THE EFFECTS OF TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS ON PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' IDENTITY FORMATION: A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARATIVE STUDY*

Mehmet TUNAZ [a1], Arif SARIÇOBAN [b]

a Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, The School of Foreign Languages, Nevşehir, Turkey
b Selçuk University, Faculty of Letters, Konya, Turkey

Abstract

This study attempted to examine how different teacher education programs affect the identity perception of future language teachers. This qualitative research used a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical lens informed by Engeström's activity theory to compare English language teacher education programs in Turkey and Finland. Initially, language teacher education programs in Turkey and Finland were subjected to document analysis at curricular base according to the curriculum comparison model of Adamson and Morris (2014) under four components of curriculum: language and linguistic components, literary and culture components, pedagogical components, and practicum component. Then, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and field notes were applied to investigate the professional identity perception of pre-service language teachers in both Finland and Turkey. The comparison of curricula revealed a number of theoretical and structural variations. Comparison of identity perceptions, on the other hand, revealed that there were five main differences stemming from differences in teacher education programs, which were explained as dilemmas. Depending on the results, the research suggested that (1) Finnish and other European teacher education systems might be adapted to provide language teachers in Turkey with MA degrees, (2) universities in Turkey may apply aptitude tests to the applicants considering the total number of applicants, and (3) as future educators, pre-service language teachers should have access to resources to help them map out a professional path that aligns with their values and goals.

Keywords: Comparative education; teacher Identity; teacher education, curriculum

[1]Corresponding author: Mehmet TUNAZ. ORCID ID.: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1401-5073
E-mail: mehmet.tunaz@nevsehir.edu.tr

1.   Introduction

There is a close link between in-service teacher development and pre-service teacher education. Teacher education is one of the primary variables that assist teachers establish their teaching identities. Despite the discussion for a globalized teacher education program, teacher education is mostly site-specific and may not operate in the same manner for many cultural settings. Therefore, understanding the establishment of teachers' distinct teaching identities may highlight the influence of culture and teacher education programs on the process of teacher identity formation. However, research on identity, particularly that of pre-service language teachers, is a relatively new phenomenon in the academic literature; that is, the propensity to investigate teachers' identity development as a distinct study subject has emerged only in the past two decades (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004).

Evidently, teacher quality has direct effects on the learning process, highlighting the need of teacher education programs (Rothstein, 2010; Harris & Sass, 2011). As cited by Chan (2014), Velez-Rendon (2006) stated about language teacher education that the opinions of pre-service language teachers and the influence of contextual variables on their professional growth need more study. According to Freeman and Richard (1996), the topics that need more investigation include how language instructors see their work, how they create their knowledge of language teaching, and how formal teacher education and informal procedures influence their knowledge and thought processes. Similarly, Simola (2007) stressed the importance of excellent teachers and teacher education programs as the main sources of success in PISA scores.

Understanding similarities and variations between teachers' views of teacher education programs in multiple cultural contexts may thus give crucial information regarding the effects of programs on the construction of teachers' identities in various circumstances. Most successful practices from high-education systems are dependent on the implementation context (Hwa, 2022). The current study, therefore, aims to (a) reveal a detailed comparison of teacher education programs and their implementation processes in different cultural contexts, and (b) investigate the identity formation and re-formation of pre-service EFL teachers growing professionally in different cultural contexts (Turkey and Finland). Therefore, this research compare and contrast Turkish and Finnish teacher education programs at state universities in terms of language and linguistic components, literary and cultural components, pedagogical components, and practicum component. The research also examines the viewpoints of Turkish and Finnish pre-service English language teachers to expose the influence of English language teaching programs in various cultural contexts on the formation of the identities of pre-service language teachers.

Teacher identity has been repeatedly specified as an effective aspect of teachers´ initial preparation and further development (Tsui, 2001; Yazan, 2014), although many scholars have agreed upon the fact that it has been neglected and untheorized as a domain of inquiry (Miller,

2009). There has been even less attention to the relationship between teacher education and teacher identity. Learning process is deeply affected by the teacher quality, which is also interrelated to the quality of teacher education program (Rothstein, 2010; Harris & Sass, 2011), where prospective teachers gain their primary experience and construct their teacher identities as professionals. Hence, understanding similarities and differences between teachers' perceptions of teacher education programs in diverse cultural settings might provide essential information about the impacts of programs on teachers' identity formation and perceptions in different contexts. In turn, such a comparison ideally might provide a guideline and self-evaluation for both sides. Therefore, this study intended to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences between Turkish and Finnish English language teacher education programs at state universities in terms of (a) language and linguistic components, (b) literary and culture components, (c) pedagogical components, and (d) practicum component?

2. What are the similarities and differences between Turkish and Finnish pre-service EFL teachers' experiences of teacher identity formation in different teacher education programs?

3. What do the perspectives of Turkish and Finnish pre-service EFL teachers reveal about the effects of teacher education program on their teacher identity formation?

1.1.   *Defining teacher identity*

The operational definitions of professional teacher identity have adopted a postmodernist stance, mirroring the characteristics of teachers, and have emphasized that the formation of professional teacher identity is an ongoing and fluid process between the personal and professional aspects of one's self (Lee, 2016). Adapted from Lee (2016), Table 1 summarizes how several authors have conceptualized the identity of a professional educator.

Table 1. Definitions of Teacher Professional Identity (TPI), adapted from Lee (2016)

Author(s)	Definitions of TPI
Beijaard et al. (2004)	Who I am at this moment – an ongoing process resulting in sub-identities and involving individual agency in different contexts but also answers the question 'Who do I want to become?'.
Sachs (2005, p. 8)	"The way that people understand their own individual experience and how they act and identify with various groups"
Lasky (2005, p. 901)	"Teacher professional identity is how teachers define themselves to themselves and to others. Political and social contexts mediate teacher identity."
Mann and Tang (2012)	The way they see themselves as teachers (self- identification) as well as on their teaching and learning.
Pennington (2015,p. 17)	"a construct, mental image or model of what 'being a teacher' means that guides teachers' practices as they aim to enact 'being a teacher' through specific 'acts of teacher identity'."

