



## **An Autoethnography of a Language Teacher Educator**

### **Wrestling With Ideologies and Identity Positions**

**Bedrettin Yazan**

#### **Abstract**

I write this autoethnography to narrate and analyze the important episodes in my life's history, learning and teaching English in my home country and preparing teachers to work with emergent bilinguals in the United States. I frame this autoethnography within the burgeoning strand of self-studies of language teacher education and the research on the education of preservice bi/multilingual teachers. I use language ideologies as a conceptual lens in my narrative to interpret my experiences negotiating identities as a language user, teacher, and teacher educator. I hope that this autoethnographic analysis of my experiences as an early-career transnational scholar will contribute to the conceptualization of the complex processes of teacher educator identity construction and resonate with other teacher educators who serve preservice bi/multilingual teachers.

#### **Introduction**

It is in our incompleteness, of which we are aware, that education as a permanent

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process is grounded. Women and men are capable of being educated only to the extent that they are capable of seeing themselves as unfinished. Education does not make us educable. It is our awareness of being unfinished that makes us educable. And the same awareness in which we are inserted makes us eternal seekers. (Freire, 1998, p. 58)

Situated in my incompleteness, this autoethnography has been an organic part of my efforts to inquire into my teacher education practices. The literature on the development of teacher educators (TEs) maintains that teacher education requires “purposeful commitment to a professional life,” which includes an enduring focus on understanding the preparation of teachers and an active engagement in research that investigates and orients the pedagogies of teacher education (Goodwin et al., 2014, p. 285). Although there is no formal preparation for TEs and pedagogy of teacher education, TEs are usually required to have prior experience as school teachers, a graduate education, and “a knowledge of teaching about teaching and a knowledge of learning about teaching and how the two influence one another” (Loughran, 2008, p. 1180). My research interest in teacher education has been influential in constructing this knowledge and made me conceptualize my practices as a TE inseparable from my research. Understanding the unique challenges of teaching teachers, I view investigating my own practices as an essential part of my development as a TE.

My interest in writing an autoethnography goes back to the time when I was searching for a teacher-learning tool that provides teacher candidates (TCs) the discursive and experiential space to understand, negotiate, and construct their teacher identities. This search relies on my exposure to earlier research on teacher identity, which implicated the need for including identity as an explicit focus in teacher education (Hoffman-Kipp, 2008; Hsieh, 2016; Olsen, 2008). Later on, when I was introduced to the methodology of autoethnography (Anderson, 2006; Canagarajah, 2012; Hughes, 2008; Hughes, Pennington, & Makris, 2012), I experimented with the idea of using it as a teacher-learning activity when I contributed to a volume on teaching English as an international language with a course assignment (Yazan, 2017). Language learning or literacy autobiographies have been established in the field already (Canagarajah, 2013a; Selvi & Martin-Beltrán, 2016), but I believe autoethnography can provide a novel lens for TCs and TEs to understand language teacher learning with a critical and social justice focus. The following year, I attempted to theorize and expand this idea as a programmatic component for TCs and called it *critical autoethnographic narrative* (Yazan, 2018c). In spring 2018, I changed all the assignments in my linguistics course and designed one semester-long assignment instead, to pilot the integration of autoethnography into my students’ teacher-learning experiences (Yazan, 2018b). As I read my students’ four installments of autoethnographic narratives and provided them with feedback, I was outlining the current autoethnography by taking notes about what my story would look like and how I would analyze my experiences.

## **Framing My Story in Prior Research**

### ***Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices***

I frame this autoethnography within the burgeoning strand of self-studies of language teacher education (Sharkey & Peercy, 2018), which specifically examine TEs' identities. Earlier work has highlighted the ongoing interaction between external (social, cultural, institutional) forces and individual meaning making and agency in constructing TE identities (Lunenberg & Hamilton, 2008). Therefore, as a multifaceted, subjective, and context-bound process, this construction involves a "constant interplay of constraint and enablement" (Trent, 2013, p. 264) and "personal and professional phenomena" (Dinkelman, 2011, p. 309) that are constantly negotiated. Previous studies focused on five broad aspects of TE identities. First, TEs' knowledge base has not been clearly delineated in the research literature. Goodwin et al. (2014) theorized this knowledge base by utilizing Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (1999) framework of teacher knowledge, that is, knowledges-for/in/of-practice. For TEs, *knowledge-for-practice* is what they learn in their graduate studies about teacher education pedagogies; *knowledge-in-practice* is their on-the-job learning experiences as they try out new practices and observe other TEs; *knowledge-of-practice* is what they learn as they conduct research on teacher education practices (Goodwin et al., 2014). The participating TEs in Goodwin et al.'s study did not have the learning experiences required to obtain these sets of knowledge for teacher education and reported that they were not prepared as TEs. The authors underscored that very little attention has been paid to TEs' knowledge base and competences.

Second, a wide variety of professionals are involved in preparing teachers, and these professionals would not necessarily identify as TEs. Then, the following questions emerge: Would teaching a course to TCs suffice to call an instructor a TE? Would that instructor claim a TE identity? Would internship supervisors be called TEs? This vagueness in the definition of a TE is one of the challenges that emerging TEs navigate as they construct their identities. This problem becomes exacerbated in programs that prepare teachers (e.g., MATESOL) outside colleges of education, because in such programs, the institutional role of TE might be absent in the discourse.

