
BECOMING A TEACHER BY CHOICE OR BY CHANCE? A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF IDENTITY AND ENGLISH CONFIDENCE AMONG EFL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

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Abstract

This study investigates how English language confidence is expressed in narratives and identifies the discursive patterns used by pre-service teachers to represent their professional identities. Utilizing a qualitative approach rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis, the study analyzed in-depth interviews with four postgraduate English Education students at Universitas Negeri Makassar, categorized as By Choice and By Chance. Findings reveal that the By Choice group exhibits high linguistic confidence, characterized by intrinsic motivation and narratives of comfort and passion. Discursively, they utilize an Assertive and Passionate Discourse to construct a stable professional identity. Conversely, the By Chance participant expresses confidence as a developmental process of struggle and adaptation, employing an Adaptive and Struggle Discourse driven by external motivation and continuous effort. This research concludes that career motivation is deeply embedded in linguistic representation. While voluntary entry fosters an immediate and stable professional identity, circumstantial entry requires gradual identity construction through experience. Ultimately, CDA proves to be an effective tool for unmasking the hidden connections between language, motivation, and professional self-perception in teacher education.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Professional Identity, English Confidence, Career Motivation*

Introduction

The decision to embark on a career in education is a complex process influenced by a diverse array of internal and external factors that vary significantly among individuals. For many, the path toward the classroom is a deliberate pursuit driven by deep-seated personal interest and an inherent passion for teaching, a trajectory defined as becoming a teacher by choice or a "career of choice." (Başöz, 2021). Conversely, other individuals find themselves entering the profession due to external pressures, such as limited educational alternatives or purely practical considerations regarding job availability, representing a path characterized as becoming a teacher by chance or a "fallback career." (Alghizzi, 2022; Basikin, 2024)

These distinct entry motivations are not merely administrative labels; they form the fundamental basis upon which an individual's professional qualities and mindset are built. Theoretically, the initial impetus for choosing a career serves as the vital foundation that shapes an individual's attitudes, work commitment, and professional identity. In the specific field of English as a Foreign Language education, this foundation is particularly critical because the profession demands a unique combination of pedagogical expertise and linguistic self-assurance. For these teachers, the English language is simultaneously the subject of instruction and the primary vehicle for classroom communication, making confidence in the target language a non-negotiable component of their professional self-image (Injiya, et al 2024).

Despite theories suggesting that career motivation dictates professional development, there is still a significant lack of understanding regarding how these different motivational backgrounds specifically manifest in the way teachers construct their identity and express their confidence through language and communication. This study intends to address the problem of how these underlying motivations influence the discursive patterns and identity formation of pre-service teachers, filling a gap in how we understand the relationship between initial career choice and professional readiness. Recent scholarship in the field of teacher education has increasingly scrutinized the divergence between voluntary and situational career paths. Studies comparing these two groups have consistently found that teachers who enter the profession by choice often demonstrate higher levels of intrinsic motivation (Arfiandhani, et al, 2019)

In contrast, those who enter the profession due to situational factors often face unique challenges in establishing a strong professional commitment (Basikin, 2024). Research indicates that the trajectory of professional development for these two groups involves different discursive patterns, which influence how they navigate the complexities of their early teaching careers. Furthermore, recent findings regarding professional identity and language confidence among pre-service teachers suggest that these two elements are inextricably linked. Professional identity is widely understood as a dynamic construct, a "way of being a certain kind of person", that is continuously negotiated through language and social practice. For English teachers, this identity is heavily dependent on language confidence, which is closely related to self-efficacy: the belief in one's capability to organize and execute the actions required for teaching (Bergil, et al, 2017) These factors serve as critical indicators of teacher quality, as they directly impact how pre-service teachers position themselves within the educational community (Injiya, et al, 2024; Maharani et al, 2022).

Finally, the application of Critical Discourse Analysis has emerged as a robust methodology for uncovering the hidden layers of teacher identity. CDA moves beyond descriptive linguistics to examine how language use is embedded in social practices and systems of power. This approach allows researchers to identify what is foregrounded or excluded in teacher narratives, revealing ideological processes that shape professional self-perception (Krantz, et al, 2022). Summaries of recent discourse-oriented studies show that teachers often use specific linguistic strategies to negotiate their roles, providing a more comprehensive view of the pre-service teacher experience than traditional methods.

