Russian Novice English Teachers' Perceptions of Selves as English Teachers

Kristina S. Navnyko
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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RUSSIAN NOVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS’
PERCEPTIONS OF SELVES AS ENGLISH TEACHERS

A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Kristina S. Navnyko
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
May 2015
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of English

We hereby approve the thesis of

Kristina S. Navnyko

Candidate for the degree of Master of Arts

__________________________
Gloria Park, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of English, Advisor

__________________________
Lilia P. Savova, Ph.D.
Professor of English

__________________________
David I. Hanauer, Ph.D.
Professor of English

ACCEPTED

__________________________
Randy L. Martin, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research
This qualitative study explores five Russian novice English teachers’ perceptions of selves as English teachers in relation to the imagined linguistic communities they were investing into through online linguistic autobiographies and in-depth follow-up interviews. Drawing on Kanno and Norton (2003), Norton (2000, 2001), and Pavlenko (2003), the concept “imagined community” is utilized in this study. The study is grounded in sociocultural theory by Vygotsky (1978), specifically in situated learning theory by Lave and Wenger (1991). The findings of the study demonstrate complexity and richness of the teachers’ English learning and teaching experiences in a Russian context. According to the study, the teachers are constructing hybrid linguistic identities of English learners, users, and multicompetent language speakers. However, the study revealed no significant relationship between teachers’ imagined linguistic communities and their perceptions of selves as English teachers. Teacher authority, self-confidence, and teaching experience were found crucial prerequisites for teachers’ positive professional self-perceptions.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

How It All Began

This thesis evolved from a final paper for Introduction to TESOL class which I took in my first semester in M.A. in TESOL program in the Fall of 2013. Though, the research questions explored in this thesis stem from my own English language learning and teaching endeavors.

Being guided by my background and the knowledge gained both in my home university and in the M.A. program in the USA, I sought to find a topic of interest and importance to me. Through reflections on my English learning and teaching endeavors in Russia, my first year as a teacher of English stood out as a particularly challenging experience.

I started my teaching career in September 2012 right after graduation from the teacher education program. At that moment, I believed I had all the reasons to consider myself a professional - I had been tutoring for 5 years, I had completed two teaching practicums which I found successful, I had graduated cum laude, I had studied with wonderful English teachers as my role models, I had traveled abroad and communicated with people from all over the globe. I entered the profession with what Weinstein (1989) called “unrealistic optimism” (p. 54), pre-established beliefs about teaching English and an idealized image of myself as an English teacher. I was confident, ambitious, and optimistic.

Eventually, I realized being an English teacher was not as easy as I imagined it to be. I was overwhelmed with school reality, in particular with burdening teaching load\textsuperscript{1}, administrative duties, as well as students' and their parents' biased perceptions of my professional competence. The status of a foreign language teacher put a lot of pressure on me since all educational

\textsuperscript{1} Load is defined in this paper as the number of class periods per week. I taught around 34 forty five-minute long lessons each week (Monday through Saturday).
stakeholders (English learners, their parents, and school administration) expected high English proficiency in a short period of time, not only from me but also from my students. Karimwand (2011) accurately expressed novice teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions during the transition from pre- to in-service teaching: “They [novice teachers] often enter the profession with high hopes about the kind of impact they will be able to have on students' lives, while they often encounter a reality shock when they realize that bringing about change is more difficult than they had thought” (p. 176).

Reflections on my experiences as a Russian novice teacher of English in a general education institution led me to (re)consider the impact of novice language teachers' self-perceptions and self-images on their professional development and personal growth. Also, it made me think about the ways which may facilitate novice teachers' transition from teacher education programs to actual teaching, from imagined communities defined as "groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination" (Kanno & Norton, 2003 p. 241) to communities of practice, "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98).

My final course project focused on novice English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL) teachers' perceptions of selves as English teachers and the factors which affect their self-perceptions. Working on that paper provided me with several insights. The most crucial one was that I found no research on novice English teachers' self-perceptions conducted in the Russian context. At that moment I determined to investigate Russian novice English teachers' perceptions of selves as teachers of English in Russian general education institutions in relation to their perceived English competence.
Statement of the Problem

A variety of studies have been done to explore language teachers' self-perceptions. The research on self-efficacy, teachers' judgments and perceptions of their professionalism (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2001), encompasses a myriad of factors which impact teachers' self-perceptions, including the following: gender (Karimwand, 2011; Nikoopour et al., 2012; Zehir Topkaya & Yavuz, 2011); quality of pre-service preparation (Fry, 2009; Knobloch & Whittington, 2002); level of English proficiency (Chacon, 2005); student teaching experiences (Fry, 2009; Knobloch & Whittington, 2002); years of teaching experience (Chacon, 2005; Karimwand, 2011; Nikoopour et al., 2012; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007); teaching context (Faez & Valeo, 2012).

However, the existing findings are scarce and sometimes contradicting. For example, the studies on correlation between teachers' self-efficacy and gender revealed opposing findings (Karimwand, 2011; Nikoopour et al., 2012; Zehir Topkaya & Yavuz, 2011). Moreover, the findings of the studies exploring the impact of years of teaching experience on teachers' self-efficacy demonstrated no consistency (Chacon, 2005; Karimwand, 2011; Nikoopour et al., 2012; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007). Furthermore, the research on imagined linguistic communities as a factor which may impact EFL/ESL teachers' self-perceptions is extremely limited. In this study, I utilize the term "imagined community" defined by Kanno and Norton (2003) as "groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination" (p. 241). Included under "imagined linguistic community" is teachers' self-positioning in relation to their perceived language competence and legitimacy.

In a number of studies, the concept of imagined community was employed as a lens to investigate various phenomena, which include: resistance and non-participation (Norton, 2000,
the relationship between school policies and schools' visions for their students’ future (Kanno, 2003); professional identity change from the imagined to the practiced identity (Xu, 2013); investment in imagined and practiced communities during study abroad (Trentman, 2013); the impact of the teachers' imagined communities on classroom practices (Gao, 2012), etc. The studies mentioned have different foci and target different contexts and populations.

Specific research on imagined linguistic community as a factor that may influence novice ESL/EFL teachers' perceptions of selves as teachers of English is extremely limited. My proposed study builds on the research done by Pavlenko (2003), who studied the relationship between professional and imagined linguistic communities of M.A. TESOL students and their perceived status in the profession. Pavlenko (2003) pointed out the need for further research on the topic, arguing that her study was "only an initial attempt to pinpoint a new direction for critical praxis in TESOL teacher education" (p. 266). The need for further research was addressed by the scholars who investigated imagined communities and/or imagined identities (Block, 2007; Gao, 2012; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007; Xu, 2013).

My search for relevant studies targeting Russian novice English teachers produced no results. As such, this study aims to fill the gap in the existing body of literature by examining Russian novice² English teachers, their imagined linguistic communities, and the impact of these communities on their self-perceptions as English teachers in the Russian educational context.

Research Questions

The main research question addressed in the study is the following:

---

² Following research by many scholars, including Brannan and Bleistein (2012), Faez and Valeo (2012), Farrell (2012), Fry (2009), Xu (2013), I will use "novice" to refer to teachers having no more than three years of teaching experience. I support Farrell's (2012) definition of novice teachers as "those who are sometimes called newly qualified teachers, who have completed their language teacher education program (including teaching practice [TP]), and have commenced teaching English in an educational institution (usually within three years of completing their teacher education program)” (p. 437).
1. How do Russian novice English teachers perceive themselves as English teachers?

Since obviously this is a broad question the study is narrowed down to a specific factor that may affect novice teachers' perceptions of selves as teachers of English, which is an imagined linguistic community. So, this study is guided by two ancillary questions:

1.1 What imagined linguistic communities do English novice teachers in Russia position themselves into?
1.2 Does membership into imagined communities affect the way English novice teachers in Russia perceive themselves as English teachers?

Rationale for the Research and Its Practical Implications

My proposed study investigates Russian novice English teachers' perceptions of selves as English teachers and the impact of imagined linguistic communities on their self-perceptions.

Participation in imagined communities is as important as direct involvement in communities of practice (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007, p. 670). Xu (2013) stresses the impact of novice teachers' imagined identities on their practiced identities, particularly “how the former change into the latter” (p. 80).

To my knowledge, the issues of professional identity, including imagined identity as well as teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions, are neglected in teacher education programs in Russia. As such, novice teachers may not be able to critically analyze their pre-established self-perceptions, beliefs, expectations, and self-judgments when they start teaching. Contradictions between teachers' imagined community and community of practice can affect teachers' professional development, commitment, efficacy as well as cause resistance, job-related stress, burn-out, and/or non-participation (Hong, 2010; Norton, 2000, 2001; Jingyan, 2009; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008).
Pavlenko and Norton (2007) highlight the great impact imagined community exerts on language learners and their language trajectories, “influencing their agency, motivation, investment, and resistance in the learning of English” (p. 699). Hong (2010) also addresses the importance of researching teachers’ perceptions and including this issue in teacher education program in order “to foster pre-service teachers’ healthy perception and successful sense of self” (p. 1540). Pavlenko (2003) draws on the enormous potential of imagination for teacher development and promotes an educational function of imagination which is "the need for teacher education to offer identity options that would allow teachers to imagine themselves and others as legitimate members of professional community" (p. 253). However, according to Gao (2012), non-native English speaking teachers can be limited in their imagined identity options due to the dominant native speaker discourse: "... the hegemonic discourse of ‘native/non-native speakerness’ may complicate the process of identity imagination and restrict an L2 learner’s legitimate access to any desirable identities" (p. 141).

