Preservice Language Teachers' Identity Construction During Covid-19: Positioning Analysis of Online Practicum Experience

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This study investigates the identity construction and negotiation of four preservice English language teachers enrolled at a state university in Turkey during COVID-19 lock down within the theoretical framework of positioning theory and explores their digitalised practicum experience. The data collected through learning journals written by each participant about their clinical experience on a weekly basis, online semi-structured interviews conducted with each teacher candidate at the end of their practicum period and the researcher's observations of participants' teaching practices was subjected to qualitative data analysis with Atlas.Ti software to analyse it systematically. The findings revealed that the participants constructed multiple reflexive positional identities some of which contradicted with their teaching practices. It was also observed that the participants distanced themselves from their mentor teacher while claiming interactive positional identities which was associated with their personal interpretative framework. The study further provided findings about the relational aspect of positioning theory especially when the participants were attaching positional identities for their supervisor.
Keywords: COVID-19, positioning, identity construction, reflexive positioning, interactive positioning

INTRODUCTION

It has been acknowledged in the literature that *practicum experience* or *field practice* is the fundamental component of teacher training programmes (Richards & Nunan, 1990; Roberts, 1998; Gebhard, 2009) and is of critical significance for the prospective teachers as it provides opportunity for first-hand experience through systematic observation, reflection and exploration of mentors', peers' and their own teaching (Gebhard, 2009), fosters critical stance towards teaching and helps to develop capacity to make informed teaching decisions. Also, practicum experience paves the way for bridging the gap between

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theory and practice dichotomy (Ribaeus, Enochsson, & Hultman, 2022) and establishes an ideal ground for critically questioning existing personal beliefs about teaching and learning which have been shaped by *apprenticeship of observation* (Lortie, 1975 as cited in Roberts, 1998).

Despite its pivotal role in equipping preservice teachers with necessary skills and competences for the professional life, there have been raising concerns about the effectiveness of the practicum experience questioning its value as an agent for change (Moore, 2003; Okan & Yıldırım, 2004; Mirici & Ölmez-Çağlar, 2017; Şimşek & Müftüoğlu, 2017; Riyanti, 2020). Research on learning to teach has revealed that field experience of most teacher training programmes failed to meet the expectations of prospective teachers in terms preparing them for the complexities and multidimensional nature of classroom life and the challenges against professional identity formation have been reported as disconnection between theoretical knowledge and field practice (Allen & Wright, 2014; Flores, Santos, Fernandes, & Pereira, 2014), negative or poor mentoring experiences (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Izadinia, 2015; Alemdağ & Özdemir Şimşek, 2017; Ataş & Balıkçı, 2021), contextual, institutional and political constraints (Teng, 2017), preservice teachers' personal beliefs and images of teaching derived from prior experiences (Eisenhardt, Besnoy, & Steele, 2012) and limited supervisory practices of the university professors (Barahona, 2019). In this sense, efforts have been paid within the scope of international calls to reform field experience of preservice teachers by redefining its goals, scope, conceptual frameworks, and its application.

However, additional challenges have been settled in teacher training with the unprecedented and unforeseen Covid-19 outbreak in March 2020 which caused serious breakdowns and disruptions in educational settings all over the world. The schools and universities had to shift to online provision immediately as an alternative and provided courses through synchronous and asynchronous platforms instead of face-to-face instruction without necessary preparations in most parts of the world. The crisis posed critical challenges of particular importance for the practice-oriented courses one of which was practicum experience of preservice teachers as revealed in the relevant literature. Moorhouse (2020) raised questions about the adaptability to the new form of delivery that the tutors lacked necessary skills to conduct the courses. Moyo (2020), in his research in African educational context, attracted the attentions to the assessment of teacher certification expressing concerns over practicum assessment conundrum. Nasri, Husnin, Mahmud, and Halim (2020) emphasized that digitalisation of practice teaching through online classes provided extremely limited or no opportunities to practice teaching skills for the pre-service teachers despite the primary aim of teaching practicum courses is to allow for the chances to strengthen teaching skills. Another challenge pronounced frequently was the lack of direct interaction between teacher candidates and students which hinders pedagogical learning of the preservice teachers (Sepúlveda-Escobar & Morrison, 2020; Varea & González-Calvo, 2021; Jin, 2022).

Lacking sufficient clinical teaching experiences through micro and macro teaching already, the teacher candidates were further constrained to continue their field practice on a new digital platform which they were barely familiar with as they were trained to practice field experience in face-to-face classroom settings. Under the shadow of such obstacles and uncertainties originating from Covid-19 outbreak, the growing concern was to what extent this new digital mode could prepare teacher candidates for the realities of classroom life and contribute to their professional identity development. In this respect, the focus of this qualitative research is to portray digitalised practicum experience of preservice ELT teachers during Covid-19 lockdown in Turkish educational context and investigate the

impact to their identity construction and negotiation within the scope of the theoretical framework of positioning theory (Harre & Langenhove, 1999).

LITERATURE REVIEW

LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Identity has been one of the major interests of the language teacher education research for the last two decades as it is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has crucial impact in the teaching practice and professional development. It is possible to find a ten of definitions to conceptualize identity and diversity of terminology in the literature but the common thread in each definition is identity is *relational, interactional, constructed, enacted, transforming,* and *transitional* as stated by Miller (2009, p.174). In other words, identity construction is an ongoing and dynamic process that the teachers make sense of their practices on the basis of their beliefs, experiences and expectations in interaction with others in the wider social context.

