EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND NATIVE SPEAKERISM IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: EXPERIENCES OF BLACK AFRICAN TEACHERS IN TURKEY

by

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Dedication

To God Almighty:

The author and the finisher of my faith. The one who is and who is to come. The LORD, my strength, joy, provider, healer, defense and my salvation. All glory returned to you.

Abstract

Research on race and native speaker status in language teaching provides little insight into the experiences of Black African English teachers (BAETs) in the diaspora. To address this gap, this study examines how aspects of BAETs' positionalities - such as race and native speaker status create challenges in their professional and societal lives in Turkey. Data from twelve semi-structured interviews of BAETs were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings suggest that race-related challenges trump language-related ones and that Blackness fundamentally shapes outsiders' perception and value of BAETs' linguistic expertise. Even when BAETs possess the same or superior qualifications as their White colleagues, they endure additional hardships due to their race (e.g., racial slurs, lower wages). Drawing on Foucault and Bourdieu's theories of power and capital, along with Flores and Rosa's concept of raciolinguistic ideologies, this study enhances our understanding of how racial hierarchies of power and capital systematically devalue BAETs' linguistic expertise and professional worth.

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Lists of Acronyms

BAET(s) - Black African English Teacher(s)

EL - English Learners

ELT - English Language Teaching

EFL - English as a Foreign Language

TESOL - Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

NETs - Native English Teachers

NESTs - Native English-Speaking Teachers

NNETs - Non-native English Teachers

AAVE - African American Vernacular English

EU - European Union

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 My Path to Teaching

I was born into a world where injustice did not just exist; it ruled. Oppression and racism were not theoretical; they shaped lives, including mine. Yet, facing these crushing realities, I made a choice that would define my journey: education. It was not merely a path to knowledge, but my act of resistance, my tool for liberation. Education became my identity as a student, teacher, sometimes both, consuming every chapter of my life story.

I started teaching English part-time during my undergraduate studies in a small town in Osun State, Nigeria. After five years of teaching experience, I wanted to move internationally because I could not get a job in my home country. In fact, I once had to run for my life to avoid getting kidnapped while seeking a job in Nigeria. Turkey was the most accessible option, and I eventually stayed there for three years. As I migrated, I was not prepared for what I would experience in Turkey. It was like jumping from a frying pan into a fire. In Turkey, it took me two years to land a position as an English teacher, and at interviews, I was often rejected because recruiters preferred "native English speakers". And who is that elusive "native English speaker", you might ask? A White Western-looking person.

At the time, I had no idea that race and native speakerism were deeply entrenched in English language education. At the beginning of new classes, most students would ask me where I came from and why I migrated to Turkey, and whether I had been to Western English-speaking countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, or Australia. At first, I thought those questions were to build rapport, but the recurrence implied that the real question was - is a Black African like me capable of teaching the English language? Regardless, I would mostly respond to students that I grew up speaking English and Yoruba (a language widely spoken in West Africa, Nigeria), and that I had been a professional English teacher for years. My response was an attempt to prove to my students that I was a worthy teacher.

1.2 Understanding Turkey: A Country at the Crossroads

Turkey is a country where Europe meets Asia. This is not just about geography; it is about identity. My time in Turkey helped me understand how its unique position shapes the lives of those who wish to call it home, including those who were not born here. Turkey proudly calls itself secular but walk its streets and you will quickly feel the powerful current of what locals call

"Turkishness." This is not just national pride - it is an identity woven from language, ethnicity, and often, Sunni Islam. And those who do not fit the mold, such as Kurdish families who have lived there for generations, Armenian communities with deep roots, and in the context of this research foreigners who are Blacks, often find themselves pushed to the margins of society.

Çırakman (2011) defines ethnonationalism as a type of nationalism that highlights differences instead of similarities and focuses on divisions rather than unity, seeing others as enemies rather than friends. Ethnonationalism often promotes a xenophobic viewpoint and creates an identity based on ethnic and religious backgrounds. According to Çırakman (2011), Turks define themselves through family ties and a shared history. Turkish ethnonationalism positions certain ethnic and religious groups in Turkey, such as Kurds, Armenians, and Jews as the "enemy within", while the "enemy without" refers to the Western world, including the EU and the US. Alternatively, the enemy is described in economic terms, referring to the "oligarchy" or the wealthy Turkish upper class, who are believed to be influenced by Washington and Brussels.

> *The ethnonationalist position identifies the latent enemy as the Jewish, Armenian, Kurdish, Alevi, or Greek citizens of Turkey. For those who hesitate to agree with them, who do not daily flag the nation, or who do not take ethnic nationalism for granted, there is a popular phrase displayed in public places: Love it or leave it! (Ya Sev Ya Terk Et!). 'It' refers to the homeland, meaning one should either love Turkey and be committed to the nation or leave Turkey and be the enemy (Çırakman, 2011, p. 1906).*

The quote suggests that people who do not fully support or take part in this ethnic-nationalist belief system may face pressure. Those who do not show patriotic symbols or accept ethnic nationalism as the only valid national identity often hear the slogan: "Love it or leave it" *("Ya Sev Ya Terk Et!")*. This phrase creates a clear choice: either show strong love and loyalty to Turkey, accepting an ethnic-nationalist view of being a nation, or leave the country. It implies that those who lack loyalty are enemies or should be removed.

Given this hostile context, why do some Black Africans move to Turkey? Many Africans move to Turkey for different reasons. Some have dreams packed in their suitcases - students hoping education will transform their futures, professionals recruited for their expertise, refugees seeking

safety from political instability or troubled homelands, entrepreneurs spotting opportunity in this gateway to Europe.

During my time in Turkey, I spoke with many Africans who had arrived full of hope, only to find reality more complicated than they imagined. With jobs scarce even for locals, many Black Africans find themselves pushed into the shadows of the economy, stitching clothes in textile factories, working in backroom (illegal) workshops, entertaining in clubs, or teaching languages without proper work permits. All these survival jobs have resulted in many Black Africans being frustrated, and put them in a state of dilemma, where they are not thriving in Turkey but cannot go back to their home countries.

For Black African English teachers, this creates a painful irony. Hired to build bridges through language, they often find themselves stranded on islands of isolation, watching as less qualified White teachers from Western countries receive better pay, more respect, and the automatic assumption of competence. Their stories reveal how discrimination twists together issues of race and language in ways that cannot be easily untangled.

Teachers teaching English in Turkey include Turkish nationals with local university degrees and immigrant teachers from around the world, including a significant number of Black African educators. As in many countries, there are public schools that typically teach English as a foreign language, and private schools where content may be taught in English. Private schools tend to hire more international teachers and maintain smaller class sizes. Next, universities offer language preparation programs where students spend a year immersed in English before beginning their degrees. Finally, after work hours, some adults turn to private language centers, investing valuable time and money to acquire skills they hope will advance their careers. English learners come from all walks of life: dreamers hoping to study abroad, students enrolled by their parents who lack motivation to learn English, and business executives needing to communicate with international clients. However, access to quality instruction remains deeply unequal. While wealthy families arrange private tutors and summer programs in London, children in rural villages may share a single outdated textbook and might never have met a Black person before. Turkish students' attitudes toward English vary considerably. While some lack motivation, I have encountered many who are exceptionally passionate. When I taught English in Turkey, high school students tended to be less motivated than adults who urgently needed to learn English for professional purposes.

All in all, Black African teachers who come to Turkey encounter a nation striving to embrace the global stage while still grappling with questions of identity and belonging.

1.3 Research Questions

The aforementioned past experiences inform the present study. My research question is: What aspects of Black African teachers' positionalities constitute a challenge in the context of English teaching in Turkey?

In the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) and applied linguistics, various scholars have explored the issue of race and native speaker status (e.g., Almayez, 2024; Gras, 2024; Kubota & Lin, 2006). However, the intersection of race and native speaker status for Black African English Teachers (BAETs) in the Middle East and outside the United States has only very recently received any attention (Almayez, 2024; Lee & Jang, 2023). To address this gap, I examine the lived experience of BAETs in the context of teaching English as a foreign language. This study aims to contribute significantly to the scholarship on race and English language teaching, providing theoretical and conceptual insights.

1.4 Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of seven chapters. In the second chapter, I discuss the existing literature on the intersectionality of race and native speaker status in language teaching as a background for the present research. In doing so, I explore the experiences of racialized non-native English teachers within English language education. In the third chapter, I lay out the conceptual frameworks that inform my research, including Foucault's concept of power, Bourdieu's theory of capital, and Flores and Rosa's raciolinguistics ideology. In the fourth chapter, I describe the qualitative inquiry by going over the participants' profiles, my positionality as a researcher, the sampling and data collection process, and the methods for data analysis. The fifth chapter covers the study results, while the sixth chapter discusses the findings and situates them within the theoretical framework. Finally, in the seventh chapter, I conclude with a discussion of the implications of the findings, both in theory and practice, while also acknowledging the limitations of the study and providing recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Many studies in language education have examined the experiences of teachers of color, and scholars have written extensively on the native vs. non-native speaker dichotomy. However, more research is needed on the interplay between racial identity and non-native English teachers' (NNETs) experiences.

I begin this review by unpacking the concepts of race, racialization, and racism. Then, in the following section, I review the challenges faced by teachers of color. Moving further, I explore how scholars have defined native speakers, the debate over the "native speaker" label, the concept of native speaker fallacy, and the challenges facing NNETs. Finally, I focus on studies that have specifically covered the intersection of race and native speaker status. Through this comprehensive exploration, I seek to contribute to understanding race and native speaker status issues within language education.

2.1 Race, Racialization, and Racism

Race is a social construct, meaning that racial categories and distinctions are not based on biological or genetic reality but are created, maintained, and modified by society (Jaret, 1995; Rosa & Flores, 2015). Viewing race from a social perspective means that race is not determined by biological evidence such as genetic characteristics; instead, racial classifications are human inventions shaped by historical, sociocultural, and political factors.

Race is linked to the notions of racialization and racism. Racialization or racial categorization can be defined as "a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings, as a result of individuals been assigned to a general category of persons that reproduces itself biologically" (Miles & Brown, 2003, as cited in Kubota & Lin, 2009, p. 16). This definition highlights how society creates racial groups by deciding that certain physical traits are essential, attaching meaning to such traits, labeling and categorizing people.

Racism, conversely, is defined as a fundamental characteristic of social projects that establish or perpetuate structures of domination grounded in essentialist categorizations of race (Omi & Winant, 1994). In other words, racism occurs when a society sets up or maintains a system where some racial groups have more power than others. Such a system treats racial categories as simple, natural, and unchanging facts about people rather than complex social ideas. This system of power is used to justify keeping some groups in charge and others at a disadvantage. For

example, one race (White) gets privileged, while others are racialized, stereotyped, oppressed, and marginalized (e.g., Blacks, American Indians/Alaska Natives, Asians, Hispanics/Latinos, and Native Hawaiians) (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

2.2 Challenges Facing Teachers of Color

The challenges facing teachers of color in the field of language education are multifaceted and deeply rooted in societal inequalities. Two key studies, Cushing (2023) and Ramjattan (2014), shed light on these issues from different perspectives. In a qualitative study where twenty-six semi-structured interviews were conducted with racially minoritized pre-service teachers between 2021 and 2022 in England, Cushing (2023) argued that language oppression is a key reason why England continues to fail to retain racially marginalized teachers. Cushing (2023) draws attention to how England's schools are over-represented by White teachers and how language oppression is connected to hierarchies of race and class. Language oppression is defined as a form of violence, hostility, and stigma, rooted in perceptions that individuals violate linguistic expectations set by normative whiteness. It involves intimidating teachers of color into modifying, flattening, or abandoning their language practices under the false guise of benefiting the oppressed. In the study, the twenty-six teachers of color shared how their speech was policed, consequently affecting their confidence in the classroom, damaging their teaching, and ultimately leading them to question whether teaching was the right career choice.