My main ambition as a researcher is to unpack the issue of imagined community in a particular context and make it real for some novice language teachers to have their unique stories heard. Following Maxwell's (2005) claim that qualitative research should have both "practical goals and intellectual goals", the proposed study aims (p. 21):

First, to gain an in-depth understanding of Russian novice teachers' perceptions of selves as English teachers and the way their perceptions are affected by the imagined linguistic communities they are contributing into;

Second, the findings of this study are expected to be practitioner-oriented, i.e. to contribute to publishing relevant materials (articles, handbooks) and organizing professional development events for English teachers in Russia.
Chapters Overview

Chapter One, Introduction, includes statement of the problem, research questions, rationale for the research and its practical implications.

In Chapter Two, Literature Review, I synthesize relevant to my proposed research questions research in order to build my own argument regarding imagined linguistic communities Russian novice English teachers' invest into and the impact of these communities on teachers' self-perceptions. Contextual conditions are also addressed in this chapter.

Chapter Three, Methodology, offers a description of research design. It also includes information about participants, research sites, methods and procedures of data collection as well as data analysis. Ways used to enhance trustworthiness of the study are also presented in the chapter.

Chapter Four, Data Analysis, reports on the findings of the study. The findings are presented participant by participant in the form of narratives.

The discussion of relevant themes is provided in Chapter Five, Discussion. Implications for research, teaching, and teacher education as well as reflections and concluding remarks are also addressed in this chapter.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The proposed study aims to cast light on Russian novice English teachers' perceptions of
selves as teachers of English in relation to the imagined linguistic communities to which they are
contributing. This chapter has two critical foci.

First, the current chapter intends to provide a synthesis of the relevant research. It is
crucial to highlight that the search for relevant literature produced few results. Furthermore, no
relevant research targeting a Russian context was found. Following from these premises, in this
chapter, I analyze available research focused on contexts other than Russian in order to build my
own argument about the issue explored.

Second, the current chapter aims to contextualize the study. Since my qualitative study is
grounded in the sociocultural theoretical framework, it is critical to address the contextual
conditions of the research site. Martella et al. (2013) define qualitative inquiry as research
"whose concern is understanding the context in which behaviour occurs" (p. 294). In the next
section, I explicate the role and status of English in modern Russia. Further, I discuss some
characteristics of English Language Learning and Teaching (ELL&T) in general education³
institutions in Russia.

Role and Status of English in Russia

While this spread of English is hardly ever questioned, the status of English in Russia is still an issue of
hot debate.

Proshina, 2014, p. 15

³ General education in Russia includes the following levels: pre-school education for kids aged 2-7, elementary
general education (grades 1-4), basic general education (grades 5-9), and complete general education (grades 10-11).
English is taught at all levels of general education, except for pre-school education.
The role and status of the English language in modern Russia has some specific features due to political, ideological, social, cultural, and linguistic complexities which restrain (and restrained in the past) the spread of English in Russia and impact its current status in the community. In this section, I address the contemporary status of English in Russia, its functions in the community, some challenges against the spread of English in Russia, Russians' reasons for learning English, English varieties learnt and spoken in Russia, and current policies and future prospects of English in Russia.

**The Contemporary Status of English in Russia**

English has no official status in the Russian Federation. English is only used as an administrative language in the Republic of Sakha-Yakutia (Ustinova, 2011). It is not used in any other official capacity in all territories of Russia, neither does it serve as lingua franca in multilingual Russia. In light of the modern waves of globalization, English in Russia is only used in international commerce, tourism, education, and science. It comes to Russia through international business, pop culture, mass media, advertising, and education. English is taught in Russian educational institutions as a foreign language (EFL). Students can choose English as any other foreign language offered by school (e.g. German, French).

Building upon Kachru's (1992) classification of World Englishes (Inner, Outer, and Expanding circles), two Russian scholars, Proshina (2006, 2008) and Ustinova (2005, 2011) specify the status of English in Russia arguing that "...English in modern Russia is on the periphery of the Expanding Circle" (Ustinova, 2011, p. 67). Though I agree that the English language has not gained a recognized status in the community, I find Kachru's classification of World Englishes quite problematic. I oppose the idea of labeling Russia as a country within the

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4 In this region, rich in diamond deposits, English, Russian, and Sakha are a state working languages.
5 Read more about ELL&T in the next section.
Expanding circle as well as positioning English learners/users in Russia into the Expanding circle. Kachru's three circle model managed to depict the spread of English along the historical axis. However, the model fails to reflect the real state of affairs in the modern globalized world and neglects individual English learners/users as multilingual and transnational individuals. Drawing on the critics of Kachru's model (Bruthiaux, 2003; Jenkins, 2003; Pennycook, 2003, 2008; Rajadurai, 2005), Park and Wee (2009) problematize the model arguing that it does not adequately capture the heterogeneity and dynamics of English-using communities: ... it is too oriented towards the nation-state; and (ironically) it perpetuates the very inequalities and dichotomies that it otherwise aims to combat, such as the distinction between native and nonnative speakers. (p. 392)

As an English speaker from the "expanding circle" currently residing in the "inner circle", I argue that Kachru's model fails to depict the transparency of the national borders, proliferation of communication technologies, and great demographic mobility. I agree with Yano (2009) who addresses the need "to represent the individual learner and user as another factor in the context of English as an international lingua franca" (p. 249).

Functions of English in Russia

Talking into account the status of English in modern Russia, English has a limited range of functions in the community. Kirkpatrick (2007) describes the functionality of English in the countries where it is recognized as a foreign language, like Russia, as follows:

English is not actually used or spoken very much in the normal course of daily life. In these countries [where English has a status as a foreign language], English is typically
learned at school, but students have little opportunity to use English outside the classroom and therefore little motivation to learn English6. (p. 27)

As stated earlier, English in Russia is only used in international commerce, tourism, education, and science. As such, Ustinova (2005, 2011) indicated instrumental (English as a school subject and a working language at international events), creative (English in advertisements, commercials, brand names), and interpersonal functions of English in Russia.

It is crucial to note that interpersonal function is extremely limited. English is used as a tool for interpersonal communication only by selected circles, such as English educators, students majoring in English, and businessmen. According to the 2010 Russian census, only about 5, 3 % of the respondents reported their ability "to speak" English7 (Retrieved from http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm). However, with Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (2010), I doubt the reliability of the data provided by the census, since "census and other data about languages... have never been reliably collected except for small sub - samples of various populations. It might be possible to do it, but that would require economic investment, conceptual clarification, and training" (p. 79). Though I challenge the accuracy of the figure for many obvious reasons, I argue that the role of English in Russia is insignificant, at the time of conducting this study. The Russian context does not grant possibilities for engaging in authentic communication in English which hinders English language learning in the community.

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6 I discuss ELL&T in Russia in more detail in the next section of this chapter.
7 7,574,303 of respondents out of the total number of all respondents 142,856,536 indicated that they "could speak" English. Though, the concept “to speak English” is very vague and could be interpreted differently by different respondents.
Challenges against the Spread of English in Russia

Addressing the status of English as a global language, Mufwene (2010) argues that, "As global as English has been claimed to be, it is not evenly distributed around the world" (p. 45). On this matter, Crystal (2003) provides an example of the former Soviet Union, where "English has still a very limited presence" (p. 28). The spread of English and its status in Russia has political, economic, ideological, social, and cultural underpinnings. Based on Ustinova (2005, 2011), there are several possible challenges against the spread of English in modern Russia.

First, political, ideological, and military barrier, metaphorically called "the iron curtain" isolated the Soviet Union and its allies from the rest of the world, thus preventing any communication between the citizens of the Soviet Union and foreigners. Second, language policies in Soviet times aimed at strengthening the role of the Russian language as lingua franca in the multilingual USSR as well as promotion of loyalty to the national language (Russian). The third challenge, “trans-alphabetical boundaries”, refers to different alphabets used in the Russian and English languages (Cyrillic and Roman) (Ustinova, 2011, p. 69). Finally, current language policies and regulations emphasize the role and status of the Russian language. According to the bill on the state language of the Russian Federation prepared by the Russian Parliament, "Russian should be used as an official language of the multicultural state and Standard Russian should be purified from foreign language unnecessary borrowings" (Gosduma, 2002 as cited in Ustinova, 2005, p. 240). In the article, titled Education as a Soft Power Instrument of Russia’s Foreign Policy, Torkunov discusses Russian foreign policies as tools for strengthening the position of Russia at the international level: "This is a strategy built on certain instruments that help a country position itself on the world stage such as exporting education, promoting their language and disseminating national cultural values" (Retrieved from
http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=1495#top). Torkunov cites Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia, who clearly indicated Russia's international agenda: "We must work to expand Russia’s educational and cultural presence in the world, especially in those countries where a substantial part of the population speaks or understands Russian” (Retrieved from http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=1495#top). As such, the university network consortium consisting of 16 higher education institutions from Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine was organized in 2008. According to the agreement, students from the aforementioned countries can continue their graduate education (Master) in leading Russian universities after they successfully complete the basic course at their home university.

**Russians' Reasons for Learning English**

Stemming from the fact that English has a status of a foreign language in Russia, its learning and speaking is limited to specific populations, such as students of general and higher education, "Russian capitalists", and middle-class people of all ages learning English for career, travelling, and/or emigration purposes (Ter-Minasova, 2005, p. 452). Discussing Russians' purposes of learning English, I draw on the recent study by Proshina (2014), which comprises three studies conducted in different parts of Russia at different time - Proshina (2006), Ustinova (2009), Proshina (2014).

