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English as a barrier on the pathway of professional transitioning of Ukrainian migrant teachers in Australia

Abstract. Australia is seen as a promised land by migrants pursuing a better future for themselves and their families. Highly qualified migrants with vast work experience frequently encounter hurdles on their way to professional realisation, including the official language of the country – English. This study investigates the difficulties Ukrainian teachers face with the English language on their professional transition pathway in Australia. The research involves Ukrainian migrant teachers who obtained a specialist or master's degree in Ukraine or another post-Soviet country, whose professional experience in Ukraine was in the teaching field, and who identify as Ukrainians. Narrative interviews, memos, documents, and artefacts are the data collection methods; thematic analysis is used to unpack the data. The participants were chosen using non-probability purposive snowball sampling, which engages contacts within the community and benefits projects with a small number of respondents. The inquiry elucidates the extent of the English problem for Ukrainian migrant teachers on their way to professional transition in Australia. The research will benefit other migrant teachers facing similar barriers when trying to re-enter their profession in the new environment and inform apposite institutions about the existing hurdles to facilitate positive changes in the field.

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1. Introduction

English-speaking countries, including Australia, have welcomed and provided opportunities for residency and citizenship to migrants (Dinesen et al., 2020). Australia promotes the ethos of multiculturalism (Marcus, 2014) by implementing different migration programmes, thereby enriching the Australian population with individuals from a diverse national, ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic background (Wang et al., 2023). However, certain English varieties enjoy more privilege than others (Tupas, 2021), despite substantial research on the structural, sociolinguistic, and political legitimacy of various English varieties worldwide. Employees identified as native English speakers retain a privileged position in the workplace (Harrison, 2013). From the native speakerism perspective, speaking English as their first language automatically makes a person the best teacher of English (Keaney, 2016) – this has prevailed in the field of teaching English for decades. However, Gilmour et al. (2018) assert that non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) have certain valuable assets in reserve that are deficient in predominantly monolingual native English-speaking teachers (NESTs). The UNESCO database shows that it is more effective to use a method referred to as "multilingual education" when teaching English as a second language (UNESCO, 2023). For decades, Ukrainians have been immigrating to Australia. The ongoing war in Ukraine has prompted a fresh influx of Ukrainian migrants inclusive of teachers (Department of Home Affairs, 2022). Ukrainians rank among the most sizable ethnic groups residing outside their homeland's borders (Fedyuk & Kindler, 2016). Nevertheless, no research regarding Ukrainian migrant teachers has been conducted yet.

This article aims to explore linguistic aspects of the professional transition of Ukrainian migrant teachers in Australia by attempting to answer the following research questions:

— What linguistic challenges do Ukrainian migrant teachers encounter in transitioning to employment aligned with their skills and training obtained overseas?
— How do Ukrainian migrant teachers overcome these obstacles on their professional pathways in Australia?

2. English language hierarchy

The English language has undergone a transformation from a colonial language to a lingua franca spoken by people throughout the world. Frequently, English is associated with education and culture and has become a language of communication in academia (Lai, 2021). A quarter of the global population speaks English (Ibrahim et al., 2019), and it has become the best option for people speaking other languages throughout the world (Jenkins, 2019).

There are several accepted or native Englishes, such as British, North American and Australian. The market value of different forms of English varies, and not all Englishes are considered

equal. In Australia, British English holds a higher status compared to American English (Harrison, 2013). These Englishes have their own pronunciation, dialect peculiarities, and hierarchy, with Standard English and Received Pronunciation residing at the apex of the linguistic pyramid (Trudgill, 2002). Conversely, Englishes acquired in countries where the national language is other than English are at the bottom of the hierarchical pyramid.

Given the global influence of English, one's English fluency is a means of exercising power: Standard English is often linked to status and authority. Proficiency in Standard English can play a crucial role in unlocking opportunities for a person's future endeavours (Brady, 2015) and allows access to the huge database of human knowledge worldwide (Zeng et al., 2023). Individuals who do not possess this standard language may experience a sense of disempowerment. The term "non-standard" implies notions of being less valid in some respects (Baratta, 2018, p. 59).

In Australia, the English language holds significant value as a prominent linguistic asset due to its prevalence in education, employment, and economic activities. Its elevated status perpetuates the societal structure along with specific standards of the language (Harrison, 2013). Australia, as a dominant language nation, gravitates towards monolingualism, where being monolingual is a choice rather than a lack of opportunities (Lai, 2021). However, learning the dominant language is not an option but a necessity for people migrating from linguistically diverse backgrounds. Bilingualism is a potential advantage that improves individuals' employment prospects, though the language abilities of bilingual speakers are often deemed deficient when assessed against monolingual standards (Harrison, 2013).

