Classroom Observation at Hogwarts: A Genetic Analysis of a Preservice English Teacher's Identity Development

Observación de aula en Hogwarts: análisis genético del desarrollo de la identidad de una docente de inglés en formación

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This qualitative study focuses on the identity development of an English language preservice teacher during a series of classroom observation activities that involved analysing filmic representations of fictional teachers. Data were collected through video observations, script-based tasks, group discussions, and semi-structured interviews. Data were analysed at three levels: microgenetic (identity development process from thinking to speaking), ontogenetic (meanings about the self and the teaching profession), and sociocultural (fictional classrooms and teacher education contexts). Results evidenced that the participant's beliefs and conceptions about language learning and teaching, possible selves, and inner dilemmas played a role in identity development. In conclusion, interaction with the *Harry Potter* series as a cultural and pedagogical artefact in the virtual practicum contributed to the participant's identity development.

Keywords: fictional teachers, identity development, preservice teachers, sociocultural theory, Vygotsky's genetic method

Este estudio cualitativo analiza el desarrollo de la identidad de una profesora de inglés en formación durante una práctica virtual que implicó el análisis de representaciones cinematográficas de profesores ficticios. Los datos se recopilaron mediante observaciones, tareas basadas en guiones, discusiones grupales y entrevistas semiestructuradas. El análisis involucró tres niveles: microgenético, ontogenético y sociocultural. Los resultados evidenciaron que las creencias y concepciones de la participante sobre el aprendizaje y la enseñanza de lenguas, los posibles "yo" y los dilemas internos desempeñaron un papel en el desarrollo de su identidad. En conclusión, la interacción con la serie de Harry Potter como artefacto cultural y pedagógico en la práctica virtual contribuyó al desarrollo de la identidad de la participante.

Palabras clave: desarrollo de la identidad, docentes ficticios, método genético de Vygotsky, teoría sociocultural

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Introduction

Learning to teach is an active identity-making process, and teacher identity development has garnered increasing attention in teacher education (Beijaard, 2019; Flores, 2020). Developing a teacher identity involves personal factors, such as one's biography, learning history, and beliefs about education (Beijaard, 2019). However, teacher identity is also deeply sociocultural, shaped through social interactions and mediated by tools, symbols, and contexts (Solari, 2017). This study explores teacher identity as a dynamic, dialogic process in which meanings about teaching and oneself are negotiated within specific contexts.

Existing research highlights the importance of sociocultural frameworks in understanding teacher identity, linking it to sociogenesis (social and historical contexts), mesogenesis (local communities of practice), ontogenesis (personal meanings about teaching), and microgenesis (moment-to-moment identity construction; Solari & Martín Ortega, 2022). While many studies examine the role of artefacts and situated learning environments, the construction of preservice teacher identities in imagined contexts, such as those presented in films and literature, remains underexplored.

This study addresses this gap by investigating how a preservice teacher's identity evolves during a 12-week online course in classroom observation at an English language teaching education programme (ELTEP) in Türkiye. Conducted with a preservice teacher during the COVID-19 pandemic, the course engaged her in discussions and reflections on fictional teacher characters from the *Harry Potter* film and book series. The study aims to understand how interaction with these fictional characters influences the construction of preservice teacher identity, using a sociocultural framework that emphasises the genetic method and semiotic artefacts. By focusing on this unique context, we seek to contribute to the understanding of how imagined and real-life contexts intersect in shaping teacher identity.

Theoretical Framework

Teacher Identity Development

Teacher identity has gained significant attention in teacher education, with researchers recognising its critical role in shaping teachers' professional behaviours and practices (Beijaard, 2019; Flores, 2020). Teacher identity is not a static trait but an evolving construct that is formed and reformed through social interactions, personal experiences, and cultural contexts. From a sociocultural perspective, teacher identity is understood as a dynamic, relational, and sociohistorically situated process (Solari, 2017). Vygotsky (1978) argues that higher mental functions, including identity, emerge through social interaction, with culture and context playing a fundamental role in shaping these processes. This view emphasises that identity is co-constructed in social contexts and through engagement with symbolic tools, such as language, artefacts, and narratives.

Sociocultural Perspective on Teacher Identity

Recently, studies on identity (Solari & Martín Ortega, 2022) have built on Vygotsky's (1978) ideas by offering a reconceptualisation of teacher identity formation as a relational, dialogic, sociohistorically situated, and dynamic process. Assimilation refers to a teacher's alignment with a group or community of practice, where shared values, beliefs, and practices define their identity. Differentiation, on the other hand, involves teachers' conscious efforts to distinguish themselves from others, emphasising their uniqueness within the broader educational context. This relational nature of identity construction underscores the importance of the social environment and the tools used in these interactions.

The dialogical meanings that teachers ascribe to themselves and their profession are not only declared in words but also enacted through practices that involve gestures, actions, and positionality (Solari & Martín Ortega, 2022). These enacted meanings provide insight

into how teachers perform their identities, revealing the complexities of self-concept in the context of their teaching practice.

