

# A case study of an English teacher in Ukraine: Where gender and national identity intersect

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## Abstract

Using a transnational intersectionality framework that focuses on the interactions of multiple identities, this article reexamines the study conducted in 2017 on the experiences of one female in-service English language teacher in the Ukrainian context. Employing a narrative inquiry approach, using an online autobiography, interviews, and lesson materials, Irene's multiple identities have intertwined with her gendered identity, shaping her experiences. This study's findings show that Irene's transnational gendered identity was influenced by her educational and professional paths, her position in the language teaching field, and various social identities. Irene used language strategically and negotiated power relations professionally to navigate her transition to becoming a transnational English language teacher. Moreover, she found a complex relationship between a teacher's gender and identity, which is related to the sociopolitical situation in Ukraine. The study aims to address the gap in the research on constructing a Ukrainian teacher's gendered identity. While a case study approach is not generalizable or applicable to other teachers, exploring Irene's narratives provides valuable insights into the complexities of identity and power dynamics within a transnational educational context.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

*I am shattered to pieces as I write this prologue on March 31, 2023. In the morning, I received the news that a dear friend died of wounds. He went to fight on the first day of the full-scale war on Ukraine in February 2022. A true patriot, he was a superhero for many. I am still in denial that he is not alive. He could have been a mayor, later a President, or simply a father to his 2-year-old daughter. But the war made him a heavenly angel. Vitalik, this manuscript is dedicated to you. Glory to Ukraine, glory to the heroes, fallen heroes.*

As a Ukrainian citizen, I consider it my duty to amplify Ukrainian voices, particularly considering the ongoing war. The war in Ukraine has profoundly impacted all aspects of society, including education. Shchepetylnykova (2023) notes that Ukrainian scholarship is scarce globally because most scholars write in Ukrainian rather than in English. However, the war brought Ukraine to the forefront of the international political scene. Delwaide (2011) had already argued that Ukraine should be visible not only on geographical maps but also in the minds of academics worldwide. Expanding on this view, it is true today that within the TESOL and English teaching profession, the political situation in Ukraine influences aspects of English language instruction and educators' practices. For instance, teachers address current events and societal issues related to the war in their classrooms. Moreover, these circumstances shape the identities of both teachers and students. So it is worth asking: In what ways do political tensions and conflicts affect how teachers and students perceive themselves and others? How do they navigate language teaching and learning amid such upheaval?

Moreover, Jain et al. (2021) call for scholars to “diversify the stories that are being told and heard in ‘mainstream’ scholarship, and we need to include practitioners’ narratives ... around the world across a global ELT [English language teaching] landscape” (p. 1). This emphasizes the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences into TESOL discourse, highlighting the need for inclusive practices that reflect the complexities of language education in diverse cultural and geopolitical contexts. Against the prior backdrop and in support of the promotion of Ukrainian voices—and particularly female voices—in this article I explore the intersectionality of the gender identities of a “Ukrainian female teacher,” as Irene (a pseudonym) calls herself. The present study is a re-examination of a previous study conducted in 2017, six years earlier, with different research questions, changed through the researcher’s enriched lived experiences and other contexts, as well as through gained knowledge and developments in the literature. The focal participant of the 2017 study had more than 10 years of working experience at the time of data collection. She taught at various levels, including beginners, intermediate, and advanced. She worked at a public university as an instructor for future English teachers, and also at an information technology (IT) company where she taught English to program developers. By focusing on Irene’s teacher identity formation, this study sheds light on the complex and dynamic ways in which gender, nationality, and the English language intersect in shaping the identities of a Ukrainian teacher. By examining these issues, it is my hope that we will be better able to understand educators’ challenges and develop strategies to support their professional development and well-being. Although the data were collected in 2017, they are still relevant today as the issues surrounding the transnational intersectionality of gender identities are ongoing and have continued to evolve worldwide. Additionally, the current political climate in Ukraine, including the ongoing war since 2014, the Russian annexation of Crimea, and a full-scale war on Ukraine

since 2022,<sup>1</sup> have further impacted the experiences and identities of Ukrainian teachers. Therefore, understanding the intersectional identities of Ukrainian teachers is crucial for promoting equity and inclusivity in education and beyond. Defining and exploring these terms within the Ukrainian context is critical in the TESOL profession. By doing so, we can better understand the specific challenges faced by Ukrainian teachers of English and develop strategies to promote genuine inclusivity and equity within their educational settings.

## 2 | TEACHER-RESEARCHER'S POSITIONALITY

My identity as a researcher and teacher shaped this study in many ways. As a novice researcher in 2017, I was a second-year MA student in a TESOL program on a Fulbright scholarship during the data collection period. I was passionate about the intersection of gender and English language teacher identity and wanted in particular to amplify the voices of Ukrainians on the academic scene. For this study I approached the data collected in 2017 with knowledge of identity performativity from a postmodern stance (Butler, 1997), the intersectionality theorized by Crenshaw (1991), and readings of the scholarship on gender in education since 1990. I was new to gender research and U.S. academia in general. I had to learn to cite, conduct research, gather and analyze data, present findings, and socialize in the new academic milieu. The researcher-me back in 2017 had a different view of the world than the researcher-me in 2023. Not only has my trajectory and learning undergone a tremendous reorientation, but also my response to changes in the scholarship and the world scene have led me to reanalyze the 2017 data through the prism of my growing awareness as a transnational reflexive teacher-scholar who investigates identities from a poststructuralist perspective.

As a researcher now, I position myself within the poststructuralist continuum, emphasizing language and discourse. Thus, I researched various aspects of identity negotiations, questioned multiple assumptions, and reflected on and critically examined the nature of gendered identity. One particular example of my philosophical beliefs comes from my view on identity. Like Aneja (2016) and Rudolph et al. (2015), I believe identity should be viewed and studied not in terms of separation but as a whole construct. According to Lee (2013), teacher identities can be understood as teachers' discussion about themselves (their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and pedagogies), their roles, and their practical activities as teachers, as well as their positioning of themselves in relation to their sociocultural, political, and historical environment. This view of identities helped me reexamine Irene's identities holistically as a multifaceted construct constantly negotiated and contextualized. In addition, I use a transnational approach to examine identity construction (Jain et al., 2021; You, 2018). Just as my identity is complex due to my cultural, linguistic, social, digital, and material experiences, my participant's identity is influenced by her gendered experiences, Ukrainian academic discourses, the English language, various workplaces, and interactions. Like me, Irene lives in transnational spaces; her life "within [her] homeland can also involve mobility and transnational identities and connections" (Canagarajah, 2018, p. 42). Irene's transnational identity is shaped by various ties she maintains with other cultures, places, languages, people, and discourses (Moroz, 2023). My identity and positionality within and beyond this study are defined from a poststructural lens as fluid, negotiated, and contextual due to my living experiences as a transnational scholar. As a resident alien in the United States, my citizenship status, linguistic

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<sup>1</sup>More information about the war on Ukraine can be found at <https://kyivindependent.com/tag/war/>.

identity, family responsibilities, and social expectations differ from those in Ukraine, emphasizing the role of transnational experiences and the impact on multiple intersectional identities. Crossing physical and metaphorical borders shuttling between the U.S. and Ukrainian contexts, which ultimately have influenced my various identities, constitutes my reason for grounding this study in transnational intersectionality as a conceptual framework for understanding one's identity within transnational conditions.