Considering all these definitions of teacher identities, this research defines teacher identity as follow: 'teacher identity is the dynamic construct of being a certain kind of English teacher changing over time and in different context due to the interaction between personal experiences, and the social, cultural, and institutional environment'.

1.2.   Research on teacher education and teacher identity

On a quest to understand teacher identity development of 'student teachers/ pre-service teachers/ prospective teachers' several studies have been carried out to 'help those involved in designing and conducting teacher education programmes with decision making about how to develop and implement programmes so as to help student teachers go through a productive process of constructing their professional identities' (Izadinia, 2013, pp. 695- 696). Izadinia (2013) grouped previous articles related to pre-service teachers' identity formation under four categories according to their main focuses: reflective activities, learning communities, role of context, and (prior) experiences.

Reflective activities include drawings, reflective journals, portfolios, autobiographical stories/ narratives, video reflection circles, interviews, classroom discussions and forums as main data collection tools. Related studies (e.g., Cattley, 2007; Vavrus, 2009; Chitpin and Simon, 2009; Sutherland, Howard & Markauskaite., 2010) indicated that involving reflective activities in teacher education programs brings about changes in pre-service teachers' self-knowledge, cognitive and emotional selves, sense of agency, voice, confidence as a teacher and self- dependency. However, none of these studies mentioned negative outcomes of reflective practices or challenges of identity formation process.

Learning communities is the very initial contexts where student teachers develop their identities in collaboration with others and through activities in that learning community. According to Wenger (1998), student teachers form their identities involving as an active member of community of practice. As Izadinia (2013) argues, studies on student teachers' identity development and their involvement in learning communities stress the significance of collaboration and reflection and their impact on student teachers' identity formation (Seidl and Conley, 2009; Farnsworth, 2010). Similarly, context refers to the social settings where student teachers collaborate with others and develop their professional identity. Several studies revealed the importance of contextual factors and their impact on student teachers' professional identity formation. For instance, Larson and Philips (2005), and Findlay (2006) stressed the term 'tension' that occurred during the student teachers' teaching experience and the tension is to some extend due to the contextual factors. As the final focus, (Prior) experiences are found to be significant for teacher education programs since these experiences involve student teachers' values, beliefs, prior learning and experiences they bring with them into teacher education program, and they play important role in shaping classroom practices and identity (Izadinia, 2013).

As a result of her review of 29 relevant studies, Izadinia (2013) argued positive and negative changes observed in pre-service teachers' perception and response to the teacher training

program. Figure 1 indicates the graphical summary of Izadinia's (2013) summary related to components of student teachers' identity construction in previous studies.

Figure 1. Izadinia's (2013) review of student teachers' identity construction components
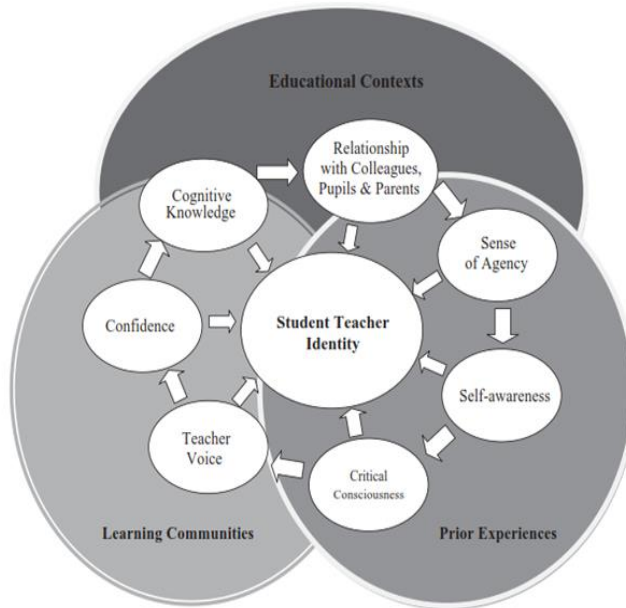
1.3.   Research on pre-service EFL teachers' professional identity

Pre-service teachers' identity has been investigated widely parallel to the promptly increasing research in the field of language teacher identity. Clarke (2008) conducted a longitudinal study in the United Arab Emirates to investigate student teachers' identity construction. Clarke (2008) deduced that pre-service teachers' identity is formed on interrelated factors such as their belief system and their sense of community, and suggested that internalization of learning to teach as new identity by student teachers, strength of the community they belong to, and strength of their beliefs are inherently related. In another study, Dang (2013) investigated 50 pre-service EFL teachers' identity development in Vietnamese teacher education context. Two student teachers were included in the study, and their professional development in the same practicum was interpreted with Vygotskyan sociocultural theory and activity theory through interview transcripts, individual semi-structured interviews, recorded video of student teaching, field notes, and artifacts related to practicum. Dang (2013) concluded that student teachers can develop qualitative teacher identities as a result of resolving conflicts constructively though planned and supervised collaboration.

A relatively recent study carried out by Riyanti (2017) focused on English as foreign language pre-service teachers and their identity development in the process of learning to teach both in a

microteaching class and teaching practicum in Indonesia. The research aimed to understand how university and school contexts contribute to the identity development of pre-service EFL teachers by lensing sociocultural theory integrating activity theory and positioning theory emphasizing discursive positionality as a framework. As a result of the analysis of data obtained from classroom observations, in-depth interviews, university instructors, a focus group discussion, classroom artifacts and pedagogical documents, pre-service EFL teachers' identities evolved from disciplined to more flexible as they finished practical applications in two sites.