While much of the research on teacher identity focuses on real-world interactions within schools and communities, Falsafi (2010) introduces the concept of "imagined contexts," which are derived from literature, films, and other forms of media. These imagined spaces allow teachers to reflect on and negotiate their identities outside the immediate constraints of their lived experiences. Caviglia and Delfino (2009) refer to these contexts as "commonplaces," offering reflective opportunities for preservice teachers to engage with narratives and symbols that may challenge or reinforce their beliefs about teaching.

Fictional texts, such as the *Harry Potter* series, offer rich, multifaceted portrayals of teachers and their pedagogical practices, enabling preservice teachers to explore a range of teaching styles and philosophies in an imaginative yet reflective manner (Yeşilbursa, 2018). Shaffer (2017) notes that the *Harry Potter* series offers a diverse array of teaching practices and teacher characters that can serve as a platform for analysing educational theories and teacher behaviours. However, while research has examined various aspects of teaching in the fictional world of Hogwarts (Birch, 2008; Helfenbein, 2008), few studies have explored how engagement with these fictional characters influences the professional identity development of preservice teachers.

Although there is extensive literature on teacher identity development, a gap remains in understanding how preservice teachers engage with fictional materials—such as those found in popular media—and how this engagement influences their professional identity. To date, there has been limited research into how preservice teachers' interaction with pedagogical narratives, such as the *Harry Potter* series, contributes to their evolving sense of self as teachers. The present study aims to fill this gap by examining how a preservice teacher's identity develops during a 12-week online course in classroom observation, where she observes teacher characters from the *Harry Potter* series.

By exploring the role of semiotic artefacts, such as films and books, in the construction of preservice teachers' identity, this study contributes to the growing body of research on the sociocultural dimensions of teacher identity. In particular, it extends existing research on teacher identity by focusing on how engagement with fictional teaching scenarios can shape preservice teachers' self-perceptions and professional beliefs. This study provides new insights into how imagined contexts can serve as powerful tools for reflection and identity formation in teacher education. In line with this goal, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do the Hogwarts professors influence a preservice teacher's beliefs about language learning and teaching in an online classroom observation course?
2. What does this influence reveal about the participant's identity development?

Method

This qualitative case study investigates the professional identity development of a preservice teacher in her third year of an ELTEP at a large state university in Türkiye. ELTEPs in Türkiye typically offer a range of courses, including subject matter knowledge (e.g., academic writing, speaking, listening, and reading skills), pedagogical knowledge (e.g., educational psychology, classroom management, inclusive education), pedagogical content knowledge (e.g., approaches and methods in ELT, teaching language skills, and teaching English to young learners), and world knowledge (e.g., history, information technologies) (Güngör, 2020). In the third year of the programme, preservice teachers begin to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application through subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge courses. In their final year, they undertake a practicum to refine their teaching skills in authentic settings.

The study took place during the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically the 2020–2021 Spring semester, when the participant was engaging in distance education due to lockdown restrictions. This context of virtual learning provided a unique opportunity to examine her identity development in an online environment. The course that provides the framework for the current study was a 12-week online course in classroom observation that we had designed and was independent of the teacher education programme. Participation was informed and voluntary.

Research Design and the Participant

As a qualitative case study, this research allows for a deeper exploration of the ways in which a preservice teacher's professional identity evolves over time within a specific virtual context. Stake (1995) emphasises that case studies of this nature can reveal the connections between personal and social factors, between individual agency and structural influences, and between micro and macro-level processes, offering rich insights into identity development. For the purposes of this study, we focused on one participant, Demet (a pseudonym), to closely investigate the process of her professional identity construction throughout the course. She was attending the class with a group of 10 preservice teachers at the time of the study. Although other preservice teachers participated in the course activities, we solely focused on her due to her active involvement in the classes and regular engagement with the tasks. She was 21 years old and came from a small city in Central Anatolia. During high school, she loved her English teacher, which led her to decide to become a language teacher. We co-taught the online observation lessons on a weekly basis, collecting data simultaneously. In this article, we have used the term "preservice teacher" to refer to teacher candidates in the programme, and "professor" to refer to teachers teaching at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Online Observation Course Programme

Rationale for Using the *Harry Potter* Series

The *Harry Potter* film series offers a rich portrayal of diverse teachers, each with complex identities, within the same school setting (Wong, 2014). The continuity of characters throughout the series allows for an examination of the development of both the students and their relationships with teachers over time. In this study, the series provides a unique "commonplace" (Thomas, 2018) that teachers can engage with to reflect on their beliefs about teaching. We chose to focus on five teachers— Severus Snape, Sybill Trelawney, Gilderoy Lockhart, Remus Lupin, and Dolores Umbridge—because their classroom practices and personal characteristics offer contrasting models of teaching that reveal distinct pedagogical beliefs. These teachers' varied approaches, from Snape's authoritarianism to Lupin's student-centred pedagogy, provide valuable material for exploring how the participant's identity is shaped by these representations of teaching and authority (Yeşilbursa, 2020).