In addition, my Ukrainian nationality and “insider” position in the Ukrainian context helped me to understand the participant's cultural background, which we share. This thought is supported by Ritchie and Lewis (2003), who claimed that “sharing some aspects of cultural background or experience may be helpful in enriching researchers' understanding of participants' accounts, of the language they use and of nuances and subtexts” (p. 65). The current full-scale war on Ukraine has added to the transnational understanding of the participant's identity construction, as it has impacted every Ukrainian citizen despite their geographical location. Interestingly, Irene did not mention any political topics when she participated in the research in 2017. I can speculate that since the war was mainly in the east of Ukraine at that time, she did not feel its impact on her identity then. However, several missile attacks throughout 2022–2023 on the region where Irene and I are from, as well as the war's widening scale, has made us share the worries, anger, fear, and hope for victory. The war became part of the transnational shared space that people worldwide now partake in as Ukraine fights for its freedom.

### 3 | WHY UKRAINE?

Identity and language in Ukraine are intricately woven within the complexities of ongoing conflicts, political shifts, and societal challenges. The annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and the ongoing war add geopolitical complexity. However, gender equality remains elusive. The Ukrainian radio station *Svoboda*<sup>2</sup> reports that 48% of women and 52% of men believe that there is no gender discrimination, and 58% of women state that gender equality exists. In Ukraine's complex current political situation, gender equality is but one of the many social problems Ukrainians face. However, Ukrainian society has traditionally been heavily patriarchal, and the topic of gender is often silenced. During the Soviet Union times, according to Ashwin (2000), gender and sex topics were banned because they distracted citizens from the political agenda. Tarkhanova (2021) sheds clearer light on Ukrainian gender norms and the cultural/societal/state roles in sustaining these norms. Historically, Ukrainian men and women have always had gender-specific societal roles—a woman is mother and housewife, a man is a breadwinner (Bialystok, 1998).

Societal norms rooted in these historical gender roles perpetuate a patriarchal society. A 2017 incident involving the Mayor of Chortkiv, a city in Western Ukraine, exposed deeply ingrained sexist views, prompting public outrage and subsequent apologies. He said,

Не сприймаю жінок керівників. Вважаю, що чоловіки краще керують.  
Вони практичніші, швидше приймають рішення. Довго не розумів жінок

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<sup>2</sup>Radio Svoboda (Free Radio, Radio Liberty) is a U.S. government-funded broadcasting organization that provides news, information, and analysis to countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East, where the free flow of information is either banned by government authorities or not fully developed. The radio station is considered the most trustworthy and objective in Ukraine.

сільських голів. Мені важко дається зрозуміти – навіщо це їм. Все таки є винятки, коли жінки дуже класні керівники. Але це рідкість. Вважаю, що жінка – це мама, вихователь, вчитель по життю. Але не керівник. Моя дружина хоче бути керівником, кар'єру зробити, але я питаюся її, чи варто. Коли був молодшим, боявся стоматологів, змій і жінок за кермом. Десь до 20 років дивувався, як жінка може автомобіль водити. Це дитячі фобії. [I do not perceive women as leaders. I believe that men are better managers. They are more practical, fast decision makers. For some time, I could not understand women, who are the heads of the countries. It is difficult for me to understand why they need it. Still there are exceptions when women are very cool leaders. But this is rare. I believe that a woman is a mother, an educator, a teacher of life. But not the leader. My wife wants to be a leader, to make a career, but I ask her if it is worth it. When I was younger, I was afraid of dentists, snakes, and women behind the wheel. Until I was 20 years old, I wondered how a woman could drive a car. Those are child's phobias.]

(Бізнес Компаньйон)

The highly sexist words of the person representing the city aroused extreme anger on social media, according to several Ukrainian media outlets (e.g., Бізнес Компаньйон).

With a problematic political and gender situation, Ukraine also grapples with a language divide, as half the population speaks Ukrainian and the other half Russian. English has risen in prominence and is considered a pathway to economic success, leading to linguistic competition and the prioritization of English language education. This language situation, “with one official language, one language of a wider communication,” has put English in a favorable position (Goodman, 2009, p. 32). The ascendancy of English is reinforced by its critical role in business and employment, contributing to what Cisel (2002) terms *linguistic opportunism*. This shift, abetted by cuts to Ukrainian language classes for Russian speakers, positions English as a medium of university instruction.

Geopolitical conflicts, gender inequalities, linguistic shifts, and educational transformations shape Ukraine's identity and language dynamics. Understanding these intricacies requires an awareness of historical legacies and societal norms, highlighting the dynamic interplay shaping Ukraine's trajectory. Hence, this article explores the experiences of a female English teacher, utilizing a transnational, intersectional approach to understand the transformative and agentic nature of identity and gender constructs.

#### 4 | TRANSNATIONAL INTERSECTIONALITY AS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), a scholar of critical race theory, first introduced the term *intersectionality* to address issues of systemic racism and oppression. Grounded in the intersectionality framework, this study examines teacher's identities as interconnected and complex. However, it is important to acknowledge that intersectionality highlights differences within groups by attributing them to structural inequalities resulting from privileging specific ways of being. According to Launius and Hassel (2015), the intersectional approach supports the description of identity shifts relevant to changes in sociopolitical contexts. These authors further state that gender is “shaped by behavioral cues and social codes that are coded as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’” (Launius

& Hassel, 2015, p. 27). In this view, gender expression is like performance; it is “something you ‘do’ rather than something that is built into or programmed into you” (Launius & Hassel, 2015, p. 27). Gender in this perspective is an important topic to be explored in the Ukrainian context, particularly in the education field, where gender division is especially noticeable, with women dominating the field (Lin, 2004), as well as the contextual importance of discussing gender due to its being silenced.

