayed in Turkey, so I said, “I should go too.” (Gözde, 2nd Interview)

Although Dilara did not mention any specific name or friend, she also pointed out that such mobility experiences were highly popular and desirable within her social context. She noted that these experiences were being shared not only through word of mouth but also through social media. For example, when I asked about her first acquaintance with the Erasmus program, she answered, “I’m not sure when I first heard it, but I can tell you that it’s a common thing, you know, you can see on social media how much fun people are having [during the STSA period].” It is worth noting that their sources of “inspiration” or information usually shared “fun” stories (see also *STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience*).

As might be expected, after a certain point, the participants decided to benefit from the available or affordable opportunities in order to experience their own "international adventures." Marco and Dilara were actually the only participants who had been able to accumulate certain international experiences before undertaking the Erasmus experience. While Marco's experience in the UK was built largely on "saving money" and "developing speaking skills in English," Dilara's *Interrail* experience was mainly oriented to traveling within Europe. Later on, both Dilara and Marco wanted to extend their nascent mobility experiences to the realm of student mobility, or in other words, to the Erasmus program. Meanwhile, the other four participants had also been acting strategically to gain eligibility, in particular, for the Erasmus program. Ayşe and Gözde, for example, worked hard to raise their CGPA and become eligible for the Erasmus grant, a grant only available to a certain number of applicants who stand out with their CGPA and English language proficiency scores.

Based on their statements, in fact, I identified three "popular" options that they could use to experience (further) international mobility: (1) *Work and Travel USA* that allows higher education students to stay and work in the US for several months (particularly in summer), (2) *The Interrail Pass* that offers unlimited rail travels within Europe for a certain period, and (3) *The Erasmus+ Program* that provides a modest amount of grant for studying at another university in Europe for one semester or two semesters. In addition, as in Marco's case, they could find a part-time job in any country through their own resources or networks, though this was a rare practice in this context. However, among all these options available in the research context, I observed that STSA or the Erasmus program stood out as "the most popular ticket for going abroad," as Gözde put it.

Marco noted that the Erasmus program was "a highly desired experience" among his peers, including the study participants, because "[it provided] both money and the opportunity to live abroad for a while." He added that while "living abroad" through this program, they could also maintain their student status without having to set "ambitious" academic goals. The participants, thus, approached the Erasmus program as the most "affordable" and coveted option for "going abroad," mainly thanks to its modest financial support, relatively longer duration (one semester or two semesters),

academically undemanding structure, and convenience for fun and travel (see also *STSA as an Academic Experience* and *STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience*).

Although the participants constructed one of the major dimensions of their Erasmus experience based on the discourses of “popularity,” I also should note that they did not confine their program motivations only to this dimension. For instance, they also shared motivations such as “experiencing another education system or academic setting,” “meeting new people,” “exploring a new culture,” “learning a new language,” and “improving English skills.” However, when I probed further, they had difficulty in elaborating on these common and broad reasons. That is, they were unable to offer clear and sophisticated objectives in those regards. Melis, for example, stated that she primarily “tested her luck” to see whether she would be accepted to the program. Dilara and Marco submitted their application forms hastily the night before the deadline. Therefore, I note that most of the participants, before benefiting from the program, did not go much beyond the discourses that marked the program as a “popular opportunity for going abroad” and as a carrier of several ungrounded “promises.” Similar discourses, in fact, were also evident in their destination or university choices.

While evaluating the university options for their Erasmus period, all the participants drew on their broad perceptions of particular countries and cities rather than focusing on particular university contexts. Zeynep, for instance, said that she did not begin looking for information about the receiving university and program until after being nominated for the Erasmus program. Before that, she “didn’t even focus on the city,” she “chose the country.” Marco also pointed out that when he was accepted to the program, he “didn’t even know where exactly [the receiving university] was.” Ayşe, likewise, focused mainly on her self-perceived image of Sweden and wished to study there (but she was accepted to one of her secondary choices, Spain): “I don’t know why I wanted Sweden so much. There were no specific reasons. I think I like the Scandinavian countries. I like cold weather. I love winter, I love the life there....” While listing her preferences, Melis also resorted to a stereotyped image of Spain and hoped that the people in Spain would be “similar to Turkish people, warm and friendly.”



In the light of these examples, I interpret that their country choices were largely shaped by broad and vague reasons rather than specific motivations toward a particular university program or a particular local destination. In fact, they were primarily interested in economically viable country options so that they could afford fun and travel opportunities during the Erasmus period. For example, during our interviews, I learned that Poland was one of the most popular Erasmus destinations in the research context due to its geographical location, which they considered to be “good” for traveling within Europe, and its more affordable economic conditions compared to, for example, the Western European countries. For these reasons, Dilara, Gözde, and Marco indicated that the most successful applicants from their undergraduate program tended to study in Poland for their Erasmus period. The popularity of this destination, therefore, suggested strong clues about the dominance of adventurous and economic elements in the constructions of the Erasmus experience in this particular teacher education context (see also *STSA as an Economic Experience* and *STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience*).

Regarding their perceptions and expectations of the Erasmus program, I also noticed that the participants were primarily influenced by their informal social networks rather than by teacher educators, academic programs, and policy discourses. In fact, the participants (except for Marco, who viewed the Erasmus program as mainly a geopolitical project contributing to “a unified Europe”) conceded that they gave little thought to “the official aims” of the Erasmus program. Ayşe and Dilara, for instance, avoided discussing the official aims of the program and admitted that they had not thought about it before. They, therefore, offered several fragmented and evasive statements in that regard. Consequently, I inferred that the policy discourses or official objectives of STSA programs were an unfamiliar discursive field for most of the participants. Melis even downplayed the relevance of the official aims of the Erasmus program:

[Erasmus] gives you money and says, “go and study there, do whatever you do, then come back,” isn't it great? [...] I don't know who cares about [the official aims of the program], but for me, it was a very nice experience, you know, you see a new city, a new school... It was fun to see them, so... (Melis, 2nd Interview)

Therefore, the absence or downplay of thinking about the official aims or discourses also corroborated my argument that before experiencing it, the participants tended to view the Erasmus program as a popular means to “go abroad” and obtain the entertainment and traveling opportunities associated with it.

### **3.3.1.2. STSA as an Economic Experience**

As I implied earlier, the participants often emphasized that the economic factors were a major dimension in their STSA or Erasmus experience. At several points during our interviews, the participants, for example, highlighted that in the absence of the support that offered them 500 Euros for each month of the Erasmus period, spending a semester abroad would be unaffordable. In other words, they suggested that their socioeconomic background alone would be insufficient to undertake a semester abroad. Marco explained:

I can say that we don't have enough money to go to Europe, I'm sorry, but this is the truth... So, we're literally hungry for such opportunities. But, you know, a European person does not need such an opportunity to travel. Let me give an example... I had an Italian roommate during the Erasmus. After completing her university education, she did her internship in [a city in England], then took a gap year and traveled to many countries. She did that without having to work, you know, drawing on her family support. I imagine, in my case, if I said, “mom, I've finished my undergrad program, and now I take a gap year and travel to the Scandinavian countries,” she would throw slippers at me (laughs)... As I mentioned, we don't have the means to travel to Europe on our own. (Marco, 3rd Interview)

The participants, therefore, suggested that the availability of financial support contributed to the popularity and accessibility of the Erasmus program in this particular context in Turkey. It is worth noting that 80% of the grant is non-refundable, while 20% is awarded upon the successful completion of at least 20 (out of 30) European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System credits (1 ECTS = 25-30 study hours in a semester). “Success” in that regard is defined as achieving at least the minimum passing grade for a course.

Although the grant was one of the major sources of motivation for undertaking the Erasmus period, the participants, however, described it mainly as the financial “backbone” rather than the sole resource that could cover the entire Erasmus

experience. Dilara and Zeynep, for instance, pointed to the necessity of seeking and receiving additional support:

Erasmus is a really nice experience, but the grant, you know, is not always enough. I guess it's more affordable for those who go to Poland, but for us who went to Germany... I can't say the same... (Dilara, 2nd Interview)

I think I wouldn't be able to do that if I had to rely completely on my own resources. I received 500 Euros for each month. This is an amount perhaps equal to the monthly income of my whole family, especially when I multiply it by eight (referring to the exchange rate of the Euro to the Turkish lira at the time). So, naturally, it would be impossible for me... But, for example, when I added something like 100 Euros per month to the grant, I could easily make both ends meet. (Zeynep, 3rd Interview)

Likewise, Dilara also pointed out that she received the grant only after settling in the context abroad, meaning that she did not have access to the grant when, for example, applying for the visa, buying flight tickets, and arranging health insurance. As part of the visa application process, they actually had to provide certain financial proof of funds to prove the adequacy of their economic resources for the period abroad (note that this requirement was not present in the preparation of the students coming from the EU member states). Although they could easily provide a document that showed the total amount of the grant, the process was still (financially) demanding. Dilara explained:

While dealing with the visa process, they asked for financial guarantees, a certain amount of money that you have to show in a bank account, something like 720 Euros per month. My father helped me prove a certain amount, I mean, there were about 20,000 liras in the bank, but I guess this wasn't enough for what they wanted. So, I went to our [international cooperation office] and received a document stating that I would receive a grant. Then, thanks to it, we solved the problem... It was indeed a frustrating requirement because I hadn't received my grant yet, and my father perhaps would prefer to send me a certain amount on a monthly basis rather than all at once... So, they want a guarantee of everything from you, you know, you can't leave it to chance, you can't just say that my father will support me when I'm there (laughs)... (Dilara, 2nd Interview)

Clearly, they had to prove a significant amount of money through their own economic means to prepare and qualify for the STSA period. They, therefore, underscored that they had to seek financial support from their families or close social networks for the

enactment of this coveted experience. To convince her family on this matter, Ayşe interestingly drew on the discourses of “educational mobility”:

[My parents] took out a loan for me to spend during my period abroad... They helped me financially because this was something about my education. But if I had told them, for example, something like, “I’m going on a one-month vacation,” they could’ve had some objections... (Ayşe, 2nd Interview)

Although family members were the main source of “additional support” for this “educational journey,” some participants also engaged in casual employment before their STSA period in order to supplement their grant and spend a “stress-free” or “enjoyable” Erasmus period. In preparation for her Erasmus experience, Gözde, for instance, worked at a chain supermarket for a few months and sought to build a “sufficient” budget:

After learning that I was accepted for Erasmus, my family started to save money for it. At that time, I was also offering private language lessons to, I guess, three people. So, I was able to save some money thanks to those lessons... Although we saved a reasonable amount of money, when we exchanged it for Euro, it didn’t have much value. So, we started to think about what to do next... My father considered taking out a loan from a bank but then decided not to do it. We, afterward, decided to borrow some money from my uncle... In the end, I also decided to work at [a supermarket], which was one of the most interesting experiences in my life... (Gözde, 2nd Interview)

Through casual employment and family support, Gözde suggested that she managed to support herself financially during her Erasmus period and even traveled to many other cities in Europe. Likewise, right before his STSA experience, Marco worked at a restaurant in the UK with the intention of “saving money for Erasmus.” He also reported that he spent his STSA period without experiencing any significant financial challenges. In fact, none of the participants reported a major financial difficulty for their Erasmus period. They, however, mentioned several “money-saving strategies” that they needed to employ during the STSA period in order to survive and also travel or enjoy the moments of pleasure made possible by the program (see also *STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience*).

Melis and Zeynep, for example, decided to share a room during their Erasmus period in order to manage their budget or spare some money for other possible expenses,

including adventure and entertainment. Despite their efforts to save money, these two participants still reported that they could not travel much because of their limited budget and “living in an expensive city in Spain.” Even when they managed to travel, most of the participants often had to monitor their budgets, as Marco suggested: “While we were traveling, we always kept an eye on our phones to see how much money we had left...” Some previous Erasmus students even warned Gözde to manage her budget well so that she could save money for traveling: “They warned me to be always thrifty... So, before going there, I thought it was a big sin to eat out. They prepared me in such a way that I was programmed to spend money only on traveling.” Ayşe and Dilara, similarly, preferred to cook their own meals during their Erasmus period to save money for adventurous and entertaining activities that, they suggested, were highly tempting during their ephemeral period abroad.

### **3.3.1.3. STSA as a Transient Carefree Experience**

As I suggested in the previous sub-themes, the participants initially approached the Erasmus program as a popular international experience that promised them a modest grant, undemanding coursework, and convivial experiences. In addition, they already knew that failing the courses during the Erasmus period would not cause any harm to their CGPA; they would only forfeit their chance to receive the remaining 20% of the grant (see also *STSA as an Academic Experience*). They, thus, suggested that they did not have to worry much about the academic outcomes of the Erasmus program because their only “loss” would be delaying their graduation, which they had already accepted when they decided to participate in the program. They, then, also framed the program as an appealing opportunity for having a “break” from their “stressful” and “boring” lives, especially amid the challenging academic demands of their undergraduate program. Ayşe and Marco illustrated this “carefree” dimension of the program through the following statements:

I didn't mind prolonging my graduation [because of the Erasmus program]; we'll work for the rest of our lives anyway. (Ayşe, 3rd Interview)

I really loved the life there. I mean, it was nice, it was carefree, but the stress here... As if it was not real (laughs) [...] No responsibility, nothing serious I had to do... Nor did I have a concern for money. At worst, I would not get the rest of

the grant [if I failed the courses] ... well... I had nothing to lose (laughs)... (Ayşe, 4th Interview)

... let me tell you honestly... How is Erasmus viewed in our country? It's seen as an escape to abroad or a vacation for which the expenses are covered by the EU... This is how it's viewed. (Marco, 3rd Interview)

Even though she was one of the participants who was openly critical of several consumerist discourses in a “typical” Erasmus experience (see *STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience*), Zeynep also expressed that she had been seeking a “relaxed” environment for a temporary period, mainly because of her negative perceptions of the political issues and rising economic downturns in Turkey. Therefore, she, too, viewed the Erasmus program as an opportunity to take a break from her life in Turkey.

Although the program appeared as a “carefree” experience thanks to low academic expectations and common convivial elements, it was still a transient experience. That is, I suggest that the participants' STSA experiences were also typified by *liquidity*. Zeynep, for instance, decided to join a student club in Spain to maintain her interest in acting. However, she was unable to become a full member of the community, mainly because of her temporary stay and also insufficient Spanish skills. In fact, some other participants, such as Ayşe and Gözde, welcomed the idea of developing ephemeral social relations during the STSA period and even appreciated the transient or liquid characteristics of the program that rendered stability and commitment almost impossible:

Being there for a temporary period, of course, influences many things. For example, I wouldn't get unhappy at all if someone ditched or upset me (laughs)... I mean, you can meet someone else next week, or you can get to know another person two days later. Or, you can plan to visit another city three days later. So, everything seems to start all over again. Well... I really liked it (laughs)... (Ayşe, 5th Interview)

There're always new people around... You can meet them all the time, as there's a very international atmosphere there. For example, assuming that you're bored, you can always find an interesting event. Attend, for example, a Couchsurfing (a social networking and hospitality exchange service) event, you'll surely find new people there... (Gözde, 4th Interview)

With these statements, Ayşe and Gözde postulated that they did not have to commit themselves to a social relationship or a stable (academic) life there. This way, they could allocate a large amount of time to entertaining or consumerist practices in the STSA context (see also *STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience*). The *transient* and *carefree* condition, however, did not always result in pleasant outcomes. For example, some of the participants, such as Dilara, Gözde, and Melis, developed certain concerns about the “fate” of their already established “Erasmus friendships”:

You won't see most of those people again. So knowing this, it feels really bad when you leave. You say “bye bye,” and it's really your last “bye bye” ... Okay, you know, you will stay in touch with most of them on Instagram, Facebook, and so on, but your communication also fades away in time. Maybe I'll visit them sometime in the future. (Dilara, 4th Interview)

We were very attached to each other; I mean... There was a family atmosphere in that house; there were six people... Of course, we had some troubles among us, but everyone was tightly connected to each other. So, everyone was so sad when we had only one month before our departure... (Gözde, 4th Interview)

She (one of her closest friends during her stay) was an excellent person with good intentions, she was also very sweet. We met for the last time before I left, and it was such a strange feeling to know that I might not see her again in my life... (Melis, 3rd Interview)

STSA, therefore, was not a completely ephemeral or forgettable experience for them. They, however, suggested that they needed to treat it as a *fait accompli* so that they could move on with their responsibilities and re-engage with their “old and new concerns” that awaited them in the original context, as Marco highlighted (see also the next main theme, *Constructing the Future: Flexibility, Multiplicity, Precarity and Uncertainty*). Nevertheless, through their statements and social media posts, I observed that some of the participants (i.e., Dilara, Gözde, and Marco) continued to hold sporadic interactions with their “Erasmus friends” during their re-entry period. In their post-Erasmus interactions, they frequently expressed how much they missed each other and the Erasmus period. The re-entry period, in fact, appeared as a productive focus of analysis with regard to understanding how the participants framed their STSA experience as a whole.

When I asked them to describe their Erasmus experience using a metaphor, all the participants suggested an extraordinary or a “dreamlike” experience, pointing once again to the transient and carefree dimension of the program. In one of our dialogues, Zeynep, for example, illustrated a sharp distinction between “the Erasmus period” and “the post-Erasmus period”:

*Zeynep:* I think [the Erasmus period] was like... you know, it's spring, and you walk down the road, you suddenly catch a smell, a nice smell of flowers, but you also know it'll pass... It was similar to this, a sweet smell that came out of nowhere...

*I:* But “you also know it'll pass” ...

*Zeynep:* I know it'll pass; it actually passed.

*I:* It's a temporary, sweet smell, interesting... So let's do the same for the post-Erasmus.

*Zeynep:* We're going over the edge of a dumpster (laughs)... (Zeynep, 4th Interview)

The other participants also offered similar metaphors that marked the Erasmus experience as an extraordinary or unusual period (e.g., “fairy tale,” “utopia,” “sweet dream,” and “unusual road”):

It was like a fairy tale... It was actually too good; I didn't really experience anything bad. (Dilara, 4th Interview)

I can say that it was like a utopia... (Gözde, 4th Interview)

It was like dreaming in a very comfortable bed. By “comfortable,” I mean the financial support (grant) given to us because, otherwise, you can't have a sweet dream when you have a bumpy train ride. It was a dream like that... (Marco, 4th Interview)

You're walking on a road (referring to her life prior to the program), but the road is clear, the road is straight, but you say, “I'll go to another road, I want to try something new,” and you take another direction [for Erasmus]. Once you've tried, you come back but not because you want to... (Melis, 4th Interview)

Likewise, Ayşe also underscored the program as an unusually “independent” experience. She compared her program experience to “a personal music playlist.” With this metaphor, she suggested that she had a sense of “control” or “flexibility” over her



life during the Erasmus period. She, thus, implied that the elastic, “controllable” structure of the program made her feel good:

You know, it happens in movies; we hear different background music depending on the mood. I wish it could also happen in real life, but in a personalized way, in sync with each person’s mood. Only you can hear it (laughs)... It was as if I was making my own playlist while in Erasmus. It would always play the things I wanted. But things changed when I came here. I feel as if another playlist is playing, and I'm listening to it. (Ayşe, 5th Interview)

Before concluding this sub-theme, I reiterate that the Erasmus program offered many “attractions” or “promises” to the participants, such as receiving financial support, having a break from “stressful” or “busy” lives, traveling within Europe, having “fun,” meeting new people, and developing language skills. While engaging in these “attractions” or “promises,” they could also maintain their student status without being burdened with academic demands. Confronted by a sudden shift from “stress” and “routine” to “carefreeness,” “fun,” and “adventure,” they found themselves in a transient “dreamlike” period. Once “returned back to reality” (as in Marco’s words), most of them, however, suggested that they started to miss their “flexible” and “joyous” lives back in the STSA context, especially when perturbed by increased concerns and responsibilities (see also the next main theme, *Constructing the Future: Flexibility, Multiplicity, Precarity and Uncertainty*). They, thus, started to listen to “another (random) playlist” or walk “on the edge of a dumpster” while fondly reminiscing about their experiences abroad.

#### **3.3.1.4. STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience**

Well... [The Erasmus students] are very happy because they just consume and know for sure that they’ll not have that much fun when they return to their countries... well... Just like the American dream, there is also the Erasmus dream... (Zeynep, 2nd Interview)

As a student, you have almost nothing to do during Erasmus... well... For example, I didn’t have to do much for my courses, and I guess it is similar for other people too. I mean, you don't have to do much, you don't have to keep your mind busy, but you have a lot of time to have fun... (Zeynep, 3rd Interview)

With these statements, Zeynep suggests that the Erasmus students tend to construct their STSA experiences primarily based on *fun* and *adventure*. Having analyzed the entire data set, I also revealed that these were the most salient elements within the

STSA discourses and experiences of the study participants, even though most of them occasionally challenged these “common” features of the program. Based on their observations and also first-hand experiences, the participants, thus, frequently pointed to a “typical” Erasmus experience, which I frame here as “fun and adventurous”:

When I think of Erasmus, I immediately think of having fun in Europe... I have to push really hard to say that education comes first. Everyone thinks of fun first, even those who study the most... (Marco, 3rd Interview)

Do you know what is the sole purpose of an exchange student in Europe, or let’s say, of a student going from France to Spain or from Spain to France? To party. Completely that... That's how they look at it. Two of my roommates were French, one Italian, and one Korean... Their sole purpose was to attend every party. (Melis, 2nd Interview)

What I heard from all my friends, except me, is that Erasmus is mostly about sex, partying, meeting new people, and pouring money into silly Erasmus clubs; this is indeed what I've been hearing all the time. If I had not experienced the program myself and if you asked me this question (“How would you describe a typical Erasmus experience?”), I would also probably give this common answer. But I’ve experienced it myself, and it can happen in other ways as well. (Zeynep, 2nd Interview)

Based on these statements, I infer that the Erasmus students tend to prioritize fun and adventurous elements in their STSA experiences and to relegate, for example, academic concerns to a secondary status (see also *STSA as an Academic Experience*). In fact, this priority was also evident in the STSA discourses and experiences of the study participants, though in slightly different ways.

After talking for a while about her initial STSA experiences and focusing mainly on “fun” moments, Gözde, for instance, uttered reflexively: “By the way, I’m not talking about the school (referring to her receiving university) at all (laughs)...” During this moment of epiphany in one of our interviews, she actually revealed to me that she spared most of her time for informal activities rather than focusing exclusively on formal or academic tasks, though she did not completely abandon her academic obligations during the Erasmus period (see also *STSA as an Academic Experience*). She, in fact, also agreed that she was primed toward the fun and adventurous dimension of STSA before leaving Turkey: “I was like, okay, I’ll go to Erasmus, but I was definitely not into academic prospects. I was like, I’ll have fun and come back.”

Ayşe was another participant who also constructed her STSA experience mostly on fun and adventure. Having a desire to travel solo before her Erasmus experience, she embraced the traveling opportunities during her Erasmus period and even created her own opportunities by, for instance, sacrificing her course requirements. As a result, her Erasmus experience was inscribed with fun and travel elements. I was able to confirm this point also in her re-entry narratives. During the re-entry period, she, for example, preferably talked about her traveling experiences:

*I: What memories did you share with your friends?*

*Ayşe: Travel. Every person with whom I shared my memories actually expressed their sudden desire to visit Sweden. I guess I was talking a lot about Sweden... But I mean... Most of the things I did were already on my Instagram or something, so they had seen them anyway. So, when I returned, I often talked about how much I traveled ... So, I was talking about those trips and also about the parties or something... (Ayşe, 4th Interview)*

Most of the other participants shared their fun or traveling memories as well when I asked about any specific moments that they recalled or when I asked what they missed or regretted about their Erasmus period. In fact, their STSA-related pictures and social media posts that they provided as data also demonstrated the dominance of this dimension in their STSA constructions. Upon close inspection, I could easily discern that their pictures and social media posts mostly included cheerful moments from parties and/or travels, whereas there was little visual evidence showing that they were involved in formal (academic) contexts or local communities.

The participants actually suggested that they, as students coming from “a non-EU country,” took a distinctive approach to this apparently dominant dimension of the program. They, in particular, indicated that they were more attracted to traveling opportunities, while other students coming from the EU member states were more interested in local fun elements or immediate convivial environments. With the following statements, Ayşe and Gözde, in fact, attempted to explain the rationale behind their desire to travel:

We (generalizing to all Erasmus students coming from Turkey) have a kind of anxiety about traveling. We get stressed about it because we have such an opportunity [to travel in Europe] and also money (the grant) (laughs)... We

develop a sort of fear that we think we may not be able to come again... In my case, I had never been abroad before, so there was such a pressure that I might not be able to go abroad again... (Ayşe, 4th Interview)

When I was there, I was traveling so much that my housemates couldn't understand the logic behind it and would ask, "what's the use of staying in [the city in Spain]?". They were telling me that I would not have enough time to explore [the city in Spain] because I was usually traveling to other cities [in Europe]. But when I asked them [about their previous traveling experiences], I learned that they had already traveled [in Europe]. (Gözde, 3rd Interview)

Mainly because of their Turkish citizenship that required them to obtain a visa for their STSA period (except Marco, who had dual citizenship), they actually assumed that they might not have a "second chance" to travel across Europe. In addition, the participants rated their overall economic capacity lower than that of "an average student" in an EU country. That is, they indicated that they might not have sufficient economic resources and time to travel again, particularly in Europe or in the Global North. Therefore, most of the participants mainly sought traveling opportunities and tried to enjoy the convivial opportunities during their STSA period. Marco, after all, asked: "When I have the chance to visit ten countries in Europe at this age, why should I stay in my room in Germany and only study?"

Despite their predominant engagement with fun and adventurous elements, their level of alignment with this *common sense* Erasmus dimension, however, varied based on their time, responsibilities, and budget. Although all of them organized trips to other cities and countries during their stay abroad, Ayşe and Gözde, for example, were the participants who traveled the most. When reflecting on their experiences retrospectively, both of them actually expressed or critiqued (but not regretted) their disproportionate engagement with traveling and highlighted the potential benefits of immersing in a local context abroad:

I think I couldn't benefit enough from the opportunities in [the city in Spain] [...] When I first went there, I dealt with an adaptation process, which I think took almost a month. As I also spent two months traveling, I was left with only two months to spend [in the city], which actually passed so fast... I really couldn't understand how the time passed there, so fast... (Ayşe, 4th Interview)

I think we (with a tendency to generalize), as Turkish students, have a wrong attitude [to how STSA should be experienced]. As I told you before, what is

Erasmus for us? It means traveling to as many countries as possible. For example, ... when I was there, my friends were usually asking me, “why do you need to travel so much?” “what's the use of living here?” and saying, “you are always traveling,” “it's not like you're living here” ... I agree that Turkish students miss this point, [experiencing the local context]. What does Erasmus truly mean? It means knowing the country you live in, knowing the city you live in... We were unaware of that; we were not even attending the classes properly, we were always on a trip... (Gözde, 7th Interview)

Although the other participants also accumulated several travel experiences over the course of their STSA period, they, however, suggested that they spent more time in their immediate STSA contexts that consisted mostly of other students. Further, most of them tried to find a balance between having fun and pursuing their studies, though they still paid less attention to the latter (see also *STSA as an Academic Experience* and *STSA as a Transient Carefree Experience*). For example, alongside their “regret for not traveling more,” Marco and Dilara claimed to have confronted a demanding academic atmosphere and, concurrently, several financial issues during their Erasmus period. As a result, they indicated that they decided to maintain their academic responsibilities to a certain extent rather than exploiting the “fun” opportunities and renouncing the remaining 20% of the grant (see also *STSA as an Economic Experience*, *STSA as a Transient Carefree Experience*, and *STSA as an Academic Experience*):

We had some traveling experiences anyway, so it didn't turn out to be much trouble for us. But we weren't the people who traveled every week, either. Because of some financial reasons and also because we were attending almost all the classes, we didn't have much time for [traveling] anyway... (Dilara, 2nd Interview)

While I was there, I also wanted to have fun, but I never thought about going to a party every day or throwing one every day... (Marco, 2nd Interview)

Due to his later decision to enjoy the “mundane daily events” or “an ordinary life in Germany,” Marco, however, reported that one of her friends questioned his approach to the Erasmus program: “Once I heard someone questioning me, asking ‘what kind of an Erasmus student are you? You don't even join the parties?’. I replied, ‘for me, Erasmus is not just about partying.’” Although he enjoyed the parties during his first weeks in Germany, Marco, after a while, started to demonstrate a critical attitude toward the construction of “a typical Erasmus experience” that revolved mainly around partying and/or traveling. Thus, he gradually immersed himself in other dimensions of

the local life or his social networks in the STSA context. In fact, I was able to ratify his statements through his social media posts, most of which featured elevated moments with friends in Germany.

For similar reasons but mainly because of financial constraints, Melis also said that she did not travel much. Instead, she, too, decided to immerse herself in the local life and challenge her “comfort zone.” As a result, she claimed to have made several close friends and also made significant improvements in Spanish. Zeynep, however, usually avoided participating in social activities during the initial stages of her STSA period because she needed to take medications for her ongoing health problems (for further details, see the section where I introduced her). But, once she started to feel better and willing to socialize, she realized that she had missed the *common sense* medium to socialize for Erasmus students: “Erasmus parties.” She, thus, suggested that Erasmus students might not find sufficient opportunities to make new friends or extend their social networks if they missed or avoided the parties being organized for them. As a result, also because of her restricted budget, she preferred to devote most of her time to exploring local life and enjoying her individual time at home.

To further illustrate the dominant status of fun and adventurous elements in the participants’ STSA constructions, I also draw on how they incorporated their STSA experiences into their teaching after the Erasmus period. With this specific purpose of analysis, I revealed that most participants mainly emphasized the *fun and adventurous* dimension of their STSA experiences in their teaching practices. During her re-entry semester, Dilara, for instance, used several pictures taken during her “Erasmus trips” to prepare a teaching task in the practicum course. Talking about her first day of teaching as a language instructor, she also mentioned how she achieved to “attract all the attention of students” by sharing her travel experiences from “Erasmus and Interrail.” Gözde, likewise, pointed to the motivational or engaging functions of her Erasmus experiences for her language students:

Well, for example, some topics can be very boring. I mean, when I’m teaching a very boring grammar topic, I try to show a photograph from [my Erasmus trips], which suddenly attracts students’ attention. Or, you know, I assign a writing task in which they’re supposed to practice their skills by introducing a

city. For this task, I don't ask them to describe [the city they live in], but I give each student a city and, for example, say "look, you'll introduce Florence, you'll introduce...." It's easy for me to do that, since, you know, I've been to those cities. (Gözde, 7th Interview)

To motivate her students or enrich the lessons, Melis also told, she integrated several video blogs or "vlogs" and "travel guides" into her classes, particularly into those lessons whose theme was "travel" or "holidays." While doing so, she also shared her own traveling memories from the Erasmus period. Therefore, based on these examples, I conclude that mainly the *common sense* or dominant fun and adventurous dimension of the Erasmus program resonated with the participants' teaching practices.

On the other hand, in one of our interviews, Zeynep pointed to a subtle link between industry and university, illustrating how her receiving university approached the Erasmus program. Through the following example, she suggested how the industry and university partnership in her STSA context contributed to the reproduction of the Erasmus program primarily as a fun and adventurous experience:

The [Erasmus] program was like a source of revenue for the university there. There was [an agency] that organized so many trips and made people pour so much money into these trips. They would normally cost less if you did them on your own... I mean, it seemed like a source of revenue generated by a private company, not by a [non-profit] community or a student club located in the school. They actually had an office close to the school, and it was really a [profit-making] company, which truly surprised me. I was very surprised... When we first went there, we thought it was a non-profit community because we received a text message from them. So, they could reach me, showing that they're in cooperation with the school... (Zeynep, 2nd Interview)

Zeynep added that this agency offered them "a welcome package" that included a SIM card, promotion codes for specific restaurants or clubs, brochures about some upcoming events, and a vodka-filled chocolate, all of which cost 20 Euros (note that this agency was not the Erasmus Student Network [ESN], a well-known agency located in many higher education institutions in Europe). Therefore, based on Zeynep's observations and statements, I note that "university-industry partnerships" might contribute to the framing of the Erasmus program as a touristic youth pleasure rather than as a valuable opportunity for conducting critical (and perhaps

transformative) inquiries into local and global matters (I discuss this issue in greater detail in the next, last chapter of this study).

### 3.3.1.5. STSA as an Academic Experience

Based on the discussions so far, I underscore that the participants constructed their Erasmus experiences, as well as their views on the Erasmus program, primarily through the elements of *popularity, finance, carefreeness, transience, fun, and adventure*. However, among these elements, they mostly referred to the fun and adventurous dimension of the program, viewing it as the “typical” defining feature of an Erasmus experience. Therefore, I revealed that the participants, with certain individual differences, tended to attach a secondary or marginal status to the academic activities and opportunities during their STSA period.

During the application phase of the Erasmus program, the participants, for instance, honed their focus on particular countries or languages (see also *STSA as a Popular Experience*). None of the participants, thus, focused exclusively on particular university settings or programs for their STSA period. Only after their official nomination for the program did they actually start to consider which courses to take in the receiving program. Zeynep, for example, realized that she would delay her graduation after she was selected for the Erasmus program. That is, until then, she was not aware that she would have to take an extra semester in her original program to make up for the Erasmus period and graduate from the program:

While looking at the available courses there, we noticed that it was a program for *Modern Languages*, not *English Language Teaching*. So, we became sure about delaying our graduation because there was no... There was no course that would be recognized for our [compulsory] practicum course here, or there was no course at all for receiving credits for our compulsory courses here... (Zeynep, 2nd Interview)

Clearly, like the rest of the participants, Zeynep started to consider her academic concerns right after being matched with a program abroad, although the course information regarding her program preferences had already been available on relevant web pages during the application period. In other words, as I pointed out earlier (see *STSA as a Popular Experience*), the participants prioritized particular countries or languages over particular academic settings or courses for their STSA period.



Although Dilara also agreed that she did not think much about the academic prospects of the Erasmus program, she claimed that she and Marco (both were placed at the same university in Germany) did not completely discard this dimension in their STSA experiences:

The [Erasmus] program is usually pictured [by previous students] as, you know, “you’ll go to [Europe], you’ll spend four or five months in a different country, you’ll have fun, you’ll travel....” Well, they don’t even mention the courses... There’re even some Turkish people who do nothing [for their courses] and come back... We (she and Marco) were never like that. (Dilara, 2nd Interview)

Dilara and Marco, therefore, suggested that they tried to find a balanced way of experiencing the program, while also making sure not to miss out on the adventurous and fun aspects (see also *STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience*). In addition to their regular attendance at classes, they, in fact, credited the driving role of the receiving program in their relatively "balanced" STSA experience. In their opinion, the receiving program provided a “satisfying” as well as a “demanding” academic experience. Even though they occasionally complained about the “heavy” workload and the “narrow” selection of courses (which pushed them to take some courses that they did not intend to), they highly appreciated the courses that enabled them to engage with topics such as “intercultural communication,” “inclusive education,” and “eco-criticism.” Otherwise, they underscored, they would not be able to explore such topics in their teacher education coursework. Dilara, for example, appreciated her course experiences in Germany in her practicum portfolio in terms of developing an understanding of “inclusive education”:

As teachers, we should be more aware of disabilities affecting education in a negative way and we should try to gain all of our students adapting the philosophy of inclusive education. However, it seems like it mostly depends on our own effort because we do not take any course related to teaching disabled students. I realized this defect of our curriculum when I took a course related to it in Germany. Of course that one was not enough to fully understand the problems and come up with solutions in a real situation, but it provided a base. Now, I have a big desire to search on this and develop myself. Sometimes, I even think about going for it in my further studies, because I want to be a teacher who can see the potential in every student, who is fair to everyone and who can create equal opportunities for everyone to learn. This can be possible by creating closer relationships with each of the students and understanding their needs. (Dilara, Practicum Portfolio, not translated)

Even though she did not have a clear intention to take a course on “inclusive education” before going to Germany, she suggested that she found herself enrolled in this course and benefited from it in terms of inclusive teaching. That is, she was able to develop further ideas about inclusivity, thanks, in part, to the “demanding” academic environment in Germany. As a result, she believed that she was able to grow as an “inclusive” language teacher.

During their STSA period, Dilara and Marco also found an experiential opportunity to explore certain cultural concepts as part of their coursework. That is, they conducted “a mini-study” in which they explored “how cultures encounter one another.” In particular, they focused on “a Korean girl’s adaptation process to Germany.” Based on a literature review and an interview, they produced a study report and presented it in the class, which, they added, was “truly appreciated” by the course instructor and classmates. Thanks to such course experiences, Marco noted, he found opportunities to reflect on his own STSA experiences and potential growth as a language teacher. As an example, he pointed out that his (academic) experiences in Germany enabled him to develop some “inclusive” understandings that could be relevant for his future language classes:

When I think about it, I was also a different student [in Germany] ... So, I think I learned to approach different students more inclusively. Through the course I took there, for example, I gained a more inclusive perspective. My own experiences there also helped me see things more inclusively, you know, German students didn’t have to accept us among them... They didn’t have to help at all. When we approached them during the classes, they became partners with us, though not so willingly... Also, they would speak English among themselves so that we could understand them... So, a Syrian child, for example, may experience the same [in my future class] ... (Marco, 4th Interview)

Marco, therefore, suggested that he would be more attentive to the needs of diverse students in his future language classes, mainly thanks to his academic experiences during the Erasmus period. In light of Dilara and Marco’s comments, I interpret that taking certain experiential courses about interculturality and inclusivity during an STSA period might help prospective language teachers grow in these areas (I discuss this point in more detail in the next chapter).

Melis, likewise, also reported that she benefited from several courses in her receiving program, which were not available in her original program. In particular, she enjoyed taking several classes on English literature. In fact, during the analysis, I noticed that she mentioned her experiences in that regard in her intention letter for a graduate program in *English Literature*:

My time at [the university in Spain] also presented me with the opportunity to encounter literary works from various countries and their milestones that define their history. To illustrate, I was introduced to Irish Nationalist movement and the history and the literature of the country. I wrote a paper on a revolutionary play by W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory called “Cathleen ni Houlihan” which was written in 1902. My paper was titled “The Many Irelands in Cathleen ni Houlihan” and discussed the various Irelands presented in the play. (Melis, Intention Letter, not translated)

However, Melis and Zeynep, who studied in the same program in Spain, were not satisfied with every course there. That is, they were not happy with the way of delivery or the content of some courses. Nevertheless, both found particular courses enjoyable, such as English literature (Melis), linguistics (Zeynep), and Spanish (both). Thanks to their regular attendance in language classes, both indeed achieved to develop their language skills in Spanish to a significant degree (see also *STSA as a Linguistic Experience*).

Through their regular academic involvement in the university setting in Spain, Melis and Zeynep also found a chance to prepare a presentation “introducing Turkey.” In response to a faculty member's request to “deliver a presentation about Turkey,” they gathered a mixed group of Erasmus students coming from Turkey and prepared a presentation that mainly aimed to challenge possible stereotypes associated with “Turkey and Turkish people.” In the presentation, which they shared with me, they included many cultural elements corresponding to different parts of Turkey and highlighted the internal diversity of the country. As they tried to “see themselves through the eyes of other people” during the preparation of their presentation, they also noted that they found opportunities to reflect on their own background (see also *STSA as a Transformative Experience*). After all, I underscore that this valuable experience derived directly from their regular engagement with the academic environment during the STSA period.

On the other hand, Ayşe and Gözde, who studied in the same program in Spain, framed their semester abroad overall as “unproductive” with respect to their ongoing studies. They asserted that “the quality of education” did not meet their expectations, thus curtailing their willingness to devote effort and time to the courses abroad:

Well, maybe it depends on where you go, but in Spain, at least in [the city where I studied], there was no [satisfactory academic environment]. Well, I thought the faculty environment was similar to a high school. I don't know... well... I mean, the classes there were not similar to the ones we have here. (Ayşe, 3rd Interview)

I wasn't satisfied with the university; why? Well, the courses... Actually, it could've been a nice experience if I had some nice lessons... I mean, when I went and observed several classes, nothing seemed attractive to me. For example, there was this course which I considered replacing with [an elective course here]. We were supposed to examine some books from children's literature, but it was such a ridiculous course that the teacher would assign homework and then forget about it... They didn't care much about the courses, then neither did I... But I remember the people who spoke at the Erasmus orientation meeting telling us things like, “I took nice courses, I improved myself.” Hearing these, I was also enthusiastic at the time about the courses I would take abroad, [...] but unfortunately that didn't happen... (Gözde, 3rd Interview)

In addition to their disappointment with the way the courses were delivered, Ayşe and Gözde also complained that most of the instructors often used Spanish during the lessons. They, thus, stated that this language preference was another important factor inhibiting their participation in academic activities abroad (see also *STSA as a Linguistic Experience*). With these “disappointments,” they pointed out that they poured much of their energy and time into the fun and adventurous elements of the program (see *STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience*).

However, their disproportionate engagement with these dominant elements (fun and adventure) of the Erasmus program cannot be explained by their “academic disappointment” alone. In fact, I noted earlier that they had already intended to prioritize “fun” and “traveling” before their program experience (see *STSA as a Popular Experience*). In addition, when I asked why they did not benefit from the practicum opportunity abroad, which was not available to other study participants in their receiving contexts, they told me that they would have to allocate a significant amount of time to complete the practicum requirements. As a result, they would not have enough time for fun or travel:

I: You didn't enroll in the practicum course [offered by the receiving program]?

Ayşe: No, no, I didn't. Though I went there with the intention to do my practicum, I didn't do it (laughs).

I: Do you have any regrets in that regard?

Ayşe: No.

I: Why?

Ayşe: Because if I had enrolled in any practicum, I'd have to go to a school all the time. (Ayşe, 3rd Interview)

When applying to the Erasmus program, Gözde, likewise, placed her receiving institution at the top of her preference list, partly due to the availability of the practicum course there:

There was a course available for doing practicum there. Sonat (a previous Erasmus student) also took it, so I was also planning to do my practicum (a compulsory component in the original program) there, and in this way, I would not prolong my graduation... But some of my friends were saying, "don't be ridiculous, will you spend your days for practicum? Then what's the use of being an Erasmus student?" ... Nevertheless, I placed it at the top of the list... (Gözde, 2nd Interview)

Once in the STSA context, she, eventually, decided not to enroll in the practicum course and renounced the opportunity to have a school experience in a different country. Thus, I put forward that their pre-program tendency to travel, coupled with their dissatisfaction with the way the courses were taught, induced Ayşe and Gözde to assign a secondary status to their academic activities in Spain. In Gözde's words, they eventually "acted like a typical Erasmus student" (see also *STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience*).