Ustinova (2009) targeted 140 participants, including English language instructors (48), students majoring in English (78), and professionals (14) from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Petrozavodsk, and Kaliningrad. Among the purposes of learning English the ability “to communicate with others” gained the majority of votes (100% of instructors, 59 % of students, and 86 % of professionals). Additionally to this reason, instructors indicated two more: "to enjoy
learning languages" (85%), and "to be able to go to Anglophone countries" (65%) (Ustinova, 2009). As for students, they also reported "to have good job opportunities" (45%), "to enjoy learning languages" (42%), and "to be able to go to Anglophone countries" (42%) (Ustinova, 2009). Professionals chose "to have good job opportunities" (86%), "to be able to go to Anglophone country" (43%), and "to like the Anglo-American culture" (43%) (Ustinova, 2009).

The results of the study are presented in a graph below (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Purposes of learning English (Adapted from Ustinova, 2009, p. 73).](image)

However, Proshina's (2014) survey revealed different results. The study was conducted in 2013 in both European and Asian parts of Russia and targeted over 300 professionals, students majoring in English, students not majoring in English, and English instructors. Similarly to Ustinova's study (2009), the main motif for learning English was intercultural communication (Proshina, 2014). However, according to Proshina (2014), only 22% out of the studied population opted for this answer which is much smaller compared to the findings in Ustinova's (2009) study (82 %). Such difference may be caused by different study sites: Ustinova focused on the European part of Russia, including the biggest cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg.
and a Russian exclave, Kaliningrad\(^8\), while 69% of the participants in Proshina's (2014) study were from the Asian part of Russia. Secondly, target population in two studies was slightly different; (1) Proshina (2014) recruited students both majoring and not majoring in English; and (2) Ustinova's (2009) participants were students majoring in English. Most importantly, that English as a tool for communication was revealed the main reason for learning English in both studies. The difference in findings revealed by Proshina (2014) and Ustinova (2009) is presented graphically in Figure 2.

![Figure 2](image)

*Figure 2. Dynamics in purposes of learning English (Proshina, 2014; Ustinova, 2009).*

**English Varieties Learnt and Spoken in Russia**

The first socio-cultural survey distributed among 300 students and instructors at several universities in the Far Eastern Part of Russia revealed that 5% of the instructors and 6% of students identified their English as Russian English while 44% of the faculty and 59% of the students reported they used a mixture of British and American English (Proshina, 2006).

Commenting the results of her survey, Ustinova (2009) revealed different findings. According to the study, 59% of the respondents used British English and considered it as a

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\(^8\) The Kaliningrad Oblast is a Russian exclave surrounded by Lithuania, Poland, and the Baltic Sea.
model; 43% of the participants preferred American English; 22% reported they used a mixture of British, American, and Russian while 9% from the participants claimed they spoke Russian English (Ustinova, 2009). Graphically, the findings of Ustinova's (2009) survey are provided below (Figure 3).

According to Proshina's recent survey (2014), 31% of the instructors claimed to prefer British English "as a prototypical variety whose norm they found more prestigious" while younger generation appealed to American English (20%) rather than British (7%) (p. 21). Furthermore, 29% of the participants reported to use mixed varieties (Proshina, 2014, p. 21). The model variety for ELL&T was revealed British English (33%), American (18%) or a mixture of both (40%) (Proshina, 2014, p. 21). Proshina (2014) also noted a positive tendency in acknowledging Russian English variety by Russians. According to her survey, 24% of all respondents considered their variety Russian English (comparing with 5-6% in 2005 and 9% in 2009). Though British English is still a dominant variety in Russia, "the progress in self-awareness of Russian English is evident" (Proshina, 2014, p. 21).

Current Foreign Language Educational Policies and Future Prospects of English in Russia

Based on the existing literature (Davydova, 2012; Leontovich, 2005; McCaughey, 2005, Proshina, 2006; Proshina, 2008; Proshina, 2014, Ustinova, 2005; Ustinova, 2011), the role and status of English and its varieties in Russia, as well as people's attitudes toward them, are still complex.

Despite all the political, ideological, social, cultural, and linguistic issues which challenged the spread of English in Russia, in recent times the English language popularity is rapidly growing and "all indications exist that English will continue to be Russians’ language of wider communication with the rest of the world" (Ustinova, 2011, p. 67).
The role of English in Russia is fostered by the recent changes related to foreign language instruction both in general and higher education. Radical changes in the Russian system of higher education have been introduced. Having signed the Bologna agreement\(^9\) in 2007, Russia joined the European Higher Education Area which aims to "improve transparency between higher education systems, as well as implement tools to facilitate recognition of degrees and academic qualifications, mobility, and exchanges between institutions" (Retrieved from http://www.eua.be/eua-work-and-policy-area/building-the-european-higher-education-area/bologna-basics.aspx). In compliance with the main principles of the Bologna Process, Russian universities are supposed to review their curricula, including those in English, and methods of teaching and learning\(^10\). The renovations aim to provide students with internationally recognized diploma (Bachelor, Master, and Doctor of Philosophy instead of Specialist and Candidate of Science) and most importantly skills and competences adequate to the demands of the modern world.

Since the target of this study is Russian novice teachers of English teaching in general education institutions, in the next section, I focus on English language learning and teaching (ELL&T) in Russia.

**English Language Learning and Teaching in Russia**

The Russian general educational system is a 4-5-2 system: 4 years in elementary school, 5 years in middle school, and 2 years in high school. Elementary school and middle school education are mandatory while kindergarten and high school are not. Though it should be noted

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\(^10\) Read more about the Bologna process in Russian higher education in Novakovskaya (2013).
that higher educational institutions require a high school diploma. School education at all levels is free for everyone (with the exception of private schools) while kindergarten is not.

Foreign language is a mandatory subject in general education institutions in Russia. According to the Federal State Educational Standard (Federalnyj Gosudarstvennyj Standart Obschego Obrazovaniay), among the objectives of teaching a foreign language in Russian public schools are stated the following:

- developing learners' foreign language communicative competence which encompasses linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences;
- developing and educating students by means of a foreign language (No specification is provided to this objective).

The Federal State Educational Standard for Foreign Language Instruction is grounded in the dual use of the concepts and approaches. Some of them are presented below:

- Learner-centered approach (addressing students' characteristics, needs, capabilities, interests as well as future career preferences);
- Learners' foreign language communicative competence as the target of ELLT in Russia;
- Dialogue of cultures (Intercultural communication);
- Educational and developmental nature of a foreign language (developing learners' personality, their cognitive abilities as well as their morals, fulfilling students' potential, developing creative skills, fostering self-reflection and cultivating students' need for self-education by means of a foreign language;

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Skills and competencies acquired while learning a foreign language are cross-functional, which means they can provide students with more opportunities in social, cultural, and professional spheres of life as well as the access to information in foreign languages.

According to the Federal Standard, students are supposed to reach A2 level within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages by the end of the middle school; B1-by the end of high school having a regular program in English; and to approach B2 level by the end of the intensive program in English in high school\textsuperscript{12}. However, it is crucial to highlight that in reality, foreign language instruction does not always meet the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard. On this matter, I support Proshina's (2006) argument that in some cases English in Russia is taught "de facto rather than de jure" (p. 79).

English is the most commonly taught of all foreign languages in Russian public schools. According to the official data portal of the Unified State Examination (USE)\textsuperscript{13}, 74,668 high school graduates across the country opted for the USE in English in June 2013; 74,408 in 2012; 65,478 in 2011 (Retrieved from http://ege.edu.ru/ru/main/satistics-ege/).

\textsuperscript{12} A2 (Basic user) “can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need”.

B1 (Independent user) can “understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans”.

B2 (Independent user) can “understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options”. (Retrieved from http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf)

\textsuperscript{13} The USE is the main and the only form of final attestation for all high school graduates in the Russian Federation as well as the main requirement for admission to the higher educational institutions since 2009. The USE in all subject areas are designed in accordance with the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard for secondary general education developed by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation. The USE in English is an optional test. It is not mandatory for receiving a school diploma though it is required for admission to some universities.
Based on the Federal Standard, English (as any other foreign language taught in Russian public schools) must be taught in Russian public schools since the 2nd grade up to the 11th grade. In some cases English is taught as an elective course in the 1st grade and even in kindergarten. Apart from that, there are public schools which offer intensive English programs and private schools which focus extensively on English language instruction. It must be pointed out, schools with intensive English programs are highly competitive. English teaching is also emerging as a private business, outside general and higher educational institutions, particularly in big cities.

The Federal State Educational Standard prescribes the exact number of 45-minute class periods of foreign language instruction (Table 1). These numbers can vary depending on school policies, requirements, resources, and other factors and constraints. For example, my student teaching experiences in 2011 and 2012 revealed that some schools, particularly in rural settings, did not have an English teacher at all due to the lack of teaching staff.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School level (grades)</th>
<th>Number of class periods per school level</th>
<th>Number of class periods per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary (2-4)</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle (5-9)</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (10-11)</td>
<td>210 (regular English program)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>420 (intensive English program)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

English is a school subject, not a medium of instruction. As stated in the previous section, British English (33%) was perceived as the model variety for ELL&T (Proshina, 2014, p. 21). Kevin McCaughey’s (2005) experiences as an American teacher-trainer who worked in Russia,
support the dominance of the British variety in Russian general education institutions.

Specifically, one of the teachers he was training found his teaching aids effective and interesting; however, she said that she was not allowed to use them because they were in American English.

Since the Russian school system is government-centralized, public schools are mandated to follow the unified national curriculum. The Federal Standard includes Compulsory Content Minimum for Foreign Language Teaching which aims to guarantee consistency of instruction. Basically, it's a list of topics for discussion which cover different aspects of life.

There is also a federal list of textbooks recommended to be used by teachers at various educational levels. According to the list for 2014-2015 academic years, all the textbooks recommended by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science were designed and published in Russia which is not supported by all educational stakeholder. For instance, Ter-Minasova (2005) highlighted the need for cooperation between English-speaking and Russian textbook writers:

"...we would like to have Russian-oriented materials by English-speaking authors, with commentaries written for Russian students by Russian teachers of English” (p. 453).