Transnational intersectionality has been gaining attention in TESOL in recent years as an approach to understanding the complex intersections of language, culture, and identity in transnational contexts (Curran, 2020; Jain et al., 2021; Kayi-Aydar et al., 2022; Robinson et al., 2020; Sánchez-Martín, 2022). Specifically, these scholars discuss the concept of intersectionality through the lens of changing conditions of transnational experiences. Some scholars have used transnational intersectionality to explore topics such as the experiences of international graduate students and their translanguaging practices (Robinson et al., 2020; Sánchez-Martín, 2022), identities as scholar, researcher, and practitioner (Thu & Motha, 2021), the connection between identity and justice in transnational spaces for ELT (Kayi-Aydar et al., 2022), native-speakers' race, gender, and sexuality (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020), and language, race, and gender in transnational and transracialized identity (Thu & Motha, 2021). Overall, transnational intersectionality has been used to shed light on the complex and dynamic nature of language and identity in transnational contexts and has the potential to inform more equitable and inclusive language teaching practices.

At the same time, conceptual tensions exist between intersectionality and poststructuralism, as noted by Mann (2018), who discussed some common grounds and differences between the two. It is important to highlight these contradictions here to understand why I use the term *transnational intersectionality* through the poststructuralism lens to describe the identity negotiations of a Ukrainian English language teacher. According to Mann (2018), both intersectionality theory and poststructuralism recognize the impact of power on knowledge creation, the reflexive nature of knowledge, and the value of personal narratives. At the same time, however, there are differences in the view of individual vs. collective power, the importance of theory, and political activism (Mann, 2018). In this study, the tension between poststructuralism manifested in the transnational experiences and aspects of intersectionality are present, too.

As a conceptual framework, transnational intersectionality highlights the complexities of gender identity and how it is shaped by various intersecting social and cultural factors, such as race, class, nationality, and sexuality, all of which transcend national borders. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding how gender identities are constructed and experienced in different cultural and historical contexts and how power relations operate locally and globally to shape these identities. It also recognizes the fluidity and multiplicity of gender identities and how they are constantly negotiated and transformed through social interactions, political struggles, and personal experiences. As Sánchez-Martín (2022) and Park (2017) note, identities can be privileged and marginalized simultaneously due to gender, sex, race, ethnicity, nationality, ability, religion, and class. These tensions are prone to material and social conditions, which shape identity construction while accounting for the poststructuralist approach to identities as fluid. Moreover, transnational intersectionality has been used to challenge dominant discourses and practices that perpetuate gender-based inequalities and to promote more inclusive and empowering approaches to gender and identity in various fields, including language education (Sánchez-Martín, 2022).

While the studies on transnational intersectionality in TESOL have focused on different contexts, they share a common finding that teachers' identities are complex and multifaceted, shaped by intersecting factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, and language. In the context of Ukraine, where gender issues in English language teaching are salient, this approach to

investigating identities is relevant. Ukrainian English language teachers' identities are shaped by gender, language, and socioeconomic status, among other factors, and the individual experiences of identity negotiation and construction are complex and multifaceted. The studies on transnational intersectionality in TESOL suggest that it is crucial to consider these intersecting factors when examining language teacher identity and to promote professional development programs that address issues of gender equity and linguistic diversity, in this case in Ukraine. It should also be borne in mind that the participant's transnational identity impacted her language teaching practices, including beliefs about language and language teaching, pedagogical strategies, and relationships with students.

## 5 | GENDERED IDENTITY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

In this study, I argue that gender is a highly social, politically charged construct in the Ukrainian context. In the field of TESOL, teacher identity is thought to be an important component of classroom teaching (Varghese et al., 2005), and it is shaped by the complexities of the social context in which teachers work and live (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Simon-Maeda, 2004). Kirk (2010) states that female teachers' identities are well theorized and documented in Western contexts, though little or no research has been done in other parts of the world. To the best of my knowledge, there are no research studies investigating the intersectionality of identities and gender of teachers in Ukrainian higher education. A few articles that primarily examine the English language status and usage represent the immediate post-Soviet Ukrainian context (Goodman, 2009; Goodman & Lyulkun, 2010; Tarnopolsky & Goodman, 2014). This article uses an intersectional approach and looks at an in-service English language teacher who negotiates multifaceted identities with the help of English. According to Launius and Hassel (2015), the intersectional approach assumes that various social categories, gender being one of them, "intersect at the micro level of individual experience to reflect multiple interlocking systems of privilege and oppression at the macro, social-structural level" (p. 114). An intersectional approach to this study clarifies how identities are constructed, interconnected, and coexist with students and other people's identities.

This study employs the definition of language teacher identity articulated by Varghese et al. (2005), which views that identity as multiple, shifting, and in conflict rather than a fixed, stable, unitary, and internally coherent phenomenon per a poststructuralist perspective. Additionally, this definition recognizes that identity is context-related, transformative, and agentic (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 22). The poststructuralist approach to identity views it as multiple, fluid, shifting, contextualized, co-constructed, and reconstructed through language, discourse, and experience. Following the same train of thought, gender is not a binary construct but somewhat fluid, complex, and discursive from a poststructuralist standpoint. At the same time, I use the terms *female*, *male*, *woman*, and *man* in this study to preserve the way the participant identified herself and other subjects in the study.

## 6 | CONTEXT OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

Considering the goal of this study to investigate the participant's gendered identity construction in the Ukrainian context through the lens of the transnational intersectionality approach, the main research question is:

1. What are the gendered dimensions of the participant's process of "becoming" an English language teacher in transnational education?

The original study was conducted at Olga Pidhiryanka National University (a pseudonym) in 2017, located in the west of Ukraine. As cited by Velykoroda & Moroz (2021), "This university is the oldest in the region and used to be a pedagogical institution in the past" (p. 61). The geopolitical and historical context of the study site is an essential variable for the study, as historically Ukraine has been torn between two the powerful influences of Europe (the western part) and Russia (the eastern part). In the previous study, I investigated the intersection of gender and identity through performativity and its implications for English language teaching field in the Ukrainian context. When collecting data in 2017, the study's focal participant, Irene, was a university instructor teaching English practicum courses to English language teachers and working on her dissertation. She also worked at an IT company as an English instructor for specific purposes. Irene was married and had one daughter at that time.

The study from 2017 employed a qualitative, narrative inquiry approach to explore Irene's experiences with teacher-gendered identity construction. According to Yin (2011), this methodology allows the researcher to examine the context of the participant's views, values, and perceptions. The study used three data sources: an online autobiography (see Appendix A), a semi-structured interview (Appendix B), and a lesson plan with a follow-up interview (Appendix C). Pavlenko (2003) argues that autobiography is a valuable, rich-in-content qualitative data source for examining lived experiences. The interviews covered issues related to teacher identity, gender, and the English language status in Ukraine. A lesson plan with a follow-up interview is a type of reflective exercise, with the help of which teachers can make connections between broader goals as educators and their practical ways of implementing those goals in classrooms through their lesson plans. A participant could choose what stories she wanted to share in a preferred language. Irene chose English for her online autobiography and Ukrainian for the interviews.