2.   Method

2.1.   *Research design*

Qualitative research methodologies have dramatically gained importance as modes of inquiry for the social sciences and applied fields (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Unlike quantitative research, which utilizes numerical data to describe, explain, or predict phenomena to reach generalizable results using statistical routines, qualitative research employs non-numerical data such as narratives, interviews, or focus group (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2011). Considering the human behavior which 'cannot be understood without reference to the meanings and purposes attached by humans to their activity' (Park, 2014, p. 52), quantitative research might be inefficient to investigate identity formation process. As cited in Park (2014, p. 54), according to Rossman and Rallis (2003), 'qualitative research is typically enacted in naturalistic settings, draws on multiple methods that respect the humanity of the participants in the study, focuses on the context, is emergent and evolving, and fundamentally interpretive.' In this vein, teacher identity requires to be handled in a qualitative manner in a natural setting, using descriptive data, focusing on the process rather than outcomes or products, and primarily focusing on participants' perspectives. Regarding these characteristics of qualitative method, it is the one to comply best with the goals of this research to understand the process of pre-service teacher identity formation and development as it gives researcher to take part directly in the setting and interact with the participants.

As for the comparison of curricula, governments undertake curricula comparison to benefit from other models and take part in international competitiveness; parents compare to decide proper institutions for their children; and students decide elective courses upon investigating the range of available courses in curricula (Adamson & Morris, 2014). Whether by a student to decide on a course in an implicit manner or by a researcher to investigate to evaluate, interpret or criticize, curriculum comparison is a common case in education. Figure 2 indicates a framework for shaping comparative curricular inquiry, and has three dimensions: purpose and

perspective, curriculum focus, and manifestation. Each part of the triangle is interlinked to one another. The purpose implies the adoption of a perspective and the questions that the researcher aims to find answers which would bring out an aspect or component of the curriculum as a focal point. The researcher would then collect the data from the related curricular manifestations such as documents or behaviors. This study approaches comparison of curricula according to this framework offered by Adamson and Morris (2014, p. 316).
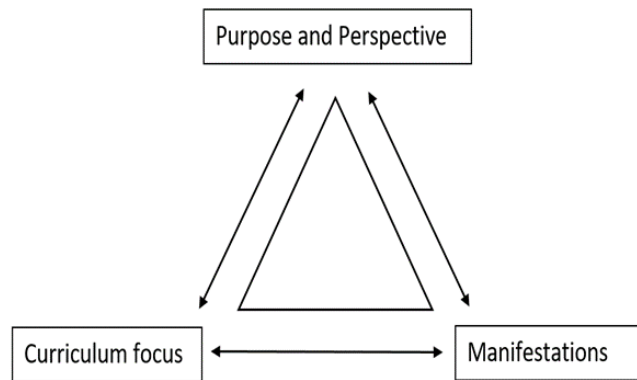

Figure 2. A framework for comparing curricula (Adamson & Morris, 2014)

2.2.   *Participants*

The participants included in this study consisted of two groups of six pre-service language teachers enrolled in English language teaching programs in Finland and Turkey. Since the aim of this research is to investigate the possible influence of program and curriculum on identity perception of student teachers, the participants were selected purposefully according to criterion sampling. The criteria included being in the final year of language teacher education program, and passing all the previous courses successfully. In order to be qualified to work as an English teacher, students in Finland must hold at least Master's degree while Bachelor's degree is enough for the same purpose in Turkey. Therefore, final year to become a language teacher in Finland is the last year of Master's degree, namely 5th year (3-year Bachelor's + 2-year Master's). Final year of education to become a teacher in Turkey, on the other hand, is the 4th year, namely the last year of Bachelor's degree. Since the participants were over 18 years old, family consent was not required, but participants were asked for their consent for being interviewed and observed. The participants in both Turkish and Finnish contexts were first limited with the criteria of being in the final year of teacher education, and then randomly chosen from the students who were willing to participate in interviews, discussions and observation

sessions. Due to the nature of qualitative research, it was important to include participants who would reluctantly speak about their teacher identity perception and how they assumed to be affected in professional means from the program they were enrolled in. Table 2 below indicates the participants' list. Only first names were given for each participants as they might be hesitant to share their full names.

Table 2. Demographic profiles of participants

Participant	Ethnicity	gender	age	First language	year
Reeta	Finnish	Female	25	Finnish	5th
Elina	Finnish	Female	25	Finnish	5th
Elisa	Finnish	Female	26	Finnish / Swedish	5th
Hanna	Finnish	Female	26	Finnish	5th
Sami	Finnish	Male	25	Finnish	5th
Mikko	Finnish	Male	25	Finnish	5th
Evren	Turkish	Male	22	Turkish	4th
Hasan	Turkish	Male	22	Turkish	4th
Kadir	Turkish	Male	23	Turkish	4th
Esra	Turkish	Female	22	Turkish	4th
Nergis	Turkish	Female	24	Turkish	4th
Çağla	Turkish	Female	22	Turkish	4th

2.3. Data collection procedure and instruments

The data for this research was collected during the 2018-2019 academic year, after getting approval for the research from the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) and from University of Jyväskylä in Finland. This research employed semi-structured interviews, focus groups discussions, practicum observations and teacher education curricula as data collection instruments. Using more than one data collection method is considered to be crucial especially in qualitative research so as to prevent any possible bias underlying under any data collection instruments. According to Creswell and Miller (2000), triangulation refers to the application and combination of several research methods in a study focusing on the same phenomenon. This combination helps the researcher overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases stemming from single method, single-researcher, or single theory. Figure 3 below shows the triangulation of data collection in the current research.
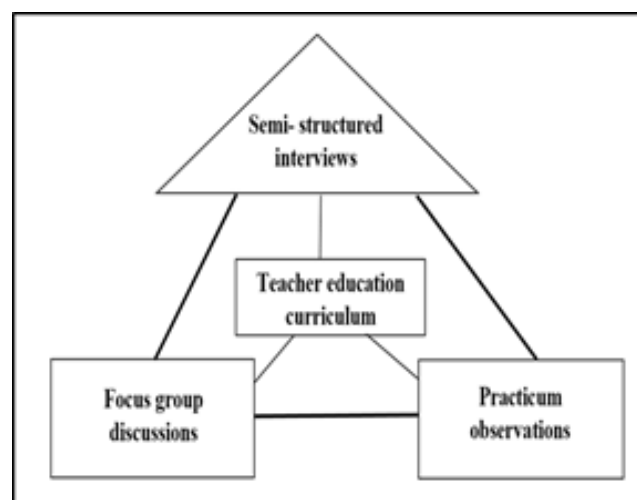
Figure 3. Triangulation of data collection