3. Translingual discrimination

Translingual discrimination refers to the phenomenon rooted in the unequal dynamics between transnational migrants and the dominant population of the host country, primarily centring on language as a pivotal element in this interaction (Dovchin, 2022). Native speakers from English-speaking countries often maintain the belief in the superiority of their own form of English (Harrison, 2013). This conviction may lead them to feel entitled to assess and judge the English of other users. Dovchin (2022) distinguishes the following types of translingual discrimination: translingual name discrimination and translingual English discrimination. The former occurs when individuals with names associated with a dominant culture are stereotypically perceived to possess superior skills compared to those with names reflecting a transnational background. Hence, ethnic minorities may adopt names typical for the dominant group out of fearing discrimination based on their original names (Kang et al., 2016). Members of the majority group tend to view individuals from ethnic minorities who choose Anglophone names as displaying a greater commitment to assimilation, suggesting a closer alignment with cultural beliefs and values compared to those who retain their original names (Zhao & Biernat, 2017). Moreover, original names can pose challenges in terms of pronunciation. Existing research indicates that individuals with names that are hard to pronounce may face less favourable judgments (Laham et al., 2012). Translingual English discrimination refers to the exclusion or ostracism of

transnational migrants based on their English language proficiency and pronunciation, and it can be bifurcated into accentism and stereotyping (Dovchin, 2022). Although there is no voice devoid of an accent (Sterne, 2022), some so-called native accents are preferred over non-native English accents. Having a distinct accent compared to Standard Australian English and lacking familiarity with local expressions and customs signal that someone may not belong to the group (Tankosić, 2022). Thus, being different from the dominant group elicits negative sentiments from the locals holding hegemonic ideologies even towards a migrant speaking English fluently and clearly (Dryden & Dovchin, 2021). In the communication between native and non-native speakers, the latter may feel anxious about receiving unfavourable judgments based on their speech, prompting the person to strive to improve their communication (Birney et al., 2020). Paradoxically, the effort invested in this response, coupled with underlying anxiety, could impede effective communication in English. According to Aichhorn and Puck (2017), anxiety poses a major problem for non-native speakers of English, which can provoke nightmares, sleeping disorders and self-doubt. Physically, it can manifest in hyperhidrosis (excessively sweaty hands), excessive perspiration, and a sensation of shakiness or agitation.

The coping strategy involves establishing a "safe translingual space" for migrants, providing them with a supportive environment where they can gather, communicate, and share their concerns without constantly worrying about conforming to the standardised requirements of English speech (Dovchin, 2022, p. 56). Kiramba and Harris (2019) emphasise the importance of creating interactive environments where bilingual or multilingual individuals can delve into their metalinguistic skills and showcase their multilingual competencies.

To avoid discrimination based on their accent, some enrol in classes with the goal of eliminating their accent, expressing a desire to achieve a fully native sound in their speech (Oleinikova, 2020, p. 229). These migrants, identified by Oleinikova (2020) as "achievers", distance themselves from their native language and culture and avoid contact with representatives of their ethnic group as a potential hindrance to their career growth. This leads to ethnic evasion of these migrants and partial loss of their identity as one's accent serves as a phonological indicator of an individual's identity (Rangan et al., 2023) and, modifying one's accent, "you lose part of yourself" (Park & Lee, 2022, p. 34).

4. Non-native English-speaking teachers

Despite numerous efforts made in recent years to address the ostracism of NNESTs in the language teaching profession, the English language teaching field continues to exhibit a contrary trend. The teaching environment remains structured and defined by boundaries influenced by language ideologies, resulting in the exclusion of NNESTs from participating in foreign language teaching on an equal footing with NESTs (Wright, 2022).

NESTs are frequently perceived as superior and credible, while NNESTs may be unjustly portrayed as inferior and incompetent, sometimes to the extent of being labelled as an underclass (Rivers, 2018). This bias is evident in the job market, where native English speakers are often

in higher demand and receive better compensation, even with only a short course certificate in English language teaching among their qualifications. Global job postings explicitly seeking English teachers exclusively from Great Britain, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand further support this trend (Wright, 2022). Thus, non-native English teachers frequently grapple with feelings of shame and develop inferiority complexes, comparing themselves to their native counterparts (Rivers, 2018).