In 2017, I started analyzing Irene's data gradually, starting with reading her autobiography many times before I inductively coded it using NVivo software. When the two interviews were conducted, I transcribed them first, listened to them a few times, coded them using the inductive method, and asked a fellow researcher to check the codes for inter-rater reliability. After that, I grouped them into parent codes. Because the interviews were conducted in Ukrainian, I followed Pavlenko's (2007) advice that "all narratives should be analyzed in the language in which they were told and not in translation" (p. 173). I examined a sample lesson plan from Irene for the third data source and conducted a follow-up interview, which underwent the same data coding process as the other data sources.

After combining several similar codes under parent codes, six themes were identified—Ukrainian female, university professor, language instructor at IT company, guardian of the hearth, and English language user. Based on these five themes, I wrote a narrative (Appendix D) and sent it to Irene for member-checking. Similar to Motha (2014), through the narrative I am "telling someone else's story" (p. 155). I am using my interpretations of the words I heard from my participant. Therefore, I would like to stress that the data analysis is my version of the words spoken during the interviews and other data collection sources. The participant's narrative was based on personal stories, which I interpreted as both an insider and an outsider in relation to the participant's lived experiences. In 2023, I re-envisioned the data findings. I posed different research questions that spoke to recent developments in the scholarship by using a transnational approach to teacher identity research.



In the next section, I provide insights from Irene's narrative under the above-mentioned common themes which emerged from the data sources. Examining these themes through the prism of transnational intersectionality framework, I found they portrayed the complexity of a teacher's identities which were shaped and negotiated in multiple contexts, including the highly political construct of gender in Ukraine.

## 7 | FINDINGS

It is not that you earn a lot if you are a teacher in this country, nor is it about receiving any social benefits. It is something different. It is being able to live a new life and experience things you would not be able to experience through your mother tongue.

(Irene, online autobiography, June 6, 2016)

Irene has constructed five gendered identities (as aforementioned, each described below) based on Irene's data and my interpretation. I would like to stress that those identities have emerged solely from the stories told by Irene; she might have been creating other identities in other contexts at different times, or she might have lost some and acquired new ones.

### 7.1 | Ukrainian female

Irene's status in society was predetermined by her parents, who were both teachers and were considered to be "intelligentsia." However, their social status did not allow them to be satisfied financially. Irene mentioned that owning a pair of jeans was impossible for her during Soviet Union times due to the unavailability of goods (online autobiography). Later in life, Irene chose to also be a teacher, which was considered prestigious in society. Her asset of knowing English, which she learned by attending a specialized English language school, also put her in a favorable position. As a Ukrainian female, Irene often referred to the Ukrainian context when she discussed her work, as this context heavily shaped her own identity. Moreover, there was a general belief that knowing English would allow women to find better jobs, assigning power to the English language and affecting career choices. From a transnational perspective, Irene's socioeconomic status intersected with her gender and national identity and ultimately impacted her life. It also showcased the historical and socioeconomic effect on Irene's identity. As Launius & Hassel (2015) acknowledge, "social class and socioeconomic status are profoundly important in shaping ... experiences of the labor market and the various kinds of privileges and rights" (p. 125).

Irene's parents' approval and her family legacy influenced her decision to become an English language teacher. In addition, Irene's decision was supported by gendered sociopolitical attitudes toward expectations of a career choice for women in Ukraine. As in Park's (2009) description of Korean society, female career path decisions are subject to Ukrainian patriarchal society.

### 7.2 | University professor

Irene's discourse communities shaped Irene's gendered identity as a university professor. Throughout 10 years as a university professor, Irene (re)constructed her professional identity at multiple levels through participation in a discourse community. Her identity as a participant in

the university's academic discourse community had been constructed and negotiated through various language usage experiences with colleagues and students of both genders in social, cultural, and political contexts (Duff & Uchida, 1997). In particular, Irene mentioned that she was able to use language practices typical for a female, for example, *рибко, золотко* (*little fish, sweetie pie*) (Interview 1) when addressing female students. In contrast, if a male teacher addressed his student using those words, it would be considered inappropriate due to stereotypical gendered societal norms in Ukraine. Moreover, mothers typically use these examples when speaking to children in Ukrainian society. Hence, Irene used those particular expressions not only with her female students but also because she was comfortable using them as she was a mother and probably had used them with her young daughter. This example showed the intersectionality of multiple identities and their interaction in Irene's life. Irene also mentioned one extremely unpleasant memory from working with a male student. She did not mention any examples that would refer to female students.

Irene's usage of specific words to address her students and experiencing comments about her appearance show how gender roles and expectations intersected with her professional identity and contributed to a transnational aspect of gender expectations. Moreover, Irene's career choice highlighted how gendered sociopolitical variables shaped individual decisions.

Regarding the environment and relations between colleagues at the university, Irene brought up some specific examples that described a female-dominating university context. Once, she received a comment from an older colleague about her appearance, particularly the type of clothes she wore to work (Interview 1). In Irene's case, she specifically said such a comment would not have been said if she had been a man. Irene also mentioned gossiping as a way of evaluating a teacher's performance. Interestingly, Irene commented that male university professors acquire "stereotypical female traits, such as gossiping and criticizing others" (Interview 1). Irene was used to working in a female-dominated sphere, as most English teachers and students at the university were females. However, she did not see this as either disadvantageous or advantageous to her professional career. In contrast, in her second job at the IT company, she worked in a male-dominated environment. The main difference between the two workplaces for Irene was how she received feedback. At university, students and other instructors "надають оцінку твоїй роботі у формі пліток" ("give their feedback in the form of gossip") (Interview 1), whereas at the IT company she received a more straightforward opinion about her work. In the university's academic discourse community, Irene's identity as a participant was formed, negotiated, and transformed through language usage, experiences with colleagues, and students of both genders in social, cultural, and political contexts (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Simon-Maeda, 2004). Gendered identity was visible in how others perceived Irene as a female. According to the academic community's gendered norms, she had to wear different clothes. Therefore, based on societal gender norms, Irene's clothing choices were seen as inappropriate.

Another societal pressure that Irene faced was finding a second source of income due to the low salaries of instructors in Ukraine. For Ukrainian females, it had become a norm to work and provide for their families like their male partners. According to the International Labor Organization, in Europe "59 percent of working women supply half or more of their family household income" (Launius & Hassel, 2015, p. 125). Hence, Irene's challenge to work at two workplaces was prompted by her desire to provide her family with financial security.