A final debatable issue regarding ELL&T in Russia is the Unified State Examination in English, mentioned earlier in this section. The test is not mandatory for receiving a high school diploma though it is required for admission to some departments/colleges. The validity as well as the impact of the USE in English on teaching English in Russian high schools is an issue of much debate. Since there are no studies on the test's impact on ELL&T in Russia, I can only speculate based on my multiple experiences as an English learner, teacher, and tutor.

In sum, I should admit that an enormous amount of work has been already done by all educational stakeholders in order to make English instruction affordable and relatively efficient
in modern Russia. I consider myself one of the living illustrations of the development of ELL&T in Russia.

**English Teacher Qualifications in Russia**

Required qualifications for teaching English in general education institutions are also mandated by the federal regulations. In order to teach English in Russian public schools, prospective teachers are required to obtain a degree in education and/or teaching English either from a higher educational institution (university, institute or academy) or a vocational institution (college). No prior teaching experience is required. Unlike many countries, there is no licensure needed in order to teach English at any school level in Russia. Most commonly, a teacher conducts English lessons at all school levels, i.e. elementary, middle, and high\textsuperscript{14}. Though, in some cases, there can be a division. Also, a novice teacher is supposed to be assigned a mentor teacher (a veteran teacher) during the first years of teaching. Though based on my experiences, mentor teacher assignment is a rare practice. Every school teacher must get the first qualification grade within first five years of teaching. In order to upgrade their qualification, teachers are required to submit a "Portfolio of Professional Achievements" which includes their educational background information, proof of professional development (certificates, publications, presentations), and proof of their students' academic achievements.

**Theoretical Framework**

My proposed study explores Russian novice English teachers' perceptions of selves as teachers of English in relation to the imagined linguistic communities they are investing into. The study is grounded in sociocultural theory rooted in the works by Vygotsky (1978), specifically in situated learning theory by Lave and Wenger (1991). My study explores how

\textsuperscript{14} See Appendix A for samples of the teachers’ weekly schedules.
Russian novice English teachers construct their professional and linguistic identities at specific times and in specific educational contexts proceeding their career path from the legitimate peripheral participation to full participation in the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Community of practice is defined as "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). Learning is viewed as a situated process of participation in communities of practice which implies constant negotiation and renegotiation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

In addition to communities of practice, people can also seek membership in imagined communities. Pavlenko and Norton (2007) argue, "Yet we humans are capable, through our imagination, of perceiving a connection with people beyond our immediate social networks" (p. 670). In this section, I highlight three issues crucial for better understanding the nature of the proposed study.

First, imagination is socially mediated. According to Vygotsky (1930/2004), imagination is connected to reality, and even being formed by the reality, “imagination always builds using materials supplied by reality” (p. 14). The process of imagination is socially constructed, “every inventor, even a genius, is also a product of his time and his environment” (Vygotsky, 1930/2004, p. 30). Having analyzed six different studies on imagined communities conducted at different times and in different contexts, Kanno and Norton (2003) revealed that "imagination at even the most personal level is nonetheless related to social ideologies and hegemonies" (p. 247) which is in line with Vygotsky's argument. Drawing on the social nature of learning and imagination, Kiely and Askham (2012) utilize the concept "furnished imagination," referring to
imagination "furnished through ... input, observation, performance, and feedback as well as through interactions with admired teacher educators" (p. 496).

Second, language can be the source of imagination. Lantolf and Thorne (2007), who elaborated Vygotsky's theory in relation to second language learning, argued:

Language imbues humans with the capacity to free themselves from the circumstances of their immediate environment and enables us to talk and think about entities and events that are displaced in both time and space, including those events and entities that do not yet exist in the real world (p. 202).

Discussing discourse communities, Kramsch (1998) stresses the links between culture, language, and imagination, claiming that "...language is intimately linked not only to the culture that is and the culture that was, but also to the culture of the imagination that governs people's decisions and actions far more than we may think" (p. 8).

Third, every experience, including participation in imagined communities, is unique though mediated by the environment. Drawing on Wenger's (1998) view of imagination as a way of belonging to a community of practice, Norton (2001) and Pavlenko and Norton (2007) claim that imagination is both social and individual. In relation to Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Norton (2001) points out the individual and the social nature of imagination, "Different learners have different imagined communities, and that these imagined communities are best understood in the context of a learner’s unique investment in the target language and the conditions under which he or she speaks and practices it" (p. 165).

With this in mind, I investigate imagined linguistic communities of Russian novice English teachers within the contexts relevant to each participant.
Imagined Community

The term "imagined community" originated from *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* by Benedict Anderson (1991) who defined a nation as "an imagined political community" arguing that "members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear from them, yet in the minds of which lives the image of their communion" (p. 6). Providing an example of Javanese villagers who tied themselves to the people they have never seen in their lives through "imagined clientship and kinship", Anderson (1991) claimed that, "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined" (p. 6).

Building on Anderson’s theoretical framework, Bonny Norton (2000, 2001) investigated second language acquisition (SLA) through the lens of imagined communities. Norton (2000, 2001) discusses theories of non-participation linking them to self-perceptions and self-positioning from the insights of five female immigrant language learners in Canada who rejected to participate in their ESL classrooms due to the failure to access their imagined communities. Defining "imagination" Norton (2001) refers to Wenger (1998) who distinguished three modes of belonging including engagement, imagination, and alignment. According to Wenger (1998), imagination as a mode of belonging is "a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves... a creative process of producing new images of possibility and new ways of understanding one’s relation to the world" (176). Building on this, Norton (2001) provides her definition of imagination as "the extent to which we create images of the world and see connections through time and space by extrapolating from our experience" (p. 163).

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15 I discuss the study in more details further in this chapter.
Kanno and Norton (2003) further analyze the concept of imagined community and its impact on language learning and/or identity (re)construction by examining the ways six different scholars conceptualized the notion of imagined community to explore different topics and different communities. According to Kanno and Norton (2003), imagined communities are "groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination" (p. 241). Based on the analysis of the six studies, Kanno and Norton (2003) came to the following conclusions which are in line with the three foci discussed in my theoretical framework:

- imagined communities create imagined identities, thus imagined communities "expand our range of possible selves" (p. 246);
- globalization (including communication technologies and mobility) impacts imagination;
- imagination is socially saturated.

Imagined identity and imagined community are inseparable. Norton (2001) states that "A learner’s imagined community invite[s] an imagined identity" (p. 166). Though the proposed study focuses on the imagined linguistic communities into which Russian novice English teachers are contributing, I find it crucial to introduce the concept of imagined identity, in the next subsection.

**Imagined Identity**

Norton (2000) defines identity from a poststructuralist perspective as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands the possibility for the future” (p. 5). According to Norton (2001), one of the conditions for identity change is individuals' imagining of themselves in a new community with new visions of their future (p. 163).
Drawing on Anderson (1991) and Norton (2001), Xu (2013) defines imagined identities as "relationships between one’s self and other people and things in the same time and space that he or she nevertheless has virtually no direct interactions with" (p. 79). The definition of imagined community presented earlier is similar to the one of imagined identity in a way that it also addresses virtual connections between self and others. Both imagined identity and imagined community draw on the power of imagination (Xu, 2013, p. 80).

Drawing on the theory of possible selves by Markus and Nurious (1986) as well as on previously mentioned Anderson (1991) and Wenger (1998), Pavlenko and Norton (2007) delve into imagined community in relation to English language learning and discuss five identity types:

- postcolonial (English is imagined differently in different postcolonial contexts);
- ethnic (Ethnicity and the ownership of English);
- gendered (English and imagining different gendered identity options);
- multilingual (English language learner vs. multilingual speaker);
- global (the increasing role of English in the world).

The proposed study investigates how Russian novice EFL teachers imagine themselves in relation to the wider English language community, i.e. what imagined linguistic community they are seeking membership in or contributing into.

**Imagined Community in Second Language Acquisition**

concept of imagined community was utilized to explore various phenomena – political, social, linguistic, and professional; to target different populations - educators, students, immigrants; and to focus on different contexts - the USA, Canada, Japan, China, Pakistan, etc. The following aspects are discussed further in this chapter:

- relationship between (non)participation and imagined communities;
- relationship between school/classroom practices and imagined communities;
- professional identity change;
- native English speaking teachers' (NESTs) and non-native English speaking teachers' (NNESTs) self-perceptions.

**Relationship between (Non)-Participation and Imagined Communities**

This subsection aims to review the research on the relationship between English learners' investment as well as motivation and imagined communities they are contributing into or seeking a membership in. The studies discussed in this subsection target different contexts and populations, including female immigrant English learners in Canada, middle-school Pakistani students, adult learners of English in China, and American graduate students in Egypt.

Norton (2000, 2001) is considered to be a pioneer in investigating the relationship between language learning and identity through the lens of imagined communities. Norton (2000) analyzed lived experiences and self-perceptions of five female immigrant language learners in Canada through interviews, diaries, and participant observations. The 12-month case study revealed that negative self-perceptions and failure to access an imagined community caused resistance and non-participation. Katarina, like the other participants in Norton’s study, was enrolled in a six-month ESL course in Canada. In Poland, Katarina had been recognized as a "highly respected professional" (Norton, 2001, p. 164). As such, her imagined community was a
community of professionals into which she was contributing in Poland and seeking membership to in Canada (Norton, 2001). Norton (2001) argues, "... although these learners were engaged in classroom practices, the realm of their community extended to the imagined world outside the classroom" (p. 164). When Katarina's English teacher discouraged her from taking a computer course that would provide her with an access to her imagined community Katarina felt that her imagined professional identity was neglected. As a result, the woman expressed her resistance to participate in the course. As Norton (2001) puts it, "Non-participation was not an opportunity for learning from a position of peripherality, but an act of resistance from a position of marginality" (p. 165).