Although Ayşe and Gözde downplayed academic activities during their STSA period, they, however, did not completely disregard the courses there. Instead, they took a "strategic" route to complete 20 ECTS credits (out of 30) and receive the remaining 20% of the grant (this is a common criterion taken by the participating universities). They, for example, said that they dropped some courses and focused on the courses for which, they believed, they could fulfill at least minimum passing criteria. They were not much concerned about receiving high grades in those courses because "just

the passing grades” would qualify them for credit recognition and the remainder of the grant. Ayşe, in fact, explained that when calculating their CGPA, their home university did not take into account the grades they received during the Erasmus period. She, therefore, suggested that “receiving passing grades” or showing a minimal level of academic commitment during the STSA period would be enough to satisfy their home academic context. She, however, also cautioned that university policies varied in that regard. She mentioned, for example, how several universities both in Turkey and Europe included the received grades in the CGPA of the students when these students asked for credit recognition or course replacement upon their return. As a result, she concluded that her university’s policy on this issue was one of the major factors that encouraged her to engage more in the fun and adventurous dimension of the Erasmus program. Therefore, based on her explanations and experiences, I infer that the institutional expectations can also be another important factor shaping student commitment toward the courses during an Erasmus experience.

In fact, during their period abroad, all six participants achieved to pass at least 20 ECTS. They were, thus, able to receive the rest of the grant (20%) and credit recognition for some courses when they returned to the original context, where their peers were about to undertake their final semester (Spring 2019) in the program. For instance, Ayşe used these credits to pass three equivalent courses (one must, two electives); Dilara four (all electives; two of them were German courses); Gözde two (both electives); Marco five (all electives, one of them was a German course); Melis five (all electives; two of them were Spanish courses); and Zeynep five (all electives; two of them were Spanish courses). However, although most of their non-mobile peers graduated at the end of that semester (Spring 2019), the participants still needed to complete some compulsory courses to graduate. In consequence, they had to spend one extra semester (Fall 2019, during which I conducted the interviews with them) in the program. In other words, their Erasmus participation prevented them from taking certain compulsory courses in the original program on time and caused them to delay graduation.

After all, the participants demonstrated varying levels of involvement in formal learning opportunities or courses abroad. In general, I emphasize that the pre-program

inclinations, differences among the host institutions, and how the participants negotiated the institutional differences (e.g., available courses, credit recognition processes, instructional procedures, language priorities, institutional expectations, and so on) were important factors influencing their orientations toward the academic dimension of STSA or the Erasmus program. In fact, while most of the participants (i.e., Dilara, Marco, Melis, and Zeynep) could lead an STSA period combining both academic and consumerist elements (with a preference for the latter), the others (i.e., Ayşe and Gözde) opted mostly for the fun and adventurous dimension of the program. Nevertheless, as I repeatedly noted, they tended to emphasize the fun and adventurous dimension of the program over the academic dimension (see also *STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience*).

#### **3.3.1.6. STSA as a Linguistic Experience**

At several points during our interviews, I observed that the participants suggested the necessity of “speaking English fluently” for English language teachers. Marco, however, lamented that most of the prospective English language teachers (PELTs) in his program lacked essential English-speaking skills:

Our education system [in Turkey] does not give enough opportunities to students to speak English. For example, here I see that many English teacher candidates, who are in the second or third year, are unable to speak English fluently... I think these people should be able to get to the floor and express their ideas in English, but I think we can't... (Marco, 1st Interview)

Sharing similar opinions with Marco, the other participants viewed the opportunity to spend a semester abroad as highly valuable, especially for developing English communication skills. In fact, they claimed to have gained many chances to experiment and improve their English-speaking skills during the Erasmus period. Surrounded mostly by other “international students,” the participants noted that they often had to make use of their English skills to function socially and academically. Thanks to their efforts in that regard, as well as the linguistic affordances embedded in the STSA contexts (both convivial and academic), most of the participants reported significant improvements in their communication skills in English.

Having used English mostly during her travels in Europe, Ayşe highlighted that she became more confident in her English use and surmounted her “speaking anxiety.” Gözde, similarly, “congratulated” herself for speaking English more fluently by the end of the Erasmus program. She said that she owed her achievement to her “perseverance” in using English throughout the STSA period. As she trusted the “reassuring message” of her productive skills in English, Gözde also claimed to have become more confident as a language teacher. Dilara and Marco, too, underlined their improvements in speaking English thanks to their regular attendance in classes and interactions with their classmates and/or housemates (see also *STSA as an Academic Experience*). Melis, however, noted that she had already been confident with her speaking skills in English before the STSA period. Nevertheless, thanks to her openness and language skills, she suggested, she made several friends there and improved her communication skills in and through English. Her roommate in Spain, Zeynep, also valued the opportunity to experiment freely with English before undertaking her Erasmus period. Once in the STSA context, she decided to improve, particularly, her English pronunciation skills so that she could speak it more accurately and fluently. Through her efforts abroad, she indicated, she improved her pronunciation and fluency in English.

Some participants also mentioned that they learned more about the *lingua franca* status of English thanks to their STSA experiences. As they were able to start a conversation with many different people in English, they realized how “useful” English or *English as a lingua franca* (ELF) was. Gözde and Marco, for example, noted that:

Okay, English could be the language of imperialist America [...] But we really need a language that will help us interact with each other. I mean, I feel so lucky that, for example, when I wrote the New Year message in English on Instagram, many different people commented on it. The Mexicans, the French, all were saying, “Happy New Year.” It's so nice to meet around such common things; it makes you feel very valuable. (Gözde, 6th Interview)

I found the *lingua franca* very useful; why? Because it brought people from a thousand cultures together at a common point. If I didn't know English, how could I live in the same house with a Japanese or with a Korean? No way. (Marco, 4th Interview)



As a result of their experiences with the *ELF communication*, these two participants, therefore, suggested that they felt more interested in communicating with people from diverse backgrounds. They also realized that they did not have to be “perfect” or sound like a “British” or an “American” while speaking English. Gözde even attempted to transfer her growing confidence in *ELF communication* to her classes when she started to work as a language instructor after graduation:

Students generally believe that they’ll never be able to speak perfect English, and they’re quite worried about what to do about that. If I had heard this concern in the past, I could’ve said, “yes, you’ll never be able to do that,” but now I say, “you don’t need to speak it with a [British or American] accent” [...] I actually realized that I also used to complain about being unable to speak with a [British or American] accent and question what kind of English teacher I was becoming. But I noticed during Erasmus that people were terrible at speaking English. Then, I found my desire to speak with a [British or American] accent funny. For sure, there is no need for everyone to have these accents. Sometimes it’s even funny when someone insists on speaking with [these accents] ... (Gözde, 7th Interview)

Based on her first-hand STSA experiences and observations regarding the *ELF communication*, Gözde, therefore, suggested that she encouraged her language students to become more confident in their English use and persist in their learning.

While all the participants emphasized their significant improvements in English and most linked these improvements to their professional growth, I also noted that they showed changing orientations or interests toward learning the dominant local language(s) in their STSA contexts. In fact, only few participants said that they had clear pre-program motivations for learning the local language(s). However, once settled in the STSA context, most participants, particularly Dilara, Marco, Melis, and Zeynep, showed interest in the language courses offered by the receiving universities. Dilara and Marco, for instance, enrolled in two intensive German courses that, they suggested, helped them with their adaptation processes and the management of their daily lives in Germany. However, Dilara and Marco did not continue to take language courses in their re-entry period in Turkey, while Melis and Zeynep sought further opportunities and managed to take two more Spanish courses in their original university context after their return. During the last interview that we conducted almost six months after their graduation, both Melis and Zeynep reported that they had

reached the B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in Spanish, pointing to their impressive progress in this regard. Melis attributed her “success” to her immersion in the local context in Spain and communication with her friends there, as well as the courses she took both in Spain and Turkey. Eventually, someone indeed acknowledged her remarkable skills in Spanish: “As I told you before, a friend of mine from work is Spanish, and we usually talk to each other during breaks at work. She once told me, ‘your Spanish is very good,’ and I said, ‘yes, my Spanish is very good’” (laughs).”

On the other hand, Ayşe and Gözde expressed their regret that they did not allocate enough time for learning Spanish, especially before and during the Erasmus program:

I couldn't learn Spanish because when I first went there, I struggled a lot with the adjustment period... I wish I had learned it a bit before I went there, one of my regrets... So, my first month there passed with a period of adjustment. And then, especially in my last two months, I didn't spare enough time for learning it because I was constantly traveling [in Europe]. I mean, I couldn't manage to learn it. Actually, I went to a place where I could learn it very well... (Ayşe, 1st Interview)

I wish I had done something to learn Spanish a bit before I went there. You know, I could've taken some courses... When I first went there, I couldn't understand people. Actually, I started to understand them a bit toward the end [...] But I still wish I had signed up for a language course there... (Gözde, 3rd Interview)

One of Gözde's social media posts actually confirmed her struggles with the Spanish language. In the post, she described herself as an “alien” who insisted on speaking English despite everyone around her speaking Spanish. In addition, in one of our interviews, she emphasized how she remained aloof from student societies or clubs due to her insufficient Spanish competence:

Well, there were student societies at the university, and most of my friends joined in some of them because they could speak Spanish, but I couldn't... There was, for example, a cinema club that I really wanted to join. I love Spanish cinema, but I didn't try it. Actually, I could've tried, and I wish I had. Yes, this might be one of my regrets... Frankly, I didn't benefit enough from what the university offered. (Gözde, 3rd Interview)

Ayşe, too, occasionally felt isolated due to the dominance of the Spanish language in, especially, the academic domain. She, for example, highlighted how she experienced

difficulty in following some courses and maintaining interactions with the instructors and classmates due to “their low proficiency in English.” Consequently, these language challenges became another reason for both Ayşe and Gözde to steer most of their energy into the fun and adventurous dimension of the program (see also *STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience* and *STSA as an Academic Experience*). However, in an effort to compensate for the “lost opportunity” in Spain, Gözde said that she took a beginner-level Spanish course in her re-entry period in her home university context.

During their re-entry period, including their first months as a language teacher, Gözde and Melis also noted that they spotted similarities between their linguistic experiences abroad and the learning processes of their language students. They, therefore, suggested that they were able to develop “empathy” for their learners because they went through similar linguistic processes during the Erasmus period. Melis, for example, said that she frequently enticed her students to contemplate their language learning motivations through examples from her own ongoing experiences with the Spanish language. This way, she believed, the students could find meaningful reasons to learn English rather than prioritizing instrumental or mechanical reasons such as “passing an exam” or “getting a better job.”

While the linguistic experiences of Melis directed her focus to the motivational dimensions of learning English, Gözde’s linguistic experiences abroad culminated in her appreciation of formal instruction in additional language development. Based on her own language learning efforts during and after the STSA period, Gözde, for instance, started to believe that exposure to a language might not be sufficient to learn that language, especially if not accompanied by explicit instruction or “noticing grammar structures.” As a language teacher, she, thus, stated that she attempted to balance her input-providing episodes with explicit grammar instruction. During her classes, along with her noteworthy linguistic experiences abroad, she also shared several online resources with her students so that they could benefit from them for their individual studies. After all, I note that the participants valued the linguistic dimension of their STSA experiences. Although they had little contact with local communities during the STSA period, as a result of their linguistic experiences abroad, they, nevertheless, felt more confident in their English skills, developed varying initial

skills in local languages, and began to view themselves as more resourceful and empathetic language teachers.

### **3.3.1.7. STSA as a Transformative Experience**

As I discussed in the previous sub-themes, the participants' STSA discourses and experiences gravitated toward certain STSA dimensions such as *carefreeness*, *financial capacity*, *popularity*, and *fun* and *adventure*. In addition, some other dimensions, such as participation in academic activities and engagement in local communities and languages, found a marginal place in their STSA discourses and experiences. However, I should remind that the preponderance of consumerist elements does not preclude the possibility of experiencing the transformative potentials of an STSA program. Therefore, though not as visible as popular convivial elements, the discourses and experiences of (critical) transformation were also evident within the participants' polydimensional STSA construction.

Even before their Erasmus experience, the participants were aware that their upcoming STSA period might help them undergo certain forms of transformation. Despite having been attracted primarily to popular fun narratives associated with international experiences (see *STSA as a Popular Experience*), most participants also suggested that they sought to challenge their "comfort zones" through an STSA experience. Zeynep, for instance, noted that she complained about her "monotonous life" before the program and opted to "shake up the things that she got used to." She added that after her Erasmus experience, she managed to fulfill her expectations in that regard to a certain extent, as she became "more fearless not only about living in other places but also about the unknown."

Before leaving for the Erasmus program, Ayşe and Melis also viewed STSA as a possibly challenging experience because, they thought, such programs required people to go into "an unknown realm." They, thus, hoped to become more "resilient" or "self-sufficient" through such a challenging process. Ayşe, for example, stated that she had been questioning her "dependence on other people" for a long time before applying to the program. As a result, she regarded STSA also as a valuable opportunity to "show herself that [she] could do things on her own," including traveling across Europe.

Melis, likewise, referred to her pre-Erasmus self as a person who was “more withdrawn” and in need of “going beyond [her] comfort zone.” While reflecting on their STSA experiences, both Ayşe and Melis, in fact, claimed that they experienced certain transformations and showed improvements in, for example, “adaptation,” “communication,” “bravery,” “confidence,” “independence,” “risk-taking,” and “problem-solving.”

Although he did not emphasize any radical personal transformation, Marco also said that he “expanded [his] lens” regarding “problem-solving” thanks to his “successful” adaptation to the “multicultural” environment in his temporary residence in Germany. He noted that he usually took initiatives to facilitate communication among his housemates from different countries and made chief contributions to the eventual “solutions.” As a result, he started to feel more competent at solving problems in “multicultural settings” and communicating with people from diverse backgrounds. Similarly, Dilara indicated that the Erasmus experience afforded her greater confidence in communication, as well as the ability to “start conversations”:

Well, I feel more self-confident. As I told you before, during Erasmus, people come and talk to you with no apparent purpose, trying to start a conversation. During my stay there, I did the same thing. So, I am now capable of doing things that I couldn't do before. For example, I am currently employed in a coffee shop here, and I am comfortable talking to the customers. [...] I'm much more comfortable in terms of starting and holding conversations or meeting new people. (Dilara, 2nd Interview)

After overcoming the challenges of living abroad for a semester and also traveling on her own, Gözde also mentioned how she started to feel “more outgoing” and “more self-confident,” especially with regard to adapting to new environments:

[The Erasmus experience] contributed a lot to my growth... It gave this message to me: wherever you go, you somehow find your way, you survive, you get along with people, you make yourself liked... I mean, it became... well... a confidence boost for me... (Gözde, 4th Interview)

You should've seen how I was [...] when I first came to the university... I was very shy, never speaking to anyone. I mean, I still feel such tensions when I speak in front of an audience, but it was Erasmus that helped me minimize these tensions. (Gözde, 3rd Interview)

As a prospective language teacher, Gözde added that she also became more “confident” in issues of “classroom management,” again thanks to her experiences abroad:

I mean, [during Erasmus], you give several presentations, you meet many people [...] Well, you speak English in very different contexts... I think you shouldn't have any problems with classroom management thanks to these experiences that help you develop self-confidence. (Gözde, 2nd Interview)

In fact, Gözde was not the only participant who became more "confident" about her language teaching abilities as a result of the Erasmus program. Ayşe also mentioned how she overcame her “speaking anxiety” through the Erasmus program and started to feel more competent as a prospective English language teacher (see also *STSA as a Linguistic Experience*).

Based on these experiences of transformation that were characterized mainly by the discourses of *self-development*, *self-renewal* and *self-discovery*, I suggest that the domain of their transformation was largely confined to the realm of *the Self* or *the individual*. That is, they turned more toward constructing narratives of individual transformation that emphasized the elements of *independence*, *resilience*, and *strength*. Therefore, I interpret that the implications of their discourses for larger societal transformation, political engagement, and communal participation might be weak. However, despite their close alignment with such discourses of self-focused development or transformation, I also noticed that they were still able to integrate a number of critical elements into their worldviews as a result of their experiences abroad.

As the participants needed to adjust to unfamiliar linguistic, sociocultural, and educational contexts abroad, all of them highlighted that they gradually developed new reference points with which they could critically assess their previous understandings of themselves and broader issues. In other words, as a result of observing and reflecting on multiple unaccustomed dimensions of the STSA contexts, they were able to challenge or expand their certain habituated ways of thinking or question the unquestioned. Dilara, for example, claimed that she expanded her “vision” by comparing “what people were doing in Germany and in Turkey.” Marco, similarly,

mentioned that he expanded his repertoire in terms of “different educational practices” by participating in academic activities abroad. Gözde also stated that while abroad, she compared certain dominant understandings in Spain and Turkey with regard to, for example, “religion.” Thanks to these comparisons, she added, she was able to reflect on the “relative nature of the truth.” While their comparisons and resulting “expanded vision” often implicated certain “differences” between the country settings, they also reported several “similarities” between the countries. During their STSA period, Ayşe and Gözde, for example, observed that regardless of the country setting, the youth shared “common anxieties” regarding the future.

Although they were able to compare several aspects of different country settings and also identify certain similarities between them, I revealed that they focused primarily on unequal economic conditions between Turkey and the Western European countries. Comparing the living costs and minimum wage in Turkey with those in their destination countries, all the participants pointed to the “worse economic conditions” in their original country setting, Turkey. However, before dwelling further on this point with a few examples and quotes, I should note that the participants’ modest economic background might be an important factor in steering their focus toward such economic issues and stimulating them to draw certain conclusions (see also the synopsis of their backgrounds and *STSA as an Economic Experience*).

Marco, for example, was surprised when he discovered that “almost everyone in Germany” could afford “meat products” thanks to the existing “economic welfare.” Having compared the economic power of the essential workers in Germany and Turkey, Dilara also began to “feel sorry” for people who earned minimum wage in Turkey. Having seen “the comforts that the young people had [in Germany],” she also felt that “[her] youth had been wasted [in Turkey].” Zeynep, likewise, compared the working conditions and income levels of essential workers in Spain and Turkey during her period abroad. Through these comparisons, she realized that her mother, who was also a precarious worker in Turkey, had been working under “extremely difficult” conditions. Consequently, she suggested that she expanded her worldview regarding the working conditions in different sociocultural and sociopolitical settings. Melis also contemplated such economic dimensions both during and after her period abroad:

Why do they deserve to live in better conditions than me? Why am I not living [with similar standards]? What's the difference [between us]? I questioned these a lot... When shopping with Zeynep, this [economic disparity] was the point that hit us the hardest, especially at the beginning. [...] Let's consider their minimum wages and subsistence level. They have a lot more purchasing power even with their minimum wage; why can't we have the same? (Melis, 1st Interview)

Sharpening their focus especially on the analysis of (unequal) economic conditions in Turkey and Western Europe, most participants, therefore, were able to identify and reflect on certain “differences” between these contexts. That is, they were capable of identifying and discussing economic disparities between certain countries. Particularly due to their consideration of “the minimum wages” and “essential workers,” I also underscore that they were occasionally able to go beyond the realm of *the Self* and (re)evaluate their original country setting. However, they appeared to have difficulty in expressing complex perspectives when I asked them to elaborate on their observations and opinions on those economic matters. For instance, I found almost no evidence of critical views toward historically situated power imbalances between “East and West” or between “North and South.” They, in fact, seemed to have more questions and resentments than answers to those issues of economic discrepancies. Therefore, I interpret that they largely remained at the level of simplistic explanation or bewilderment in their economic analyses. For instance, according to Gözde, “the people in Turkey” were the main source of explanation for such economic or other possible disparities:

We arrived at the gate [to fly back to Turkey]. Everyone there [who were assumed to be the citizens of Turkey] had a gloomy face. I wondered what happened to these people, and I thought how worn out these people were, how sad they were... I had never noticed these before. [...] I believe that the reason behind this is not the government, not ideology, not religion, but the people themselves. For example, similar things happened in Spain in the past, too. [...] But today, people in Spain appreciate other people, so they have been able to overcome [certain obstacles]. I believe we can also get over them, but people are entirely responsible for it. As I said, our people [in Turkey] have a lack of self-worth and self-underestimation, I noticed that. (Gözde, 4th Interview)

Despite her careful observations, I suggest that Gözde's existing experiential and intellectual repertoire stimulated her to seek answers as well as solutions largely within the agentic power of people, which can, of course, be a significant factor in



transforming societies. That is, in her analysis, she seemed to have neglected other possible sources of explanation, such as the deep-seated unequal (global) structures of geopolitics, power, and economy. Nevertheless, she was able to reflect on certain challenges that had been experienced both in Spain and her original country regarding the issues of power, inequalities, oppression, and so on. Ultimately, I found this to be one of the noteworthy examples illustrating the transformative potentials of STSA programs with regard to developing complex critical worldviews.

In addition to comparing certain country contexts with regard to societal and economic conditions, the participants also noted that they often critically questioned and interpreted their positions in the world during different phases of their Erasmus experience. After being nominated for the receiving university, they (except Marco), for instance, needed to obtain a visa in order to study at a university in the EU. Knowing that other Erasmus students from the EU member states did not have to go through a visa process, most participants mentioned that they started to feel “different” before the program. With the start of the STSA period, they indicated, they continued to reflect on their backgrounds, especially after being exposed to particular stereotypes. Ayşe and Dilara, for example, shared two incidents when I asked if they encountered any prejudices or mistreatments because of their national background:

We had some friends who thought we were using the Arabic script or something. Especially, I met an English boy there; he was a friend of my friends. [...] He was always trying to oppress us or something like that. On one occasion, he pissed me off so much [...] because he said things like, “you’re not in Turkey; you can do whatever you want here.” I couldn’t stop myself but told him that we could do anything we wanted in Turkey. To him, it was as if we are all walking around in burqas in Turkey. [...] By the way, [wearing burqa] is not a bad thing; people can walk around completely covered or however they like... You can't interfere with people's choices, and you can't judge people like this... (Ayşe, 3rd Interview)

I mean, they see us more like Iran or something. I had a friend named Sema, whose roommate was a Romanian girl. She once asked Sema, "Do you cover your hair when you go back?" This is indeed something sad to hear... Why should I cover my hair when I go back? But this is how people seem to think. There's such a general image of [Turkey] as a Middle Eastern country or an Islamic country... (Dilara, 3rd Interview)

Therefore, I interpret that the exposure to certain stereotypes triggered these participants to reflect on common prejudices or stereotypes that might be directed at certain groups or individuals. These statements, in fact, point to another transformative potential of STSA experiences or to the possibility of heightened interculturality in student mobility programs.

Although such incidents abroad incited the participants to develop further thoughts with regard to their backgrounds and interculturality, they, however, often complained about being treated as “the ambassador of their country,” as in Dilara’s words. Melis, for example, expressed how people often relegated her to her national background in the STSA context: “they always associate you with the culture of your country.” Mainly because of such reasons, Melis and Zeynep willingly agreed to take part in organizing a cultural event. That is, together with some other students coming from Turkey, they found a chance to “introduce Turkey” in their receiving university context (see also *STSA as an Academic Experience*). Thanks to this event, they suggested, they achieved to challenge “the most common stereotypes associated with Turkey.” They also noted that even while preparing for the event, they found many opportunities to discuss and reflect on their own diverse backgrounds. In fact, Melis tried to integrate such intercultural issues into her professional life when she started to work as a language teacher. She, for instance, said that she tried to discuss how “foreigners view Turkish people abroad” when introducing such topics as “traveling” or “holidays” in her classes. Therefore, I suggest that critical (intercultural) incidents experienced during an STSA period can have a long-lasting or long-reaching impact on the personal and professional lives of (prospective) language teachers (I discuss this point in greater detail in the next chapter).

Although the participants confronted and negotiated certain stereotypes or essentialist perspectives during their STSA period and ultimately developed more complex perspectives of interculturality, I noticed that they also demonstrated certain examples of essentialist thinking toward certain groups or individuals. As can be seen in the quotes above (and also available in the interview data), their statements often included essentialist or simplistic cultural elements (e.g., we-they discourse, “foreigners,” “English boy,” “Romanian girl,” “Iran or something,” “German discipline,” “funny

Spaniards,” and “arrogant French people”). Therefore, despite their complaints about certain stereotypes, I argue that they also tended to reduce certain individuals or groups to few simple categories, thereby neglecting complex constructions of human lives as well as the larger economic, historical, and political structures that can permeate these constructions. In other words, their statements pointed to the partial, processual, and incomplete nature of intercultural development and also the necessity to continue working on intercultural issues after the STSA period (see the next chapter for further discussions and attendant recommendations). In fact, Gözde was aware that she needed to work further on her cultural understandings. When I drew her attention to certain stereotypes that she previously uttered, she, for instance, stated: “I guess I need to work on these [stereotypes] a little more, you know, I need to experience more to overcome them, I have these [stereotypes] for now anyway.” Nevertheless, I suggest that every single participant seemed to have experienced a remarkable growth or transformation in their understandings of *the Self* and *the Other* as a result of their Erasmus experiences that enabled them to confront certain forms of *essentialism* and *othering*.

On the other hand, at several moments during our interviews, I also observed that the participants highlighted certain *cosmopolitan* orientations and an appreciation of *multiplicity* and *humility* rather than *singularity* and *superiority*. I offer several examples below to help illustrate this point:

[I’ve become] more tolerant, more empathetic, more open-minded, more affectionate... I mean, the world can change, the world is actually a good place. My views on the world have changed... As I said before, I’ve got rid of such labels as “the other, foreigner, heathen,” there’re no such things in my life anymore... (Gözde, 3rd Interview)

When you close your eyes and imagine your place in space, on earth, in the universe, you know, you start to understand how small you are... Likewise, I see myself big in my room in Turkey [...] But once I think about my previous visits to different places [during the STSA period] and imagine how my body was present in those different places, I feel very small. I don’t mean that I feel worthless, you know, I feel small in the sense that my universe has expanded... I’ve actually realized how big the universe is. (Marco, 3rd Interview)

There’s a world out there, good or bad; it doesn't matter... There’re other cultures, good or bad; no culture is superior to another anyway. Let's just be familiar with them, at least. Let's not think that [...] we're the best, we're great, so on... (Melis, 4th Interview)

Yes, [Turkey] is very beautiful, there're many beautiful places here. But this is not the only beautiful place in the world... (Zeynep, 4th Interview)

With these statements, they, thus, suggested that thanks to their STSA experiences, they cut across the *ethnocentric* or *nationalist* perspectives in their worldviews. As a result, Gözde, for example, claimed to have developed a *transnational* sense of belonging to the world. She pointed out that before the Erasmus period, she mainly associated herself with her ethnic background. Having returned from abroad, she suggested that she re-thought her conceptions of *spatial* or *ethnic belonging* and started to regard herself as “a citizen of the world” who “could live and adapt anywhere in the world.” However, although this discourse of “global citizenship” suggests a *liquid* and perhaps an *ethnorelative* position, I caution that it may not necessarily indicate growth in, for example, *critical* or *transformative cosmopolitanism*. For example, even though she occasionally reflected on global disparities in wealth and human rights, she, as “a citizen of the world,” was primarily motivated to “travel to everywhere on earth.” That is, she highlighted disproportionately the *adventurous* elements in her conceptions of *mobility* and *cosmopolitanism* (see also *STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience*). It is also worth noting that after she confronted “post-graduation realities” and also the COVID-19 pandemic, her optimism about “living anywhere in the world” waned (which I discuss further in the next main theme, *Constructing the Future: Flexibility, Multiplicity, Precarity and Uncertainty*).

Nevertheless, in general, I underscore that the participants were able to conduct critical observations, question their positions in the world, create “new” reference points for comparison, and eventually expand/re-evaluate their evolving worldviews, mainly thanks to the affordances of an unaccustomed STSA context abroad. However, I also emphasize that these observations and interpretations demonstrated a wide variety of criticality, depth, and complexity among the participants. Nonetheless, regardless of the individual differences, the participants’ statements suggested nascent improvements in intercultural questioning and reflexivity. These improvements, in fact, may mean that the participants might be open to developing more coherent and critical intercultural perspectives when they return back to their original contexts. STSA learning can, thus, be a process that extends into later stages of life, including

the re-entry stage, rather than being limited only to the STSA space-time. In fact, I noticed that several participants pointed to the continuity of their questions and reflections stemming from their STSA experiences. Gözde, for example, pointed out that upon her return, she “made a better sense” of her experiences and attendant growth, especially when observing “the realities” of her original context through a “different” lens. However, unlike Gözde, Zeynep reported that she was unable to reflect further on her previous “country comparisons” when she returned to Turkey. She, thus, found herself “forgetting” her experiences:

When I was [in Spain], I used to think and compare the lives [in Turkey] and [in Spain] a lot. But when I came back [to Turkey], I didn't have time to think about what I was doing [in Spain]. [...] And I actually started to forget it very quickly. [Our country] is such a place that makes you forget (laughs). (Zeynep, 4th Interview)

Distinct from Zeynep’s case, Ayşe and Dilara suggested that they had time and energy to talk about their STSA experiences when they returned. However, Dilara, in particular, complained about the “indifference” of her close friends and family members to her STSA experiences. As a result, I interpret that she did not find sufficient opportunities to express her STSA-related experiences, reflections, and possible transformations. Thus, on the basis of all these statements from Ayşe, Dilara, Gözde, and Zeynep, I conclude that these participants could benefit from a guided re-entry program that would encourage them to reflect further on their experiences and continue their (critical) development (see the next chapter for further discussions and attendant recommendations).

### **3.3.1.8. STSA as a Facilitating Experience for Employability and Further Mobility**

As I discussed in the previous sub-themes, the participants overall suggested that their participation in the Erasmus program resulted in a variety of personal and professional improvements in areas such as adaptation, communication, flexibility, global awareness, independence, language, inclusivity, and interculturality. When I asked specifically what the “Erasmus experience” represented on their CVs (since they had already included it on their CVs), they, once again, referred to these particular discourses of development or transformation. Upon this question, they also pointed to

their competitive advantage over other potential job-seekers, whom they thought might lack certain indicators for such areas. In other words, they constructed connections between the developmental or transformative dimensions of their Erasmus participation and the discourses of employability. However, it is worth noting that the other dimensions of their STSA experiences, such as fun and adventure, received almost no attention in their CV constructions or discourses of employability. Marco, for example, explained:

I regard [Erasmus] as studying abroad. [...] But, you know, studying abroad also brings a living [and traveling] abroad experience with it... For example, I went to Prague, I went to Vienna where I spent four days. [...] So I can also add these things [to my CV], but it won't make much sense. But I think being an official student at a university [abroad] is something that makes sense [to potential employers]. (Marco, 2nd Interview)

Illustrating a common strategy among the participants, Marco, therefore, preferred to highlight the academic dimensions of his STSA experience on his CV. By doing so, he believed, his CV would be more appealing to a potential employer. Through a similar strategy, several other participants linked, in particular, their self-perceived growth in language(s) and communication to discourses of competition or employability (see also *STSA as a Linguistic Experience*). Ayşe and Gözde, for instance, stated:

You know, we're English teachers, so having international experiences can be advantageous for us. So, [employers] may think that she (referring to herself) went abroad, made an improvement in language skills... Well, Spain didn't make a huge difference for me in that regard, but I mean, [English] was still the language that I could speak [during the STSA period]. After all, I spoke to the people there in English [...] So, [STSA on the CV] might be perceived [by potential employers] as a contribution in terms of language... (Ayşe, 2nd Interview)

Let me tell you that the students [at many other ELTE programs in Turkey] can't actually speak English since their courses are usually taught in Turkish, and they take only theoretical courses and graduate. So they have very few opportunities to practice [their English skills]. Well, in my case, when tutoring someone or teaching a class, I tell people that I spoke [English] for five months and my accuracy and fluency are pretty good. So, I use this as a marketing tool... (Gözde, 2nd Interview)

Claiming that most of the prospective language teachers in Turkey have difficulties in speaking English, these participants, then, viewed themselves as “one step ahead” in the job market thanks to the self-perceived language gains from their STSA participation. In fact, in addition to their improved communicative skills in English, most participants also pointed to their increased “bravery,” “extroversion,” and “confidence” as potential distinguishing traits in the market. I provide several quotes below to instantiate this point:

I mean, there're some hidden meanings [of STSA on the CV]. As it may indicate things like expanded worldview and vision, I wanted to put it [on my CV]. I think it also shows that I had the courage to do it. Perhaps many people do not look at it from this perspective, but I know there're many people who don't have enough courage to undertake [an STSA experience] (laughs)... (Dilara, 3rd Interview)

[Employers may think that] she (referring to herself) is a brave person who will not shy away from taking any responsibility [...] She's someone outgoing and at ease talking to others... I'd think about these [if I saw STSA on a CV]. (Gözde, 5th Interview)

I think [STSA] is a plus [on the CV]. So why would it be a plus? [...] I managed to get along with people from other nations, which shows that I've broadened my lens a bit more in problem-solving. I think this is something [a potential] employer will care about. (Marco, 2nd Interview)

What does [having STSA on the CV] mean to me? Going abroad and living there might be a testament to my abilities in terms of adapting to a new environment, right? It also shows that I'm actually good or perhaps skilled at interacting with cultures. These are the things I see in myself; what else could it be? (Melis, 2nd Interview)

[...] maybe because of the challenges [involved in studying abroad], [employers] may think that she (referring to herself) is a successful student. Anything else? It might also be something [extra] to mention during a job interview (laughs)... (Zeynep, 5th Interview)

Even if Zeynep, in particular, took a critical stance in one of the interviews and compared the CV construction to “an advertisement brochure,” all the participants, then, suggested that their STSA experience on the CV represented several individual skills such as “adaptation,” “flexibility,” “global or intercultural competence,” “communication,” and “risk-taking.” And they associated these skills with increased employability. That is, they tended to imagine that these broad forms of “soft skills”

would be valued by potential employers. They, perhaps, trusted the neoliberal ethos of entrepreneurialism that actively promotes inventing and/or acquiring “marketable” skills.

In fact, they also suggested that they developed certain feelings of *distinction* as a result of adding an STSA experience to their CVs. In other words, they all felt that they completed “something extra” in comparison to their peers or the graduates of other ELTE programs in Turkey. According to the participants, STSA, thus, indicated a distinguishing status. Marco, for instance, illustrated this point through the following statements:

When I saw [the Erasmus program] on my CV, I was like this (stands upright), my chest swelled with pride. Yeah, it reminds me proudly that I studied [in Germany]. When I used to look at my CV in the past [before Erasmus], I would say, “yeah, it looks good,” but after adding it, the CV appeared as exalted to me. (Marco, 2nd Interview)

By including her STSA experience in the CV, Ayşe, likewise, thought that she was able to document “[having done] something else in addition to regular course work.” Therefore, I re-emphasize that the participants viewed their STSA experiences as a “positive” or “distinctive” addition to their personal biographies or as an “added value” to their employability.

On the other hand, I contend that the transformative and linguistic dimensions of their STSA experiences also encouraged the participants to look beyond their national borders regarding potential study and/or job opportunities (which I discuss in greater detail in the next theme, *Constructing the Future: Flexibility, Multiplicity, Precarity and Uncertainty*). They actually suggested, during our interviews, that their improved sense of “independence,” “self-confidence,” and “global citizenship,” coupled with their self-perceived language improvements, brought them closer to the imaginaries and discourses of *international mobility* (see also *STSA as a Linguistic Experience* and *STSA as a Transformative Experience*). Thanks to her Erasmus experience, Dilara, for instance, pointed out that she could imagine “better opportunities abroad,” thereby highlighting her expanded range of professional opportunities:



After living [in Germany], I saw, for example, that I could live abroad, where I can build a beautiful, happy life and even have better opportunities. So, if I had never been there, I would have been stuck where I was. I mean, I would be afraid and unwilling to live abroad. I would choose a simpler life or choose the immediately available opportunities for myself. But right now, I want to try my luck abroad, too. [...] [Erasmus] has at least given me more options in life... (Dilara, 3rd Interview)

All the other participants, similarly, also reported that they planned or imagined enrolling in a graduate program abroad at some point in the future. They, too, pointed to the facilitating role of their STSA experiences in engaging with such mobility imaginings. Hence, in addition to associating it with discourses of employability, the participants viewed STSA as a facilitating experience for further mobility. That is, thanks to their first-hand Erasmus experiences, they were able to imagine further mobility possibilities abroad in a “well-informed” way. For example, during our interviews, Ayşe, Gözde, and Marco stated:

If I had to study in a master’s program abroad now, I wouldn’t be afraid at all. Well, I feel as if I can go anywhere. It seems like I can do it. But before [Erasmus], I was a bit hesitant about if I could do it. So I lacked self-confidence and had some doubts, as I had never been abroad before... (Ayşe, 2nd Interview)

As I mentioned, after living [in Spain], I gained a sort of confidence in myself, feeling like I can do anything. I can go abroad if I want and can find... well... scholarships, so I can study at a school abroad... I couldn't even imagine these things before, I mean before the Erasmus. Okay, we were talking about similar things in the past, but putting them into action is another thing. I saw concrete examples of how people were so active in Europe; they were quite mobile, going from place to place, studying here and there... Then I told myself, “you can do it too” ... (Gözde, 5th Interview)

As a student in a different country, how will I live, what will I do, what will I have, what will I not have, what will be good and what will be worse? [Erasmus] has definitely helped me answer these questions. [...] When did I notice this? It was the time when I came back [to Turkey] and decided to apply to universities abroad. While, for example, considering German universities, I could easily imagine the environment I would be placed in. (Marco, 5th Interview)

Thus, the Erasmus experience not only served as a motivational factor for further mobility but also acted as a preview for graduate programs abroad. I conclude this sub-theme by arguing that while constructing STSA as a facilitating experience for employability and further mobility, the participants mainly espoused the neoliberal

discourses and ethics of *competition*, *self-management*, and *mobility* (I elaborate on this argument in the next main theme and in the next chapter).

As a conclusion to this main theme (*Constructing the Short-Term Study Abroad: A Polydimensional and Disproportionate Experience*), I put forward that the participants' overall polydimensional STSA or Erasmus construction is mainly oriented to the neoliberal framings of short-term youth or student mobility. In particular, I contend that while constructing their STSA experiences as well as discussing their views on the Erasmus program, this particular cohort of PELTs mostly drew on the discourses of *adventure*, *carefreeness*, *competition*, *finance*, *fun*, *popularity*, *self-management*, and *employability* (I offer further discussions on this point in the next chapter with references to the extant literature). Thus, I suggest that these discourses represent the most prominent or *common sense* elements of their overall complex STSA construction. However, their disproportionate involvement with these *common sense* elements did not exclude or preclude academic, intercultural, linguistic, and transformative dimensions in their STSA constructions.

Although they tended to give them less weight, the participants also reported sporadic engagements with *academic activities*, *local communities and languages*, and several *critical issues* (e.g., cosmopolitanism, economic disparities, interculturality, essentialism, identities, inclusion, and stereotypes) during their Erasmus experiences. That is, along with their predominant conversations with those *common sense* elements, they also provided a notable number of statements that I interpreted as a sign of academic, critical, intercultural, and language improvements through STSA. In fact, I regard these relatively marginal forms of development or discourses as *good sense* dimensions of their polydimensional STSA construction, which certainly deserve further attention for a more balanced Erasmus experience for prospective language teachers (I discuss this crucial point in greater detail in the next chapter). Below, in an effort to illustrate my overarching interpretations in this theme, I offer a rough visual representation of the participants' overall polydimensional but disproportionate STSA construction. In this figure (Figure 5), I try to demonstrate how the *common sense* elements received more attention in their overall STSA construction, resulting in an unbalanced experience. In other words, I depict a polydimensional and

disproportionate STSA construction that I interpret to be predicated on the participants' financial capacity (see *STSA as an Economic Experience*).



Figure 5. The participants' polydimensional and disproportionate STSA construction

In the next theme, which corresponds to the second research question (How do the participants construct their future imaginatively and experience the immediate post-graduation period?), I explore how the participants constructed their *imagined futures* and post-graduation period. By doing so, I aim to scrutinize the potential entanglements between the neoliberal common sense and their future imaginings. Through this scrutiny, I also intend to evaluate the participants' STSA constructions within their constructions of the future and immediate post-graduation period. Thus, with these focal points of analysis, I hope to describe further complexities of their re-entry period (i.e., their last semester in the teacher education program and immediate post-graduation period) with regard to the neoliberal common sense.

### 3.3.2. Constructing the Future: Flexibility, Multiplicity, Precarity and Uncertainty

As I already discussed in the previous theme, most participants tended to link their STSA experiences, particularly the self-perceived linguistic and transformative outcomes, to the discourses of *competition*, *employability*, and *further mobility*. They,

thus, ascribed a facilitating role to these outcomes for future prospects. In other words, they did not restrict their STSA experiences only to the realm of the past but also connected them to future temporalities. Their frequent (discursive) engagements with the future possibilities or scenarios, in fact, confirmed the importance of analyzing their imagined futures, particularly during a transition period that signaled their entry into the job market and/or graduate programs. Through a comprehensive focus on their imagined futures, as well as immediate post-graduation experiences, I, thus, aimed to shed further light on the complexities of their re-entry period (note that they undertook their last year in their regular teacher education program after their STSA period). In doing so, I also aimed to explicate how they continued to confront or negotiate neoliberal discourses. Based on a thorough analysis of their discourses and experiences in those respects, I constructed this main theme in which I demonstrate their close engagements with the conditions and discourses of *flexibility, multiplicity, precarity* and *uncertainty*.

To begin with, the participants suggested that upon their return from the Erasmus period, they found themselves negotiating, as in Marco's words, "a reality shock." They noted that they were not much concerned about the post-graduation scenarios during the Erasmus period (see also *STSA as a Transient Carefree Experience* and *STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience*). Therefore, their re-entry into the original context stimulated them to (re)consider their plans or options regarding, for example, future employment and career-building. While doing this, Marco, for example, felt disoriented because he realized that he was not on the same page with his peers, who had already started to evaluate possible options for entry-level employment and/or graduate programs. In fact, he attributed his disorientation to the STSA participation:

[When I returned], I told exactly this to myself, "look, there's a huge difference between what people are doing and what you're doing." I mean, people had already started to gather some opinions about work options, they were talking to the schools, you know, private schools, kindergartens, and so on. So, they had already been talking to many schools, learning about incomes, comparing them, so they had already been doing something... In my case, however, I was trying to hand out the chocolates I had brought from Germany. (Marco, 4th Interview)

Although most of the participants believed that the Erasmus experience strengthened their sense of “having done something extra” or distinction (see also *STSA as a Facilitating Experience for Employability and Further Mobility*), they still experienced certain feelings of disorientation or “staying behind” during the re-entry period. I observed that these feelings appeared primarily in relation to the fact that they had to prolong their graduation as a consequence of participating in the Erasmus program. This heightened affective state, in fact, further intensified when their peers graduated and took up certain job positions and/or enrolled in graduate programs. Melis, for example, highlighted her anxiety upon observing what her peers were doing while she was still a “student”: “All of my friends are getting jobs, applying to master’s programs, and I’m like, oh my God, everyone is doing something, but I’m doing nothing.”