Undoubtedly, teacher education programmes have strong impact in language teachers' identity construction. More specifically, during teaching internship under the supervision and in collaboration with mentor teachers and university professors, teacher candidates constantly construct, shape, and reformulate their identity in complex social interaction with prior and recent experiences which has significant impact in their professional development either positive or negative as mentioned in the literature.

In a study conducted by Ngia and Tui (2017) it was observed teachers' identities were shaped by early experiences, expectations, and imagination of professional roles prior to the teacher education programmes which challenged the realities that they faced in the practicum experiences. Similarly, Trent (2010) in his study argues that identity construction is experiential and positional and concludes that the teacher candidates constructed conflicting identity positions during teaching practicum which could be detrimental for professional development. Hisiao (2018) analysed ten prospective teachers' reflective logs majoring at English language teaching during their practicum experience and gathered the attention around the interactional and contextual nature of identity construction reporting that the influence of workplace played a key role in shaping participants' identity development. In a similar study Teng (2017) investigated the narrative interactions of six preservice ELT teachers that they commented on their practicum experiences. The findings indicated that a strong relationship existed between the participants' emotions and identity development. Teng (2017) further reported that the emotional rules hidden in the practicum school could exert a significant impact on the emotional experiences and identity construction.

Other scholars drew attention to the impact of other agents of the process who have pivotal roles in shaping teacher identity. Yuan (2016), in his small-scale study that he grounded on self-discrepancy theory with two preservice language teachers, revealed the dark side of mentoring on the professional development of the participants. Yuan reported that despite the ideal teacher identities informed by previous learning experiences and teacher training courses, negative mentoring destroyed prospective teachers' ideal identities and created new feared identities which could inform their teaching practice and impair professional development. Izadinia (2015) similarly observed the relationship between mentors and preservice teachers and sought to answer its effect on the identity construction. The findings of the study presented that the mentors did not cause drastic changes in the identity construction of the preservice teachers, but their identities were positively or negatively affected depending on the relationship. In a more recent study Cameron and Grant (2017) emphasized the criticality of effective mentoring process in the

professional identity development and restructuring. Briefly, practicum experience of the preservice teachers has a critical role in developing healthy identity formation which informs effective teaching practice and professional development.

POSITIONING AND IDENTITY

Constructing teacher identity is a comprehensive and complicated process as it is continuously co-constructed in situ, on the basis of personal experiences, interactional skills, knowledge and attitude and it is strongly influenced by contextual factors such as occupational culture, workplace conditions, cultural differences, students, institutional practices, access to professional development opportunities and so on as stated by Miller (2009, p. 175). Therefore, it may not be possible to talk about a static, stable, and fixed nature while discussing about teacher identity as identity development process is full of conflicts, contradictions, and struggles because of the misalignments between experiences, expectations, beliefs, values, roles, and contextual conditions at work. In this sense, identity construction is both personal and influenced by how the person position himself or herself and social, how he or she is positioned by others as suggested by Chen and Mensah (2018).

Within this perspective, the present study adopts positioning theory (Harre & Langenhove, 1999) as its theoretical framework. Positioning theory that originates in the Social Psychology is conceptualized as "the assignment of roles or positions in the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person's actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts" (Harre & Langenhove, 1999, p. 17). In other words, the person position himself/herself or is positioned by others during social interactions (Harre & Langenhove, 1999).

Two modes of positioning are relevant in the present study. The first one is intentional self-positioning which is labelled as reflexive positioning (Harre & Langenhove, 1999, p. 62) in which a person intentionally or unintentionally positions himself/herself in and acts and expresses his/her personal identity on the basis of them in discursive practices. To put it in different way, individuals reflexive positioning guides the way they act in the society (Yoon, 2008). The other mode of positioning is interactive positioning in which one person says positions others (Harre & Langenhove, 1999, p. 37). In other words, it is the process of assigning identity positions to other people in conversations on the basis of individuals' perspectives of those people's roles, identities and agencies which inhibits or extends what they can say and do (Harre & Langenhove, 1999). It is important to note here is that both reflexive and interactive positioning process is dynamic as the individual constantly assigns or reassigns positions for himself/herself and for the others depending on the context and social interactions.

Existing literature emphasizes close relationship between positioning and identity development (Reeves, 2009; Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Arvaja, 2016). In fact, it could be argued that identity negotiation is the process of assigning positions for yourself and for the other people as individuals "take up, assert and resist identity positions in conversational exchanges that define them" (Reeves, 2009, p. 35) and in the meantime they (re)shape, (re)structure or (re)construct their identities. Kayi-Aydar (2015) in her study with the participation of three preservice classroom teachers, investigated the relationship between positioning and identity negotiations of the participants in relation to their social context. The findings of the study revealed that the teachers assigned various positions to themselves sometimes conflicting positional identities in relation to learners and mentor teachers which shaped their agency and guided their classroom practices. Arvaja (2016) contended that teacher identity construction and development involve a negotiation of various positions depending on the self and the others in discursive practices (p. 400). Similarly, Reeves (2009) analysed the identity negotiation of one secondary English teacher in relation to the learners and presented that the positioning of language learners as

deficits like any other language learners led to conflicting identity assertion on the part of the teacher and guided the way he/she acted in the classroom.