Third, many TEs want to keep their teacher identities for their legitimacy as teachers of TCs. They tend to construct their identities "through the lens of the ex-school teacher" (Loughran, 2006, p. 13) and position themselves as "still-a-school-teacher" who knows how public schools work (Boyd & Harris, 2010). These identity-maintenance efforts impact their aspirations and investments as an integral part of their TE identities.

Fourth, Lortie's (1975) concept of *apprenticeship of observation* is pertinent to TEs' growth, too. That is, TEs' earlier experiences as learners and teachers provide a basis with deeply entrenched beliefs and values about sound practices of learning,

teaching, and teacher learning (Goodwin et al., 2014). TEs rely on this basis as they negotiate and enact their practices and identities. Fifth, TE identity construction includes a struggle between “multiple and at times conflicting professional identities” (Williams, Ritter, & Bullock, 2012, p. 245) as they have to “balance multiple and often competing demands” (p. 251) in their professional context. Addressing these demands, they situationally negotiate and enact their identities as former teachers, university supervisors, faculty members, researchers, and TEs. Also, these identities are interwoven and cannot be conceptualized in isolation from others. For instance, their research interests and epistemological commitments as researchers could orient their decisions about where to channel their energies in educating TCs. Specifically, if TEs pursue research on teacher learning, there emerges a more intimate connection between their identities as researchers and TEs (Yazan, 2018b; Yuan, 2016; Zeichner, 2005). Framed within this strand of research on TEs, my story will build on previous discussions on TE identity. I hope that the autoethnographic narration and analysis of my experiences as an early-career transnational scholar will contribute to the conceptualization of the complex processes of TE identity construction and resonate with other transnational scholars.

### ***Teaching Future Teachers of Emergent Bilinguals***

Serving preservice teachers of emergent bilinguals (EBs), I also frame this autoethnography in the line of inquiry on the preparation of preservice teachers for bi/multilingual contexts. Language is a central component in every teaching setting, but it is specifically important in the classroom where language is both part of the content and the medium through which teachers deliver this content (Télez & Waxman, 2005). In the U.S. public school context, English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual programs include very complex dynamics regarding the use, learning, and teaching of languages particularly because of the monolingual ideologies that position English as the de facto language of instruction (de Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013). Scholars have researched the ways EBs rely on their language repertoires and translanguaging as they learn the curricular content, especially with the recent focus of the Common Core on developing literacy skills across content classes (Bunch, 2013). However, it is still a challenge to delineate and conceptualize the knowledge and preparation that teachers of EBs need to serve this linguistically and culturally diverse student population in varying political contexts (Télez & Waxman, 2005). Such a challenge led researchers to theorize *pedagogical language knowledge* (Bunch, 2013; Galguera, 2011), which builds on the approaches of systemic functional linguistics, critical language awareness, and sociocultural theory and extends Shulman’s (1987) concept of pedagogical content knowledge.

Another strand of research specifically focuses on bilingual teachers’ language competencies required to teach the content in a non-English (predominantly Spanish) language (Aquino-Sterling, 2016; Guerrero, 1997, 1999, 2003). Earlier stud-

ies found that TCs go through bilingual teacher education programs with almost no teacher-learning experience with an explicit goal to develop their “teacher-like” (Guerrero, 1997), “teaching-specific” (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2013), or pedagogical “language and literacy competencies” (Aquino-Sterling, 2016). Bilingual teachers are not prepared to present the content in non-English languages as competently as in English (Guerrero, 2003; Guerrero & Valadez, 2011). These issues in bilingual teacher preparation could lead to inequitable practices in EBs’ exposure to and learning of the curricular content in their dominant language, as well as their academic socialization and performance in the discourses of the two languages of instruction (Aquino-Sterling & Rodríguez-Valls, 2016; Guerrero, 1999; Guerrero & Lachance, 2018). Therefore, to provide EBs with more equitable educational opportunities, bilingual teachers’ development of pedagogical language competencies needs explicit attention in their teacher education courses (Aquino-Sterling & Rodríguez-Valls, 2016). Although these teachers might have acquired fluency in all aspects of the multiple languages of instruction, this fluency does not necessarily translate into successful pedagogical use of language in delivering the content.

Recently, Aquino-Sterling (2016) responded to this issue by relying on the approaches of content-based, task-based, and language for specific purposes and devised a bilingual teacher education course activity that explicitly supports TCs’ pedagogical Spanish competencies. Comprising three phases, this activity included planning, teaching, and a self-evaluation of teaching Spanish language arts to imaginary fifth-grade students. Right after teaching, TCs were peer-evaluated by classmates with a set of criteria focused on the teacher’s discursive moves and other instructional language used during the lesson. In the third phase, TCs audio-recorded the descriptions of their lessons and used the recordings for self- and peer-assessment purposes. Based on the implementation of this activity, Aquino-Sterling (2016) argued that such teacher education practices that promote bilingual teachers’ development of professionally relevant Spanish competencies should become more common and systematic.