For example, Cushing (2023) shared the experiences of Shanika, a teacher whose speech could be classified as multicultural London English - a variety often stigmatized in educational contexts. Cushing (2023) reported that negative perceptions of her speech may lead others to categorize her teaching as inadequate and hinder her career progression. Her own mentor consistently criticized her speech patterns, instructing Shanika to "stop using slang" and to “stop talking like you are a gangster” (p. 906). The mentor framed this critique as a matter of “self-respect” and the need to provide students with a “good role model”. However, Shanika, as a Black female teacher from the same low-income community as many of her Black students, felt that her background and speech made her an ideal role model for students who faced similar stereotypes in terms of race, class, and language. In short, Shanika’s experience highlights the complex interplay between stereotypes of language and race in educational settings. Teachers of color often face criticism and policing of their speech, which undermines their confidence in the classroom

and negatively affects their teaching. Notably, the case of Shanika illustrates how a teacher's linguistic background, which could be an asset in connecting with students from similar communities, is instead framed as a liability by those enforcing standardized language norms.

In another study, Ramjattan (2014) recounts the experience of ten English teachers of color in a private language school in Canada, whose students often expressed strong disappointment upon discovering that their instructor was a person of color. A striking example comes from Yun, a racialized teacher who recalls a Japanese student's extreme reaction on the first day of class:

> *I remember one Japanese student [coming in on her first day] and I guess she was shocked by my appearance or approach. I don't know exactly what happened, but she essentially stormed out of the class, slammed the door, and went straight to my supervisor at the time....I didn't find out until afterwards that she was unhappy with me for whatever reason and had asked to be switched to another class (Ramjattan, 2014, p. 134).*

Ramjattan (2014) labeled the reaction by that student as a microinsult, a reaction that conveyed rudeness to Yun as a teacher of color. The student's angry exit and request to change classes sent an insulting message, suggesting that Yun was an unsuitable teacher due to her racial background. Furthermore, Yun explained that in the school, Japanese students occupied the role of "educational consumers" with the power to change service providers if dissatisfied (Ramjattan, 2014). As service recipients, students interpreted race and ethnic markers as indicators of the nature of the service itself. In Yun's case, the student may have interpreted Yun's Chinese background as evidence of inadequacy in teaching ESOL. Holding this belief and comforted by their position as a customer, the student might have felt entitled to commit a microinsult, viewing it as their right as a client to openly express dissatisfaction.

Both studies by Cushing (2023) and Ramjattan (2014) explore the challenges faced by racialized language teachers in different contexts. Cushing's (2023) work reveals how language oppression in England's educational system leads to the policing of teachers' speech, undermining their confidence and potentially driving them away from the profession. This oppression is linked to racial and class hierarchies. On the other hand, Ramjattan's (2014) research in Canada exposes another dimension, namely: students' expectations and biases against teachers of color in ESOL settings. Both studies reveal the complex intersection between race, language, and power in

educational contexts, demonstrating how racialized teachers often face discrimination from both institutional structures and the very students they aim to teach.

In the next section, I will review the literature on the concept of native speakers, starting with the definition, then the label, fallacy, and the challenges faced by non-native-speaking teachers.

2.3 Who Are Native Speakers and Non-Native Speakers?

It is often said that native speakers have learned a language from birth or early childhood, typically as their first language. In contrast, non-native speakers have acquired the language later in life as a second or additional language through formal education or immersion. However, scholars point out that the defining features of a native speaker are socially constructed (Cook, 1999; Davies, 1991; Kramsch, 1997). The notion of the native speaker is socially constructed because it goes beyond the commonly cited criteria of being born into a language and learning it in early childhood. Davies (1991) suggests that membership in a native-speaker community is largely a matter of self-identification and acceptance by other community members. This view emphasizes the role of confidence and identity in claiming native speaker status. Kramsch (1997) takes this further, arguing that birth, education, and linguistic competence are not sufficient for claiming native speakership and that "one must also be recognized as a native speaker by the relevant community" (p. 363). In her study, however, Kramsch did not further explore the specific factors that play a part in the community members' judgment of whether or not someone is a native speaker. These studies demonstrate that there is debate in the literature over who is considered a native speaker or non-native speaker, which has led to discussions regarding the relevance of the term "native speaker" in language education.

2.3.1 Debate Over the "Native Speaker" Label

There has been a longstanding debate about the "native speaker" label, shifting away from native competence to focus instead on what individuals can do with the language. Paikeday and Chomsky (1985) lamented in their book *"Native speaker is dead"* that a native speaker "exists only as a figment of linguist's imagination" (p. 12). Paikeday and Chomsky clearly defined a native speaker as someone competent in a language rather than just born into it, suggesting using the term "proficient user" to refer to all speakers who can successfully use the language.

A few years later, Rampton (1990) proposed the term "expert speaker" to include all successful language users, writing: "When educationalists have the communicative aspects of

language in mind, they should speak of accomplished users as experts rather than as native speakers" (p. 99).

Next, Cook (2002) coined "L2 users" to refer to individuals who use a language besides their mother tongue to communicate. However, Cook's (2002) definition of "L2 users" does not align with Paikeday and Chomsky's "proficient user" or Rampton's (1990) "expert speakers," which focus on higher proficiency. Cook (2005) argued that if we define native speakers as people who use the first language learned in childhood, "nothing learned in later life could qualify you as a native speaker" (p. 49). Cook (2005) concluded that L2 users should be measured by what they are, i.e., L2 users, not what they can never be, i.e., native speakers.

Davies (2013), who wrote extensively on native speakers in applied linguistics, coined the term "native users", arguing that there is no substantial distinction between native speakers and native users, and stressing the significance of the standard language. Writing, "the academic construct of the native speaker is isomorphic with the Standard Language which is available to both native speakers and native users through education" (p. 56), Davies (2013) implies that native speakers do not inherently possess the standard language variety from birth, but rather learn it through education. Both native speakers (those who acquired the language from birth) and highly proficient non-native speakers (whom Davies calls "native users") can access and master this standard language through education.

Applauding Cook's "L2 user" term for its inclusiveness, Dewaele (2017) suggested the term "L1 vs. LX users", with LX being all-inclusive of any foreign language acquired after age 3. For Dewaele (2017), the label LX allows for specific comparisons between a person's L2, L3, or L4 and avoids confusion about when the language was learned. Dewaele (2017) added that the "L1 user" versus "LX user" avoids the question of whether one is inferior to the other, emphasizing their equality and potential.

Isaacs and Rose (2022) examined all the above labels and argued that the word "users" is semantically negative since it refers to a person who takes illegal drugs or exploits others. They further explained that the word "drug" collocates with the word "user." Isaacs and Rose failed to offer another label but suggested that everyone who still uses "native speaker" should not be criticized since the term has a complex history. They suggested we thoughtfully discuss its meanings and limitations while being open to better terms that do not leave out or look down on any groups of language users.

2.3.2 Native Speaker Fallacy

Within the context of teaching and learning second languages, many scholars have questioned the distinction between native speakers and non-native speakers, as discussed earlier. The phrase "native speaker fallacy" was first used by Phillipson (1992), who argued that there is no scientific basis for the notion that the best language teacher is someone who speaks the target language natively. According to Phillipson (1992), proficiency in the target language and understanding of the language learning process are the main characteristics of a good language teacher. These skills are learned through teacher preparation, regardless of the teacher's background in the language. Furthermore, non-native speakers who have completed the process of learning the target language and have attained near-native proficiency may have a deeper understanding of the needs of students and may be better qualified to teach the language than their native speaker counterparts.

The same notion is echoed by Holliday (2006), who calls this form of discrimination *native speakerism*, the ideology that upholds the belief that "native speakers" of any language are inherently superior language teachers and represent the ideal model for English language learning. Native speakerism, much like the native speaker fallacy, is rooted in the assumption that being a native speaker guarantees mastery of one's mother tongue (Rampton, 1990). This ideology perpetuates the belief that native-speaking English teachers are the only worthy sources of language instruction, despite growing evidence that non-native English teachers can be equally, if not more, effective in teaching due to their firsthand experience with the learning process (Llurda, 2005; Mahboob, 2010; Medgyes, 1994).

Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999) further explored the complex identities of non-native English-speaking teachers, emphasizing the need to reconceptualize the native/non-native dichotomy. Canagarajah (1999) observed the geopolitical implications of the native and non-native distinction and its far-reaching consequences beyond language teaching, arguing that distinguishing between native and non native speakers often reflects and reinforces global power dynamics, particularly between countries where English is the primary language (like the US, UK, Australia) and countries where it is learned as a second or foreign language. Braine (1999) compiled extensive research on non-native English-language teaching educators, providing empirical support for their effectiveness and unique contributions to the field. In sum, non-native speakers who have learned a second language and attained high proficiency may have a deeper

understanding of students' needs, potentially making them better qualified to teach the target language than their native counterparts.

2.4 Challenges Facing Non-native English Teachers

The scholarly literature has documented two major challenges facing non-native English teachers: discriminatory hiring practices and accent discrimination.

Globally, non-native English teachers (NNETs) often face job discrimination because recruiters prefer native teachers, whom they believe have the innate ability to teach English (Atkinson, 2023; Charles, 2017; Medgyes, 2020). This internalized belief places NNETs at a disadvantage in obtaining English teaching jobs (Rivers & Ross, 2013; Romney, 2010). However, applied linguists such as Cook (1999), Jenks and Lee (2020), Kubota and Lin, (2006), as well as Rudolph (2024) argue that the decisive factor when evaluating English teachers should be teaching experience and skill sets, pointing out that NNETs can be as effective as native English teachers (NETs).

Since people often make unfounded assumptions about others based solely on how they sound (Barrio, 2015; Lippi-Green, 2012; Ramjattan, 2014), it is not surprising that NNETs often face discrimination in the job market due to their accents (e.g., Moussu, 2018; Ramjattan, 2014). To illustrate, North American TESOL program administrators are often reluctant to allow non-native speakers to teach, citing concerns about their accents, fluency, and cultural knowledge (Moussu, 2018). When NNETs are permitted to teach, they are frequently assigned to beginner-level classes or encouraged to teach in EFL study abroad. Moussu (2018) states, "many NNETs feel marginalized and sometimes discriminated against, self-evaluate their own skills negatively, question their own qualifications, and feel self-conscious about their mistakes, fearing that their native English-speaking colleagues and students will not respect them" (p.3). Such findings powerfully illustrate the profound psychological impact of accent discrimination, showing how systemic biases can erode teachers' confidence and professional identity.