In this sense, it is assumed that the positions that preservice teachers assign to themselves and to the other agents such as students, mentor teachers, university supervisors etc. may help to understand their identity development through opening a window to their implicit beliefs, values and experiences, and shed light how they learn to become language teachers as learning to teach is a social complex phenomenon. It is also expected to investigate if distant practicum experience may pose additional constraints and challenges for the preservice teachers and cause identity conflicts and misalignments. Within this perspective, the research questions for the present study are:

1. What are the positions that the student teachers assigned to themselves and to their mentor teacher, and university supervisors?
2. How does each student teacher position themselves during their distant practicum experiences?
3. How do the student teachers position their mentor teacher, and university supervisors?

METHOD

RESEARCH DESIGN

The qualitative approach was chosen as the methodological foundation for the present study as it aimed to investigate professional identity development of prospective ELT teachers that is dynamic, relational, and interactional in nature in its natural setting inquiring into the participants' perspectives within the scope of positioning theory. As a form of qualitative research, case study design was employed since the phenomenon was inquired deeply for almost four months using variety of data collection tools which provided large quantity of data as suggested by Creswell (2007).

PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING

The subjects in the present study were four preservice teachers, Hande, Sena, Ufuk and Yusuf (pseudonyms are used) enrolled at English language teaching programme at a university in Turkey. All four participants, two female, two male, were in their senior year who had to attend a full day at practicum schools. Except for Umar who was working in a private language institution as a part-time language tutor, the other participants had no teaching experience.

The practicum period that is consisted of School Experience course and Practice Teaching course lasts for one academic year, aims to provide first-hand, face to face experience for the prospective teachers to bridge the gap between theory and practice. However, because of the unprecedented, emergent situation because of Covid-19 outbreak, the participants had to complete their practicum experience course online at the same school, a public primary and secondary school located in the downtown, which they were assigned at the beginning of the academic year. The school was a medium-sized institution providing education for the children of medium class and upper medium class families. Although the participants had the chance to observe English teaching in several grades in the practicum school, each of them was assigned to Grade 5 students by the school management to observe and practice teach for 6 hours a week in 3 months period.

A cooperating mentor teacher was responsible for all four participants to model teaching, provide feedback and support. The mentor teacher had teaching experience for almost thirteen years and was experienced in mentoring for the teacher candidates. However, the

sudden shift to distant education exposed both mentor teacher and the participants to an unparagoned experience as they had to fulfil their responsibilities online.

DATA COLLECTION

The data sources in the present study include learning journals written by each participant that they critically reflected on their clinical experience on a weekly basis, online semi-structured interviews conducted with each teacher candidate at the end of their practicum period and the researcher's observations of participants' teaching practices.
For the learning journals, the researcher assigned a topic each week for the participants to focus during their practicum experience such as: When you observe class, please reflect on the teaching strategies and methods your mentor teacher used. What would you keep? What would you change? Why? The participants were instructed to write about their experiences without any constraints. At the end of each week, the researcher also held an online meeting with the participants to reflect on their experiences about the assignment topic. Each meeting lasted for almost an hour approximately. In total, each participant wrote about ten learning diaries.

At the end of the practicum period, an online, in-depth semi-structured interview was conducted with the participants that they evaluated the impact of their practicum experience on their professional development and identity construction. In the interviews, the participants were requested to comment on their expectations and the realities of field practice experience, the strengths and the weaknesses of the process, their perceptions about students, mentor teacher, peers and university supervisor, any changes in their teaching practices… etc.

The researcher also attended the participants' online teaching practice sessions and kept observation notes in order to triangulate data for the purpose of reaching more reliable findings.

DATA ANALYSIS

The focus of this study is identity construction of prospective ELT teachers within the framework of positioning theory. In this sense, the collected data was analysed on the basis of two modes of positioning reflexive and interactive positioning namely (Harre & Langenhove, 1999) to investigate the impact on the professional identity development of the participants.

The collected data was subjected to qualitative data analysis with Atlas.Ti software to analyse it systematically. The analysis was conducted in stages based on the constant comparative method of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At first, raw data obtained from data sources was looked through to interpret extensively on the basis of the research purposes and first stage open coding was executed by coding anything of research interest until a certain level of saturation and structure was achieved. Then, the code list developed was analysed through axial coding procedure by making constant comparison, considering similarities and differences for the purpose of organizing codes into categories. In the third stage, conceptual level analysis was conducted by collecting related categories under one core category through selective coding process as suggested by (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

For the purpose of increasing validity of the present qualitative research, the data obtained from the learning diaries of the participants was triangulated from the other data sources, which were labelled as semi-structured interview data and practice teaching observation notes as suggested by Creswell (2007). Also, an expert investigated and

assessed the appropriateness semi-structured interview questions and the questions posed to the participants through learning diaries.

Reliability is confirmed through interrater agreement procedure. The structured codebook was sent to another rater who specializes in the field to assess conformity. The data obtained from both coders were analysed using SPSS 23 through Cohen's Kappa Statistics. The descriptive value revealed 0,892 match which corresponds to "almost perfect" strength of agreement on the basis of Landis and Koch's (1977) interpretation scale. For the purpose of increasing strength of conformity, both raters discussed about the disagreements about the contradictory code labels and reached to consensus by making necessary changes or excluding the code from the codebook if necessary.