A critical analysis of previous scholarship reveals that while teacher motivation, professional identity, and language confidence have been discussed, significant research gaps remain. Many existing studies tend to treat these variables as isolated phenomena, often focusing on measuring them through quantitative instruments such as the FIT-Choice questionnaire (Alghizzi, 2022; Garza-Rodríguez, 2022).

Consequently, there is a lack of deep examination regarding how these elements are actually expressed, constructed, and reflected through the participants' own words and narratives. By prioritizing statistical trends, previous findings often fail to capture the subjective depth and the specific discursive strategies that pre-service teachers employ to negotiate their professional self-image.

Furthermore, existing research rarely explores the specific relationship between the initial reason for choosing the teaching profession and the subsequent way teachers communicate and demonstrate their confidence and identity. There is also a notable scarcity of studies that apply the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis to identify specific language patterns used by teachers to represent their personal experiences and motivations (Maharani et al., 2022). This gap is even more evident in the Indonesian educational context, specifically focusing on pre-service teachers at Universitas Negeri Makassar.

This study will fill these gaps by focusing on the active expression of these concepts and the specific patterns of language used, providing a deeper and more detailed understanding of the topic that has not been sufficiently covered in previous literature.

Based on the problems identified and the gaps found in previous research, this study is specifically designed to achieve its aims. Following these questions, the research objectives are to analyze the manifestation of linguistic confidence within teacher narratives and to identify the discursive patterns used to construct professional identity among those who entered by choice versus by chance. The novelty of this research lies in its shift from traditional measurement-based descriptions toward a critical analysis of how professional concepts are communicated and constructed through language use. Unlike previous studies, this research offers a new perspective by examining the direct link between career motivation and professional self-presentation, providing deeper insights that contribute to the application of Critical Discourse Analysis in the field of English Language Teaching research, particularly within the local context of Universitas Negeri Makassar.

Research Methodology

This research employed a qualitative research design, specifically integrating a case study approach with Critical Discourse Analysis. This design is considered highly appropriate and suitable for answering the research questions because it facilitates an in-depth investigation of social phenomena through the lens of language use and subjective experience (Alghizzi, 2022).

By adopting a case study framework, the researcher can focus on the specificities of the participants' professional journeys, while CDA provides the analytical tools to examine the underlying meanings expressed and the complex identities constructed within their narratives (McAlinden, 2018). This integrated design enables the researcher to explore deeply how linguistic confidence is reflected and what specific discursive patterns are employed by the participants, offering insights that cannot be fully captured by quantitative methods, which often prioritize statistical breadth over narrative depth (Krantz et al, 2022). Ultimately, this qualitative approach is justified as the most relevant for this study because it prioritizes the lived experiences of pre-service teachers and the way they negotiate their professional selves within their unique institutional and social contexts (Maharani et al., 2022).

The population of this research consists of postgraduate students enrolled in the English Language Education program at Universitas Negeri Makassar. To obtain data that is both specific and rich in detail, the research subjects were selected using a purposive sampling technique, which ensures that the participants meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. There are four participants in total, strategically divided into two distinct categories to allow for a contrastive analysis: three participants represent those who became teachers by choice, while one participant represents those who entered the profession by chance (Alghizzi, 2022; Basikin, 2024).

These participants were selected to ensure they represent the two different motivational groups being compared, providing a diverse range of perspectives on professional identity and English confidence. This sampling process is appropriate for the study as it provides highly relevant data for the CDA framework, allowing the researcher to analyze how different initial career motivations manifest in the linguistic representation of their professional identities (Gu & Benson, 2014; Maharani et al., 2022). (Maharani et al., 2022).

The primary technique employed for data collection in this research is the semi-structured interview, a method chosen for its efficacy in eliciting deep personal reflections while maintaining a clear thematic focus. The instrument utilized for this purpose is an interview guide comprising a series of open-ended questions designed to explore the participants' personal backgrounds, their initial motivations for entering the teaching profession, the development of their professional identity, and their perceived confidence in utilizing English (McAlinden, 2018). This instrument was meticulously developed based on the core variables of the study, motivation, and identity, and was prepared to encourage the participants to produce detailed narratives and utilize natural language patterns that reveal their true self-perceptions (Maharani et al., 2022). The data collected through this technique consists of verbal transcripts, specific statements, emotional expressions, and narrative arcs obtained directly from the interview sessions. To ensure the integrity of the data

and the potential for replication, all interviews are recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim into written form, providing a reliable dataset for the subsequent discursive analysis.