Apart from such feelings of disarray, the participants also mentioned how they were haunted by the “unpredictability” of the upcoming post-graduation period or the job market. In fact, all the participants reported difficulty in terms of anticipating, for example, their first job or where they would live after graduation, as Ayşe and Melis illustrated:

I guess the uncertainty brought by this last semester makes me nervous. Normally, I'm a person who is somewhat organized or something like that. So, when there's no clarity, it makes me a little nervous, it's not clear... [...] I guess it's the same for everyone, I think the people I've been talking to, who are in their last year, are also worried about their future... (Ayşe, 4th Interview)

I need to find a job (laughs)... Okay, the future anxiety... I'm actually a bit tired of saying the same things over and over again... I don't know, I don't know what will happen in January, and I don't like this; not knowing where we'll be in two months... We're drifting like leaves in the wind, which doesn't appeal to me. (Melis, 3rd Interview)

Therefore, I note that the participants constructed their imagined futures, in the first place, through the discourses of *mutability* and *uncertainty*, coupled with an affective state characterized by *anxious thinking* and *disorientation*. Often, their anxiety was triggered by the *multiplicity* of (imagined) employment opportunities, the fear of “landing in a bad position,” and the general lack of clarity. Melis, for example, even

wished that someone had reduced her options and forced her to make a choice among fewer options:

I wish you would tell me, “Melis, you have three options.” I would perhaps eliminate one of them first. In that case, I would have a 50/50 chance [...], and there would be two certain things. I would just pick one of them. Then I can't regret it, why? Because these were given to me, I only had these... There was no more option. (Melis, 2nd Interview)

Melis (also Marco and Dilara), then, complained explicitly about the possibility of numerous career paths and the need to exercise certain judgments to decide on “the best” option or to “make the right choice.” In fact, I interpreted their last semester in the program as a unique transition period in their lives, quite unlike the previous stages. They, for instance, suggested that before this period, they followed a relatively more linear pathway without feeling much stress about future employment or career paths. However, most of them said that when imagining the post-graduation period, they hovered among a variety of possibilities embedded in an uncertain or unpredictable future. At this stage in their lives, they, thus, imagined and negotiated a wide range of options in the vastness of the (global) job market and graduate programs. While doing so, they suggested, they relied on their high levels of English proficiency, language teaching skills (described as “a golden ticket” by Gözde), and other forms of academic and mobility capital.

As I also discussed in the previous theme (see *STSA as a Facilitating Experience for Employability and Further Mobility*), the participants noted that their STSA experiences played a particular role in their engagement with a multiplicity of future scenarios. In other words, their STSA experiences added an “abroad dimension” to their imagined futures, thereby expanding the range and number of possibilities for the future. Dilara, for example, pointed out that if she had not been involved in the Erasmus program and remained in her local context, she would have been dreaming of “safer” options in Turkey, such as working at a state school. She, thus, asserted that the Erasmus experience broadened her future options and provided a diverse range of spatial possibilities in the future:

Well, you know, if I had conditioned myself to only [the options in Turkey], my options would have been fewer. I would actually have to consider fewer options

right now. [...] I mean, if, for example, I had focused straight on [working at a state school in Turkey], [...] it would have been the easiest, perhaps the happiest choice among them... It would at least give me peace of mind... (Dilara, 5th Interview)

Therefore, similar to Melis, Dilara was restless about the multiplicity of future scenarios, especially after the Erasmus experience added the “abroad” dimension to her possible future trajectories. Nevertheless, they continued to allocate some (growing) space to the possibilities abroad in their imagined futures (both near and distant). In fact, all the participants stated that they would prefer to live in a Western or Global North country at some point in the future, mainly because of “general happiness,” “better opportunities,” “economic comfort,” and “entertainment,” which they believed these countries provided.

If they were to remain in Turkey after graduation, the participants suggested, they would encounter four main employment options, particularly in the domain of the language teaching profession: (1) secure a permanent position at a state school through a sufficient score received from the standardized national teacher qualification exam, (2) work at a foundation school on a permanent or temporary contract, (3) work at a private language institution that usually offers precarious contracts tied to the number of enrolled students, and (4) obtain a temporary language instructor position at a higher education institution. As might be noticed, it was only the first option that offered a secure and permanent position on the condition that they received an adequate score in the standardized exam regulated by the state. However, I found that all the participants, except Zeynep, eschewed this option before graduating from the teacher education program.

Most participants pointed out that even if they passed a competitive examination process and became eligible to work at a state school, they would still have to live in a disadvantaged region in Turkey for a few years due to the shortage of teachers in such regions. Gözde, for example, had reservations about “being assigned to a village school and living away from all [her] loved ones and being deprived of everything.” Similarly, Melis said, she “couldn’t live in [a small city] unless [she] had to.” For Marco, working at a state school was the last option because he “[didn’t] want to work

at a state school unless [he was] in a very difficult situation.” He even viewed this option as “a trap” because he was sure that he would be “unhappy” in a remote or unacquainted place. Even for Zeynep, who was the only participant who seriously considered this option before graduation, it was a “very safe” option, thus “was scaring [her].” In particular, she was worried about the possibility of restricting her life to a single option. She, therefore, did not “view [it] as something that [she] would do throughout [her] entire life.” Rather, she noted, she planned to “save the day” and “meet [her] needs” through this “safer” option. In other words, she viewed it as the best starting option, offering her “a safer position,” “better working conditions,” and “more personal time” than private language institutions.

Most of the participants, who were studying at one of the most prestigious universities in Turkey and aspiring to lead a “vibrant” life in a major city, were then inclined to view working at a state school in Turkey as “undesirable.” Hence, they seemed to have intentions to stay in major cities or with their families (as in the case of Ayşe, Gözde, and Melis) to invest in a more “promising” path in terms of *mobility*, *social status*, and *income*. Overall, their plans and views evoked a self-focused and economically driven rationality rather than a sense of collective responsibility that might have steered them to work with, for example, disadvantaged populations in small towns or villages.

As a result of their preference for a flexible and unpredictable career in major cities in Turkey or Global North countries, most of the participants eventually opted for temporary or precarious jobs for their post-graduation period. Although these jobs usually provide short-term contracts and flexible schedules that the participant sought, it is also worth noting that such positions usually offer low wages and job insecurity. Since the participants were also aware of these disadvantages, they expressed concerns particularly about the working conditions in the foundation schools and private language institutions. For instance, they reported that these profit-making institutions offered “an income close to minimum wage” in exchange for at least 30-40 working hours in a week and additional duties. Ayşe, Dilara, and Zeynep further explained:

Okay, I'm not greedy for money, but I mean, a certain amount is needed to maintain basic living conditions. Right now, [a foundation school] or something



similar, for example, is not even on my radar because you can never get the reward for the effort you spend there... (Ayşe, 5th Interview)

Unfortunately, right now, it's not quite possible to work [in the private job market] and imagine an income that is above the minimum wage. We have a lot of competitors... (Dilara, 6th Interview)

I am extremely biased toward the foundation schools, so they scare me a lot. I mean, there're very few people around me who work at such schools and are happy or satisfied... (Dilara, 7th Interview)

Some of [the private language institutions] even make you work on the weekends. And in such a case, I would probably not be able to do anything else such as, you know, allocating time for my theater performances. I don't really think that I would have the energy for... you know, dealing with the parents and so on [...] After all this exhaustion, I probably wouldn't enjoy teaching. (Zeynep, 5th Interview)

The participants, thus, appeared to have an overall negative perception of the working conditions in the local private education market. Further, they perceived this market as “exploitative” because of “the high number of graduates,” as Dilara and Marco pointed out. Nevertheless, before graduating from the program, all the participants (except Zeynep) regarded these private schools or institutions as a potential means of gaining teaching experiences and protecting a certain level of flexibility. In the meantime, they suggested, they would be able to survive economically and consider what type of employment would be “better” for their future. They would also avoid forging any solid or fixed connections to a position.

In fact, I found that the economic dimension was particularly prominent in their imagined futures. Most of the participants indicated that they were not eager to rely entirely on their families for their basic expenses after graduation. Therefore, they were concerned about earning a regular and, if possible, “satisfying” income without losing their flexibility in the labor market. Further, they often drew my attention to the economic conditions in Turkey at the time, which they believed were “worsening” due to the “rising prices” and “exchange rates.” Melis, thus, was even ready to provide financial support to her family when I asked about her immediate plans for the post-graduation period:

My primary goal right now is to start making money, and then, maybe I'll start my master's degree somehow [...] I'll try to put to work what I've learned so far

and earn some money. And, if possible, I'll try to provide economic support to my family. After that, we'll see... (Melis, 2nd Interview)

Hence, Melis and most of the other participants did not wish to have unemployment as an option, especially in light of, as Dilara put it, "the increasingly bad economic conditions." In fact, such economic rationalities or exigencies did not emerge suddenly right before their graduation. Rather, all the participants (except Ayşe, whose family could provide sufficient support) had already been involved in certain temporary or part-time jobs during their undergraduate education (see also the section where I introduced the participants). Dilara, Gözde, and Melis, for example, worked for various private language institutions during certain periods of their undergraduate education and taught English to different groups of learners. Dilara and Zeynep also worked in some casual jobs such as "barista" (Dilara) and nanny (Zeynep) that did not require any teaching. Through their involvement in such temporary jobs, they explained, they hoped to generate additional financial support and/or accumulate teaching experiences. However, even though they were mainly pleased with their increased budgets thanks to these jobs, they also often complained about the low wages, especially regarding their teaching labor. When I asked about the exact amount that they earned for one English lesson, Melis, for instance, answered:

18 (approx. three American dollars at the time). Very little indeed. Very little. Huge exploitation... I don't know how I got into this... But on the other hand, I think I gain some sort of experience, so I mean, I'll have a classroom experience. And indeed I like it. The point is that when I enter the classroom, I actually enjoy it a lot... (Melis, 1st Interview)

Even though Melis "enjoyed" teaching, she could not escape a feeling of "exploitation" largely because of the low wages. Based on her statements, I interpret that her attachment to the profession was being undermined by unfavorable financial conditions in the private market that did not offer satisfying wages. Nevertheless, with such mixed feelings, she hoped to gain "a classroom experience" that could help her hone her teaching skills while undertaking her last semester as an undergraduate student. The other participants, however, did not report any satisfaction with their teaching experiences in those part-time positions. As can be anticipated, they were also clearly disappointed with the low wages and working conditions. In short, I note that

before graduating from their undergraduate program, they developed a close familiarity with the precarious work conditions that were mainly colored by *flexibility*, *low wages*, and *job insecurity*.

Although their earlier experiences and ongoing observations led them to hold negative perceptions of the options in the private education market, all of them (except Zeynep, whose first choice was to work at a state school), as I discussed earlier, still reported that they planned to involve in such precarious options after graduation. By doing so, they suggested, they hoped to retain a certain level of flexibility and find more satisfying employment over time. Among the precarious options that were available to beginning language teachers in Turkey, the participants tended to favor temporary teaching positions at higher education institutions. Ayşe, Dilara, and Marco were the participants who overtly indicated their interest in this option before graduation. They regarded it as highly attractive because they thought that it offered “flexibility,” “an acceptable income,” “manageable working hours,” and “personal time.” This option, additionally, would allow them to “stay in a university setting,” “live in a major city,” and “pursue a master’s program.” Although Gözde and Melis did not clearly target this option and eventually chose to work temporarily at a private language institution in their hometowns, they were also interested in working at a higher education institution in the long term for similar reasons. Most participants, thus, viewed higher education as an appealing target for employment both in the short and long term. However, the popularity of this option does not necessarily mean that all the participants held the same motivations and plans for it.

Ayşe and Marco planned to pursue a PhD program in the long run since they imagined and desired to maintain their scholarly engagements with their fields of interest. With a PhD degree, preferably from “a university abroad,” they believed, they could obtain a faculty position in a university in Turkey or abroad. Having a long-term academic career in mind, they, therefore, viewed temporary language teaching at the university level as the most complementary work option. They also believed that thanks to the flexibility provided by this option, they would be able to have enough time for their graduate studies. Added to that was the amount of the monthly income, which, they suggested, was much higher than “an average income” in a foundation school or a

private language institution. Although Dilara, Gözde, and Melis did not openly plan to pursue a PhD program or an academic career, they also wanted to maintain their touch with “a university setting” and enjoy the “opportunities” brought by such contexts. They envisaged that they could enroll in a master’s program in the future if they wanted to, thanks to the flexible and “not bad” working conditions promised by higher education institutions.

The participants, then, suggested that the temporary language teaching positions at the university level were highly relevant and attractive for their various aims and plans, especially when compared to other teaching options available in the private market. However, all the participants were also aware that in order to continue to work at these institutions and obtain a permanent and better-paying position, they would need to complete a master’s program in a relevant field of study. This requirement is actually a consequence of a policy change that was started to be implemented in Turkey in 2018.

Before 2018, the graduates of language teacher education programs could find permanent language teaching positions in higher education institutions in Turkey. The recent regulation (Council of Higher Education, 2018), however, requires that they obtain at least a master’s degree from a relevant program in order to be eligible for a permanent position in a state or foundation university. A permanent position, in fact, generally offers higher salaries and better work conditions than a temporary position in the same context. Without a master’s degree, the graduates are, thus, eligible only for precarious positions that offer, as mentioned, lower wages, insecure contracts, and considerable uncertainty, even though they allow the graduates to maintain a certain level of flexibility and enjoy a “university environment.” Therefore, Dilara, Gözde, Marco, and Melis considered enrolling in a recognized master’s program right after graduation in order to meet the basic requirements for a permanent position at a higher education institution. Otherwise, Marco and Gözde, for example, put forward that they would primarily consider applying to a non-education graduate program such as *Eurasian* or *Russian Studies* (Gözde) and *Linguistics* (Marco) that would better suit their long-term personal interests.

Ayşe, however, did not prioritize the master's programs that could be relevant for language teaching since her interest was primarily in linguistics, an option that was not listed by the employers in the higher education domain. Nevertheless, she also found the temporary positions in higher education to be viable, at least until she could complete a master's program in *Linguistics* or *Cognitive Science*. With a master's degree in one of these fields, she noted, she could try to enroll in a PhD program abroad and move closer to fulfilling her long-term career goals, which included becoming a professor in linguistics. Similarly, Zeynep planned to pursue a master's and PhD program (preferably abroad) in *Linguistics*. But she was not concerned about permanent employment at a university since she had already decided to work at a state school, especially after learning about the changes to hiring practices for higher education. She was, thus, predominantly interested in the academic dimensions of graduate studies either in Turkey or abroad.

Even though there were individual differences or exceptions among the participants regarding their motivations for pursuing a master's program, I suggest that most of them adopted an instrumental lens in the first place to gain a permanent position at a higher education institution. They actually seemed to have shaped their future plans mainly according to the vagaries of the precarious job market and certain policy changes. To negotiate the demands, risks, and uncertainties of the precarious market, Dilara and Marco even planned to enroll in graduate programs that could open up more options for "decent" employment. For example, before graduating from the undergraduate program, Dilara said that "[her] dream job [was] not English language teaching." She, thus, did not want to "restrict [herself] to English language teaching." Consequently, she planned to apply to a master's program in the field of *Educational Administration and Planning* (which she noted as one of the valid programs for permanent employment in higher education). She maintained:

I want to turn my attention to the field of education, you know, there might be more jobs available in the state or private institutions in this area... It seems like something related to education can bring more benefits than a master's in English language teaching. As I said, the master's in educational administration can also get me hired, for example, in Turkish Airlines, perhaps in their human resources department or something. So, it makes more sense to me... Actually, if I could do something in international relations or something, I might even have

better opportunities, but I don't seem to have enough experience for this...  
(Dilara, 5th Interview)

Dilara, then, believed that holding a master's degree in *Educational Administration and Planning* would bring her a satisfying position or a wide range of possibilities in the job market, even though she had almost no experience in this field. Therefore, I could discern an entrepreneurial rationality in her imagined future. Dilara, in fact, was also proactive in expanding her options to a global scale because she was afraid of "the unstable Turkish economy." She, therefore, tried to receive "a barista certificate," which, she suggested, could help her go beyond the national framings of employment and become part of a transnationally mobile workforce. This way, as mentioned earlier, she would not "restrict [herself] to English language teaching" or living in Turkey.

While Dilara thought that she was incompetent in "international relations," Marco, however, was slightly more confident in considering a master's program in this field. Unlike Dilara, he had already audited some undergraduate courses in this non-education field and translated several field-specific texts. With a "unique" combination of a master's degree in *English Language Teaching* with a degree in *International Relations*, he, for example, thought that he could find a position in an international organization such as the United Nations. Therefore, I interpret that he also tended to frame the future largely as an entrepreneurial activity, envisioning unique, flexible, and multiple combinations that could be translated into social and economic benefits.

Toward the end of their undergraduate studies, Dilara and Gözde also viewed employment as a flight attendant as another "good" career option and took initial steps to gain full-time employment in this non-education field. Their application process, however, stopped at a certain point with a "rejection letter." When I questioned their motives in that regard, Gözde, for instance, replied, "there're people who manage their lives well and reach much higher standards, so what makes me different from them?" In addition to such discourses of *self-management* and *self-responsibility*, they also referred to certain *economic* and *consumerist* rationalities while explaining their motives for considering being a flight attendant:

I: Suppose that you've been accepted to both; Which would you choose to be? A temporary language instructor [at a higher education institution] or a flight attendant at Turkish Airlines?

*Dilara*: A flight attendant. (After realizing my surprised face) but they pay a very good salary. I mean, you can earn something like seven to eight thousand liras [each month] ... (*Dilara*, 6th Interview)

Gözde, likewise, told: "I know someone from our university, a graduate of the Philosophy department. For example, she works at Emirates (an airline company). I follow her on Instagram, and I can tell she enjoys life to the fullest." *Dilara* and *Gözde*, thus, were active in searching for different career options for which they had not received any formal training. They searched over both virtual and physical domains for a job that could provide them a "good salary" and enable them to travel or "enjoy life." Therefore, I argue that these two participants, in particular, were inclined to prioritize self-focused rationalities, economic concerns, and mobility opportunities over the intrinsic aspects of the teaching profession when imagining or constructing future possibilities. However, I also note that such self-focused discourses of *flexibility* and *multiplicity* that prioritized individual economic benefits and consumerist practices were not exclusive to *Dilara* and *Gözde*.

As *Zeynep* was preparing for her university entrance exams, she, for example, found comfort in knowing that she would not be restricted only to language teaching once she graduated from a language teacher education program (see also the section where I introduced her). She suggested that she was convinced at the time that her advanced English skills could help her find desirable positions in the state- or private-funded sectors. As she approached graduation from the program, she, however, favored the state schools as a potential employment domain. Nonetheless, as I highlighted before, she did not regard working at a state school "as something that [she] would do for the rest of [her] life," suggesting her interest and flexibility toward other career options, such as an academic career.

Similar to *Zeynep*, after taking the university entrance exams, *Marco* also decided to study in an ELTE program because he thought that it would help him develop acquaintance with multiple fields such as *English Language Teaching*, *English Literature*, and *Linguistics* (see also the section where I introduced him). As a

consequence, he would have a wide range of career options upon his graduation. In fact, toward the end of his undergraduate education, he decided to work as a temporary language instructor at a foundation university and sought an academic career in *Linguistics*. As I mentioned earlier, before graduating from the ELTE program, Ayşe also planned to pursue a graduate program in *Linguistics* and thought that she could generate income through temporary language teaching positions simultaneously. Although Melis enjoyed teaching English, she did not regard it as “something that [she] could do [her] entire life,” similar to what the other participants thought.

All the participants, then, eschewed spending their whole professional careers in language teaching or in a fixed (teaching) position. For them, language teaching was increasingly becoming a profession that was not promising with regard to income, mobility (physical and professional), and personal time. As a consequence, they often treated it as a secondary pursuit, and, as I suggested earlier, they usually considered it for various temporary or pragmatic reasons. Therefore, based on their future-oriented actions, plans, and statements, I contend that the participants constructed their imagined futures mainly in alignment with neoliberal discourses of *flexibility* and *multiplicity* rather than with strong motivations to pursue a career in language teaching. However, while assessing their discourses and strategies in that regard, the onus should not fall entirely on their individual agency.

I caution that the undesired working structures in the private language industry or the increasing precarization of the teaching profession might also be nurturing *self-entrepreneurship*, *flexibility*, *risk-taking*, and *vigilance* among prospective language teachers. These neoliberal configurations, therefore, might be steering teacher candidates to seek out more “fulfilling” options in (imagined) multiple employment domains, whereby it might be possible for them to valorize their existing qualifications and language repertoire. Added to that could be the local economic downturns that the participants repeatedly highlighted as a growing concern for the future. Nevertheless, while negotiating (or escaping) the market conditions, most participants still aligned closely with entrepreneurial subjectivities. They, thus, did not appear to take an overt critical position against such subjectivities. Nor did they demonstrate an intrinsic or



altruistic approach toward the teaching profession, even though they all achieved to graduate from their language teacher education program with a high CGPA.

Evidently, their actual and imaginary negotiations with the mutable, precarious, and flexible job conditions influenced their imagined futures and teacher identity construction. In their negotiations, however, they usually relied on their own devices or received help from their close informal networks. During one of our conversations, Melis, in fact, complained about the lack of formal guidance in the face of impending encounters with the professional job market:

Here is someone who is about to enter [the job market], a recent graduate. According to what I've observed so far from people around me, you've actually observed it the best; no one really knows what to do. I mean, honestly, what will I do now? What will happen if I try this? What will happen if I try that? [...] Or what are my options? What's best for me? What's worst for me?... I don't know if there's a source that can answer these questions. I guess there's nothing in that regard. Even if there's something, I have no idea where it is. So, it's quite normal for us to suffer so much because nobody knows anything... (Melis, 7th Interview)

Based on these statements, I, thus, assume that she and her peers were not guided during their teacher education processes regarding how to navigate through the job market and (critically) appraise existing options. That is, they were expected to succeed in the market through their own efforts, mediums, and strategies. However, as Melis suggested, this self-focused climate might also engender “suffering,” especially when faced with a competitive, precarious, and profit-seeking job market.

In fact, in the course of data generation, I confirmed that they lacked certain information or strategies for contacting potential employers, especially in the higher education domain. Having witnessed their interest in this domain, in our interviews, I asked if they took any steps to be considered for an available part-time or temporary position. To my surprise, none of them had considered sending an email to the heads of relevant departments and inquiring about the available positions. Instead, they intended to follow the announcements on the departmental web pages, where such hiring announcements are rarely found. Therefore, I suggested sending an email to potential employers and asking about the available positions along with an attached CV. Thanks, in part, to my impromptu suggestion, Ayşe, Dilara, and Marco (Melis

and Zeynep decided not to work at such positions) found a chance to be interviewed by several foundation universities right before their graduation. As a result, Dilara and Marco were hired, while Ayşe's application was turned down without a "clear" reason. Gözde also employed the same strategy at a later point during her post-graduation period and eventually gained temporary employment at a foundation university.

As to their post-graduation experiences, I observed a variety of decisions and actions, many of which still reflected the discourses of *flexibility*, *multiplicity*, *precarity* and *uncertainty*. For example, Ayşe, especially after her failed attempt to work at a foundation university, decided to return to her hometown, spend a few months with her parents, and prepare for a master's program in *Cognitive Science*. When we held an interview five months after her graduation, she was still undecided about employment. Shortly after our interview, she was admitted to her target master's program in *Cognitive Science*. While taking courses in this program, she decided to work at a state school. After passing through the standardized examination process, she started working at a school in the East of Turkey. She explained that she chose this option mainly for reasons such as "job safety," "regular income," and "having enough time to follow the graduate courses online." It is worth noting here that their immediate post-graduation period coincided with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, those who were enrolled in a graduate program pursued their courses online, which apparently facilitated Ayşe's decision to work at a state school in a different city. But, regarding her long-term plans, Ayşe was still interested in going abroad for a PhD degree. Thus, I could observe that working at a state school did not suppress the elasticity of her future plans and desire to go abroad.

Following her graduation, as she had already planned, Zeynep also started working at a state school in the Southeast Turkey. However, she waited for almost eight months to be appointed through a centralized system. In the meantime, she enrolled in a master's program in *Linguistics* and stayed with her family, especially during the first waves of the pandemic. Luckily, she and her long-time boyfriend, who also graduated from the same department, managed to work in the same town and got married just before moving there. Both were motivated to pursue further graduate studies, preferably in universities abroad.

After graduation, as I already mentioned, Dilara and Marco started to work at a foundation university as a temporary language instructor, a position they described as the “best” option given the “poor conditions” of other employment opportunities in the private job market. Their contract, however, was terminated after a semester (almost five months covering the first wave of the pandemic) due to the end of the classes and the austerity measures taken by the university in response to “the pandemic conditions.” After being unemployed for almost three months, both, nevertheless, managed to find a similar position at another foundation university. Meanwhile, they were also accepted to a master’s program. Just as he wished, Marco started to study in an *English Language Teaching* program. With his enrollment, Marco primarily aimed to gain permanent employment in higher education and sustain the scholarly activities that could enable him to lead an academic career or at least gauge his abilities for such a career. Dilara also achieved to enroll in a master’s program in *Educational Administration and Planning*. Similar to her pre-graduation plans, her statements on this subject still revolved around the discourses of *flexibility* and *multiplicity*. Having explained how this program could enable her to gain full-time employment at the university level, she stated once again that she did not intend to spend her entire life as a language instructor and added:

Completing [this master’s program] will surely help me become a [full-time] instructor, but if I complete my master's [in this program in educational sciences], then I can also move into other fields or positions... I mean, for example, I could take a job in the human resources department of a company that is completely independent of [language teaching]. (Dilara, 7th Interview)

Apparently, both Dilara and Marco were not planning to engage in temporary or flexible job positions for a long time. Although they were able to maintain a certain level of flexibility, they were, however, slightly getting vexed by the insecurity as well as the low wages associated with these temporary positions in higher education, as Dilara briefly complained about:

After all, we get paid less [than others who work with a permanent contract] because we are part-time, but our [job requirements] are almost the same. We need a better way of organizing this; I mean we should know what will happen to us. There’s really no guarantee for us... (Dilara, 7th Interview)

In order to surmount these insecure, underpaid, mutable, and uncertain conditions, I observed, they regarded their graduate studies as an important step. In line with what they suggested before their graduation, their discourses in that regard, therefore, gravitated again toward the instrumentality of graduate programs for “ideal” employment. Similar to the other participants, Dilara and Marco were also vigilant about the possibilities of living and studying abroad. In a sense, they seemed to preserve their flexibility also for the options abroad while working toward more secure and well-paying contracts in the local context.

On the other hand, Gözde and Melis, after graduation, decided to return to their hometowns, where they managed to find full-time positions in a private language institution. However, both earned a monthly income close to the minimum wage in return for their 30-40 hours of teaching each week. After a while, they decided to leave these institutions for various reasons, including “low wages,” “long working hours,” and also “the health concerns” arising from the pandemic. In her quest for better employment opportunities, Melis began thinking about working at a state school because she realized “how unsustainable the jobs in the private market were.” Further to that, she became increasingly convinced that a position at a state school was “the safe way of life,” especially regarding the financial issues. In fact, she eventually started working at a state-funded school in the South of Turkey, which bordered war-torn Syria. In the meantime, she had also been accepted to a master’s program in *English Language Teaching*. During one of our brief informal conversations, she, nevertheless, suggested a loose and temporary attachment to her teaching position at the state school. She stated that her long-term plans involved living in a large city with higher living standards. That is, she also aimed for permanent teaching positions in higher education in the long run. After all, she highlighted, “I feel a high level of anxiety if I am trapped in a place or situation that doesn’t move,” thereby suggesting her propensity to remain flexible and mobile rather than clinging to a certain position or community.

Following her initial but unpleasant job experience in a private language institution, Gözde also found a full-time position at a foundation school in her hometown. Although she navigated through “better” conditions this time, Gözde wished to work

in a higher education setting as a temporary language instructor. By doing so, she imagined, she could also enroll in a graduate program, which would enhance her employability and allow her to “stay in a university environment.” After working for a while in her second workplace, she, in fact, managed to find a temporary position in one of the foundation universities in the city where she completed her teacher education program. During the post-graduation period, Gözde also tried to enroll in a graduate program, which, however, did not result as she had hoped. Nevertheless, she continued to allocate certain space for graduate studies in her future plans. While she was reflecting on her work experiences and occasional unemployment during the post-graduation period, I also observed that Gözde tried to explain her “failures” through a discourse of *self-responsibility*. During our last interview, she, for example, put forward that:

When I look at what I’ve been going through, I see that I’ve accumulated a lot of experiences, been involved in a lot of good projects, or something... Also, I graduated from a reputable university. But when I look at my current situation, I tell myself that I’ve failed to take full advantage of the opportunities that have been available to me, so I’m here, unemployed and living with the family (laughs)... (Gözde, 7th Interview)

Compared to her optimistic rhetoric after the Erasmus period (see *STSA as a Transformative Experience*), Gözde’s statements, then, turned more toward self-accusation and despair, mainly because of her first-hand experiences in the job market and remarkable uncertainty. When I asked explicitly about this shift in her optimism, she answered, “I actually realized that I need more stable things in order to be blissful.” She, thus, suggested that she needed a certain level of job security and income to lead a fulfilling life.

Based on their post-graduation experiences, I note that most of the participants often found it difficult to reach “secure,” “well-paying,” and “promising” positions. In fact, mainly because of this struggle, some participants, such as Ayşe and Melis, began to regard state schools as “a safe station,” which they previously viewed as “the last resort.” Dilara, Gözde, and Marco also sought safe or permanent employment in the domain of higher education via a relevant master’s degree. Although all of them still intended to maintain their flexibility, especially for the options abroad (both work and

study), I revealed that they adjusted their discourses and actions to the “realities” of the market. They, therefore, strived to end their relations with the precarious, mutable, and uncertain conditions in the market that usually prioritized competition, low wages, and long working hours for beginning teachers.

Despite their strong motivation and willingness to go abroad, none of the participants, however, managed to do so within the 2-year period following their graduation. They gave the main reasons behind their “immobility” as “the pandemic” and “the struggle to survive financially and professionally.” In addition, none of them reported a clear impact of their STSA experiences on their employment processes even when I asked about it openly, although they previously viewed it as a facilitating experience for employability (see *STSA as a Facilitating Experience for Employability and Further Mobility*).

In general, I argue that the participants hoped to achieve “better” mobility and economic opportunities (e.g., high income, sufficient personal time, social prestige, job security, and international mobility) through open-ended imaginings and evolving/adaptive investment strategies. They, thus, tried to remain flexible in their career and study choices instead of concentrating on clearly delineated teaching options or careers. In other words, most of them could find employment at a state school in the first place and serve some disadvantaged rural populations. This way, they could also benefit from the job security and modest income that this position offered. Instead, most of them were inclined to assign a secondary status to this position or view it as the “last” option that would be available in case of an “emergency.” Therefore, I argue that this teaching position did not hold a high moral or intellectual appeal for them.

However, as I suggested beforehand, a dominant focus on their individual agency regarding the constructions of the future may lead to a fragmented and incomplete analysis. That is, they needed to confront and negotiate several dominant neoliberal structures along the way. It is, thus, likely that these mechanisms or structures instigated their entrepreneurial thinking and motivated them to internalize certain strategies, such as evaluating or inventing multiple options, calculating the best

economic circumstances, and considering further opportunities for social and spatial mobility. Therefore, the precarious and uncertain market conditions, coupled with rising local economic downturns, low wages, and long working hours, might have triggered certain forms of neoliberal subjectivities among the participants. Nonetheless, I caution that their close alignment with neoliberal subjectivities does not imply complete compliance with the neoliberal common sense. In fact, along with their creative as well as anxious engagements with neoliberal discourses and structures, they often critiqued and questioned the “exploitative” market conditions. However, I also observed that while crafting themselves to survive in the market, they were left to their own devices or were uninformed of such market conditions.

After all, through an elongated focus on the participants’ imagined futures and immediate post-graduation experiences, I was able to demonstrate how certain elements of the neoliberal common sense continued to permeate their personal and professional trajectories. Therefore, I showed how their constructions of STSA and the future were characterized mostly by neoliberal conceptions, accompanied by few elements of criticality, civic engagement, and communal sensitivities. While constructing their STSA experiences and imagined futures, they, therefore, interacted and negotiated predominantly and disproportionately with a complex amalgam of neoliberal discourses, such as *competition, consumerism, finance, employability, flexibility, multiplicity, precarity, and self-management*. As a result, I contend that they found it challenging along the way to cultivate altruistic identities whose seeds had, in fact, already been planted. During our interviews, Dilara, for instance, often talked about her “nurturing” side. Likewise, Marco identified one of his most salient characteristics as “helping others.” He also offered free tutoring to some disadvantaged students when undertaking his practicum at a high school. Owing mainly to her ethnic background, Gözde was also highly sensitive to the collective issues of both her ethnic community and other disadvantaged communities both on a local and global scale. Zeynep, in a similar vein, considered becoming a teacher to “help others” when she was still a high school student.

Despite the dominance of neoliberal elements in their STSA constructions and imagined futures, I underscore that all the participants were also highly sensitive or

critical toward certain political agendas and (emerging) global challenges such as climate change, inequalities, migration, poverty, and unemployment. I elaborate on this point in the next and last main theme. By focusing on their interpretations of the current state of the world, I frame the next theme as a broader checkpoint for figuring out how their worldviews converged or diverged with their STSA and future constructions. With such a focus, therefore, I can paint a more complex and broader picture of their discourses and experiences.

### **3.3.3. Interpreting the Current State of the World: (Critical) Views and Counter-Discourses**

As I discussed in the preceding themes, the participants engaged primarily in neoliberal discourses in their STSA constructions, imagined futures, and post-graduation period. For instance, before graduating from the teacher education program, they constructed their STSA experiences mainly through neoliberal framings of studying abroad, though I could also find certain critical and transformative dimensions in their STSA discourses and experiences. In addition, despite their unease with the functioning of the job market, they employed self-interested and entrepreneurial strategies, such as multiplying career options on both local and global scales and remaining flexible. This way, they hoped to cope with the precarity and uncertainty imposed by the future and the market. Therefore, I re-emphasize that the participants' STSA constructions and imagined futures were largely colored by neoliberal elements such as consumerism, competition, employability, entrepreneurship, flexibility, precarity, self-management, and self-focused economic rationalities.

In order to assess their STSA constructions and imagined futures on a broader or macro terrain of inquiry, I also invited the participants to discuss their worldviews in an interview (see Appendix A for the sixth interview guide). During this interview, they found a chance to discuss major global challenges and share their views on the current state of the world. Additionally, in the same interview, I asked them to envision and describe their ideal educational, political, and societal configurations that would be free from "our current major problems." Drawing on their interpretations and imaginings in those respects, I constructed this theme that corresponds to the third



research question (How do the participants interpret the current state of the world and associated challenges?). With this theme, I hope to offer a broader layer of analysis that can enhance the points that I made in the previous two themes.

To begin with, when I asked about “the main problems in the world” and provided several statistics or pieces of information, the participants identified or agreed on a wide range of “problems” to be tackled for a “better” world. While some of these issues, such as “poverty” or “selfishness,” received the most attention, some others, such as “population boom” or “automation technologies,” were mentioned by only two participants. The final list of the “problems,” nevertheless, was exhaustive and varied (listed by the frequency of mention and the weight of attention paid):

- economic inequalities and poverty,
- selfishness and consumerism,
- un(der)employment and low wages,
- privatization of health and education services and lack of decent public services,
- gender inequalities,
- climate change and water shortage,
- biodiversity loss and ecological destruction,
- forced migration,
- manipulation of the masses through media and ideologies/belief systems,
- (regional) conflicts,
- polarized societies,
- child labor,
- population explosion,
- automation technologies.

Based on the discussions in the introduction chapter, where I highlighted a wide range of alarming issues and global challenges, I can state that the participants were aware of the major global challenges identified by key organizations and thinkers. That is, the participants seemed, at least on the discursive level, open and attentive to the major issues that threaten the welfare on earth and the wellbeing of the majority of people.

Among this diverse array of “problems,” there was, however, one issue that every participant addressed first and treated as a central issue.

When I asked about “the main problems in the world,” all the participants pointed immediately to the issues of inequality, primarily in the economic sense. In fact, they brought it up within seconds after hearing my question that inquired about their self-perceived problems in the world. To my surprise, they gave the answer without even asking for a moment to think about it. Dilara, for example, fueled my surprise when she turned out to be “the fifth participant” who provided the same answer to the opening question in our sixth interview:

*I:* What do you think are the main problems in the world right now?

*Dilara:* I think, in general, inequalities are the main problem.

*I:* (Surprised) you are the fifth participant to say this (both laughing) ...

*Dilara:* So, there is something so obvious... (Dilara, 6th Interview)

The following examples, which were responses to the same opening question, also illustrate how the participants had keen observations on economic inequalities:

I think there's no equality in any sense. I think there's a huge [inequality], especially in economic terms... Some countries are much better, living in such prosperity, while some others are dealing with extreme conditions. I mean, there're countries that are in worse conditions than us, you know, living in poverty, hunger, and so on. So, I think the biggest problem is inequality. [...] The same goes for Turkey, you know, some people earn incredible salaries [...] while, for example, I'm okay with 3000 [Turkish liras; approx. 400 American dollars at the time]. Yeah, I'm okay with that (laughs), and this doesn't seem to bother me. We're in such a situation that I have to accept 3000 (an amount close to the minimum wage) ... (Ayşe, 6th Interview)

I think inequality is the biggest problem... You know there was a tweet posted, “I wish Pangaea never broke apart” (laughs)... We live in very different parts of the world and think of the world as quite big. But in reality, it is actually small, you know, we can go wherever we want. But there're also too many restrictions [...] There's also poverty or misfortune brought about by geographical location alone. Imagine you were born in a land without water, think of Africa... (Melis, 6th Interview)

The main problems in the world... First, the economy. Let's start with the economy, but when I say economy, I'll not make propaganda for socialism or communism [...], but the fact that there's so much capitalism is one of the main

problems in the world [...] I think this is one of the biggest problems in the world. Capitalism is so prevailing, and the welfare state is weakening [...] The rich are getting richer abnormally... (Marco, 6th Interview)

Based on these statements, I re-emphasize that the economic inequalities, which are argued to be on the rise under the neoliberal conditions (see the introduction chapter), were quite evident to the participants. In fact, some participants also attempted to link several other “main problems,” such as climate change, ecological destruction, and privatization of public services, to the same unequal economic realm. Marco, for example, viewed “economy” as “the main wheel” sustaining or generating many other major problems:

*I:* So, this gender inequality, the damage we do to biodiversity, climate change, income inequality, and so on... Do you think these are all related or are they independent problems?

*Marco:* All of them are actually cogs by themselves, but they’re connected to each other.

*I:* How are they connected?

*Marco:* Let me explain, there’s the economy, which, I think, is the biggest wheel [...] (he takes a long pause here, inviting my contribution)

*I:* Who does benefit from the economy?

*Marco:* Unfortunately, the capitalist economy benefits because I can even explain [the climate change] through the economy; how? This climate change, industrial waste [...] aren’t there any ways to reduce the waste generated by the factories? There are, but these would be costly. I mean, there’re those chimney filters that can be quite costly, but can’t they be installed? They can be, they actually should be installed, but they’re not installed because of the capitalist logic, because those people will lose a million from their billions of dollars. (Marco, 6th Interview)

Likewise, Dilara also alluded to the possible links between environmental destruction and “the capitalist logic”:

Imagine that there’s a vacant space there, the capitalist would think, “I’ll construct a building there, I’ll sell or rent it for this and that much,” and so on. But the trees, the animals, the general habitat, these are never considered [in such plans]. (Dilara, 6th Interview)

Employing a form of critical systemic thinking, Dilara and Marco, therefore, pointed to the essential role of capitalist rationalities in generating major global problems such as climate change, ecological destruction, and biodiversity loss.

In light of these points, I maintain that the participants were not passive, uncritical observers of the world. Their criticality was evident even in the initial moments of our sixth interview, during which they were agile or vigilant enough to list several alarming and interconnected issues. In fact, I should note that their critical awareness and thinking did not remain only at the level of observation. The participants were also able to suggest several ways to address these “main problems.”

Having been prompted to consider how to deal with these diverse “problems,” the participants offered a wide range of suggestions or “solutions.” While some of them, such as Gözde and Zeynep, were more oriented toward radical solutions such as “revolution” or “bringing socialism,” others were keen to propose less drastic recipes that they presumed could alleviate the existing inequalities. For instance, in addition to suggesting reforms to encourage “local production” systems or economies, Ayşe, Melis, and Marco believed that “taxing the wealth of the rich” would be “the most logical thing to do.” Ayşe also added that through wealth redistribution, it might be possible to provide everyone with “a moderate life” and construct “happier” societies. She maintained:

[I prefer to imagine] a world where everyone is equal, but lives a moderate life; that sounds more appealing to me. I think everyone can be happy then. I wish we were not so greedy and everyone would accept [a moderate life] (laughs) [...] I would want that; equality, equality in every sense... (Ayşe, 6th Interview)

Marco, similarly, suggested strengthening the welfare state worldwide and taxing the rich who pass a certain threshold. As a result, he believed, economic inequalities would be alleviated, and hunger would be prevented. He further argued that “the top one percent” should contribute more to philanthropic activities rather than asking “the common people” to help the poor:

I always see it on Amazon, “would you like to donate to UNICEF?” I’d like to ask Jeff Bezos [the owner of Amazon], did you do it (donation)? Why didn't you

do it? I'd prefer to see Jeff Bezos doing it. I mean, this man is a billionaire, these are not big [amounts] for him... (Marco, 6th Interview)

With these questions, Marco, in fact, alluded to the self-interested rationalities of well-known wealthy people and how they shun genuine concerns for the public good. For this reason, during the same interview, he envisioned an ideal society in which people would be encouraged to “produce for the common good rather than for individual profit.” He was, therefore, concerned about the heightened “selfishness,” which he believed could endanger the future of the world. In his opinion, it could be too late for humanity to come together if a serious crisis broke out in the future. I found his example in that regard intriguing, in which he speculated about a possibility of a pandemic as a potential unifying event. He gave the following example just months before the COVID-19 pandemic erupted in China:

When will humanity be united? For that to happen, do we have to experience a very big disaster that will affect the whole world? Do we have to be in huge trouble? Do we have to [wait for] a crazy rat to spread a disease in the middle of Europe and cause millions to die? Then, everyone would perhaps say, “we’re all humans.” (Marco, 6th Interview)

Considering the significant number of people who lacked access to essential health services and also to vaccines during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, it is worth noting that his wishes for “standing united” seem to be far from being fulfilled. Nevertheless, his concerns appeared to be powerful, signaling the complexity and depth of his critical views and vision. Marco, in fact, was not alone in his plea for expanding collective conditions or prioritizing the common good for a crisis-free world. Dilara was also increasingly uncomfortable with the rising right-wing discourses that sought to polarize the societies: “We're being separated politically. [...] they separate us even in the smallest thing, [...] the two sides have to hate each other; [...] yes, everyone hates everyone; a constant rivalry, a constant fight...” Dilara, thus, drew attention to how it was becoming more difficult to develop conditions for collective action under the divisive political discourses, which she presumed to be on the rise. As an antidote, she suggested, “we should recognize how connected we all are and appreciate the values that make us a society.” With these words, she spoke out against the weakening ties

among people and wished for more collective and caring political and societal structures.