FINDINGS

RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

The positioning theme is consisted of two categories, reflexive positioning, and interactive positioning namely. The following two network views display the thematic and categorical representation of reflexive positioning that the participants assigned positions to themselves and interactive positioning that they position their mentor teacher, students, and university supervisor within the present research scope.
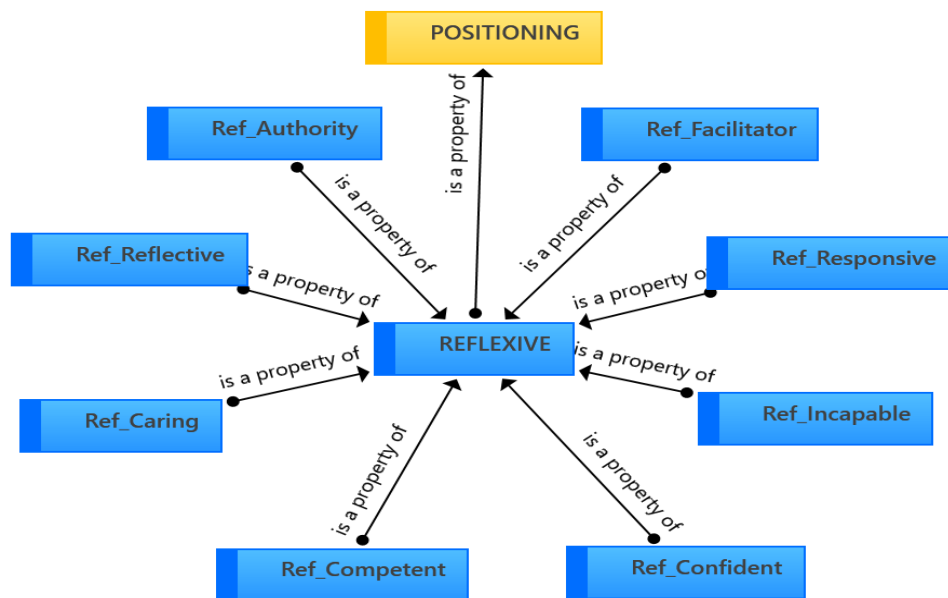

Figure 1. Network view of reflexive positioning

Reflexive positioning category includes codes that the participants actively position themselves as mentioned before. The category consisted of eight subcategories which were labelled as "authority, caring, competent, confident, facilitator, incapable, reflective and responsive" respectively as revealed in Figure 1. A total of 38 codes were identified from the relevant literature and attached to 150 quotations that were assumed to be related with reflexive positioning. Two subcategories "incapable" and "responsive" namely stands out on the basis of their groundedness and frequency. 33 data segments were attached to 5 codes subsumed by "responsive" subcategory corresponding to 22% of the total number of associations. With respect to "incapable" subcategory, a total of 27 quotations were linked to 11 codes within whose percentage to the total is 18%. The following subcategories on

the basis of frequency distribution is "competent" and "reflective". Competent subcategory has 26 data segments that have been associated with 6 code labels. Reflective subcategory includes 23 data segments attached to the including 5 code labels. The percentage of each association to the total is 17% and 15% respectively. "Caring" subcategory is the fifth in the rank order which subsumes 4 codes attached to 17 quotations with 11% percentage. "Confident" subcategory includes 2 codes that have been linked to 13 data segments and the percentage of the association to the total number is 9%. The last two subcategories with respect to frequency distribution is "facilitator" and "authority" each of which has 6 quotations associated with 3 codes and 1 code respectively.

Figure 2. Network view of interactive positioning

Interactive positioning category was subcategorized under two main subheadings that are positioning mentors, and supervisor namely which include codes and associated data segments that the participants positioned others both intentionally and unintentionally. A total of 22 codes were applied to 115 data segments from the participants' data pool. Of the total number of data segments more than half of the quotations were (79%) attached to the codes within positioning mentor subcategory which is consisted of "traditional-typical", "role model" and "humanist" subcategories whose number of code member is 16. The frequency of quotation declines sharply in positioning supervisor subcategory. 18 quotations were identified with 4 code labels within the subcategory that is consisted of "guide, critic, master and instructional coach" subcategories whose percentage to the total is 21%.

RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

Reflexive positioning. The analysis of participants statements collected through learning journals, semi structured interviews and classroom observations revealed that all four participants constructed different teacher identities while positioning themselves in variety of ways. The results further indicated a flux and misalignment in the construction of identities when the data is cross tabulated and analysed comparatively.

Hande's case. First of all, the conflict in Hande's identity constructions is quite observable as the subject positions make cluster in four different teacher identities. Hande consistently positions herself as a "confident" teacher in her anecdotes that she compares

the beginning and the end of the practicum period and underlines the lack of confidence as a teacher at the beginning of the process. The following excerpt taken from Hande's data represents an example of self-positioning as a confident teacher.

> At the beginning of the period, I was so shy, nervous, and lacking confidence in the class. I didn't have the teacher's authority. In the end, I was feeling more confident than before. I had the teacher authority as expected (Hande, 31:7).

However, the classroom observations of Hande that she carried out her practice teaching towards the end of the practicum period revealed clear signs of lack in teaching confidence as she demonstrated anxiety and tension in variety of occasions which interferes with the ability to teach effectively.