In 2000-2001, Norton and Kamal (2003) conducted a qualitative study on Pakistani children's investment into actual and imagined communities through interviews, observations, and questionnaires. As a final step of data collection, the students were asked to write a paragraph about Pakistan in 2020. The study revealed that the children were investing into an imagined community of Pakistan being "peaceful, true to the principles of Islam, and a contributing member of the international community" (Norton & Kamal, 2003, p. 301). Though the students mentioned some negative impacts of globalization on Pakistan, they envisioned the development of literacy, competence in English, and technological advances as significant prerequisites for the prosperity of their home country. Most importantly, students' investment in imagined communities was linked to their investment in their communities of practice. Precisely, the students were participating in the project which addressed social issues and promoted social changes. "The Reformers", this is how the students called themselves, designed a plan aimed to enhance literacy among Afghan refugee children; they also planned to organize English classes for the refugees (Norton & Kamal, 2003, p. 305). Reporting the findings, Norton and Kamal
(2003) state, "They [students] see themselves as part of a larger community of English speakers, but not as second class citizens of the United States or the United Kingdom" though "they recognize Pakistan's marginal status in the international community" (p. 315).

In a very different context, Jingyan (2009) investigated learner investment and motivation to study English from the insights of three learners of Crazy English (CE) in China through document analysis (CE textbooks, CDs and videos, advertising brochures, articles from Chinese journals and press), interviews with senior administrative and teaching staff, and a case study of teacher-student experiences throughout an adult CE program in Beijing. Though the participants had different characteristics, they had a common motivation to learn spoken English. Having completed the CE program, learners were asked to reflect on their English learning experiences. Jingyan (2009) reported that CE fostered the participants' imagination. According to the study, one of the participants stated that CE "had opened a window through which she saw herself in the future" (p. 62) as "a modern Chinese woman, with international qualifications like Yang Lan" (p. 63). Another participant envisioned himself as "the Chinese Bethune demonstrating his medical expertise to developed countries as well as teaching millions of Bethunes [foreigners] traditional Chinese medicine in China" (Jingyan, 2009, p. 63). Based on the study finding, CE experiences offered the participants new identity and community options and thus, facilitated learners' investment and commitment to learning English, as one of the qualifications required in the modern world.

Trentman (2013) also adopted the concepts of investment, imagined communities, and communities of practice in order to explore study abroad experiences of 54 American students in Cairo, Egypt. In particular, Trentman (2013) investigated the reasons for the students' investment in the Arabic language, their desired imagined communities, as well as the alignment of their
imagined communities with the communities of practice, during their study abroad. Multiple sources of data collection, including interviews, questionnaires, technological observations (Facebook profiles and/or blogs), and out-of-class observations were utilized in the study. According to Trentman (2013), before the study abroad, the participants viewed themselves as "cross-cultural mediators and dedicated language learners", in the Middle East (expanding the boundaries of Egypt) (p. 552). However, the students' participation in the communities of practice, including the Language Pledge Program (LPP), a rugby team, and leisure time revealed both alignments and misalignments with their imagined communities (Trentman, 2013). For instance, Trentmant (2013) reports that, "Participation in the LPP community of practice allowed the greatest number of students to perform as both cross-cultural mediators and dedicated language learners. However, some female students ...became less invested in their learning goals" (p. 559). Trentman (2013) concludes by stressing the impact of belonging to community of study abroad in the Middle East on students' investment in Arabic, "both in terms of material resources (future careers and success in continuing studies) and symbolic resources (mastering a less commonly taught and more difficult language and working toward cross-cultural understanding)" (p. 558).

The studies reviewed demonstrate strong relationship between learners' motivation as well as investment in communities of practice and the imagined communities they are contributing into or seeking an access to. Imagined communities can facilitate investment and increase motivation (Jingyan, 2009; Norton & Kamal, 2003). While failure to enter an imagined community can lead to resistance and non-participation (Norton, 2000, 2001).
Relationship between School/Classroom Practices and Imagined Communities

In this subsection, I present two studies on the relationship between imagined communities and school and/or classroom practices. Gao (2012) claims that second language teaching and learning is mediated by imagined community "involving positioning learners themselves or being positioned by others in possible worlds" (p. 140).

Kanno (2003) argues that not only individuals, but also institutions have imagined communities they want to invest in or they want their members to invest in. In her ethnographic study, Kanno (2003) analyzed four different schools in Japan which catered to different bilingual groups of students in order to explore the relationship between the schools’ policies and practices, schools' visions for their students, and students’ identities. The findings revealed that each school had their own imagined community into which they were investing by implementing different policies and practices. Based on the results of the study, Kanno (2003) claims: "From the vantage point of each of the four schools, Japan as an imagined community looks like a remarkably different place" (p. 295). For example, one school was creating an image of Japan like an elite international community while another one was navigating children's visions toward a low-income society. Thus, the students' identities and their visions of their future and of Japan were highly affected by school policies and practices. On this matter, Kanno (2003) states: "...educational institutions have the power and expertise to navigate students’ learning toward such visions in a systematic manner beyond the capacity of individual learners and parents" (p. 287). Though I am not studying imagined communities of educational institutions, I argue that every educator should be aware of and responsible for the imagined community s/he implicitly or explicitly may impose on students. My statement is supported by the research discussed next.
Gao (2012) explored how Chinese language subject teachers in Hong Kong imagined the possible memberships of the communities in which South Asian learners of Chinese would participate, and how the imagination influenced their pedagogies and classroom practices. Based on classroom observations and interviews with 14 secondary school teachers, the study revealed strong connections between teachers' imagined communities and their classroom practices. The researcher focused on the language and culture issues addressed in class as well as on teacher-student interactions. According to the study findings, the teachers treated South Asian learners as ethnic minorities in Hong Kong and perceived them as "illegitimate Chinese language users and second-class citizens in the host society" (Gao, 2012, p. 145). The teachers' perception of South Asians as "aliens" had a strong impact on their pedagogies and classroom practices (Gao, 2012, p. 150). The researcher argues: "... although individual teachers, in theory could counteract hegemonic ideologies that oppress language minorities, they actually mediate a kind of social reproduction" (Gao, 2012, p. 150). Gao (2012) addresses the need for the teachers of Chinese in Hong Kong to re-imagine South Asian learners as multilinguals and legitimate Chinese language users (p. 152). In support of Pavlenko (2003), whose study is discussed later, Gao (2012) claims that acknowledgment and promotion of L2 learners' legitimacy can "awaken positive motivation and investment in the target language " (p. 152) and "counteract hegemonic ideologies that oppress language minorities" (p. 151). Though Gao's (2012) study targets the teachers of Chinese and South Asian learners of the Chinese language this study provides me with critical insights about the impact of imagined communities on teachers' pedagogies and classroom practices.

From Imagined to Practiced Identity: Professional Identity Change

As stated earlier in this chapter, "A learner’s imagined community invite[s] an imagined identity" (Norton, 2001, p.166). A number of studies, including the aforementioned Jingyan
studied both imagined communities and imagined identities in the language teaching and learning realm though having the main focus on imagined communities. In this subsection, I present the study which targets specifically professional imagined identity of novice EFL teachers in China.

Xu (2013) conducted a four-year case study on Chinese novice EFL teachers during their last year in a teacher education program and then during three years of actual teaching in K-12 schools in China. In order to scrutinize teachers' professional identity change Xu (2013) investigated their transition from teacher education programs to actual teaching, i.e. from imagined community to the community of practice, through individual interviews, teachers' journals, and observations of teaching. The researcher focused primarily on professional identity change, from imagined to practiced. The findings demonstrate that the novice teachers entered the profession having specific professional imagined identities such as "language expert", "learning facilitator" or "spiritual guide" which were either cue-based or exemplar-based, i.e. stemming from the participants' personal experiences as an English learner or as a student-teacher (Xu, 2013, p. 84). The study revealed that the participants' initial imagined identities underwent significant transformations after three years of teaching in K-12 schools in China primarily due to institutional requirements and policies. The imagined identities "language expert", "learning facilitator", and "spiritual guide" were reconstructed into rule-based "a routine performer", "a problem analyzer", and a teacher "busy catching up with the schedule" (Xu, 2013, p. 83-84). Based on the study results, only one participant's identity did not change drastically under the institutional pressure but rather became contextualized and concretized from "learning facilitator" to "educator" (Xu, 2013, p. 84). Analyzing this case, Xu (2013) reports, "instead of
yielding to the institutional pressures of various kinds, Li adhered to her imagined identity with perseverance and agency” (p. 84).

Though in my study I do not aim to trace Russian novice EFL teachers’ imagined linguistic identity (re)construction, I find this study critical for my better understanding of the complex nature of imagined identities and imagined communities as well as their impact on teachers’ practices.

**Native English Speaking Teachers' (NESTs) and Non-Native English Speaking Teachers' (NNESTs) Self-Perceptions**

My proposed study aims to investigate Russian novice English teachers' perceptions of selves as English teachers in relation to their imagined linguistic communities. Considering the research questions, I find it crucial to critically analyze the relevant research on EFL/ESL teachers' perceptions of selves as English teachers in order to build my own argument about Russian novice English teachers' perceived status as English teachers. Due to the lack of relevant research targeting Russian context, in this section, I synthesize research, including Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999), Kim (2011), Park (2012), Pavlenko (2003), Reves and Medgyes (1994), and Xuan (2014) which focuses on contexts rather than Russian.