The linguistic preparation of bilingual teachers intersects with ideological issues like being a “native” speaker and being professionally competent in the language (Swan, Aboshiha, & Holliday, 2015; Yazan & Rudolph, 2018). Teachers with “native” or “near-native” fluency in the language could be automatically assumed to be competent in using that language for pedagogical purposes when teaching content across the curricula. Such an assumption could be the reason why bilingual teacher education has not so far attended to linguistically preparing teachers (Aquino-Sterling & Rodríguez-Valls, 2016; Guerrero & Valadez, 2011). Therefore the current article discusses the ideological conflation of linguistic and professional identities and competencies through my stories as an English-language user and TE.

## **The Lenses in My Narration**

### ***Language Ideologies***

I used the concept of language ideologies to explicate the links between my identities and broad social structures in educational contexts. Language ideologies refer to both language beliefs and their enactment in everyday language practices. They are not only individuals' and groups' implicit and explicit "systematic ideas, cultural constructions, commonsense notions, and representations" (Gal, 1992, p. 445) but also "everyday practices in which such notions are enacted" (p. 445). Serving as a basis to rationalize or justify particular language uses and practices, language ideologies "envision and enact ties of language to identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology" (Woolard, 1998, p. 3). Because of such ties, language ideologies operate as the "mediating link" between individual language practices and social, historical, and institutional structures (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 61). This mediation involves the complex ways in which particular linguistic practices, uses, and features of language are assigned nonlinguistic values, utilities, preferences, and interests that are related to social power structures. That is, language ideologies underpin the processes of valorization, legitimization, standardization, and hierarchization in language contexts and concomitantly impact which identity options are positioned as desirable and valuable for language users and which ones are not (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).

Constructed both as beliefs and practices, language ideologies are prevalent in everyday language use, but language users are mostly unaware of these ideologies and their effects. Reflecting their language ideologies, "people in the context of everyday language use or 'praxis' reify, reproduce, and sustain hegemonic relations, in particular the supremacy of so-called standard languages in relation to other 'dialects' and variations" (Razfar, 2012, p. 66). If these people are (language) teachers, language ideologies become particularly important because schools are major discursive spaces for language socialization that shape students' beliefs about languages and language users (Henderson & Palmer, 2015; Nuñez & Espinoza, 2017). Both teachers and students are provided certain identity options and negotiate these options in schools. "When educators and students speak and write, they signal things not only about the subject matter they are learning but also about their affiliations with social groups both inside and outside the speech event" (Wortham, 2008, p. 39). As decision makers, teachers' language ideologies impact the ways they design instructional environments and tasks and interact with students and parents. Thereby, they convey to students numerous messages that assign nonlinguistic values to linguistic aspects of language, (de)legitimize certain language uses, and shape the construction of their language ideologies.

Considering the relationship between teachers' language ideologies and their classroom practices, bilingual teacher education could benefit from helping TCs externalize these ideologies, understand how they are constructed, explore how they

connect with the broad societal structures, and investigate their influence on teachers' identities and pedagogies (Palmer & Martínez, 2013). Because TCs understand the intricate ways language ideologies operate in day-to-day interactions, they can claim stronger ownership of and control over their teacher identity construction and agency. They can become cognizant that their teaching and teacher-learning experiences involve an ongoing negotiation of various identity positions tethered to and supported by competing ideologies in social domains. Teachers are not passive in their interaction with hegemonic language ideologies; relying on their identities, they can question, challenge, and subvert these ideologies (Palmer, 2018; Sánchez-Suzuki Colegrove & Zúñiga, 2018; Sexton, 2008).

In my research and teacher education practices, my ideological understanding of (non)nativeness led me to become more interested in the interplay between language ideologies and teacher identity. Although my initial focus was on the intersection of linguistic and professional identities, I expanded my conceptualization to understand teacher learning and practice through an identity lens. I view teacher identity as a “pedagogical tool” as well as a “research frame” (Olsen, 2008, p. 5), and I believe teachers negotiate and enact their identities as they teach and learn to teach, which concomitantly involves ongoing interaction with language ideologies. From this standpoint, bilingual teachers' “pedagogical language competence” (Bunch, 2013) concerns the nexus of their linguistic and professional identities. For example, how they position themselves and are positioned by others linguistically as “native,” “nonnative,” “near-native,” or “heritage” speakers could lead to assumptions about their perceived teaching competence. Such ideological assumptions would misinform bilingual teachers about their professional skills and potential desire to develop their “teaching-specific” language competence (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2013). Therefore TEs who are linguistically preparing bilingual TCs would also need to address the pervasive language ideologies that conflate TCs' linguistic and professional identity positions.