Materials and Procedure

Building on Lemke's (2000) perspective that relationships between processes across different timescales should be investigated using semiotic artefacts like films and books, Demet engaged with both video observations and script-based tasks. The aim was to observe and reflect on classroom dynamics in both immediate (microgenesis) and broader (ontogenesis) contexts. The process began with video observations and script-based tasks, continued with group discussions, and concluded with a semi-structured interview with Demet.

Video observations. Over 12 weeks, Demet observed 10 video clips taken from the *Harry Potter* film series, each featuring one of five key teachers: Snape, Trelawney, Lockhart, Lupin, and Umbridge. These clips were selected for their depiction of varied teaching practices and teacher–student interactions. The focus

of the video observations was on non-linguistic aspects of teaching, such as classroom environment, teacher entrances, body language, and student reactions. Demet viewed these videos independently before completing the associated tasks. The total duration of the video clips varied, but collectively they represented critical moments of classroom interaction that were relevant to the study's focus on identity and pedagogical beliefs.

Script-based tasks. Following each video observation, Demet engaged in 10 script-based tasks. Each task presented an excerpt from the scene she had just viewed, with the accompanying stage directions. She was guided to analyse the fictional teachers' pedagogical beliefs as reflected in the discourse, and their approaches to classroom interaction. Specific questions were posed regarding each teacher's beliefs about learning, teaching, and the classroom dynamics. The tasks encouraged her to reflect on what she had learned about teaching from observing each character. She was asked to document her insights individually before participating in group discussions.

Group discussions. After completing the video observation and script-based tasks, Demet took part in 10 group discussions held via Zoom. Demet and the other 10 preservice teachers were randomly assigned to breakout rooms (groups of 4–5) for each session, where they discussed their reflections and responses to the tasks. These discussions enabled Demet to compare her views on teaching, critique the observed teaching practices, and reflect on her own beliefs about education. Each session was audio-recorded for later analysis. Discussions lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

Semi-structured interviews. Demet was interviewed twice in total, once at the beginning and once at the end of the 12-week course, through semi-structured interviews. These two interviews provided an opportunity to explore her overall experiences, reflections on how the online course impacted her teaching beliefs, and the role of the *Harry Potter* material in shaping her professional identity. The interviews allowed for both

guided questions and flexibility to explore individual experiences in depth. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data Collection Process

Data for this study were collected from multiple instruments, each designed to capture distinct dimensions of Demet's identity construction within the online course context. These instruments and their specific contributions are as follows:

3. **Video recordings:** Weekly discussion sessions during the 12-week online course were recorded, resulting in a total of 12 video recordings, each lasting approximately 60–120 minutes. These recordings captured the participant's moment-to-moment social interactions, declared meanings, I-positions, and negotiations of her professional identity in a collaborative setting.

4. **Personal teaching philosophy (PTP) narratives:** At the beginning of the course, Demet submitted a written narrative outlining her personal teaching philosophy. These narratives provided insights into her initial beliefs about teaching, learning, and the role of teachers.

5. **Individual reflective tasks (IRTs):** Demet completed two reflective tasks per week over the 12-week period. While IRT 1 focused on the non-linguistic aspects of observed Hogwarts professors—such as classroom management, teaching styles, and interactions with students—IRT 2 examined Demet's interpretations of script-based tasks, emphasising professors' pedagogical beliefs and lessons derived from their teaching practices.

6. **Semi-structured interview (SSI):** After the course ended, a final semi-structured interview was conducted. This interview explored Demet's overall reflections on the online course, her evolving teaching philosophies, and her perceptions of how the course influenced her identity development.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was guided by Vygotsky's (1978) genetic method, which operates across three interconnected levels: microgenetic, ontogenetic, and sociocultural. This approach aligns with the sociocultural theory, enabling a comprehensive understanding of how professional identity develops in specific contexts. Microgenetic analysis focused on moment-to-moment meaning negotiations during Demet's interactions in the online course, capturing her declared meanings, I-positions, and social interaction patterns. Ontogenetic analysis examined changes in Demet's self-conceptions and professional beliefs, emphasising the interplay between established and emergent teacher identities. Finally, sociocultural analysis contextualised her identity development within the dual settings of the online course and ELTEP in Türkiye, highlighting the influence of sociocultural and institutional factors.

The analysis followed a systematic process, beginning with transcription and coding. Transcriptions were created for the 12 video recordings of weekly discussion sessions and one semi-structured interview conducted after the course. These transcripts provided rich data for examining Demet's reflections, interactions, and meaning negotiations. Written data from her personal teaching philosophy narratives and individual reflective tasks were also incorporated into the analysis without transcription. A constant comparison method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) was employed to ensure a rigorous and iterative analysis process, structured across two dimensions: horizontal and vertical.