2.5 Intersection of Race and Native Speaker Status

Research has shown that race intersects with and trumps native speaker status (Almayez, 2024; Kubota & Lin, 2009; Ramjattan, 2014). That is, racial identity often has a more significant impact on hiring decisions and professional experiences in English language teaching than native

speaker status. For instance, in Almayez's (2024) study, Kareem, an African American English teacher in Saudi Arabia, recounts how non-White NETs are often subjected to fake interviews:

> *If you are not White, your CV will be scrutinized. Then, you will be interviewed, and then you will be asked to do a 45-minute demo lesson. I came to realize that this does not happen to White teachers! They are hired on the spot! ... Just have a quick look around the staff room to see the clear preference for recruiting White teachers. Non-Whites are never the first choice. They're hired if, and only if, there is no alternative (p. 6).*

The narrative above clarifies that the intersection of race and native speaker status creates a hierarchy in which:

1. White NETs are often preferred.
2. NETs of color face discrimination despite their native speaker status.
3. NNETs of color experience compounded disadvantages due to both their racial identity and non-native status.

Kubota and Lin (2009) argued that there is a tendency to equate non-native speakers with non-White individuals and native speakers with White people. For Kubota and Lin (2009), the root of the problem is the perception that "native speaker" is synonymous with "Standard English speaker" and "White," whereas "non-native speaker" is synonymous with "non-standard English speaker" and "non-White."

Research also shows that many English learners (ELs) expect to be taught by native speakers, whom they imagine to be White (Jenks & Lee, 2020). Kareem, the participant in Alamayez's (2024) study, recounts how students keep cross-checking teachers of color's knowledge of English with White teachers:

> *We had a lesson on regular vs. irregular verbs, and we came across the verb 'dream'. I told my students that both 'dreamed' and 'dreamt' are acceptable past tense forms. There was this student who wasn't convinced by my explanation and kept asking questions. He came back the next day convinced that my explanation was correct after he had checked with Mr. X, who happens to be a White teacher. I felt slighted. This hadn't happened to me before! As an African American, I know I can be stereotyped in*

> *multiple ways. But I was never stereotyped for not being an English speaker! (p. 7)*

Consciously or unconsciously, ELs infer that White NESTs can provide a more immersive and natural learning experience, and can better model pronunciation, vocabulary, and usage. Javier (2016) demonstrates the persistent misconceptions surrounding who is perceived as a "legitimate" English instructor by focusing on the cases of two NESTs who are teachers of color in the United Kingdom: Li, a Canadian of Hong Kong descent, and Andres, a U.S. citizen of Mexican descent. Both Li and Andres's "native speaker" identities are often questioned by students and parents, who imagine a native speaker of English to be White. In other words, despite their fluency and proficiency in the language, NESTs like Li and Andres, who do not fit the stereotypical profile of a Western White teacher, find their linguistic abilities and teaching credentials challenged by stakeholders who hold narrow, ethnocentric views of what a native speaker should look and sound like. Here again, race trumps native speaker status.

In conclusion, this review examines Black African teachers' positionalities related to race and native speakerism, which explains why BAETs often face discrimination in hiring practices, encounter accent discrimination, and contend with learners' failed expectations.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I discuss Foucault's notion of power and Bourdieu's notion of capital, situating these concepts within Flores and Rosa's idea of raciolinguistic ideologies. All three of these theories frame the present study.

3.1 Foucault on Disciplinary Power

In his book "*Discipline and Punish"* (Foucault, 1979), Foucault devises a theory of disciplinary power, which he relates to the rise of institutions (e.g., government, schools, hospitals, etc.) and their agenda to control, regulate, and punish lives continuously. Foucault (1979) emphasizes how surveillance often equates to power. In the book, Foucault examines how punishment methods evolved by contrasting two historical examples: a man publicly tortured and executed for attempting to kill the king in 1757, and a prisoner following a rigid daily schedule in 1837. This comparison reveals a fundamental shift from public spectacles of torture to controlled institutional environments with strict regulations. Foucault's key example is the Panopticon prison design. This innovative structure featured a central watchtower that could observe all cells, while prisoners could not tell if they were being watched. The power of this design was that prisoners would behave as if under constant observation, even when no guards were present. The control mechanism was built into the physical structure itself, not dependent on continuous monitoring by authorities. While many interpreted this shift from public torture to institutional confinement as society becoming more "civilized," Foucault saw a different purpose. He argued that these new systems were not about humane conditions but rather about creating more efficient methods of control designed to produce automatically docile individuals without requiring physical violence. As a result, prisoners became docile and self-monitoring, believing they could be observed at any moment.

This illustration helps us understand Foucault's perspective on power. Foucault believes power is a technique that subtly influences our thoughts and behavior. These techniques have spread over time throughout society. No single group controls all these techniques, nor are they centrally regulated; they are merely methods, systems, and strategies that shape the institutions in which we spend much of our lives, such as schools, universities, hospitals, and government. We can see how disciplinary power works nowadays by, for example, looking at how the government

uses the police to arrest so-called "illegal" immigrants, punish them, treat them like criminals, and surveil them.

According to Foucault (1979), we are free agents who have choices. However, we have different force relations that try to direct our choices. We can ask ourselves which force relations (i.e., rules, peers' advice, parental instructions, laws, and policies) guide our decision-making. Force relations include tactics at the micro level (e.g., peers, and parental forces) and strategies at the macro level (e.g., institutional and governmental forces). Force relations do not work in isolation. Instead, force relations work in different directions and can overlap. Consider a child raised in a community where English is the predominant public language used by peers, but Yoruba is spoken at home. When this child starts school, peer pressure (tactics) and institutional policies (strategies) privilege English as the standard language. Despite being competent in both languages, the child may be forced to speak only English in school, limiting the child's ability to choose Yoruba.

Laws are examples of macro forces that subject us to fear. According to Foucault (1982):

> *Confronted by a power that is law, the subject who is constituted a subject—who is "subjected"—is he who obeys. The formal homogeneity of power in these various instances corresponds to the general form of submission in the one who is constrained by it—whether the individual in question is the subject opposite the monarch, the citizen opposite the state, the child opposite the parent, or the disciple opposite the master. A legislative power on one side, and an obedient subject on the other (Foucault, 1982, as cited in Lynch, 2016, p. 29).*

This quote means that we always have a choice, but force relations such as laws and policies are in layers, acting on each other to either form a chain or a system, or struggle with one another. Power influences subjects (individuals) to be obedient and submissive.

3.1.1 Repressive and Normalizing Power

Foucault (1979) did not completely reject traditional ways of thinking about disciplinary power; instead, he used it to explain how power is portrayed subtly, appearing normal and

eventually becoming taken for granted or 'natural' in everyday life. This process leads to a form of power known as normalizing power.

Repressive power, also known as disciplinary power, is a visible and direct exercise of control (Foucault, 1995). We can observe it when a boss exercises power over an employee by demanding certain work to avoid dismissal. Similarly, we see it when powerful nations impose their will on smaller countries through military or economic force. Repressive power, which operates explicitly through threats, fear, violence, and psychological or physical control, creates oppressive relationships that prevent individuals, groups of workers, and countries from realizing their dreams and desires without restriction.

Normalizing power, on the other hand, operates more implicitly. Rather than preventing individuals from doing what they desire, normalizing power affects what individuals desire in the first place. Normalizing power operates by persuading us to internalize social norms and willingly do things that belong to already established norms. What is most remarkable about normalizing power is that we work together actively in its regulation, often without even realizing the external force behind the choice. This power produces norms by which we measure ourselves, creating expectations to achieve idealized positions within the social hierarchy.

While repressive power takes the form of exterior constraints that people are consciously aware of and can resist or obey, normalizing power achieves its goals by converting people into self-controlling subjects who consciously conform to societal norms. The ultimate achievement of normalizing power is that it becomes invisible and embedded in institutions, practices, and discourses that appear neutral or beneficial rather than controlling. We come to desire what society has conditioned us to, believing that these desires originate from within ourselves rather than from external influence.

3.2 Bourdieu on Capital

According to Bourdieu (1986), power operates in society and people's lives. Bourdieu uses Marx's theory of power to understand social stratification. Like Foucault, Bourdieu rejects the notion that power is solely concentrated in the hands of the state or ruling class. He sees power as functioning more through symbolic/cultural means.

At the heart of Bourdieu's (1986) theory is "capital". Capital denotes the resources individuals possess that can be used to exert or sustain power and influence over others. Bourdieu

(1986) delineates forms of capital to encompass economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Economic capital is characterised as monetary means, personal wealth, or financial resources that serve as a fundamental source of power, privileging certain individuals within society. Secondary forms of capital, such as cultural, social, and symbolic capital, possess value only to the degree that they are convertible into economic capital. Thus, various capitals interact to constitute power relations and can substitute for one another.

Cultural capital refers to the accumulation of cultural knowledge, visible and tangible distinctions, such as educational qualifications and literary possessions, personality traits shaped by one's upbringing, and social competencies esteemed by mainstream society (Alsagoff, 2010; Bourdieu, 1986). It also encompasses linguistic proficiency, and various class-dependent forms of knowledge. Disparities in educational attainment and the differential experiences stemming from cultural upbringings illustrate how the cultural nurturing provided within affluent families aligns more closely with the norms prevalent in mainstream society and educational institutions (Bourdieu, 1987). According to Bourdieu (1986), contemporary social hierarchies and societal injustices are fundamentally rooted in the unequal distribution of cultural capital.

In contrast, social capital refers to the resources and benefits individuals can access through their social networks and relationships. These resources act as credentials, sources of leverage, status, or value. In other words, social interactions maintain and strengthen social relationships and positions through the exchange of social capital (Julien, 2015).

According to Bourdieu (1977), language is a crucial marker of cultural capital. That is, the way one speaks indexes one's sociocultural position. For example, consider how language varieties are perceived in society. The dominant class is often associated with standardized language, viewed as “proper” and “correct” and considered to be the norm (Bourdieu, 1991). In the case of English, language varieties associated with lower socioeconomic classes or marginalized groups, such as African American Vernacular English, are often stigmatized and perceived as “improper,” “broken,” or “uneducated” (Cushing, 2023; Flores & Rosa, 2015). Therefore, speakers of non-dominant language varieties or the lower class may be considered less intelligent, less educated, or less capable, regardless of their actual linguistic competence or intelligence. That is, their linguistic capital is not recognized or valued within the dominant cultural framework.

In sum, capital is not just economic wealth, but a broader concept that brings together various forms of resources that can be leveraged to gain social advantage. Bourdieu (1986) identifies several types of capital:

1. Economic Capital: Monetary wealth and financial resources
2. Cultural Capital: Knowledge, skills, education, and cultural competencies
3. Social Capital: Social networks, connections, and relationships
4. Symbolic Capital: Prestige, honor, and recognition

In Bourdieu's view, power is fundamentally about the ability to accumulate and mobilize these different forms of capital. The more capital an individual or group possesses, the more power they can exert within social fields.

3.2.1 Bourdieu and Fields: English Language Teaching (ELT) as a Field

At the core of Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital are two concepts: "field" and "habitus." Habitus refers to the "system of dispositions that are permanent lifestyles resulting from learning, training, and incorporation" (Bourdieu, 2020, p. 26). In other words, our social upbringing, education, and lived experiences systematically reflect the norms, values, and expectations of the social groups to which we belong.