Irene also described events when some administrative personnel or colleagues of a higher position diminished her status as a teacher and marginalized her because of her gender. Kubota (2002) refers to such instances by pointing out that "instructional fields are indeed sites of power struggle. Compared to faculty with higher social status regarding race, gender, class,

and language, minority faculty tend to be confronted with more intense struggles for power” (p. 302). Moreover, Irene’s gender identity was heavily influenced by her workplace interaction with colleagues, students, and administration. As Thimm et al. (2003) mention, “verbal communication at work influences the professional performance of men and women in gender-specific ways. The communication of social categories is important in constructing gendered professional worlds” (p. 529).

As a teacher with extensive work experience, Irene said that being a woman influenced her choices of texts. For example, she would choose a text about family and children for her students at the university, and for the program developers at the IT company she had to choose materials about technology. Based on her experience, Irene noticed that group work and individual work were both considered suitable for both genders, but that pair work was generally shunned by men. She also said in her interview that “video is more interesting for men, but reading is more engaging for women, maybe because women are more patient ... for men, writing an essay is a challenging task.”

### 7.3 | Language instructor at IT company

As mentioned above, Irene also worked as an English language instructor at an IT company, where her students were mostly program developers. This was a different environment than the university in terms of atmosphere, students, and attitude. In her interview, she discussed some incidents that happened at this job site and revealed her gendered identity. During Interview 1, for example, Irene remembered that one time she decided to speak to her supervisor about her salary, which was already a sign of her initiative nature, but unfortunately the supervisor did not take her words seriously; he only smiled and nodded without giving her a clear answer. This incident is a vivid example of what Launius and Hassel (2015) call “gender ranking” (p. 128). Gender ranking characterized the power relationship between Irene, a female employee, and her male supervisor. Irene thought that if she had been a male her supervisor would have answered directly and honestly. Irene was conscious of her gendered identity and reflected on other scenarios where she tried to put herself into a man’s role and thought of what might happen if she had not been a woman.

Irene also mentioned her male colleagues’ attitude to a newly hired English teacher who had a nice picture on her resume but, according to Irene, her expertise was not impressive.. Irene assumed that this new teacher was hired because of her looks, not her qualifications. When this real-life situation, with its discriminatory comments by male colleagues, came to Irene’s mind as we discussed her IT company workplace, she explained that she found it unacceptable.

### 7.4 | Guardian of the hearth

In an interview, Irene said that “a female teacher drags work home. Not the papers, but the attitude, the domination, the evaluation, everything traces into life. It worsens with years” (Interview 1). As a working woman, Irene found it difficult to combine her personal life and her professional life. She mentioned that writing a dissertation was a major challenge for her, as she had family chores and duties to attend to. Therefore, being a mother, a wife, and a “guardian of the hearth” did not merge well with working at two jobs and being a scholar. As mentioned by Launius and Hassel (2015), “two institutions that profoundly shape women’s lives are the workplace and the

family” (p. 88). I agree with these scholars, as in Irene’s life her identities were primarily negotiated between those two distinct realities. Irene also specified that she tried not to bring her family troubles and problems into her work environments. From the narrative and the interviews, it becomes clear that Irene moved between her identities as they intersected with each other, but that she found great difficulty in balancing the different spheres of family, students, and even the physical spaces of home and classroom.

## 7.5 | English language user

The power of the English language affected many areas of Irene’s life, contributing to her identity. Mastering English allowed Irene to gain economic and academic advantage. She said the English language allowed her “to live a new life; experience things you would not be able to experience through your mother tongue” (online autobiography). In this quote, Irene referred specifically to her identity as an English language user. Knowing English gave her social status, aided her academic advancement, and helped her get a prestigious job. This dimension of Irene’s identity constituted her transnational disposition and emphasized the intersectionality of becoming an English language teacher.

Nevertheless, Irene noted that she did not use English when it was not necessary. She also expressed negative thoughts on adding English words to the Ukrainian language. Irene’s resistance to using the English language outside her professional space and desire to keep the Ukrainian language intact showcase a conflict between Irene’s identity as an English user and her Ukrainian national identity. This tension highlights how one’s linguistic identity can intersect with broader cultural and national identities.

## 7.6 | Summary of the themes

In her story, Irene talked about how she saw herself as a talkative, impatient, curious person who liked to be praised. In her interviews, she also mentioned being organized and hard-working. When Irene discussed her behavior in class, she used words and sentences that indicated her friendly, sometimes edifying, almost parent-like tone with her students. All the adjectives Irene used to describe herself were associated with her gender as a female. However, it should be noted that although Irene was the authority in her class, she was also working two jobs to provide for her family. Therefore, her gendered identity construction was not only multifaceted and negotiated, but also in conflict and constantly changing. Irene’s stories showcased that she moved between her identities as they intersected—family, students, and even the physical spaces of home, classroom, and workplace.

## 8 | DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has explored the intersectionality of gender and identities of a female Ukrainian English teacher. The intersectional approach allowed the investigation of multiple facets that shape Irene’s life. Her gendered identity was always an essential aspect of her life, from her first encounter with the English language to becoming and establishing herself as an English language teacher. According to Mayer (1999), “being” a teacher is to acquire and perform a

sets of skills and strategies to be able to teach, while “becoming” is to be “developing a sense of oneself as a teacher” (p. 5). *Being* and *becoming* can be traced in Irene's lived experiences. First, Irene explicitly stated her identity as a teacher and mentioned that other people also defined her as a teacher (Danielewicz, 2001). This identification is one of the aspects of “becoming” a teacher as perceived by oneself and by others. In addition, Irene mentioned that teaching is not merely a one-way process for her, but that she also learns from her students daily. Therefore, Irene is constantly in the process of “becoming,” as she is learning how to be a teacher daily (Britzman, 1991). This notion of “becoming” constitutes the axis of the substance of teacher identity, according to Clarke's (2009) *identity work*. In the case of Irene, the substance of her teacher identity is also related to her being a mother, a spouse, a daughter, a nonnative speaker, and a Ukrainian female. Her gender also influenced Irene's lived experiences at various workplaces and is projected to keep playing a crucial role due to the sociopolitical context in Ukraine.

Like Park (2013), in this study I investigated the complexity of teaching and the “relationships between gender and teaching” (p. 16). I explored how an in-service English language teacher constructed her identity, focusing on her gendered identity. As stated by Motha (2005), “my intention in this study was not to identify a solution ... I sought to explore” (p. 31). Irene's narrative illustrates the complexity of her identity shaped by being an English teacher, which is an essential part of her lived experiences and gender identity. Therefore, the participant's identity appears to be complex and intersectional. Similar to Kayi-Aydar et al.'s (2022, p. 3) contention that intersectionality is contextual, the gendered identities of the participant of this study prove to be impacted by social, political, and historical contexts.