Gözde, likewise, voiced her concerns about increasingly individualized and polarized societies: “We don’t know how to cooperate, we’re selfish, we don’t help anyone, we only complain, we never find alternative ways, and we don’t unite. There’s actually no place to go and talk about our common problems.” I found similar sentiments in Zeynep’s statements, as well. She, similarly, evoked a discourse of *I in the collective We* and highlighted the value of “collective work” for the wellbeing of individuals and societies:

Of course, we’re all different, you know (laughs), but we also shouldn’t ignore the togetherness [while being an individual]. [...] The work you do together usually becomes much more valuable, which gives you such a feeling of joy that, I believe, the feeling of self-realization can only emerge from [such collective work] ... (Zeynep, 6th Interview)

Therefore, Gözde and Zeynep, too, depicted their “ideal society” as primarily responsive to the collective conditions or the common good. While constructing their ideal societies and underscoring the importance of collective structures, Dilara, Gözde, and Zeynep also placed particular emphasis on the role of education in fostering such structures. In their view, the educational domain held the potential to guide young people toward thinking and acting collectively. Otherwise, Zeynep, for example, believed that the current individualized educational practices had already been encouraging people to act in a superficially competitive or self-focused spirit:

Education then turns into a race, individual conduct, you know, “how can I improve myself?” ... After a while, we even start to lie to ourselves. For example, I go to get a certificate and then think I’ve improved myself [...], although I don’t remember a word from there... (Zeynep, 6th Interview)

Gözde, along similar lines, criticized contemporary schooling systems for their tendency to foster “competitive” rationalities among students. She, thus, suggested: “If we give up teaching these people about greed, rivalry, and competition and actually start to teach other things, I think much better things will come out, why not?” When I asked her to elaborate on what she meant by “other things,” Gözde responded, “teaching solidarity,” especially during the early stages of formal education:

We really need to show these in schools, instead of teaching nonsense; I mean, we need to teach them solidarity, how to be together... For example, think about community service; I didn't take such a course until university; it's ridiculous. How can someone begin to learn how to help others at the university level? They should start it in primary school, in secondary school... I mean, we don't teach such things at all [until university]. (Gözde, 6th Interview)

Although she directed her criticisms and suggestions primarily to the early years of education, Gözde also criticized how universities typically operated or how “educated people” were distant from the general public:

University campuses are usually isolated. We never leave our own campus. [...] We need to stop this because I think we need to stay away from the things that drive people apart; we need to solve the problems as a society in a collective way [...] I mean, if we teach educated people how to be together with the public, we may also prevent all these polarizations... (Gözde, 6th Interview)

Similar to Gözde’s critique of universities that she argued lacked strong bonds with outside communities, Dilara also criticized the “closed” characteristics of the schools and, in fact, planned to nurture inclusive and collaborative skills among her future students, as she noted in her practicum portfolio:

I am planning to teach how to be tolerant and humble and how to love others accepting their differences to my students. [...] There can also be activities outside the school such as helping illiterate, disabled, homeless, old or immigrant people. In this way, they would start feeling empathy and love for all of the varieties. (Dilara, Practicum Portfolio, not translated)

Dilara, Gözde, and Zeynep, therefore, provided strong examples as well as critical discourses regarding how educational domains can play a transformative role in cultivating collective responsibility and participation. Although she did not explicitly mention such collective potentials of the schools, Ayşe was also vigilant about the value of formal education in transforming societies into more “critical” or “equal” forms. In her imagined ideal society, she, for example, assigned a critical role to education and expected educators to promote critical dialogue with the surrounding and broader world:

I wish we had lessons in, for example, high schools [to discuss critical issues]. Otherwise, we’re offering a very narrow form of education to students. I mean, we’re able to talk about certain issues only at the university. So, such lessons

could also be offered [in the earlier stages], you know, talking about the society, the world... (Ayşe, 6th Interview)

According to Ayşe, educators should help students question and understand the world. She maintained that students, otherwise, might fall into a state of despair or underestimate the importance of formal education, especially if they come from disadvantaged backgrounds. To substantiate this point, she shared an example that was about one of her friend's language teaching experiences in a small city in Turkey:

Many people believe that they're helpless. For example, the other day, I was talking to one of my friends, a teacher [at a state school in a small city]. One of her students asks her, "what will happen if I learn English?" and adds that learning English would not make any difference to his life. [The student] thinks he'll stay in the same city even if he finishes the school. I wish we could change the perspectives of those children... We can actually do it, it's not very difficult, but we don't know how strong their beliefs are, what they're going through... Of course, it's sad. (Ayşe, 6th Interview)

Yeah, the boy thinks like that, you know, he asks, "what good will it do for me to know English?" He also says, "my older brother graduated from [this school], and nothing happened to him, he's working in the field now," as if it's supposed to be always like this... Actually, things can go a different way. (Ayşe, 6th Interview)

Giving this example, Ayşe, as a prospective English language teacher, indeed displayed her sensitivity toward the needs of disadvantaged or "desperate" students. Through these statements, she also demonstrated how language education could be an important educational domain to capture certain moments and help disadvantaged people become more hopeful about transforming themselves and their communities. That is, as in her words, "things can go a different way" in language education.

Based on the discussions so far, I note that the participants offered a large number of critical interpretations or discourses, as well as potential "solutions," regarding "the main problems in the world." They, therefore, demonstrated a high level of critical awareness and sensitivity toward the major issues in the world. Despite the abundance of complex critical perspectives in their statements and their willingness to imagine "solutions" to these issues, some participants, such as Ayşe, Dilara, and Melis, however, were reserved or hopeless in their resistance to the neoliberal common sense. For instance, although she found the idea of "taxing the elite" as a plausible way to



alleviate economic inequalities, Ayşe seemed hopeless in that regard: “I feel like nothing can be done (laughs)... There needs to be a big sanction in order to take something from them. After all, their wealth belongs to them.” When I asked her to elaborate on why “nothing can be done,” she referred to the extreme complicacy and difficulty of “uniting people” around common causes and believed that people would be afraid of losing what they had. She, then, attempted to explain why people usually remained passive and accepted ongoing unequal conditions:

Suppose we went to some people who work for the minimum wage and told them that [we could do something about these problems], I think they would be afraid of losing what they have. In my case too, I’m okay, for example, with 3000 [Turkish liras; approx. 400 American dollars at the time] (laughs) because that’s all I can have in my hand, we accept it somehow, I mean, we’ve been made to accept it... We’ve started to feel as if this is normal; I mean, we’ve been made to believe this is what we deserve and can do. You know, they gradually made us accept it. (Ayşe, 6th Interview)

Therefore, I interpret that Ayşe viewed the hegemonic status or edifice of neoliberal capitalism as too strong to be reconfigured into a more just structure. That is, she believed that it was almost impossible to change the status quo. Likewise, Dilara thought that it would be arduous to unite people and challenge the existing power relations, as she also believed that “the order” was too powerful to rise against it:

Well, if you come together with a few people and try to [change] something, they threaten you with your job. But you know, you have to feed yourself, so you get afraid, you can’t do it, you can’t say anything. Unfortunately, there’s such a problem; I mean, we may get wasted while trying to disrupt the order. (Dilara, 6th Interview)

She, thus, seemed to support Ayşe’s suggestion that the existing “order” is unlikely to be transformed. In addition, she appeared to be skeptical about “closing the gap between the rich and the poor”:

I don't think there's a way to close it, I mean, as long as the existing order continues like this, I don't think so... Perhaps if these people put their hands on their hearts and develop a tendency to share their wealth, we may then expect an improvement. Otherwise, as long as these guys set up factories, make us work for the minimum wage, and double their wealth, how will it get better [for us]? How will [this gap] shrink? I don't think it will. (Dilara, 6th Interview)

Dilara, then, was inclined to accept the dominance and endurance of “the existing order” unless the powerful elite decided to share their wealth with the masses. That is, she acknowledged the hegemonic status of “the existing order” despite her strong criticisms against it. She, after all, remarked that “she had no hope left” when she realized that “the state is always trying to feed ‘the one percent’ instead of doing good, useful things to the society.”

In fact, it was not only Ayşe and Dilara who expressed despair in their statements. I also noticed it in Melis’ remarks about the possibility of “solving the main problems in the world.” Like the other participants, Melis was disgruntled about the prevalence of individual interests over collective wellbeing. She was, however, convinced that “it would be too utopic to establish an equal society.” Focusing her criticisms even on her own actions, Melis also concluded in one of our earlier interviews that “we’re all selfish inside”:

We mainly think about ourselves. For example, we go to work; we do something, you know, I also work... What good do we produce [as a result of our work]? I haven’t actually done any good to anyone. I mean, I didn’t help anyone; I didn’t do anyone any favors. Well, of course, we can imagine a perfect world in which everyone helps each other, and so on... But this will not happen, it won’t because we’re all selfish inside... (Melis, 4th Interview)

In these statements, Melis clearly suggested that she struggled to find a collective value in her and others’ work experiences. As a result, she portrayed everyone as self-focused or “selfish.” Thus, I interpret that she was apt to deliver a bleak conception of the world in general. In our first interview, she even seemed to accept ongoing inequalities as a “natural” way of organizing societies. She, thus, referred to the notions of an equal society as possibly “naïve”:

Perhaps we’re thinking very naïvely right now. I mean, let’s assume that I’m thinking and saying that these inequalities should not exist, but on the other hand, they might be necessary for the wheel to spin. Otherwise, the world might be dragged into chaos. [...] The way it's spinning now is perhaps the best. We don't know. Maybe we're being too naïve. (Melis, 1st Interview)

With these views, Melis was, then, inclined to naturalize the current systems of power and inequalities. Therefore, I conclude that despite offering several sound criticisms regarding “the main problems in the world,” Ayşe, Dilara, and Melis supplemented

their critical or counter-discourses with propensities to accept existing forms of inequalities. They, in other words, tended to adopt a reproductive stance with respect to power and inequalities.

While not as skeptical as these participants, Marco was also hesitant to consider radical alternatives to “capitalism,” even though he believed that it was the primary source of existing inequalities. Presenting himself as a “relativist” in general, Marco suggested taking a pragmatic or flexible position on major global issues rather than adopting a firm or fixed position. He, thus, highlighted that he always tried to maintain a certain distance from “strict” ideologies such as “socialism and communism.” For instance, while contemplating how to minimize “the gap between the rich and the poor,” he proposed “a threshold system” without redistributing the existing wealth or removing the capitalist relations and systems of production in the first place:

[In my idealized society] I accept the existence of private companies or corporations. The means of production do not belong to the state; these still belong to individuals. I just don't let people [earn excessive amounts], so I set a threshold. I mean, I set a threshold for the rise of capitalism, anything above which will be redistributed to the lower segments. [In this threshold system] ordinary people can still advance very quickly. As everyone can rise, the threshold will also rise. But in communism, the threshold is the same for everyone, a standard level for everyone... (Marco, 6th Interview)

In his “threshold” system, Marco, thus, tried to preserve the central elements of capitalism. That is, he did not seem willing to offer alternative systems to the capitalist framings of wealth accumulation and relations of power or production, although he was uncomfortable with serious income inequalities. Similar to Marco's views, Gözde also tended to take a firm stance against the centralized forms of government such as “communism,” which she viewed as “oppressive”:

*Gözde:* Communism is something that oppresses people a lot. [...] I think it classifies people just like the military does. There's always something above ruling you... As I said, it's not a system that will enable someone to reach their full potential because it tells you where to stand, what to do, and how to spend your life...

*I:* But there're actually similarities between what you say and what some capitalist discourses claim, you know, these discourses also advocate the idea of “not restricting” people. Where's the problem then?

*Gözde*: The problem is that the rich get too rich, so yes, that's the problem with this [capitalist] system, I don't know (in a confused voice) ... (*Gözde*, 6th Interview)

Apparently, *Gözde* also preferred to imagine through, not the outside, “the capitalist system” and favored the discourses that promised opportunities for self-regulation and self-advancement. Nonetheless, she felt uncomfortable about the unequal wealth accumulation in capitalism. Consequently, especially after my question, she became confused and suggested the partiality of her perspective by saying, “I don’t know.” Similar to her earlier remarks (see *STSA as a Transformative Experience*), *Gözde* also tended to hold individuals or “our own stupidity” primarily responsible for the ongoing “problems” facing humanity: “[These challenges or problems] are not the fault of the politicians or someone else, it’s rather the fault of our own stupidity as human beings [...] We let them exploit us, and we don’t show any resistance against it.” That is, in her criticisms, she ignored the deep-seated generative structures that are meant and sustained to foster the hegemonic capitalist systems.

Despite her (partial) critical views, *Gözde*, nevertheless, was quite keen to think about how to ameliorate existing challenges, particularly those associated with “the gap between the rich and the poor.” However, she also indicated that her enthusiasm in that regard was often being undermined by some *commonsensical* discourses. She explained:

It's actually quite ridiculous. I mean, if we use the military spending poured into the defense industry to end hunger, help the poor, or provide something to the orphans, the results would be much better. But instead, we always stockpile weapons in case a war breaks out one day. [...] This is the most ridiculous thing in the world, it sounds ridiculous, but no matter to whom I tell this, they always say, “you see the world through rose-colored glasses,” “this is the truth of the world” ... But, in the past, people used to believe that the world was flat; this was the “truth” for everyone. And today, everyone seems to believe in such things, but does this mean that we should continue to believe in them? [...] Why should we affirm this system if it’s not correct? (*Gözde*, 6th Interview)

Right after these statements, she concluded in a complaining tone, “imagine a world where even producing alternatives is an offense.” *Gözde*, thus, was clearly in favor of challenging the status quo or *common sense* and remaining hopeful for a more just and non-violent future. She, in fact, viewed “hope” as important to the “fight” against the

status quo: “people seem to have plunged themselves into such huge darkness... I mean, being hopeful, even if you do nothing, is actually a means of fighting.” Based on all these compelling statements, despite her earlier partial criticisms, I suggest that Gözde was enthusiastic about ameliorating existing challenges associated with the current systems of power. She was also hopeful about constructing more just and inclusive systems.

Zeynep, on the other hand, did not offer any example that could indicate her “desperation” or “confusion” about the possibility of transforming societies into more equal and welfare-oriented forms. Rather, she demonstrated a hopeful attitude toward such issues. She, for instance, envisioned that the current liberal states would one day be transformed into “socialist” states. In addition, just as Gözde expressed, she was uncomfortable with how people tended to preserve the status quo by employing *commonsensical* discourses:

[...] and, well, there’re those people who tell you, “give up, stop struggling, nothing changes anyway,” you know, they’re suggesting something like, “don’t waste your time with these things.” But if you don’t do this, you won’t be able to live a fulfilling life after a certain point; that’s actually your salvation because, otherwise, you’ll vegetate. (Zeynep, 6th Interview)

Zeynep was, thus, agitated about how “people” contributed to the naturalization of ongoing inequalities through such acquiescent tendencies. As a reaction, she seemed to take a stance against the acceptance of the status quo.

In general, I note that the participants offered profound examples of critical thinking regarding the current state of the world. However, there were also notable differences in their views or attitudes regarding how to “solve” current global challenges or problems. That is, while they all appeared to challenge certain aspects of the neoliberal common sense, most of them found it difficult or even “impossible” to devise powerful and hopeful narratives that would reconfigure neoliberal capitalism to a system ensuring the public good. Concerning how to address such partial critical views and turn them into more coherent and strong narratives, I suggest that teacher educators can play a key role. Language teacher education can, thus, be an important domain, whereby PELTs can be guided to analyze their worldviews, (critically) interpret the

world, and imagine alternatives or solutions to existing challenges or problems. During this process, PELTs can also be invited to discuss the possible roles that (language) education can play in challenging and transforming the neoliberal common sense (see next chapter for further discussions).

In fact, I offered several examples under this theme that can serve as starting points for addressing such issues in language teacher education. Melis, for example, struggled to find “meaningful” connections between her language teaching experiences and the possibilities to transform the world in a “better” direction. Ayşe, on the other hand, was willing to help her (imagined) students improve and/or transform their lives and also surrounding communities. She was, however, unsure about how to do it. By seeking such specific entry points for critical intervention, language teacher educators, therefore, may help prospective language teachers expand their critical transformative views and imagine socially just pedagogies that they can transfer to initial teaching contexts (I provide several other potential entry points in the next chapter). While not very common, some participants, in fact, provided certain examples of how teacher educators might help teacher candidates develop critical views and pedagogical skills.

Influenced by one of her instructors during her teacher education, Gözde, for instance, highlighted that she was able to integrate critical topics, such as “gender inequalities,” into her lessons after graduation. She, therefore, suggested that she did not always prioritize “typical” topics like “what’s your favorite holiday destination.” She maintained that she also modeled the same instructor in terms of how to help students “think critically” without causing any “instant shock” to them:

You can feel that she (referring to her instructor) has her own truths, or you can guess what she believes, but she never imposes them on others. But she does... how can I tell you that? She asks students certain questions, which are always relevant to the lesson, [...] I mean, these questions really make people think, make them think critically. So, I learned a lot from her. I mean, I learned that we should question everything, [...] and I really learned how to do this without hurting the students, [...] without causing an instant shock. (Gözde, 5th Interview)

While taking a practicum course from the same instructor, Dilara also found an opportunity to reflect on how schools or schooling systems might be contributing to

existing inequalities. I took the following excerpt from her practicum portfolio for that course:

I do not like making generalizations because I believe in the power and the rights of exceptions. Unfortunately, we need to admit that people in Turkey are inclined to think so superficial that they cannot see the real picture behind. [...] Same story is valid with most of the teachers, too. When a student is not good at the lesson, they simply say that s/he is not studying enough. They do not think much about the family background of the child, the learning environment in which the students struggle or the whole system which affects teachers, students and parents. (Dilara, Practicum Portfolio, not translated)

However, I should also note that such critical topics or reflections were absent in her practicum portfolio that she created for another course offered by a different instructor. While taking the latter practicum course, she was guided to explore topics that did not include broader macro perspectives. Perhaps due to the instructors' changing approaches to the course, the practicum portfolios of the other participants also lacked any topics that could indicate critical or macro issues in (language) education. I identified the most common topics in that regard as "L1 use," "giving instructions," "providing feedback," "interaction patterns," "using digital tools," "openings and closures," "teacher's questioning skills," and so on. Zeynep, in fact, complained about the lack of critical topics or courses in her undergraduate program when I asked about her "holistic impression of the program":

There're, of course, shortcomings [in our program] in terms of the curriculum... The simplest example is that we don't have a course about how to teach different students (referring to the students with special needs); we don't have such a course, so we carefully ignore this. But this is something we cannot ignore in real life... Or, in some courses, we never speak about what's on the news on that day. (Zeynep, 6th Interview)

Overall, based on all these critical views, I reiterate that PELTs may not be passive, uncritical consumers willing to serve the *common sense* or status quo. Rather, they seem to be grappling critically with several global challenges in their lifeworlds, no matter how fragmented or contradictory their views or discourses might be. Therefore, the gaps, contradictions, and even pessimism within their thinking and actions can be regarded as entry or *good sense* points that can be addressed through courses, tasks,

and guidance provided by language teacher educators (see next chapter for further discussions and recommendations).

Especially given the abundance of critical views in the participants' statements, I also suggest that PELTs, as STSA participants, can be highly receptive to analyzing neoliberal elements in STSA. That is, they can be willing to expand the critical and transformative dimensions of STSA in their own discourses and experiences. Furthermore, if guided, especially during the re-entry phase of STSA, they may also be able to reflect critically on their future plans and imaginings. Thus, in addition to critically appraising the value of STSA experiences for their personal and professional futures, they may take more informed and critical actions in their actual engagements with the job market. After all, the study participants seemed capable of producing strong critiques of the current state of the world and counter-discourses against neoliberal capitalism. I elaborate further on these issues in the next and final chapter of this study.



## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 4.0. Presentation

In this critical qualitative inquiry, I argue, in general, that neoliberalism and its ideological components have achieved a hegemonic status in Western economies, politics, and societies and also infiltrated into many other country contexts in variegated ways, especially since the 1970s (Brenner et al., 2010; Foucault, 2008; Harvey, 2005; Peck et al., 2018; Springer, 2016; Steger & Roy, 2010). Although originally introduced as an economic theory, neoliberal ideology, therefore, has extended into many domains of human lives and constructed a “new” capitalist *common sense* (Gramsci, 1971). With this hegemonic status, neoliberal ideology appears to be circulating its ideals over a vast human fabric and naturalizing pro-capital conceptions of politics, society, economy, and education. In doing so, it promotes and normalizes capital accumulation, competition, consumerism, profit-making, and self-interest over collective responsibility, labor rights, solidarity, social justice, and welfare (Brown, 2005; Dardot & Laval, 2014; Hall & O’Shea, 2013; Harvey, 2005; Mirowski, 2013). Consequently, under this complex neoliberal *common sense*, we witness a depressing growth in various forms of inequality and deprivation on both local and global scales despite the unprecedented economic growth and scientific and technological achievements (Alvaredo et al., 2018; Duménil & Lévy, 2011; Harvey, 2014; Piketty, 2014).

As its sphere of influence is immense, the neoliberal common sense is also highly visible in higher education (Bamberger et al., 2019; Giroux, 2002; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Ward, 2012). Influenced by market discourses such as *(global) knowledge economy*, *privatization*, *competition*, and *human capital*, higher education institutions nowadays are under pressure to sustain neoliberal agendas such as *entrepreneurship*, *international outlook*, and *economic efficiency*. Simultaneously, they are expected to

cater to the aspirations and dispositions of neoliberal subjects or *homines economici* who constantly seek educational credentials, marketable skills, economic gains, mobility, and adventure. In fact, study abroad or international mobility programs seem to offer the right mixture in that regard since these programs are typically promoted as an opportunity for undergraduate students to acquire marketable skills, build globally appealing CVs, and relish travel and fun experiences (Bamberger et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2003; Cairns et al., 2017, 2018; Courtois, 2020; Cuzzocrea & Krzaklewska, 2022; Dvir & Yemini, 2017; Krzaklewska, 2013; Michelson & Alvarez Valencia, 2016; Yoon, 2014; Zemach-Bersin, 2009).

However, student mobility programs cannot be associated only with such common consumerist motives and self-focused outcomes. These programs are also seen as valuable opportunities that can offer transformative experiences. That is, they can act as catalysts for higher education students to reflect on their positions in the world and contemplate the issues of inequality, power, and social justice (Brown, 2009; Cairns et al., 2017, 2018; Chiocca, 2021; Larsen & Searle, 2017; Nada & Legutko, 2022; Perry et al., 2012; Reddy, 2019; Tochon & Karaman, 2009). As one of the most popular forms of student mobility and also the focal domain of this study, short-term study abroad (STSA) programs such as the Erasmus program in Europe, therefore, can also enable higher education students to engage in unfamiliar contexts and question their habituated ways of thinking. As a result, students can develop critical views and perhaps actions against neoliberal discourses and practices.

Considering the possibility of divergent outcomes, I suggest in this study that STSA can be a contested domain over which multiple as well as conflicting discourses exert an influence (Bodinger de Uriarte & Di Giovine, 2021; Courtois, 2020; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021a; Goldoni, 2021; Klose, 2013; Sharma, 2020; Zemach-Bersin, 2009). In fact, the neoliberal common sense itself has been subject to contestation because such hegemonic projects are argued to be incomplete, contradictory, and inherently vulnerable to critique (Crehan, 2016; Donoghue, 2018; Fairclough, 2010; Gramsci, 1971; Hall et al., 2013). That is, *common sense* also contains *good sense* that can be regarded as “the healthy nucleus” in such hegemonic capitalist projects (Gramsci, 1971, p. 328). Therefore, *good sense*, which is diffused across various domains of

human lives, deserves “to be made more unitary and coherent” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 328). By constructing broader and coherent counter-discourses based on *good sense*, a new *common sense* can emerge and plant the seeds for a just and equal world (Crehan, 2016; Gramsci, 1971; Torres, 2013).

Despite currently being under the auspices of the neoliberal common sense, STSA discourses and experiences may also contain *good sense* elements, such as critical cosmopolitanism, interculturality, collective responsibility, and civic engagement, which can be identified and expanded. Therefore, I contend in this study that empirical studies focusing on the patterns of STSA discourses and experiences (both *common sense* and *good sense*) can be highly valuable in challenging the neoliberal framings of study abroad. Such critical contributions might be welcomed particularly in the context of English language teacher education (ELTE), where neoliberal ideology has been the subject of increasing criticism.

The central component of ELTE programs, the English language, has been argued to be “an instantiation of the ideologies of neoliberalism” (Shin, 2016, p. 511). In other words, English is viewed as one of the primary mediums for promulgating the neoliberal common sense and driving global trade and industry (Flores, 2013; Holborow, 2013; Majhanovich, 2013; Phillipson, 2008; Piller & Cho, 2013). Entwined with the discourses of competition, global knowledge economy, and self-management or advancement, English seems to have increased its marketplace value across the globe, thereby may also act as one of the gatekeeper mechanisms in upward social mobility and life opportunities (Barnawi, 2020; Darvin, 2017; Majhanovich, 2013; Soto & Pérez-Milans, 2018). Further, as a globally-acclaimed language linked to privilege, progress, and prosperity, it poses a danger to minority and heritage languages that may not be valued equally in the market (De Costa et al., 2019, 2021; Flubacher & Del Percio, 2017). Therefore, I underscore that English language teachers do not have the luxury of ignoring such links between the neoliberal common sense and the English language, as well as the issues of *social justice*, *equity*, *diversity*, and *interculturality*. ELTE programs, however, have been criticized for their insufficient emphasis on these issues, although the language classrooms are increasingly becoming

more complex, diverse, and unequal (Block & Gray, 2016; Clarke & Morgan, 2011; Gray, 2019; Gray & Block, 2012; Hawkins & Norton, 2009).

Considering the transformative potentials or *good sense* possibilities of STSA programs, including the Erasmus program, I suggest that temporary (semester or year-long) mobility opportunities can be an effective experiential means to help prospective English language teachers (PELTs) consider ongoing issues of inequalities, power relations, privilege, and social justice. That is, through STSA programs, PELTs can develop essential skills for culturally, linguistically, and socially responsive teaching before turning into in-service teachers. However, these assumptions or possibilities require empirical inquiries, as STSA or Erasmus experiences can be complex, malleable, and subject to competing or conflicting macro discourses (Cairns et al., 2018; Courtois, 2020; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021a; Klose, 2013; Krzaklewska, 2013).

However, despite the potential benefits of STSA programs for ELTE students, there is a paucity of research in that regard. To my best knowledge, no study has explored how macro discourses such as neoliberalism influence the way these programs are framed and experienced by PELTs (Çiftçi & Karaman, 2019; Kang & Pacheco, 2021; Plews, 2019; Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). In this study, therefore, I mainly focused on the the STSA constructions (e.g., motivations, experiences, self-perceived outcomes, re-entry experiences, views on a “typical” Erasmus experience) of a cohort of PELTs (six participants) who were Erasmus alumni and enrolled in the final semester of their ELTE program in Turkey. I also aimed to explore their imagined futures (e.g., future plans and immediate post-graduation experiences) and views on the current state of the world. This way, I could also explore the intricacies of their re-entry period, which has been the least explored STSA phase in (language) teacher education literature (Arthur et al., 2020; Back et al., 2021; Clarke et al., 2020; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2019; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Larsen & Searle, 2017; Marx & Moss, 2016; Moorhouse, 2020; Nada & Legutko, 2022; Smolcic & Katunich, 2017).

To meet the study aims, I generated and analyzed a set of qualitative data (i.e., interview transcripts, CVs, graduate program application forms, practicum portfolios, and social media posts). For the analysis of this large data set consisting primarily of

interview transcripts, I employed a critical reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021b) that was informed by an amalgamation of *Qualitative Inquiry* and *Critical Discourse Studies* (see Chapter 2 for detailed methodological discussions). Following a recursive analysis process, I constructed three main themes addressing the study aims (see Chapter 3 for an in-depth discussion of these themes). Overall, in these final themes of the analysis, I discussed that the participants constructed their STSA or Erasmus experience as a polydimensional experience. But their narratives, reflections, and views also pointed to a disproportionate experience that skewed toward the neoliberal framings of studying abroad. In other words, I interpreted that their STSA discourses and experiences gravitated toward certain *commonsensical* elements such as *adventure, carefreeness, employability, financial capacity, fun, self-interest, and self-management*, which are usually associated with the neoliberal forms of study abroad experiences (Bamberger et al., 2019; Cairns et al., 2018; Courtois, 2020; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021a; Dvir & Yemini, 2017; Michelson & Alvarez Valencia, 2016; Yoon, 2014; Zemach-Bersin, 2009).

Because I expanded the analysis to include the participants' imagined futures and immediate post-graduation experiences, I also demonstrated that certain neoliberal elements such as *flexibility* and *self-management* dominated their imaginings and post-graduation experiences. In fact, they seemed to have aligned with the neoliberal elements mainly because of the precarity and uncertainty imposed by the future and the labor market. They also struggled to develop an intrinsic and altruistic approach to the language teaching profession. As a result, I underscored that their STSA experiences and imagined futures, including their professional visions, were highly influenced by flexible, self-interested, and economic rationalities rather than by critical views and actions such as civic engagement, political awareness, and social justice. That is, they constructed their STSA experiences and imagined futures mainly with references and creative responses to neoliberal discourses.

In fact, informed by the Gramscian concepts (i.e., *hegemony, common sense, and good sense*), I was also able to identify several *good sense* patterns in the participants' STSA discourses and experiences. Some of their statements, for instance, suggested that they developed several critical perspectives on economic inequalities and cultural

prejudices through a number of (but limited) critical incidents abroad. That is, the discourses and experiences of criticality and interculturality were also evident within the participants' STSA constructions, though not as visible as the neoliberal elements. Furthermore, along with their close engagements with the market discourses in their imagined futures, they often critiqued the "exploitative" market conditions. When I inquired into their worldviews with respect to global challenges (e.g., climate change, inequalities, migration, poverty, and unemployment), I also noticed that they had already been engaged in critical (though often contradictory) thinking in those respects. Therefore, despite the prevalence of the neoliberal elements in their STSA and future constructions, I concluded that they were not passive, uncritical servants of the neoliberal common sense. The presence of such *good sense* patterns, in fact, implied their potential receptivity to critical interventions that address the STSA discourses and experiences, as well as the plans for the future.

In this concluding chapter, I elaborate on these patterns of analysis and make several recommendations for future research and practice. I organize these discussions and recommendations under two main themes: (1) *Short-term study abroad through the Erasmus+ program: is it a neoliberal experience for prospective language teachers?* and (2) *Short-term study abroad, imagined futures, and worldviews: a plea for intervention in the discourses and experiences of prospective language teachers.* Under these themes, with references to the extant literature, I discuss further the pervasiveness of the neoliberal elements in STSA or Erasmus constructions. In addition, I offer several patterns of *good sense* discourses and experiences that can be expanded in the future for a more balanced, transformative STSA experience for PELTs. To help ELTE programs identify and expand *good sense* discourses and experiences, I also offer an intervention framework and attendant recommendations that focus on several entry points, phases, and dimensions of STSA. After offering detailed discussions on these matters, I conclude the chapter with final comments and recommendations.

Before addressing the discussion themes, I raise an important caveat. In this exploratory critical qualitative inquiry, I generated a large set of qualitative data from a purposive sample of prospective language teachers (six people). To analyze the data,

I employed a critical, in-depth, and reflexive thematic analysis method (RTA). Thus, at the outset of the study, I did not intend to produce “quantified results” that could be generalized to wider populations or contexts. Instead, within the particular realm of the study cohort, I primarily aimed to reach a detailed picture that could manifest the complexities of STSA experiences and discourses in relation to neoliberal *hegemony* and *counter-hegemony*. That is, the statistical or empirical *generalizability* was not an epistemological assumption in this study (see also *The Issues of Quality* in Chapter 2). The absence of this positivist assumption, however, should not be interpreted as a limitation or weakness because in-depth qualitative inquiries might also yield implications that can be transferred to other comparable contexts and people (Creswell, 2012; Mirhosseini, 2020; Saldana, 2011). In other words, readers can make connections between a particular qualitative analysis and their own discourses and experiences. This kind of resonance can be possible even with the analysis of a single person. Therefore, I advise readers to evaluate the current analysis and attendant discussions with regard to *transferability* instead of *generalizability*.

With a manageable number of participants, as well as a coherent theoretical framework, qualitative inquiries can indeed delve into the intricacies of an underexplored issue and inform further research or practice that can result in larger and perhaps generalizable patterns over time. Therefore, in-depth qualitative evidence accumulated in a certain area can produce meta-patterns that can be used for theory building as well as large-scale practical applications (Walsh & Downe, 2005). Given that, with this pioneering qualitative inquiry, I hope to inspire further critical research on the nexus between STSA and language teacher education. In fact, guided by several Gramscian concepts, I offer a transferable theoretical framework (see the introduction chapter) that can be deployed to analyze the STSA discourses and experiences in the context of language teacher education. Based on the analysis in this study, I also provide an intervention framework (see the second discussion theme in this chapter) that can be used to help prospective language teachers go through a balanced, transformative STSA and (language) teacher education process. Through further work in multiple contexts in this direction, (language) teacher educators can better

understand how they can benefit from STSA programs to prepare prospective language teachers for socially just pedagogies and collective responsibilities.

#### **4.1. Short-Term Study Abroad Through the Erasmus+ Program: Is It a Neoliberal Experience for Prospective Language Teachers?**

In the introduction chapter, referring to the extant literature, I discussed that STSA programs have been exposed to multiple, competing, and often conflicting macro (ideological) discourses along with an array of meso (institutional) and micro (individual) factors. Therefore, I suggested that these programs could offer multifarious outcomes to participating students based on the discourses that the participants engage in. As a corollary to these discussions that framed STSA as a complex, contested, and malleable domain, I also postulated the current prevalence of neoliberal discourses in international student mobility, particularly in the domain of the Erasmus program (Cairns et al., 2018; Juvan & Lesjak, 2011; Klose, 2013; Krzaklewska, 2013; Kosmaczewska & Jameson, 2021; Lesjak et al., 2015, 2020). Therefore, I posited that prospective language teachers benefiting from the Erasmus program might engage disproportionately in dominant neoliberal discourses and reproduce them despite the valuable transformative possibilities inherent in such experiences. In fact, my analysis (see the previous chapter) that focused on the STSA or Erasmus constructions of a particular cohort of prospective language teachers confirmed the dominance of the neoliberal common sense in the Erasmus program.

The cohort largely drew on the discourses or elements of *adventure*, *carefreeness*, *competition*, *employability*, *finance*, *fun*, *popularity*, and *self-management* while constructing their Erasmus experiences and discussing their views on the Erasmus program. As a result, based on their STSA constructions, I portrayed an overall disproportionate and polydimensional Erasmus experience that was mainly wrapped in neoliberal discourses and contingent on the participants' financial capacity (see Figure 5 in the previous chapter for a rough visual representation of this interpretation). In fact, the participants suggested that such disproportionate STSA constructions were not unique to them. Based on their own observations, they reported how certain dimensions such as fun and adventure were also prevalent in the Erasmus experiences



of other students coming from different European contexts. After all, both my interpretations of their polydimensional STSA construction and their own first-hand observations pointed to a quintessential or *common sense* Erasmus experience that hinged on the financial capacity of the beneficiaries and prioritized an aggregation of consumerist and convivial elements. In other words, as Zemach-Bersin (2009) put it, they resorted primarily to “touristic themes of adventure and discovery with little accent on rigorous academic learning” (p. 310). In addition, when I asked them to assess the impact of this mobility experience on their post-STSA lives, the study participants drew mainly on neoliberal discourses of *competition* (“having done something extra” in comparison to non-mobile peers), *employability*, *self-interest*, and *self-management*. They, therefore, continued to corroborate the neoliberal framings of such mobility experiences in their re-entry period.

Based on these points, I suggest that the study participants tended to assign secondary importance to academic, civic, critical, intercultural, and linguistic (local languages) elements of the Erasmus program. Instead, they framed and reproduced the program primarily as a popular “prestigious” experience that offered them a break, financial support, and fun and adventure opportunities while also allowing them to maintain student status or “[stay] in the game” (Trower & Lehmann, 2017, p. 283). Further, they approached the program as a site where they could invest in the future by improving language skills (particularly in English) and gaining self-confidence and independence. After the STSA experience, they, in fact, reported growth in self-confidence, cosmopolitan dispositions, and (English) language skills, which they believed increased their competitive power against the non-mobile teacher candidates in their country context. Due to these self-focused improvements or transformations, which generally involved a sense of “distinction” and an adventurous view of cosmopolitanism, they expected increased employability and also sought further mobility opportunities, particularly in Europe or the Global North.

These arguments or interpretations, of course, are in need of further (dis)confirming evidence, especially in language teacher education where the value and role of STSA programs are underexplored (Çiftçi & Karaman, 2019; Kang & Pacheco, 2021; Morley et al., 2019; Plews, 2019; Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). That is, due to the number of

the participants involved in this in-depth qualitative inquiry, I cannot generalize the analysis outcomes to every other context of language teacher education. However, based on the existing literature, I put forward that similar STSA-related economic issues, expectations, motivations, rationalities, and self-perceived or reported outcomes can also be found in other higher education contexts, including teacher education programs. Therefore, unless counter-evidence is presented, I continue to assume the dominance of neoliberal discourses and experiences in current STSA programs.

For example, similar to the study participants' discourses and experiences, many scholars refer to the vital role of economic capacity in access to STSA programs and also in the way these programs are experienced (e.g., Ballatore & Ferede, 2013; Cairns et al., 2017, 2018; Courtois, 2018, 2020; Goldoni, 2021; Heger, 2013; Lehmann & Trower, 2018; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002, 2008; Prazeres, 2019; Salisbury et al., 2009; Tran, 2016; Trower & Lehmann, 2017; Van Mol & Timmerman, 2014; Waters et al., 2011). STSA programs, then, can be seen primarily as an economic field that validates the primacy of financial capacities and rationalities. That is, STSA experiences are usually brought in a close relationship with neoliberal market principles and economic conditions that generally trivialize class-based differences and attendant economic inequalities. Nevertheless, the Erasmus program, in particular, appears to serve the discourses of inclusion to a certain extent, complicating the popular opinion that STSA is available only to privileged segments. For instance, the study participants, who received financial assistance from the Erasmus program, came from modest-income families, and none of them had ever received private education. The grant was, thus, the leading factor enabling them to involve in a study abroad experience. Otherwise, as they repeatedly underscored, they would not be able to experience an STSA period during their undergraduate studies (see *STSA as an Economic Experience* in the previous chapter). However, the financial support given to Erasmus students does not nullify the concerns regarding access to STSA programs, as the study participants also reported that the grant was insufficient to cover all STSA-related costs. Privatizing a large portion of the costs and employing selection criteria that are “achievement-based rather than needs-based” (Trower & Lehmann, 2017, p. 287), the Erasmus program,

therefore, serves those who can supplement the grant with additional financial resources such as family support, scholarships, and casual employment (Ballatore & Ferede, 2013; Cairns, 2017; Cairns et al., 2018; Courtois, 2019; Heger, 2013; Rodriguez Gonzalez et al., 2011; Souto-Otero et al., 2013). That is, the inclusion of marginalized and disadvantaged students remains a concern in the design and implementation of the Erasmus program.

Similar to the current analysis, the extant literature also suggests that students are usually attracted to STSA programs for opportunities to engage in convivial or touristic activities and for employability discourses associated with study abroad participation (Bodinger de Uriarte & Di Giovine, 2021; Cairns et al., 2018; Courtois, 2019, 2020; Cuzzocrea & Krzaklewska, 2022; Krzaklewska, 2013; Michelson & Alvarez Valencia, 2016; Reilly & Senders, 2009; Trentman & Diao, 2017; Zemach-Bersin, 2009). Students, therefore, tend to invest significant energy in leisure activities during their STSA participation. Concurrently, they may seek to develop knowledge and skills, such as “flexibility,” “intercultural understanding,” “English proficiency,” “global awareness,” and “self-confidence,” which might be valued in the (global) job market. That is, they are inclined to comply with the neoliberal mantras inviting them to become “both playful student and strategic planner” (Krzaklewska, 2013, p. 82). As a result, it has been shown that they spend the STSA period predominantly on “the study-party-travel nexus” (Cairns et al., 2018, p. 83), whereas they pay the least attention to the first element in the nexus (e.g., Aksay Aksezer et al., 2022; Barkin, 2018; Bodinger de Uriarte & Di Giovine, 2021; Brown & Aktaş, 2012; Cairns et al., 2018; Courtois, 2019; Frieson et al., 2022; Forsey et al., 2012; Jacobone & Moro, 2015; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Kosmaczewska & Jameson, 2021; Lesjak et al., 2015, 2020; Nada & Legutko, 2022). The subordinate status of the “study” component in common STSA or Erasmus experiences can perhaps best be observed in students’ choices of study abroad destinations.