The data analysis process for this study follows a logical and rigorous sequence of procedures within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis. The analysis begins with data reduction, a stage where the researcher carefully selects and isolates the most significant portions of the interview transcripts that address the research objectives regarding motivation and identity (Krantz, et al, 2022). This is followed by data display, wherein the information is organized into thematic categories to facilitate the identification of trends and contradictions between the different participant groups. The final stage involves conclusion drawing and verification, where the researcher synthesizes the findings to form a coherent understanding of the participants' professional realities. Specifically, the analysis focuses on identifying how English language confidence is expressed and reflected within the narratives, while simultaneously uncovering the discursive patterns used by the participants to represent their motivations and identities. By scrutinizing the specific choice of words, sentence structures, and linguistic styles, the analysis moves beyond surface-level content to reveal the underlying meanings, ideological perspectives, and power dynamics that shape the pre-service teachers' self-perceptions.

Results and Discussion

Results

1. Description of Participants

The participants in this study consist of four postgraduate students at Universitas Negeri Makassar, specializing in English Language Education. As illustrated in Table 1, the distribution of participants is categorized based on their initial career motivation: "By Choice" and "By Chance."

Table 1. Distribution of Participants by Category

Multinomial Test			
<i>Multinomial Test</i>			
	χ^2	df	p
Multinomial	1.000	1	.317
<i>Note.</i> Chi-squared approximation may be incorrect			
<i>Descriptives</i>			
Group	Observed	Expected: Multinomial	
By Chance	1	2.000	
By Choice	3	2.000	

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the participants ($N=3$) entered the teaching profession "By Choice." This group includes Nurnadiefa, Khairina, and Mukhlisah, all of whom exhibited strong intrinsic motivation and a clear sense of professional calling from the outset of their studies (Dewi, et al, 2023). Conversely, one participant, Putri Dianing Rahayu, was categorized as "By Chance," reflecting extrinsic motivation where the career path was influenced by external circumstances or perceived job availability rather than a primary personal passion for teaching (Diasti, 2021; Ölmez-Çağlar, 2022).

2. Descriptive Statistical Data

The quantitative analysis of the variables reveals a stark contrast between the two groups, particularly in the realm of English language confidence.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variable

Descriptive Statistics ▼						
	Teaching_Experience		English_Confidence		Age	
	By Chance	By Choice	By Chance	By Choice	By Chance	By Choice
Valid	1	3	1	3	1	3
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Median	1.000	1.000	65.00	82.00	26.00	24.00
Mean (arithmetic)	1.000	1.333	65.00	82.33	26.00	24.33
Std. Deviation		0.577		2.517		0.577
Minimum	1.000	1.000	65.00	80.00	26.00	24.00
Maximum	1.000	2.000	65.00	85.00	26.00	25.00

The data in Table 2 highlights a significant difference in English confidence scores. The "By Choice" group reported a mean confidence score of 82.33, with relatively low variance ($SD = 2.517$). In contrast, Putri Dianing Rahayu, representing the "By Chance" category, reported a confidence score of 65.00. While the "By Chance" participant was slightly older (26 years) compared to the "By Choice" group average (24.33 years), this maturity did not correlate with higher language confidence. Similarly, teaching experience was comparable across both groups, suggesting that the confidence gap is more closely aligned with initial career motivation and identity formation rather than mere time spent in the classroom.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest a powerful link between career motivation (choice vs. chance) and the construction of professional identity and language confidence among EFL pre-service teachers.

1. Motivation and the Expression of English Confidence

The significant gap in English confidence scores (82.33 vs. 65.00) indicates that pre-service teachers who choose the profession based on intrinsic interest are more likely to project a robust professional self (Ma, 2022). For Nurnadiefa, Khairina, and Mukhlisah, confidence is not merely a linguistic trait but a discursive performance of their commitment to the field. Research suggests that when identity construction is driven by a "sense of oneself that is more autonomous," individuals are more empowered to navigate the complexities of language teaching.