To summarize, my analysis demonstrates how Irene's identities are complex, shaped by gender, and influenced by various aspects such as social status, her job, linguistic status, and cultural environment. Irene's experiences with her gender identity reinforce and complicate the idea of transnational intersectionality in different ways. Her experiences provide insights into the complexities of identity and power dynamics and how they intersect with broader cultural and national contexts.

Analyzing Irene's data sources, several themes emerged in relation to current topics in the TESOL field:

- *Gender intersectionality and power dynamics*: Irene's experiences highlight the intersectionality of her gendered identity with other aspects of her life, such as social class, language proficiency, and career choices. This complexity adds depth to understanding the power dynamics within TESOL regarding gender and other intersecting factors.
- *Gendered career choices in TESOL*: Irene's narrative sheds light on how gendered expectations and norms influence career choices in TESOL. These insights can enrich discussions about gender representation within TESOL across different cultural and national contexts.
- *Language and identity in TESOL*: Irene's negotiation of the English language and her identity as a language user contribute to discussions about language attitudes and identity in TESOL. Her conflicts over incorporating English words into the Ukrainian language highlight the tension between global English dominance and preserving national and linguistic identity.
- *Work–life balance and teaching identity*: Irene's struggles to balance her roles as a mother, wife, teacher, and scholar resonate with educators worldwide, contributing to the ongoing conversation about work–life balance in TESOL.
- *National identity and TESOL*: Irene's experiences provide a unique lens through which to examine the influence of national views on her gendered identity within the field of TESOL.

Additionally, this study has several pedagogical implications for the field of TESOL. The following list proposes tangible action items to be considered for various stakeholders within the field:

- *Contextualized professional development and intersectional sensitivity*: Design professional development acknowledging contextual challenges faced by English language teachers. Integrate intersectional sensitivity through localized training, workshops, and mentorship.
- *Inclusive language policies and transnational perspectives in curriculum*: Advocate for inclusive language policies recognizing linguistic diversity.
- *Gender-inclusive practices and safe spaces for identity expression*: Develop guidelines for gender-inclusive practices and create safe spaces for identity expression in language classrooms.
- *Critical pedagogy and global collaboration*: Embrace critical pedagogy, encouraging students to critically analyze language, power, and identity.
- *Professional mentorship programs and research-based teaching resources*: Implement mentorship programs and disseminate research-based teaching resources addressing the intersections of gender, language, and identity.

As the war rages in the land of Ukraine, it is still unknown to what extent intellectuals and practitioners will be impacted. However, the role of English will likely increase as Ukraine moves toward the West and further from Russian expansion. Therefore, I echo Shchepetylnykova's (2023) sentiments to bring Ukrainian intellectual ideas to the core of worldwide science and humanities as the country moves away from the decolonized history of Russian oppression through many centuries. Considering this shift, Sánchez-Martín (2022) asserts that "If we guide teachers to understand the changing conditions under which they live and teach, we can alleviate some of the obstacles they experience in terms of their gender and language identities, and perhaps transcend them" (p. 574). The acceptance of Ukrainian voices will empower and liberate Ukrainian scholars to find their unique identities and move forward with establishing themselves as participants and contributors to the collected knowledge of academics worldwide.

This study has highlighted how institutions play a role in assigning gender roles to women. This affects how women are treated in and by these institutions and how they perceive themselves. It also suggests that institutions need to be aware of their role in perpetuating gender stereotypes and work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable environment. It is essential to recognize how individuals navigate their gender identities in different contexts and how others perceive them. Irene's case highlights the complexity of teacher identity and how it is shaped by various factors such as personal experiences, societal expectations, and professional roles. These factors have implications for teacher education and development, as they suggest that teacher identity is an ongoing process that needs to be supported and nurtured throughout a teacher's career.

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## APPENDIX A

### Task-based protocol

Dear,

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. Your time and interest in this research are highly appreciated.

The current study focuses on the gendered influence on English language teacher identity in Ukraine. You are eligible to participate in this study because you are an English teacher; more importantly, you have no less than two years of teaching experience; you are Ukrainian; you received your degree from Precarpathian National University; you express interest in learning more about language teacher identity experience.

The consent form you signed before is attached to this letter. Please review the consent form again as a reminder if you wish. It is important to stress that participation in this study is voluntary. All the information you share with me is confidential and will be used only for this study. To ensure confidentiality, please create a pseudonym for the study instead of your name. It is important to reiterate that you can withdraw at any point during the study.

If you are willing to participate, please read the task below.

Please send your story via email by (date).

If you have any questions/concerns/comments regarding the task or any other issues, do not hesitate to contact me via Skype or email.

Thank you very much for your interest in this research! Your participation is precious for this study!

## APPENDIX B

### Semi-structured interview protocol

Hello,

How are you doing? Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. I appreciate your time and interest in this research.

As you may know, the study focuses on the gendered influence on English language teacher identity in Ukraine. You are eligible to participate in this study because you are an English teacher; more importantly, you have no less than two years of teaching experience; you are Ukrainian; you received your degree from Precarpathian National University; you express interest in learning more about language teacher identity experience.

I will ask you several questions regarding teaching, schooling, your experiences, and perceptions. The interview will last for 50–60 minutes.

Here is the informed consent you signed before. Please read it carefully one more time. It is essential to say that the information collected in this interview is completely confidential and will only be used for this study. Also, the discussion will be recorded. Are you okay with it?

Finally, to ensure confidentiality, please create a pseudonym.

Before we start, do you feel comfortable? Also, please let me know if you need anything during the interview. I will do my best to make this experience positive and memorable for you.

*Participants' qualifications:*

1. How many years have you been teaching? What levels? What schools?
2. What brought you into teaching?
3. How can you describe yourself as a teacher?

4. What is your primary goal as a teacher of English?
5. How do you feel about being an English teacher in a Ukrainian classroom? Provide some specific incidents when you feel different as an English teacher.
6. How does being a woman influence (positively or negatively) what you do as an English teacher?
7. Have you ever experienced any problems with being a male/female English teacher?
8. In what ways do you feel being judged by your gender by students, colleagues, or administration? How does it affect you as a teacher? What are your experiences with other male teachers/ administration/ female teachers/ administration?
9. What are your experiences with being a woman/man and a teacher? In what ways has gender helped or made it difficult for you to become a teacher and to grow as a teacher throughout your career?
10. How does being an English teacher in Ukraine differ from being a daughter, mom, spouse, colleague, etc.? (a father, a son)
11. What are the significant victories and challenges you face as an English teacher (if any)? What would you say are your major successes as an English teacher (if any)?
12. What 3–5 words best describe you as an English teacher? Why did you choose these words, and what do you think they say about you as an English teacher?
13. Has the English language status in Ukraine changed over the last few years? In what ways? What are the attitudes of the students/ stakeholders/ government/ teachers toward the English language and the emphasis on learning it?