Fields, on the other hand, are sites of struggle where social agents strive for different forms of capital (resources, e.g., economic, cultural, social, symbolic) that would allow them to exert power in the social hierarchy (Bourdieu, 2000; Costa & Murphy, 2015). People compete for power, status, and resources within a specific field based on the field's rules, which are often set forth by the dominant group (Cui, 2016). Individuals with the most valuable capital often dominate the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Cui, 2016). For example, in the global field of English education, English functions as a "lingua franca." Still, different varieties of English, such as Indian English, Nigerian English, or Singlish, hold varying degrees of prestige and acceptability. Standard British or American English is often regarded as the "dominant" form, conferring cultural and symbolic capital on those who speak these varieties. In contrast, speakers of non-standard varieties may have their English devalued in international contexts despite their fluency.

3.3 Raciolinguistic Ideologies

The concept of raciolinguistic ideologies offers insights into how language practices are racialized, often to the detriment of teachers and students of color (Kubota & Lin, 2006; Lippi-

Green, 1994; Motha, 2014; Rosa & Flores, 2015). Flores and Rosa (2015) critique appropriateness-based approaches to language diversity in education, which purport that there are certain ways of speaking and using language in academic settings that are considered "standard," "correct," or "educated." They point out that these "*appropriate*" ways of speaking are often based on the linguistic practices of White and highly educated communities, suggesting that the language and communication styles of other racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups are inferior, non-standard, or uneducated. This results in a hierarchy where the language of a certain race (usually White) is valued, while the language of racialized communities is devalued or stigmatized.

The "White listening subject" (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 152) refers to the dominant, often unquestioned perspective that arbitrates what is a proper or normative use of language. This listening subject does not simply listen to that which is uttered but rather racializes the speaker by virtue of their racial or ethnic identity. Therefore, even when speakers of color do use standardized language practices, they are perceived through a racialized frame that positions their language variety as inferior or inappropriate. Flores and Rosa (2015) draw examples from African American English (AAE) speakers whose language variety is negatively evaluated, simply because it does not fit the dominant, standardized norms.

For scholars such as Delpit (2006), curriculum should focus on teaching what she calls "codes of power," which include specific linguistic forms, communicative strategies, and social behaviors (e.g., ways of speaking, writing, dressing, and interacting). Delpit (2006) contends that success in institutional settings like schools and workplaces relies on mastering the culture of those in power, and that explicitly teaching these cultural rules can make it easier for those outside the dominant group to gain access to power. Essentially, Delpit's view is that speakers of AAE and other non-standard English varieties need direct instruction in mainstream linguistic practices to navigate and succeed within these power structures.

In contrast, Flores and Rosa (2015) consider Delpit's stance as upholding a raciolinguistic ideology as it employs an appropriateness-based model that argues explicitly for teaching idealized linguistic practices of the White-speaking subject. Both Flores and Rosa contend that Delpit's approach, while well-intentioned, ultimately reinforces linguistic hierarchies and fails to challenge the underlying structures of racial and linguistic inequality. Instead, Flores and Rosa advocate for a critical examination of how language ideologies intersect with race, power, and identity in

educational settings. They propose a shift from focusing solely on language acquisition to addressing the broader sociopolitical context in which language is used and evaluated.

Research on raciolinguistic ideologies in non-Western contexts remains limited, with the exception of Kir (2022), who conducted a study on how race influences EFL learners' perceptions of the 'native speaker' concept by examining Turkish university students' (N = 314) responses to speech samples paired with photos of speakers from different racial backgrounds. Participants listened to the same speech recordings of White American women, accompanied by photos of either White or racially minoritized women, and rated each speech sample for nativeness. The results showed that the participants consistently rated White speakers as more 'native' than speakers of color, with South Asian speakers generally rated less favorably across measures. Notably, Black speakers sometimes received ratings comparable to or higher than White speakers, highlighting the complex and racially influenced perceptions of nativeness. Overall, the findings show how race shapes learners' conceptualizations of the 'native speaker,' often marginalizing non- White speakers within the global English language context. In another study set in Turkey, Gras (2024) analyzes how societal norms, racial ideologies, and systemic inequalities affect the identities of teachers of color in TESOL contexts. The author used a narrative inquiry methodology to analyze data from semi-structured interviews and discussion forum posts. Findings revealed that teachers of color often experience racial discrimination during recruitment. For instance, participants' professional experiences are frequently overlooked due to their racial appearance in application materials (e.g., applicants' photographs on their CV). In other words, recruiters make judgments about racialized teachers' suitability based on their appearance, leading to exclusion or profiling. This visual bias contributed to discriminatory practices, making it more difficult for teachers of color to be seen as legitimate or qualified candidates simply because their racial appearance did not conform to the stereotypical images of "native" or "appropriate" White English teachers favored in the hiring process.

3.4 Raciolinguistics help us understand Foucault and Bourdieu's notion of Power

Raciolinguistics provides a valuable lens for connecting and understanding Foucault's disciplinary power and Bourdieu's theories of capital. Together, these theories help us uncover how language a) becomes racialized, and b) functions as both a disciplinary mechanism and a form of capital in social hierarchies.

When examining Foucault's concept of normalizing power, raciolinguistics reveals how certain language varieties become "normalized" while others are marginalized, and relegated to the periphery. Raciolinguistics extends Foucault's concept of disciplinary power by showing how language norms operate as surveillance mechanisms in educational settings. In a context where certain language varieties are deemed "appropriate" or "standard," speakers are constantly monitored and disciplined for linguistic conformity. This creates a panoptic effect where speakers of non-dominant language varieties internalize dominant language ideologies and monitor their own speech. The "White listening subject" that Flores and Rosa (2015) identify functions as the invisible observer in the panopticon, continuously evaluating and disciplining racialized speakers at all times.

Raciolinguistics also expands Bourdieu's theory of power by showing how capital is not just class-based but also racialized. Standard language varieties associated with Whiteness are seen as valuable, desirable cultural capital in educational fields. As Leonardo and Broderick (2011) note, intelligence itself becomes constructed as a form of cultural capital that people of color are less likely to be perceived as possessing, regardless of their actual linguistic abilities.
Bourdieu's concept of “linguistics capital” and "legitimate language" is best understood through raciolinguistics. Even when speakers of color use what would objectively be considered "standard" language, the listening subject may still perceive their speech as deficient or inappropriate. Linguistic legitimacy is thus not about the language itself, but rather about who is speaking.

The concept of field is particularly relevant here. In the educational field, as described in Bourdieu's section above, we see how language varieties become markers that position individuals within social hierarchies. Those who possess the "appropriate" linguistic capital (typically associated with Whiteness) occupy dominant positions in the field. Raciolinguistics reveals how these supposedly neutral "fields" (like education) have inherent rules that privilege certain racial and linguistic groups at the expense of others. This shows how fields themselves are sites of struggle where power is contested through race and language.

Together, these frameworks help us understand that language standards are not neutral or objective but rather mechanisms of racialized power. What Foucault helps us see as disciplinary techniques, Bourdieu helps us recognize as forms of capital distribution. Raciolinguistics brings these perspectives together by showing how language becomes a tool where both disciplinary power and capital accumulation operate simultaneously through racial hierarchies.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

By examining the role race and native speaker status play in the experiences of Black African English teachers (BAETs), this study aims to shed light on the current issues facing BAETs as an underresearched, underrepresented group in the field of English language education. BAET teacher identity is an underexplored topic within the field of TESOL and applied linguistics. Few studies have sought to explore the role of race in language education, specifically in Turkey (except Gras, 2024). This study seeks to understand the challenges Black African English teachers (BAETs) in Turkey encounter regarding their positionalities. A qualitative inquiry was employed because it can provide complex descriptions of BAETs' personal experiences while considering how such experiences connect to society at large.

This chapter describes the methodology and criteria used to determine the rigor of the present research. It is organized into the following subsections: qualitative inquiry, researcher positionality, participant selection and profile, data collection that includes semi-structured interviews, and data analysis method and rigor.

4.2 Qualitative Inquiry

I used qualitative inquiry to examine the daily realities of BAETs in Turkey. The two main objectives of my study were 1) to understand the personal and professional experiences of these teachers and 2) to determine which aspect of BAETs' positionalities constitutes a challenge in the context of English teaching in Turkey.

Qualitative inquiry seeks to collect and analyze non-numerical data by "involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Qualitative researchers study issues in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people assign them. Corbin and Strauss (2014) remind us that qualitative inquiry aims to develop an understanding of the social realities experienced by individuals, including their attitudes, beliefs, and motivations.

4.3 Researcher Positionality, Participant Selection, and Participants' Profile

Within the scope of this research, I am an insider studying specific insiders. I'm a male BAET, bilingual in English and Yoruba, born and raised in Nigeria. I'm currently an M.A.

candidate and teaching assistant at the Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, with a diploma in law and a bachelor's degree in linguistics and communication studies. I am not foreign to the research setting (Turkey) since I spent two and a half years in Turkey teaching English at different language schools before I migrated to the US on a scholarship to study for my master's degree in 2022.

I share similarities with my participants, such as the fact that we work in the field of TESOL. However, I no longer live or work in Turkey, and I recognize that my experiences may differ from those of my participants. As an insider studying insiders' positionalities, I approach the research reflexively by leaving room for both my voice and the participants' voices.

Regarding participant selection, the study's inclusion criteria included self-identifying as a BAET with a minimum of one year of teaching experience in Turkey. I already knew three individuals who fit the study criteria and subsequently interviewed them.

At the start of this study, I had planned to use snowball sampling (Ligita et al., 2020) by asking participants to refer other potential participants. However, seeing that snowball sampling did not yield the expected results, I took a different approach and reached out to potential participants through an online professional network. I began with a random search using the keywords "Black teachers in Turkey" and then "Black African teachers in Turkey." I sent connection requests to ten individuals who met the study criteria, and nine agreed to participate in this study. In total, I interviewed twelve participants.

Table 1 Participants' Profiles

Names (pseudonyms)	Gender	Nationality	Age range	Teaching experience in Turkey	Teaching setting in Turkey
Michael	M	Ghanaian	28-30	2 ½ years	Private language/high schools
Ropo	M	Nigerian/American (raised in Nigeria)	30-35	5 years	High schools
Sodiq	M	Ghanaian	23-25	2 years	High schools
Rita	F	Nigerian	23	1 year	Kindergarten and high school
Fade	F	Nigerian	30	3 years	High schools
Malik	M	Senegalese	30-35	5+ years	High schools
Amaka	F	Nigerian	32	3+ years	High schools
Prossy	F	Ugandan	40-45	4 years	Private language schools
Alex	M	Ugandan	26-30	4 years	High schools
Bola	F	Nigerian	27-30	2 years	Private language Schools
Ali	M	Djiboutian	23-26	1½ years	High schools
Lucas	M	Sudanese	35-40	2 years	Private language schools

4.4 Data Collection

4.4.1 Semi-Structured Interview

I collected all the data through semi-structured interviews. These semi-structured interviews encouraged the participants to share relevant stories (Gras, 2024) while allowing me, the researcher, to adjust the questions as appropriate during the interview to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the topic (Gras, 2024; Henriksen et al., 2022). The interview questions (see Appendix A) aimed to prompt the participants to share their lived experiences.

Semi-structured interviews have been used in studies examining native speakerism, such as Alshammari's (2022) study, which examined how NNETs in Saudi Arabia develop their professional identities. Interviews with eighteen participants from Preparatory Year programs at two Saudi universities showed that some NNETs were aware of how the native speaker fallacy affected their professional identity. Also, in a study that addresses the issue of race and its relationship to native speakerism in TESOL employment, Atkinson (2023) used semi-structured interviews to engage participants in an open-ended dialogue, eliciting rich, qualitative data about their personal experiences and perspectives on native speakerism and hiring discrimination.