2.4.   *Data analysis*

Parallel to the purpose of this research, the data was analyzed in three steps. First step included the comparison of the teacher education curricula used in Turkey and Finland according to their language and linguistic components, literary and culture components, pedagogical components, and practicum component. Since teacher education curricula constitute an activity system for pre-service teachers, identifying the related activity systems was crucial for this research. As the second step of data analysis, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and field notes were transcribed to apply content analysis. Coding and thematic categorization process were utilized to determine main themes and sub-themes during the content analysis. As the final step, the data obtained from the participants were associated and interpreted according to

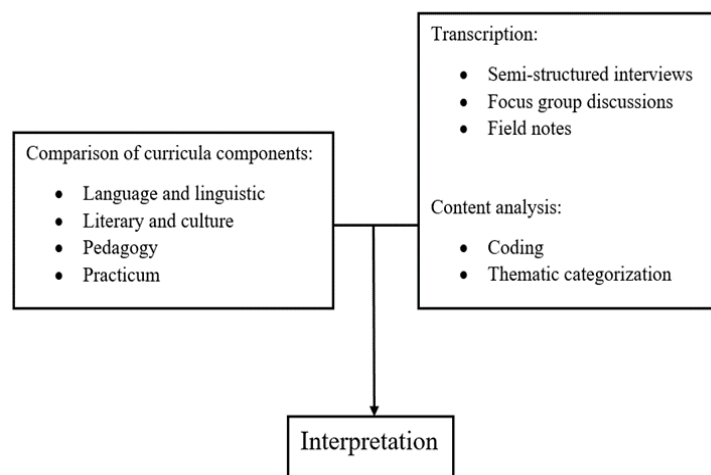sociocultural theory, and activity theory. Figure 4 indicates the data analysis process of this research.

Figure 4. Data analysis process

3.   Results

3.1.   *Results of curricular document analysis*

As the first data analysis part of this research, language teacher education curriculum utilized in University of Jyväskylä, Finland, and Nevşehir University, Turkey, were subjected to document analysis according to curriculum analysis framework offered by Adamson & Morris (2014, p. 316). In this vein, the purposes and perspective of general curriculum and individual courses in the curriculum were investigated and categorized under four main curriculum foci: language and linguistic, literary and culture, pedagogy, and practicum.

3.1.1.   *Language and linguistic components*

As the first main component of language teacher education curriculum, language and linguistic properties of the courses are analyzed according to two criteria - contents of the courses and definitions of the courses mentioned in the curricula. As a result of the analysis of courses according to their purposes and application procedure, it was found that 39 courses in

the curriculum applied by University of Jyväskylä are directly related to language and linguistic properties as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3. Courses referring to language and linguistic component (Finland)

● Introduction to Language and its Research	● English in Finland
● Pronunciation and Oral Skills	● Literacy in Contemporary Society
● Academic Writing	● Sociolinguistics 1
● Introduction to Language Study	● Sociolinguistics 2
● Practical Grammar	● Media in Britain
● Exploring Grammar	● English as a World Language: Past, Present, and Future
● Discourse and Literacy	● Residence in an English-speaking Country
● The Story of English	● Reading and Writing in a Foreign Language
● Research Writing	● Learning Disorders from the Perspective of SLA
● Three Genres	● Genres in Writing
● Creative Writing	● Tutoring Writing
● Business Writing	● English for Professional Life
● Language and Discourse in the Media	● Language and the Mind
● Oral Communication	● Language and Social Media
● Grammar in Use	● Redefining Language in the 21st Century
● Corpus Linguistics	● Bilingualism
● Semantics	● Pragmatics 2
● Pragmatics and Interactional Sociolinguistics	
● What is a Word	
● Pragmatics 1	

As for Turkey, the curriculum comprises 18 courses related language and linguistic aspects. Table 4 demonstrates the courses regarding language and linguistic contents of the curriculum applied in Turkey.

Table 4. Courses referring to language and linguistic component (Turkey)

● Reading Skills 1	● Reading Skills 2
● Listening and pronunciation 1	● Listening and pronunciation 2
● Verbal communication skills 1	● Verbal communication skills 2
● Writing skills 1	● Writing skills 2
● Linguistics 1	● Linguistics 2
● Translation (English – Turkish)	● Translation (Turkish – English)
● Structure of English language	● Comparative grammar of Turkish and English
● Language acquisition	● Advanced translation practices
● Discourse analysis	
● Semantics	

3.1.2. Literary and culture components

Regarding literary and culture focus, document analysis revealed that curriculum applied in Finland includes 14 courses based on literary and culture whereas there are seven courses under

this category in the curriculum applied in Turkey. The courses in both contexts are indicated in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Literary and culture related courses (Finland and Turkey)

Related courses in Finland	● Introduction to Literary Studies ● Literature in Classroom ● Literary Texts - Prose Fiction ● Literary Texts - Poetry ● Cultural History of the English-speaking World ● Classics Reading Circle ● American Novels ● Henry the Fifth and Macbeth: Two Studies in Leadership ● Contact Zones in English Fiction ● Cinematic Narratives of Identity, Difference and Diversity ● Shakespeare ● Multilingualism and Transcultural Practices ● American Novels ● English as a Global Language
Related courses in Turkey	● English Literature 1 ● English Literature 2 ● Literature and Language Teaching ● American Literature ● Scientific and Cultural Activities ● Language and Culture