Like the study participants, many students seem to choose their STSA or Erasmus destinations based on their financial capacity and the stereotyped perceptions of certain countries, cities, and languages (e.g., Cairns, 2017; Cuzzocrea & Krzaklewska, 2022; Lesjak et al., 2015; Kosmaczewska & Jameson, 2021; Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe,

2008; van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005). They seem to do so without generating concrete and purposeful (academic) learning goals or agendas. In fact, such *commonsensical* or “popular” forms of decision-making for STSA are usually predicated on “words of mouth” and peer relations rather than empirical evidence or professional discourses (Beech, 2015; Cuzzocrea & Krzaklewska, 2022; Petzold & Peter, 2015; Van Mol & Timmerman, 2014).

At this point, it is worth noting that the *common sense* Erasmus or STSA constructions may also encourage and welcome the commodification efforts that restrict such programs to the domains of tourism and entertainment (Barkin, 2018; Bodinger de Uriarte & Di Giovine, 2021; Michelson & Alvarez Valencia, 2016; Rodriguez Gonzalez et al., 2011; Zemach-Bersin, 2009). The industry, thus, may frame and promote the Erasmus program as a profitable, fun experience unless the institutions or organizations that manage the (public) funds take necessary interventions and, for example, honor the potential contributions of “the average professor” (Bodinger de Uriarte & Di Giovine, 2021, p. 20). In fact, one of the study participants, Zeynep, noticed that her receiving university cooperated closely with a profit-making agency that offered entertaining experiences to Erasmus students (see *STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience* in the previous chapter). Similarly, Cairns et al. (2018) suggest that several university settings across Europe organize entertaining events or tours for Erasmus students in cooperation with the local entertainment industry. If implemented in a way detached from critical and transformative elements, such partnerships, however, may contribute to the reproduction of the program as a touristic youth experience. Students, thus, may miss chances to conduct critical and transformative inquiries into local and global matters and develop “critical thinking, civic responsibility, cross-cultural understanding, humble cooperation, and committed respect toward others” (Zemach-Bersin, 2009, p. 317).

However, I should note that these critical discussions do not necessitate denying the transformative potentials embedded in convivial experiences abroad. That is, I am also aware that the enjoyable social opportunities during an Erasmus or STSA period can be “an additional space of learning” (Cairns et al., 2018, p. 81) and may hold potential in terms of personal, language, and intercultural development (Aksezer et al., 2022;

Barkin, 2018; Cairns et al., 2018; Cuzzocrea & Krzaklewska, 2022; Cuzzocrea et al., 2021; Krzaklewska, 2013). In fact, in this study, I learned that several participants improved their English skills and global awareness thanks, in part, to their fun and travel experiences (see *STSA as a Linguistic Experience* and *STSA as a Transformative Experience* in the previous chapter). However, based on the broader analysis, whereby I pointed to a disproportionate and largely neoliberal Erasmus experience, I am primarily concerned that the superficial or consumerist engagements in fun and travel will remain as the most visible STSA activity for prospective language teachers. Thus, in their STSA experiences, PELTs may persist in ignoring the chances for professional growth and dismissing the opportunities to immerse in local contexts. With these concerns, I encourage further work or efforts to ensure that enjoyment is not “the only outcome” of the Erasmus program for PELTs (Cairns et al., 2018, p. 173). Otherwise, fun and adventure, along with self-advancement, may continue to be the defining features of a “typical” Erasmus experience, overshadowing other possible dimensions such as academic, civic, critical, intercultural, linguistic, and transformative (Courtois, 2019).

To promote a balanced STSA or Erasmus experience, several parties may take initiatives. These parties include supra-governmental organizations (such as the European Commission), governments, non-profit organizations, higher education institutions, language teacher education programs (the focal setting in this study), student organizations, and participating students. The institutions and organizations, for instance, can work in a concerted way to highlight the transformative learning opportunities available through an STSA period. They can also revise the funding schemes or policies in a way that would promote engagement in these transformative opportunities. Through such measures and promotional work, the parties, therefore, can infiltrate the academic, civic, critical, intercultural, and linguistic discourses into the normative or dominant constructions of the STSA programs. Another major strategy for these parties to ensure a balance in common STSA constructions can be to identify existing *good sense* STSA discourses and experiences and to seek ways to expand them. In fact, I offered several examples of such discourses and experiences in this study (see, in particular, *STSA as an Academic Experience*, *STSA as a Linguistic*

*Experience*, and *STSA as a Transformative Experience* in the previous chapter). It might be helpful to revisit some examples in that regard.

Marco and Zeynep, for instance, mentioned that after a while during their Erasmus period, they began to question the “typical” Erasmus experience and decided to spend less time with parties and travel. They, then, took the time to explore the local life. For similar reasons, and also because of financial concerns, Melis also preferred to enjoy the local environment most of the time and did not travel much during her Erasmus period. As a result, she claimed that she achieved to make several friends from the local context and showed improvements in the local language, Spanish. In fact, thanks to their linguistic experiences during the Erasmus period, Gözde and Melis realized that, as novice language teachers, they were able to empathize with their students.

Dilara and Marco also reported several personal and professional outcomes thanks to the academic expectations set by their receiving program. They, for example, gained (experiential) opportunities to explore topics such as “intercultural communication,” “inclusive education,” and “eco-criticism” that turned out to be helpful for them in making sense of their experiences abroad. Similarly, Melis and Zeynep found a chance in the host setting to introduce their “country and culture” to an audience consisting of several faculty members and local students. Thanks to the event, they noted, they engaged in complex conversations with themselves and started to see their own background from broader perspectives. These points indeed pointed to the value of academic experiences abroad with regard to intercultural learning and critical transformation. The academic dimension, thus, deserves a larger space in the STSA constructions of prospective language teachers.

Although the academic domain was the main STSA site where they questioned their position in the world, the participants also found themselves thinking about their national identity or citizenship after being exposed to visa regulations and certain stereotypes. While trying to make sense of these STSA-related experiences, they developed further awareness of unequal conditions in the world and common prejudices among people and communities. Thanks to such instances of critical reflection and heightened interculturality, they could, thus, step into the domain of *the*

*Other* as well as the issues of power and inequality. Their engagement in such multilayered and multidimensional critical thinking, however, should not be interpreted as a sign of complete intercultural development. That is, they also provided several statements in which I could identify certain examples of essentialist thinking toward certain groups or individuals. They, therefore, overall painted a partial and processual picture of intercultural development that can still be regarded as a *good sense* pattern deserving to be expanded or made more coherent.

As they grappled with certain STSA challenges, the study participants also suggested that they developed new and broader reference points through which they could assess their previous knowledge of the world. One example in that regard was their assessment of the material and symbolic disparities between their original context and the Western European countries. In addition, at several moments during the interviews, I observed that the participants highlighted certain cosmopolitan dispositions, signaling a multilayered belonging to the world. That is, thanks largely to their STSA experiences, they framed their citizenship both on local and global levels. As they did not remain on the level of strict nationalistic worldviews, their emerging “global citizenship” can also be perceived as a *good sense* outcome of the Erasmus program.

However, I also caution that their discourses of cosmopolitanism gravitated toward adventurous and self-oriented conceptions of the world. In other words, they mainly highlighted their motivations to pursue further traveling opportunities and study/live in a country in the Global North rather than focusing their attention on plans that would indicate their willingness to act against existing global crises (for similar critiques of “global citizenship,” see also Bernardes et al., 2021; Brooks & Waters, 2022; Dockrill et al., 2016; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Larsen & Searle, 2017; Lyons et al., 2012; Moreno, 2021; Trentman & Diao, 2017). Nevertheless, these expanded views of *the Self*, *the Other*, and *the world* can be taken as a sign of being open to discussing ongoing global challenges and perhaps acting on them. Therefore, all these potential *good sense* discourses can be considered as possible entry points for guiding future students to activate academic, civic, critical, intercultural, linguistic, and transformative dimensions of their STSA experiences.

In fact, although not as prevalent as the elements of the neoliberal common sense, the extant literature also offers similar examples of *critical/good sense/alternative* STSA discourses and experiences in teacher education programs. That is, there is an emerging body of research that points to the critical and transformative potentials of STSA programs for the intellectual and professional growth of (prospective) teachers. Similar to the themes and discussions here, both empirical and review studies, for example, have shown that STSA can serve as a catalyst for the development of cosmopolitan perspectives, global citizenship, and civic engagement among (prospective) teachers (Byker & Putman, 2019; Cushner, 2011; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2019; Phillion & Malewski, 2011; Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). In line with the statements of some participants in this study, several empirical studies have also substantiated the affordances of STSA for challenging ingrained views of *the Self* and *the Other*.

The studies, for instance, have shown that STSA experiences can help teachers achieve emotional maturity, increase cultural self-awareness, develop (sociopolitical) awareness of prejudices, modify worldviews, and experience personal and professional growth (Abraham & von Brömssen, 2018; Dockrill et al., 2016; Karaman & Tochon, 2007, 2010; Li & Costa, 2022; Nieto, 2006; Trilokekhar & Kukar, 2011). Several studies have also indicated the possible benefits of intercultural and linguistic experiences abroad in terms of developing “empathy” for language learners (Çiftçi & Karaman, 2019; Frieson et al., 2022; Hauerwas et al., 2017; Jacobs & Haberlin, 2022; Larsen & Searle, 2017; Marx & Pray, 2011; Pilonieta et al., 2017; Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). Therefore, especially if guided, temporary experiences abroad can be an effective experiential medium to help (prospective) teachers develop a greater understanding of social justice issues and become culturally and linguistically responsive teachers (Alfaro & Quezada, 2010; Byker & Putman, 2019; Cacciattolo et al., 2020; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2019; Hauerwas et al., 2017; Jacobs & Haberlin, 2022; Kasun & Saavedra, 2016; Larsen & Searle, 2017; Menard-Warwick & Palmer, 2012; Smolcic & Katunich, 2017).

However, the extant literature in (language) teacher education has also pointed to the diversity and partiality of growth or transformation through STSA. By offering mixed



evidence, some studies, similar to the concerns here, imply doubts about the relevance of self-reported “personal” growth for the issues of social justice and critical global citizenship (Bernardes et al., 2021; Frieson et al., 2022; Larsen & Searle, 2017). That is, they suggest that self-focused transformations may not necessarily indicate critical systemic knowledge and awareness about inequalities, privilege, poverty, and injustice. Or, as I also argued in this study, developing tolerance and communication skills through STSA may not necessarily mean eliminating ethnocentric, essentialist, and stereotyped views toward certain groups or individuals (Hauerwas et al., 2017; Klein & Wikan, 2019). Therefore, I also note that there is no endpoint or guarantee for critical transformation through STSA.

Nevertheless, the existing efforts in the field of teacher education, including this study, document several examples, means, and potentials of transformation through STSA. The emerging patterns in that regard can be utilized to work further on legitimizing the transformative ways of experiencing STSA in language teacher education programs. These patterns can also inform further program designs, interventions, refinements, and implementations that can secure a balanced and critically transformative STSA experience for prospective language teachers. Therefore, over time, language teacher education programs can accommodate both the convivial and transformative elements abroad and offer a balanced, coherent, and powerful STSA experiences for prospective language teachers who are urged to develop understandings of critical cosmopolitanism, inequalities, power relations, privilege, and social justice (Clarke & Morgan, 2011; Gao, 2019; Gray, 2019; Gray & Block, 2012; Hawkins, 2011; Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2020; Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016; Nguyen, 2019; Ortaçtepe Hart & Martel, 2020).

In the absence of guidance or intervention, prospective language teachers, however, may not be able to exercise their agency during an STSA period. That is, they may experience the neoliberal framings of STSA as default because of the currently dominant neoliberal discourses in such programs, particularly in the Erasmus program. They may, thus, miss the opportunities for civic engagement, community service, local communication, sociopolitical participation, and school experience during an STSA or Erasmus period. Considering these possibilities, I subscribe to the idea that

participating in an STSA program or crossing “borders” does not guarantee professional growth and improvements in collective understandings and responsibilities, thereby supporting the necessity of guided reflections, discussions, and assignments (see also Arthur et al., 2020; Barkin, 2018; Bernardes et al., 2021; Bodinger de Uriarte & Di Giovine, 2021; Chiocca, 2021; Çiftçi & Daloğlu, 2021; Dockrill et al., 2016; Enriquez-Gibson & Gibson, 2015; Härkönen & Dervin, 2016; Hauerwas et al., 2017; Holmes et al., 2016; Klein & Wikan, 2019; Jackson, 2018a, 2018b; Jackson & Oguro, 2018; Jacobs & Haberlin, 2022; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Li & Costa, 2022; Perry et al., 2012; Santoro & Major, 2012; Vande Berg et al., 2012). I put forward that without intervention, STSA can remain a largely neoliberal experience for PELTs.

In fact, in this study, I observed that the participants were tacitly held responsible for collecting information and taking control of their own learning throughout the different phases (preparation, sojourn, and re-entry) of the Erasmus program. In other words, it was their responsibility to “make the right choices” and “take responsibility for the ensuing consequences of their decisions” (Cairns, 2021a, p. 30). They, therefore, were left to their own devices while preparing for the program, experiencing the STSA context, and making sense of their STSA experiences. However, especially considering their potential receptivity to critical interventions (see the third theme in the previous chapter), I suggest that they could have benefited from guided learning opportunities and experienced a more balanced and transformative STSA process. With this in mind, I plead, in the next section, for intervention in the STSA discourses and experiences of prospective language teachers. Also, I offer several recommendations in this regard.

#### **4.2. Short-Term Study Abroad, Imagined Futures, and Worldviews: A Plea for Intervention in the Discourses and Experiences of Prospective Language Teachers**

In the previous section, I discussed that the neoliberal framings of STSA dominated the study participants’ STSA discourses and experiences. Referring to the extant STSA literature, I also suggested the prevalence of similar neoliberal elements in many other

contexts. That is, I alluded to a *common sense* STSA or an Erasmus construction that is disproportionately marked by consumerist, self-focused, and instrumental elements. Therefore, I recommended promoting and guiding an STSA experience that would offset the *good sense* elements (e.g., academic, civic, critical, intercultural, linguistic, local, and transformative) against these neoliberal elements, especially in language teacher education programs (i.e., the focal context of this study). Otherwise, without such interventions, I argued, the neoliberal common sense could maintain its dominance over such mobility experiences in language teacher education and uphold the framings that would contribute to its *common sense* status.

With these points in mind, in this section, I present a multidimensional, multilayered, and interconnected framework that language teacher education programs can consider in their interventions into STSA constructions (see Figure 6). In the framework, I offer several focal or entry points that span across different phases (i.e., preparation, sojourn, re-entry) and multiple dimensions of an STSA or Erasmus experience. By targeting the phases, dimensions, and entry points in the framework and guiding STSA students, language teacher education programs can expand *good sense* elements in students' STSA constructions. This way, they can help prospective language teachers engage in a balanced, transformative STSA experience that can have far-reaching impacts on their personal and professional lives.

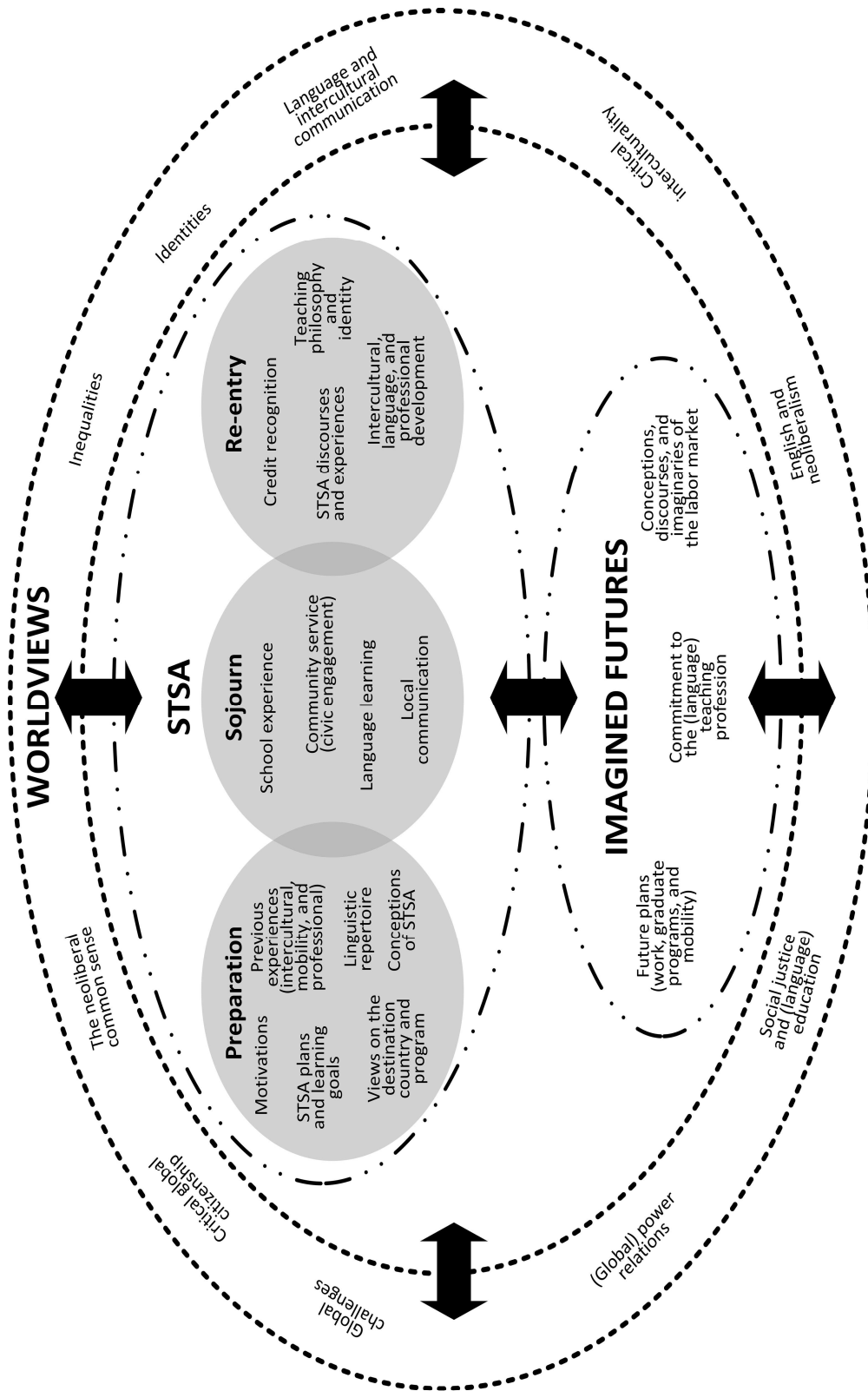


Figure 6. An intervention framework for a balanced, transformative STSA experience in language teacher education

In the remainder of this section, I suggest several broad ways of intervention that can be adapted or employed by language teacher education programs. In doing so, I hope to help illustrate how the framework can be used. As I focused on the nexus between the Erasmus program and ELTE in this study, I make recommendations with these two particular domains in mind. But, of course, the implications can also be extended to other available STSA programs in (language) teacher education. In any case, teacher educators should consider their contextual complexities when assessing the feasibility of the framework and accompanying recommendations. That is, there is no single “right” way to intervene in prospective language teachers’ STSA constructions. Rather, I intend that the framework here helps think about specific entry points and interconnected stages and dimensions in planning intervention courses/programs/workshops.

Based on the present study, the framework, and available literature (i.e., Arthur et al., 2020; Çiftçi & Daloğlu, 2021; Goldoni, 2021; Holmes et al., 2016; Jackson, 2018a, 2018b; Jackson & Oguro, 2018; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Larsen & Searle, 2017; Plews & Misfeldt, 2018; Vande Berg et al., 2012), I suggest, in the first place, that language teacher education programs cooperate and consider providing theoretical and experiential learning opportunities to STSA students. They can, for example, design intervention courses or refine existing courses in their curriculum. By doing so, they can facilitate a holistic, connected, critical, and guided STSA experience for prospective language teachers. Although these coordinated interventions can be intended particularly for mobile students, language teacher educators can also welcome non-mobile students and help them engage in such learning opportunities in the home context. By inviting diverse voices, teacher educators, in fact, can enhance the learning environment, where both mobile and non-mobile students can learn from each other.

The courses intended, in particular, for the pre-STSA phase may include (interconnected) discussions on, albeit not limited to, (1) the links between the English language and the neoliberal common sense (e.g., Block et al., 2012; Bori & Canale, 2022; Darwin, 2017; De Costa et al., 2021; Flores, 2013; Holborow, 2006, 2015; Majhanovich, 2013; Shin, 2016); (2) critical interculturality (Bernardes et al., 2021;

Çiftçi & Daloğlu, 2021; Dervin, 2016; Dervin & Jacobsson, 2021); language and intercultural communication (Holmes et al., 2016; Jackson, 2014b); (3) existing global challenges (e.g., conflicts, climate change, drought, environmental degradation, inequalities, migration, poverty, and power relations); and (4) social justice (language) education (Adams et al., 2007; Clarke & Morgan, 2011; Hawkins, 2011; Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016; Kumashiro, 2015). Through guided discussions and experiential tasks that blend such critical topics, students can explore complex links among culture, identity, language, and communication. They, therefore, can develop critical analytical and conceptual tools through which they can analyze their positions in the world (local and global), identities (age, class, ethnicity, gender, nationality, professional, race, religion, and sexuality), and (mobility) experiences. In addition, they can critically assess ethnocentric or essentialist views, global challenges, role(s) of English in contemporary societies, and potential reverberations of the neoliberal common sense on their thinking and actions. As a result, they, as prospective language teachers, may start to develop a sophisticated form of critical reflexivity and deepen their perspectives regarding *the Self*, *the Other*, and *the common good* before the STSA period.

Informed by the critical course topics and instructor guidance, students can actually learn more about the historical, economic, societal, and (geo)political backgrounds of sending and receiving country contexts. They, thus, can be prompted to scrutinize their views on their home and host countries. By doing so, they may feel better prepared for interpreting and discussing their cultural, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical experiences abroad. In this study, the participants, for instance, had difficulty in making sense of the visa requirements or economic disparities between their original context and the EU countries. They also reported being exposed to certain stereotypes while abroad due to their “Turkish background” (see *STSA as a Transformative Experience* in the previous chapter). By treating such issues as potential entry points, language teacher educators, therefore, can help students turn the existing structural barriers, unequal conditions, and prejudices into opportunities for critical learning and growth during their STSA period.

Amid these interventions tailored to the pre-STSA phase, language teacher educators can also stimulate STSA candidates to reflect on the neoliberal framings of studying abroad. They can, for example, invite students to (re)examine their motivations for applying to the STSA program. To facilitate critical reflections on the neoliberal constructions of STSA, instructors may consider integrating authentic audiovisual and textual materials such as policy documents, previous students' posts (blogs, pictures, social media posts, and video logs), popular stories, and so on. Through such guided examinations, students may notice, if any, their consumerist or instrumental motivations. Consequently, they might be guided to envision specific ways to leverage critical and transformative paradigms of STSA.

Furthermore, while helping STSA candidates engage in critical explorations and imaginings, language teacher educators may consider leading them to conduct experiential or ethnographic tasks that inquire into the critical matters available in surrounding contexts or communities. Students, for instance, can be encouraged to communicate with certain individuals or communities that might be considered "marginal," "problematic," "disadvantaged," and "unwanted" (for similar intervention recommendations, see Çiftçi & Daloğlu, 2021). Through such tasks, STSA candidates can broaden their intercultural, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical repertoire and prepare for possible transformative learning opportunities in the local communities and academic contexts abroad.

Since I revealed in this study that the participants did not devise clear professional goals for their STSA period, language teacher educators may also consider helping STSA candidates envisage links between their STSA learning and growth as language teachers. Otherwise, as I showed in this study, students may struggle to construct professional meanings and development from their STSA experiences, especially if they are not inclined to see STSA as a valuable academic experience (see *STSA as an Academic Experience* in the previous chapter). Language teacher educators, therefore, can find ways to help them see the relevance of STSA experiences for their development as culturally, linguistically, and socially responsive language teachers. While guiding students to scrutinize their STSA motivations and envisioning such professional links, teacher educators can also ask STSA candidates to design an STSA

learning plan that would include concrete academic goals and target a balanced STSA experience.

While setting the learning or developmental goals, students can benefit much from partnerships established among language teacher education programs. In fact, the European Commission has recently acknowledged the vital role of teachers in the European Education Area and invited teacher education programs to develop cooperation or partnership for the professional development of mobile (prospective) teachers (European Commission, 2021). To facilitate such partnerships, the Commission initiated the action called *Erasmus+ Teacher Academies*, which can enable language teacher education programs in the EU member states and other countries associated with the Erasmus+ program to set up projects and receive support for collaboration. Benefiting from this funding opportunity for collaboration, language teacher education programs can enable Erasmus students to experience a continuous, coherent, participatory, and productive academic experience that is disentangled from superficial tourism and hedonistic pursuits (Cuzzocrea & Krzaklewska, 2022; Jackson, 2018a; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Li & Costa, 2022; Perry et al., 2012; Santoro & Major, 2012; Vande Berg et al., 2012).

If the collaborating language teacher education programs need a systematic and detailed checklist or toolkit for the professional development of mobile students in Europe, they can receive help from the *European Profile for Language Teacher Education – A Frame of Reference* (Kelly et al., 2004). The Profile basically deals with the structure of the courses, the knowledge base of language education, the diverse approaches to language teaching and learning, and the skills and values that language education should embrace. With such a wide scope, it offers 40 key elements in language teacher education courses, which can serve as a checklist for the curricular efforts of language teacher education programs in Europe (for the complete list, see Kelly et al., 2004).

Among many possibilities inherent in such (funded) partnerships, receiving programs, for instance, can offer a range of courses that address topics similar to those covered in the preparation period (e.g., cosmopolitanism, identities, interculturality,



inclusivity, multilingualism, power relations, and social justice). Likewise, the courses in the STSA period can provide in-class and out-of-class learning components (e.g., theoretical discussions, group work, reflective writing, video logs, blog posting, journal keeping, presentations, and ethnographic research tasks). Thanks to these courses, students can continue to equip themselves with certain intellectual and reflexive tools and abilities that can be helpful in making sense of their experiences and attendant development abroad. In this study, Dilara and Marco, in fact, reported how certain experiential inquiries (i.e., interviewing “two Korean girls”) helped them interpret their own experiences during the Erasmus period (see *STSA as an Academic Experience* and *STSA as a Transformative Experience* in the previous chapter). The receiving program, therefore, can design courses and experiential components that build upon students’ previous learning experiences and address the complexities of the period abroad.

Considering the benefits of studying languages in every phase of STSA (see *STSA as a Linguistic Experience* in the previous chapter), I also suggest encouraging students to take language courses both in home and host academic contexts. Thanks to these (possibly cooperated) courses, students may increase their chances of communicating with local communities abroad (and indeed they should be encouraged and guided to do so). Further, as reported by several participants in this study, they may develop “empathy” with language learners by experiencing a first-hand language learning process.

Through joint efforts, prospective language teachers can also gain school experiences within the STSA context and enhance their professional repertoire. Thanks to the practicum opportunities, STSA students can find chances to observe another educational system and improve their pedagogical skills (e.g., Abraham & von Brömssen, 2018; Kabilan, 2013; Karaman & Tochon, 2007; Larsen & Searle, 2017; Lee, 2011; Mesker et al., 2018; Parmigiani et al., 2021; Yang, 2011). Furthermore, as they may engage in close contact with local communities through school experiences, they can reach out to local people. Consequently, they can explore the educational, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical challenges of the receiving country and work with

community members, peers, and professionals to envision possible solutions (Goldoni, 2021; Reilly & Senders, 2009).

As I reported in this study, students may not always achieve to receive credit recognition for the courses they take abroad (see *STSA as an Academic Experience* in the previous chapter). However, a partnership between language teacher education programs can also resolve the issues of credit recognition and alleviate students' concerns about delaying graduation. Through a connected and recognized learning experience, the programs may also deter those who aim to complete the minimum academic requirements and spend much of their time on fun and adventure (see *STSA as an Academic Experience* in the previous chapter). Therefore, they can encourage and support students to fulfill their academic commitments during the STSA or Erasmus period (Courtois, 2019). However, I caution that an unreasonable level of academic demands or expectations may result in an imbalanced STSA construction as well, limiting students' access to unique informal opportunities found in social or convivial contexts (Cairns et al., 2018; Cuzzocrea & Krzaklewska, 2022; Cuzzocrea et al., 2021; Krzaklewska, 2013). The programs, thus, should allow students to take certain breaks for fun and adventure, which can also offer transformative experiences, particularly as part of such a guided STSA learning process.

To ensure a balanced STSA experience, in addition to partnerships between language teacher education programs, I also recommend forming partnerships between teacher education programs and local student communities. Such collaborative efforts can also help STSA students engage in civic activities abroad, possibly resulting in opportunities to learn about the local history, politics, socioeconomic patterns, diversity, events, and so on. In fact, a well-known student organization, the European Student Network (ESN), has already initiated a project called *SocialErasmus+* (<https://socialerasmus.org/>), through which Erasmus students are connected with local communities and schools during their period abroad. As part of the project work, students volunteer to explore the local challenges and generate potential solutions to these challenges. Besides, they participate in organized activities such as “picking up garbage, planting trees, walking dogs from a local shelter, visiting schools and kindergartens to give talks about their country, meeting with senior citizens, blood

donations and participating in a diverse range of charity events” (Cairns et al., 2018, p. 92). Through their participation in this project, prospective language teachers are, thus, highly likely to engage in the transformative dimensions of STSA and complement their STSA learning with powerful informal experiences. When they return to their original contexts, they may continue to involve in voluntary work and contribute to surrounding local communities, thereby gaining an active collective responsibility (Cuzzocrea et al., 2021).

Once they return back to their original teacher education contexts, students can be welcomed with further opportunities to grow as culturally, linguistically, and socially responsive language teachers. In fact, as I demonstrated in this study, STSA returnees may complain about finding people who would listen to their mobility experiences or “stories” (see *STSA as a Transformative Experience* in the previous chapter). The returnees can, thus, be willing to disclose their experiences, thereby being receptive to re-entry courses or programs (e.g., Arthur et al., 2020; Back et al., 2021; Dunn et al., 2014; Hauerwas et al., 2017; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Marx & Moss, 2016; Moorhouse, 2020). Again through a possible partnership between programs, language teacher educators can design re-entry workshops or programs that can help STSA alumni share and discuss their STSA experiences and relate them to their professional development, imagined futures, and worldviews (Karaman & Tochon, 2010). To facilitate critical discussions and reflections in that regard, the instructors can ask the alumni to bring pictures, videos, and social media posts that can illustrate their STSA experiences (Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015).

During the post-program debriefings, students can also be guided to reflect critically on neoliberal discourses of competition, distinction, employability, mobility, and self-management, which can often be observed among STSA students or alumni, including the participants of this study (Cuzzocrea & Krzaklewska, 2022; Moreno, 2021; Prazeres, 2019; Yoon, 2014; see also *STSA as a Facilitating Experience for Employability and Further Mobility* in the previous chapter). In fact, similar to the study participants, the alumni may see themselves as distinctive mobile subjects or “global citizens,” seeking further opportunities to travel or migrate to the countries in the Global North without concrete goals (Cairns, 2021a; Cairns et al., 2018; Courtois,

2020). That is, mobility *per se* can be a goal for STSA alumni. Through the intervention components designed for the re-entry period, language teacher educators, therefore, may help the alumni cut across such superficial framings of mobility and develop a critical awareness of global issues such as power asymmetries, pluralities, and epistemic and social injustices (Byker & Putman, 2019; Camicia & Franklin, 2011; Pais & Costa, 2020). As a result, in their mobility plans (if any), the alumni may shift their attention from self-focused and competitive discourses to discourses of collective responsibility and social justice.

Then, STSA carries with it a future dimension that can be influenced by neoliberal discourses (Ballatore & Ferede, 2013; Cairns et al., 2018; Cuzzocrea & Krzaklewska, 2022; Jackson, 2010; Krzaklewska, 2013; Lipura & Collins, 2020; Moreno, 2021, Nada & Legutko, 2022; see also the previous chapter in this study). Therefore, in addition to their critical interventions in STSA alumni's mobility conceptions and plans, language teacher educators can also help the alumni reflect and work critically on their professional plans for the post-graduation period. In fact, through such future-oriented interventions and guidance, the alumni may develop critical thinking skills and dispositions that can help them make socially sensitive decisions and actions in their later engagements in professional spheres. After all, they may begin to think and act as “critically engaged citizen[s] in the world” (Davies & Barnett, 2015, p. 16), who aim to transform undemocratic societies, oppressive markets, and unequal power structures. In other words, before becoming in-service teachers, they can be ready to think and act critically on the issues of social justice in (language) education. Once in the profession, they can help every language learner acquire not only language skills but also critical cosmopolitan and civic perspectives. Otherwise, as I illustrated in the analysis, STSA alumni may mainly transfer *fun and adventurous* dimensions of their STSA experiences or their essentialist views of certain “cultures” to their professional practices (see *STSA as a Fun and Adventurous Experience* and *STSA as a Transformative Experience* in the previous chapter).

Without interventions and guidance, STSA alumni may also step into the neoliberal labor market with uncritical imaginings and an acquiescent acceptance of competitive, mutable, uncertain, and precarious conditions. In response to the vagaries of neoliberal

discourses and practices, they may devise self-interested flexible and multiple strategies and, thus, expect increased employability and a multiplicity of future options (see the second theme in the previous chapter for several examples). However, as I observed among most of the participants in this study, staying flexible and looking for multiple options can also be anxiety-inducing and may not bring the desired outcomes. Nevertheless, STSA alumni may situate their future plans in such an instrumental and pragmatic picture colored by flexibility, multiplicity, precarity, and uncertainty. This way, they may think that they are building an impressive career and approaching more satisfying standards (e.g., high income, sufficient personal time, social prestige, job security, and international mobility). Therefore, a predictable and humble career in the teaching profession may not always be appealing to STSA alumni, especially when they feel distinctive and “focus on the journey rather than [a teaching] destination” (Walsh & Black, 2021, p. 511).

As can be observed in this study as well, STSA alumni may struggle to find an intrinsic identity and satisfaction in the teaching profession under the neoliberal climate (Attick, 2017; Buchanan, 2015; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021b; Fenwick, 2003; Gupta, 2021; Hara & Sherbine, 2018; Kumashiro, 2015; Loh & Hu, 2014; Mooney Simmie et al., 2019; Reeves, 2018; Skerritt, 2019). Relying on their linguistic and mobility capital (e.g., English language skills, STSA experiences, and “global citizenship”), they may open up “a degree of mental space for thinking about further travel” (Cairns, 2021a, p. 31). In addition, they may seek degrees or positions that have no relation to their teacher education background but offer chances to “enjoy life.” They, therefore, may not prefer to work with disadvantaged populations in rural contexts, where they are likely to secure a permanent teaching position with a modest income (this is possible, at least, in the country context of this study, Turkey). With a hope to stay mobile (both physical and social), they, then, are likely to land in flexible and temporary (teaching) positions that usually offer low wages and precarious conditions (Standing, 2011; see also the second theme in the previous chapter).

Such forms of future-oriented thinking and acting, in fact, reminisce about the characteristics of both *homo economicus* (Foucault, 2008) and *homo promptus* (Walsh & Black, 2021). Combined, these forms of subjectivity predict that higher education

students develop entrepreneurial characteristics in the face of the uncertainties of the labor market and closely align with neoliberal discourses of employability, flexibility, human capital, mobility, precarity, and self-interest (for similar discussions, see also Courtois, 2020; Ikonen & Nikunen, 2019; Oinonen, 2018; Pimlott-Wilson, 2017; Ratner, 2019). That is, they are anxious about being entrapped in fixed or limited options that may result in a “mediocre” life. To deal with this anxiety, they constantly evaluate (or invent) multiple options; anticipate job positions; self-manage to acquire marketable skills; seek mobility opportunities; compete with others; and tolerate uncertainty and precarity. In doing so, they hope to reach prestigious and well-paying positions over time.

Although I can partly confirm these self-focused subjectivities in this study (see the second theme in the previous chapter, where I discussed in detail how the study participants aligned closely with the neoliberal discourses of entrepreneurship in their imagined futures and post-graduation experiences), I caution that every young person or prospective language teacher cannot be confined or reduced to neoliberal subjectivities. In fact, the neoliberal common sense itself is argued to be incomplete and vulnerable to critique, mainly because of its inherent contradictions and threat to the welfare of the societies (Crehan, 2016; Donoghue, 2018; Fairclough, 2010; Gramsci, 1971; Hall et al., 2013). Therefore, young people may also challenge and go beyond the neoliberal discourses and subjectivities in their future-oriented thinking and acting. For instance, despite their frequent alignments with such subjectivities, the participants in this study strongly criticized the “exploitative” neoliberal market conditions. Further, after confronting unfavorable job conditions and the profit-seeking educational industry, most of them reconsidered the secure and fixed positions available in the state sector and even altered their career plans in favor of these permanent positions (see the second theme in the previous chapter). In other words, they did not portray an obdurate neoliberal subjectivity and a blind alignment with market fundamentalism, similar to those young people in several other studies (Oinonen, 2018; Pimlott-Wilson, 2017; Reddy, 2019; Skilling, 2021). However, because of the current dominance of the neoliberal common sense, they may still remain vulnerable and often a contributor to this “unloved system” (Skilling, 2021, p.

56). They, therefore, may lose sight of larger economic, social, and political arrangements that regulate the job market and serve “some” better than others. As a result, I contend that STSA alumni may need interventions and guidance to develop more coherent and durable critical dispositions, actions, and subjectivities regarding the job market and the teaching profession.

Thanks to the interventions and guidance offered by teacher educators, particularly in the re-entry period, prospective language teachers can indeed develop an understanding of how the neoliberal market operates and nurtures certain subjectivities (Courtois, 2020; Ikonen & Nikunen, 2019; Oinonen, 2018; Papatsiba, 2009; Peters, 2016; Pimlott-Wilson, 2017; Ratner, 2019; Reddy, 2019; Scharff, 2016; Skilling, 2021; Yoon, 2014; Walsh & Black, 2021). Further, they can develop habits and dispositions of critical analysis toward the *commonsensical* discourses of competitive individualism, precarity, and self-management. Equipped with such critical tools and dispositions, they may, then, envision future (professional) paths that can offer them intrinsic as well as altruistic satisfaction. They, therefore, can take more informed choices and critical actions, taking into account the moral or intellectual appeals of the teaching profession rather than focusing solely on self-interest and economic rationalities.

By learning about the way the market works, they can also be more careful about the employment contracts and may even form collectives in the long run to sustain their rights (Pimlott-Wilson, 2017; Skilling, 2021). In addition, they can safeguard their wellbeing, which seems to be in grave danger because of the low job satisfaction and insecure conditions currently associated with the private language education sector (Mercer, 2021). If they encounter “failure” along the way, they may not put all the blame on themselves. That is, they can develop critical dispositions and skills to challenge or debunk the neoliberal discourses of self-management or self-responsibility (Brown, 2005; Dardot & Laval, 2014; Foucault, 2008; Lemke, 2001; Peters, 2016; Ratner, 2019; Read, 2009; Scharff, 2016; Skilling, 2021). Eventually, they may contribute to the transformation of the language teaching industry, which nowadays seems to naturalize the intensified workload, low wages, and job and social insecurity while projecting English language learning as a profitable self-management

venture (Barnawi, 2020; Flubacher & Del Percio, 2017; Gupta, 2021; Litzenberg, 2020; Mercer, 2021; Park, 2010; Simpson, 2018; Walsh, 2019). Over time, they, thus, may contribute to the outlook of the profession as a collective, inclusive, moral, and intellectual endeavor that is also financially, socially, and psychologically rewarding.

In fact, prospective language teachers do not enter undergraduate programs, as well as STSA programs, as passive or uncritical individuals who lack critical views against the neoliberal common sense. Rather, as I demonstrated in this study, they might be vigilant enough to identify the consumerist elements in an STSA experience. They might also take a critical stance against the labor market and (global) power relations. Above all, even if they are likely to exhibit individual differences in their worldviews, they might be sensitive to major global challenges and offer critical systemic views and solutions to those challenges. In this study, for instance, the participants offered a wide range of solutions, such as restoring the welfare state, improving collective conditions, and prioritizing the common good and social justice (see the third theme in the previous chapter). Therefore, prospective language teachers can be open to learning and thinking about the local and global challenges such as biodiversity loss, climate change, drought, environmental degradation, migration, poverty, and un(der)employment. Language teacher educators, then, can also tap into prospective language teachers' worldviews and help them draw on their broader critical views during the entire STSA intervention process. By navigating various micro and macro topics or entry points similar to those in the intervention framework (Figure 6), language teacher educators may ultimately help STSA students/alumni acquire critical views and dispositions against the neoliberal common sense. With such views and dispositions, students/alumni may develop strong attachments to the teaching profession and imagine socially just pedagogies before stepping into their first teaching position, possibly in an underserved community.

### **4.3. Conclusions and Final Recommendations**

At the outset of this critical qualitative inquiry, I framed STSA as a contested and malleable terrain over which competing or conflicting discourses can make an impact and seek to popularize certain discourses and experiences. Therefore, I argued that



STSA programs can be ideologically loaded. In other words, I contended that dominant macro ideologies, such as the neoliberal common sense, can influence the way these programs are experienced and constructed. In fact, through a dialogue with the extant literature, I demonstrated how the neoliberal framings of studying abroad have a direct impact on pervasive STSA motivations and experiences. As a result, I suggested that most higher education students may be inclined to participate in such programs in order to enrich their CVs, acquire marketable skills, and have fun.

However, I also suggested that STSA programs cannot be restrained to the neoliberal framings alone. Since these programs may facilitate transformative experiences and questioning processes in an unfamiliar context abroad, I added that they may also enable students to reflect on issues of inequality, power, and social justice. Therefore, I also postulated that STSA programs can be an effective experiential means to help prospective language teachers develop critical views, skills, and dispositions for culturally, linguistically, and socially responsive teaching. I focused particularly on this group of higher education students as they are increasingly expected to develop critical views on the role(s) of the English language in the entrenchment of the neoliberal common sense. Besides, they are desired to construct inclusive and democratic language classrooms that are not dominated by external performance criteria, selfish rationalities, test content, uncritical materials, and standardized instruction (Clarke & Morgan, 2011; Doğançay-Aktuna, 2006; Gao, 2019; Gray, 2019; Gray & Block, 2012; Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Johnson & Golombek, 2020; Kasun & Saavedra, 2016; Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016; Nguyen, 2019; Ordem, 2022; Ortaçtepe Hart & Martel, 2020).