Additionally, Hande positioned herself a "caring" teacher who considers students' feelings and contributes to their emotional development that is also clearly displayed in each practice teaching experiences as given in the following anecdote.

> I listen to kids. I give importance to what they want to share with me. I don't ignore them. For example, in the lesson, one of the students said: "she had a new computer" to one of my friends and she ignored her because she didn't want to disrupt the course of the lesson (Hande, 23:5).

Sena's case. With respect to Sena, identity misalignment is quite significant as she reflexively positioned herself as a both "incapable" and "competent" teacher based on data collected which leads us to the development of conflicting professional identity. Sena voices her incapability in various aspects explicitly but she lays stress especially on her incapability in lesson planning, time management, using body language and arranging the right tone of voice while teaching to students. The following two quotes stands as an example of positioning herself as an "incapable" teacher in terms of inability in lesson planning and inability in time management.

> I used technological applications to make a quiz to use in the classroom. I think that was an interesting quiz for students and going to work well in the classroom. What problem with the quiz was the difficulty level of questions that I couldn't arrange while planning the lesson? I am not good at it. My peers are better than me clearly (Sena, 38:4).
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> Unfortunately, I cannot manage class time effectively. I couldn't apply the last activity because of my lack in time management. Since my activities were difficult for students, I waste valuable class time on these activities. Therefore, I couldn't do the revision activity at the end of the lesson (Sena, 44:4).

Another strong identity construction of Sena is positioning herself as a "competent" teacher as mentioned before. In her learning journals and semi-structured interview, Sena consciously and unconsciously made a reference to her strength in "classroom management," competency in "material design" and ability to "communicate with the students". However, as in Hande's case, classroom observations exhibit contradictory positional identities that she struggles especially in managing classroom and communicating with students.

Ufuk's case. Despite the numerous identity self-positions claimed by Ufuk, two of them strongly claimed and recursively voiced based on learning journals data and semi-structured interview data. Ufuk first, asserted a positional identity as a "responsive" teacher who meets the learning needs of all students in the classroom. While uttering position as a responsive teacher, he distanced himself from his mentor teacher continually whom he criticized his teaching and classroom management strategies as revealed in the following excerpt.

> According to my perspective, activities aren't catchy for students to make them give their full attention. I saw some warnings from mentor teacher directed to students to turn off their televisions during the lesson. When she raised them to participate

> in the activities, teacher heard some disturbing TV voice behind, and it occurred continually. The teacher warned them again, but it didn't make sense. However, if I were the teacher, and observed my warnings didn't make sense for students, I would try to find and use variety of activities which are more enjoyable than the ones she used that would catch attention of each student and prevent disruptions (Ufuk,16:3).

However, as in the previous partners, reflexively repositioning himself explicitly as a responsive teacher contradicts with what he did in the classroom as presented by classroom observation data. Although he distanced himself from the mentor teacher criticizing that he couldn't respond to the instructional needs of the students because of the use of limited number of activities as given in the anecdote above, his practice teaching lacked the qualities of responsive teaching as it lacked motivation and interaction because of framing one digital class period around one teaching activity which became seriously overwhelming and boring for the students.

The second strongest positional identity that Ufuk referred in 9 instances is "reflective teacher". By being reflective Ufuk implies that he is aware of his strengths and weaknesses as a prospective teacher, he continuously self-observes while teaching and develops himself, and he appreciates lifelong learning for the professional development. Observation data from his practice teaching and the following feedback sessions also supported reflexive positioning as reflective teacher since he was able to reflect on his actions in the classroom and identify his weaknesses and make better-informed teaching decisions in the following practice teaching sessions. In the following extracts, Ufuk's positional identity construction as "reflective teacher" is exemplified.

> Technology is getting developed day by day, and I should always develop myself. If I didn't do this, my current knowledge would be old fashioned for the future. To do that, I have a plan except for searching and reading contemporary trends in ELT. If I had the chance to work with internship students, I would be delighted to work them because they graduate from their universities by learning current trends in ELT and I want to see how they are applied into the classroom (Ufuk, 21:1).

> My expectation from the practicum experience was to be able to see the relationship between theory and practice in ELT. I was taught heavily with theoretical information during my university years. However, the reality in the classroom can sometimes be different I expected to see how I can bridge these two in classroom atmosphere. I did it by learning about my faults and weaknesses and how to correct them thanks to the feedback sections I received each practice teaching sessions (Ufuk, 22:1).

Yusuf's case. Yusuf claims various identity positions as in Ufuk's case but two of them "competent teacher" and "responsive teacher" are analysed as the dominant identity constructions as both are referenced with 9 quotations which corresponds to nearly half of the total number of quotations associated with reflexive positioning category. Yusuf explicitly identify himself as a competent teacher but while positioning himself as competent he compares himself with peer preservice teachers and distance himself from them in certain aspects such as advanced language proficiency, competence in material design and strength in classroom management. In the following quote taken from his 9th learning journal, Yusuf clearly states his superiority in terms of content knowledge and language proficiency while comparing himself with his friends.

> I have realised that some of my peers have problems about the content knowledge and language proficiency. This also effects the communication proficiency of a teacher. I doubt some of them has enough proficiency in language. It is observable in instances like using wrong vocabulary, unintelligible pronunciation, and grammatical errors. These are important stuff that a teacher needs in basis to be a

teacher. As we know without content knowledge and language proficiency undesirable acts would happen in the classroom Well, I am not perfect either, but I think I am pretty advanced in language proficiency and content knowledge if a comparison is made (Yusuf, 9:4).