NESTs have long been in demand in the field of teaching English. From the native speakerism point of view that has dominated English Language Teaching (ELT) (Ershadi, 2024; Holiday, 2005), NESTs have been considered to be the standard to follow with regard to the language, which automatically made NESTs the best teachers of English including the methods of teaching. However, this notion has been increasingly criticised from the perspective of its racism, fallacy, linguistic imperialism, prejudice and discrimination. Some NESTs do not have sufficient pedagogical experience or qualifications and are predominantly monolingual (Keaney, 2016).

According to Phillipson (2012), the ELT myth that the best teacher is a native speaker supports linguistic imperialism. Many NESTs may lack adequate understanding or background in the specific teaching practices needed to support learners of English as a second language (Oliver et al., 2017). UNESCO (2023) has stressed the importance of native languages and multilingual education. Phillipson (2012) asserts that the positive effect of multilingual education based on the person's native language is definite, whereas English-based education ignoring native languages and cultures is inadequate and unproductive. NNESTs possess professional assets that are often absent in their monolingual colleagues (Gilmour et al., 2018), who comprise the majority of Australian schools. These assets include being multicultural and multilingual, having versatile pedagogical knowledge, and having valuable teaching experience (Marom, 2019).

5. Ukrainian migrant teachers' professional transition and identity work

An individual's identity is shaped through interactions with others and the wider socio-cultural environment (Maydell, 2020). Accordingly, self-perception is socially formed and linked to distinct social roles (Stets & Serpe, 2013), often referring to social categories, namely occupation, ethnic group, or marital status, when introducing themselves (Schwartz et al., 2011).

Identity construction and reconstruction are continual processes for everyone, but migrants undergo more pronounced changes (Maydell, 2020). This can entail creating a new identity or adapting their existing one to the new environment or circumstances. The identity crises faced by refugees, displaced persons, and migrants necessitate a transformative shift in their identities (Alieksieienko, 2020). This transformation is essential for developing effective strategies that facilitate their seamless alignment into Australian society (Oleinikova, 2020). The identity work process relies on the addition, retention and subtraction of elements within one's identity (Lepisto et al., 2015). Adding to a person's identity constitutes either embracing a new identity or appending features to the existing one to better align with the new setting (Ennerberg &

Economou, 2021). Retaining an individual's identity entails maintaining and fortifying one's sense of self, whereas subtracting identity leads to a partial or complete loss of one's identity (Lepisto et al., 2015).

6. Materials and methods

6.1. Methodology

The focus of this research is the professional transition of Ukrainian migrant teachers in Australia. The narrative research design entails comprehending lived experiences from the viewpoint of the respondents rather than striving to portray life objectively (Mertova & Webster, 2019). The research is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, specifically well-suited for narrative studies (Papathomas, 2017), as its objective is to explore the complexities of the world by studying personal experiences within a societal context (Schwandt et al., 2007). The concepts of identity and narrative are often theorised as intertwined (De Fina, 2015), as an individual's identity tends to be expressed and molded through the act of narrating their story. Additionally, a narrative study has been chosen for its focus on the nuanced and complex facets of human experiences, particularly their relevance to the personal experience stories of teachers (Creswell, 2019). The comprehensive nature of the research design enables researchers to encompass the entire narrative based on the principles of continuity across the participant's past, present, and future (Clandinin, 2016). This stands in contrast to other research methods concentrating on specific moments, which potentially overlook noteworthy nuances interwoven throughout the enveloping storyline (Mertova & Webster, 2019).

The research has been conducted by the PhD student, Ms Chybis, referred hereto as "project lead", supervised by a team of experienced researchers of Curtin University located in Perth (Western Australia), further referred to as "research team" for convenience.

The credibility of this research, a criterion of qualitative research trustworthiness (Korstjens & Moser, 2018), has been achieved by prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and member check. The research entailed prolonged engagement with the participants by conducting three interview sessions to narrate their stories, clear up the collected data and ask follow-up questions. The participants were encouraged to bring memory boxes that helped them tailor their narratives and highlight certain intricacies and heartfelt moments of their lives.