### **The Method in My Story: Autoethnography**

I view autoethnography as a genre of qualitative research that allows us to “look inward into our identities, thoughts, feelings and experiences—and outward into our relationships, communities and cultures” (Adams, Holman Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 46). Situating the self within the context of cultural communities, autoethnography foregrounds the relationship and interplay between the personal and the cultural in constructing our identities (Anderson, 2006). Autoethnographers rely on their personal experiences to make sense of the sociocultural issues by focusing on the impact of dominant discourses and corresponding ideologies. Thereby, the researcher becomes “a site of cultural inquiry within a cultural context,” for the purpose of “breaking open the dichotomous notions of the self/other within empirical traditions” (Hughes et al., 2012, p. 210). Our researcher positionality becomes

a central piece in autoethnography, which explores the ways we influence and are influenced by the cultural discourses surrounding us. It enables us to stop hiding “our personal self behind a veneer of academic and theoretical detachment” and to debunk “the misconception that it has no influence, no place, no significance in our work” (Bochner, 1997, p. 433). It uncovers the intimate connection between our scholarly work and our personal stories.

Autoethnography is “a powerful method” (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014, p. 15) to explore issues of diversity and identity. Autoethnographers take initiative and assert agency to narrate their lived experiences and enact identities without allowing others’ representation (Canagarajah, 2012). Engaging in the construction of autoethnography, authors experience tensions between their different identities, which may or may not be resolved during or after the writing process, but trying to work these tensions out affords the authors a vantage point to develop “critical insights” and negotiate “in-between identities” (Canagarajah, 2012, p. 261). Therefore the act of autoethnography writing is a concentrated and profound experience of identity negotiation.

Autoethnography also affords us the discursive space and tools to practice self-reflexivity as we share our significant identity negotiations. Hughes (2008) noted that it “forces us to be more self-reflexive, and instructs us about our professional and personal socialization and how we participate in socialization in our schools” (p. 27). In the sense of reflexivity, writing autoethnography runs the risk of becoming vulnerable as our personal stories are shared for public reading. Such a writing practice involves taking psychological and social risks in exposing our “own mistakes, conflicts, confusions, and dilemmas to the public” (Lin, 2004, p. 287), which becomes both scholarly and political engagement. However, we expect the self-reflexive accounts in autoethnographies to resonate with readers’ own similar experiences and invite them “to reflect critically upon their own life experience, their constructions of self, and their interactions with others within sociohistorical contexts” (Spry, 2001, p. 711).

When constructing my self-reflexive account, I first did a careful read of all my data (personal diaries, email conversations, lecture notes, and syllabi) to re-remember my experiences that pertain to my identities as a language user, teacher, and TE. In the second round of my reading, I selected 14 episodes in which I negotiated these identities and ordered these episodes chronologically on a timeline. I had already discussed most of these experiences with my critical friends, colleagues, audiences at conference presentations, or students in my classes. Therefore my analysis included my re-remembering and reinterpreting these discussions as well, which helped me see how I negotiated my identities when I shared my critical experiences with others. After I narrowed my data down to 14 episodes, I wrote a narrative account of each episode, which also involved preliminary analysis. Then, I analyzed each narrative with the theoretical lens of language ideologies to interpret the connections between my personal accounts and broader discourses of language teaching, teacher education, and higher education. At this stage, in the interest of

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space, I only kept the narrative accounts that are most prominent for my identities in relation to language ideologies. Focusing on the accounts I selected to include, I wrote my interpretations at length, which I condensed later on when drafting and revising this article.

### **My Language-Learning Background**

Born in a village of nearly 900 people in northwestern Turkey, bordering Greece, I grew up speaking Turkish, although multilingual practices were fairly common in the area. Interacting with children from neighboring villages and nomadic Romani people, I was exposed to a variety of Greek and Balkan Romani languages as a child. Part of a mainly Turkish monolingual family (except for my father, who speaks Classical Arabic), and due to the dominant Turkish language policy in the education system, I was a monolingual Turkish speaker. I became literate in Turkish only through formal schooling, which neglected local multilingual communities. I recall how schools constructed the “correct” and “pure” use of the Turkish language as an indication of a dominant national identity. At the age of 10 years, I started receiving Arabic instruction to read and recite the Qur’an during the summers and continued learning it outside formal schooling until after graduating from college. However, I never used Arabic for communication purposes in my life. It was always a language of religious identity for me. Later on, I would be introduced to English in middle school at the age of 12 years, but I do not think my English literacy developed until the intensive language preparation in the first year of high school when I selected a foreign language track for secondary education and later on in college. My decision to study language was fueled by my interest, curiosity, and passion about the intriguing interplay between language and society. However, I selected English (as opposed to other languages) as my major area of study because of the dominant neoliberal ideologies in Turkey, which framed English with the highest potential social, cultural, and economic capital. As I considered my career options, I remember constantly receiving messages that underscored the importance of English (along with computer skills) for profitable job prospects.

### **My Story of Identities and Ideologies**

Becoming an English-language user and, later, professional, I have grappled with the notion of “nativeness” that has been part of the dominant language ideologies in my language learning and teaching contexts. Framing the native speaker as both myth and reality, Davies (2004) synthesized different conceptualizations of “native” speaker and highlighted two divergent perspectives: the linguistic perspective conceives the native speaker as the repository and guardian of the true language, while the social perspective views the native speaker “as the standard setter” (p. 447). Particularly, the social view attends to the deleterious impact of native-speaker

norms in language learning and teaching. In this line of critique, native-speaker ideology refers to the system of beliefs that position native speakers automatically as the best teachers of the language, while questioning nonnative speakers' ability to teach and considering them deficient or "less than" their native-speaker colleagues (Holliday, 2005; Swan et al., 2015; Phillipson, 1992).