Critical transformation through STSA programs, however, is not guaranteed. Rather, higher education students are highly likely to engage in the neoliberal framings of STSA due to the *common sense* status of neoliberalism in contemporary economies, politics, and societies (Block, 2018a; Brown, 2005; Chun, 2017; Dardot & Laval, 2014; Hall & O'Shea, 2013; Harvey, 2005; Mirowski, 2013; Springer, 2016; Torres, 2013). With these points in mind, I eventually highlighted the need to investigate the STSA discourses and experiences of PELTs who benefit from STSA programs such as the Erasmus+ program. In fact, I noted that such empirical explorations are rarely

found in the field of language teacher education (Çiftçi & Karaman, 2019; Kang & Pacheco, 2021; Morley et al., 2019; Plews, 2019; Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). Thus, in this critical qualitative inquiry, I broadly aimed to address the lacuna regarding the critical and multidimensional evaluations of STSA programs in language teacher education. By doing so, I also hoped to identify and expand critical transformative or *good sense* (Gramsci, 1971) possibilities in the nexus between STSA and language teacher education. After all, I focused on the STSA discourses and experiences of a cohort of PELTs (six participants) who were Erasmus alumni and enrolled in the final semester of their ELTE program in Turkey. Relying mainly on interview data as well as several secondary forms of qualitative data (i.e., CVs, graduate program application forms, practicum portfolios, and social media posts), I addressed three research questions in this study.

With the first question, I explored how the participants constructed their STSA or Erasmus experiences retrospectively. Through the second question that placed a particular emphasis on the re-entry period of STSA, I sought to understand how the participants constructed their imagined futures (near and distant) and experienced the post-graduation period, during which they applied to several jobs and graduate programs. With the help of the last research question, I aimed to reveal certain patterns regarding how the participants interpreted the current state of the world or existing global challenges. While tackling these questions, I also looked for possible patterns or traces of the neoliberal common sense, as well as the patterns of *counter-hegemony* or *good sense* (Gramsci, 1971), in their statements.

Having analyzed a large data set through a critical reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021b), I constructed three main themes, each of which corresponded to a research question: (1) *Constructing the short-term study abroad: A polydimensional and disproportionate experience*, (2) *Constructing the future: Flexibility, multiplicity, precarity and uncertainty*, and (3) *Interpreting the current state of the world: (Critical) views and counter-discourses*. Based on these themes, I drew four major conclusions that laid the groundwork for the discussions in this concluding chapter.

First, the participants' polydimensional STSA construction relied disproportionately on several elements such as adventure, carefreeness, employability, financial capacity, fun, popularity, self-interest, and self-management. Their STSA discourses and experiences, therefore, mainly evoked the neoliberal framings of studying abroad (Bamberger et al., 2019; Cairns et al., 2018; Courtois, 2020; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2021a; Dvir & Yemini, 2017; Michelson & Alvarez Valencia, 2016; Yoon, 2014; Zemach-Bersin, 2009). That is, regardless of some individual differences, they primarily contributed to the widespread or *common sense* STSA constructions that prioritize consumerism, financial capacity, and self-management over academic, civic, critical, intercultural, and transformative elements (Bodinger de Uriarte & Di Giovine, 2021; Cairns et al., 2017, 2018; Courtois, 2018, 2019, 2020; Cuzzocrea & Krzaklewska, 2022; Forsey et al., 2012; Frieson et al., 2022; Jacobone & Moro, 2015; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Krzaklewska, 2013; Lesjak et al., 2015, 2020; Michelson & Alvarez Valencia, 2016; Nada & Legutko, 2022; Trower & Lehmann, 2017; Van Mol & Timmerman, 2014; Waters et al., 2011; Zemach-Bersin, 2009).

Second, the neoliberal common sense continued to permeate the participants' imagined futures and experiences during their re-entry period, particularly before and right after their graduation from the ELTE program. For instance, in the face of precarity and uncertainty posed by the future and the neoliberal labor market, they imagined and employed self-interested and entrepreneurial strategies, such as multiplying career options and remaining flexible for opportunities both in Turkey and abroad. While engaging in such market-oriented rationalities and actions, they, however, struggled to develop a durable and intrinsic approach or attachment to the language teaching profession. Therefore, their STSA experiences and imagined futures, including their professional visions, were largely colored by several neoliberal elements such as consumerism, competition, employability, entrepreneurship, flexibility, precarity, self-management, and self-focused economic rationality rather than by (critical) views and actions such as civic engagement, collective responsibility, political awareness, professional development, and social justice.

Third, the participants also demonstrated several patterns of *good sense* in their STSA constructions, imagined futures, and post-graduation experiences, albeit not as

prominent as the *common sense* neoliberal elements. For instance, in their STSA constructions, they suggested several sporadic engagements with academic activities, intercultural communication, local languages, and sociopolitical and sociocultural issues. As a result, they offered a number of statements that evoked some forms of critical, personal, language, intercultural, and professional growth. In addition, they often critiqued the “exploitative” market conditions and, thus, took a critical stance against the precarious working conditions in the local private education market.

Fourth, when I invited them to talk about their views on global challenges, the participants produced several complex critiques of the current state of the world. That is, they offered a remarkable number of statements that demonstrated their close involvement in critical thinking (though often contradictory) about global challenges (e.g., climate change, inequalities, migration, poverty, and unemployment). Therefore, despite the prevalence of the neoliberal elements in their STSA and future constructions, their discourses and experiences on this broader or macro terrain of inquiry suggested their sensitivity to major global challenges and how to tackle them.

Overall, based on these main analysis outcomes (see the previous chapter for a detailed discussion of each main theme), I argued that prospective language teachers may not be passive, uncritical servants of the neoliberal common sense or status quo. Even though they might reproduce several neoliberal elements in their STSA constructions and imagined futures, I also suggested that they can be receptive to analyzing *common sense* STSA or mobility constructions and seizing *good sense* opportunities in STSA programs. In addition, they might be open to reflecting critically on the relevance and value of STSA experiences for their professional identities and future plans. Similarly, they might respond well to critical interventions regarding how to envision the job market and career trajectories. Through critical interventions, I indicated, they can make informed decisions and take critical and socially sensitive actions in their interactions with the job market or professional spheres.

Considering their potential receptivity to guidance and also to critical thinking and acting (Davies & Barnett, 2015), I offered an intervention framework (Figure 6) and several attendant recommendations in this chapter. In doing so, I hoped to help

language teacher education programs in challenging neoliberal or *common sense* constructions of STSA programs, expanding *good sense* elements of STSA constructions, and promoting a balanced, transformative STSA experience for prospective language teachers. Without such interventions, STSA experiences may not actually warrant critical transformation and professional development, particularly under the current neoliberal climate (Arthur et al., 2020; Bernardes et al., 2021; Çiftçi & Daloğlu, 2021; Dockrill et al., 2016; Hauerwas et al., 2017; Holmes et al., 2016; Klein & Wikan, 2019; Jackson, 2018a, 2018b; Jackson & Oguro, 2018; Jacobs & Haberman, 2022; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Li & Costa, 2022; Perry et al., 2012; Santoro & Major, 2012; Vande Berg et al., 2012). Therefore, I recommended that language teacher education programs make further efforts (e.g., intervention, research, and practice) to search for alternatives to the currently dominant neoliberal constructions of STSA.

Building upon this study, (language) teacher education programs may continue to identify and challenge dominant neoliberal patterns in the STSA discourses and experiences of prospective (language) teachers. If possible, further studies can adopt longitudinal designs and delve into all stages (before, during, and after) of an STSA experience. In their complex explorations that incorporate both micro and macro factors, researchers can draw on multiple forms of data, including interviews, documents, observations, portfolios, policies, visuals, social media, word of mouth, and so on. In fact, social media posts, in particular, proved to be helpful in this study in terms of enhancing the interpretations of the interview data. Researchers, thus, may consider generating such web-based data in the future to enrich their analysis of STSA constructions. Thanks to multilayered, multidimensional, multimodal, and multitemporal investigations, they may eventually offer us a sophisticated picture of *common sense* and *good sense* elements in STSA programs that are available to prospective (language) teachers. An accumulated body of scholarship in this regard can also help us envision and design powerful and situated intervention strategies to expand *good sense* elements in STSA programs. As a result, we can stimulate prospective language teachers to engage considerably in the critical and transformative framings of studying abroad.

Also, as the impact of an STSA experience on (prospective) teachers may not emerge immediately, further research may consider designing long-term projects that are not limited to the immediate re-entry period (e.g., Arthur et al., 2020; Chiocca, 2021; Hauerwas et al., 2017; Larsen & Searle, 2017; Paige et al., 2009). For instance, in this study, I made the first contact with the participants after they had already spent one semester in their re-entry period. In addition, I followed them through their transition from university to work and/or graduate programs. With this multidimensional longitudinal approach (a 2-year research period), I was able to explore their polydimensional STSA constructions in greater depth. Consequently, I managed to propose a complex intervention framework for future (longitudinal) efforts. Therefore, future work may avoid treating STSA as an isolated, short-lived event in (language) teacher education by adopting a multidimensional and multitemporal design.

The longitudinal projects, for instance, may focus on the professional paths of STSA alumni over certain milestones such as 3-year, 5-year, 10-year, and so on. This way, it might be possible to track how the alumni construct their (language) teacher identities or commitment in the long-term, with links to their STSA experiences and the neoliberal common sense. Their (evolving) discourses and experiences can, thus, help teacher educators better understand how STSA experiences influence later stages of (professional) life, mobility, and identities.

Through longitudinal work, researchers can also assess how the alumni respond to, if any, intervention efforts made during (language) teacher education. As a result, (language) teacher educators can revise or refine their intervention frameworks and practices that address, for instance, STSA constructions, imagined futures, and worldviews. In fact, (language) teacher education programs can receive funding for such longitudinal projects and conduct large-scale studies in multiple settings. For instance, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the programs located in Europe can form partnerships and benefit from the action *Erasmus+ Teacher Academies* (European Commission, 2021).

Another important focus for future work can be the role of geopolitical factors in STSA constructions (Brooks & Water, 2011; Cairns, 2014; Cairns et al., 2018;

Kosmaczewska & Jameson, 2021; Van Mol & Timmerman, 2014). For instance, in this study, some participants reported that they often compared the economic conditions of their home country, Turkey, with those of the Western European countries because of the increasing economic challenges in Turkey. Further, most participants said that they encountered certain stereotyped views about their national background. They, as citizens of a non-EU country, also mentioned that they tended to exploit traveling opportunities more than other Erasmus students coming from the EU-member states. They actually suggested that their pre-dominant traveling motivation was partly influenced by the visa requirements imposed on them by the member states. That is, they felt as if there would be no second chance to visit major European cities in the future, echoing the statements of several other students affiliated with universities in Turkey (see also Aksay Aksezer et al., 2022; Brown & Aktaş, 2012; Çiftçi & Karaman, 2018). Future studies, therefore, should consider including such geopolitical or contextualized factors in their analyses of the STSA constructions. This way, we can develop a contextualized or nuanced picture of the STSA constructions and design situated methods of critical interventions in (language) teacher education programs. As a side note, considering the significant impact of visa requirements on Erasmus students from non-EU countries, I invite the program designers to reconsider such structural barriers and further address the discourses and practices of inclusion, sustainability, and democracy in the Erasmus program (European Commission, 2021).

Before concluding this chapter, and thus the study, I should re-emphasize that the implications and recommendations of this study are mainly for the physical STSA programs offered to (prospective) language teachers. While the physical programs such as the Erasmus (currently being implemented under the 2021-27 framework) seem to be durable, virtual mobility is also an emerging realm in higher education, particularly in the (post-)COVID world (Huang et al., 2022; Koris et al., 2021; López-Duarte et al., 2022). Due to its novelty in higher education, virtual mobility may offer a unique avenue of research regarding what discourses and experiences are dominant and what forms of social constructions take place. Future efforts in (language) teacher

education, thus, may also concentrate (critically) on this emerging field of research and practice.

Last but not least, I hope that this study will ignite critical and transformative agendas in (language) teacher education programs regarding how STSA programs are framed and experienced. I am also hopeful that the study will help these programs envision and implement certain interventions to expand *good sense* framings of studying abroad in (language) teacher education. Thus, I anticipate that the programs will highlight the STSA discourses and experiences that value the collective good over rampant consumerism and toxic individualism. This way, over time, prospective (language) teachers may move away from the reductive neoliberal subjectivities such as *homo economicus* (Foucault, 2008), *homo mobilicus* (Cairns, 2021b), *homo promptus* (Walsh & Black, 2021) to complex and caring beings such as *homo complexus* (Morin, 2001) and *homines curans* (Tronto, 2017). There is an urgent need for this shift, especially in the face of current global challenges ranging from inequalities and poverty to climate change and environmental degradation.



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## APPENDICES

### A. INTERVIEW GUIDES (IN TURKISH AND ENGLISH)

#### A.1. İLK GÖRÜŞME REHBERİ (TÜRKÇE)

**Görüşme odağı:** Kişisel geçmiş ve kimlik boyutları

**Görüşme tarihi ve zamanı:**

**Görüşme yeri:**

**Katılımcının ismi:**

**Katılımcının cinsiyeti ve yaşı:**

**Katılımcının kendisi için seçtiği rumuz:**

**Erasmus programı ile gidilen ülke, şehir ve üniversite:**

**(Muhtemel) Takdim:**

Merhaba. Önceden de konuştuğumuz üzere, bu çalışmada, ağırlıklı olarak, Erasmus programını tamamlamış ve mezuniyet aşamasında olan İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının Erasmus deneyimlerini incelemeyi amaçlıyoruz. Siz de bu kriterleri sağladığınız ve bu çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz için şu anda ilk yüz yüze görüşmemizi gerçekleştirmek üzere birlikteyiz. Tekrardan size bu gönüllü katılımınız için çok teşekkür ederim. Bu ilk görüşmemizde genel hatlarıyla sizi tanımak istiyoruz. Paylaşmalarımızın daha akıcı bir şekilde ilerleyebilmesi açısından ben de size zaman zaman sorularla ve gerekirse kendi görüşlerimle eşlik edeceğim. Gönüllü katılım formunda da ifade edildiği üzere, görüşmemiz kayıt altına alınacak ve kesinlikle gizli tutulacaktır. Vereceğiniz cevaplar bizim için oldukça değerli. Bu sebeple, cevaplarınızı ve görüşlerinizi açık bir şekilde ve elimden gelen bütün dikkatimle dinleyeceğimden ve yargılayıcı bir tavırdan kaçınacağımdan emin olabilirsiniz. Dilerseniz başlayabiliriz.

**Soru(lar):**

1. Kendinizden bahseder misiniz? İsterseniz ben de size sorular yönlendirerek yardımcı olabilirim.

**İrdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** eğitim geçmişi, yaşanılan şehirler/ülkeler, olası tanımlayıcı sıfatlar ve kimlikler, aile bireyleri hakkında bilgiler (sosyoekonomik profiller, genel yaşam pratikleri, yurt dışı deneyimleri), Erasmus haricinde yurt dışı deneyimleri, konuşulan/öğrenilen diller, İngilizce geçmişi, tüketim alışkanlıkları (teknolojik ürünler, sosyal tüketimler, tercih edilen beslenme ürünleri, marka tercihleri), hobiler, tercih edilen sosyal aktiviteler, sosyopolitik grup üyelikleri, aylık gelir, yaşanılan alanlar (alanın büyüklüğü, türü, bulunduğu muhit), sağlık durumu

**Görüşme sonrası araştırmacı notları:**

## **A.2. FIRST INTERVIEW GUIDE (ENGLISH)**

**Interview focus:** Personal background and identity dimensions

**Interview date and time:**

**Interview location:**

**Participant's name:**

**Participant's gender and age:**

**The nickname chosen by the participant for himself/herself:**

**Erasmus destination (country, city, and university):**

**(Possible) Presentation:**

Hello. As I mentioned before, in this study, we mainly aim to investigate the Erasmus experiences of prospective English language teachers who have completed their Erasmus period and undertaken their last semester in the language teacher education program. Now that you have met these criteria and agreed to participate in this study, we are now together for our first face-to-face interview. Again, thank you very much for your voluntary participation. In this first interview, I would like to listen to your autobiography. To help us have a fluent conversation, I will occasionally accompany you with some questions and, if necessary, my own views. As stated in the consent form, our interview will be recorded and kept strictly confidential. Your answers are very valuable to us. So, you can be assured that I will listen to your answers and



thoughts with full attention and avoid a judgmental attitude. We can begin now, if you like.

**Question(s):**

1. Can you tell us about yourself? If you wish, I can help you with some guiding questions.

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** educational background, cities/countries inhabited, self-perceived identities, information about family members (socioeconomic profiles, sociocultural practices, experiences abroad), previous international experiences other than the Erasmus period, languages spoken/learned, English learning history, consumption habits (preferred technological products, ways of social consumption, nutritional products, brands, and so on), hobbies, preferred social activities, sociopolitical group membership(s), monthly income/allowance, spatial conditions (size, type, and location of the accommodation), state of health

**Post-interview notes:**

**A.3. İKİNCİ GÖRÜŞME REHBERİ (TÜRKÇE)**

**Görüşme odağı:** Erasmus öncesi deneyimler, Erasmus programına katılma konusunda karar verme süreci ve Erasmus programına katılma güdüleri

**Görüşme tarihi ve zamanı:**

**Görüşme yeri:**

**(Muhtemel) Takdim:**

İlk görüşmemizde de konuştuğumuz üzere, bu çalışmada, ağırlıklı olarak, Erasmus programını tamamlamış ve mezuniyet aşamasında olan İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının Erasmus deneyimlerini incelemeyi amaçlıyoruz. Tekrardan size bu gönüllü katılımınız için çok teşekkür ederim. İlk görüşmemizde genel olarak otobiyografınız ve gündelik yaşam pratikleriniz hakkında konuşmuştuk. Bu ikinci görüşmemizde ise daha çok Erasmus programına başvuru sürecinde yaşadığınız deneyimleri ve programa katılma amaçlarınızı dinlemek istiyoruz. Bir sonraki görüşmemizde de, dilerseniz, Erasmus dönemi kapsamında yaşadığınız deneyimleri detaylı bir şekilde konuşabiliriz.

Paylaşımlarımızın akıcı bir şekilde ilerleyebilmesi açısından, ilk görüşmemizde de olduğu gibi, size zaman zaman sorularla ve gerekirse kendi görüşlerimle eşlik edeceğim. İsterseniz görüşmeye başlayabiliriz.

#### **Sorular:**

1. Erasmus programına katılmaya nasıl karar verdiniz?

**İrdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** Erasmus programı ile ilk tanışmanız, karar verme öncesinde ve sonrasında paylaşmak istediğiniz deneyimleriniz, Erasmus programına başvuru amacınız, başvuru sürecinde yaşadıklarınız, karar verme ve başvuru sürecinde hissettiğiniz duygular, Erasmus programına kabul edildikten sonra hissettikleriniz/düşünceleriniz, diğer insanların bu süreçteki etkileri/rolleri, karar vermeden önce ve hazırlık süresince aldığınız destekler (Uluslararası Değişim Programları Ofisi ve bölümünüzdeki Erasmus koordinatörleri)

2. Şu ana kadar olan görüşmelerimizle ilgili paylaşmak istediğiniz başka bir şey var mı?

#### **Görüşme sonrası araştırmacı notları:**

#### **A.4. SECOND INTERVIEW GUIDE (ENGLISH)**

**Interview focus:** Pre-Erasmus experiences, decision-making process for the Erasmus program, and motivations for participation in the Erasmus program

**Interview date and time:**

**Interview location:**

**(Possible) Presentation:**

As I mentioned earlier, in this study, we mainly aim to investigate the Erasmus experiences of prospective English language teachers who have completed their Erasmus period and undertaken their last semester in the language teacher education program. Again, I would like to thank you very much for your voluntary participation. During our last interview, we discussed your autobiography and some of your daily

practices. In this second interview, I would like to learn your pre-Erasmus experiences and pre-program thoughts. Next time we meet, if you wish, we can talk about your Erasmus experiences. But for this interview, our focus will be mainly on the pre-Erasmus period. As in our first interview, I will accompany you with some questions and, if necessary, with my own views so that our conversation can proceed smoothly. If you like, we can begin right now.

**Questions:**

1. How did you decide to participate in the Erasmus program?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** Your first encounter with the Erasmus program, your experiences before and after the decision-making, your motivations for applying to the Erasmus program, your experiences during the application process, your feelings during the decision-making and application process, your feelings/thoughts after being nominated for the program, the influence/role of other people in this process, the support you received before making the decision and during the preparation for the Erasmus program (The International Exchange Programs Office and departmental Erasmus coordinators)

2. Is there anything else that you would like to share about our interviews so far?

**Post-interview notes:**

**A.5. ÜÇÜNCÜ GÖRÜŞME REHBERİ (TÜRKÇE)**

**Görüşme odağı:** Erasmus programı hakkında genel görüşler, Erasmus programına katılmış olmanın etkileri/sonuçları ve Erasmus programı süresince yaşanan önemli deneyimler

**Görüşme tarihi ve zamanı:**

**Görüşme yeri:**

**(Muhtemel) Takdim:**

Tekrardan merhaba. Bir önceki görüşmemizde Erasmus programına başvuru sürecindeki deneyimlerinizi konuşmuştuk. Aynı zamanda, Erasmus programına

katılma amaçlarınızı detaylı bir şekilde ele almıştık. Bu görüşmemizde ise Erasmus programı hakkındaki düşüncelerinizi ve bu programın üzerinizde bıraktığı etkileri detaylı bir şekilde konuşmayı hedefliyoruz. Paylaşmalarımızın daha akıcı bir şekilde ilerleyebilmesi açısından, önceki görüşmelerimizde de olduğu gibi, size zaman zaman sorularla ve gerekirse kendi görüşlerimle eşlik edeceğim. İsterseniz görüşmeye başlayabiliriz.

**Sorular:**

1. Sizce Erasmus programının amaçları nelerdir?

**İrdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** sizin amaçlarınızla ve yaşadıklarınızla program amaçları arasındaki uyum, programa yönelik amaçlarınız ve gerçekte deneyimledikleriniz

2. Erasmus programından yararlanmış biri olarak şu an nasıl hissediyorsunuz?

**İrdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** ülke ve üniversite seçimi ile ilgili memnuniyet/memnuniyetsizlik, yurt dışında kısa süreli eğitim hakkında hissedilenler, bu programa kabul alınmadığında ya da başvurulmadığında oluşan durum hakkında düşünceler/tasavvurlar, programın genel olarak kattıkları (mesleki, kişisel, dil, kültür, dünya görüşü), program sırasında deneyimlenen güçlükler (ekonomik, sosyal, akademik, dil, kültür), anımsanan önemli anılar/olaylar/anlar, program süresince alınan dersler ya da yürütülen akademik etkinlikler ve bu konuda olan görüşler, programa dair duyulan herhangi bir pişmanlık

3. Şu ana kadar olan görüşmelerimizle ilgili paylaşmak istediğiniz başka bir şey var mı? (Araştırmacı bu noktada bu görüşmenin odağına uygun olabilecek sosyal medya gönderilerini talep edecektir.)

**Görüşme sonrası araştırmacı notları:**

## **A.6. THIRD INTERVIEW GUIDE (ENGLISH)**

**Interview focus:** General views about the Erasmus program, outcomes of participating in the Erasmus program, and notable Erasmus experiences

**Interview date and time:**

**Interview location:**

**(Possible) Presentation:**

Hello again. During our previous interview, we talked about your experiences during the pre-Erasmus period. We also discussed in detail your motivations for participating in the Erasmus program. In this interview, I would like to learn about your views on the Erasmus program and how you think it has influenced you. As in our previous interviews, I will accompany you with some questions and, if necessary, my own views. We can begin now, if you like.

**Questions:**

1. In your opinion, what are the objectives of the Erasmus program?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** the convergence between your program experiences and the objectives of the Erasmus program, your program expectations/motivations and what you experienced in reality

2. As someone who has participated in the Erasmus program, how do you feel about the experience?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** Any satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the choice of country and university, feelings about studying abroad for a temporary period, thoughts/visions about the scenario in which you have not been accepted to the program, contributions of the program to your development/growth (professional, personal, language, cultural, worldview, and so on), difficulties/challenges experienced during the program (economic, social, academic, language, cultural, and so on), important/significant memories/events/moments from the Erasmus period, academic activities during the Erasmus program and thoughts in that regard, any regret about participating in the program

3. Is there anything else that you would like to share about our interviews so far?  
(At this point, the researcher requests the social media posts that may be relevant to the focus of this interview.)

**Post-interview notes:**

**A.7. DÖRDÜNCÜ GÖRÜŞME REHBERİ (TÜRKÇE)**

**Görüşme odağı:** Erasmus programının öğretmen eğitimi süreçlerine olası etkileri/katkıları ve Erasmus programı sonrası deneyimler

**Görüşme tarihi ve zamanı:**

**Görüşme yeri:**

**(Muhtemel) Takdim:**

Tekrardan merhaba. Bir önceki görüşmemizde Erasmus programı hakkındaki genel fikirlerinizi ve bu programa katılmış olmanın sizin üzerinizdeki etkilerini konuşmuştuk. Aynı zamanda, Erasmus programı sırasında deneyimlediğiniz önemli olayları veya anıları paylaşmıştınız. Bu görüşmemizde ise Erasmus programı sonrası deneyimlerinizi detaylı bir şekilde konuşmayı hedefliyoruz. Yani Erasmus sonrasındaki geri uyum sürecinizi konuşmayı planlıyoruz. Bu kapsamda, Erasmus programının İngilizce öğretmenliği eğitimi sürecine olası katkılarını da konuşabileceğiz. Paylaşımlarımızın daha akıcı bir şekilde ilerleyebilmesi açısından, önceki görüşmelerimizde de olduğu gibi, size zaman zaman sorularla ve gerekirse kendi görüşlerimle eşlik edeceğim. İsterseniz görüşmeye başlayabiliriz.

**Sorular:**

1. Erasmus programına katılmış olmak bir öğretmen adayı olarak gelişiminizi nasıl etkilemiş olabilir?

**İrdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** alan bilgisi, İngilizce dil becerileri, öğretmen kimliği, pedagojik bilgi ya da sınıf becerileri, öğrencilere yaklaşım, İngiliz diline yaklaşım

2. Erasmus programından döndükten sonraki süreçle ilgili önemli olabilecek deneyimlerinizi paylaşır mısınız?

**İrdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** Ülkeye dönüş hazırlığı günlerinde deneyimlenenler ve bu süreçte hissedilenler, Erasmus dönemini tanımlayabilecek bir metafor, Erasmus sonrası dönemi tanımlayabilecek bir metafor, geri uyum süreci deneyimleri (toplum, üniversite, öğretmen eğitimi programı, sosyal ilişkiler, gündelik pratikler) ve, varsa, bu süreçte yaşanan zorluklar

3. Şu ana kadar olan görüşmelerimizle ilgili paylaşmak istediğiniz başka bir şey var mı?

### **Görüşme sonrası araştırmacı notları:**

#### **A.8. FOURTH INTERVIEW GUIDE (ENGLISH)**

**Interview focus:** Post-Erasmus experiences and possible contributions of the Erasmus program to language teacher education processes

**Interview date and time:**

**Interview location:**

**(Possible) Presentation:**

Hello again. During our previous interview, we talked about your general views on the Erasmus program and the self-perceived outcomes of participating in this program. You also shared important events and memories that you experienced during the Erasmus program. In this interview, I aim to talk specifically about your experiences after the Erasmus program. In other words, I plan to talk about your re-entry process with specific references to your ongoing language teacher education. So, we will be able to discuss the possible contributions of the Erasmus program to your development in becoming an English language teacher. Again, I will accompany you with some questions and, if necessary, my own views, as in our previous interviews. If you like, we can begin now.

**Questions:**

1. As a teacher candidate, how did your participation in the Erasmus program affect your development?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** content knowledge, English language skills, (re)construction of language teacher identity, pedagogical knowledge or classroom skills, approach toward the English language and language learners

2. Could you tell us about your experiences after returning from the Erasmus program?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** Experiences and feelings during the days before returning to Turkey, a metaphor that could define your Erasmus period, a metaphor that could define your post-Erasmus period, experiences during the re-entry stage (society, university, language teacher education program, social relations, daily practices, and so on) and difficulties experienced during this process, if any

3. Is there anything else that you would like to share about our interviews so far?

**Post-interview notes:**

**A.9. BEŞİNCİ GÖRÜŞME REHBERİ (TÜRKÇE)**

**Görüşme odağı:** Gelecek planları ve tasavvurları ve Erasmus programına katılmış olmanın gelecek planlarına ve tasavvurlarına olası etkileri

**Görüşme tarihi ve zamanı:**

**Görüşme yeri:**

**(Muhtemel) Takdim:**

Merhaba. Bir önceki görüşmemizde Erasmus programı sonrası deneyimlerinizi konuşmuştuk. Aynı zamanda, Erasmus programının özellikle İngilizce öğretimi boyutunda size neler katmış olabileceğini konuşmuştuk. Bu görüşmemizde ise detaylı bir şekilde gelecek planlarınızı ve hayallerinizi konuşmayı hedefliyoruz. Önceki görüşmelerimizde de olduğu gibi, size zaman zaman sorularla ve gerekirse kendi görüşlerimle eşlik edeceğim. İsterseniz görüşmeye başlayabiliriz.



**Sorular:**

1. Kendiniz için nasıl bir gelecek planlıyorsunuz?

**İRdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** kariyer planları, mesleki gelişim, lisansüstü çalışmalar, yaşanmak istenen yerler, sosyal ilişkiler (aile, arkadaşlar, romantik birliktelikler)

2. Gerçekleşmesini istediğiniz hayalleriniz ya da planlarınız nelerdir?

**İRdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** yakın zaman için kurulan hayaller ya da yapılan planlar, daha uzun vade için kurulan hayaller ya da yapılan planlar

3. Gerçekleşmesinden çekindiğiniz gelecek senaryoları nelerdir?

**İRdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** yakın zaman için var olan kaygılar (iş, aile, arkadaşlar, akademik çalışmalar, toplum, ekonomi, politika), daha uzun vade için çekinilen senaryolar (iş, aile, arkadaşlar, akademik çalışmalar, toplum, ekonomi, politika)

4. Erasmus programına katılmış olmak gelecek planlarınızı sizce nasıl etkilemiş olabilir?

**İRdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** Erasmus programı öncesinde düşünülen gelecek planları ile sonrasında düşünülenler arasında olası değişimler, geleceğe uzanan yollarda Erasmus programına katılmış olmanın olumsuz etkilerinin olma ihtimali, iş başvuruları ya da lisansüstü program başvuruları sırasında Erasmus deneyimleri ve katkıları hakkında paylaşılmak istenen noktalar

5. Şu ana kadar olan görüşmelerimizle ilgili paylaşmak istediğiniz başka bir şey var mı?

**Görüşme sonrası araştırmacı notları:**

## **A.10. FIFTH INTERVIEW GUIDE (ENGLISH)**

**Interview focus:** Future plans and imagined futures, future scenarios, and possible influences of participating in the Erasmus program on future plans and imagined futures

**Interview date and time:**

**Interview location:**

**(Possible) Presentation:**

Hi. During our previous interview, we talked about your post-Erasmus experiences. We also talked about how the Erasmus program might have contributed to your development, especially in terms of English language teaching. In this interview, I aim to learn about your future plans and imaginings in detail. As in our previous interviews, I will accompany you with some questions and, if necessary, my own views. Let's get started now if you like.

**Questions:**

1. How do you envision your future?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** career plans, professional development, graduate studies, places to live, social relations (family, friends, romantic relationships, and so on)

2. What are your dreams or plans that you would like to come true?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** dreams or plans for the near future, dreams or plans for the long term

3. What are the possible future scenarios that you are afraid of experiencing?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** concerns for the near future (work, family, friends, academic studies, society, economy, politics, and so on), scenarios for the longer term (work, family, friends, academic studies, society, economy, politics, and so on)

4. How do you think participating in the Erasmus program influenced your future plans?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** Possible convergences/divergences between the future plans before and after the Erasmus program, the negative impact of participating in the Erasmus program on future plans and scenarios (if any), possible influences of the Erasmus experiences on upcoming job/graduate program applications

5. Is there anything else that you would like to share about our interviews so far?

**Post-interview notes:**

### **A.11. ALTINCI GÖRÜŞME REHBERİ (TÜRKÇE)**

**Görüşme odağı:** Çeşitli açılardan (ekonomik, politik, kültürel, toplumsal, eğitimsel, iklimsel ve çevresel) dünyamızın şu anki halleri üzerine görüşler

**Görüşme tarihi ve zamanı:**

**Görüşme yeri:**

**(Muhtemel) Takdim:**

Merhaba. Bir önceki görüşmemizde detaylı bir şekilde gelecek planlarınızı ve hayallerinizi konuşmuştuk. Bu görüşme ise bağlı bulunduğunuz İngilizce Öğretmenliği programından mezun olmadan önceki son görüşmemiz olacak. Bu görüşmede dünyamızın şu anki halleri üzerine bazı noktaları ele alıp sizin bu konularda görüşlerinizi dinlemeyi planlıyoruz. Önceki görüşmelerimizde de olduğu gibi, size zaman zaman sorularla ve gerekirse kendi görüşlerimle eşlik edeceğim. İsterseniz ilk soruyla görüşmeye başlayabiliriz.

**Sorular:**

1. Sizce şu an dünyadaki temel problemler nelerdir?

**İrdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** ekonomik, politik, kültürel, toplumsal, eğitimsel, iklimsel ve çevresel

2. Sizinle birazdan tek tek birkaç bilgi ya da istatistik paylaşacağım ve bunlar hakkındaki görüşlerinizi merak etmekteyim (Araştırmacı bu aşamada aşağıda verilen maddeleri tek tek paylaşıp bunlar üzerine olan görüşleri talep eder):

- a. Neredeyse tüm dünya bölgelerinde, son yıllarda gelir eşitsizliği artmıştır. Dünyanın en zengin %1'lik kesimi küresel servetin %82'sine sahip ve bu %1'lik kesim 1980'den bu yana gelir seviyelerinde önemli bir artış yakalarken en altta kalan %50'lik kesimde neredeyse gelir artışı olmamıştır (Alvaredo vd., 2018, s. 11).
  - b. 2016 yılı itibarıyla 28 milyon çocuğa zorla yer değiştirme (zorla göç) uygulandı (UNICEF, 2018).
  - c. 400 milyondan fazla çocuk aşırı yoksulluk içinde yaşıyor (UNICEF, 2018).
  - d. 2014 ve 2018 yılları arasında 26.000 göçmen ölümü meydana geldi (UNICEF, 2018).
  - e. İyi eğitim ve kaliteli sağlık hizmetlerine erişim dünya çapında bir lüks haline gelmiştir (Birleşmiş Milletler, 2018).
  - f. 2016 yılında yetersiz beslenen tahmini 815 milyon insan vardı (Birleşmiş Milletler, 2018).
  - g. Biyoçeşitlilik ve aynı zamanda iklimsel etkenler önemli bir tehdit altındadır (Birleşmiş Milletler, 2018).
3. Sizce bazı ülkeler, toplumlar ya da gruplar neden ekonomik problemler yaşar?  
**İrdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** Sizce ekonomik krizler neden olur? Ülkemizin şu anki ekonomik/toplumsal/politik durumu hakkında görüşleriniz nelerdir?
4. Sizce ideal bir toplum ya da dünya nasıl olmalıdır?  
**İrdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** Bütün insanlar ya da insan toplulukları (dil, din, ırk, mezhep, cinsiyet, etnik köken) eşit saygı görmeli mi? Bütün insanlara eşit yaklaşılması gerektiğini düşünüyor musunuz? Bütün insanların eşit hayat olanaklarına sahip olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Resmettiğiniz ideal topluma erişebilmemiz için şu an neler üzerine odaklanmalıyız?

5. Sizce ideal eğitim nasıl olmalıdır?

**İrdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** Eğitimin dünyadaki problemlerin ortaya çıkmasında ya da çözümünde sizce rolü nedir? Sizce herkes eğitim olanaklarına erişimde eşit şanslara sahip mi? İngiliz dili eğitimi bu bağlamda nasıl olmalı? Temel eğitimde genel olarak hangi konular ya da disiplinler ele alınmalı?

6. Şu ana kadar olan görüşmelerimizle ilgili paylaşmak istediğiniz başka bir şey var mı? (Araştırmacı bu aşamada katılımcının özgeçmiş belgesini ve öğretmenlik uygulaması dosyasını talep edecektir.)

### **Görüşme sonrası araştırmacı notları:**

#### **A.12. SIXTH INTERVIEW GUIDE (ENGLISH)**

**Interview focus:** Views on the current state of the world from various perspectives (economic, political, cultural, social, educational, climatic, environmental, and so on)

**Interview date and time:**

**Interview location:**

**(Possible) Presentation:**

Hi. During our previous interview, we talked about your future plans and imaginings. This interview will be our last interview before you graduate from the English language teacher education program. As part of this interview, I would like to discuss some issues regarding the current state of our world and listen to your views on these issues. As in our previous interviews, I will accompany you with some questions and, if necessary, my own views. If you like, we can start the interview with the first question.

**Questions:**

1. What do you think are the main problems in the world right now?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** economic, political, cultural, social, educational, climatic, environmental, and so on

2. I will soon share some information or statistics with you one by one, and I am interested in hearing your views on them (At this stage, the researcher shares the following points one by one and requests the participant's views on each of them):

- a. Income inequality has increased in almost all regions of the world in recent years. The world's richest one percent owns 82% of global wealth, and the one percent has seen a significant increase in income levels since 1980, while the bottom 50% has seen almost no increase in their income levels (Alvaredo et al., 2018, p. 11).
- b. As of 2016, 28 million children were subjected to forced displacement (forced migration) (UNICEF, 2018).
- c. More than 400 million children live in extreme poverty (UNICEF, 2018).
- d. 26,000 migrant deaths occurred between 2014 and 2018 (UNICEF, 2018).
- e. Access to decent education and quality healthcare has become a worldwide luxury (United Nations, 2018).
- f. An estimated 815 million people were undernourished in 2016 (United Nations, 2018).
- g. There is a significant attack on biodiversity as well as climatic factors (United Nations, 2018).

3. Why do you think some countries and societies or groups of people experience economic problems?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** Why do you think economic crises occur? What are your views on the current economic/social/political conditions in our country?

4. How would you describe an ideal society or world?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** Should all people or groups of people (language, religion, race, sect, gender, ethnicity, and so on)

be equally respected? Do you think all people should be treated equally? Do you think all people have equal opportunities? How can we achieve the ideal society you are describing?

5. How would you describe an ideal system of education?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** What could be the role of education in generating or solving the problems in the world? Do you think everyone has equal access to educational opportunities? What is the ideal way of teaching English? Which topics or subjects should be addressed/included in basic education?

6. Is there anything else that you want to share about our interviews so far? (At this point, the researcher requests the participant's CV and practicum portfolio.)

**Post-interview notes:**

### **A.13. YEDİNCİ GÖRÜŞME REHBERİ (Çevrimiçi/Uzaktan Görüşme)**

#### **(TÜRKÇE)**

**Görüşme odağı:** Mezuniyet sonrası deneyimler (profesyonel ve kişisel gelişmeler) ve önceki görüşmelerde ortaya çıkan fakat eksik kalan ya da netleştirilmesi gereken noktalar

**Görüşme tarihi ve zamanı:**

**(Muhtemel) Takdim:**

Merhaba. Son görüşmemizi yaklaşık beş ay önce yani mezuniyetinizden hemen önce gerçekleştirmiştik. Bu son görüşmede bazı ekonomik, politik, kültürel ve toplumsal konular üzerine detaylı bir şekilde konuşma şansı bulmuştuk. Bu görüşme ve mezuniyetiniz sonrasında insanlık olarak bazı önemli ve hatta zorlu süreçler deneyimledik. Bunların en önemlisi elbette pandemi süreci oldu. Biliyorsunuz, bu süreçte sizlerle çok sık olmasa da iletişim halinde olduk ve sağlıklı bir süreç geçirdiğinizi bilmek gerçekten mutluluk verici. Tabii gönül isterdi ki bu görüşmeyi

yüz yüze yapabilelim. Umarım yakın gelecekte sağlık kaygıları gütmeden yüz yüze görüşmeler yapma fırsatı da buluruz. Bu görüşmemizde, genel olarak, mezuniyet sonrası deneyimlerinizi dinlemeyi planlıyorum. Yine bu görüşmede, önceki görüşmelerimizde ortaya çıkan fakat eksik kalan ya da netleştirilmesi gereken bazı noktaları mümkünse konuşmamızı rica edeceğim. Önceki görüşmelerimizde de olduğu gibi, size zaman zaman sorularla ve gerekirse kendi görüşlerimle eşlik edeceğim. İsterseniz ilk soruyla görüşmeye başlayabiliriz.

**Sorular:**

1. İlk olarak, bu beş aylık süreçte profesyonel anlamda neler deneyimlediniz?  
**İrdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** (Mevcut ise) iş arama süreci, (mevcut ise) mülakat deneyimleri, (mevcut ise) iş hayatında öne çıkan deneyimler ve memnuniyet durumu, (mevcut ise) Erasmus deneyimlerinin iş arama ve profesyonel deneyimler üzerinde etkileri, (mevcut ise) pandemi sürecinin profesyonel deneyimler üzerindeki etkileri
2. Bu süreçte herhangi bir lisansüstü programa başvurduunuz mu ya da başvurmayı planlıyor musunuz?  
**İrdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** (Mevcut ise) belirtilen lisansüstü programa yönelik amaçlar ve planlar, (mevcut ise) profesyonel gelişim süreçleri ve planları
3. Paylaştığınız bu profesyonel deneyimleriniz dışında bu süreçte deneyimlediğiniz ve önemli olduğunı düşündüğünüz kişisel gelişmeleri de, varsa, paylaşabilir misiniz?  
**İrdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** mezuniyet sonrasında ikamet edilen yaşam alanları, olası yeni rutinler ya da pratikler, pandemi sürecinin kişisel deneyimler üzerindeki etkileri, dil öğrenme süreçlerinde geline son durum
4. Paylaştığınız bu profesyonel ve kişisel deneyimler ışığında yakın gelecek için planlarınız nelerdir?



5. Önceki görüşmelerimizde sık sık Erasmus dönemini özlediğinizi belirtmişsiniz. Hala özleyor musunuz? (Bu soru bütün katılımcılar için uygun bir soru olmuştur.)