Thank you very much for participating in my study. Your time and participation are highly appreciated and will contribute to the existing knowledge of gender and English language teacher identity.

## APPENDIX C

### Follow-up interview protocol

Hello again,

How are you doing today? Thank you very much for allowing me to see your sample lesson plan. I appreciate it.

Regarding this second interview, I will ask you several questions regarding your lesson plan and your goals as a teacher. The discussion will last for 30–40 minutes.

Here is the informed consent you signed before. Please read it carefully one more time. It is essential to say that the information collected in this interview is completely confidential and will only be used for the study. In addition, the discussion will be recorded. Are you still ok with it? Thank you.

Before we start, do you feel comfortable? Also, please let me know if you need anything during the interview. I will do my best to make this experience positive and memorable for you.

*Suggested questions regarding the lesson plan:*

1. How do you create your lesson plans? What resources (internal and external) do you use to create your lesson plans?
2. What specific goals did you have in mind when creating this lesson plan?
3. How does being a man/woman influence your choice of lesson activities? For example, are there specific words/ phrases/ sayings usually referred to as woman/man language?

4. Could you illustrate with examples: texts, activities, etc. then you will see what genders are there, roles, actions, etc.
5. When selecting materials, methods, and activities for your lesson, what resources do you use and why? Did someone advise you?
6. Do you have complete freedom when choosing lesson materials and activities? Do you think your goals and lesson objectives will be met with the help of the selected materials and activities?
7. How do you feel about your lesson plan? In what ways did it help you to achieve your lesson objectives?
8. What worked and what did not work during your lesson? Why do you think some of the activities did not work?
9. How do you use English outside of the classroom? Do you think your life would be different if you did not choose this career? What about your social status and roles? Would they change?
10. What does it mean to you to teach or be a teacher?

Thank you very much for your interview. Your insights will be a helpful asset to the research. Have a great day!

## APPENDIX D

### Irene's narrative

Irene's idea of becoming a teacher of the English language came to mind when she was in middle school. At that time, Ukraine was still a part of the Soviet Union<sup>3</sup>; for Irene's hard-working family, those times were difficult:

I was born in the Soviet Union, where a pair of jeans was a dream come true, where a can of Coke made you the most popular gal in the neighborhood, and where understanding the lyrics of Ace of Base spoke of high levels of intelligence.

(Online autobiography, June 6, 2016)

She clearly remembers that as a teenager she admired those who could speak English—"being excellent at physics or math stood no comparison with speaking decent English" (online autobiography, June 6, 2016). It was not a surprise that Irene chose a career as a teacher, as both of her parents were teachers. Therefore, she always respected teachers and was always schooled by her parents not to diminish mistakes but to provide evidence for her ideas. She grew up in a family that, according to Ukrainian standards, would be addressed as "intelligentsia" due to their social status.

Later in life, at university, Irene was the only one amongst her classmates who could speak English. However, she understood that her proficiency was far from advanced. This realization served as a stimulus for "learning grammar, understanding phonetics as a science one needs to study, discovering the history of language that provides in-depth information about how vocabulary is formed" (online autobiography, June 6, 2016).

There were a few significant moments in Irene's life that aided her in becoming a professional English language teacher. She still remembers the first classes at school as a student assistant during her practicum. During that time, she met her mentor, Mrs. Natalia Vykhor,<sup>4</sup> who, according to Irene,

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<sup>3</sup>On 24 August 1991, Ukraine proclaimed independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

<sup>4</sup>All names of persons and institutions are pseudonyms.

“is a marvelous English teacher” (online autobiography, June 6, 2016). Mrs. Vykhor's way of teaching impressed Irene because of her dynamics, usage of various techniques, and the rhythm of the lesson. Other milestones in her teaching career were her first classes at university as a professor, the first tests to proofread, and the first mistakes to admit to. The third significant moment was working as a substitute teacher in one of the colleges in Rohatyn, Irene's hometown, “a tiny place where an English teacher who can speak English is quite a rarity” (online autobiography, June 6, 2016).

Irene has more than 10 years of working experience. She has taught various levels, including beginners, intermediate, and advanced. Now, she works at the university as an instructor for future teachers of English and at an information technology (IT) company where she teaches program developers. She has also worked with children from the age of 3: “дійсно це найважчий сегмент, потрібно дуже багато працювати. Це не може бути заняття експромтом. Це найбільше, до певної міри, найбільш така група, що дає насолоду від роботи, але не в плані розвитку себе як професіонала, а в такому якомусь більш людському” (“it is indeed the most difficult segment of students, you need to work a lot. It cannot be an improvised class. To some degree, working with this group of learners gives the most satisfaction, but not in terms of being able to develop oneself as an instructor, more in a humane way”) (Interview 1, August 3, 2016).

One of the reasons Irene became a university instructor was the sense of prestige associated with this profession. At the beginning of her work experience, she was pleased to be able to work alongside those who were her teachers before. However, she was surprised to learn that some of her colleagues, whom she respected and thought of as role models, were not afraid to take bribes for their work as teachers.

For Irene, one of the most significant benefits of being a teacher is not only to teach but also to learn from students—in particular, as she knows from her students at university, “бо там є люди, що приїхали з-за кордону, наприклад, які вчилися там. Тоді ти можеш отримати щось, а не тільки ділитися знаннями” (“because there are people who came from abroad, who studied there, for example. In that case, you can get something, not only transmit your knowledge”) (Interview 1, August 3, 2016).

Having worked in education for over 10 years, Irene says the Ukrainian “system of education lacks good teachers, hands-on experience and interpreting expertise” (online autobiography, June 6, 2016). The methods used by instructors do not provide practical implementation of the acquired skills. Still, due to subjects like History of Language, Ukraine's higher education system made Irene “fall in love with the beautiful language of Shakespeare and Hemingway” (online autobiography, June 6, 2016).

Irene is used to working in a female-dominated sphere, as most English teachers and students at the university are females. However, she does not see it as any disadvantage or advantage to her professional career. In contrast, in her second job at the IT company, she worked in a male-dominant environment. The main difference between the two workplaces for Irene is how she receives feedback. At university, students and other instructors “надають оцінку твоїй роботі у формі пліток” (“give their feedback in the form of gossip”) (Interview 1, August 3, 2016), whereas at the IT company she receives a more straightforward opinion about her work. Also, teachers at university are not as flexible in choosing their materials. The national curriculum dictates what should be taught. They have to teach the vocabulary that will be checked at the end of the semester. However, teachers still have some flexibility; if a teacher wants to do more, they can do it.