### ***Discerning the Nexus Between Language and Pedagogy***

Although my high school education was mostly geared toward developing grammar, vocabulary, and reading, it helped me "succeed" in the national university entrance exam and be admitted to an English teacher education program (TEP) at a university with an international reputation in Turkey. The TEP had two professors who were "native" English speakers, and I remember hearing my peers compare these two professors' language use (British vs. American) and revere their classes partly because they were "native" English speakers and listening to them would "magically" improve students' language competence with "authentic" aural input. This was one of my earliest experiences with language ideologies that conflated professional competence with an individual speaker's first-language competence, which is "an unalterable historic fact" (Cook, 1999, p. 186) and biodevelopmental characteristic. That is, one professor was valued more because of his "nativeness" in the language than because of his professional content knowledge and capacity to teach. Another significant experience was with the international students in my cohort, who typically came from Central Asian (former Soviet Union) countries, Greece, and Syria. Because language is such a visible characteristic of human beings, I was initially impressed by their English-language use, which to me sounded very similar to the people I heard on the language-learning textbook cassettes and in Hollywood movies. I remember sometimes paying more attention to their English fluency than to what they said. I was trying to assign them a label based on the "nativeness" benchmark, and I could not call them "native" English speakers since they were not coming from the United Kingdom or the United States, which reflected the ongoing impact of the language ideologies along with a nation-state ideology—one language, one nation, one folk (Wright, 2004). Later on, I remember hearing terms like *near-native* and *native-like* in an Introduction to Linguistics class and feeling so relieved that I was able to assign them a label within the realm of native-speaker ideology.

### ***My English Did Not Suffice***

When I graduated from the TEP, I had to take another national test to apply for jobs in the public schools. However, I was not appointed to a position because I only chose the schools in the capital city of Ankara (which were highly competitive) so that I could pursue my master's degree. Then, I started considering applying for jobs other than teaching and thought of applying to a test preparation company

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that published English-language learning and test materials. I sent my application to the director of the company via email and got a rejection with this explanatory note: “Except for myself, all our test preparation employees are native English speakers.” I knew that looking for jobs with no prior experience would be tough and that rejection was upsetting, but her answer made me think about the professional value poured into being a native English speaker. It sent me the message that being a native speaker of English makes you a better test designer, although I never questioned the ideology of nativeness explicitly then.

#### **Complex Divides in the Workplace**

Later on, I interviewed for a teaching position at an intensive English program (IEP) housed in a private university in Ankara. In November 2005, I started working there as an instructor of English to serve college students who needed to demonstrate English “proficiency” to be able to begin their major with an English medium of instruction. Language ideologies based on native–nonnative binaries were visibly dominant in this workplace. The IEP administration would split the classes by the four language skills, which has been a dominant ideology of teaching, even though the integrated approaches have been theorized and promoted in numerous publications (Hinkel, 2006). Interestingly, the “foreign” native English–speaking teachers (roughly 5% of the faculty) were assigned to teach speaking and listening classes, while “local” nonnative teachers would teach grammar, vocabulary, and reading, which I did for 4 years. For some reason, writing was trusted to an “exquisite” group of seasoned teachers that comprised a mix of native and nonnative, and most often, joining this group was seen as a promotion because of the fewer hours of teaching. In my last year, the administration “rewarded” my “good” teaching with a spot in this group, which gave me more time to write my master’s thesis and prepare my doctoral program applications.

The teaching cadre of this IEP also included teachers (roughly 5% of the faculty) hailing from Russia, Uzbekistan, and Sudan, who were variably treated as native– and nonnative English–speaking teachers. For example, teachers from Russia and Uzbekistan typically taught speaking and listening, sometimes writing, but never grammar, reading, and vocabulary. Interestingly, the teacher from Sudan would prefer teaching grammar, reading, and vocabulary, even though he was offered a spot in the writing group. The “local” nonnative teachers, including me, did not have a big issue with this divide, I think, because what they taught very much reflected what was dominant in their English learning experiences. Therefore they were usually liked and preferred more by the students preparing for the test, which was heavily reliant on grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing. In this test-based teaching context, knowledge *about* language was more valuable than native language intuition and cultural knowledge. The binary dominant workplace positioned me as a local nonnative teacher, and I was deemed an effective teacher because I had

the knowledge *about* language and was good at teaching to the test. I accepted the local nonnative English teacher identity but simultaneously questioned the borders between the dichotomous native English-speaking teacher (NEST)/nonnative English-speaking teacher (NNEST) labels because of the variable positioning of other “foreign” nonnative teachers.

However, the most visible discrimination was the fact that all foreign teachers would be paid in dollars and, I think, a little more than the local ones. Other than that, I do not think one group of teachers was continuously marginalized and the other privileged because of their “(non)native” status or their home country. To me, the biggest problem was the binary structure in the teaching assignment, which was perpetuating the ideological and social chasm between idealized groups of native- and nonnative-English speaking professionals. Approaching the teachers’ experiences of privilege and marginalization with this essentialized binary lens would simplify and reduce their experiences to just one biodevelopmental aspect of their linguistic identities and neglect all the facets of their teaching experiences and professional identities (Park, 2017; Rudolph, 2016; Solano-Campos, 2014).