Although Yusuf identify himself as a competent teacher in terms of positional identity voicing recursively his competence in content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, classroom observation records from his practice teaching sessions revealed contradictory positions indicating lacks especially in classroom management and lesson planning ability as in the other participants.

The second most salient identity position that Yusuf identified himself is "responsive teacher" that is in line with the other two participants, Hande and Ufuk namely. From his reflexive positionings as responsive teacher, Yusuf perceived that young learner learn through playing as they are very active, and it is vitally important to include game-like activities to catch their attention and fulfil their learning needs as given in the following anecdote.

This age group needs the elements of fun, games, and curiosity in the teaching. They love to play games. And they build a connection with the adults who play games with them. So, games and plays are a great way to melt the ice down between. Therefore, I knowingly prepared a competitive game to make them feel like they are in the classroom with themselves again. My whole play activities seemed effective; they were eager to play. I got their attention all together (Yusuf, 1:20, 3:15).

Classroom observation records also supported that he acted on this self-position as responsive teacher as he included motivating game-based activities to practice language into his practice teaching sessions.

RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

Positioning mentors. Both learning journals and semi structured interview data of each participant included several explicit and implicit references to the mentor's teaching practices which they both identify and distance themselves with the subject positions that they adhere to their mentor teacher. However, what is common in all four participants is that they all strongly position their mentor teacher who has been teaching English for about 15 years as a "traditional-typical teacher". The findings revealed that nearly 71 % of the quotations referenced with the mentor were associated with the code labels within "traditional-typical" subcategory. The participants, while positioning their mentor teacher as a traditional-typical teacher, distanced themselves from this subject position which significantly impacted their identity negotiation since they avoided to employ her teaching practices into their teaching practices as revealed by the classroom observation data. This positioning also led to the construction of another positional identity for the mentor teacher as "poor role model" despite a few instances of references that she was perceived as "strong role model" because of her humanistic approach to teaching.

The participants positioned their mentor teacher as "traditional typical" because of using traditional teaching activities in online classroom setting, poor classroom management, dependence on the coursebook, poor error correction, using first language as class language, inadaptability to distant education, being poor language model for students, limited interaction and lacking positive feedback for students respectively on the basis of frequency of code labels respectively. The following quotes selected randomly represent how the participants distance themselves from the positional identity that they assigned to their mentor teacher while explicitly voicing her lacks as an effective language teacher and strong role model for them.

The teaching strategies of our mentor teacher are casual and indefinite in my perspective. In the presentation part, there is mostly a blank screen with grammatical rules that are given explicitly. As we know it is acceptable for some grammar elements to teach deductively. But as I have seen the presentation part in one case, I do not have enough clue to make a statement about her presentation strategies of the language. But, for the practice part, I can pretty much say that it is overwhelming. Entire of the courses is built upon the practice part. It is series of books or worksheet exercises that we used to. No special activity for a specific classroom is made (Yusuf, 2:18).

If a student answers questions incorrectly, she says how you can't remember this topic! You must do this; you should know it etc.! In my opinion, these teacher reactions are not appropriate especially for young learners. They may not attend to the lesson, or they may lose their motivation because of these behaviours. Also, they may be afraid of answering questions because of fear of being reprimanded (Sena, 40:6).

The other position that the participants adhere to their mentor teacher is "humanist" but the number of references to this position is quite limited in number and low in frequency when it is compared with the previous subject position. A total of 15 quotations were attached to the code labels within humanist sub-category which corresponds to 15 % of the total number of quotations referenced with the mentor. The participants implicitly position her humanist as she adopts humanistic approach to teaching, provides emotional support for the students, uses humour in the classroom and motivate them as voiced by them. The following anecdote from Sena's data reveals how mentor teacher provides emotional support for her students.

My mentor teacher supports students about their daily life problems. The students sometimes mention about their personal problems during the lesson, and she provides support for each. She tries hard to find a solution to their problems which sometimes becomes redundant. She behaves to her students quite kindly. She knows them very well (Sena, 36:2).

The other interactive positionings of the mentor teacher were not discussed since the number of references quite few and it does not make significance.

Positioning supervisor. The analysis of the data revealed that all four participants made references to four interactive subject positions for the supervisor who was responsible for monitoring and guiding the practicum experience that are "instructional coach, guide, critic, and master" as discussed before.

Central in the beliefs of all four participants was the supervisor was a "guide" who monitored and supervised them during their clinical experience period and provided constructive feedback about their strengths and weaknesses. Especially, Hande made strong positive references to the positional identity of the supervisor as a guide and explicitly voiced his contribution to handle critical emergency online practicum experience period.

My university supervisor has guided us this term and he has helped us manage this online term. He has informed us about the process and expectations. He has observed my online practicum and given personal feedback. He has shown me both my good sides and bad sides (Hande, 29:8).

Sena like Hande positioned her supervisor as a "guide" but she made references to another subject position, which is "instructional coach." For Sena, the supervisor is a formal agent who leads her reflecting on teaching and enhances her professional knowledge about teaching as given in the following quotation.