As a teacher, Irene admits that she sometimes talks more than she should and is slightly impatient, especially when students need more time to answer. She is also a hard-working professional who likes to be praised for her work. Her teaching philosophy can be summarized in a few phrases: “не нашкодь, вмій виправити свою помилку, визнати свою помилку” (“do no

harm, know how to correct, and admit your mistakes”) (Interview 1, August 3, 2016). Irene sees that most teachers follow routine plans, such as teaching grammar and testing students’ knowledge, allowing them to show their superiority. However, based on her experience, Irene realizes that vocabulary and speaking are the most critical aspects of language learning.

As Irene reflects on her position as a teacher in Ukraine, she realizes that it is not a financially satisfying profession though it has some social benefits. For Irene, it is “something different; it is being able to live a new life, experience things you wouldn’t be able to experience through your mother tongue” (online autobiography, June 6, 2016).

Being an English language teacher is a prestigious profession that requires a lot of time and love for teaching various students. “Труднощі, домашні проблеми ... не можна, щоб вони впливали на роботу” (“Troubles, family problems ... you cannot allow them to interfere with your work”) (Interview 1, August 3, 2016). Irene does not see any hidden misunderstandings regarding working with female students, as could happen between a male instructor and a female student. For example, in the Ukrainian language, a female teacher could call a female student *рибка, золотко* (*little fish, sweetie pie*) (Interview 1, August 3, 2016). If a male teacher addressed his student using those words, it would be considered inappropriate. Regarding working with male students, Irene understands that males will not answer her harshly or disrespectfully because of her female status. Honestly, Irene does not have pleasant memories of working with male students. She recalls one incident that happened at the beginning of her career. Irene was a teacher of a student whose mother also worked as an English instructor, but Irene “не бачила можливості поставити йому відмінну оцінку на фоні дівчат значно старанніших. Потім, як виявилось, хлопець мав нервовий зрив, емоційний зрив” (“could not give him the highest grade, as he was less skilled in comparison to female students, who were more diligent. As was discovered later, this student had a nervous breakdown, an emotional one”) (Interview 1, August 3, 2016).

At the beginning of Irene’s professional career, one older university colleague commented on Irene’s work attire as “inappropriate.” Irene was stunned by this comment and thought such remarks should not occur at any workplace. At university, she noticed that even male teachers gossip and criticize one another, and that they possess more of this stereotypical woman’s trait. Once again, this might be because they feel insecure about the salary level. Older female teachers get to feel underappreciated, according to Irene’s experiences. “Жінка-вчитель тягне роботу додому. Не папери, але ставлення, керування, оцінний момент, все переноситься в життя. З роками гірше стає” (“A female teacher drags work home. Not the papers, but the attitude, the domination, the evaluation, everything traces into life. It worsens with years”) (Interview 1, August 3, 2016).

Once, Irene decided to talk to her supervisor at the IT company about a raise in her paycheck. When she met him, he only smiled and bowed his head without giving her any concrete answer. Looking back at this situation, Irene thinks that if she had been a man, the supervisor would have provided an honest answer instead of avoiding it. Also at the IT company, Irene witnessed a situation when a young woman was hired because of the good-looking picture on her resume. As it turned out, that young woman did not have enough qualifications to work as an English teacher there.

When Irene receives teacher evaluations of her work, they are always positive, but she does not think they represent an objectified opinion of her work. “Недавно я почула, що одна колега хотіла б клонувати мене, щоб у нас в компанії було двоє мене” (“Recently, one of my colleagues said she would like to clone me, so that we have two ‘mes’ in the company”) (Interview 1, August 3, 2016).

Writing a dissertation was the biggest challenge for Irene. She spent 5 years on it and still could not manage to balance working at two different jobs, having a daughter and husband, and

finishing the dissertation. Irene's most significant victory in the sphere of teaching is her flexibility in working with different age groups, from 3- to 50-year-olds.

Irene thinks a lesson plan is essential to a teacher's work. She spends time on finding and developing exciting activities and materials for her class. She follows a standard lesson plan—warm-up, homework checking, new material presentation, evaluation, homework setting. Irene believes that the lesson plan helps her to be organized.

“Я використовую різну літературу, сайти, BBC learning English сайт, playphraze.me, де нові слова можна знайти в частинах фільмів. Часто я використовую статті, відео, такі як з Discovery, TED зазвичай для обговорення та вокабул яру” (“I use various literature, sites, BBC learning English site, playphraze.me, where new vocabulary can be found in movie excerpts. I often use articles and videos, such as Discovery, TED for discussions and vocabulary”) (Interview 2, Aug 12, 2016).

As a teacher with extensive work experience, Irene says that even today, being a woman influences her choices of texts. For example, she would choose a text about family or children for her students at university, and for the program developers she would choose something about technology. Based on her experience, Irene noticed that both group work and individual work are suitable for both genders, but that men tend to dislike pair work. Video is more interesting for men, but reading is more engaging for women, maybe because women are more patient. For men, writing an essay is a challenging task.

Irene thinks English is used too much at the IT company where she works. Many workers add Ukrainian affixes to English words, such as *юзати*, *фіксити* (*use*, *fix*) (Interview 2, August 13, 2006). Irene herself does not use English outside of class unless she is required to. If not an English teacher, Irene would have become a program developer; her math was good at school. She would not be a host or a factory worker.

Irene's journey in becoming an English teacher was not an easy or smooth path. It had bumps and detours, but ultimately it led her to figure out who she was and what she ought to do. “Truth be told, I am delighted with what I am doing alongside the feedback I receive” (online autobiography, June 6, 2016). Would life be different if Irene was not an English teacher? She believes so. Irene is 98% satisfied with her current work and life situation; she would not have changed anything. But what about that 2%?

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

**Oksana Moroz** is an assistant professor of English and Director of Writing at Messiah University. She has previously served as an associate director of the Kathleen Jones White Writing Center and a “Mama” PhD recipient at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Moroz is an immediate past co-chair of the Graduate Student Council of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL). Her research interests revolve around gender and digital identities of English language teachers and multilingual students, writing in Wikipedia, language ideologies, and accents. Oksana's essay “A Poetic Narrative Autoethnography on Transnational Identity: Tumbleweed,” appeared in the edited collection of *Doctoral Students' Identities and Emotional Wellbeing in Applied Linguistics*. She has also published in *Composition Forum*, *Rhetoric Review*, *Explorations in English Language and Linguistics*, *Praxis*, *TESOL Journal*, and *Internationalisation of Higher Education*.