Horizontal analysis examined Demet's reflections on each Hogwarts professor as represented in the video observation and script tasks. This level of analysis focused on her interpretations, observations, and reactions, specifically related to her beliefs about language learning and teaching. The analysis captured her declared meanings and group-level discussions, offering insights into her pedagogical reasoning and critical reflections. In contrast, vertical analysis delved

into her broader identity development trajectories. It explored her possible selves, including both hoped-for and feared teacher identities, as well as the tensions and challenges she encountered during the course. This dimension also investigated shifts in her professional beliefs and conceptualisations of competent teaching.

Data were coded both deductively and inductively, guided by predetermined categories such as declared meanings, pedagogical beliefs, and identity-related tensions, while allowing emergent themes to surface during the iterative process. *Mindmup* was utilised to facilitate organisation, comparison, and triangulation across data sources. Triangulation was a critical component of the analysis, as data from multiple instruments—video recordings, written narratives, reflective tasks, and interviews—were cross-referenced to identify consistent patterns and address discrepancies. This methodological triangulation enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings, ensuring that the interpretations were well-grounded in the data.

By employing this multi-layered approach to analysis, the study was able to provide a nuanced understanding of Demet's professional identity construction. The integration of microgenetic, ontogenetic, and sociocultural perspectives not only illuminated the complexity of identity development but also situated the findings within the broader landscape of teacher education research.

Findings

Horizontal Aspect: Beliefs About Language Learning

Snape. Professor Severus Snape teaches the "Potion Making" class to first-year students at Hogwarts (Columbus, 2001, 00:49:00). In the video, it is observed that he is favouring certain students and believes that only those who possess a predisposition (innate capacity) to the subject can pass the class. Demet criticised him for his favouritism towards certain students, harsh manners,

and assigning difficult tasks to the rest of the students, which instilled fear and intimidation. He is observed failing to assist or scaffold students who are not paying attention, instead subjecting them to belittlement in front of the entire class. Demet stated: "I feel his cruelty and unfairness towards students in the class. I do not want to see Snape bullying me or asking me to do difficult tasks in front of others" (IRT 1).

Demet believed language learning takes place in a relaxed atmosphere and requires positive communication, paying attention to students' individual learning needs, styles, and preferences (PTP). Hence, shy and introverted students may not feel confident in their class, fearing they will make mistakes. She believed the English language has reached the status of a global language, so learning it requires the transition of cultures, traditions, feelings, and the use of authentic materials and media beyond traditional boundaries (PTP). Therefore, she criticised that there was no room for interaction, collaboration, or scaffolding in Snape's class, which are all thought to be requirements for a natural language learning process (SSI). Here, what she believed about learning a language appeared to be established.

Lockhart. The video opens with a scene of students chatting in the classroom. Professor Lockhart enters the class from the top of the staircase (Columbus, 2002, 00:34:00). He is shown as a stylish and attractive teacher, considering his clothing, hairstyle, and manners. While he comes downstairs, he introduces himself, his talents, and his success. However, when he starts the activity he has brought to class, he demonstrates that he is unable to manage it. Chaos erupts, and Lockhart escapes from the classroom, leaving the students to handle the situation on their own.

Based on Professor Lockhart's position at the beginning of the scene (at the top of the stairs), Demet inferred that "he tries to give the message: 'I'm superior to you.'" She also argues that students would respect teachers who show that they know the subject and know what they are doing (IRT 2). However, Lockhart clearly did not

have a backup plan, as was evident during the disruptive situation. Thus, Demet found him an irresponsible and incompetent teacher. Given his inability to start the first day of the class, plan the lesson, manage the class, and give instructions, she felt learning would not occur in such a class (SSI).

Trelawney. This video clip is about Professor Trelawney's first divination class (Cuarón, 2004, 00:34:00). The seating is organised in groups so that students can collaborate and interact with each other. There are cups (authentic materials) and class materials on the round tables. This reminds Demet of the recommended seating arrangement in the desuggestopedia method (SSI). Trelawney welcomes students and introduces the syllabus through positive and inclusive language (e.g., we, my children): "Welcome, my children. In this room, you shall explore the noble art of Divination . . . This term, we'll focus on Tasseomancy, the art of reading tea leaves." Demet stated: "She is trying to include students in the humanistic learning process and to create a positive, powerful relationship with them, and a stress-free and safe classroom atmosphere" (IRT 1).

For Demet, Trelawney's body language encouraged and motivated students at the beginning of the lesson, fostering curiosity about the topic. She believes this is an important aspect of creating learner-centred classes (PTP). Trelawney is thought to show her trust, affection, and passion for the students. Demet, who sees language learners as whole individuals and advocates for the importance of a humanistic approach in learning a foreign language (PTP), praises Trelawney's positive talk:

> She probably wants her students to be actively involved in the learning process. Her use of "we" language and "my children" shows that she truly loves teaching and her students. I think if students feel the love, they will learn better. (SSI)

Here, one of Demet's language learning beliefs in her personal teaching philosophies appeared to be reflected in Trelawney's class.