**İrdeleyici/yönlendirici noktalar/sorular:** Özlem duyulan noktalar, pandemi sonrası dünyada Erasmus gibi hareketlilik programlarının olası durumu ve bu konudaki düşünceler

6. (Burada, her bir katılımcı için farklı sorular oluşturulmuştur ve önceki görüşmelerimizde ortaya çıkan fakat eksik kalan ya da netleştirilmesi gereken önemli noktalar ele alınmıştır.)

7. Bu görüşmemizle ilgili paylaşmak istediğiniz başka bir şey var mı? (Araştırmacı bu noktada katılımcıdan, varsa, katılımcının iş ve/ya da lisansüstü program başvurularında kullandığı formları ve/ya da niyet mektuplarını talep edecektir.)

#### **Görüşme sonrası araştırmacı notları:**

#### **A.14. SEVENTH INTERVIEW GUIDE (Remote online) (ENGLISH)**

**Interview focus:** Post-graduation experiences (professional and personal development) and the points that emerged from the previous interviews but remained incomplete or need clarification

**Interview date and time:**

**(Possible) Presentation:**

Hi. We conducted our last interview about five months ago, before your graduation. In that last interview, we had the chance to discuss some important economic, political, cultural, and social issues that concern our lives. After our last interview and your graduation, we went through some important and even difficult times as humanity. The most obvious one, of course, was the COVID-19 pandemic. As you know, we have been in frequent contact during this period, and I am glad to know that you are doing well. Of course, my preference would be to conduct this interview face-to-face. Nevertheless, I hope that in the near future we will have the opportunity to meet face-

to-face without worrying about our health. In this interview, I plan to listen to your post-graduation experiences. If possible, I would also like to talk about some points that emerged from our previous interviews but remained incomplete or need to be clarified. As in our previous interviews, I will accompany you with some questions and, if necessary, my own views. If you like, we can begin the interview right now.

**Questions:**

1. First of all, what professional experiences did you go through during these five months?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** Job-seeking processes (if applicable), interview experiences (if applicable), significant work experiences (if applicable), level of satisfaction with work experiences (if applicable), possible influences of Erasmus experiences on job-seeking processes and professional experiences (if applicable), influences of the pandemic on professional experiences (if applicable)

2. Have you applied or are you planning to apply to any graduate program?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** motivations and plans for the graduate program (if applicable), professional development processes and plans (if applicable)

3. If you have experienced any other personal developments during this period, could you share those as well?

**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** accommodation, possible new routines or practices, influences of the pandemic on personal experiences or daily life, language learning processes

4. In light of these professional and personal experiences that you shared, what are your plans for the near future?

5. In our previous interviews, you often stated that you missed the Erasmus period. Do you still miss it? (This question was a relevant question for all of the participants.)

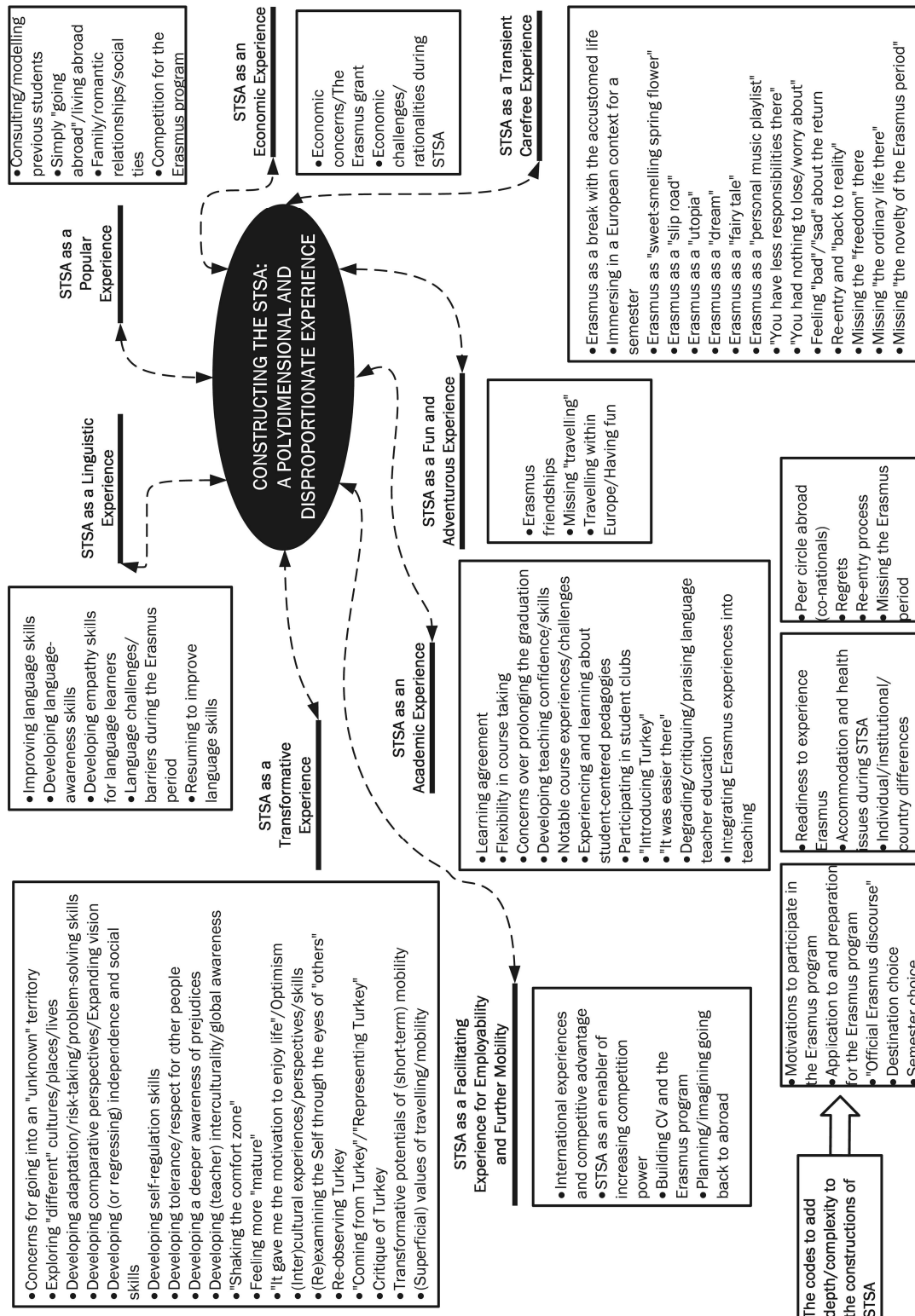
**Possible guiding points/questions (probes and prompts):** what is missed the most, views on the possible status of the mobility programs such as the Erasmus after the pandemic

6. (Here, the researcher asks different questions to each participant and requests her/him to clarify some important points that emerged in the previous interviews but remained vague or incomplete.)
7. Is there anything else that you would like to share about the topics of this interview? (At this point, the researcher requests, if any, the forms and/or letters of intent submitted by the participants during the job and/or graduate program applications.)

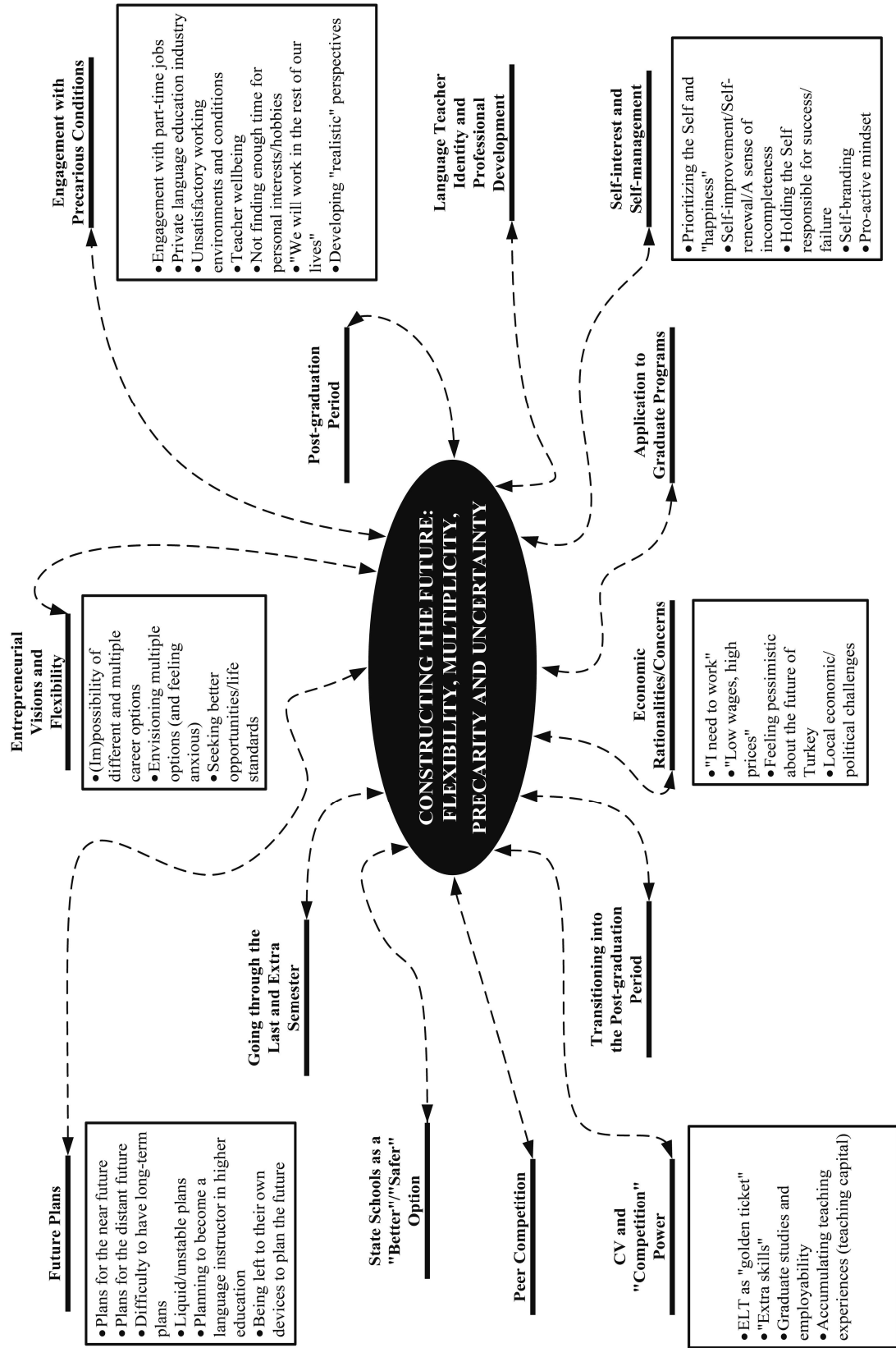
**Post-interview notes:**

## B. THE CODES AND INITIAL THEMES UNDER THE FINAL THEMES

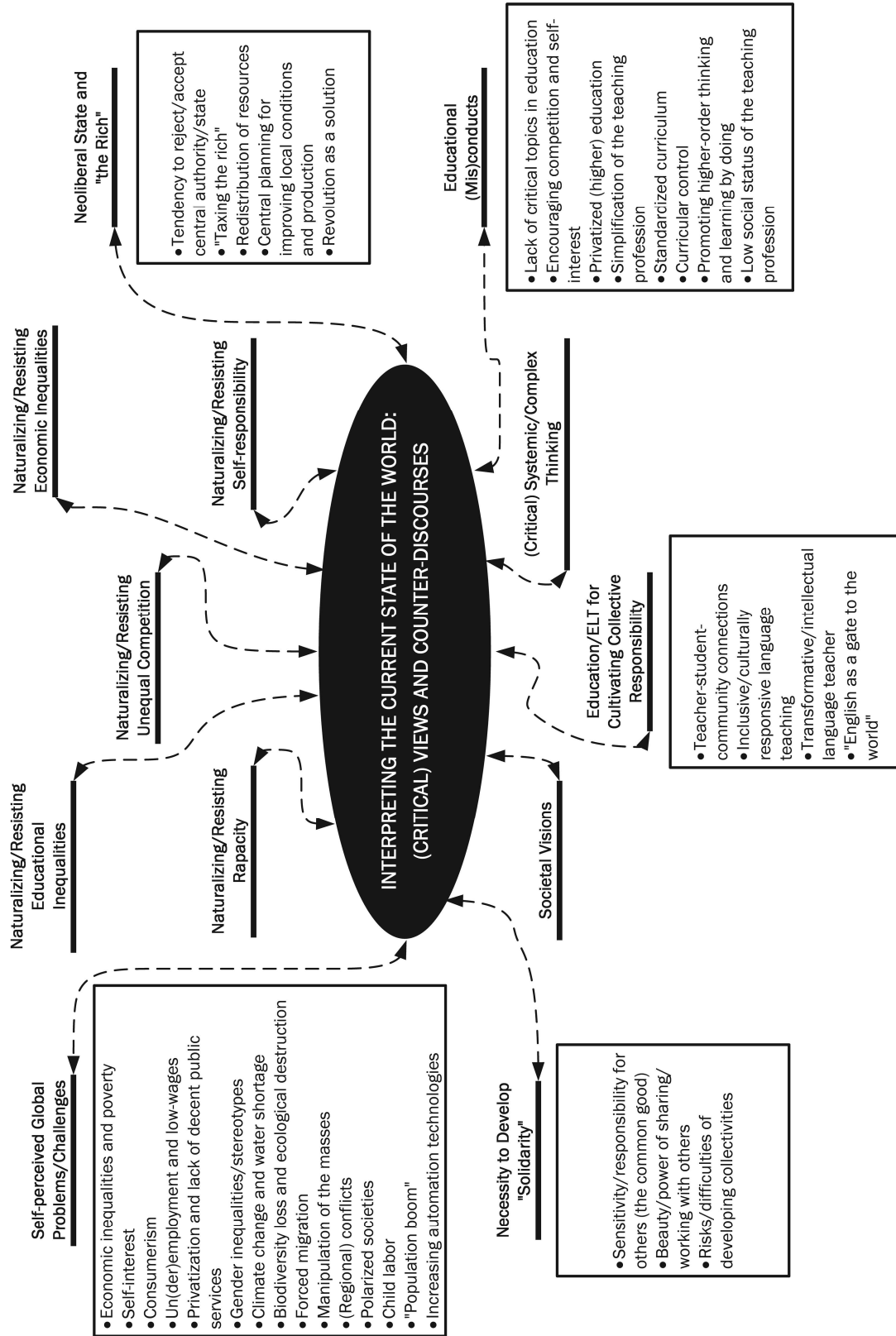
### B.1. Constructing the STSA: A Polydimensional and Disproportionate Experience (Final Theme 1)



B.2. Constructing the Future: Flexibility, Multiplicity, Precarity and Uncertainty (Final Theme 2)



**B.3. Interpreting the Current State of the World: (Critical) Views and Counter-Discourses (Final Theme 3)**



## C. APPROVAL OF THE HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ  
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
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21 AĞUSTOS 2019

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Doç.Dr. A.Cendel KARAMAN

Danışmanlığını yaptığımız Emrullah Yasin ÇİFTÇİ'nin "Neoliberalizm, Kısa Dönemli Uluslararası Öğrenci Hareketliliği ve İngilizce Öğretmen Adayları: Anlatıların ve Bakış Açılarının Eleştirel Bir Söylem Analizi" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve 323 ODTÜ 2019 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

  
Prof. Dr. Tülin GENÇÖZ

Başkan

  
Prof. Dr. Tolga CAN

Üye

İZİNLI

Doç.Dr. Pınar KAYGAN

Üye

  
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ali Emre TURGUT

Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Şerife SEVİNÇ

Üye

  
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ

Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Süreyya Özcan KABASAKAL

Üye

## D. CURRICULUM VITAE

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

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Surname, Name : Çiftçi, Emrullah Yasin  
Year of Birth : 1990  
Place of Birth : Ağrı, Turkey  
E-mail : [eyasinciftci@gmail.com](mailto:eyasinciftci@gmail.com)  
WoS ResearcherID : AAZ-6683-2020 (<https://bit.ly/3xtkeZI>)  
Google Scholar Profile : <https://bit.ly/3c4Yrju>  
ORCID Identifier : 0000-0002-9747-6333 (<https://bit.ly/3eUnh6H>)

### EDUCATION BACKGROUND

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Degree	Institution	Year
PhD	Middle East Technical University, <i>English Language Teaching</i>	2016-2022
MA	Middle East Technical University, <i>English Language Teaching</i>	2013-2016
BA	Middle East Technical University, <i>English Language Teaching</i>	2008-2012
	Inholland University of Applied Sciences, <i>Education and Social Work</i> (Erasmus Exchange)	2011
High School	Van Alpaslan Anatolian Teacher Training High School	2004-2008

### RESEARCH INTERESTS

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Language Teacher Education, Study Abroad Programs, Critical Interculturality, Intercultural Education, Intercultural Communication, Critical Pedagogy, Qualitative Inquiry, Critical Discourse Studies, Political Economy in Language Education, Complex Systems Science, Qualitative Meta-Synthesis

### FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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English (C2), French (A1)



## **WORK EXPERIENCE**

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<b>Year</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Job Title</b>
2014-2022	Middle East Technical University, Faculty of Education, Department of Foreign Language Education	Research Assistant
2013-2014	Ordu University, Faculty of Education, Department of Foreign Language Education	Research Assistant
2012-2013	Szkola Podstawowa nr 1 w Luboniu, Luboń, Poland	EU-Comenius Assistantship

## **PUBLICATIONS & OTHER ACADEMIC WORK**

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### **MA Thesis**

Çiftçi, E. Y. (2016). *Preparation for an international exchange program: A phenomenological analysis of prospective English language teachers' lived and imagined experiences* (Unpublished master's thesis). Middle East Technical University.

### **Journal Articles**

Çiftçi, E. Y., Karaman, A. C., & Daloğlu, A. (2022). 'No one is superior to another': Tracing intercultural development in a year-long study abroad programme. *The Language Learning Journal*, 50(5), 537-549.

Çiftçi, E. Y., & Daloğlu, A. (2021). Short-term study abroad: Designing an intercultural induction program to prepare prospective language teachers. *Intercultural Education*, 32(2), 175-193.

Çiftçi, E. Y., & Karaman, A. C. (2019). Short-term international experiences in language teacher education: A qualitative meta-synthesis. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(1), 95-121.

Çiftçi, E. Y., & Gürbüz, N. (2019). Intercultural sensitivity orientations prior to short-term study abroad: A qualitative study on prospective English language teachers. *The Qualitative Report*, 24(6), 1319-1337.

Çiftçi, E. Y., & Savaş, P. (2018). The role of telecollaboration in language and intercultural learning: A synthesis of studies published between 2010 and 2015. *ReCALL*, 30(3), 278-298.

Çiftçi, E. Y., & Karaman, A. C. (2018). 'I do not have to love them, I'm just interested in their language': Preparation for a study abroad period and the negotiation(s) of intercultural competence. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 18(6), 595-612.

Çiftçi, E. Y. (2016). A review of research on intercultural learning through computer-based digital technologies. *Educational Technology & Society*, 19(2), 313–327.

### **Book Chapters**

Çiftçi, E. Y., & Karaman, A. C. (2021). “Successful teaching”: Neoliberal influences and emerging counter-narratives. In A. C. Karaman & S. Edling (Eds.), *Professional learning and identities in teaching: International narratives of successful teachers* (pp. 172-189). Routledge.

Çiftçi, E. Y., & Karaman, A. C. (2021). Rethinking the value(s) of short-term youth mobility: Neoliberal ideals and counterhegemonic possibilities. In D. Cairns (Ed.), *The Palgrave handbook of youth mobility and educational migration* (pp. 441-451). Palgrave Macmillan.

Karaman, A. C., & Çiftçi, E. Y. (2019). Identidade do professor e problemas políticos atuais da formação docente na Turquia [Teacher identity and current teacher education policy issues in Turkey]. In J. E. Diniz-Pereira & K. M. Zeichner (Eds.), *Formação de professores S/A: Tentativas de privatização da preparação de docentes da educação básica no mundo [Teacher training Inc.: Attempts to privatize teacher education in the world]* (pp. 67-79). Autêntica Editora.

### **Conference Presentations**

Çiftçi, E. Y., & Karaman, A. C. (2021, November 22-26). *Neoliberal common sense and short-term study abroad: A focus on prospective language teachers' discourses* [Paper presentation]. The 21st International Conference of the International Association for Languages & Intercultural Communication (IALIC), Online Conference.

- Karaman, A. C., Çiftçi, E. Y., & Elmas, T. (2020, November 6). *Can interculturality be assessed in higher education?: Reflections on language teacher education* [Plenary panel session]. Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) 55th Conference Day, Online Event.
- Çiftçi, E. Y., & Karaman, A. C. (2019, November 20-22). *Short-term study abroad in language teacher education: Translating interculturality framework to the design of an intercultural induction program* [Paper presentation]. The 19th International Conference of the International Association for Languages & Intercultural Communication (IALIC), Valencia, Spain.
- Karaman, A. C., Çiftçi, E. Y., & Elmas, T. (2019, June 21-22). *Navigating interculturality in language education: Conceptual and experiential perspectives* [Plenary panel session]. The 2nd International FLE Joint Conference: Unity in Diversity, Ankara, Turkey.
- Karaman, A. C., & Çiftçi, E. Y. (2019, June 17-19). *Interculturality and international field experiences in language teacher education* [Paper presentation]. Interculturality in Teacher Education and Training: Methodologies, Criticality and Sustainability Conference 2019, Karlstad, Sweden.
- Çiftçi, E. Y., & Karaman, A. C. (2018, August 29-31). *'No one is superior to another': Intercultural competence development through a year-long international exchange program* [Paper presentation]. The 18th International Conference of the International Association for Languages & Intercultural Communication (IALIC), Helsinki, Finland.
- Çiftçi, E. Y., & Karaman, A. C. (2017, May 31-June 2). *The role of international experiences in language teacher education: Focus on qualitative research results* [Paper presentation]. Redesigning Pedagogy International Conference 2017, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.
- Çiftçi, E. Y., & Karaman, A. C. (2016, April 8-12). *Preparation for a study abroad program in the United Kingdom: Prospective teachers' experiences* [Poster presentation]. American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting, Washington D.C., USA.

## **Organizational Experience**

*Reporter:* Ulusal Sempozyum: Üniversitelerde İngilizcenin Eğitim Dili Olarak Kullanılması: Bütüncül Bir Yaklaşım [National Symposium: A Holistic Approach to English Medium Instruction], April 19, 2019 – Ankara, Turkey.

*Reviewing committee member:* The TESOL International Convention & English Language Expo, Master's Student Forum, March 21, 2017 – Seattle, Washington, USA.

*Reviewing committee member:* The TESOL International Convention & English Language Expo, Master's Student Forum, April 5, 2016 – Baltimore, Maryland, USA.

## **Journal Referee Work**

*Action in Teacher Education* (2020), *CALICO Journal* (2020, 2021), *Computers and Education* (2019, 2020), *Educational Review* (2020, 2021), *Intercultural Education* (2019, 2021), *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* (2020), *Language and Intercultural Communication* (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021), *Language Teaching Research* (2019), *ReCALL* (2019), *Review of Educational Research* (2020), *System* (2020, 2021)

## **Awards**

Middle East Technical University,  
Graduate Courses Performance Award (2018)

Middle East Technical University Development Foundation,  
Article Publication Award (2016, 2018, 2021)

The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK),  
Incentive Award for International Scientific Publication (2017, 2018, 2019)

The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK),  
International Scientific Meetings Fellowship Program (2018)

## E. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKE ÖZET

### NEOLİBERAL ORTAK DUYU VE YURT DIŞINDA KISA SÜRELİ EĞİTİM: İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMEN ADAYLARININ SÖYLEM VE DENEYİMLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR ELEŞTİREL NİTEL ARAŞTIRMA

#### 1. GİRİŞ

Neoliberalizm ve ideolojik bileşenleri içinde bulunduğumuz bu çağda, bilhassa Batı ekonomilerinde, siyasetinde ve toplumlarında, hegemonik bir statüye ulaşmıştır. Diğer bir ifadeyle, neoliberal ideoloji, özellikle 1970'lerden itibaren, tüm dünyada etkisini göstermiş ve çeşitli şekillerde birçok farklı ülke bağlamını derinden etkilemiştir (Brenner vd., 2010; Foucault, 2008; Harvey, 2005; Peck vd., 2018; Springer, 2016; Steger ve Roy, 2010). Yani, başlangıçta bir ekonomik teori olarak sunulmasına rağmen, neoliberal ideoloji zamanla insan yaşamının birçok alanına sinmiş ve çok yönlü “yeni” bir kapitalist *ortak duyu* (*common sense*) inşa etmiştir (Gramsci, 1971).

Neoliberal ideoloji, elde etmiş olduğu bu hegemonik ya da *ortak duyu* statüsü aracılığıyla, bugün çok sayıda alanda (örneğin, siyaset, toplum, ekonomi ve eğitim) eleştirellikten uzak ve sermaye lehine olan kavramların ve uygulamaların doğallaştırılmasında başat bir rol üstlenmektedir. Diğer bir deyişle, kolektif sorumluluk, işçi hakları, dayanışma, sosyal adalet ve toplumsal refah gibi kavramları değersizleştirirken sermaye birikimi, rekabet, tüketimcilik, kâr etme ve kişisel çıkar gibi kavramları teşvik etmekte ve normalleştirmektedir (Brown, 2005; Dardot ve Laval, 2014; Hall ve O'Shea, 2013; Harvey, 2005; Mirowski, 2013). Böylesi bir kapitalist *ortak duyu* altında, benzeri görülmemiş ekonomik büyümeler, bilimsel gelişmeler ve teknolojik başarılar elde edilmiş olsa da, hem yerel hem de küresel ölçekte çeşitli eşitsizlik ve yoksunluk biçimlerinde iç karartıcı bir büyüme gözlemlenmektedir (Alvaredo vd., 2018; Duménil ve Lévy, 2011; Harvey, 2014; Piketty, 2014).

Bu çok yönlü etki alanı sayesinde, neoliberal ideoloji günümüzde yükseköğretimde de oldukça görünür bir durumdadır (Bamberger vd., 2019; Giroux, 2002; Olssen ve Peters, 2005; Ward, 2012). *Bilgi ekonomisi, özelleştirme, ve rekabet ve insan sermayesi* gibi piyasa söylemlerinden sıklıkla etkilenen yükseköğretim kurumları bugünlerde *girişimcilik, uluslararası görünüm ve ekonomik verimlilik* gibi neoliberal gündemleri destekleme ve sürdürme baskısı altındadır. Bu kurumlardan, aynı zamanda, neoliberal öznelerin veya *iktisadi insanların (homines economici)* ihtiyaçlarına ve eylemlerine hitap etmeleri de beklenmektedir. Üniversiteler, örneğin, pazarlanabilir beceriler, ekonomik kazançlar, hareketlilik (mobility) ve macera gibi konularda neoliberal öznelere hizmet etme beklentisi altındadır. Bu bağlamda, yurt dışında eğitim (study abroad) veya uluslararası öğrenci hareketlilik (student mobility) programları neoliberal öznelere “doğru” bir karışım sunuyor gibi görünmektedir. Bu tür uluslararası programlar lisans öğrencileri tarafından, genellikle, pazarlanabilir beceriler kazanmak, küresel olarak “etkileyici” biyografiler/özgeçmişler oluşturmak ve seyahat ve eğlence deneyimleri biriktirmek için önemli bir fırsat olarak görülmektedir (Bamberger vd., 2019; Brown vd., 2003; Cairns vd., 2017, 2018; Courtois, 2020; Cuzzocrea ve Krzaklewska, 2022; Dvir ve Yemini, 2017; Krzaklewska, 2013; Michelson ve Alvarez Valencia, 2016; Yoon, 2014; Zemach-Bersin, 2009).

Ancak, öte yandan, uluslararası öğrenci hareketliliği programları yükseköğretim öğrencilerine dönüştürücü (transformative) deneyimler sunabilecek değerli bir fırsat olarak da görülebilir. Yani, öğrenciler, bu programların sunduğu alışılmadık deneyimler ve bağlamlar aracılığıyla, dünyadaki konumları üzerine düşünme fırsatları bulabilir ve dolaylı yoldan eşitsizlik, güç ve sosyal adalet gibi önemli konular hakkında farkındalık geliştirebilirler (Brown, 2009; Cairns vd., 2017, 2018; Chiocca, 2021; Larsen ve Searle, 2017; Nada ve Legutko, 2022; Perry vd., 2012; Reddy, 2019; Tochon ve Karaman, 2009). Bu nedenle, öğrenci hareketliliğinin en yaygın biçimlerinden biri ve aynı zamanda bu çalışmanın odak programı olan yurt dışında kısa süreli eğitim (YDKSE) programları, öğrencilerin neoliberal söylem ve uygulamalara yönelik *karşı-hegemonik* görüşler ve eylemler geliştirmesi hususunda da etkili bir deneyim olabilir.

Görüldüğü üzere, YDKSE programları çeşitli gelişim fırsatları ile ilişkilendirilmeye açıktır. Buradan hareketle, YDKSE'nin birçok makro ve mikro söylemin etki edebileceği çekişmeli ve aynı zamanda çelişkili bir alan olduğu öne sürülebilir (ayrıca bkz. Bodinger de Uriarte ve Di Giovine, 2021; Courtois, 2020; Çiftçi ve Karaman, 2021a; Goldoni, 2021; Klose, 2013; Sharma, 2020; Zemach-Bersin, 2009). Doğrusu, hegemonik projelerin tamamlanmamış, tutarsız ve kısıtlayıcı doğası sebebiyle, neoliberal ortak duyunun kendisi tartışmalı bir alan olmuştur (Crehan, 2016; Donoghue, 2018; Fairclough, 2010; Gramsci, 1971; Hall vd., 2013). Diğer bir ifadeyle, *ortak duyu* bünyesinde aynı anda “sağlıklı bir çekirdek” ya da *iyi duyu* (*good sense*) barındırmaktadır (Gramsci, 1971, s. 328). Yani, *ortak duyu* içerisinde yer alan *iyi duyu* söylemlerini belirleyip genişleterek zaman içerisinde yeni bir *ortak duyu* inşa etmek ve böylece daha adil ve eşit bir dünyanın tohumlarını ekmek mümkün olabilir (Crehan, 2016; Gramsci, 1971; Torres, 2013). Tartışmalı ve çelişkili bir alan olan YDKSE de, Antonio Gramsci tarafından detaylı bir şekilde ele alınan bu kavramlar (*hegemonya*, *karşı-hegemonya*, *ortak duyu* ve *iyi duyu*) aracılığıyla, mercek altına alınabilir ve bu alanda yer alan *iyi duyu* söylem ve deneyimleri (örneğin, mesleki gelişim, kozmopolitlik, kolektif sorumluluk, kültürlerarasılık, yerel etkileşim ve sivil ve sosyopolitik katılım) belirlenip zaman içerisinde genişletilebilir. Hâlihazırda neoliberal ortak duyunun himayesi altında görünen YDKSE söylem ve deneyimlerine yönelik bu tür *karşı-hegemonik* çalışmalar özellikle neoliberal ideolojinin bugünlerde sıklıkla tartışıldığı İngilizce öğretmen eğitimi bağlamında değerli olabilir.

Bazı araştırmacılar, İngilizce öğretmenliği programlarının esas bileşeni olan İngilizceyi “neoliberal ideolojilerin somutlaştırılmasında bir araç” olarak tanımlamaktadır (Shin, 2016, s. 511). Diğer bir deyişle, İngilizcenin neoliberal ortak duyunun yayılmasında ve küresel ticaret ve sanayinin ilerlemesinde önemli bir rolünün olduğu ileri sürülmektedir (Flores, 2013; Holborow, 2013; Majhanovich, 2013; Piller ve Cho, 2013). Aslına bakılırsa, *rekabet*, (*küresel*) *bilgi ekonomisi* ve *öz-yönetim* söylemleriyle iç içe geçmiş bir dil olan İngilizce dünya genelinde pazar değerini de arttırmış gibi görünmektedir. Bu nedenle, İngilizcenin yukarı doğru sosyal hareketlilik ve yaşam fırsatlarında “eşik bekçisi” mekanizmalardan biri olarak hareket ettiği söylenebilir (Barnawi, 2020; Darwin, 2017; Majhanovich, 2013; Soto ve Pérez-Milans,

2018). Ayrıca, İngilizcenin dünya çapında kabul gören bir statüye sahip olması ve *ayrıcılık*, *kârlılık* ve *ilerleme* gibi kavramlarla sıklıkla ilişkilendirilmesi nedeniyle diğer dillerin (özellikle azınlık ve miras dillerinin) varlığını tehdit ettiği de öne sürülebilir (De Costa vd., 2019, 2021; Flubacher ve Del Percio, 2017). Neoliberal ideolojiyle bağdaştırılabilecek bu tür ciddi sebeplerden dolayı, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin neoliberal ortak duyu ve İngilizce arasındaki olası bağlantıları ve *sosyal adalet*, *eşitlik*, *çeşitlilik* ve *kültürlerarasılık* gibi konuları göz ardı etme lüksüne sahip olmadığı sonucuna varılabilir. Ancak, dil sınıflarının giderek daha karmaşık, çeşitli ve eşitsiz yapısına rağmen, İngilizce öğretmen eğitimi programları bu tür önemli konuların yeterince vurgulanmaması sebebiyle genellikle eleştirilmektedir (Block ve Gray, 2016; Clarke ve Morgan, 2011; Gray, 2019; Gray ve Block, 2012; Hawkins ve Norton, 2009).

Fakat daha önce de belirttiğim üzere, Avrupa Birliği tarafından yürütülen Erasmus programı da dâhil olmak üzere, YDKSE programları İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının sosyopolitik ve sosyokültürel gelişiminde etkili bir deneyimsel ve dönüştürücü fırsat olabilir. Böylece, İngilizce öğretmen adayları, öğretmenlik mesleğine atılmadan önce, kültürel, dilsel ve sosyal olarak duyarlı bir dil eğitimi için gerekli becerilerde ciddi ilerlemeler kaydedebilirler. Her halükârda, YDKSE veya Erasmus deneyimleri karmaşık ve mücadele halindeki makro söylemlere tabi olabileceğinden, bu varsayımlar veya olasılıklar doğrulanmaya ya da araştırılmaya muhtaçtır (Cairns vd., 2018; Courtois, 2020; Çiftçi ve Karaman, 2021a; Klose, 2013, Krzaklewska, 2013). Doğrusu, bu konuda oldukça kısıtlı sayıda araştırma bulunmaktadır. Hatta bildiğim kadarıyla, özellikle neoliberal ideoloji gibi makro söylemlerin YDKSE deneyimleri üzerinde nasıl bir etkiye sahip olduğuna dair İngilizce öğretmen eğitimi bağlamında herhangi bir çalışma bulunmamaktadır (ayrıca bkz. Çiftçi ve Karaman, 2019; Kang ve Pacheco, 2021; Lipura ve Collins, 2020; Morley vd., 2019; Plews, 2019; Smolcic ve Katunich, 2017). Mevcut araştırma dâhilinde, bu araştırma boşluğunu derinlemesine nitel bir anlayışla ele almayı amaçladım.

Daha detaylı olarak ifade etmem gerekirse, bu eleştirel nitel araştırmada, Erasmus programı kapsamında bir YDKSE dönemini tamamlamış ve Türkiye'de bağlı buldukları İngilizce öğretmen eğitimi programında son dönemlerine girmiş olan bir



grup (altı katılımcı) İngilizce öğretmen adayının YDKSE söylemlerini ve deneyimlerini irdelemeyi hedefledim. Bu çalışmada, özellikle, katılımcıların (1) YDKSE inşalarına (örneğin, programa katılma amaçları, program deneyimleri ve programa katılımın sonuçları), (2) gelecek tasavvurlarına (örneğin, gelecek planları ve mezuniyet sonrası deneyimler) ve (3) dünyanın mevcut durumu üzerine olan görüşlerine odaklandım. Ve bu odak noktalar kapsamında *ortak duyunun* ve *iyi duyunun* izlerini sürmeyi amaçladım. Erasmus sonrası döneme bu çok boyutlu derinlemesine ve eleştirel bir yaklaşımla, aynı zamanda, (İngilizce) öğretmen eğitimi literatüründe en az araştırılan YDKSE evresi olan yeniden giriş (re-entry) dönemi üzerine detaylı analizler sunmayı hedefledim (Arthur vd., 2020; Back vd., 2021; Clarke vd., 2020; Çiftçi ve Karaman, 2019; Kortegast ve Boisfontaine, 2015; Larsen ve Searle, 2017; Marx ve Moss, 2016; Moorhouse, 2020; Nada ve Legutko, 2022; Smolcic ve Katunich, 2017). Bu amaçlara paralel olarak, bu nitel çalışmada aşağıdaki araştırma sorularını ele aldım:

1. YDKSE döneminden dönmüş ve üniversiteden mezuniyetlerine yaklaşmış olan katılımcılar, YDKSE deneyimlerini geriye dönük olarak nasıl inşa ediyorlar?
  - a. Programa katılma amaçları nelerdi?
  - b. YDKSE programına katılımlarının bir sonucu olarak ne(ler) elde etmeyi umuyorlardı ve kendi bakış açılarına göre ne(ler) elde ettiler?
  - c. Ne tür YDKSE deneyimlerini öne çıkarıyorlar?
  - d. YDKSE, kendi bakış açılarından, lisans eğitimlerini, yani İngilizce öğretmen eğitimi süreçlerini, nasıl etkiledi?
  - e. Ortaya koydukları YDKSE inşalarında neoliberal söylemlerle ve unsurlarla nasıl ilişki(ler) kuruyorlar?
2. Katılımcılar (yakın ve uzak) geleceklerini hayali olarak nasıl inşa ediyorlar ve hemen mezuniyet sonrası süreci nasıl deneyimliyorlar?
  - a. Gelecek planları nelerdir?
  - b. İş arama süreçlerini ve/veya lisansüstü eğitim başvurularını nasıl tasavvur ediyor ve deneyimliyorlar?

- c. YDKSE, kendi bakış açılarından, gelecek planlarını ve hemen mezuniyet sonrası deneyimlerini nasıl etkiledi?
  - d. Paylaşmış oldukları gelecek inşalarında ve hemen mezuniyet sonrası deneyimlerinde neoliberal söylemlerle ve unsurlarla nasıl ilişki(ler) kuruyorlar?
3. Katılımcılar dünyanın mevcut durumunu ve küresel sorunları nasıl yorumluyorlar?
- a. Başlıca küresel sorunlar hakkındaki görüşleri nelerdir?
  - b. Kendi dünya görüşlerinde neoliberal söylemlerle ve unsurlarla nasıl ilişki(ler) kuruyorlar?

## 2. YÖNTEM

Bir önceki bölümde de açıkladığım üzere, bu nitel çalışmada, bir grup İngilizce öğretmeni adayının YDKSE deneyimlerini, hayali geleceklerini, hemen mezuniyet sonrası deneyimlerini ve dünya görüşlerini araştırmayı hedefledim. Araştırma kapsamında, bu mikro konuların neoliberal ortak duyu ve *karşı-hegemonya* veya *iyi duyu* gibi daha geniş ideolojik alanlarla nasıl bir etkileşim halinde olduğunu da göstermeyi amaçladım. Başka bir deyişle, ayrıntılı ve çok katmanlı analizler amaçlayarak, bu çalışmada karmaşıklığı, derinliği ve eleştirel yorumlamaları ön planda tuttum. Bu öncelikler doğrultusunda, araştırma yöntemi olarak *Nitel Araştırma* yaklaşımını benimsemeyi uygun buldum (Creswell, 2012).

*Nitel Araştırma*, bu çalışmanın teorik altyapısına ve amaçlarına uygun olarak, karmaşık, bağlamsallaştırılmış ve derinlemesine yorum ve eleştirileri destekleyen köklü bir bilimsel araştırma yaklaşımı olarak bilinmektedir. Ancak, bu yaklaşımda tek bir ideal araştırma reçetesi bulunmamaktadır. Bu nedenle, araştırmacıların bu yaklaşıma yönelik teorik yönelimlerini tartışmaları ve netleştirmeleri beklenmektedir (Braun ve Clarke, 2022; Creswell, 2012; Mirhosseini, 2020; Saldana, 2011). Dolayısıyla, mevcut nitel araştırmaya yön veren teorik altyapıdan ve benimsediğim belirli nitel değerlerden kısaca bahsetmem gerekir.

Bu nitel çalışmada, *Nitel Araştırma* geleneğinde yer alan genel değerleri (örneğin, bağlamsallaştırma, çok boyutlu derinlemesine analiz, düşünümSELLİK, karmaşıklık, öznellik ve yorumlama) benimsemenin yanı sıra, *Eleştirel Söylem Çalışmalarının* (ESÇ) temel araştırma anlayışını benimsedim. Genel olarak buluşsal bir yöntem ve eleştirel bir teorik yaklaşım olarak bilinen ESÇ, birçok farklı alanda (örneğin, sosyal, politik, kültürel, eğitimsel ve ekonomik) çeşitli makro ve mikro söylemsel konuların varlığını ve etkileşimini araştıran geniş bir çalışma alanıdır (Fairclough, 2010; Flowerdew ve Richardson, 2018; Forchtner ve Wodak, 2018; Rogers, 2009; van Dijk, 2014; Waugh vd., 2016; Wodak ve Meyer, 2016; Zotmann ve O'Regan, 2012). Söylemlerin farklı katmanlarda özellikle *güç* tarafından nasıl şekillendiğine eleştirel bir yaklaşım getirmiş olması sebebiyle, ESÇ bu nitel araştırma için uygun bir teorik yaklaşım olmuştur (özellikle Gramscici kavramlarla bir araya geldiğinde). Yani, neoliberal ortak duyu ile bir grup İngilizce öğretmen adayının söylemleri ve deneyimleri arasındaki olası etkileşimleri nitel değerler aracılığıyla ortaya koymam hususunda, ESÇ rehber niteliğinde teorik bir altyapı olmuştur.