The study by Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) is considered to be pioneering in researching the dichotomy of native versus non-native English teachers. The researchers investigated the role of teacher education programs in dis/empowering NNESTs and possible ways of destroying the native speaker ideology by analyzing the experiences and perceptions of nineteen MA and PhD in TESOL students from various backgrounds (Korea, Turkey, Japan, Russia, China, Togo, Burkinafaso, and Surinam) who participated in a pilot graduate seminar for NNESTs at an American university. Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) enhanced validity of the
data by using multiple methods of data collection, including students' journals, autobiographies, group semistructural interviews, and observations. The graduate seminar aimed to raise students' awareness of their status as NNESTs through critical dialogue (classroom and written dialogues) and to empower NNESTs as legitimate English teachers (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999, p. 419). According to the study, the majority of the participants confided to be negatively affected by the native speaker ideology (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999, p. 421). Written dialogue with Medgyes, a NNEST and an author of the book *The Non-Native Teacher*, provided the students with meaningful insights about the "multidimensionality of the ELT professional" specifically about "the dynamics and demands of a particular sociocultural and linguistic context... allowing pluralism in the profession" (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999, p. 424). Furthermore, writing a professional autobiography allowed the students to analyze critically not only their teaching experiences but also their teaching context (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999, p. 425). Though one of the main goals of the seminar, promotion of teacher agency, was achieved, the researchers addressed the need to break down the dichotomy and empower NNESTs (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999). As Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) concluded, "At that point in their careers, generally, the participants did not perceive themselves as active, contributing members in the field. But they also expressed a strong desire to take matters into their own hands and to become themselves" (p. 426).

Pavlenko (2003) aimed to contribute to Brutt-Griffler and Samimy's (1999) discussion about NNESTs ' status in the profession and the role of teacher education programs in empowering NNNESTs by promoting and cultivating professional agency and legitimacy. Pavlenko (2003) investigated the relationship between pre-service teachers' linguistic and professional imagined communities and their perceived status in the profession. Linguistically,
racially, and ethnically diverse sample of 44 MA TESOL students all having teaching experience participated in the study. The researcher employed students' linguistic autobiographies as a method of data collection. The participants were asked to reflect on their teaching and learning experiences in relation to the issues discussed in SLA class, such as multilingualism, L2 learning, the role of identity in L2 learning, linguistic diversity, standard English ideology (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 255). As a result, 30 students out of 44 touched upon native speaker ideology in their reflexive linguistic autobiographies.

According to Pavlenko (2003), the following imagined linguistic communities emerged from the data:

- native speaker community,
- non-native speaker community/ L2 learner community,
- multilingual/ L2 user community.

Those investing into native speaker imagined community reported that they perceived Standard English as the only legitimate form of the language. Those students were revealed to strive for native-speaker competence. Thus, the participants mentioned "struggle" in getting access to this community by imitating native speakers’ accents, focusing on forms and structures, and neglecting meaning and literacy (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 257). The participants described themselves in an extremely negative way devaluing all their skills and competences and professional legitimacy in general. Reflecting on their lived experiences they called themselves "tiny, unimportant, and invisible", having "a kind of deficiency", and feeling "less than a human being" (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 258).

Non-native speaker community or L2 learner imagined community united those who failed to enter the imagined native speaker community and thus decided to improve their English
language proficiency (Pavlenko, 2003). In many cases those were the students who after some teaching experience went abroad, including to English speaking countries, in order to polish their language skills. The self-perceptions of the members of this imagined community were also negative. Though all participants had had teaching experience they reported feeling frustrated, embarrassed, and desperate and positioned themselves as "passive, incompetent, stupid, and childlike" (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 260).

Based on the study, SLA class promoted bilingualism and multicompetence and led the students to reimagine themselves and their memberships into linguistic communities. Various discussions and class activities revealed a new community option, multilingual or L2 user imagined community, which students had never considered before (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 260). According to the study, 24 out of 30 participants reframed their self-perceptions and considered themselves as legitimate English users (Pavlenko, 2003). According to Pavlenko (2003), L2 user imagined community empowered some students, opened up new opportunities, and boosted their self-perceptions. What needs to be noted is that the participants repositioned not only themselves but also their prospective students seeing them also as legitimate L2 users. The participants reexamined their teaching practices in order to promote students' agency and linguistic legitimacy in their classrooms. To conclude the discussion of Pavlenko's (2003) study, it is crucial to pinpoint that students' self-perceptions and self-images, their relationship with L2 and their professional legitimacy differed depending on what community they decided to invest in. My proposed study also aims to examine the relationship between Russian novice EFL teachers' imagined linguistic communities and their perceptions of selves as English teachers.

Studying a different population and a different context, Xuan (2014) revealed findings similar to Pavlenko's (2003). Xuan (2014) investigated five English teachers (three females and
two males) from mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam studying for a MEd in TESOL at an Australian University. Xuan (2014) explored whether and how the teachers transformed their identities as legitimate speakers and teachers of English through participation in a critical pedagogical unit, titled *Language, Society, and Cultural Difference*. The data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and students' reflections upon their English learning and teaching experiences both in Australia and their home countries. The students were asked to connect their experiences to the concepts and issues discussed in the critical pedagogical unit. Similarly to Pavlenko (2003) who revealed the positive impact of SLA class on the MA in TESOL students' self-perceptions, Xuan (2014) found that the unit raised the students' awareness of the existing language ideologies and helped them to reconstruct their perceptions of and attitudes toward their status as NNESTs. Like Pavlenko's participants before taking SLA class, Xuan's participants reported that, before attending the unit, they experienced perceived lack of English proficiency which resulted in an "inferiority complex" as NNESTs (Xuan, 2014, p. 15). Xuan (2014) demonstrates the students' self-marginalization by summarizing their negative self-perceptions: "the participants originally used to look upon themselves as inferior; the Other, or even as a failed teacher of English..." (p. 21). The study findings are in line with Pavlenko (2003). According to Xuan (2014), after the unit, the participants viewed themselves as multilingual speakers of English with “multicompetence” (Cook, 1999, p. 191 as cited in Xuan, 2014, p. 20) and as legitimate speakers and teachers of English. Apart from using the material and symbolic resources provided by the unit, the participants constructed their professional and linguistic identity by means of their imagination (Xuan, 2014, p. 20). It should be noted that according to Xuan (2014), his participants' identity was ambivalent and contradictory (p. 18). Though the students' recognized their linguistic and professional legitimacy as NNESTs they did
not recognize their ownership of the English language (Xuan, 2014, p. 18). While some participants argued that English belonged to everyone, others expressed perceived lack of confidence to claim their ownership of English (Xuan, 2014, p. 18).

Though Park (2012) did not utilize the concept of imagined community in her qualitative inquiry about East Asian women's experiences before and during their TESOL programs in the USA, the findings of her study are relevant to my discussion of NNESTs' perceptions of themselves as teachers of English in relation to their perceived English language proficiency. In her article, titled *I Am Never Afraid of Being Recognized as an NNES: One Teacher’s Journey in Claiming and Embracing Her Nonnative-Speaker Identity*, Park (2012) describes the English learning and teaching experiences of Xia, a Chinese novice English teacher who graduated from the MEd in TESOL at an American university. Analyzing Xia's academic and professional endeavors both in China and in the USA, Park (2012) revealed that Xia's linguistic and professional identity underwent significant transformations. Park (2012) reports that in China Xia’s identity as an English learner was strong "due to her stellar performance in class and on examinations of her EL [English language] abilities" (p. 134). However, when Xia came to the USA, she questioned her legitimacy as an English speaker. Xia confided that she felt marginalized and linguistically "powerless" because of her perceived lack of English proficiency (Park, 2012, p. 133). The turning point of Xia's perceptions of self as an English learner, speaker, and teacher happened during her student teaching practicum under the mentorship of a "supportive and encouraging" mentor teacher (Park, 2012, p. 140). According to the study findings, Xia reexamined her status as a NNEST "when she shifted her role from a learner and user of English to an ESOL [English to Speakers of Other Languages] teacher" (Park, 2012, p. 139). Based on the data, Park (2012) revealed the difference between Xia’s identity construction
as an international graduate student in the American university and an ESOL teacher. Xia celebrated her identity as a NNES using "Chinglish", while she manifested her status as a legitimate English teacher by means of American Standard English (Park, 2012, p. 139). Referring to the rest of her participants, Park (2012) highlights the complexity and diversity of the teachers' English learning and teaching journeys. While Xia celebrated her identity as a NNES, another participant demonstrated resistance in accepting her NNES identity by teaching Korean in the USA (Park, 2012, p. 141). Furthermore, according to Park (2012), one of the participants enjoyed the privilege of having bilingual identity, whereas another woman perceived herself marginalized as an English speaker (p. 141). Though none of my participants studied/resided abroad, Park's (2012) inquiry about NNESTs' English learning and teaching experiences contributed to the discussion about professional and linguistic identity being "fragmented, dynamic, multiple, and contradictory" (Hall, 1996; Hall, 1997; Norton, 2000; Weedon, 1997 as cited in Xuan, 2014, p. 9) due to various political, economic, sociocultural, and educational conditions.

Kim (2011) also addresses the problem of NNESTs' perceptions of selves as English speakers and teachers affected by the native speaker ideology. This case study examined how ESL graduate students negotiated their linguistic identities studying in the USA. Kim (2011) revealed that the native speaker ideology negatively influenced students’ perceptions of selves as prospective English teachers and caused low professional self-esteem. Similarly to Pavlenko (2003) and Xuan (2014), Kim (2011) revealed that the study participants had extremely negative perceptions of themselves as English teachers. They expressed their self-marginalized status as NNESTs, stating that: only NESTs can be "ideal" English teachers; NNESTs could not acquire "perfect" English; the reason for their concerns was mostly connected with their accent (Kim,
The study revealed that the students were affected tremendously by the native versus non-native dichotomy. Kim (2011), as Pavlenko (2003) and Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999), considered critical pedagogy as a method "to deconstruct socially imposed identities and reconstruct non-NESs’ identities as English language professionals" (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999, p. 419).