Lupin. The video opens with a scene of students standing up in the classroom in front of a wardrobe (Cuarón, 2004, 00:47:00). The class activity is to cope with a "boggart," a magical creature that takes the shape of what a person fears most, and which is hidden in the wardrobe. Lupin is among the students and starts the lesson by eliciting a definition of a boggart and its salient features. To do this, he asks yes-no questions, wh-questions, and question tags. Simultaneously, he provides feedback on each student's answer and elaborates further.

Demet first focused on the use and purpose of Lupin's questions for positive classroom interaction. For her, these elicitation questions were posed to help students make connections to the new information by using what they already know, arouse their curiosity, activate their background knowledge, prepare them for the lesson, and smoothly transition from the pre-stage to the main activity. Particularly, she noted down her preferred feedback types, discussed feedback and error correction techniques, and compared the ones she had learnt in the ELTEP with those of Lupin's (SSI). Keeping eye contact with the class, Lupin provides positive reinforcement (e.g., "terrific," "good") to each student who answers, encouraging active participation. Demet highly appreciated the active participation of the students, which increases students' readiness levels and activates their previous knowledge at the beginning of the class.

As for Lupin's interactions in such a learning atmosphere, Demet deemed him to be friendly, motivating, and tolerant of students. Demet, who prioritised student and teacher psychology above all (PTP), paid attention to Lupin's positive teacher image through his body language, facial expressions, and words. He addresses students by name and knows the strengths and weaknesses of each student in the class. Students' enthusiasm and willingness to participate in the activity create a warm atmosphere. Noticing Lupin's happiness in the class, Demet assimilated herself with him as being the ideal teacher:

Lupin addresses all learning types: visual, audio, and kinesthetic learning styles. Lupin and I see learning as a process. This process is full of fun, hands-on experience, and application of theory. These are the ideal aspects I'm looking for in my practicum next year. (IRT 2)

Umbridge. Professor Dolores Umbridge is the new Defence Against the Dark Arts (DADA) teacher after Lupin left Hogwarts in the previous movie. In this class, Demet primarily focused on the teachers' effect on the psychology of students and the role of school in educating citizens. The scene begins with some students playing with a paper bird they have made before the teacher arrives (Yates, 2007, 0:34:54). Umbridge enters the classroom from the back and burns the paper bird with her wand. Then, she welcomes the class with a sweet tone. Demet commented: "This behaviour showed us that she could torture students to maintain her authority if necessary" (IRT 1). Disapproving of Umbridge's behaviour, Demet stated by differentiating herself from this teacher:

I don't think that punishment is a solution for misbehaviour. She wants to provide authority and convince students through her polite and soft voice. We are supposed to be encouraging and supportive role models for our students. Instead of harming their mental health [referring to Umbridge's burning the paper bird], we should modify their behaviour and help them develop their identities and protect their mental health, especially during puberty. (SSI)

As Umbridge approaches the stage on the first day of class, she says: "Study hard and you will be rewarded; fail to do so, and the consequences may be severe." Referring to the teacher presence concept, Demet reasoned that Umbridge desired her presence to be felt in the classroom. Determined and critical, Demet argued that schools are contexts where preservice teachers learn how to teach, live, become responsible citizens, and build self-esteem (PTP). Umbridge's focus on the

exams from the first day was unacceptable for Demet. So, she concluded, under these conditions, students would not learn anything.

Even one of the students in the video clip (in this case, Harry, the story's main character) questions and opposes Umbridge's insistence on the theory, as this goes against their needs as fifth-year students. This causes a fierce argument between the teacher and the student. Demet justifies this questioning of authority when the students' needs are not being considered (SSI).

Horizontal Aspect: Beliefs About Language Teaching

Snape. Demet evaluated Snape's teaching from several aspects: his entrance to the class, use of body language and appearance, voice quality, use of questioning strategies, and their effect on students. His stern and loud entrance on the first day of the "Potion Making" class, without greeting the students, was perceived as abnormal. His facial expression was harsh and sceptical. His body was stiff, his shoulders tense, his arms crossed, and his voice authoritarian and insulting, implying that he was angry, unapproachable, and even inaccessible. Demet noticed how Snape hides his hands while interacting in the classroom. She realised that teachers' use of hands is important to catch students' attention in the class (IRT 2). All these aspects led Demet to regard Snape as not espousing the principles of active learning and teaching.

Lockhart. Without giving any instruction or background knowledge, Professor Lockhart freed Cornish pixies (a sort of mischievous fairies), saying, "Let's see what you make of them!" (Columbus, 2002). As Demet states, "a teacher should not expect students to show what they know without giving them the necessary information. Apparently, [Lockhart] knows neither theory nor practical information about those pixies" (IRT 1). In the video, Lockhart struggled to manage the class, and the lesson ultimately ended in chaos. Emphasising the importance of a well-prepared lesson

plan, Demet reasoned: "While preparing an activity, we should think about its aim and students' readiness levels. Here, I see how the lack of pre-activities and input makes a teacher desperate" (IRT 1). Demet differentiated herself from Lockhart by not being able to manage the class, positioning him as an incompetent, conceited, and inexperienced teacher.