In contrast, Putri Dianing Rahayu's lower confidence score (65.00) may stem from what literature describes as "identity tension." (Ardi et al., 2023). Those entering the profession "By Chance" often view English as a tool of obligation rather than a medium of self-expression. As noted in similar Indonesian contexts, pre-service teachers often face a "confidence level crisis" during their early practice, which is exacerbated when their entry into the field was not a primary choice (Maharani et al., 2022; Mamat, 2024)

2. Discursive Patterns of Identity and Motivation

Through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, the participants' narratives reveal distinct discursive patterns:

The Discourse of Agency and Investment: The "By Choice" group utilizes agentic language, positioning themselves as active participants in their professional development. Their narratives are often characterized by themes of inspiration and long-term commitment. For instance current role to early inspirations or a "calling." (Diasti, 2021). **The Discourse of Contingency and Hesitancy:** The narrative of the "By Chance" participant reflects a more reactive stance.

The lower confidence scores are mirrored in a discourse that emphasizes "nervousness" or "uneasiness." (Saputro et al., 2023). In these cases, the identity is often "forced" or influenced by external factors, such as job security or parental pressure, leading to a more fragile professional self-image (Diasti, 2021; Ölmez-Çağlar, 2022). The interplay between motivation and confidence suggests that the "By Choice" participants have successfully integrated their personal and professional selves, allowing them to view English proficiency as an achievable goal rather than a source of anxiety. Conversely, for the "By Chance" participant, the lack of intrinsic alignment may result in a perceived "power gap" between their current proficiency and the requirements of the profession (Nasution et al., 2020).

Qualitative Findings from Interview Transcripts

1. Motivation and Background

The narratives of the "By Choice" participants emphasize a sense of professional legacy and personal fulfillment. Participant 1 highlights the influence of her parents and a long-standing interest in the language:

"Sejak kecil saya sudah sangat berminat menjadi guru karena profesi kedua orang tu saya menjadi motivasi. Saya pun berminat pada Bahasa Inggris sejak SD yang merupakan pelajaran favorit saya, awalnya bagi saya Bahasa Inggris merupakan hal keren yang perlu saya pelajari... Hal tersebut terjadi karena benar ada minat sejak awal sehingga untuk meraihnya terasa menyenangkan."

Participant 2 similarly reflects a stable professional identity, noting that her dream of teaching English began as early as age four:

"Betul menjadi guru bahasa Inggris merupakan cita-cita saya sejak masih duduk di bangku sekolah... Dan cita-cita saya tersebut tidak pernah berubah. Sejak berumur 4 tahun, saya sudah mempunyai keinginan untuk menjadi seorang guru. Ya, keinginan saya untuk menjadi guru bahasa Inggris tidak pernah berubah. Saya merasa sangat enjoy dan nyaman dengan profesi ini dan sama sekali tidak pernah merasa terbebani."

Participant 3 represents a "choice" made after personal reflection, where switching to English Education provided her with a sense of agency:

"Setelah berpikir dengan matang dan mempertimbangkan passion saya, saya akhirnya memilih jurusan pendidikan bahasa Inggris... Karena dengan pilihan saya sendiri, saya merasa percaya diri dengan apa yang saya lakukan."

In contrast, Participant 4 describes her entry as a series of external pressures and "wrong" choices:

"Waktu itu, saya memilih jurusan bahasa Inggris karena nilai bahasa Inggris saya waktu SMK adalah nilai tertinggi saya pada saat itu, dan itu beberapa hal dari pertimbangan mama saya yang selalu mau diikuti kemauannya... Saya diterima di pilihan kedua saya, di SBMPTN, yang salah pilih Pendidikan bahasa Inggris... Mungkin saya akan mengambil Teknik kembali dan menjadi arsitek sesuai dengan keahlian saya."

2. English Language Confidence and Career Motivation

The findings demonstrate that English language confidence is intrinsically linked to career motivation. The "By Choice" group's narratives are permeated with terms of comfort ("*nyaman*") and enjoyment ("*menyenangkan*"), which correlate with their high confidence scores (82.33). Their confidence is a reflection of "investment," where the language is viewed as a medium of self-actualization (Nue & Manara, 2022). Conversely, Putri's lower confidence (65.00) and her description of teaching as "challenging" due to her introversion suggest that "By Chance" motivations can lead to a "confidence crisis" during identity formation (Mamat, 2024).