The project lead has observed the principle of persistent observation by reading and re-reading the collected data and then working with the research team to negotiate the coding process for the data and the resulting thematic analysis. The memos written by the project lead during the interviews provided depth to the narratives and helped the research team reflect on the collected data which were later coded. Themes were identified before conducting the final set of interviews. Data triangulation has been achieved by using multiple methods of data collection, such as narrative interviews, documents, memos and artefacts. After a discussion with the research team, the project lead undertook a negotiated process with the research participants

in order to address any potential discrepancies between the original and restoried narratives (Creswell, 2019) and has been discussing the data codes and themes with the research team to check the inquirer's interpretations.

6.2. Data collection methods

The primary method of collecting data necessitates narrative interviews because this interview type enables respondents to casually relate their stories, diverging from the conventional question-and-answer format (Kartch, 2017). The interviews were planned in consultation with the research team and comprised three sessions, with the initial two typically taking place on the same day and lasting up to 90 minutes. In the first session, the project lead listened to the participant's narrative without interruptions. Subsequently, questions were posed to the participants to seek clarification on specific aspects related by the interviewees during their story (Burke, 2014). Afterwards, the project lead discussed these interviews with the research team, and it was decided that additional interviews would be scheduled with the respondent to authenticate and substantiate the collected data.

Narrative interviews were complemented by documents, artefacts and memos to provide a comprehensive depiction of personal stories. The project lead took copious notes in order to elucidate and traverse data, as well as to determine new ideas and motifs. Writing memos during the interviews enabled the documentation of observations pertaining to interviewees' non-verbal communication and emotions.

The interviewees were encouraged to present their 'memory boxes' with personal artefacts at the first interview sessions. This was done to elicit otherwise forgotten memories, to enrich their personal narratives, and to navigate the process of narrating their personal stories.

6.3. Positionality

The incentive for this research originates from the project lead's personal experiences as a Ukrainian migrant teacher in Australia. The project lead acquired a fervid curiosity about Ukrainian migrant teachers' personal experiences in Australia after contending with a dearth of connections within the Australian teaching environment and the difficulty of adjusting to the local educational system when investigating her employment perspectives that would match her expertise obtained in Ukraine. The methodology for the research has been chosen given the project lead's Ukrainian background and close connections with the Ukrainian community. The project lead has managed to secure prospective respondents for the research, being a member of the Ukrainian community in Western Australia and a volunteer English teacher for displaced Ukrainians. The project lead and the participants have developed a communal affinity due to their shared linguistic background, ethnicity, and culture. Being a Ukrainian migrant teacher and an internally displaced person have enabled the project lead to examine the issue with the depth of an insider (Beresniova, 2017) and to provide a comprehensive study of its intricacies that monolingual scholars without migrant experiences may find daunting to fully grasp (Radhouane et al., 2022).

The project lead acknowledges the potential influence of her background, experiences and personal interactions with the participants in the project. Thus, the field texts and coded data have been routinely reviewed by the research team to eschew the project lead's biases, which could influence the recognition of themes (Patton, 2015). During the follow-up interview sessions, the project lead sought to clarify information provided by the interviewees, which seemed to be ambiguous. The data collected during the first interview sessions were coded before conducting the final sessions with the participants in order to differentiate between the project lead's and the participants' experiences. Additionally, the project lead has prolifically used quotes from the interviews to allow an inclusive and diverse representation of the participants' voices.

6.4. Participants and setting

The main focus has been on studying complete stories since the research design utilises a narrative methodological approach. The number of research participants has been restricted to five, given the encompassing nature of their individual experiences and the project lead's need to meticulously record the nuances of these stories. A smaller participant pool has enabled the project lead to preserve the data complexity (Creswell, 2019) and allowed her to commit sufficient attention to comprehensive analysis and subsequent data collection.

The project lead has employed a non-probability purposive snowball sampling method utilising her connections within the Ukrainian community in Western Australia to identify potential participants for the project. This approach is especially well-suited for endeavours with a restricted pool of participants (Cohen et al., 2018). The prerequisites for selecting participants were the following: participants must affirm their Ukrainian identity; their primary employment in Ukraine or another country in the post-Soviet space was teaching in a secondary or tertiary educational institution; and they must possess either a master's or specialist degree (master's equivalent in accordance with Legislation of Ukraine (2014)) obtained either in Ukraine or another post-Soviet country.

6.5. Data instruments and analysis

The collected data have been processed following an inductive approach, which includes the generation, analysis, and reporting of themes. In this approach, the coding of data was devoid of any prior theoretical framework or predefined ideas. Rather, the process of coding was developed involving the themes drawn from the interview data. This method of processing data enabled a versatile and unrestricted examination of the participants' stories, avoiding the imposition of predetermined categories or theories during analysis.