3.1.3. Pedagogical components

Document analysis revealed that there are totally 33 pedagogy-based courses available at the University of Jyväskylä while the number of courses for the same category is 25 in Turkey. ELT candidates in Finland are responsible to decide and get a certain amount of pedagogical courses during both BA and MA programs. In Turkish context, these courses are prearranged by the faculty and students have to get these courses in a semester sequence during BA degree. As a whole, pedagogical courses make up an important part of the curricula in both contexts. The lists of courses in both curricula are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Pedagogy-based courses (Finland and Turkey)

Pedagogy-based courses in Finland	Pedagogy-based courses in Turkey
● Towards Language Teaching ● Introduction to Research in Language Learning and Teaching ● New Tools and Environments for Language Learning ● Introduction to Research ● Digital Games and Language Learning ● Designing Teaching Materials ● Tasks in Language Teaching ● Learning and Teaching Grammar and Vocabulary Oral Language Learning and Teaching ● Psychological Foundations of Education ● Sociological Foundations of Education ● Philosophical and Historical Foundations of Education ● Instructed Orientation Practice ● Introduction to Tutoring and Pedagogical Content Knowledge ● Education, Society and Change ● Constructing Scientific Knowledge: Teacher as Researcher ● Age and Language Learning ● Agency and Emotions in Language Learning and Teaching ● Current Issues in Language Teaching ● Language and Content Integration in Teaching ● Assessment of Language Proficiency Language Education Policy ● Project Work in Language Learning and Teaching Projects ● Applied Language Studies Now: Lecture Pass ● Formulaic Sequences in Language Use and Learning ● Teaching and Learning Vocabulary ● Multilingual Learning Environments ● Literature in the Classroom Vocabulary and Grammar in Foreign Language Classroom ● Assessing Reading and Writing ● Beyond Big Ben: Teaching English through Critical Cultural Content Teaching English for Social Justice ● Educational Administration Studies	● Education sociology ● Introduction to Education ● Education philosophy ● Education psychology ● Teaching of language skills 1 ● Teaching of language skills 2 ● Approaches and methods in Language teaching 1 ● Approaches and methods in Language teaching 2 ● Teaching principles and methods ● Scientific research methods ● Instructional technologies and teaching material design ● Teaching English to young learners 1 ● Teaching English to young learners 2 ● Literature and language teaching 1 ● Literature and language teaching 2 ● Special teaching methods 1 ● Special teaching methods 2 ● Classroom management ● Assessment and evaluation ● Educational counselling ● Material investigation and development in language teaching ● Turkish education system and school management ● Assessment and evaluation in language teaching ● Computer assisted language teaching ● Drama and language teaching

3.1.4. Practicum components

Curricular analysis revealed that the number of practicum courses in Finland is eight compared to the Turkish curriculum including two practicum-based courses. The list of practicum-based courses is indicated in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Practicum components of curricula in Finland and Turkey

Practicum related courses in Finland	• Pedagogical Practices in Classroom Interaction • Knowledge and Expertise: Orienteering and Teaching Practice (AIKO) • Knowledge and Expertise: Teaching Practice • Knowledge and Expertise: Orientation Training • Competence and Expertise: Guided Basic Practice • Knowledge and Expertise: Advanced Guided Practice • Competence and Expertise: Applied Guided Practice • Constructing Scientific Knowledge: Investigative Teaching
Practicum related courses in Turkey	• School observation • Practicum experience

3.1.5. *Results of interviews and focus group discussions*

As the second part of data analysis, audio-recordings of the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed by the researcher, and went through coding and thematic categorization with the purpose of content analysis. As a result of thematic categorization, dilemmas regarding the professional identity perception of pre-service language teachers were exposed as the main findings of interviews and focus group discussions. Professional identity development versus identity complication, experienced versus inexperienced, autonomous versus hesitant, professional satisfaction versus career anxiety, and mature versus too young teachers were the main dilemmas resulting from the participants' perceptions of professional identity.

Professional identity development vs. identity complication: Participants' views as for professional development showed that there might be two possibilities in the process of professional identity development as in other types of identities: development versus complication. Finnish pre-service language teachers stressed more often the importance of professional identity development. However, Turkish participants tended to focus on the identity complication. Turkish participants denoted that they were less aware of the need for professional development, reporting that the current teacher education program lacked the essential content to support their professional development. As an example to this finding, Hasan, a Turkish participant, uttered that:

> *Teacher education program in our university gives more importance to theoretical information rather than identity needs of the students. Even the pedagogical courses available in our program focus on the teacher appointment exam. This makes me believe*

> *that I am not well-aware of my professional identity development since our program has provided little or no opportunity for me to question my professional identity. In this vein, I think I am not clear about my teacher identity.*

On the other hand, Finnish participants commonly stressed the term "*professional identity*" and how to develop professionally in the process of becoming a teacher. Also, Finnish participants focused on the individual aspects of identity development, and attributed more responsibility to the students themselves.

Experienced vs. inexperienced pre-service language teachers: The participants were asked about their readiness to be appointed as an official language teacher. The findings revealed that Finnish pre-service language teachers described themselves as "quite experienced" teachers whereas Turkish participants stated their level of experience as "very low". One of the participants from Finland, Mikko, stated that:

> *I personally believe that I am quite experienced because I can handle a classroom if I must do it now after so many practices I did during the pedagogical applications. Indeed, I planned and conducted more than 50 separate courses at the teacher training school in front of our teacher trainers and I had many constructive feedbacks for these courses.*

Comparatively, Turkish participants stated that teaching practicum is very short and not efficient enough to provide essential feedback. Mentor teachers at placement schools were also criticized for not providing an effective role model.