3. Discursive Patterns of Identity and Confidence

Critical Discourse Analysis reveals distinct patterns. The "By Choice" participants utilize agentive discourse, positioning themselves as the primary authors of their professional lives. Their use of "self-choice" narratives reinforces a resilient professional identity (Ardi et al., 2023; Diasti, 2021). In contrast, the "By Chance" narrative is characterized by contingent discourse, where the participant's identity is "positioned by others" (e.g., parental influence or exam outcomes) (Maharani et al., 2022). This lack of discursive agency manifests as hesitancy in her professional self-image, where she still identifies more with her "lost" goal of architecture than her current role as an educator (Andana, et al, 2024; Ölmez-Çağlar, 2022).

In conclusion, the transition from being a teacher "by chance" to one who possesses high linguistic confidence requires a shift from extrinsic positioning to intrinsic professional investment. For the participants at Universitas Negeri Makassar, "choice" serves as the foundation for a robust and confident professional identity (Ardi et al., 2023; Dewi, et al, 2023).

4. Professional Identity

The "By Choice" participants describe a professional identity characterized by adaptability and personal investment. Participant 1 balances a friendly persona with professional discipline:

"Saya mendeskripsikan diri sebagai guru yang ramah, sabar, dan berusaha membuat bahasa Inggris terasa menyenangkan serta mudah dipahami... Di kelas saya tampil lebih tegas dan terstruktur agar pembelajaran berjalan efektif, sementara di luar kelas saya lebih santai dan terbuka."

Participant 2 adopts a "friend-teacher" identity to facilitate learning:

"Saya merupakan tipe guru bahasa Inggris yang lebih suka berbaur dengan murid... dengan menjadi guru sekaligus sahabat bagi murid, saya merasa materi yang saya sampaikan lebih mudah untuk mereka pahami."

Participant 3 also emphasizes a clear professional boundary while maintaining confidence:

"Saya adalah seorang guru yang tegas, namun tetap friendly dan berusaha mengerti siswa dengan baik... Kalau untuk meragukan diri sendiri sebagai seorang guru bahasa Inggris, Alhamdulillah, tidak, ya."

Conversely, Participant 4 displays a more pragmatic and somewhat hesitant identity, reflecting her extrinsic motivation:

"Saya kurang lebih akan mendeskripsikan kalau saya akan jadi guru yang semampu saya saja... Awal saya jadi pengajar, saya adalah orang yang kaku, perlu ada teks tertulis dulu. Kadang teman saya atau murid saya bosan dengan ini."

5. English Language Confidence

English confidence appears high among "By Choice" participants, who view the language as a natural extension of their identity. Participant 1 notes:

"Saya cukup percaya diri, terutama saat menjelaskan materi... Karena sejak awal profesi ini merupakan pilihan sadar dan sesuai minat, saya merasa lebih nyaman dan percaya diri menggunakan bahasa Inggris."

Participant 2 echoes this sentiment, linking choice directly to confidence:

"Selama saya menjadi guru, saya selalu merasa percaya diri ketika menggunakan bahasa Inggris karena saya yakin saya bisa melakukannya dengan baik... Hubungan antara pilihan dan tingkat kepercayaan diri saya ini mungkin punya hubungan."

Participant 3, however, struggles with a "stiffness" in her linguistic performance, which she relates to her "By Chance" entry:

"Awalnya, saya tidak percaya diri untuk ngomong dengan teman saya bahasa Inggris... Biasanya, saya gugup, jadi sesekali saya menggunakan bahasa Indonesia untuk beberapa kosakata yang belum saya pelajari untuk instruksinya."

6. Motivation as a Source of Teacher Identity

The data confirms that career motivation is a primary source of teacher identity formation (Ölmez-Çağlar, 2022). Participants who selected "By Choice" demonstrate a "teacher-as-agent" identity, in which their personal aspirations align with professional requirements (Ardi et al., 2023). (Ardi et al., 2023). Their discourse is filled with positive self-evaluative markers like "*nyaman*" (comfortable) and "*percaya diri*" (confident). This alignment fosters resilience, as seen in Mukhlisah's ability to overcome anxiety through self-assurance (Diasti, 2021).