4.4.2 Data Analysis Method

I analyzed my data using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis refers to a method for analyzing qualitative data that involves searching for recurring ideas (referred to as themes) in a data set (Rigor & Sigurvinsdotter, 2016). Following Rigor and Sigurvinsdotter's (2016) framework, I analyzed the data in six stages. In stage 1, I immersed myself in the data by transcribing all interviews and reading the transcripts repeatedly. While this transcription process was time-consuming, it helped me become intimately familiar with the data. During my readings, I actively looked for meanings and patterns, making notes on potential coding categories that I could develop further in subsequent analyses. In stage 2, after becoming familiar with the data, I generated initial codes. I used data-driven codes that emerged inductively from the dataset and

theory-driven codes related to my specific research questions. I coded the data manually in Microsoft Word and used colors in the texts to visually identify codes and participant quotes. I coded for as many potential themes as possible, recognizing that some codes might become more or less significant later in the process. During stage 3, I searched for themes by examining how different codes could fit together into broader patterns. I organized these themes hierarchically, creating higher-order themes and subthemes. To facilitate this process, I created visual representations using tables and mind maps to help me understand the relationships between codes and potential themes.

In stage 4, I reviewed and refined the themes I had initially identified. I evaluated whether the coded extracts within each theme fit together coherently and assessed whether the themes as a whole captured the essence of my entire dataset. At this stage, I reread my complete dataset to ensure I had not missed any relevant data that fit within my themes.

During stage 5, I defined and named each theme. I identified the central idea within each theme and created concise names that effectively captured these ideas. I also developed subthemes to capture important dimensions within larger themes. For each theme and subthemes, I wrote definitions and detailed analyses of its content and how it contributed to my overall understanding of the data.

Finally, in stage 6, I produced my coding scheme. I carefully selected data extracts that best illustrated each theme and documented my analytical decisions throughout the process. In my writing, I went beyond mere description to construct an argument about my data, addressing key questions about the meaning and implications of each theme, the assumptions underpinning them, and the conditions that gave rise to particular patterns in my data.

4.4.3 Rigor

Rigor plays a vital part in qualitative research. Rigor is a means of demonstrating confidence or trustworthiness in research study outcomes. It enables the researcher to demonstrate methodological consistency throughout time. Furthermore, it offers a precise portrayal of the population under investigation (Gass et al., 2005; Mills, 2018). Mills (2018) points out the four elements of trustworthiness as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Table 4.2 presents the elements of rigor and how they were implemented in the study to ensure the trustworthiness of my findings.

Table 2 Ensuring Rigor

Elements of rigor	Definition	How it was ensured in my study
Credibility	Whether the participants find the results believable	I made use of participant validation through member checking.
Transferability	Whether the findings may apply to other settings	Due to the limited number of participants, study results cannot be generalized. However, the results can inform other teachers of color in similar contexts.
Confirmability	The degree to which the findings are based on the data collected and not influenced by the researcher's biases	My study supervisor verified my analyses.
Dependability	Extent to which the research study's conclusions are reliable and consistent	The study supervisor independently coded a portion of the data, and we met to reconcile our codes.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the step-by-step process I used to examine the experiences of Black African teachers in Turkey. I discussed my qualitative research approach, detailing how I conducted interviews and thoroughly analyzed the data using thematic analysis. To ensure the integrity of my research, I concentrated on four critical aspects: establishing the believability of the results (credibility), ensuring potential applicability in other contexts (transferability), maintaining consistency (dependability), and ensuring the findings were influenced by the participants rather than my perspectives (confirmability). By verifying my findings with the participants and meticulously documenting each step of my analysis, I developed a solid

foundation for understanding their experiences. In the next chapter, I will present my discoveries from these interviews and analyses, highlighting the key themes and patterns that emerged from the teachers' stories.

Chapter 5: Findings

In this chapter, I report on the results of the semi-structured interviews, which I organized around five major themes. Theme 1 covers participants' characteristics. Despite their qualifications, participants face challenges mainly related to race (theme 2) and, to a lesser extent, language (theme 3). I also examine how participants responded to these challenges (theme 4) and share some success stories (theme 5).

5.1 Theme 1: BAET's Characteristics

Before discussing BAETs' challenges in Turkey, it is crucial to understand who these teachers are and what qualifications they bring to their professional roles.

The teachers I interviewed are well-educated professionals. Their strong educational backgrounds and professional training position them as qualified experts in their field. For example, all twelve participants held at least a Bachelor's degree, with many pursuing advanced graduate studies, such as Fade.

> *I studied English and International Studies as my first degree in Nigeria for Osun State University, and I have a Master's degree in English Literature from the University of Lagos, Nigeria. (Fade)*

Similarly, Michael's academic journey demonstrates a commitment to educational excellence:

> *I've had all my basic education and then my first level of university education in Ghana. I studied business at Ibaka State College from 2009 to 2013. Then, I enrolled in the University of Cape Coast, where I earned a Bachelor of Management Studies from 2014 to 2018 with first-class honors. (Michael)*

Besides formal university degrees, most participants actively pursued specialized teaching certifications to enhance their professional credentials. As Amaka describes, this ongoing professional development was often driven by a desire to overcome barriers in the job market.

> *So, I kept on improving myself. I did TEFL, Teaching English as a Foreign Language. I did all the certifications, I did for general English speaking, I did for business English, I did for young learners. I told myself, if I give myself more value, maybe I will be good enough for these jobs. (Amaka)*

Regarding character traits, participants could be characterized as hardworking, resilient, and resourceful. Participants often demonstrated strong entrepreneurial abilities, developing side businesses to create additional income streams and opportunities. When faced with economic challenges in Turkey, these teachers have not simply relied on their teaching positions but have actively created business ventures.

For example, Malik talked about sacrificing his time and energy for days without pay. Malik's story illustrates how he endured hardship, working long hours for very little pay without support. He did not let it weigh him down; instead, he used these experiences to strengthen his professional profile. Because securing a teaching job was difficult, Malik eventually created a non-profit English center with branches in multiple countries.

> *So I don't think I'm doing all this because I am skilful or something, but because I had to be. (...) I had to stay days without eating or being able to go to school because the school owner [at my previous job] didn't pay me. (...) And I understood that I needed to try new things to do new things. (...) I'm still rejected in so many things. But you know, [potential employers] take the time at least to process. (...) I created an organization in five cities in Algeria, currently in two cities and about to be in a third one in Turkey. I'm managing twenty young people. (Malik)*

5.2 Theme 2: Race-related Challenges

By far, the most prominent theme that emerged from the data pertained to race-related challenges, including racism experienced at and out of work, as well as institutional racism.

5.2.1 Racism Experienced at and out of Work

All but two participants revealed that they had directly experienced racism at work, as well as outside of work.

In Turkish classrooms, BAETs frequently faced direct racism, as students used Turkish to make derogatory remarks, assuming that the teacher could not understand. Michael recounted a troubling incident where a student took advantage of this linguistic barrier.

> *A student called me an "animal", thinking I didn't understand. I pretended like that, and one of her friends screamed. And I asked her, "what did she say?" And the other students were like: "nothing, nothing". Later, the*

students came to tell me that their colleagues had said this. I had to confront that student, and I think she was in grade 8. (Michael)

Amaka also stated that a student had referred to her using a derogatory name.

I was teaching - Yeah, a girl in the old school. She said, I was a monkey, and all of them started to laugh, and I told her, "come here". She was about 5, and I said "who is a monkey?" She thought I didn't understand Turkish. She was trying to do what the other kids did to me in the old schools. So this time she was shocked, and she said... I said, "who's a monkey"? I looked at her in the eye, and she said, "She's a monkey". I said, "Oh, you are a monkey? Because I thought for a minute you said I was a monkey". She said "no". (Amaka)

Lucas also described his experience of racial prejudice in classroom settings and the ensuing trauma. He recounted how his students in Isparta, a small city where some students had never encountered a Black person, reacted to his Blackness. Lucas said the students often ignored him, misunderstood his actions, and treated him differently.

Even when you come to class, you try to be friendlier. When you try to shake their hands, they move away as if something is wrong with you. You know, this kind of... Even though I'm trying as much to be more diplomatic and avoid that because it is a trauma. (Lucas)

Outside of work, a few participants mentioned Turkish people referring to them using the derogatory label "yabancı" (a pejorative term for "foreigner"). Fade described this shared experience of being randomly identified and labeled as an outsider:

*We get laughed at, whether you're a Black person or not. As far as the foreigner, you, you face .... You have that same experience. Another one is, you know, just some random people telling, just passing this comment at you. yabancı. Just call me "*yabancı*" for no reason. (Fade)*

In addition, two of the five female participants reported experiencing heightened sexual harassment because of their race, including inappropriate and unsolicited sexual advances or behaviors. Fade, who had encountered sexual harassment during a professional interview, complained about being constantly sexualized.

Being Black in Turkey and now being a Black female in Turkey is another thing. At least, I can see categorically that every Black female in Turkey has been harassed. Every. One way or the other. As far as you are ... Whether you are pregnant or not, you would have been harassed. Either you're on the road, or you get into a taxi, and the taxi man is showing you his whatever. This happened to me. So if ... Let me say this: a few months ago, you had to just get out of the car, or they would call you 'freaky-freaky," but they just, they just... Oh, God! It's so disgusting. (Fade)

Amaka's story also exemplifies how sexual harassment particularly affects women who are Black and foreign.

And then, they just see you and think you are available. I tell a man to come to fix a fridge. I tell serviceman to come to repair something, and he's saying, "don't pay", and I'm like "why?" He's saying, "because I want you", and I'm like, "Are you sick? I called you for a service because I have money to pay you. You think that my body should be the payment?" So women are treated very badly, but not Turkish women, because it's a rule, it's a criminal offense, but Black women and foreigners, because they know you do not have anybody to fight for you. (Amaka)

Participants also lamented the pervasiveness of negative stereotypes about Africa. Fade shared how students, as well as her Russian colleague held negative stereotypes about Africa being poor and disease-ridden. After Fade was assigned to re-teach a topic on poverty in English that the Russian English teacher had already covered, she was appalled by the disturbing images of Africa that her colleague had used in the original lesson.

That's all these White people know about African countries. I needed to start re-educating this Russian teacher; in fact, I have to start showing up pictures, showing now what Lagos looks like. "Oh, Africa, they have a lot of diseases." I said, "yes, in your country, your people have cancer. You have bigger diseases. You have ... Just Malaria, which is treatable; there is cure." (Fade)

Amaka also experienced this negative perception of Africa in her classroom, stating:

I said [to my students], "Can you give me some examples of countries that are suffering from poverty?" You know. I think I shot myself in the foot because I was expecting them to call out world countries and nobody... They said, "Africa". And I said, "What do you mean? Do I look poor? And who told you Africa is a country?" You just got a whole continent of poverty; you just call the whole continent poor, and that's what he [the average student] knows. That's what he sees on television. And that's what the media does to us. (Amaka)

Next, almost all participants experienced a form of erasure related to their identity as BAETs. For example, employers frequently hid BAETs during inspections by government officials, regardless of whether or not they held a legal work permit. Ropo, who has a work permit, explained that the school had manipulated his time sheet in the Ministry of Education records, which caused the school authority to hide him during inspections by officials.