Autonomous vs. hesitant pre-service language teachers: Student teachers from Finland expressed that they had a great deal of autonomy as a teacher ranging from finding their own jobs to reflecting their own teaching abilities to their classrooms. The statement of Reeta, a Finnish participant, illustrates the perspectives of Finnish participants about autonomy and professional identity:

> *Teachers in Finland have lots of freedom. Society respect and trust teachers as default; therefore, teachers try to do their best. This fact might load many responsibilities to teachers, but this is not discouraging for me, because I know I am the one who will decide for my teaching process. Though we have language course books, I will not even have to rely on them or follow them as long as I have a rationale behind my teaching practice.*

Participants from Turkey, however, identified themselves to be more hesitant and indecisive. Being dependent on a pre-determined curriculum and course books, and following an exam-aimed procedure in language teaching were mentioned as the most challenging obstacles in their future teacher autonomy. Another difference was associated with the experiences in foreign countries where English is the first language. Finnish participants correlated their autonomous-self to their university experience abroad since universities in Finland were stated to support and encourage pre-service language teachers to study at least one semester in an English speaking county.

Professional satisfaction vs. career anxiety: The findings indicated that Finnish participants tended to focus on their career satisfaction and had a positive outlook due to the social and financial status of the teaching profession in Finland, whereas Turkish participants emphasized the risk of becoming redundant after graduation and the diminishing social status of teachers in Turkey. Regarding this dilemma, the quotations from Hanna, a Finnish participant, might represent the common perceptions of Finnish participants:

> *I think the total income of a teacher in Finland is very satisfying. The government is already investing a huge sum of money in education. The teachers are usually happy with this, and therefore, I guess, they can focus on doing their best rather than thinking about economic concerns. In Finland, we don't have an exam to be appointed as a teacher. When I graduate, I can apply to many different schools for a position with my CV, and I guess, every teacher candidate can find a position because the government always needs language teachers somehow.*

Moreover, Finnish participants specifically mentioned two aspects of the teacher education program: growing up as autonomous teachers through self-determined career plans and attending seminars/orientations regularly. All the Finnish participants stated they attended a career planning seminar at some point during their college experience, and almost all types of elective courses were available for them.

As for the same concern in Turkish context, four out of six respondents stated their satisfaction with the salary as a language teacher. Consensus was reached that language teachers are assumed to be more prestigious, cultured, sociable and outgoing than the teachers of other subjects. However, Turkish participants particularly noted their feelings of dissatisfaction about the society's unfavorable views towards teachers and concern about obtaining a job after graduation. The following is how one of the Turkish participants expressed this worry:

I think, language teachers are assumed to be more extrovert and sociable than the teachers of other subjects at schools since language teachers are seen as the representatives of the target culture as well as the target language. However, currently teachers are not as respected as the way when I was at primary and secondary school. Furthermore, I don't find teacher salary satisfactory but I will feel pleased if I am appointed as soon as possible. This concern alone is enough to deprive me from becoming a happy teacher actually.

It was concluded that both Finnish and Turkish participants had some job aspirations, but with some notable distinctions. While the Turks were more concerned with post-college employment prospects, the Finns seemed more concerned with their own growth and contentment in their chosen fields when examining their professional concerns.

Age of becoming a teacher: mature vs. too young: Regarding their views about graduation age, the Finnish participants expressed that it was sensible and old-enough to graduate and start teaching at the age of 27. The Finnish participants were also asked to compare if they graduated and started teaching at the age of 23 like the Turkish participants. To give an example, Mikko, a Finnish participant, explained his comparison as below:

I think becoming a teacher at the age of 23 is very early. Personally, I would be immature at that age to start teaching. I believe that the right age of becoming a teacher is when we construct our own personality and identity. I believe becoming a too young teacher might lead the teachers to experience identity conflicts and other problems, and this might bring burdens to the students of that teacher. MA degree is a crucial process in the development of our professional-self. Therefore, I think I am pleased with our graduation age.

About the same issue, the participants from Turkey defined becoming a teacher at the age of 23 as a reasonable time for graduate students. When asked to comment about the starting age of Finnish teachers, Nergis explained her ideas as below:

I think becoming a teacher at the age of 23 is OK. I don't think MA degree should be compulsory for teachers to start their jobs, but teachers should be supported to get MA degree after they are appointed. Moreover, many teachers would have financial problems in Turkey if they started their job at the age of 27 like Finnish teachers. It is too late, and I think we can construct and develop our professional identity after getting our appointment as well.

Overall, the participants from both nations were satisfied with the present graduation ages in their respective systems for a variety of reasons. For Turkish participants to defend the early graduation age, economic expectations and the desire to obtain a job were the motivating factors. For Finnish participants, obtaining sufficient experience and developing psychological stability and self-assurance were the primary arguments in favor of a somewhat late graduation age for the teaching profession.