Trelawney. At first, Demet found Trelawney's use of intonation effective in catching the students' attention. However, her excessive use of body language made her appear clumsy. The fluctuations in her voice became irritating to Demet. Although this shows Trelawney as excited, cheerful, and extremely enthusiastic, Demet thinks students would feel uneasy during the lesson. In some parts of the video, Trelawney's emotions take over, which gives students a negative impression. Demet criticises this: "If we cannot control ourselves like Trelawney, it is impossible to control and guide students" (IRT 2). Incoherent instructions, absence of feedback, and inconsistent manners led Demet to imply that Trelawney, too, can be a great fortune teller, but she is seemingly an ineffective teacher. She also differentiated herself from Trelawney, as in Lockhart's case.

Lupin. Demet evaluated Professor Lupin's teaching regarding instruction-giving, scaffolding techniques, and classroom interaction. Demet observed Lupin's ways to activate students' schemata through concept-checking questions and giving instructions slowly and step by step. As an example, before the main activity, he guided Neville, the shyest and most introverted student, through calm and motivating instructions. Demet, appreciating Lupin for Neville's sense of achievement, was aware of the impact of Lupin's technique (doing practices for modelling) on the clarity of instructions and the students' emotions. Demet highlighted Lupin's use of authentic materials (a boggart in a wardrobe), which set the stage for experiential learning. Lupin kept asking some intriguing questions, explaining the importance of the activity, warning the students against potential problems, and showing how to do it.

Demet, transforming her theoretical knowledge into her emerging belief, imagined herself in Lupin's shoes while using his techniques. Overall, she assimilated herself with Lupin in these aspects.

Umbridge. Since Umbridge's first day's emphasis was on the examination, Demet thought her teaching would be based on exams rather than getting prepared for real-life situations. As commented above, Umbridge replaced the previous DADA teacher; however, while previous professors used hands-on activities, Umbridge concentrated on theory. For Demet, this leaves no room for practice, student autonomy, or adaptation of the lesson content.

She was also criticised for strictly following the Ministry's curriculum, disregarding students' needs. Here, Demet related Umbridge's profile to teachers who strictly obey the curriculum, especially when this curriculum is too prescriptive.

Her argument with Harry was also the focus of group discussions. Demet found Umbridge unable to answer properly, giving Harry a severe punishment to satisfy her ego (IRT 2). So, she criticised Umbridge for abusing her authority. Demet considers each student as an individual who has their own beliefs, ideas, and needs: "Umbridge's pressure will affect students badly, and this would hinder active learning and teaching in the classroom" (PTP). From this perspective, she seemed to be just the opposite of Umbridge.

Vertical Aspect

At the time of the study, the first author had taught Demet for three years. Demet is a shy, silent, humanistic, and academically successful preservice teacher. In the three years she had been in the programme, she attended the courses regularly and listened to the instructors actively by taking notes all the time. In the interview, she told us that she prefers to keep her opinions to herself until she is asked. For her, a teacher must know her students, their needs, abilities, learning styles, and

preferences well because she believes each student is different (PTP). She saw language teaching as a strategy for training. A teacher must train students according to their individual learning styles and preferences, using appropriate strategies to help them cope with challenges in learning a language. She conceptualised education as the teaching and learning process, which could not be quantified solely through tests or assignments, but rather as the process by which individuals grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially as a whole. She believed in the learner-centred, friendly, and encouraging roles of a teacher (PTP).

Possible Selves

Upon observing all the fictional professors for 12 weeks, Demet confirmed her future self as a teacher who always considers students' individual differences, specific learning needs, and preferences. "Student psychology is of utmost importance for me," she states (PTP). She does not want to become a teacher who ignores students' psychological mood, age-appropriate development, and socio-cultural background. She fears becoming a teacher who is arrogant or angry all the time, like Lockhart or Snape. Nor does she want to become a teacher like Umbridge, who hurts students' feelings, ignores what they need and feel, and uses cruel punishment methods for regulating misbehaviour. Demet rejects Umbridge's school conception as a place for preparing students exclusively for exams. Instead, "schools provide the context for students to prepare them for life, teaching them how to learn, live, become successful and good citizens, and build self-confidence and esteem" (SSI). Demet's influential teacher was her previous English teacher, who was cheerful and supportive, and who improved herself both academically and pedagogically. She had promoted self-confidence in the class just like Lupin did for Neville. Hence, Demet's hoped-for selves relate to Lupin. Due to her sensitivity to students' feelings, she focused on the psychological aspect more during

the programme (PTP). In this respect, Demet found a parallel between her established teacher identity and her personality and personal teaching philosophy.