The analysis of qualitative data has encompassed the restorying process. First, the respondents' personal narratives in the form of field texts or raw data (Clandinin, 2016) were collected during the narrative interviews. Then, the interview recordings were transcribed and, if it was required, translated from Ukrainian into English. Afterwards, the data underwent thorough analysis for the key elements: characters, settings, problems, actions, and resolution (Creswell,

2019). Recurring themes regarding the experiences of Ukrainian migrant educators in Australia were ascertained while reconstructing the narratives. In a subsequent stage, the individual narratives of the respondents were woven together into a larger overarching tale, emphasising significant themes rather than existing as separate accounts.

6.6. Ethical considerations

The Human Research Ethics Committee of Curtin University approved the project, ID: HRE2023-0115. The project lead provided the participants with the project information, including the consent forms in either English or Ukrainian, depending on the participant's English fluency. Likewise, the interviews were conducted in Ukrainian or English, depending on the interviewee's choice. Additionally, the project lead explained the research objectives to the participants before conducting the interviews. The project lead disclosed the voluntary nature of the research project to the participants, who were free to withdraw from it at any time or decline a question during the interviews if it made them feel uncomfortable. The project lead has concealed the participants' identities and personal information that could lead to the participants' identification.

The project lead, being a representative of the same ethnic group as the participants and being a migrant herself, availed her experiences and empathy to create an environment comfortable for the interviewees to share their individual stories. Also, the project lead has obtained a Standard Mental Health First Aid certificate in order to identify distress and trauma symptoms and to readily inform the participants of the professional counselling opportunities in Western Australia.

7. Findings and discussion

The findings outlined below are part of the research conducted to obtain a Doctor of Philosophy in Education. This study has delved into the professional transition of migrant teachers who moved to Australia from Ukraine and one post-Soviet country and who identify themselves as Ukrainians, with Ukrainian being their native language.

7.1. Participants' overview

Four of the Ukrainian Migrant Teachers (UMTs) are specialists in English, as presented in Table 1; three of them were trained in Ukraine and one UMT obtained her English teacher qualification in another post-Soviet country. One UMT received training as a mathematics teacher at a Ukrainian university. All the UMTs are females aged between 32 and 70, with their pedagogical experience ranging from two to 48 years. Three of the UMTs arrived in Australia holding their student visas, and two fled Ukraine when the large-scale stage of the war started in 2022. Four out of five UMTs continued their professional education in Australia. The time spent in Australia varied from over a year to 10 years during the first interview session. Four UMTs stayed in the pedagogical field after their arrival in Australia, and one chose another field for developing her career.

Table 1. UMTs' gender, age, grounds for coming to Australia, duration in Australia, pedagogical field, teaching experience overseas, jobs in Ukraine and Australia

UMTs	Gender	Age	Grounds for coming to Australia	Duration in Australia	Pedagogical field	Job in Ukraine	Teaching experience overseas	Job in Australia
UMT1	Female	37	Student visa (for PhD degree)	10 years	English	Linguist	Eight years	Academic
UMT2	Female	32	Student visa (for Master's degree)	Five years	Italian and English	Language schools, university lecturer	Five years	Hotel business, government job
UMT3	Female	70	War	Over a year	English	Secondary school teacher of English	48 years	Teacher assistant
UMT4	Female	37	Student visa (for PhD degree)	Seven years	English	University tutor	About seven--eight years	Relief teacher, university tutor
UMT5	Female	39	War	One year and a half	Mathematics	Secondary school teacher of mathematic	Two years	Teacher assistant for disabled children

7.2. English fluency

English fluency can pose a significant hindrance for migrant professionals on the way to their professional transition in an Anglophone country. UMT5 had to seek employment at an educational institution other than a mainstream high school because of her insufficient English fluency: "They said that taking into account my language barrier, it would be more difficult for me, in general, to find a job in a mainstream school". Four UMTs, being teachers of English by their training and occupation, were fluent in English. Three of them, who had student visas on their arrival in Australia, passed their International English Language Testing System (IELTS) academic test as their visa requirement, which can serve as another indication of a person's fluency in English. UMT2 said that being a teacher of English gave her the speaking skills necessary in the English-speaking country: "Having a teaching background … was very [helpful]. I didn't have any language barriers, so it was not something that I was worried about… It was very easy for me". She added that her English fluency was sufficient for a career in Australia: "My English was definitely enough for all of the jobs that I was doing".