#### ***First Rejection in the English-Dominant Academe***

I had another very memorable experience when applying for the doctoral programs in the United States back in 2008. Since my master’s degree was in English literature, I thought I should keep the same field and applied to 10 English and cultural studies programs at U.S. universities. Only one of them accepted me, but it did not offer graduate assistantship to support my doctoral studies. Emailing them to inquire about the reason, I received a response that said, “We grant graduate assistantships only to English native speaker doctoral students because they need to teach our undergraduate courses.” This message excluded me from being considered as a potential doctoral student, too, and discouraged me from applying again the following year because of my linguistic identity, which I would never be able to change. It was an ideology-laden message about the intersection of linguistic and professional identities. It reinforced the supremacy of being a native speaker of a language to be employed, and it negated all my professional experience and my academic/educational trajectory as well as the “good” test scores from TOEFL and GRE, which I thought would help me become accepted to doctoral programs. That was the second very telling experience that made me self-conscious about my language competence and how others would perceive me as a “nonnative” speaker of English. I would keep this feeling later when I started a doctoral program in applied linguistics to which I had applied the following year. Whenever I spoke or wrote, I was concerned about how I was going to be positioned by the readers and listeners in terms of my language ability. I kept asking myself, Would my readers be able to tell if I’m not a native speaker? This made my linguistic identity very pronounced in the ways I positioned myself professionally.

**Stepping Into the NNEST Movement**

The next year, I started my doctoral studies in applied linguistics at the University of Maryland, where I also served as a graduate teaching and research assistant. Receiving admission to multiple programs in 2009 was fairly reassuring for my linguistic identity, which I found out is not entirely unacceptable in an English-dominant academic context. Potentially because of its salience in my life history, “nativeness” in language has emerged as one of my research interests through mind-opening readings on world Englishes and intellectually stimulating conversations with fellow doctoral students with extensive international experience. This research made me think about the multiplicity of Englishes around the world, the interaction between English and local languages, and ownership of language, and I started destabilizing the notions of linguistic “correctness” and “standard.” Coupled with my daily experiences in which English was becoming more dominant in my language repertoire, these theories directed my attention to the intricate relationship between language and identity (Norton, 1997).

Thanks to my close friend Halil,<sup>1</sup> I became part of the NNEST caucus in Washington Area Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages. This caucus adopted the mission of the NNEST Interest Section in the TESOL International Association: fight against the professional discrimination based on “nativeness.” For 9 years, I have maintained my affiliation in the caucus and interest section, participated in its activities, and served in leadership positions. I am truly grateful for all I have learned through my affiliation with the NNEST movement at varying levels. Engaging in research and advocacy efforts for NNESTs, I have been working on a nuanced perspective of the ways ideologies of nativeness operate.

I grappled for a while with my stance on the issues of equity, privilege, and marginalization, which have been central to NNEST research and advocacy. Initially, my conceptual stance was impacted by my earlier experiences being denied jobs because of my “nonnative” status in English, which could be the most common discriminatory treatment for NNESTs. Therefore I was selectively focused on the professional privileges NESTs have just because of their first-language competence, which is biodevelopmental rather than professional (Cook, 1999; Davies, 2004). I was not willing to complicate the issues of privilege and marginalization, because this reactive ideology explained what I felt: “NESTs are not better than NNESTs; each group has its own strengths and weaknesses,” which conveniently suggests collaboration between NESTs and NNESTs as the best instructional solution. However, later on, I included professional preparation in the equation and would call “native” speaker ideology a double-edged sword (hurting both groups) in the title of a conference presentation. I would argue that hiring language teachers solely based on their “nativeness” demeans and discredits the teacher education activities in which both NESTs and NNESTs engage.

Then, poststructuralist readings would kick in and lead me to argue for a con-

ceptual lens contending that the NEST and the NNEST are both essentialized and idealized constructions having emerged within the discourses of English language teaching (Rudolph, 2016; Rudolph, Selvi, & Yazan, 2015; Yazan, 2018a, 2018b). These constructions split English education professionals into two groups and assign them certain identities and corresponding experiences by reducing the complexity and uniqueness of language teaching across all translocal contexts. What is more, they neglect the intersectionality between linguistic identity and gender, racial, ethnic, national, regional, socioeconomic status, class, and community membership identities, among others. Therefore I believe that NNEST advocacy efforts need to use a conceptual lens that views privilege and marginalization as fluidly experienced by teachers without positioning them as categorically and universally marginalized or privileged (Rudolph, 2016).

### ***Identity as Pedagogy***

Now the question becomes, How does my stance with regard to NNEST issues or language ideologies factor into my teacher education practices? The program of which I am a part is housed in the college of education and certifies teachers of world languages (Spanish, French, German, and Latin) and ESL. I work with a variety of undergraduate- and graduate-level TCs with or without a state certification track. Therefore, usually in my classes, I have some students who seek K–12 certification in ESL or world languages to teach in U.S. public schools and others who plan to teach ESL at the postsecondary level in the United States or move overseas to teach EFL.