4.   Discussion and conclusion

4.1.   Comparison of curriculum components

With regards to the language and linguistics component of the curricula, Finland's curriculum offers more options than Turkey's. Finnish curricula were found to place a greater emphasis on language and linguistics-related subjects. In addition, the policy of sending Finnish pre-service teachers to countries where English is the official language was designed to boost the amount of English and other languages taught in Finnish schools. Curriculum in the fields of literature/culture and education were likewise more robust in Finland. Yet, the practical training requirements in Finland and Turkey stood out as the most dissimilar component of the two nations' respective curriculum. Throughout their undergraduate and graduate courses in Finland, students have several chances to get practical classroom experience. It is widely acknowledged that collaboration between universities and purpose-built teacher preparation institutes, whose faculty members are well-versed in both teacher education and supervision, is of paramount importance (Jyrhämä, 2006). On the other hand, there is a lack of opportunities to gain in-class experience before graduation in Turkey, which may influence the self-perception of pre-service language teachers. Using activity theory to the instance of curricular variation between Turkey and Finland can provide a clear picture of how the curricula could affect the identity conceptions of future language teachers. From a pedagogical stance, the activity system's subject would be the lecturers and mentors involved in the process of educating future teachers, while the system's object may be the future language teachers themselves. Within a system or instrument, which in this case is teacher education curricula, subjects engage in actions that enhance the teacher identities of objects. The 'division of labor' among the subjects, in this case teacher trainers and instructors at teacher education institutions, is vital to achieving the intended results from the activity process, as is using an instrument that is well-suited to those aims. As a possible instance of proposed usage of Engeström's activity theory, see Figure 5 below.
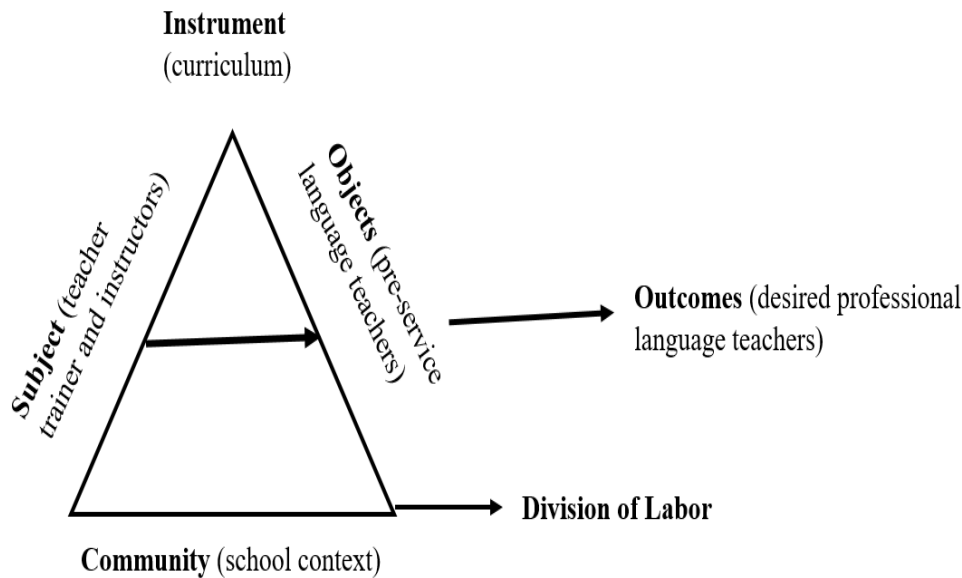
Figure 5. Application of activity theory to language teacher education process

According to activity theory, a curriculum that promotes more autonomy and identity development among pre-service teachers within a more demanding and constructive environment may be helpful. It is also clear that the division of work in the Turkish setting is inadequate. The Turkish situation illustrates the need for subject teachers at practicum schools to take a more active role in mentoring pre-service teachers and to have specialized knowledge of teacher education and training. According to the findings, the activity system in Finland is effective in developing the teachers' professional identities of future language educators. Therefore, activity theory's recommendation to strengthen the pre-service language teachers' sense of professional identity offers hope that Finland's research-based approach to teacher education can serve as a model for more difficult communities. Lim (2011), who investigated the development of teaching candidates' senses of self, had similar conclusions with the current study. Lim (2011) discovered that owing to their lack of teaching experience, undergraduate teachers were unable to connect the subject information they had gained via the teacher education program with their professional identities. Real-world teaching experiences and critical reflections, according to Lim (2011), strengthen educators' sense of professional identity.

4.2.   *Comparison of teacher identity formation processes*

Comparison of Turkish and Finnish teacher education programs via Adamson and Morris (2014) revealed significant constructional and practical variations in terms of aims and manifestation, resulting in distinct procedures for the pre-service teachers. Pre-service language instructors in Finland may benefit from this definition by learning more about their position and relationships, as well as being acquainted with their future potential, thanks to the autonomy offered by the self and the curricular alternatives they have. The issues identified in the data revealed that the identity development of Turkish pre-service language instructors was assumed

as a challenging method owing to a lack of enough practice, autonomy, professional satisfaction, and graduation maturity. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory was used as a theoretical lens to examine this instance to demonstrate potential causes for the identity conceptions. The Zone of Proximal Development, a concept central to sociocultural theory, provides a framework for analyzing and addressing issues at each of these stages (ZPD). Students operate alone at the lowest level or zone to complete tasks and solve issues using their present knowledge, whereas those at the next level require guidance, scaffolding, and social engagement to develop their skills to their fullest potential. On the surface, one's growth consists of skills that are beyond their reach even with the help of others. Thus, it is possible that the difficulties experienced by the Turkish participants in developing their professional identities are attributable to a lack of scaffolding, or assistance, provided to the pre-service teachers during their practicum experiences, thereby enhancing their exposure to and ability to work with actual students. Without enough support from teacher trainers and instructors, future language teachers in Turkey may not be able to meet the demands of ZPD and become fully autonomous in their work.

The teaching practicum procedure stands out as a major point of difference between the Turkish and Finnish teacher education systems. Based on the findings, it seems that the majority of aspiring language teachers in Turkey feel that their school's current practicum requirements are not sufficient to prepare them for their future careers. Therefore, it may be argued that the teaching practicum has a significant impact on the way future language instructors assume themselves. This finding supports previous research on the effect of teaching practicum on constructing teacher identity. The self-concept of future language teachers was also studied by Liu and Fisher (2006). Findings from their research showed that aspects like academics, institutions, curriculum, cognition, emotions, and social contexts all contributed to a more favorable view of student teachers' classroom performance and their own sense of teacher identity over time. Moreover, the results of the current study are consistent with those of Lamote and Engel (2010), who conducted a similar study in Belgium but focused on the influence of the practicum on the identities of future teachers. According to Lamote and Engel (2010), participants' perspectives on education and instruction were shaped by their internship and practicum experiences.