However, Reves and Medgyes’s (1994) international study on non-native English speaking ESL/EFL teachers' self-images showed different results. The study was conducted in ten non-English speaking countries (Brazil, Mexico, Hungary, Israel, Russia, Sweden, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria) and targeted 216 participants, in particular NESTs and NNESTs having more than 5 years of teaching experience. The study aimed to compare teaching behaviors of NESTs and NNESTs using a 23-item online questionnaire. The researchers revealed that the native - non-native dichotomy affected NNESTs “general self-image and attitude to work” (Reves & Medgyes, 1994, p. 363). However, based on the study findings, NNESTs demonstrated more self-confidence and higher self-efficacy than the participants from the studies discussed previously in this subsection (Reves & Medgyes, 1994, p. 363). Answering the question who the participants found more successful NESTs or NNESTs, half of the respondents reported that they saw no difference, another half was divided into similar halves - the first one found NESTs more successful, the second one - NNESTs (Reves & Medgyes, 1994, p. 356). According to the study, NESTs were viewed being more successful due to their confident usage of English in the classroom and capability "of creating motivation and an 'English' environment in the school" which made their students trust them (Reves & Medgyes, 1994, p. 361). As for the NNESTs' advantages, they were revealed to better anticipate students' difficulties and "read their minds" (Reves & Medgyes, 1994, p. 361). Another interesting finding
which resonates with previous research was that only 10% percent of the respondents would employ NESTs (Reves & Medgyes, 1994, p. 356). According to Reves and Medgyes (1994), the majority of the participants stated that they "were not very much hindered by their language difficulties" (p. 363). Commenting upon this finding, the researchers speculated that the participants did not consider English proficiency a crucial factor for maintaining teaching efficacy (Reves & Medgyes, 1994, p. 363) which strongly resonates with the research discussed earlier in this subsection (Kim, 2011; Park, 2012; Pavlenko, 2003, Xuan, 2014).

Though the study has a number of advantages, I assume that it also has many limitations. Firstly, the number of NNESTs and NESTs were not equal. Only 10% of the whole sample reported to be NESTs. Secondly, I do not find the method of data collection reliable and thus doubt validity of the data. The questionnaire was distributed online. Most of the questions were close-ended. There was no evidence regarding who completed the questionnaire, under what circumstances, and in what conditions. The respondents tended to skip questions (Reves & Medgyes, 1994). It should be noted that the researchers did not include any authentic responses of their participants' to the article. Finally, the study was conducted 15 years ago, in the 1990s.

In sum, the studies demonstrate relationship between NNESTs' perceptions of selves as English teachers and their perceived English language proficiency. The existing research shows that NNESTs' perceived status as legitimate English speakers and teachers is greatly affected by the native - non-native dichotomy. Brutt-Griffler and Samimy's (1999), Pavlenko's (2003), and Xuan's (2014) studies exemplify the development of professional agency and legitimacy through critical dialogue. Various readings, discussions, and reflections allowed NNESTs to shift their linguistic and professional identities from inferior statuses to those of legitimate speakers and teachers of English. Additionally, imagination was revealed to be a productive tool in
constructing new professional and linguistic identity options (Pavlenko, 2003; Xuan, 2014). Pavlenko (2003) and Xuan (2014) also stress the role of teacher education programs in fostering pre-service teachers' imagination through critical pedagogy and providing them with alternative discourses such as multilingual speaker (Cook, 1999) and "awareness and the right to speak" (Norton Pierce, 1995).

**Summary of the Chapter**

The proposed study investigates Russian novice English teachers' perceptions of selves as teachers of English and the impact of imagined linguistic communities on their self-perceptions. Utilizing sociocultural theoretical framework, I drew on Vygotsky's (1930/2004), Wegner's (1998), and Norton's (2007) notions of imagination. In this chapter, I introduced and discussed the concept of imagined community. Kanno and Norton (2003) define imagined communities as "groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination" (p. 241). Based on the relevant research on imagined communities in the language teaching and learning realm, the concept of imagined community was employed to investigate relationship between imagined communities and (non)participation as well as school/classroom practices, teachers’ identity change, and NESTs and NNESTs’ self-perceptions.

The proposed study draws extensively on the research on NNESTs’ perceptions of selves as legitimate English teachers in relation to their perceived English language proficiency. The relevant research revealed a strong connection between teachers’ perceptions of selves as teachers of English and their perceived English language proficiency. NNESTs reported to feel self-marginalized due to the existing language ideologies. Critical pedagogy was revealed to be a powerful tool in challenging the dominant beliefs about NNESTs' legitimacy as English teachers.
Furthermore, imagination offered NNESTs new professional and linguistic identity options, such as multilingual speakers and legitimate English teachers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research framework to explore Russian novice English teachers' perceptions of selves as teachers of English and the impact of imagined linguistic communities into which they are investing on their self-perceptions. The following chapter sheds light on study design. It also provides a description of the setting in which the study was conducted. Furthermore, I list participant selection criteria and introduce my participants. Methods and procedures of data collection and data analysis are also presented in this chapter. Finally, I discuss my positionality as a researcher and trustworthiness of the study.

Study Design

This qualitative study attempts to find the answers to two guiding research questions from the insights of the five Russian novice teachers of English:
1. What imagined linguistic communities do English novice teachers in Russia position themselves into?

2. Does membership into imagined communities affect the way English novice teachers in Russia perceive themselves as English teachers?

According to Merriam (2009), the questions about perceptions and understandings can be explored only by means of qualitative strategies. On this matter, Merriam (2009) claims, "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). As one of the main features of qualitative inquiry, Martella et al. (2013) point out unique case orientation where, "meanings and understandings are reached by studying cases intensively" (p. 294). Yin (2011) also argues that qualitative research differs from any other educational research by its ability to capture participants’ views and perspectives in a particular context thus making the research personalized and contextualized. Yin (2011) claims, "...the events and ideas emerging from qualitative research can represent the meanings given to real-life events by the people who live them, not the values, preconceptions, or meanings held by researchers" (p. 8). Yin's (2011) statement is in line with Lichtman (2009) who says, "It [qualitative research] relies heavily on the voices of humans" (p. 5).

My main ambition as a researcher is to unpack the uniqueness of each story and to demonstrate the diversity of my participants' experiences. On this matter, Yin (2011) states, "Within qualitative research, phenomenological studies, emphasizing hermeneutic or interpretive analyses, are most strongly devoted to capturing the uniqueness of events" (p. 14).
The proposed study possesses a number of characteristics which are in line with the features and aims of qualitative research proposed by Lichtman (2009), Tracy (2012), and Yin (2011). More precisely, qualitative research aims to:

- Explore participants' real lives;
- Represent the views and perspectives of participants;
- Address the context where participants live;
- Contribute insights into existing or emerging concepts;
- Use multiple sources of evidence.

Finally, Merriam (2009) stresses the impact of researchers' personal beliefs and biases on the qualitative study. Following from these premises, I find it critical to address my positionality as a researcher in the next section.

**Researcher's Positionality**

Should I delineate myself from the participants and position myself as a researcher only? Or should I approach my participants as a legitimate member of the Russian novice English teachers' community? Can I draw on my experiences and perceptions in my research? How can I not confuse my personal agendas with the ones investigated?

My exploration of Russian novice English teachers' self-perceptions led me also to self-exploration and then to answering the aforementioned questions. In this section, I address my "awareness of self" and my impact on the research process (Lichtman, 2009, p. 22).

I strongly support those who celebrate researcher's identity in a qualitative study (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Lichtman, 2009; Martella et al., 2013; Morse & Richards, 2002; Motha, 2004; Park, 2012; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Torrance, 2010; Tracy, 2012; Yin, 2011).
Torrance (2010) states explicitly the impact of researcher's identity on a study: "Researchers' personal identities and the perspectives, understandings and knowledges, the beliefs and values that go with them shape all aspects of the research process" (p. 36). Yin (2011), discussing researchers' positionalities, utilizes Powdermaker's (1966) striking simile, "...the researcher has a human personality and cannot perform as 'a faceless robot or a machinelike recorder of human events'" (p. 13). Like Motha (2004) and Park (2012) did in their studies on ESOL teachers, I find it crucial to acknowledge my personal experiences and make them transparent.

As stated in Chapter One, my desire to contribute to understandings about the Russian novice English teachers' self-perceptions is rooted in my own multiple experiences, gained both in my home country and abroad. I argue that the proposed study is shaped by my multiple identities as a Russian woman, a bilingual, a graduate student at an American university, a novice researcher, an international student, a novice teacher of English, etc.

My multiple identities affected my research interests and objectives. If I did not experience the first years of teaching English in a general education institution firsthand, I would probably not be interested or motivated to research this topic. If I were not Russian, then I probably would not opt for Russian teachers as my participants. Furthermore, my studies as an M.A. student in a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages program reconstructed my understandings and perceptions of teaching English, both in Russian and other contexts.

Methods of data collection and analysis were also affected by my views, knowledge, and experiences. The participants shared their lived experiences through the methods of data collection which I designed and implemented. Also, the data were analyzed under my lens. On this matter, Yin (2011) argues, "...the participants’ meanings, if studied and reported by a
researcher, also unavoidably subsume a second set of meanings of the same events - those of the researcher" (p. 11).