Demet's Conceptions About Language Learning and Teaching

Considering the classroom atmosphere at Hogwarts, Demet reconceptualised the necessary conditions for language learning and teaching to take place as having a comfortable classroom, motivating students, considering their emotions and abilities, assigning tasks that are not beyond their levels, and never humiliating them in front of the class (SSI). In addition, Umbridge's example reinforced Demet's teaching philosophy, emphasising that EFL teachers should avoid mechanically teaching grammar rules or assigning students lists of words to memorise. This, she believes, "will hinder effective learning and teaching, and grades can only have a short-term motivational effect on students' long-term development" (SSI). She already held such beliefs prior to the programme, but she revisited and confirmed them by watching each professor critically and discussing their actions and reasons from different perspectives. Hence, these conceptions came from her established beliefs. Another of Demet's established beliefs is about student motivation and the use of age-appropriate authentic materials:

> Trelawney taught me that if we motivate our students and lower the affective filter, we may help them participate actively in the lesson through pair or group work activities. Unlike Snape, who asked questions beyond students' levels on the first day, Trelawney positively welcomed students, introduced the syllabus and objectives, and brought authentic materials to students' attention. (SSI)

However, Demet criticised students who were caught in the physical charm of some teachers in language learning. As she watched Lockhart's class, she remembered how she was also fascinated at first by some of her previous teachers and laughed at herself.

Now, she better understood the importance of the first lesson in making a long-lasting, positive impression on students (as demonstrated by Lupin) or revealing the deceptive influence of some superficial traits, such as Lockhart's good appearance or Umbridge's sweet voice, which only hide their incompetence. In the SSI about Lockhart's class, Demet emphasised: "Being ready for the lesson, preparing a good lesson plan, anticipating possible problems and taking precautions before the class, and giving clear instructions all affect classroom management skills and are related to successful language teaching skills."

One of her emerging beliefs was how sociocultural teacher education could be integrated into real teaching classes. She observed this in Lupin's successful use of scaffolding, as demonstrated by an example activity, his facilitator and supportive role, his interaction with students through constructive feedback and step-by-step instructions, and the students' interaction with each other. Her conception of language teaching, which was theoretically taught in methodology classes at the university, was rooted in and reframed from a sociocultural perspective, emerging as a new belief for her.

Demet's Tensions

In Snape's and Umbridge's classes, Demet felt herself an introverted, cowardly, and pressured student. Particularly, Umbridge's warning, "the consequences may be severe," caused Demet to feel insecure. Trelawney's use of "we" language, however, relieved her. Contrary to Umbridge's class, she felt encouraged in Trelawney's. Demet said: "Showing passion, emotions, and enthusiasm in the class like Trelawney is one of the signals for the student-centred and communicative nature of the classroom. In such classes, we can talk about a mutually sincere classroom context" (SSI). However, Lupin's class became her favourite because the scene showed students with a low affective filter and full of energy, motivation, and trust in the teacher. Given the

successful implementation of sociocultural teacher education principles here, Demet found her "soulmate" and became more enthusiastic.

Demet's Perceptions of Becoming a Competent Teacher

"Body language and voice are the first and most impressive aspects that make a teacher seem competent," Demet said. By observing a teacher on the first day, she thought she could understand her identity and personality. Once she forms an impression, she claims it would be hard for her to think the opposite until she has new experiences. As she observed in Trelawney's classroom, seating design, authentic material use, emphasis on students' past experiences and emotions, and the use of "we" language create a positive classroom atmosphere and imply "teachers' love" in the classroom. This contributes to her perception of becoming a competent teacher. However, as observed in Trelawney's and Lockhart's classes, Demet believed that no matter how much teachers know about a subject or how cool they seem, unless they convey the message through appropriate teaching techniques, take into account learning preferences, and spare room for experiential teaching, they will not be able to teach effectively (SSI). Aspects such as Lupin's teacher knowledge, pedagogical skills, backup plans, supportive use of language, questioning techniques, and classroom management skills appeared to become established beliefs of hers at the end of the programme.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study explored the multifaceted process of a preservice teacher's identity construction within a reflective, virtual learning environment. We examined how Demet interpreted and reflected on her beliefs about language learning and teaching through her engagement with fictional Hogwarts professors in an online classroom observation course. In response to the first research question, we identified how various reflective course tools, such as individual reflective tasks

and written personal teaching philosophy narratives, contributed to the participant's evolving professional identities.

Reflective tasks served as discursive resources (Solari & Martín Ortega, 2022) that enabled Demet to critically evaluate and align her beliefs with those demonstrated by fictional teaching characters. For instance, her identification with Lupin reflected a desire to emulate learner-friendly, encouraging teaching practices, which resonates with Ruohotie-Lyhty et al.'s (2021) findings on the interplay between success, appreciation, and recognition in identity development. Simultaneously, the critical evaluation of Trelawney's perceived ineffectiveness prompted a re-evaluation of Demet's beliefs, underscoring the significance of collaborative inquiry spaces for fostering critical reflection (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019). For teacher educators, we suggest incorporating narrative writing, group discussions, and multimodal resources into teacher education programmes to support preservice teachers in critically engaging with their evolving roles as educators.