4.3.   Teacher education programs and language teachers' identity development

The content analysis revealed five dilemmas regarding the influence of teacher education programs on language teachers' identity formation. The first dilemma was identity development versus identity complication. It was found that the teacher education in Turkey causes identity complications for future Turkish language teachers. It was determined that the major causes of this problem are the theory- and exam-based education process and the general public's view of teachers. According to the results, the pre-service teachers in Turkey may have identity confusion due to the longitudinal nature of the teacher education program and the tests required to become a teacher. In this respect, sociocultural theory proposes that environment and social practice have a significant impact on the identity formation of people. As 'context' is comprised of the teacher education program in a limited sense and the society as a whole in a larger sense,

the attitudes and approaches of society towards teachers may have an effect on teachers' perceptions of their own identities. Similarly, Clarke (2008) concluded that teacher identity is built in relation to elements such as the pre-service teachers' belief system and their feeling of community. In studies done by Larson and Philips (2005), and Findlay (2006), the impact of context on identity formation was also emphasized via conflicts that may be exacerbated by contextual variables, which is corroborated by the results of the present study.

As for the dilemma related to experience, the high level of practice during teacher education process was found to be the main reason behind this difference between Turkey and Finland. To emphasize the significance of practicum in teacher education, Beeth and Adadan (2006) suggested that practicum may be seen as a chance for teacher candidates to apply teaching and learning theories in a real-world classroom setting. In this respect, the problem of experience in the Turkish instance is consistent with the results of Findlay (2006), who noted that teaching practicum reveals the contradiction between the expectations of pre-service teachers and the realities of school life.

The third dilemma was related to autonomy and confidence in teaching. The historical origins of teacher autonomy in Finland lie in the legislative changes enacted in the 1980s and 1990s. With the introduction of municipal curriculum, working educators began to participate in educational choices and design their own work (Laukkanen, 1995). As for the Turkish situation, the present study revealed that pre-service teachers have a hesitant sense of their identity. The notion of a predetermined curriculum and its rigid structure by pre-service teachers may be one of the reasons for the hesitancy in defining Turkish pre-service language teachers. This can be explained by Engeström's (1999) activity theory, which emphasizes the role of instruments in achieving desired outcomes.

The fourth dilemma was mainly related to job satisfaction and career anxiety. The disparity between the required number of language teachers and the number of students admitted to colleges may provide a challenge for the activity system – teacher education programs. Due to the amount of students and their anxiety perception, activity theory's division of labor can also be disrupted. As Lasky (2005) emphasized, the construction of a teacher's identity can be impacted by a variety of elements, such as personal dedication, individual beliefs, emotional well-being, and willingness, which may be impeded by fear.

The final dilemma resulted from the age of becoming a teacher in Turkey and Finland. Due to the difference between the graduation ages, the subject of teachers' maturity in their very first year of formal teaching emerged as a theme. Sachs (2005) defined teacher identity as the process through which individuals acknowledge their own unique experience and the manner in which they interact with diverse groups. Additionally, Barkhuizen (2017) stated, 'Language Teacher Identities (LTIs) are cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical – they are both inside the teacher and outside in the social material, and technological world…they are also accepted, acknowledged and valued, by self and other'. Considering this definition, it can be argued that teacher identity must develop via contact, experience, and cognitive growth. Therefore, the MA degree in Finland might give pre-service teachers with greater opportunity to engage, acquire experience, and grow professionally via demanding practicum.

4.4.   Implications of the study

Considering the difference in the educational requirements to become a teacher, Finnish student teachers must hold Master's degree after covering a 3-year BA degree. In Turkey, however, BA degree which lasts four years is required to become a teacher. This study suggests reorganizing the language teacher education program in Turkey similar to the one applied in Finland and also some other European countries. Accordingly, it can be suggested that graduating future teachers with MA degree would provide more confident future teachers. To achieve this, however, a deep structural and investigative procedure about the curriculum development and application should be initially realized.

In Finland, pre-service language teachers gain crucial experience by applying the teaching theories into practice and to get instant and constructive feedback on their practices from the experienced teacher trainers who work at teacher training schools as subject teachers. However, teaching practicum in Turkey was found to be less effective. Teaching practicum is carried out at normal state schools in Turkey, and subject teachers working at these schools are usually untrained to train student teachers or to give constructive and reflective feedback on their teaching practices. Teacher practicum is a controversial issue in Turkey and should be handled meticulously to support future teachers. In this regard, this study suggests organizing teacher training schools that employ expert teacher trainers as subject teachers instead of using state schools for practicum. This model is also expected to increase the collaboration between the teacher educators at education faculties and training schools so that practicum process would be prolific in all aspects.

Finally, this study found that selection of future teachers was influential for career planning and teacher identity perception of language teachers. However, student teachers in Turkey enroll in universities according to their results in the national student selection exam without an aptitude test. Hence, it might be suggested that the number of given quota for teacher education departments in Turkey should be planned in accordance with the demand for language teachers in the following years, and student teachers should be provided with the future career planning opportunities considering various features of teacher identity concept. Such an arrangement might be expected to decrease the anxiety stemming from unemployment concern.

4.5.   Limitations and suggestions

This research focused on the perceived teacher identity of the participants and therefore, it might be considered as restricted with 'identity as a language teacher' domain. Moreover, only the related aspects of the teacher education curricula were included in this dissertation, that is, extracurricular activities are excluded in the process due to the wide scope of the research.

As for the suggestions, this research included Finland and Turkey in order to investigate the possible influence of teacher education programs on teacher identity development. It is suggested that various comparative education researches might be carried out between Turkey and other educationally advanced countries in international rankings such as PISA. Moreover, similar comparative studies might be conducted with the other subject areas in order to attain a broader image of the teacher education programs.

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