Anytime there is an individual inspector from the Ministry of Education, that week, or those weeks, are, like, leave weeks for me. You come to work but you don't work because of the Ministry of Education. Remember, I said in the beginning you have just 9 to 15 hours per week. So when the Ministry of Education comes, you don't go to most of your classes. They don't allow you to go because it's illegal for you to work more than some certain hour. (Ropo)

Amaka recalled a time when she was without a work permit.

When the Government was coming to check, or the Ministry of Education was coming to inspect the schools, we had to hide, we had to leave the school. We have to go somewhere: to a restaurant, or we have to go home. They shouldn't see us in the premises. It's illegal. So I told my principal, like, "why am I working like this where I'm hiding or running away, or going out when the government or the inspectors are coming?" And she said, "Because you don't have a work permit", and I'm like, "Why don't I have a work permit?"... We have to leave or run away or hide somewhere. (Amaka)

Lucas, who had been working without proper documentation, said:

> *And at times when the mobilization of these schools, when police come and, like, try to see whether who is teaching? And if foreigners are teaching, are they legit? And all this. They [the schools] used to hide us. (Lucas)*

Participants also discussed how school management often changed their names and nationalities to appeal to parents and position the school as an international institution. Malik explained:

> *... Some of them [administrators] used to change our names. You know that, yeah. Because it does, it doesn't sound American. (Malik)*

Amaka also noted how her nationality had been altered to appeal to parents:

> *... Sometimes they lie to the parents that I'm not Nigerian. They don't even say I'm African. They say. "Oh, she's from America", or "she's from the United Kingdom". They use me to market. (Amaka)*

Ropo, a dual US-Nigeria citizen, discussed how his Nigerian identity was erased while his American identity was celebrated. Indeed, having an American nationality positively influenced his standing with students, and the school management used it to attract parents.

> *This question keeps coming up from time to time because they all talk to themselves. You get to some classes you've never been before, maybe having a cover lesson, and this question keeps coming up. "Oh, teacher, I learned your mom is American and your dad is Nigerian. You are half-American. Is that true? Do you have an American passport and all of that?" And by the time you're telling them a yes, they put you on a different level, so they don't mess with you. Because of that, the school also wants to showcase you to the parents. They want to slap you on every of their social media accounts even if they don't write it. "Our American teacher", they just want to put you there. So when there are questions, they say, "Oh, you see, that guy is half American", you know. And it's, it's just, it's, it's crazy. (Ropo)*

Participants held different opinions on whether it was easy for Black Africans to secure jobs in Turkey. Some reportedly obtained teaching positions shortly after arriving in the country, while others encountered significant challenges to accessing these roles, despite possessing relevant qualifications. Many participants described long periods of unemployment and numerous

rejected applications, suggesting systemic exclusion from their profession. This led some participants to temporarily settle for manual jobs, such as Rita, who explained that it was a common occurrence for African immigrants.

> *Most of the jobs that are available for Africans are factory jobs. You can't really say skilled job is factory. Most. Okay, let me just say, like, 90% of Africans work in a factory. (Rita)*

Fade's experience demonstrates the exceptional perseverance needed to obtain a teaching position.

> *I waited 3 years. Yeah. I waited 3 years, and I've, I'm not gonna lie. I've gone for more than 40 interviews. (Fade)*

Seven participants reported getting their first English teaching position through an agency. Some participants, such as Michael, reported being exploited by the agency (the "middleman") in the process.

> *It's more like an established agency. I say, middlemen, a middle person. And we later got to realize that our salaries were slashed, like, up to 50 or 60% by these middle people. (Michael)*

Other participants obtained their teaching positions through close friends and social connections.

> *So I got this job through a friend. I had a friend who was teaching at a language school. (Sodiq)*

Once they secured a teaching position, BAETs' livelihood was still precarious. Indeed, participants consistently reported earning significantly lower wages (sometimes as little as one-fourth) than their White counterparts for identical work. Amaka, who has a work permit, revealed:

> *Let me shock you. Even where I work, they give the native speakers [White teachers] the full pay. They do a work permit, they do everything, but they give them the full pay. So the difference between me and them is they get the full pay. I don't, you see, even in all my, okay, legal work. And you know I still get a little bit of discrimination. But it's better than where I was coming from. (Amaka)*

One participant recounted witnessing these racist practices firsthand when his supervisor offered a European (White) teacher a salary that was equivalent to three times the minimum wage.

Meanwhile, Black teachers, such as himself, received barely above the minimum wage. Another participant points to the racial hierarchy in teacher wages.

> *Americans were paid 40 liras, White people from Hungary, from Poland, who are not native speakers, were paid 40 liras in the beginning, while I was paid 10 liras. (Malik)*

Besides work, foreigners often face discrimination in housing, an issue that is conflated for BAETs, and that mostly concerns access and price. Indeed, most Turkish people do not want to rent out houses to foreigners, and housing ads will often specify that a house is "not available to foreigners."

> *When it comes to the housing part, you know. That's the most astonishing part, you know because they will openly tell you "we don't rent this house to foreigners". (Alex)*

Even if an African immigrant is able to rent an apartment, their rent will probably be higher than for Turkish renters.

> *You might be paying 4,000 Turkish lira per month as a Nigerian, while the other person, a Turkish citizen, might be paying 1,000 in the same building. (Fade)*

Alex came to the conclusion that he had experienced housing discrimination after he conducted his own experiment, having a Turkish friend ask about the same flat he was interested in.

> *I did a social experiment. I have a Turkish friend. I was looking for a house, and then I went to this house. The guy told me you're going to pay a deposit. You're going to pay two months' rent, deposit, two months' rent, and then you're going to pay commission, this like four times. So I'm going to pay around 40,000, just to live in the house, and then also the next month I will start paying deposit of two months rent and commission. I was like, this is ridiculous. I've never heard of this. So I did a social experiment. Same house. I called a Turkish friend of mine. (...) He went to ask for the house, the guy told him: "Pay one month rent and start living", you know. Yes, you see the difference. He just told him. The house is ready, just pay, pay your*

rent and start living. He's not asking for no commission. He's not asking for, you know, no deposit and not even asking for two months rent. (Alex)

5.2.2 Institutional Racism

Most participants lamented the racial bias inherent in Turkey's policing and immigration enforcement, sharing poignant stories of how Black immigrants are routinely targeted by immigration authorities, regardless of their legal status. This mistreatment has become so prevalent that it is routinely documented on social media.

It's a standard up now. Go on Tiktok. Go on Instagram. Most of those social media account on social media platforms. You will see it there, how they humiliate the Blacks. In fact, there are some [immigration officials] they ask you, where is your permit? You bring out your resident permit, they break it and they tell you, they push you into the van. They take you to a deportation camp, and you live there for many months, some years. (Ropo)

Even those attempting to follow proper procedures find themselves trapped in a system designed to fail them, as Ropo further explains.

People apply for resident permit, they don't give them, and the next thing, they pick them up they knock at people's door, pick them up, push them to deportation camp, keep them there for many years, or many months. At the end of the day, they end up deporting them to their country, not allowing them to pick anything out and all. (Ropo)

The conditions within these detention centers are nothing short of horrifying, with Fade sharing second-hand accounts of abuse hidden from public view:

[My friend] was in the immigration camp for months. He shared his experience with me. I don't know. Maybe someone should work on this. People died there. Yes, people died. Without cameras, they beat them, yell at them, kick them. Whatever reason - Just to get the satisfaction of beating yabancı [= foreigner]. I know of other two people there, for a crime they did not commit. Their only crime was to come to Turkey. (Fade)

This targeting appears racially motivated, with Black immigrants presumed illegal, regardless of documentation status.

I've seen Black people picked up, Black men or Black women. They just assume you don't have documentation or they just assume that you're an illegal worker, an illegal immigrants. They don't even listen. One time, I saw a violent scene on Instagram. He was screaming, "I have my papers". They don't understand English. They dragged him. They hit him. They brutalized him, and when they got to the police station he had a paper, you know. They don't want to know anything. They just say, "Show me", and before you can even bring it out, or even say "I forgot it at home", or something, they pick you up, and they send you. The next thing, you're in Africa. They don't want to hear anything. When they see a Black man, they just assume: scammer, drugs, or something. (Amaka)

Those who manage to obtain work permits find themselves caught in an ever-shifting maze of regulatory changes designed to push immigrants out, creating a constant state of vulnerability. These accounts revealed a troubling system where Black immigrants live in fear. The legal status of BAETs is frequently undermined, resulting in a lack of respect for their humanity. The psychological toll of enduring such situations is severe, yet these teachers continue their work despite the constant threat of detention or deportation.

Now, even with work permits, they keep changing policies that are not favorable. I don't know why. Maybe they think because they have a lot of foreign settlers in their country, they are trying to chase them back home. So what they do right now is they bring out crazy policies that, you know, sometimes the requirements are difficult. At that point, they are trying to enforce those who are trying to renew at that point. They end up getting denied, and they become illegal migrants in the country. (Fade)

Two participants established a direct link between Turkey's targeting of African immigrants and the country's financially motivated attempts to bolster its relationship with the European Union (EU).

Actually, I heard something is happening there because of this money that the EU provides. These people are literally making some money, or it's become like a business where you know those working there [immigration agents] swindle the money. Let's say they report the number of people

captured, and they send the money for those people, so the higher the numbers, the more money they get. (...) Even if you have the documents, sometimes they will arrest you, and then they release you, and if they find you the next day, they will arrest you again. (Alex)

Ropo also argued that this system transforms immigrants into a source of profit, regardless of their efforts to maintain legal status.

At the end of the day there is an amount they collect from EU, you know, for the fact that they are keeping people from entering to EU. The EU pays them. Either EU or the United Nations. They pay them for all these people to pick up in full. We are also a source of income. You can read about it online so it won't be like speculations. You can read about it. So when they deny us the permit, they [immigration officials] render was out of status, and then we become a meat to them. Not that we did not apply. We applied, but it did not ... And after, like, 10 days of your expiration, you become illegal occupant or immigrant. Did they pick you off? You become a meat. If you get to the airport you want to leave, you have to pay for overstay. (Ropo)

In short, immigration enforcement against Black immigrants in Turkey extends beyond legal compliance. It is linked to overarching geopolitical and financial agreements between Turkey and the EU, which encourage the mistreatment of Black African immigrants.

5.3 Theme 3: Language-related Challenges

Participants reported experiencing language-related challenges with regards to English, mostly centered around native speakerism.

5.3.1. Challenges Related to English

Most participants reported experiencing negative outcomes as a result of native speakerism, i.e., the belief that "native" (White) English speakers are the ideal candidates to teach English. For example, ideologies of native speakerism are often reflected in advertisements for teaching positions.

And when you look at the ad, from the very ad, you see that only native speakers should apply: from Australia, from Australia, America, Canada,

and the United Kingdom. That's it. There was a time South Africa was considered, but then they stopped. (Amaka)

Students' preference for native-speaking teachers from Western countries was evident.

That was the expectation that if you speak English, you should speak like Americans. Yeah, that's the [students] expectation. (Sodiq)

Participants often pushed back against questions regarding their linguistic legitimacy.

And I used to ask when I saw those ads, like, who colonized us? The British. What language do we learn officially? What's our lingua franca? English. We speak it from 0 to the end of your master's or Ph.D. level. So why am I not a native speaker? I used to ask this question, and I don't know. That's how the world always sees people who are not on that list, who are not Americans, Canadians, United Kingdom, or Australians. You will always be less. (Amaka)

Fade also criticized the native speaker myth heralded by some of her colleagues.