Written narratives provided further insights into Demet's personal teaching philosophies, revealing declared meanings and possible selves. Her reflections highlighted her commitment to differentiated instruction and preparedness, linking these qualities to her interpretations of Lupin's classroom practices and Lockhart's shortcomings. This process aligns with Garner and Kaplan's (2019) emphasis on integrating personal and professional aspects of identity in teacher education. Moreover, as Demet engaged in narrative writing, she began to see herself as both a teacher and an individual, aligning with Flores's (2020) assertion that reflective practices facilitate the transition between student and teacher identities.

In addressing the second research question, participation in the online course offered Demet alternative contexts to reimagine teacher identity beyond her existing educational environment. Observing the teaching practices of Hogwarts professors through a critical lens

enabled her to connect these fictional representations to her past experiences and future aspirations. For instance, Lupin emerged as a model for effective teaching, while Snape and Umbridge represented negative influences, such as authoritarianism and rigid institutional policies (Ruohotie-Lyhty et al., 2021).

Also, the changes observed in her reflections highlight the dynamic and context-sensitive nature of teacher identity development. Demet's narratives demonstrated how fictional scenarios enabled her to articulate her evolving self-perceptions, transitioning from a student identity to a teacher identity. For example, she contrasted Lockhart's unpreparedness with her aspiration to become a well-prepared and adaptable teacher, using these reflections to articulate her vision of effective teaching. This aligns with Garner and Kaplan's (2019) emphasis on integrating personal and professional growth in teacher education.

The role of *perezhivanie* (Shahri, 2018)—emotional engagement in learning—was also evident as Demet reflected on her experiences with fictional professors. Her emotional attachment to Lupin's empathetic teaching style, in contrast to her critique of authoritarian figures like Snape and Umbridge, underscored how emotional resonance can shape identity construction. In other words, Hogwarts professors acted as reflective tools, enabling her to evaluate, critique, and refine her teaching philosophies. Here, we argue the importance of creating structured, imaginative spaces where preservice teachers can explore the interplay between their established beliefs and emerging identities in teacher education programmes. Teacher educators, therefore, should consider incorporating emotionally engaging materials and activities that foster empathy, self-reflection, and personal growth. These experiences can play a crucial role in helping preservice teachers develop the resilience and adaptability required in the complex realities of teaching.

In addition, this study supports the argument that identity construction is both dynamic and situated,

evolving through interaction with people, contexts, and experiences over time (Wortham, 2006). By using semiotic artefacts from popular culture, such as Hogwarts professors, the virtual programme bridged theoretical knowledge and practical application, enriching the preservice teacher's reflective practices. These findings emphasise the need for teacher educators to integrate innovative, multimodal approaches from popular culture to prepare preservice teachers for the complexities of teaching in diverse and evolving educational landscapes.

Finally, in addition to the contributions of the study, it has several limitations. First, the study relied on an online classroom observation course. While this may offer unique insights into Demet's reflections on fictional teacher models, it may not fully capture the complexities of identity development in more traditional, face-to-face practicum settings. The virtual nature of the study may have limited her opportunities for engaging in face-to-face interactions with mentors or experiencing real-time classroom dynamics, which could influence how her identity is formed and enacted in a practical setting.

Second, while the study highlighted the influence of reflective tasks and narratives, it did not explore the long-term impact of these reflective practices on Demet's professional identity after she entered the workforce. Longitudinal research would be beneficial to investigate how these early experiences shape preservice teachers' teaching practices and self-concept as teachers in the long run.

Third, the use of fictional characters (e.g., Hogwarts professors) as semiotic artefacts was a novel approach, but it may have limited the depth of connection between Demet's reflections and real-world teaching experiences. While these characters provided an imaginative and emotionally engaging lens through which she could explore teacher identities, future studies could compare the impact of fictional vs. real-world teacher role models on preservice teachers' identity development.

Last, we focused on only one participant among a group of 10 preservice teachers. Future studies may explore the interplay between the dynamics of preservice teachers' identities in online or face-to-face group collaborations through the use of movies as artefacts.

As teacher educators, we have long been interested in how preservice teachers make sense of their developing professional identities, particularly in contexts where traditional classroom practices are limited or mediated through alternative experiences, such as online collaboration opportunities. This study was born out of a dual motivation: first, to explore innovative ways to scaffold reflective practice through cultural artefacts such as films; and second, to respond to the need for more dynamic, meaningful observation tasks in preservice teacher education programmes.

The idea of using fictional teachers, particularly those from the *Harry Potter* series, emerged from our observation of how enthusiastically preservice teachers referred to popular culture when discussing teaching styles, classroom management, or ethical dilemmas in the previous courses of the programme. We saw this as an opportunity to bridge preservice teachers' pedagogical choices with their language learning histories, drawing on Vygotsky's genetic method to trace how identity develops over time across different levels of experience and reflection.

In conclusion, this study reflects our commitment to preservice teacher education that is critical, creative, and grounded in sociocultural theory. It offers an example of how we might expand the notion of "observation" in an online classroom beyond the real classroom to include imagined ones that still provoke genuine pedagogical insight.

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