UMT5 received her pedagogical training as a mathematics teacher. However, English had never been an issue for UMT5 as she never planned to leave Ukraine and used the language as a means of communication when travelling abroad:

> I have never been concerned about my English. It was enough for me to be able to go somewhere in Europe as a tourist in order to converse with the denizens. […] I never thought that I would need to know English so well to be able to go to a school and teach there.

Nevertheless, English became quite a challenge when UMT5 had to flee the war in Ukraine in 2022: "It became a real problem when I migrated here". UMT5 described her English fluency among locals soon after she arrived in Australia as being "numb": "First, I was sitting at the table as if I was numb". However, her English fluency was assessed high enough as UMT5 was able to join the class for Certificate III of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), which helped her to improve her English:

> I am really grateful to the Australian Government for these programmes in TAFE [Technical and Further Education], which enable one to improve their English to the point when one can communicate with locals and feel a bit better in society.

7.3. Different Englishes in Australia

Some of the UMTs stated that English in Australia differs from English varieties spoken elsewhere. UMT5 compared Australian English to the one spoken in Europe: "Australians speak English which is different to the one spoken in Europe. All the same, it [English] is different. That is why it was very difficult for me". She admitted that in the beginning, comprehending the Australian version of English posed such a challenge to her that she felt as if she was "deaf and numb":

> If in Europe I could communicate with people to some extent, in Australia, there is an absolutely different accent, and people speak somewhat differently here. I remember feeling as if I were deaf and numb for the first few months. You could say nothing to people, and you could not understand what people were trying to tell you.

One of the reasons for such communication problems is different Englishes and diverse accents that exist within Australia because of the multicultural nature of the country:

> I have been communicating with migrants, for example, in transport when I needed to get somewhere, and I asked people. They were, for example, people with dark skin, so I suspect they were not Australians. They might be natives of Africa. They were also people who had a specifically Asian appearance. They were speaking differently, too.

Similarly, UMT2 admitted that the diversity of accents in Australia was a problem for her to some extent, requiring some adjustment:

> Different accents, that was a problem. [The] Indian accent. I [had] never seen Indians before I came to Australia, and it was very hard for me to understand them in the beginning. As soon as you get used to their accent, … you … understand everything.

UMT3 described the local Australian accent as "challenging": "It [Australian English] is a bit challenging for me". She found other migrants' accents easier to comprehend compared to the local Australian accent: "In terms of the languages, yeah, sometimes, it's easier to understand people of other nationalities". She described it as sharing diverse cultural backgrounds or being in "the same boat" in her own words: "Maybe, it's easier to understand migrants because, for migrants, English is also a second language. We're just in the same boat with them, and I just understand them".

UMT4 asserted that she had no issues regarding academic English as she came to Australia for her PhD course: "I had no problem in terms of academic English, and at university, I was pretty good with communication and everything". Nevertheless, everyday Australian English became a communication barrier: "When I was attending some social gatherings, I had trouble understanding slang. I had trouble sometimes understanding the accent". UMT4 recalled her first linguistic crisis in Australia: "My first problem was when I came to Australia and tried to order some […] fast food. I didn't understand a word". Despite her degree in TESOL and a good understanding of academic English, this academic experienced a communication dysfunction when talking to a fast food employee speaking with a broad Australian accent.

UMT2 has also mentioned that Ukrainian teachers of English are accustomed to Standard English, to which Ukrainian educational institutions adhere. In her view, it becomes a problem when Ukrainian professionals migrate to Australia:

> People come [here] even with a teaching background; they are professionals, and they know English well. In Ukraine, we were not studying real English. We were learning perfect British English that no one else in the world is probably speaking.

UMT1 was accustomed to academic English but faced problems with everyday communication. She differentiated between academic English used in Australian educational institutions and everyday English requiring different vocabulary knowledge and fluent speaking skills:

> …even though I worked with Australians, it wasn't your everyday life. While here, I found that when I lived on my own…, I would be working a lot doing my PhD on my own, which wasn't very helpful in terms of everyday… just training your brain to, I guess… especially in terms of oral speech, of presentation, all of those phrases. It was much harder to speak than to write or to read.