My university supervisor helped us to deal with this period. He has given us any information that we needed during our practicum experience. We can communicate

> with him in formal ways. We can ask any questions about the practicum experience to our university supervisor. He observes our lessons and gives us feedback individually. He gives us feedback in detail. Without him I wouldn't reflect on my good and bad sides in teaching. Thanks to him, I learned lots of things about how to give a lesson to young learners (Sena, 36:6).

Positioning his supervisor as a "guide" as in the previous participants, Ufuk also positioned his supervisor as a "master" by making stronger references and distancing himself by reflexively positioning self as an "appentice" describing him as a craftsman shaping an instrument as reflected in the following anecdote

> I can easily say that I would position myself like an apprentice of a master, and I would position my supervisor as a master. I always say that too much theoretical information is unnecessary for some jobs. I think that for being a teacher, learning too much information is unnecessary. In this case, our supervisor helps me to clean my mind by deleting unnecessary information indirectly and lead me to focus on how to teach (Ufuk, 18:6).

In addition to the interactive positioning of supervisor as "guide" Yusuf positioned his supervisor as a "critic". By doing this, Yusuf exposes his perception about the role of supervisor as someone who criticizes prospective teachers' actions and thus voices the alignment between his beliefs and the subject positions that he adheres to his supervisor as presented in the following quote.

> I was expecting my supervisor to criticize us and counsel us. To a high extent, I have experienced the things that I expected. I have seen my strengths and weaknesses; thanks to the honest and constructive feedback he provided (Yusuf, 12:18).

RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

Positioning mentors. Both learning journals and semi structured interview data of each participant included several explicit and implicit references to the mentor's teaching practices which they both identify and distance themselves with the subject positions that they adhere to their mentor teacher. However, what is common in all four participants is that they all strongly position their mentor teacher who has been teaching English for about 15 years as a "traditional-typical teacher". The findings revealed that nearly 71 % of the quotations referenced with the mentor were associated with the code labels within "traditional-typical" subcategory. The participants, while positioning their mentor teacher as a traditional-typical teacher, distanced themselves from this subject position which significantly impacted their identity negotiation since they avoided to employ her teaching practices into their teaching practices as revealed by the classroom observation data. This positioning also led to the construction of another positional identity for the mentor teacher as "poor role model" despite a few instances of references that she was perceived as "strong role model" because of her humanistic approach to teaching.

The participants positioned their mentor teacher as "traditional typical" because of using traditional teaching activities in online classroom setting, poor classroom management, dependence on the coursebook, poor error correction, using first language as class language, inadaptability to distant education, being poor language model for students, limited interaction and lacking positive feedback for students respectively on the basis of frequency of code labels respectively. The following quotes selected randomly represent how the participants distance themselves from the positional identity that they assigned to their mentor teacher while explicitly voicing her lacks as an effective language teacher and strong role model for them.

> The teaching strategies of our mentor teacher are casual and indefinite in my perspective. In the presentation part, there is mostly a blank screen with

grammatical rules that are given explicitly. As we know it is acceptable for some grammar elements to teach deductively. But as I have seen the presentation part in one case, I do not have enough clue to make a statement about her presentation strategies of the language. But, for the practice part, I can pretty much say that it is overwhelming. Entire of the courses is built upon the practice part. It is series of books or worksheet exercises that we used to. No special activity for a specific classroom is made (Yusuf, 2:18).

If a student answers questions incorrectly, she says how you can't remember this topic! You must do this; you should know it etc.! In my opinion, these teacher reactions are not appropriate especially for young learners. They may not attend to the lesson, or they may lose their motivation because of these behaviours. Also, they may be afraid of answering questions because of fear of being reprimanded (Sena, 40:6).

The other position that the participants adhere to their mentor teacher is "humanist" but the number of references to this position is quite limited in number and low in frequency when it is compared with the previous subject position. A total of 15 quotations were attached to the code labels within humanist sub-category which corresponds to 15 % of the total number of quotations referenced with the mentor. The participants implicitly position her humanist as she adopts humanistic approach to teaching, provides emotional support for the students, uses humour in the classroom and motivate them as voiced by them. The following anecdote from Sena's data reveals how mentor teacher provides emotional support for her students.

My mentor teacher supports students about their daily life problems. The students sometimes mention about their personal problems during the lesson, and she provides support for each. She tries hard to find a solution to their problems which sometimes becomes redundant. She behaves to her students quite kindly. She knows them very well (Sena, 36:2).

The other interactive positionings of the mentor teacher were not discussed since the number of references quite few in number and it does not make significance.

Positioning supervisor. The analysis of the data revealed that all four participants made references to four interactive subject positions for the supervisor who was responsible for monitoring and guiding the practicum experience that are "instructional coach, guide, critic, and master" as discussed before.

Central in the beliefs of all four participants was the supervisor was a "guide" who monitored and supervised them during their clinical experience period and provided constructive feedback about their strengths and weaknesses. Especially, Hande made strong positive references to the positional identity of the supervisor as a guide and explicitly voiced his contribution to handle critical emergency online practicum experience period.

My university supervisor has guided us this term and he has helped us manage this online term. He has informed us about the process and expectations. He has observed my online practicum and given personal feedback. He has shown me both my good sides and bad sides (Hande, 29:8).

Sena like Hande positioned her supervisor as a "guide" but she made references to another subject position, which is "instructional coach." For Sena, the supervisor is a formal agent who leads her reflecting on teaching and enhances her professional knowledge about teaching as given in the following quotation.