Particularly after I started working as faculty in my current institution, I became more confident bringing in my key experiences with “native” speaker ideologies and analyzing these experiences with my students. Typically, they do not initially feel comfortable making comments, but after a while, they begin sharing their own experiences or their friends’ stories. I include readings on learner and teacher identities, “nativeness,” and world Englishes in my syllabi, and mostly, my students move the discussions to potential classroom implications. I always share with TCs that I am interested in identities as a researcher, which influences my teaching practices, so that they see the link between my scholarly endeavors and pedagogies as a TE. Recently, I have drawn their attention to the ways my languages, English and Turkish, interact when I speak. When such interaction is easily discernible in my classroom language use, I pause and explain the Turkish impact on my English use. Then, I invite them to observe their language use to discover this interaction between the languages in their repertoires. Apart from these impromptu instances, we discuss the concepts of translanguaging and sociocultural in-betweenness (Canagarajah, 2013a, 2013b). They often ask me to explicate the difference between bilingualism and translanguaging, which leads me to bring in more examples and readings to maintain the conversation.

***Identity as an Explicit Goal in Teacher Education***

My growth as a language TE has involved the ongoing negotiation of intertwined identities as a researcher and TE. To explicate, one of my research interests is language teacher learning and identity construction, and my engagement in research on these topics impacted my approach to educating teachers in two main ways. First, my research on teacher identity led me to reflect more on my identity construction as a language TE. As I have read earlier studies on teacher identity and conducted my own studies, I adopted the conceptualization that becoming language teachers necessitates developing a teacher identity that is constantly negotiated in educational contexts (Olsen, 2008). I believe that there is a complex interplay between language teachers' identities and their professional learning, development, and practices. On one hand, teachers negotiate identities and assert agency in all their decisions, feelings, and actions when they are learning to teach, teaching, and interacting with students, colleagues, administration, and parents. On the other hand, teacher identity orients these decisions, feelings, and actions, because it signals what teachers believe, value, and prioritize in their professional lives. Conceptually grappling with the relationship between teacher identity and teacher learning and practice, I started asking questions about how my professional identity interacts with my learning and practice as a TE, such as, How does my identity as a transnational TE shape my teacher education practices? How do I enact this identity in response to the dominant ideologies in the academe? These questions provided an infrastructure for my self-reflexivity regarding the ways my professional identity guides my pedagogy of teacher education and the ways I negotiate my identity as I engage in practices of teacher education.

Second, researching teacher identity, I started evaluating my own pedagogy and practices of teacher education to see the extent to which they are based on the notion of teacher identity as an organizing framework for TCs. My reflections led me to notice that I was mostly emulating my former professors in the doctoral program rather than crafting my own practice. I did not have a solid pedagogy of teacher education upon which my practices rested. My research interest in teacher identity facilitated this realization and potential ways to work on my practice as a TE. That is, earlier research on teacher identity concluded that both preservice and in-service TEPs should include identity work as an explicit goal across all their activities that promote the growth of teachers. Such explicit focus on identity work can facilitate teachers' negotiation and adoption of research-based and social justice-oriented pedagogies. If teachers are afforded the agentic space to try out or enact the identity options available in these pedagogies, it is more likely that they will renegotiate their identities and teacher learning, which translates into teacher practice (Martel, 2018). With this lens, I reflected on what I do as a TE in all my courses and ask if my practice aligns with what I believe, value, and prioritize as a researcher. Then, I embarked on a quest for an identity-oriented teacher-learning

activity, and recently, I experimented with autoethnography in my language teacher education practices.

### ***Autoethnography as a Teacher Education Tool***

In spring 2018, I wanted to design a new assignment that could support my students' re-remembering, narrating, and examining their stories of learning, using, and teaching languages; I called it *critical autoethnographic narrative* (Yazan, 2018a). As a TE, my goal was to have my students analyze the relationship between identity and language in their past and current life experiences. I had three main learning objectives for my TCs with this assignment: to (a) identify and explain the significant (prior and recent) events or incidents in their trajectories of language learning and teaching and discuss the intimate relationship between identities and learning and teaching experiences; (b) identify the language ideologies prevailing in their contexts and explain how their and their students' identities interact with these ideologies; and (c) discuss the ways individuals negotiate sociocultural structures, ideologies, and inequitable power relations via language use (Canagarajah, 2013b). They worked on their narratives throughout the semester, and we had class discussions on language ideologies, identity, and potential theoretical frameworks (e.g., linguistic capital, language socialization, communities of practice) they could use for analysis. Each student submitted four installments. I met with students individually after each installment to discuss their progress and answer questions. I had them collectively co-construct a rubric to evaluate their narratives, and in the last class meeting, they presented to the class the highlights of their autoethnography (see the appendix). Using this rubric, I assessed their final autoethnographies at the end of the semester, and all six autoethnographies included TCs' discussion of identity negotiation in language-related critical incidents they narrated, as well as identification and unpacking of language ideologies dominant in their society and culture by utilizing a theoretical framework. This reading and assessing process also reminded me that identity resists and "risks being modularized" in the dominant standards-based teacher education discourses (Morgan, 2004, p. 177), which codify requisite teacher knowledge and skills in measurable fashion.