UMT1 solved her problem with everyday English by exposing herself to Australian English so she could get used to the dialect:

> I was visiting friends, so I spent some time with them, talking to them from morning till evening. I realised that my brain gets that stimulation, and it becomes much easier for me after that. I think that was something that helped.

UMT3 partially distanced herself from locals who could be "talking too fast", giving her preference to communication with other educated migrants and Australian teachers like herself. Sharing the same professional field and Australian teachers' clear English contributed to the comfort of their communication:

> In terms of the languages, sometimes, it's easier to understand people of other nationalities maybe, but sometimes […] it depends on their education. Some people, even Australians, […] they're talking too fast, and it's difficult for me just to understand them, but some Australians are just like teachers; for example, their language is very easy for understanding, and I find it much easier to communicate with these people than with locals… no problems communicating with teachers. […] but when it comes to the locals, […], like any other professions, or especially old people, sometimes, I don't quite understand what they mean.

7.4. Career in Australia

Four of five UMTs have remained in the teaching field after moving to Australia. UMT2, who was also a teacher of Italian and English in Ukraine, has chosen to develop her career in a different field, doubting herself as a teacher of English in the Anglophone country: "I would not consider teaching English in an English-speaking country". During the interview, UMT4 asserted that

she experienced self-doubt as an NNEST in Australia: “I felt that I’m not good enough to teach somebody English”.

Moreover, UMT4 expressed her irritation regarding prejudicial attitudes towards NESTs and NNESTs that exist in society, including how it has resulted in unfair treatment of NNESTs and competition between these categories of teachers that she experienced when working overseas:

> I was fed up with the treatment because when you teach English as a foreign language, and you have tutors who are native English speakers, you always have to compete with them and prove that your knowledge is good enough. Even though the native English speakers are not really trained to be teachers and teach English as a foreign language because they just speak the language as native speakers, and they never learned pedagogy behind what they teach.

Being an NNEST in Australia, UMT4 experienced difficulties securing a job that would align with her training and experience: “I was trying to look for the jobs like English tutor and being a non-native speaker made it quite difficult”. UMT1 confirmed that it was difficult for her to find a permanent job, which was an additional stress: “Not knowing whether I’ll have an employment next semester was quite stressful”. UMT5 was not able to find a job in a mainstream high school in Australia that would match her pedagogical training and teaching skills being a non-native English speaker: “I wanted to work in high school… because I thought that being a teacher of mathematics I would make a greater contribution in high school”.

The UMTs encountered other challenges on their pathway to professional realisation in Australia: their Ukrainian accent and non-Anglophone names. UMT4 received numerous rejections from potential employers partly because of her name, which revealed her otherness. The UMT had to change her name in order to start receiving responses to her job applications:

> My name in my CV sounded like the person they don’t want to work with. I asked career consultants to help me with my CV, and the first thing they asked me to do [was] to change my name so that it sounded easier for people to read it.

Cases of accentism were reported during the interviews, such as in UMT4’s story when the native-speaking person testing migrants’ English speaking skills showed their prejudice: “I definitely felt that the examiner was biased and was criticising me for my accent. The facial expression wasn’t friendly at all”. UMT4 felt vulnerable regarding her Ukrainian accent when required to speak English: “Every time when I start talking, people ask me, “Where are you from?” which indicates that my accent gives me away”. For UMT4, her accent was something she might not like but had to put up with: “I came across the fact that we have the accent, and I had to live [with] that fact”.

UMT5 admitted experiencing difficulty being accepted as a team member and feeling like she was an outsider among local counterparts because her English fluency was insufficient for

leading everyday conversations and understanding people. She said that she was not "accepted" by her local colleagues because she was a "stranger" to them:

> I have noticed that Australians… If a total stranger comes, it is very difficult for this person to be accepted as a team member. Especially if there is a language barrier… You cannot understand people well or express your thoughts. Therefore, you are a bit isolated all the time.

Another problem that the UMTs encountered and felt was unfair was the necessity to take the IELTS test. UMT5 referred to the IELTS test as the "main problem". Some of the UMTs had to take the test on numerous occasions in order to prolong their stay in Australia and to be able to find a job in their professional field:

> Because it expires every two or three years… that can be quite stressful because it is quite a long test. It is also very expensive, and just understanding that once you reach the band you need, and you feel like, "Okay, I've done that," I think that is a stage of my life in the past, then you have to do it again. You have to prove yourself every time (UMT1).