*Nitel Araştırma*'nın ve ESÇ'nin bu birleşiminden doğan yöntem anlayışlarını ve teorik bakış açılarını merkeze alarak, bu çalışmada, analiz yöntemi olarak ise Düşünümsel Tematik Analiz (DTA) yöntemini benimsedim (Braun ve Clarke, 2006, 2021a, 2021b, 2022). Bu analiz yöntemine ve verilere dayanarak, çalışma amaçlarına yönelik anlam odaklı temalar oluşturmayı hedefledim. Yani, mikro boyutlara odaklı (aktörler, argümantasyon, betimleme, ifade biçimi, zaman, kip, vb.) dilbilimsel bir analiz yerine çalışma katılımcılarının sağladığı ifadelerin anlamlarına yönelik eleştirel bir yorumlayıcı tematik söylem analizi uyguladım (ayrıca bkz. Block, 2019; Chun, 2017; Menard-Warwick ve Palmer, 2012). DTA yöntemini benimseyerek, söylemlere dayalı oluşturduğum anlamsal örüntüleri, aynı zamanda, neoliberal ortak duyu ve *iyi duyuya* ilişkin söylemler açısından yorumlama imkânı elde etmiş oldum. Böylece, çalışma katılımcılarının kendi YDKSE inşalarında, tasavvur ettikleri geleceklerinde ve dünya görüşlerinde neoliberal ortak duyunun belirli unsurlarını (örneğin, rekabet, tüketimcilik, ekonomik öncelik, girişimcilik, esneklik, kişisel çıkar, öz yönetim, şahsi sorumluluk, güvencesizlik) nasıl yeniden ürettiklerini ve/veya bu unsurlara nasıl direndiklerini gösteren anlam temelli temalar oluşturma imkânım oldu.

## 2.1. Araştırma Bağlamı ve Çalışma Katılımcıları

Hedef araştırma bağlamı olan İngilizce öğretmenliği programı Türkiye'nin İç Anadolu Bölgesi'ndeki bir devlet üniversitesinde yer almaktadır. İngilizce öğretmen adayları, bu dört yıllık programda eğitimlerini sürdürürken, Erasmus programı aracılığıyla geçici bir süreliğine (bir ya da iki dönem) yurt dışında eğitim alma şansına da sahiptirler. Aslında her yıl bu bağlamdan önemli sayıda İngilizce öğretmen adayı Erasmus programı kapsamında Avrupa'da başka bir üniversitede eğitim almak üzere seçilmektedir. Üniversite'nin Uluslararası İşbirliği Ofisi tarafından sağlanan bilgilere göre, 2015-16 akademik yılı için bu sayı 35, 2016-17 için 26, 2017-18 için 20 ve 2018-19 için 23 olmuştur. Bu çalışmada, özellikle, Erasmus programından en son olarak faydalanan İngilizce öğretmen adaylarına, yani 2018-19 yılında faydalanan adaylara odaklandım. Bu 23 öğretmen adayından 15'i yurt dışından döndükten sonra öğretmen eğitimi programındaki üçüncü senelerine başlarken, geri kalan sekizi ise dördüncü yani son senelerine başlamıştır. Mevcut çalışma için gerekli etik izinleri aldığım da (Ek C), bu son sınıf öğrencilerinden altısı belirtilen programda son dönemlerine girmek üzereydiler. Diğer bir deyişle, bu altı öğretmen adayı Erasmus döneminden döndükten sonra öğretmen eğitimi programında bir dönem geçirmiş ve mezun olmaları için önlerinde sadece bir dönem kalmıştı. Çalışma amaçları için uygunlukları sebebiyle, bu nitel araştırma, nihai olarak, bu altı kişilik grubun söylem ve deneyimlerine dayanmaktadır.

Özellikle bu gruba odaklanmanın arkasında aslında üç temel neden veya varsayım yatmaktadır. Birincisi, Erasmus döneminden sonra bağlı buldukları öğretmen eğitimi programında bir dönem geçirmiş olmaları, katılımcılara Erasmus deneyimleri üzerine daha fazla ve derinlemesine düşünme fırsatı sağlamış olabilir. Diğer bir ifadeyle, böylesi makul bir zaman aralığının sağladığı düşünsel olanaklar sayesinde, katılımcıların YDKSE deneyimleri hakkında zengin veriler elde edebileceğimi farz ettim (ayrıca bkz. Arthur vd., 2020; Clarke vd., 2020; Dockrill vd., 2016; Kortegast ve Boisfontaine, 2015; Larsen ve Searle, 2017; Nada ve Legutko, 2022). İkincisi, mezuniyetlerine sadece bir dönem uzakta olduklarından, gelecek senaryoları hakkında etraflıca düşünmüş olabileceklerini ve bu konuda da detaylı veriler sağlayabileceklerini varsaydım. Üçüncüsü, bu grupta yer alan öğrenciler, Erasmus

döneminde (2018-19 güz dönemi) bağlı oldukları öğretmen eğitimi programının sunduğu bazı zorunlu dersleri alamadıkları için döndüklerinde bu programda fazladan bir dönem daha (2019-20 güz dönemi) geçirmek zorundaydılar. Yani, “olağandışı” bir dönem geçireceklerini düşünerek, yine YDKSE deneyimleri, öğretmen eğitimi süreçleri, hayali gelecekleri ve dünya görüşleri hakkında zengin veriler ortaya koyabileceklerini düşündüm. Ayrıca, bu son dönemlerinde almak zorunda oldukları dersler önceki dönemlere göre nispeten daha az olduğu için ders yükleri alışmış oldukları yüke nazaran daha hafifti. Bu nedenle, araştırmaya katılmak için yeterli zamana sahip görünüyordular. Bu örneklem ölçütlerine dayanarak, altı kişilik bu gruptaki her bir öğrenciyle iletişime geçme kararı aldım. Ayrıntılı bir e-posta aracılığıyla kendilerini bu çalışmaya katılmak üzere davet ettim. Gruptaki bütün İngilizce öğretmen adayları, yani Ayşe, Dilara, Gözde, Marco, Melis ve Zeynep (bu çalışmada yer alan tüm kişisel ve kurumsal isimler takma isimlerdir), davetimi kabul ettiler ve tercihlerine (gün, saat ve yer) uygun olarak ilk buluşmamızı planladık.

## **2.2. Veri Üretimi ve Analizi**

Bu çalışma için veri üretme sürecine hedef üniversite bünyesinde faaliyet gösteren İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'nun onayını (Ek C) aldıktan sonra başladım. Çalışma amaçları doğrultusunda, her bir katılımcıyla toplamda yedi bireysel görüşme yaptım (Ek A). Her görüşmeden önce çeşitli görüşme konuları ve ana sorular (olası irdeleyici ya da yönlendirici noktalar ile birlikte) belirleyip katılımcıların bu konulara ilişkin deneyim ve görüşlerini paylaşmalarını sağladım (Brinkmann ve Kvale, 2015; Mirhosseini, 2020; Roulston ve Choi, 2018). Son görüşme hariç tüm görüşmeleri yüz yüze gerçekleştirdik. Ancak son görüşmeyi, COVID-19 salgını ve takip eden kısıtlamalar nedeniyle, uzaktan (çevrimiçi) gerçekleştirmek zorunda kaldık. Katılımcılardan gerekli izinleri alarak, tüm görüşmeleri sesli olarak kayıt altına aldım. Ayrıca, katılımcılar görüşmeleri ana dilleri olan Türkçe ile yapmayı tercih ettiler.

İlk görüşmede katılımcılarla yakınlık kurmaya ve geçmişleri hakkında detaylı bilgiler edinmeye odaklanırken, görüşmelerin geri kalanında (son ikisi hariç) YDKSE'nin farklı aşamalarını (hazırlık, geçici konaklama ve yeniden giriş) odağa aldım. Bu ilk beş görüşme aracılığıyla, katılımcıların YDKSE deneyimlerini, öğretmen eğitimi

süreçlerini ve gelecek hayallerini ve planlarını öğrenme şansım oldu. Özellikle altıncı görüşmede katılımcıların başlıca küresel sorunlar hakkındaki görüşlerini dinledim. Yani, dolaylı olarak katılımcıların dünya görüşleri üzerine odaklanma fırsatımız oldu. Katılımcıların öğretmen eğitimi programından mezun olmalarından beş ay sonra gerçekleştirdiğimiz son görüşmede ise, daha önceki görüşmelerde ortaya çıkan konulara açıklık getirmeyi ve katılımcıların hemen mezuniyet sonrası deneyimlerini öğrenmeyi amaçladım. Bu yedi görüşme sayesinde, genel olarak, katılımcıların araştırma amaçlarıyla ilgili söylemlerini ve deneyimlerini dinleme ve kayıt altına alma şansı elde ettim.

Görüşme verilerine ek olarak, katılımcıların tamamı özgeçmişlerinin (CV) bir örneğini sundular. Ayrıca, “öğretmenlik uygulaması” dersleri için oluşturmuş oldukları dosyaları da benimle paylaştılar. Bu yazılı ikincil veri formlarının yanı sıra, katılımcılar kendi YDKSE deneyimlerini yansıttığını düşündükleri birçok sosyal medya gönderisini de veri havuzuna eklememi sağladılar. Son olarak, varsa, kendilerinden iş/lisansüstü program başvuru formlarını da rica ettim. Katılımcıların sadece yarısı bir lisansüstü programa sunduğu niyet mektubunu benimle paylaşabilirken, diğer yarısı ise veri üretme süreci boyunca böyle bir form veya mektup oluşturmadığı için bu konuda herhangi bir veri sağlayamadı. Hiçbir katılımcı iş başvuru formu oluşturma durumunda kalmadığı için bu konuda da katılımcılardan herhangi bir veri elde edemedim. Sonuç olarak, birincil veri kaynağı olan görüşme verilerini sosyal medya gönderileri, öğretmenlik uygulaması dosyaları, özgeçmiş ve lisansüstü program başvuru formları gibi ikincil türde nitel verilerle zenginleştirmiş oldum.

Çeşitli veri türlerinden (ağırlıklı olarak görüşme verileri) oluşan veri setini analiz etmek ve nihai temalar oluşturmak için, daha önce de bahsettiğim üzere, bu çalışmada DTA yöntemini kullandım. Yani, Braun ve Clarke (2021b) tarafından geliştirilmiş şu altı aşamalı düşünümsel ve yinelemeli veri analiz sürecini uyguladım: “1) verilere aşına olma ve fikirlerin not edilmesi; 2) ilk kodların sistematik olarak oluşturulması; 3) kodlanmış ve derlenmiş verilerden başlangıç temalarının oluşturulması; 4) temaların geliştirilmesi ve gözden geçirilmesi; 5) temaların iyileştirilmesi, tanımlanması ve adlandırılması ve 6) raporun yazılması” (s. 331). Veri setinin

büyükliğini ve çeşitliliğini göz önünde bulundurarak, bu altı aşamalı analiz sürecini çoğunlukla nitel bir veri analizi yazılımı olan MAXQDA aracılığıyla yürüttüm (Gibbs, 2014; Kuckartz ve Rädiker, 2019; Rädiker ve Kuckartz, 2021; Nowell vd., 2020).

Braun ve Clarke (2006, 2021b) tarafından da önerildiği üzere, analiz sürecine verilerin deşifre (transcription) edilmesi ile başladım. Bu aşamada katılımcıların sağladığı görüşme verilerini kelimesi kelimesine deşifre ederken, kodlama ve tema oluşturma gibi sonraki aşamalar için de çok sayıda fikri not alma imkânım oldu. Deşifre aşamasından sonra ise bütün verileri detaylı bir şekilde kodlamaya koyuldum. Belli bir teorik çerçeveye (Gramscici kavramlar, ESÇ ve *Nitel Araştırma*) dayanarak, ucu açık, eleştirel ve yorumlayıcı bir kodlama süreci yürüttüm. Yani, teorik bakış açılarının ve araştırma amaçlarının ışığında, verileri cümle veya paragraf düzeyinde anlam odaklı olarak kodladım. Daha sonra, bu kodları başlangıç temalarına dönüştürmek amacıyla çalışmalara başladım. Neredeyse bir yıl harcadığım bu düşünümsel, eleştirel, yinelemeli ve yorumsal tematik analiz sonucunda birtakım başlangıç temaları oluşturdum. Bu temalar üzerinde bir süre daha çalışmaya devam ederek, nihai olarak, üç ana tema ortaya koydum (burada kullandığım “nihai” kelimesi anlamların kesinliğini veya sabitlenmesini değil, üstlendiğim analitik ve düşünsel yolculuğun sonuçlarını ifade eder).

### 3. ANALİZ SONUÇLARI

Giriş bölümünde de belirttiğim üzere, bu çalışmada üç ana araştırma sorusuna veya üç ana amaca odaklandım. İlk soru ile katılımcıların YDKSE veya Erasmus deneyimlerini geriye dönük olarak nasıl yapılandırdıklarını araştırdım. YDKSE'nin yeniden giriş dönemine vurgu yapan ikinci soruyla, katılımcıların hayal ettikleri geleceklerini (yakın ve uzak) nasıl inşa ettiklerini ve hemen mezuniyet sonrası dönemde kişisel ve mesleki açılardan ne tür deneyimler edindiklerini anlamaya çalıştım. Son araştırma sorusu aracılığıyla ise, katılımcıların dünyanın mevcut durumunu veya mevcut küresel sorunları nasıl yorumladıklarına dair belirli örüntüleri ortaya çıkarmayı amaçladım. Bu sorulara yanıtlar oluşturmaya çalışırken, aynı zamanda, katılımcıların söylemlerinde ve deneyimlerinde neoliberal ortak duyu ve *iyi duyu* ile ilişkilendirilebilecek örüntüleri de belirleyip sunmaya çalıştım.

DTA (Braun ve Clarke, 2021b) aracılığıyla büyük ve çeşitli bir nitel veri setini analiz ettikten sonra, her biri bir araştırma sorusuna karşılık gelen üç ana tema oluşturdum: (1) *Yurt dışında kısa süreli eğitim deneyimini inşa etme: Çok boyutlu ve orantısız bir deneyim*, (2) *Geleceği inşa etme: Esneklik, çokluk, güvencesizlik ve belirsizlik* ve (3) *Dünyanın mevcut durumunu yorumlama: (Eleştirel) görüşler ve karşı söylemler*. Analiz çıktılarına, yani nihai temalara dayanarak, bu çalışmadan dört ana sonuç çıkardım.

Birincisi, katılımcılar bütünsel anlamda çok boyutlu bir YDKSE deneyimi inşa ettiler (temel olarak sekiz boyut: [1] *popüler*, [2] *ekonomik*, [3] *geçici kaygısız*, [4] *eğlenceli ve maceralı*, [5] *akademik*, [6] *dilsel*, [7] *dönüştürücü*, [8] *istihdam edilebilirliği ve başka hareketlilik deneyimlerini kolaylaştırıcı*). Fakat aynı zamanda, bu çok boyutlu insanın orantısız bir şekilde macera, kaygısızlık, istihdam edilebilirlik, finansal kapasite, eğlence, öz çıkar ve öz yönetim gibi çeşitli unsurlara dayandığını gösterdim. Diğer bir ifadeyle, katılımcıların YDKSE söylemlerinin ve deneyimlerinin, esas olarak, neoliberal YDKSE inşalarını çağrıştırdığını öne sürdüm (Bamberger vd., 2019; Cairns vd., 2018; Courtois, 2020; Çiftçi ve Karaman, 2021a; Dvir ve Yemini, 2017; Michelson ve Alvarez Valencia, 2016; Yoon, 2014; Zemach-Bersin, 2009). Yani, bazı bireysel farklılıklardan bağımsız olarak, katılımcıların bu konudaki söylem ve deneyimlerinin, çoğunlukla, akademik, kültürlerarasılık ve dönüştürücü unsurlar yerine, tüketimcilik, finansal kapasite, öz çıkar ve öz yönetim gibi unsurları ön planda tuttuğunu iddia ettim (Bodinger de Uriarte ve Di Giovine, 2021; Cairns vd., 2017, 2018; Courtois, 2018, 2019, 2020; Cuzzocrea ve Krzaklewska, 2022; Frieson vd., 2022; Forsey vd., 2012; Jacobone ve Moro, 2015; Kortegast ve Boisfontaine, 2015; Krzaklewska, 2013; Lesjak vd., 2015, 2020; Michelson ve Alvarez Valencia, 2016; Nada ve Legutko, 2022; Trower ve Lehmann, 2017; Van Mol ve Timmerman, 2014; Waters vd., 2011; Zemach-Bersin, 2009).

İkincisi, neoliberal ortak duyunun, özellikle öğretmen eğitimi programından mezuniyetten hemen önce ve sonra, katılımcıların hayal ettikleri geleceklerine ve deneyimlerine nüfuz etmeye devam ettiğini gösterdim. Örnek vermem gerekirse, iş gücü piyasasının yarattığı güvencesizlik ve belirsizlik karşısında, katılımcılar sıklıkla hem Türkiye'de hem de yurt dışında kariyer seçeneklerini çoğaltmak ve ileride



çıkabilecek fırsatlar için esnek kalmak gibi kendine odaklı ve girişimci stratejiler hayal ettiler. Doğrusu, bu stratejileri hayal etmekle kalmayıp bazı mezuniyet sonrası eylemlerinde de bunları yansıttılar. Ayrıca, bu tür açık uçlu hayaller ve gelişen/uyarlanabilir stratejiler yoluyla, zaman içerisinde “daha fazla” hareketlilik (sosyal ve uluslararası) imkânlarına ve “daha iyi” yaşam fırsatlarına (örneğin, yüksek gelir, yeterli kişisel zaman, sosyal saygınlık ve iş güvenliği) ulaşmayı umdular.

Piyasa odaklı tasavvurlarla ve eylemlerle meşgul olmanın dolaylı bir sonucu olarak, katılımcılar İngilizce öğretmenliği mesleğine kalıcı ve içsel bir yaklaşım veya bağlılık geliştirme konusunda zayıf göstergeler sundular. İngilizce öğretmenliği mesleğini gelir, hareketlilik (fiziksel ve sosyal) ve kişisel zaman açısından umut verici olmayan bir meslek olarak görmeye yatkın olduklarından, katılımcılar bu mesleği genellikle ikincil bir önemle ele aldılar ve çeşitli geçici veya yüzeysel amaçlarla bağdaştırdılar. Katılımcılar tarafından sağlanan bu tür açıklamaları göz önünde bulundurarak, katılımcıların hayali geleceklerini, dil öğretimine yönelik güçlü güdülerden ziyade, neoliberal esneklik ve çokluk söylemleri ile inşa ettiklerini öne sürdüm. Sonuç olarak, kendilerine dair gelecek tasavvurlarını, sivil katılım, politik farkındalık ve sosyal adalet gibi eleştirel görüşlerden ziyade ekonomik öncelik, rekabet, esneklik, güvencesizlik ve öz yönetim gibi çeşitli neoliberal söylemler ve unsurlar aracılığıyla şekillendirmiş oldular.

Üçüncüsü, katılımcılar YDKSE inşalarında, hayali geleceklerinde ve mezuniyet sonrası deneyimlerinde, neoliberal unsurlar kadar belirgin olmasa da, çeşitli *iyi duyu* örüntüleri de sağladılar. Örneğin, katılımcılar, akademik faaliyetlere, yerel topluluklarla etkileşimlere, yerel dillere ve çeşitli kültürel ve eleştirel konulara (örneğin, kozmopolitlik, ekonomik eşitsizlikler, kültürlerarasılık, kimlikler ve kapsayıcılık) YDKSE inşalarında zaman zaman yer verdiler. Yani, *ortak duyu* unsurlarıyla kurdukları baskın bir iletişimin yanı sıra, katılımcılar YDKSE inşalarında akademik, eleştirel, kültürlerarası ve yerel diller ve topluluklar gibi boyutlara yönelik kayda değer sayıda *iyi duyu* örnekleri de sağladılar. Buna ek olarak, gelecek tasavvurlarında daha çok neoliberal unsurlara yer vermelerine rağmen, katılımcılar hayali geleceklerinde sıklıkla “sömürücü” piyasa koşullarını eleştirip (yerel) özel eğitim pazarındaki güvencesiz çalışma koşullarına karşı eleştirel bir duruş sergilediler.

Dördüncüsü, neoliberal unsurlar katılımcıların YDKSE inşalarında ve hayali geleceklerinde baskın bir yer elde etmiş olsa da, katılımcıların hepsi, aynı zamanda, belirli siyasi gündemlere ve iklim değişikliği, eşitsizlikler, göç, yoksulluk ve işsizlik gibi küresel sorunlara karşı eleştirel görüşler ve çözüm önerileri de sağladılar. Yani, bu makro düzlemdeki görüşlerinden yola çıkarak, katılımcıların, en azından söylemsel düzeyde, dünyadaki yaşamı ve insanların çoğunluğunun refahını tehdit eden temel sorunlara karşı eleştirel ve duyarlı olduklarını belirttim.

Genel olarak, tüm bu analiz sonuçlarına ve *iyi duyu* örüntülerine dayanarak, İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının neoliberal ortak duyuya hizmet etmeye istekli, pasif bireyler olmayabileceklerini savundum. Bir diğer ifadeyle, YDKSE inşalarında ve kendileri için tasavvur ettikleri geleceklerinde birçok neoliberal unsuru yeniden üretmiş olsalar da, katılımcıların *ortak duyu* temelli YDKSE inşalarını eleştirel bakış açılarıyla analiz etmeye ve bu tür deneyimlerde mevcut olabilecek *iyi duyu* fırsatlarını yakalamaya açık olabileceklerini önerdim. Benzer şekilde, katılımcıların kendi gelecek planlarına ve tasavvurlarına ilişkin eleştirel müdahalelere de olumlu yanıtlar verebileceklerini gündeme getirdim. Bir sonraki bölümde, analiz sonuçlarından doğan bu önemli noktaları çeşitli araştırma ve uygulama önerileriyle birlikte tartışacağım.

#### 4. TARTIŞMA VE ÖNERİLER

Bu çalışmada sunduğum analiz sonuçları, elbette, daha fazla araştırma ile desteklenmeye ya da çürütülmeye açıktır. Doğrusu, bir grup İngilizce öğretmen adayının söylem ve deneyimlerine dayandığından, bu sonuçları diğer İngilizce öğretmen eğitimi programlarına ve öğretmen adaylarına genellemek henüz mümkün görünmüyor. Bu sebeple, bu tür çalışmalara olan ihtiyacımız devam etmektedir (ayrıca bkz. Çiftçi ve Karaman, 2019; Kang ve Pacheco, 2021; Morley vd., 2019; Plews, 2019; Smolcic ve Katunich, 2017). Ancak, mevcut YDKSE literatürü incelendiğinde, bu çalışmada ortaya koyduğum sonuçlara benzer örüntülere rastlamak mümkündür. Yani, neoliberal söylemlerin ve deneyimlerin mevcut YDKSE programlarında baskın olduğunu şimdilik varsaymak mümkün görünüyor.

Örneğin, çalışma katılımcılarının söylemlerine ve deneyimlerine benzer şekilde, diğer birçok öğrenci ve araştırmacı, YDKSE programlarına erişimde ve ayrıca bu programların deneyimlenme biçimlerinde ekonomik gücün başat rolüne atıfta bulunmaktadır (Ballatore ve Ferede, 2013; Cairns vd., 2017, 2018; Courtois, 2018, 2020; Goldoni, 2021; Heger, 2013; Lehmann ve Trower, 2018; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002, 2008; Prazeres, 2019; Salisbury vd., 2009; Tran, 2016; Trower ve Lehmann, 2017; Van Mol ve Timmerman, 2014; Waters vd., 2011). Buradaki analiz sonuçlarına paralel olarak, mevcut literatür, aynı zamanda, öğrencilerin YDKSE programlarını genel olarak eğlence ve istihdam edilebilirlik söylemleri sebebiyle cazip bulduklarına işaret etmektedir (Bodinger de Uriarte ve Di Giovine, 2021; Cairns vd., 2018; Courtois, 2019, 2020; Cuzzocrea ve Krzaklewska, 2022; Krzaklewska, 2013; Michelson ve Alvarez Valencia, 2016; Reilly ve Senders, 2009; Trentman ve Diao, 2017; Zemach-Bersin, 2009). Diğer bir ifadeyle, mevcut çalışmalar, birçok öğrencinin hem eğlenmeye erişim hem de (küresel) iş piyasasında değerli olabilecek bilgi ve becerileri (örneğin, esneklik, kültürlerarası anlayış, İngilizce yeterliliği, küresel farkındalık ve özgüven) edinme amacıyla bu programlara katıldığını göstermektedir. Sonuç olarak, buradaki analize ve mevcut literatüre dayanarak, yükseköğrenim öğrencilerininin YDKSE dönemini ağırlıklı olarak “çalışma-parti-seyahat üçlüsü” üzerinde geçirdiklerini söylemek mümkündür (Cairns vd., 2018, s. 83). Fakat bu üçlü içerisinde ilk unsurun genelde en az ilgiyi çektiğini de eklemek gerekir (ayrıca bkz. Barkin, 2018; Bodinger de Uriarte ve Di Giovine, 2021; Cairns vd., 2018; Courtois, 2019; Frieson vd., 2022; Forsey vd., 2012; Jacobone ve Moro, 2015; Kortegast ve Boisfontaine, 2015; Kosmaczewska ve Jameson, 2021; Lesjak vd., 2015, 2020; Nada ve Legutko, 2022).

Bu çalışmada da sıklıkla ifade ettiğim üzere, YDKSE programları, elbette, bu tür neoliberal ortak duyu ile işlenmiş YDKSE inşaları ile sınırlandırılmaz. Nitekim hâlihazırdaki öğretmen eğitimi literatürü, neoliberal ortak duyu unsurları kadar yaygın olmasa da, *iyi duyu* ile ilişkilendirilebilecek bazı YDKSE örnekleri sunmaktadır. Yani, (aday) öğretmenlerin entelektüel ve mesleki gelişimi için YDKSE programlarının dönüştürücü boyutlarına işaret eden bazı çalışmalar da mevcuttur. Örneğin, bu çalışmada yer alan analiz sonuçları ile benzer olarak, önemli sayıda derleme ve

araştırma çalışması, YDKSE programlarının (aday) öğretmenler arasında kozmopolitlik, küresel vatandaşlık ve sivil katılım gibi anlayışları geliştirmede etkili bir deneyim olabileceğini göstermektedir (Byker ve Putman, 2019; Cushner, 2011; Çiftçi ve Karaman, 2019; Phillion ve Malewski, 2011; Smolcic ve Katunich, 2017). Araştırmalar, aynı zamanda, YDKSE deneyimlerinin (aday) öğretmenlerin duygusal olgunluğa erişmelerine, kültürel öz farkındalıklarını arttırmalarına, ön yargılar hakkında (sosyopolitik) farkındalık geliştirmelerine, dünya görüşlerini zenginleştirmelerine ve kişisel ve mesleki gelişimlerine yardımcı olabileceğini göstermiştir (Abraham ve von Brömssen, 2018; Dockrill vd., 2016; Karaman ve Tochon, 2007, 2010; Li ve Costa, 2022; Nieto, 2006; Trilokekhar ve Kukar, 2011).

Çeşitli araştırmalar, bu çalışmada yer alan bazı katılımcıların söylemlerini doğrulayarak, YDKSE programlarının (aday) dil öğretmenlerinin yabancı dil öğrencilerine yönelik “empati” geliştirmesinde de etkili olabileceğini göstermiştir (Çiftçi ve Karaman, 2019; Frieson vd., 2022; Hauerwas vd., 2017; Jacobs ve Haberlin, 2022; Larsen ve Searle, 2017; Marx ve Pray, 2011; Pilonieta vd., 2017; Smolcic ve Katunich, 2017). Yani, özellikle yönlendirilmeleri halinde, (aday) öğretmenler YDKSE deneyimleri sayesinde sosyal adalet konularına yönelik derin anlayışlar geliştirebilirler. Böylece, kültürel ve dilsel açılardan duyarlı öğretmenler olma yolunda önemli adımlar atabilirler (Alfaro ve Quezada, 2010; Byker ve Putman, 2019; Cacciattolo vd., 2020; Çiftçi ve Karaman, 2019; Hauerwas vd., 2017; Jacobs ve Haberlin, 2022; Kasun ve Saavedra, 2016; Larsen ve Searle, 2017; Menard-Warwick ve Palmer, 2012; Smolcic ve Katunich, 2017).

Ancak, herhangi bir yönlendirme veya müdahalenin olmaması durumunda, İngilizce öğretmen adayları bir YDKSE dönemi boyunca failliklerini (agency) sergileyemeyebilir ve *iyi duyu* fırsatlarından yeterince yararlanamayabilirler. Yani, bu tür programlarda, özellikle de Erasmus programında, hâlihazırda egemen olan neoliberal söylemler nedeniyle, öğretmen adayları YDKSE'nin neoliberal çerçevelerini yeniden üretmeye devam edebilirler. Sonuç olarak, sivil katılım, toplum hizmeti, yerel etkileşim, sosyopolitik katılım ve okul deneyimi gibi fırsatlara gereken önemi veremeyebilirler. Doğrusu, bu çalışmada, katılımcıların Erasmus programına

hazırlanırken, Erasmus bağlamını deneyimlerken ve Erasmus deneyimlerini anlamlandırmaya çalışırken genellikle kendi hallerine bırakıldıklarını gözlemledim.

Bu noktalardan ve gözlemlerden hareketle, bir YDKSE programına katılmanın veya “sınırları” aşmanın, mesleki büyümeyi ve kolektif anlayış ve sorumluluklar geliştirmeyi garanti etmediğini vurgulamam gerekir. Dolayısıyla, YDKSE deneyimlerine yönelik yönlendirmelerin ve müdahalelerin gerekliliğini ben de bu çalışma aracılığıyla destekliyorum (ayrıca bkz. Arthur vd., 2020; Barkin, 2018; Bernardes vd., 2021; Bodinger de Uriarte ve Di Giovine, 2021; Chiocca, 2021; Çiftçi ve Daloğlu, 2021; Dockrill vd., 2016; Enriquez-Gibson ve Gibson, 2015; Härkönen ve Dervin, 2016; Hauerwas vd., 2017; Holmes vd., 2016; Jackson, 2018a, 2018b; Jackson ve Oguro, 2018; Jacobs ve Haberlin, 2022; Klein ve Wikan, 2019; Kortegast ve Boisfontaine, 2015; Li ve Costa, 2022; Perry vd., 2012; Santoro ve Major, 2012; Vande Berg vd., 2012). Öğretmen eğitimcilerine bu konuda daha fazla yardımcı olmak adına, bu çalışmada, çok boyutlu ve çok katmanlı bir YDKSE müdahale çerçevesi (Şekil 6) önerdim. Bu çerçevede, bir YDKSE veya Erasmus deneyiminin farklı aşamalarına (hazırlık, geçici konaklama ve yeniden giriş) ve boyutlarına yayılan çeşitli odak veya giriş noktaları sundum. Çerçevede yer alan bu aşamaları, boyutları ve giriş noktalarını hedefleyerek ve YDKSE öğrencilerini yönlendirerek, (dil) öğretmen eğitimi programları, dolayısıyla, gelecekteki öğrencilerin dengeli ve dönüştürücü bir YDKSE deneyimi yaşamalarını sağlayabilirler. Öğretmen eğitimcilerinin bu doğrultuda daha somut adımlar atmasına yardımcı olmak amacıyla, bu bölümün geri kalan kısmında bazı araştırma ve uygulama önerileri sunacağım.

Analiz sonuçlarına, önerdiğim müdahale çerçevesine ve mevcut literatüre dayanarak (bkz. Arthur vd., 2020; Çiftçi ve Daloğlu, 2021; Goldoni, 2021; Holmes vd., 2016; Jackson, 2018a, 2018b; Jackson ve Oguro, 2018; Kortegast ve Boisfontaine, 2015; Larsen ve Searle, 2017; Plews ve Misfeldt, 2018; Vande Berg vd., 2012), ilk olarak, İngilizce öğretmen eğitimi programlarının iş birlikleri geliştirmelerini ve YDKSE öğrencilerine teorik ve deneysel öğrenme fırsatları (örneğin, dersler, seminerler ve programlar) sunmalarını öneriyorum. Bu tür iş birlikleri ve müdahaleler aracılığıyla, öğretmen eğitimi programları, İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının bağlantılı, dönüştürücü, eleştirel ve tutarlı bir YDKSE dönemi geçirmelerini teşvik edebilirler. Böylece,

İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının, YDKSE kapsamında, eleştirel kozmopolitlik ve sosyal adalet gibi konularda derin anlayışlar geliştirmelerine yardımcı olabilirler (Clarke ve Morgan, 2011; Gao, 2019; Gray, 2019; Gray ve Block, 2012; Hawkins ve Norton, 2009; Johnson ve Golombek, 2020; Kubanyiova ve Crookes, 2016; Nguyen, 2019; Ortaçtepe Hart ve Martel, 2020).

Öğretmen eğitimcileri, YDKSE inşalarına müdahaleler yoluyla, YDKSE adaylarını yurt dışında eğitimin neoliberal çerçeveleri üzerinde düşünmeye de teşvik edebilirler. Örneğin, öğrencileri YDKSE programlarına başvuru amaçlarını gözden geçirmeye davet edebilirler. Böylece, öğrenciler, eğer varsa, tüketimsel ve araçsal güdülerini fark edebilir ve yurt dışında eğitim almanın eleştirel ve dönüştürücü boyutlarından yararlanma konusunda belirli planlar ve stratejiler tasavvur edebilirler.

Bu çalışmada yer alan katılımcıların YDKSE dönemi için net mesleki hedefler belirlemediklerinden yola çıkarak, öğretmen eğitimcilerine, YDKSE müdahaleleri kapsamında, İngilizce öğretmen adaylarına bu tür hedefler geliştirmeleri yönünde de yardımcı olmalarını öneriyorum. Öğretmen eğitimcileri, örneğin, YDKSE deneyimleri ile kültürel, dilsel ve sosyal olarak duyarlı dil eğitimi arasındaki olası bağlantıları ortaya koyup İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının bu doğrultuda hedefler geliştirmelerine yardımcı olabilirler. Öğrencileri YDKSE amaçlarını incelemeye ve bu tür mesleki bağlantıları tasavvur etmeye yönlendirirken, bir yandan da öğrencilerden somut akademik hedefler içeren bir YDKSE öğrenme planı tasarımlarını da isteyebilirler. Aslında, İngilizce öğretmen eğitimi programları arasında olası YDKSE iş birlikleri bu konuda da öğrencilere önemli katkılar sağlayabilir. Yani, yakın ve sürdürülebilir bir iş birliği yoluyla, İngilizce öğretmen eğitimi programları, YDKSE öğrencilerinin bağlantılı, tutarlı ve verimli bir akademik deneyim elde etmelerini de sağlayabilirler.

Yine öğretmen eğitimi programları tarafından yürütülen ortak çabalar sayesinde, İngilizce öğretmen adayları YDKSE bağlamında okul deneyimleri kazanabilir ve mesleki dağarcıklarını deneyimsel olarak da geliştirebilirler (örneğin, Abraham ve von Brömssen, 2018; Kabilan, 2013; Karaman ve Tochon, 2007; Larsen ve Searle, 2017; Lee, 2011; Mesker vd., 2018; Parmigiani vd., 2021; Yang, 2011). YDKSE öğrencileri, okul deneyimleri aracılığıyla, yerel topluluklarla yakın temas kurma şansına da

erişebilirler. Bu tür olası yerel etkileşimler sayesinde, buldukları ülkenin eğitim, sosyoekonomik ve sosyopolitik sorunlarını keşfedebilir ve olası çözümler konusunda yerel topluluklarla birlikte çalışma imkânları elde edebilirler (Goldoni, 2021; Reilly ve Senders, 2009).

İngilizce öğretmenliği programları arasındaki iş birliklerinin yanı sıra, öğretmen eğitimi programları ve yerel öğrenci toplulukları arasında da, YDKSE kapsamında, iş birlikleri kurulmasını öneriyorum. Bu tür iş birlikleri YDKSE öğrencilerinin yurt dışında sivil faaliyetlerde bulunmaları konusunda faydalar sağlayabilir ve böylece öğrencilerin yerel tarih, politika, sosyoekonomik örüntüler, çeşitlilikler, gelişmeler vb. hakkında kapsamlı bilgiler ve deneyimler edinmeleriyle sonuçlanabilir. Yani, yurt dışındaki yerel öğrenci topluluklarına katılımları sayesinde, İngilizce öğretmen adayları öğrenim (ya da dönüşüm) süreçlerini güçlü okul dışı deneyimlerle destekleyebilirler.

Öğrenciler bağlı buldukları İngilizce öğretmen eğitimi bağlamına geri döndüklerinde de eleştirel, kültürel, dilsel ve sosyal olarak gelişimlerini sürdürebilecekleri fırsatlarla karşılaşabilirler. Yine programlar arasında olası bir iş birliği yoluyla, öğretmen eğitimcileri, örneğin, YDKSE mezunlarının YDKSE deneyimlerini paylaşmalarını ve tartışmalarını sağlayacak yeniden giriş dersleri, seminerleri ve programları tasarlayabilirler. Bu tür öğrenme ortamları aracılığıyla, öğretmen eğitimcileri, öğrencilerin YDKSE deneyimlerini kendi mesleki gelişimleri, hayali gelecekleri ve dünya görüşleriyle ilişkilendirmelerine de yardımcı olabilirler. Ayrıca, öğrencilerin, YDKSE mezunları arasında oldukça yaygın olan rekabet, istihdam edilebilirlik ve öz-yönetim gibi neoliberal söylemler üzerine eleştirel bir şekilde düşüncelerini sağlayabilirler (Cuzzocrea ve Krzaklewska, 2022; Moreno, 2021; Prazeres, 2019; Yoon, 2014).

Doğrusu, geleceğe yönelik bu tür müdahaleler ve yönlendirmeler sayesinde, İngilizce öğretmen adayları, gelecekteki mesleki kararlarında ve eylemlerinde sosyal açılardan daha duyarlı olabilirler. Diğer bir ifadeyle, eleştirel düşünme becerileri ve eğilimleri geliştirmelerinin bir sonucu olarak, kendilerine özgecil ve içsel tatmin sunabilecek (mesleki) gelecek planları ve eylemleri tasarlayıp uygulayabilirler. Yani, yalnızca

kişisel çıkarlara ve ekonomik boyutlara odaklanmak yerine, öğretmenlik mesleğinin ahlaki, entelektüel ve toplumsal boyutlarını da dikkate alarak, daha bilinçli seçimler yapabilir ve eylemler üstlenebilirler. Böylece, muhtemel hizmet içi öğretmenlik deneyimlerinde sosyal adalet konularına duyarlı olabilir ve her öğrencinin İngilizce becerileri geliştirmesini sağlayabilirler. Aynı zamanda, öğrencilerin kozmopolitlik, toplumsal hassasiyet ve sivil katılım gibi bakış açıları geliştirmelerine yardımcı olabilirler.

Bu çalışmada yer alan bütün bu önerilerden yola çıkarak ve mümkünse bunları uygulayarak, İngilizce öğretmen eğitimi programları, öğretmen adaylarının YDKSE söylemlerinde ve deneyimlerinde var olması muhtemel neoliberal örüntüleri belirlemeye ve bunlara direnme üzerinde çalışmaya devam edebilirler. Araştırmacılar, hem mikro hem de makro faktörleri hedefleyen araştırma projelerinde, çeşitli sayıda ve biçimlerde veri kaynaklarından (örneğin, görüşmeler, belgeler, gözlemler, görseller, sosyal medya gönderileri ve videolar) yararlanabilirler. Nihayetinde, bu tür çok katmanlı, çok boyutlu ve çok kipli araştırmalar aracılığıyla, İngilizce öğretmen adaylarına sunulan YDKSE programlarında bulunan *ortak duyu* ve *iyi duyu* unsurlarının karmaşık bir resmine erişmemizi mümkün kılabilirler. Bu konuda zamanla biriken bilgi ve deneyimler, *iyi duyu* unsurlarını teşvik etme ve büyütme konusunda daha güçlü ve bağlamsallaştırılmış müdahale yöntemleri tasarlamamıza da yardımcı olabilir.

Ayrıca, bir YDKSE deneyiminin ve buna eşlik eden olası müdahalelerin etkileri hemen ortaya çıkmayabilir (Arthur vd., 2020; Chiocca, 2021; Hauerwas vd., 2017; Larsen ve Searle, 2017; Paige vd., 2009). Bu nedenle, İngilizce öğretmen eğitimi bağlamındaki gelecekteki araştırmalar, çok boyutlu ve çok zamanlı araştırma desenleri benimsemeli ve YDKSE'yi yalıtılmış, kısa ömürlü bir deneyim olarak ele almaktan imtina etmelidir. Olası boylamsal (longitudinal) çalışmalar, 3 yıl, 5 yıl, 10 yıl gibi belirli kilometre taşları üzerinden, YDKSE mezunlarının mesleki yörüngelerine ve deneyimlerine odaklanabilir. Bu şekilde, mezunların uzun vadede öğretmenlik kimliklerini ve uygulamalarını nasıl yapılandırdıklarını takip etmek ve YDKSE deneyimlerinin mezunların (mesleki) yaşamlarını uzun vadede nasıl etkilediğini anlamak mümkün olabilir. Araştırmacılar, yine boylamsal çalışmalar aracılığıyla,



öğretmen eğitimi sırasında (varsa) uygulanan müdahale çabalarının mezunların sonraki yaşamlarında nasıl etkiler bıraktığını da gözlemleyebilirler. Öğretmen eğitimcileri, bu tür gözlemler doğrultusunda, mevcut müdahale çerçevelerini ve uygulamalarını gözden geçirebilir veya iyileştirebilirler.

Son olarak, bu çalışmanın YDKSE programlarının nasıl anlamlandırıldığı ve deneyimlendiği konusunda İngilizce öğretmen eğitimi araştırmalarında eleştirel ve dönüştürücü gündemleri ateşleyeceğini umuyorum. Yine bu çalışmanın, YDKSE programlarında bulunan *iyi duyu* boyutlarını teşvik etme ve büyütme konusunda öğretmen eğitimcilerine yardımcı olacağını ümit ediyorum. Diğer bir deyişle, sosyal adalet ve kamu yararı gibi söylemlerin aşırı tüketimcilik ve rekabetçi bireysellik gibi söylemlerin üstünde tutulduğu YDKSE inşalarının İngilizce öğretmen eğitimi bağlamlarında öne çıkarılacağı beklentisi içerisindeyim. Böylece, zaman içerisinde, İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının indirgeyici neoliberal öznelliklerden uzaklaşmaları ve karmaşık düşünebilen, topluma duyarlı, adil ve şefkatli bireylere dönüşmeleri mümkün olabilir. Doğrusu, mevcut eşitsizlikler, yoksunluklar, yoksulluklar ve diğer başlıca küresel sorunlar (örneğin, iklim değişikliği ve çevresel bozulma) karşısında böyle bir dönüşüme acil bir ihtiyaç duymaktayız.

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**TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce / English):** NEOLIBERAL COMMON SENSE AND SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD: A CRITICAL QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO PROSPECTIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' DISCOURSES AND EXPERIENCES

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