In fact, my role in that school was as a native English teacher, although some of them [my colleagues] might say I'm from Nigeria. In my country, we speak English, our official language. I needed to tell them the country, is English, which is an official language. Because I remember one teacher wanting to tell me that I'm not really native. I told him I am, actually, to an extent, I can be considered native. In fact, I can speak better than the so-called Americans. (Fade)

Some participants demonstrated an awareness of accent discrimination, and were ready to challenge anyone who would question their legitimacy.

Everyone has a way of speaking in English; even the British and the Americans is different. And when you look, everyone's English is different. An accent is someone's way of speaking your language in that person's own language. So you should be. It shouldn't be about you concentrating on the person's accent, but it should be about the content, or whether the person is following the right grammar, all the right principles, the right fundamentals of the English language, so for, the thing I get is about my accents most of

the time, and I know it's my accent; I was born with, like, you grew up in it. Accent is something that you learned from your surroundings. (Sodiq)

5.4 Theme 4: How BAETs Respond to Challenges

Participants responded to race and language-related challenges in multiple ways. First, several participants questioned their decision to move to Turkey.

I used to cry. I used to feel like, why am I even here? (Amaka)

I was home for three months; I didn't get a job. And I was always asking myself, why did you leave? (Rapo)

Other participants reported feeling sad, depressed, and discouraged, questioning their future in Turkey. For example, Michael eventually decided to leave Turkey:

Personally, I don't know people, but I don't know what will motivate me to stay in Turkey or go back to Turkey tomorrow. No, there's no motivation. I told a friend, even if I'm being paid 5,000 for a teaching job in this country. The way they don't regard us, don't value our service and appreciate us is enough to put me off. (Michael)

Fade herself had a message for Africans considering moving to Turkey:

Don't dare it. I can't even advise my enemy to come. (Fade)

Downplaying racism served as a survival strategy for some participants. For example, Michael chose not to report the aforementioned racial slur incident to the school authority and instead to confront the student privately. After the student apologized, citing stress from home, Michael kept the incident silent. This response stemmed from a deep-seated belief that reporting such incidents would not lead to meaningful change.

I never told anybody. I never told any teacher. I just have to... Because that's what happens every time, you know. And going to report ... They [school administrators] may sound right in front of you. They may sound as if they are questioning the student or whatever, but it doesn't go anywhere. So sometimes you just have to pretend as if you didn't hear anything. (Michael)

Another coping strategy was to acquire skills and pursue further education.

And then I told myself, "What's, what's the point?" So, I kept on improving myself. I did TEFL, teaching English as a foreign language. I did all the

certifications; I did for general English speaking; I did for business English; I did for young learners. I told myself, if I give myself more value, maybe I will be good enough for these jobs. (Amaka)

5.5 Theme 5: Success Stories

Despite the aforementioned negative experiences, some participants deemed their experiences in Turkey as successful. For example, Prossy reported being "lucky" and not having personally experienced race-related incidents with his students.

Actually, I'm lucky. I want to use the word "lucky". Or, I'm the most fortunate. I have never had any complaints from any of my [student] groups. (Prossy)

Despite overcoming numerous obstacles, Malik and Amaka heralded their own experiences as success stories. For example, Malik went to Denmark to improve his teaching skills and came back to Turkey to create a nonprofit English center for the community. Many parents have sought out Malik to be their child's English teacher, even entrusting him to organize a study abroad trip to England.

Of course, after your story, your successes, and the things you've achieved, people now, you know, beg you to send their children. Last year, I took 39 kids, 25, by myself, to England for a summer camp. (Malik)

On the other hand, after working with no pay, Amaka got a satisfying job that valued her contribution and offered many benefits.

They call it homeroom teacher, and she told me we deal with the International Baccalaureates (IB) program from the United Kingdom. I'm like, "Whoa. I have no experience with the IB. I have no experience being a homeroom teacher, and I don't think I can do this job", I told her up front. I don't want to short work. I don't want to work and not deliver. I like to do my best at what I do, so I thought I was not going to take the job. She said: "We will train you. We would like to have you." (...) So, this school was actually amazing. It's everyone's dream job. (Amaka)

Fade successfully transferred her work permit to a new school, which felt like a victory.

To God be the Glory. What they did was transfer my letter [work permit] to wherever I will be working. (Fade)

In contrast, Lucas, who had applied for a one-year resident permit renewal after fleeing war-torn Sudan, was originally denied. Fortunately, he managed to find a lawyer to make an expensive appeal that took more than seven months. The court ordered that Lucas be issued a humanitarian visa, but the immigration department denied him again. Lucas appealed to a higher court and was eventually issued a humanitarian visa with a seven-month penalty. When asked how he was coping during that time, he said:

I could not go out because I had no papers and things were really tough, especially [for] Africans. Many of them were deported. Thank God, I didn't. So on the 7th, they gave me the paper to go and pay the fines. Which is over 20 something Turkish lira. I'm supposed to pay that fine, and then they will give me the humanitarian bill. Now I'm struggling to get the money. (Lucas)

5.6 Summary

Overall, the current study found that BAETs face race-related challenges more than language-related challenges. Race-related challenges came in many forms, including: racial slurs, sexual harassment, erasure, and negative stereotypes about Africa, as well as discriminatory practices related to hiring, wages, housing, and immigration. The study also revealed that the majority of Turkish school administrators and students prefer White native speakers. Additionally, the chapter illustrated how BAETs respond to racism and ended with success stories experienced by a small number of participants.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This study documents the experiences of a specific group of BAETs in Turkey, filling a significant gap in the research literature. Findings from the present study revealed that BAETs experienced racism in the form of racial slurs, heightened sexual harassment, wage disparities, and discrimination (in housing and the workplace). Findings also showed that race-related challenges are more prevalent than language-related challenges. By focusing explicitly on the intersection of Blackness and English language teaching in the Turkish context, this research goes beyond general discussions of native speakerism to examine how racial identity fundamentally shapes professional experiences, even when teachers possess the linguistic skills traditionally valued in the field. Examining language ideologies separately from racial hierarchies is inadequate, as BAETs' experiences demonstrate how deeply intertwined these systems of power are in practice.

6.1 Racism

It was surprising that language-related challenges paled in comparison to race-related challenges. Even if some would argue that racism is a thing of the past (Bell, 2003; Yonucu, 2023), this study confirms that racism still permeates Turkish society (see Arslan, 2023) and that it is embedded in the country's education and classrooms. Findings from this study show that BAETs are undeniably racialized in both their professional and personal lives. This aligns with Kubota and Lin's (2006, 2009) observation that racial discourse often operates invisibly in language education contexts. Race fundamentally shapes how language teachers are perceived and valued, regardless of their pedagogical expertise (Motha, 2014).

Starting with racial slurs, Turkish students took advantage of the fact that BAETs might not understand Turkish to refer to them as "animals" or "monkeys". Referring to a teacher as an animal is a clear display of racism, in that it dehumanizes the teacher. Croom (2015) discusses racial slurs as a means of racial defamation to dehumanize targeted groups and to justify racial oppression. In a study that focused on racial slurs and how prevalent they are in the workplace, Rosette et al. (2013) found that Black individuals are the most targeted racial group that is victim of such slurs. The most surprising part of my study is that the racial slurs did not come from administrators or fellow teachers, but rather from the students (including some very young students). Unlike normalizing power (Foucault, 1979), racial slurs do not relate to professional

standards or legitimacy. Rather, racial slurs represent a form of repressive power (Foucault, 1979), serving as a direct racial attack to assert dominance.

The data also brought to light an apparent contrast: participants were racialized in many aspects of their professional life, while at the same time experiencing forms of erasure of their identity and race. For example, school administrators routinely hid BAETs during inspections by authorities, a practice reported by over half of the participants. Hiding BAETs can be interpreted as a form of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1982), in the sense that educational institutions both exploit BAETs' labor while simultaneously rendering them invisible. Similarly, school authorities often deemed BAETs unworthy of legal employment or benefits, stripping them of basic rights and withholding essential resources. Such practices exemplify "structural racism,", wherein institutional practices systematically disenfranchise racial minorities (Bonilla-Silva et al., 2006; Ibrahim, 2008). Based on interviews with Syrian, Afghan, and African refugees as well as the migrant population in Istanbul, Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm et al. (2025) argue that marginalized groups, such as Africans, are often at risk of epistemic erasure (i.e., systemic devaluation and exclusion). By refusing legal recognition to most BAETs (through, for example, work permits), this study shows that Turkish schools reproduce a system that keeps BAETs in a vulnerable position, preventing them from advocating for their rights or accessing protections available to their White peers.

Similarly, changing BAETs' names and misrepresenting their identity to the parents point to the complex intersection of market forces, racial hierarchies, and raciolinguistic ideologies. Even though BAETs possess the pedagogical skills to teach effectively, they operate within an environment that favors Whiteness. School administrators make a cynical calculation: they employ BAETs for economic reasons, taking advantage of their race and visa status to pay them lower wages. School administrators recognize that parents will likely reject these teachers based on anti-Black prejudice, but instead of challenging these biases, Turkish school administrators accommodate and reinforce them through deception. The fact that BAETs' names are changed to sound American and that they are sometimes introduced as African American individuals shows a direct erasure of Africanness. Whiteness acts as a potent form of cultural capital that Turkish administrators believe enhances the perceived value of English instruction at their school. Manipulating BAETs' positionalities reflects the belief of school administrators that, regardless of qualifications, the cultural capital BAETs possess is not valuable.

Racialized power dynamics were also apparent in the sexual harassment that two female participants reported. The intersection of race and gender creates particular vulnerabilities, resulting in Black females being sexualized and harassed (Crenshaw, 2013; Jordan-Zachery, 2007). In the present case, harassment serves as a type of biopower (Foucault, 1980) that aims to dominate and subjugate these teachers' identities as well as their bodies, exposing profoundly ingrained, historically hypersexualized, and devalued assumptions about Black women's bodies. Treating these participants more like sexualized objects than esteemed educators weakens their professional authority and upholds racial hierarchies. These instructors also have to deal with the emotional strain of navigating their professional and personal obligations while avoiding or managing unwanted advances, which further drains their emotional resources and energy.

This study also shows how immigration mediates participants' experiences of race in language teaching. Research on race and language teaching in the case of immigrant teachers is scarce and shows that teachers of color are vulnerable to cheap labor, work without pay, and fearful conditions of being deported unjustly (Roy, 2018). In a study that explores how new members of the African diaspora in Vancouver negotiate spaces of belonging and exclusion, Creese (2022) finds that many African immigrants struggle to achieve their Canadian dreams, a stark contrast to Creese's own parents, who immigrated from the United Kingdom in the 1950s. Creese (2022) points to "White-skinned privilege" and the ease of Anglo-dominance embedded in Canada's ever-changing immigration policies. In the present study, Turkey's anti-Black immigration sentiment is characterized by mass deportation, attesting to an immigration strategy and policies that erase and exclude Black immigrants. Many participants reported that Black immigrants in Turkey are routinely arrested and brutalized in immigration camps, even when possessing a work or residence permit. This points to a form of repressive power (Foucault, 1979), which, in its most direct form, showcases the state's ability to control borders, determine who belongs, and physically remove those deemed unwanted. Unlike more subtle forms of power, deportations involve direct physical force and the full weight of state authority. As Black Africans are targeted for raids and deportation, the state is exercising its most explicit form of repressive power. Additionally, the threat of deportation creates a constant state of fear and surveillance for Black African teachers. Even those with legal status may live in fear of harassment or wrongful deportation, resulting in what Foucault (1979) would describe as a panoptic effect, where BAETs must constantly self-monitor and adjust their behavior, knowing they could be targeted at any moment.