In contrast, Participant 4's "By Chance" entry creates a "fragmented identity." Her narrative reveals a persistent identification with her original interest in architecture ("*Mungkin saya akan mengambil Teknik kembali*"), which complicates her current professional self-image (Andana & Fithriani, 2024). This lack of intrinsic investment results in a lower English confidence score and a more rigid, script-dependent teaching style (Nue & Manara, 2022).

Discursive Patterns of Confidence and Positioning

Critical Discourse Analysis reveals two distinct discursive patterns:

- 1) Agentive Discourse: These participants position themselves as active subjects. For example, Nurnadiefa's use of "*pilihan sadar*" (conscious choice) reflects a high level of linguistic agency. Their confidence is expressed through "certainty" in their narratives (Ardi et al., 2023).
- 2) Contingent/Positioned Discourse: Putri's narrative is characterized by externalized factors ("*mama saya yang selalu mau diikuti kemauannya*," "*salah pilih*"). Her confidence is represented as a struggle against external constraints rather than an internal resource (Maharani et al., 2022).

Ultimately, the results suggest that pre-service teachers at Universitas Negeri Makassar who view their career as a choice possess a stronger professional identity and greater confidence in English (Dewi & Fajri, 2023). This highlights the need for teacher education programs to help "By Chance" students internalize their professional roles to mitigate the linguistic and identity challenges they face (Mamat, 2024).

1. The Expression and Reflection of English Language Confidence

The findings of this study reveal a stark contrast in how English language confidence is expressed and reflected between pre-service teachers who entered the profession "By Choice" and those who entered "By Chance." For the By Choice group comprising Nurnadiefa, Khairina, and Mukhlisah, linguistic self-confidence is articulated through a narrative of stability, certainty, and inherent comfort. Their discourse is characterized by terms such as "*percaya diri*" (confident), "*nyaman*" (comfortable), "enjoy", and "*yakin*" (certain). These participants reflect a "settled" professional identity because their motivation is deeply rooted in intrinsic passion and long-term aspirations.

Participant 1, for instance, explicitly links her confidence to her intentionality: "*Karena sejak awal profesi ini merupakan pilihan sadar dan sesuai minat, saya merasa lebih nyaman dan percaya diri menggunakan bahasa Inggris.*" This suggests that when the choice to teach is internal and volitional,

the target language becomes a tool for self-actualization rather than a source of anxiety (Dewi, et al, 2023). Participant 3 echoes this stability by highlighting the longevity of her goal: "*Ya, keinginan saya untuk menjadi guru bahasa Inggris tidak pernah berubah. Saya merasa sangat enjoy dan nyaman dengan profesi ini dan sama sekali tidak pernah merasa terbebani.*" For these individuals, confidence is not a destination they are striving toward, but a state of being that aligns with their identity as "destined" educators (Ölmez-Çağlar, 2022).

In contrast, the By Chance participant 4 expresses confidence not as a state, but as an ongoing process, struggle, and effort. Her narrative is marked by expressions of initial doubt and physiological responses to stress, such as "*awalnya tidak percaya*" (initially did not believe), "*gugup*" (nervous), and "*masih kurang*" (still lacking). Her confidence is contingent upon external validation and peer comparison: "*Awalnya, saya tidak percaya, tapi saya melihat teman saya yang lincah berbicara menggunakan bahasa Inggris, jadi saya merasa termotivasi...*" Unlike the "By Choice" group, whose confidence is inherent to their career choice, Participant 4's confidence is a fluctuating construct that must be continuously built through adaptation and specific interventions, such as public speaking classes (Mamat, 2024).

2. Discursive Patterns and Identity Construction

The analysis of interview transcripts reveals two distinct discursive patterns that shape the professional identities of these pre-service teachers.

Assertive and Passionate Discourse

The "By Choice" group utilizes an Assertive and Passionate Discourse. Their language patterns are defined by strong commitments, long-term visions, and positive affirmations. They frequently use temporal markers that trace their passion back to childhood, such as "*sejak kecil*" (since childhood), "*cita-cita*" (aspiration/dream), and "*minat sejak awal*" (interest from the start). By employing this discourse, they construct an identity of a teacher who is "chosen" and "destined" for the profession.