UMT1 describes her experience of repeatedly having to take IELTS as "stressful", "expensive" and something that deprived her of the sense of stability and made her future seem uncertain. UMT4 had to take the test twice and admitted feeling similar sentiments: "I was really anxious about taking English tests".

Volunteering in the local Ukrainian community school enabled some of the UMTs to resume their teaching roles and to regain their self-confidence as professionals by acquiring Australian experience: "This is both teaching and learning because while doing this, I can socialise with my compatriots and Australians as well" (UMT3). The Ukrainian community school was a safe translingual space for the UMTs. As UMT3, who worked there as a volunteer teacher of English, described the school:

> It's [an] ideal place for all the Ukrainians, not only for me, just to feel this community, to find yourself in their environment […]. You hear people speaking the Ukrainian language. You share your problems, […] not just problems, but whatever you experience here in the Ukrainian language.

Despite all the difficulties the UMTs have encountered in Australia seeking professional realisation, four out of five stayed in the teaching field. As UMT4 said, it required time to gain Australian experience and to prove her worthiness, but once the person was in the "system", it would become easier to pursue one's career:

> I guess I'm more than satisfied because I didn't even apply for the jobs this time, so I guess once you get into the system, and you show that you can actually work. Current employment found

> me. They were just looking for the tutor, and my profile was there from the last year of teaching Ukrainian, and they just asked me if I'm interested. I said, "I'm interested," and that's it.

Only UMT2 chose to leave the teaching field and to start a new career. Though satisfied with her new job, she still had regrets about abandoning teaching:

> If I knew what I know now six years ago before coming to Australia, I would probably consider something connected with teaching because as far as I know, there are lots of positions in schools, and there are not so many professionals who can actually do that… With some additional courses to adjust your education received back in Ukraine. I know that there are Ukrainians who continue to teach [in Australia].

8. Conclusions

Applying the identity work concept of Lepisto et al. (2015), it is possible to say that UMTs in this study navigated barriers on their pathways of professional transition by retaining, subtracting and adding to their professional identities. Some of them manage to stay in the Australian pedagogical environment by pursuing a university course or acquiring a tertiary education certificate in Australia, thus adding to their professional identities developed overseas.

Others abandon their teaching professions, fully subtracting their identities and developing a new professional identity. Certain reasons for this new identity entail cases of accentism and translingual name discrimination reported by migrant teachers. Language-related prejudice often induces anxiety and hampers the cognitive capacities of those affected, as well as their interactions with individuals outside their social group (Birney et al., 2020). Ukrainian migrants experience the "glass ceiling effect" (Harrison, 2013, p. 200) because their accent and names act as an invisible barrier preventing them from finding jobs aligned with their training and experience. Since they have been accustomed to using Standard English since their university years, UMTs tend to feel comfortable communicating within academic circles. However, many have encountered barriers in everyday communication where colloquial Australian English is involved.

According to our findings, the concept of native speakerism still prevails in the ESL field, supported by both native and non-native speakers of English (Lai, 2021). NESTs speaking English as their first language are automatically considered the best teachers of English. Conversely, NNESTs have to prove their professional worthiness as they are considered novice teachers in the Australian pedagogical environment. This is reflected in unfair employment practices resulting in highly-qualified migrant teachers being unable to find jobs aligned with their expertise. Teacher registration requirements and IELTS testing, as well as other requirements, become a source of stress and anxiety, constituting a major problem for non-native English speakers in general (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017) and introducing uncertainty into UMTs' lives.

The aforementioned experiences can result in UMTs feeling self-doubt as English teachers in the Anglophone country, forcing some of them to leave the teaching field and pursue what they

deem a safer career in Australia. Others demonstrate their resilience and find employment in the teaching field, for example, by volunteering as teachers or teacher assistants. Thus, UMTs manage to continue teaching and overcome their lack of confidence as professionals. They retain their teaching identities by reinforcing their previous skills and using their vast pedagogical experience obtained overseas, even though their working positions in Australia are likely to be lower than those they had in their home country. Therefore, having an educational course in Australia is essential for any NNEST's successful career development.

Finally, a limitation of this study is that it embraces only UMTs. The research findings are also relevant for teachers from other ethnic groups, especially those from non-English-speaking countries, who encounter similar obstacles via their professional pathways in Australia; therefore, comparing the UMTs' lived experiences of professional transition in Australia with those of other migrant teachers could be a further research trajectory. Meanwhile, the findings of this study could potentially aid in crafting recommendations for pertinent institutions to enhance the migrant experience in the future.

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