Finally, housing represented another venue in which BAETs experienced racial challenges. Black African instructors are routinely excluded from safe, affordable housing options by landlords who either refuse to rent to them or charge them exorbitant rent. This parallels the plight of Kurds in Turkey, who face housing discrimination in the form of tenancy refusals and eviction threats (Yarkin, 2019). Bourdieu's (1986) theory of social capital helps us understand this phenomenon as a type of social closure in which privileged groups keep their status by limiting immigrant access to resources. Because of housing discrimination, BAETs are forced to reside in less desirable neighborhoods, commute farther, or spend a disproportionate amount of their already lower income on housing. Housing segregation further isolates BAETs from community resources and professional networks, solidifying their marginalization in Turkish society.

6.2 Native Speakerism

All participants were negatively impacted by the native speaker myth that English belongs to its native speakers, who have been exposed to the language from birth and have thus developed the competence to use it "naturally" (Mahboob, 2010; Rampton, 1990). Turkish administrators have internalized the misconception that native speakers from Western countries are the best English teachers, which is why they explicitly include this preference in their job advertisements (Ruecker & Ives, 2015). In parallel, students want to model themselves after native speakers, whom they view as White and Western (Mahboob, 2004; Samimy, 2008). This discriminatory idea of native speakerism has been vigorously challenged in recent years by many scholars (Colmenero & Lasagabaster, 2020; Harsanti & Manara, 2021; Kiczkowiak, 2020). Rudolph (2024) challenges the belief that "native English speaker teachers" are automatically better teachers just because they were born speaking English. English has spread widely, with many speakers from the “outer” and “expanding” circles (Kachru, 1985; Song & Castillo, 2015) now speaking English as one of their first languages. Interestingly, some participants stood their ground regarding their English proficiency by either identifying themselves as native speakers and asserting their linguistic qualifications or by affirming their accent as part of their identity (Amin, 2013; Lippi-Green, 2012; Subedi, 2008).

6.3 The Intersection of Race and Native Speakerism

Findings from this study align with previous research showing that race intersects with and trumps native speaker status (Almayez, 2024; Curtis & Romney, 2006; Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013;

Kubota & Lin, 2006, 2009). Racism often has a more significant impact on hiring decisions and professional experiences in English language teaching than whether the candidate is a native speaker of English. We see how language is used to create racial hierarchies when BAETs face discrimination despite their native or near-native English proficiency. Language proficiency alone is not enough when racial identity is seen as a problem in the English language teaching market. This supports Flores and Rosa's (2015) concept of the "White listening subject," where language ability is judged not just on linguistic features but through racial perceptions of the speaker. While much of the literature has focused on Western contexts (such as the US, UK, and Canada), this study set in the Middle East expands upon scholarship on raciolinguistic ideologies, . bringing needed attention to the lived consequences of raciolinguistic ideologies on BAETs' professional identity.

To summarize, findings from the present study extend previous research by documenting the specific mechanisms through which this intersection of race and native speakerism operates in the Turkish context. The racial slurs, wage disparities, racial and identity erasure experienced by BAETs reveal that their Blackness fundamentally shapes how their linguistic expertise is perceived and valued. Even when BAETs possess the same or superior qualifications as their White counterparts, they are subject to dehumanizing treatment, lower compensation, and the erasure of their professional identities. This demonstrates that native speakerism operates not as a neutral linguistic preference but as a racialized ideology that privileges Whiteness as the embodiment of linguistic legitimacy. Using terminology from Bourdieu (1986), we see different forms of capital (linguistic and racial) interact, with racial capital often determining the value attributed to linguistic capital.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

To conclude, the present study explored aspects of Black African teachers' positionalities that act as challenges in the context of English teaching in Turkey. The study employed a qualitative approach, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews. I used thematic analysis to examine the interview data from twelve participants. Results suggest that, more than language, the major challenges encountered by BAETs stem from their racialized identities. Despite the numerous daily challenges faced by BAETs, the data showed that there were still a limited number of success stories.

As I reflect on aspects of Black African teachers' positionalities that constitute a challenge in the context of English teaching in Turkey, I cannot help but compare the findings of this study to my own story. While I was spared from racial slurs, sexual harassment, housing discrimination or deportation during my time in Turkey, I did experience modern-day slavery. When I arrived in Turkey, I had nowhere to stay, so I ended up renting a room from some African expatriates. I needed to start working immediately, but quickly realized the bitter truth - there were no professional jobs available, only manual labor. This is often referred to as the "immigrant trap": people at home celebrate the immigrant's escape from their struggling country while the immigrant themselves is faced with a dire reality in their new environment. I did not think I could handle the difficult, potentially dangerous factory jobs commonly known as "çabuk-çabuk" ("quick-quick"), so I eagerly accepted an offer to work with a Turkish man who owned a shop down the street, assuming I would work as a shop attendant. Unfortunately, that's not what happened. This elderly Turkish man took me from his shop to his house out in the countryside. Meanwhile, I thought he was simply being kind by showing me his home before returning to work. Being naive and lacking proficiency in Turkish made communication difficult. Little did I know that I had essentially been sold into servitude. At this Turkish man's home were two other laborers working there for years. These were also foreigners: one from Iran in his 40s and another elderly man in his 70s, whose country of origin I cannot recall. The three of us were kept in a tiny cave-like space in the attic to sleep. Every day we worked processing countless garments, standing on our feet without breaks. Our only entitled meal was breakfast, usually just bread. I couldn't stomach it, so for two weeks I went without eating. Every day, I would voice to my captor my desire to leave, using a translator app to communicate that if he didn't return me, I would call the police. I even stopped working at

one point, claiming illness. Finally, after two weeks, my captor relented and drove me back to the city. This was my first job experience in Turkey. I had come to this country to teach English, believing it would provide an easier path. Instead, I was enslaved. What followed were "çabuk-çabuk" jobs and work as a delivery person to survive. When I finally landed an English teaching position after two years, as narrated in chapter one, I felt that I had finally "made it".

It was not until I began my graduate studies at the University of Alaska Fairbanks that I was able to take a step back and put words on my experience as a Black African in Turkey. My initial response to the multiple racial incidents that I experienced in Turkey was self-silencing. In fact, I did not realize the extent to which I had internalized raciolinguistic ideologies until I started taking graduate classes and reading scholarship on the topic of race and native speakerism in English language teaching.

I would argue that a key strength of this research lies in my positionality. As a BAET who formerly taught in Turkey, I was familiar with both the issues of race and native speakerism reported by the participants. This insider perspective enhanced both my data collection and analysis. My shared experiences with participants helped develop trust, allowing participants to share sensitive stories of racism and discrimination. This positioning helped me place participants' narratives within the broader patterns of racial and linguistic ideologies operating in Turkish educational settings. Additionally, my own experiences served as a form of triangulation, allowing me to validate and better interpret participants' accounts, while acknowledging that my own experiences influence my analysis of the data. Despite these strengths, this study is limited by its generalizability, as the findings may not apply to other populations. I addressed this limitation by collecting data from participants from different African countries who are all immigrants in Turkey.

By providing detailed descriptions of their experiences, this research offers valuable insights into patterns of discrimination faced by BAETs working within Turkey's educational and immigration systems. This study opens several avenues for future research. While this study on BAETs' experience in Turkey is country-specific, future research should examine BAETs' experiences in different countries in order to determine to what extent patterns of discrimination reported in this study are context-dependent. Future research could also compare and contrast BAETs' and White teachers' experiences, or investigate the perspectives of school administrators, parents, and students to understand their ideologies surrounding BAETs.

Based on the findings from this study, I propose the following recommendations:

1. Educational institutions should implement anti-racist policies protecting BAETs and other teachers of color. These policies should address racism, such as racial slurs, racial wage disparities, sexual harassment, and other forms of racial prejudice.
2. The Turkish Ministry of Education should require all schools to have mandatory training programs for staff that include cultural sensitivity and anti-racism components.
3. BAETs should create professional networks to collaborate, build connections, and unite for advocacy and bargaining purposes.
4. There should be diplomatic pressure from international bodies and home countries of BAETs to encourage reforms of Turkish immigration policies targeting Black Africans. Such reforms would establish clearer pathways towards legal status for qualified teachers and provide protections against unreasonable and unfair detention by immigration authorities.

To conclude, this study has significant implications for English language programs, educational institutions, and immigration legislation in Turkey and beyond. BAETs' experiences show how vitally school authorities, teachers, and students need anti-racist training to address both direct and indirect biases and discrimination. This study shows how crucial it is for educational institutions to have fair policies, transparent hiring practices, and supportive work environments that value teachers' qualifications regardless of their race. In addition, immigration officials should reform regulations that discriminate against Black Africans and create pathways to legal status for qualified instructors.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. I am interested in your journey to becoming an English teacher.

    Please tell me about yourself, where you come from, and your educational background.

2. When did you start teaching English?

    Have you always wanted to be an English teacher?

    Can you tell me about your first job?

    Where was that? How long ago was that?

    Do you remember any particular challenges or difficulties you faced?

    What went well/not so well when you were starting out?

3. How did you end up in Turkey?

    Why did you decide to teach English in Turkey?

    What was your first job teaching English here in Turkey like?

    Can you tell me about that? What was it like?

    How long ago was that?

    Do you remember any particular challenges or difficulties you faced?

    What went well/not so well when you were starting out?

4. Can you tell me the process of getting an English teaching job in Turkey?

    How did you go about getting a job?

    Tell me that story?

    What was your first (second, third) job?

    Have you had lots of jobs in Turkey? What were they?

    Have they all been teaching English?

    Has it been hard/easy finding work? Why or why not?

Can you recall any noticeable incident when seeking an English teaching job in Turkey?

Why do you think that is?

5. What were your expectations about English language teaching in Turkey before your arrival?

What did you imagine it would be like?

How did you picture your life and work in Turkey?

Has it worked out that way?

How is your life different from what you expected?

6. Tell me about your classroom.

What's it like?

What are the students like?

7. Tell me about the first day, with a new group of students.

What's it like for you?

What do you think it's like for them?

8. What kind of teacher do you think students in Turkey expect to see when they first walk into an English language classroom?

What, in their mind, do you think an English teacher looks like?

What background, in their mind, makes for a good English teacher?

Do you think you 'fit' their expectations of an English teacher? Why or why not?

9. Has a student ever commented on your background (nationality, ethnicity, or race as a black teacher)?

10. Can you tell me about when you felt your background mattered to students?

11. Has any student, other teachers, or administrators ever commented on your command of English (accent, grammar, dialect, etc)?

12. Has any student, other teachers, or administrators ever commented on your teaching competence?

13. Can you give an example of when you felt like you did not fit expectations in your job?

14. As an African teacher in Turkey, have you ever felt unsupported or excluded? Now tell me about instances when you did feel supported or included as an African teacher in Turkey.

15. Do you think your experience in Turkey would be different if you were a White teacher?

16. In a few words, how would you describe yourself as an English teacher?

17. Is there anything else you want to add or expand on?