For example, Participant 2 uses assertive language to reinforce her professional boundary and self-assurance: "*Kalau untuk meragukan diri sendiri sebagai seorang guru bahasa Inggris, Alhamdulillah, tidak ya.*" This discourse minimizes professional vulnerability and emphasizes a resilient self-image (Diasi, 2021). Their narratives suggest that the "Choice" identity is a powerful discursive resource that allows them to navigate the challenges of teaching with a sense of predetermined success (Ardi et al., 2023).

Adaptive and Struggle Discourse

Participant 4 employs an Adaptive and Struggle Discourse. Her narrative is heavily laden with contrastive conjunctions such as "*tapi*" (but), "*namun*" (however), "*akhirnya*" (finally), and "*walaupun*" (although). These linguistic choices reflect a journey defined by circumstance rather than intent. She often explains her current position through the lens of external influence, specifically family expectations, rather than personal desire: "*itu beberapa hal dari pertimbangan mama saya yang selalu mau diikuti kemauannya.*"

Her discourse constructs the identity of a "learner-in-transition" or a "struggler" who is developing and adapting to a role that was not initially their own. Even when discussing her current efforts, she uses a discourse of limitation: "*Saya kurang lebih akan mendeskripsikan kalau saya akan jadi guru yang semampu saya saja...*" This "positioned" identity highlights the tension between her past self (the aspiring architect) and her current professional trajectory (Maharani et al., 2022; Nue & Manara, 2022).

3. Comparison with Existing Literature

The results of this study strongly support existing theories suggesting that intrinsic motivation is a primary driver of higher linguistic self-confidence and professional commitment (Ma, 2022). The "By Choice" group's high mean confidence score (82.33) aligns with the concept of "investment" in language teaching, where a high personal stake in the profession leads to greater linguistic agency (Nue, et al, 2022). These findings also mirror previous research in the Indonesian context, which suggests that pre-service teachers with strong initial motivation are more likely to form a stable professional identity early in their careers (Dewi, et al, 2023).

Interestingly, while the "By Chance" group exhibits lower initial confidence (65.00), their discourse demonstrates a high potential for professional growth. Putri's narrative of "struggle" and "effort" indicates that while her identity is currently fragmented, her adaptive discourse is a mechanism for building resilience over time (Andana et al, 2024). This suggests that "By Chance" teachers are not necessarily less capable, but they require different pedagogical and psychological support to internalize their professional roles (Mamat, 2024).

This research offers significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it demonstrates that language is a mirror of identity; the way a teacher speaks about their confidence reveals the depth of their professional investment. By utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis, this study proves that hidden motivations often obscured in quantitative data can be effectively unmasked through the analysis of discursive patterns (Maharani et al., 2022).

Practically, teacher education programs, particularly at institutions like Universitas Negeri Makassar, should recognize the differing needs of "By Choice" and "By Chance" students. While the former may benefit from advanced pedagogical challenges, the latter may require specific "identity-building" interventions to help them transition from a discourse of struggle to a discourse of agency (Ardi et al., 2023). Programs should foster environments where "By Chance" students can transform their external positioning into internal professional investment (Nue & Manara, 2022).

This study involved only four participants, which limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. However, the qualitative depth of the data provides a "thick description" of the phenomenon that quantitative measures often miss. The richness of the individual narratives offers valuable insights into the psychological and discursive world of pre-service EFL teachers.

Conclusion

This study concludes that motivation behind pursuing a career in English education significantly shapes how pre-service teachers construct professional identities and express linguistic confidence. Participants in the By Choice group demonstrated high, stable confidence rooted in long-term passion and familial influence, viewing English as central to a professional identity they felt destined to fulfil. In contrast, the By Chance participant showed confidence as a non-linear process built through external motivation, peer comparison, and effort to overcome initial barriers.

Through Critical Discourse Analysis, two discursive patterns emerged: the By Choice group used Assertive and Passionate Discourse, framing their careers as a "calling," while the By Chance participant employed Adaptive and Struggle Discourse, using contrastive conjunctions ("tapi," "namun") to reflect an identity under continuous negotiation. These findings show that career motivation is embedded in language, which mirrors inner beliefs and professional investment—demonstrating that "chance" entries can still lead to professional identity development, though through different discursive paths.

Future research should involve larger cohorts and longitudinal classroom observation to examine how discursive identities translate into teaching practice.

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