I feel that this assignment has been the culmination of my reflections on potential ways to incorporate identities as resources in teacher education (Morgan, 2004). I truly enjoyed working with TCs on their installments, and they provided really good feedback on how this entire writing process provided them insights into the relationship between their identities and their practice. One day, I hope to implement critical autoethnographic narrative as a program-wide activity.



## **What Does My Story Say About Preparing Bi/multilingual Teachers?**

The narration and analysis of my experiences in this article have implications for the development of bi/multilingual teachers and the TEs who work with them. Autoethnography stands out as a significant tool for bilingual teachers and TEs to excavate their identities and become more self-reflexive in their practices (Hughes et al., 2012), which is supported by self-study research in teacher education (Sharkey & Percy, 2018). As they craft their autoethnographies as part of their initial preparation, TCs can externalize and reflect on their pedagogical beliefs regarding the delivery of content in multiple languages in bilingual settings. They can also better understand the relationship between their linguistic and professional identities in positioning themselves as bilingual teachers. Such a reflective narrative could help them problematize the role of ideologies in constructing identity options for them in the contexts of teaching, teacher education, and beyond. Thereby, they can destabilize the conception that their “native” or “near-native” language ability, which is usually the focus of the language assessment in their bilingual teacher certification, would suffice for them to become “pedagogically competent teachers” who can successfully deliver content in both languages (Aquino-Sterling, 2016; Guerrero, 2003). Also, autoethnography could be a space in which TCs can reflect on how their teaching-specific language competence could promote the equitable educational experiences of students with minoritized languages, especially Spanish in the U.S. bilingual context (Aquino-Sterling & Rodríguez-Valls, 2016).

TEs can utilize autoethnography to become more self-reflexive of their practices and identities as TEs. As a significant method in ever-growing self-study research, autoethnography writing can facilitate TEs’ development of knowledge-of-practice, which has been a missing component in TE professional development (Goodwin et al., 2014). Externalizing their values and priorities in teaching teachers through narrative, TEs can also model autoethnography in their classes for the TCs they are serving. Additionally, such a narrative approach could particularly support transnational TEs’ reflections on their experiences with the academic culture and language in the new educational context. Their autoethnographies, if published, could encourage more transnational TEs to take up this narrative tool, claim ownership, and assert agency in their professional development. These published narrative accounts are especially important because the challenges transnational TEs encounter in transitioning and transforming from teacher or doctoral student to TE in their new cultural and linguistic contexts have not been adequately addressed in teacher education research.

Constructing a TE identity involves a winding route of multifaceted negotiation, and this route becomes even more winding for emerging TEs with transnational identities that are not recognized or tapped into in their new educational context. Typically, doctoral students engage in their initial identity negotiation as TEs when they serve as graduate teaching assistants, and they would need more explicit and

formal mentoring support to transition and transform into their TE identities. Such mentoring can be facilitated through autoethnography writing, which could be an effective tool to capture the complexities of emerging TEs' identity negotiation. Such narrative components could provide the discursive and experiential space for graduate teaching assistants to claim ownership of and assert agency for their identity construction. They can later share their autoethnographies with the teacher education research community in the form of conference presentations and manuscripts, whereby the research gap in TE preparation could also be addressed.

### **In Closing**

As I constructed my autoethnography to share my identity negotiation with the public through this article, it was challenging for me to decide what stories I should include and what stories I should leave out, not only because of the word limit for a journal manuscript but also considering the identities I wanted to enact through this narrative. However, I found the entire re-remembering and rewriting process very stimulating and liberating, both intellectually and emotionally. Also, I would like to stress that this autoethnography is never a finished work, and neither is my TE identity negotiation. Going back to Freire's (1998) quote at the beginning, I, as an "eternal seeker," will keep my goal to stay self-reflexive of my practices and identities and maintain a continuous conversation with my own self.

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### **Note**

<sup>1</sup> All names are pseudonyms.

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## **Appendix**

### **Critical Autoethnographic Narrative Rubric**

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Weight (%)</i>
Assignment/audience/purpose	15
Follows the guidelines specified in the syllabus	
Constructs the narrative in an expected genre, i.e., language autoethnography	
Considers an audience and provides adequate and clear information in the narrative	
Content/process/investment	
Narrates the pertinent experiences with language use, learning, and teaching by providing adequate details (i.e., generates data)	15
Discusses and utilizes a theoretical framework informed by the literature to construe these experiences by clearly showing the connection between narration and analysis (i.e., analyzes data)	15
Completes each installment/draft on time and actively participates/engages in the one-on-one feedback sessions	15
Attends and responds to the feedback by making necessary changes in the manuscript across drafts	15
Organization	15
Includes clearly written introduction and conclusion/implications sections	
Narration and analysis of experiences follow the synthesis of theoretical framework	
Sections are clearly labeled by (sub)headings	
Conventions and writing	10
Follows APA conventions in in-text citations and references section	
Includes clear and compelling writing with smooth transitions between sentences and paragraphs	
Uses punctuation and capitalization appropriately throughout	