My university supervisor helped us to deal with this period. He has given us any information that we needed during our practicum experience. We can communicate with him in formal ways. We can ask any questions about the practicum experience to our university supervisor. He observes our lessons and gives us feedback

individually. He gives us feedback in detail. Without him I wouldn't reflect on my good and bad sides in teaching. Thanks to him, I learned lots of things about how to give a lesson to young learners (Sena, 36:6).

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DISCUSSION

This paper aimed to investigate how four preservice ELT teachers position themselves and others, their mentor teacher and supervisor namely during online practicum experience because of COVID 19 lockdown and how these positionings impacted their professional identity development.

The study revealed that identity construction of preservice teacher is a sophisticated and dynamic process in which the preservice teachers are constructing variety of conflicting self-positions contrasting with their teaching practices in the classroom as suggested by Kayi-Aydar (2015) and Arvaja (2016). It was observed that all four participants implemented contradictory practices into their practice teaching sessions to the subject positions that they claimed. This could be attributed partially to the rapid and unprepared transition to digitalised practicum experience which caught key agencies of education flat-footed, posed variety of challenges and obliged teachers to hold onto their traditional teaching practices in online classroom setting. In this sense, the preservice teachers were deprived of a valuable field experience since the mentors could not present an effective role model unfortunately and fulfil their mentoring duties because of the inadaptability to the emergency remote teaching as suggested by Ersin and Atay (2021). Also, practicum experience provides an invaluable, on-site, hands-on experience for the preservice teachers that they build a bridge between theory and practice, but the pandemic left them short of real classroom environment which could have seriously impacted their identity development. This drawback is clearly articulated in the voice of Yusuf:

I think, we all know why the distance education has affected us negatively during our practicum. We still lack a correct example of real classroom experience. We just couldn't experience it. I, basically have little idea about a real classroom environment and it is not enough for me. I wish we could experience a real classroom environment to gain familiarity with students and enhance our teaching skills.

Within this perspective, it could be argued that the participants depended on their personal theories and beliefs while they were constructing identity positions themselves which has a significant impact on the teaching beliefs of the participants (Arvaja, 2016; Kagan, 1992 as cited in Roberts, 1998) because of the lack of direct experience in real classroom environment. In this sense, the positions that they claim for themselves as prospective teachers are closely related to their prior concerns such as controlling students' survival in the classroom and maintaining self-confidence and their perception of self as competent as suggested by Roberts (1998).

The findings further revealed that the participants constructed conflicting positional identities contrasting with their teaching practices which could be attributed to the complex and dynamic nature of identity construction that is extensively structured by personal images of teaching. Despite their positioning of themselves as competent, caring, responsive and reflective, they reflected teaching practices that contradicts with these subject positions as discussed before. In this sense, the study provides correlating finding with the study of Kayi-Aydar (2015) suggesting that preservice teachers constantly construct conflicting positional identities which affords or constraints teacher agencies.

With respect to interactive positioning, the participants positioned their mentor teachers as a typical teacher who employs traditional teaching practices into the classroom and thus a poor role model for them. While positioning her as a typical-traditional teacher and a poor role model, the participants recursively distanced themselves from their mentor teacher and thus most of the time positioned themselves implicitly through opposition as teachers who were the exact opposite of their mentor teacher in variety of pedagogical aspects which is assumed to influence their professional identity development strongly as claimed by Sosa and Gomez (2012) and Kayi-Aydar (2015).

Also, the study provided findings concerning the relational aspect of positioning (Harre & van Langenhove, 1999) especially in terms of power issue. While the participants were positioning their supervisor as critic, guide, instructional coach, and master, they implicitly and unconsciously positioned themselves powerless and positioned their supervisor powerful as they did not voice any critics to his applications while he was fulfilling his roles. This could be attributed to another subject positions that the participants attached to the supervisor as an assessor of teaching performances during practicum experience that was strengthened in their personal belief systems. This was clearly observable especially in Ufuk's statements who was strictly criticizing initial teacher training course at the university addressing to the professors' ineffectiveness in providing theoretical information but escaping from criticizing the supervisor who was also a member of the department at the university as seen in the following quote.

> I don't like theoretical information much. I like to learn new things by doing or watching. Therefore, except for some lessons about methodology of teaching and psychology, I think most of the theoretical courses provided by the university were unnecessary. These lessons could be necessary for my classmates or some students in different universities, but I can't say that these are beneficial lessons to develop my teaching skills because of the workload density of instructors or ineffective teaching strategies of some professors (Ufuk,17:1).

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate professional identity construction of preservice ELT teachers within the positioning theory framework during COVID 19 rooted emergency remote practicum period since it has not been adequately addressed in the relevant literature. In line with this purpose, the study documented that the identity construction of preservice teachers is rather complex and multifaceted in nature, and it is deeply rooted in their personal interpretative framework as they were recursively constructing conflicting

subject positions for themselves that are contrasting with their teaching practices and for the others through distancing themselves on the basis of their personal images of teaching. The study further reported that digitalised practice teaching was not a powerful intervention for the preservice teachers in Turkey since the stakeholders were not able to properly adapt to the process and fulfil their responsibilities as expected. In this respect, it is assumed that the study contributed to the literature by providing new insights into the professional identity development of prospective teachers through positioning theory and calling for necessary regulations in distant initial teacher training courses to enhance prospective teacher's practicum experiences.

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