I consider my multiple identities beneficial for the purposes of this study. Being a Russian novice teacher of English helped me not only to establish positive and trust-based rapport with my participants, but also allowed them to share their stories in the language they preferred (Russian or English) and in the setting where they could feel comfortable. Most importantly, as Ritchie and Lewis (2003) claim, "...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).

In this study, I position myself as an insider, a member of the Russian novice English teachers' community, rather than just a researcher. However, it is crucial to state that I made rigorous attempts to be "faithful to the voices" of my participants (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 3).

**Study Site**

In Chapter two, I discussed in detail the status and role of English in Russia as well as ELL&T in Russian general education. In this section, I briefly introduce the study site and the higher education institution where all five participants received their teacher education. At the time of my data collection, my participants taught English in general education institutions in three different cities: Petrozavodsk, Kostomuksha, and Saint Petersburg (Figure 3). I interviewed four of the participants in Petrozavodsk, while I reached the fifth participant via Skype. I chose
Petrozavodsk as my primary study site due to my personal, academic, and professional interests in this particular city\textsuperscript{16} as well as the access to my potential participants.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Petrozavodsk (P), Kostomuksha (K), and Saint Petersburg (S) on the map of Russia.}
\end{figure}

It should be mentioned that the five participants graduated from the same teacher education program located in the city of Petrozavodsk. I find it crucial to highlight several facts about the Department of Foreign Languages where the participants received their professional preparation.

The department was established in 1965. The five-year program offered around 63 courses (8950 hours in total including 5025 classroom hours). English was not a medium of instruction in the program. Only the courses fully related to a foreign language itself, like Practice of Intercultural Communication, Speech and Writing Practice, Academic Writing and some others had a foreign language both as a target language (a subject) and a medium of instruction. During the program the students had two teaching practicums in general education institutions (the school level varied):

- six-week practicum in major language during February-March in the 4th year of studies;

\textsuperscript{16} I was born in Petrozavodsk. I received my general and higher education (teacher education) there. Upon my return to Russia, I am planning to continue my teaching career in Petrozavodsk. Furthermore, the only higher pedagogical institution (in particular, English teacher program) in the Republic of Karelia is located in Petrozavodsk.
ten-week practicum during September-November in both major and minor languages in the 5th year of studies.

Apart from conducting lessons, student-teachers were supposed to help classroom-teachers to maintain classroom management and organize extra-curricular activities. In the end of the program, each graduate defended a graduation paper and took two final state examinations. The state exam in a minor language was mandatory. As a second exam, prospective teachers could choose between Pedagogy and Methods of Teaching or a major language.

The teacher education program awarded its graduates the following degrees:

- Specialist in teaching English and German (English as a major, German as a minor),
- Specialist in teaching French and English,
- Specialist in teaching German and English (German as a major, English as a minor),
- Specialist in teaching Finnish and English.

It should be noted that I did not intend to recruit alumni of the same teacher education program. Sampling criteria are listed in the next section.

**Participant Selection Criteria**

In order to investigate Russian novice English teachers’ perceptions of selves as teachers of English and the impact of imagined linguistic community on their self-perceptions I recruited participants who met the following criteria:

1. Participants must be teachers of English.
2. Participants must have no more than three years of teaching experience in Russian general education institutions (elementary, middle, and/or high school).
3. Participants must be born and raised in Russia.
4. Participants must have a Specialist (or Bachelor) degree in teaching English received from Russian higher education institutions.

It is noteworthy to mention that I did not intend to exclude the male population. Female teachers of English in the Northwestern district of Russia prevail. Thus, the probability to recruit a female teacher was much higher. This fact explains the homogeneity of my study population. However, I excluded those candidates who had been studying, working and/or residing abroad for more than six months, since study abroad experiences may impact Russian novice English teachers’ perceptions of self as teachers of English (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Jensen & Howard, 2014; Wang, 2014).

Though I employed nonrandom purposeful sample selection, and followed rigid inclusion criteria, I did not aim to make the sample completely homogeneous. Having met the inclusion criteria, the participants still represent the diversity of English language learning and teaching journeys. In the next section, I introduce the participants of my study in more detail.

**Participants**

This qualitative study explores Russian novice English teachers’ perceptions of self as teachers of English from the insights of five teachers. All five volunteers were eligible to participate in this study which means that they met the inclusion criteria listed in the previous section.

As indicated above, the participants are females aged 24-27, born, raised, and educated in Russia. At the moment of data collection, all five women were employed as teachers of English in general education institutions. Their teaching experiences ranged from two to three years. All five participants had experience in teaching English at all school levels, including elementary,

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17 By “abroad” I exclude countries where Russian is used as a common tool for communication, like Belarus, Kazakhstan, and other countries of the former USSR.
middle, and high school. It should be noted that in Russian general education institutions, English teachers usually conduct lessons at all school levels simultaneously (See Appendix A for a typical schedule of an English teacher in a general education institution).

Furthermore, as stated earlier, all the teachers were enrolled in the same teacher education program. Though graduation from the same teacher training program was not a prerequisite for participation in my study, I assume that the fact that all five teachers received their professional training in the same program adds credibility to my research.

Brief information about each participant is presented below both in text and in graph (Table 2). All names of individuals in this study are pseudonyms.

**Anna** had been working as a teacher of English for three years by the time of my data collection. She taught English at all school levels (elementary, middle, and high) in a public school in Petrozavodsk. In the university, French was her major, while English was her minor. Before Anna started teaching English, she student taught French and English as a partial requirement for obtaining her specialist degree in teaching French and English.

**Elena** had two years of teaching experience. Similarly to Anna, she taught English at all school levels in a public school in Petrozavodsk. Elena graduated from the department of foreign languages with a specialist degree in teaching German and English. Elena majored in German, while English was her minor. Before in-service teaching, Elena student taught German and English.

**Darina** started her teacher education program in the pedagogical college (not higher educational institution, not university). After one academic year in the college, she entered the pedagogical university. In 2011, Darina obtained her specialist degree in teaching Finnish which was her major and English (minor). Similarly to Anna and Elena, Darina had student teaching in
both languages (Finnish and English). After her graduation, Darina taught English in a rural setting at all school levels, for a short period of time. Then, she moved to the town of Kostomuksha. At the moment of data collection, she taught English in a public school in elementary and middle school. For almost a year Darina had been on her maternity leave.

**NINA** had been teaching English for two years by the time of data collection. She taught English at all school levels (elementary, middle, and high) in a public school in Petrozavodsk for one year. Then, Nina moved to St. Petersburg where she taught English in elementary school. In the university Nina majored in English and studied German as her minor. Similarly to my previous participants, Nina had two teaching practicums in both languages. In 2012 Nina received a specialist degree in teaching English and German.

**OLGA** had been teaching English for three years at all school levels in a public school in Petrozavodsk by the time of her participation in my study. In the pedagogical university Olga majored in German and minored in English. She also had student teaching in both languages as a partial requirement for her teacher education program. Olga graduated from the university cum laude with a specialist degree in teaching German and English. Before Olga secured her teaching position, she had been on maternity leave for two years.

Table 2

*Participants of the Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years of teaching experience</th>
<th>School levels</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Degree (Specialist in teaching...)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Petrozavodsk</td>
<td>French and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elena</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Petrozavodsk</td>
<td>German and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darina</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Half a year- all</td>
<td>Rural setting</td>
<td>Finnish and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two years - elementary and middle</td>
<td>Kostomuksha</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
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<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>One year - all</td>
<td>Petrozavodsk</td>
<td>English and German</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One year - elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td>St. Petersburg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olga</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Petrozavodsk</td>
<td>German and English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Sources**

The study employs two methods of data collection which are aimed to supplement and enrich each other and hence, to enhance the validity and reliability of the study.

**Linguistic Autobiography**

The first method of data collection is an online linguistic autobiography (See Appendix B for the linguistic autobiography protocol). Drawing on numerous scholars (Hanauer, 2012b; Hurlbert, 2012; Pavlenko, 2001, 2002, 2003; Steinman, 2005), Park (2013) argues that evocative genres of writing, such as autobiography, can be an extremely rich qualitative data source for examining lived experiences (p. 8). Pavlenko (2007) defines linguistic autobiographies as "life histories that focus on the languages of the speaker and discuss how and why these languages were acquired, used, or abandoned" (p. 165).

In the proposed study, the participants were asked to reflect upon the process through which they became an English teacher and write a story that covered their development into becoming a language teacher. It was suggested to think of significant moments, events, and/or people who influenced their English learning and teaching journey. Participants could use any format, structures, and vocabulary they preferred.

A linguistic autobiography was an adequate and most appropriate method of data collection to address my research questions. Firstly, linguistic autobiographical narratives gave
my participants enough time to recall their English language learning and teaching journeys, and most importantly reflect upon their lived experiences as English learners and teachers. Sharing the results of the cultural and linguistic autobiography writing project, Park (2011) stresses the potential of autobiographies for self-exploration and reflexivity. Pavlenko (2003), who explored imagined professional and linguistic communities through analysis of students' linguistic autobiographies, argues, "Linguistic autobiography allows the researcher to examine discourses of language and identity, or imagined communities, the students draw on when not explicitly asked to reflect on nativeness or linguistic membership" (p. 254). One more advantage of linguistic autobiographies is that a researcher does not interfere much with the process. It is the writer (participant) who decides when, what, why, and how to write his/her autobiography:

Social interactions will occur with minimal intrusion by artificial research procedures, and people will be saying what they want to say, not, for example, limited to responding to a researcher’s preestablished questionnaire. (Yin, 2011, p. 8)

**Individual Open-Ended Interviews**

In the proposed study, an individual open-ended interview was considered an adequate and appropriate method of data collection for several reasons. According to Cohen et al. (2011), direct interaction between the researcher and the participant enables "multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 409). Merriam (1998) argues that interviews are used when researchers cannot “observe behaviors, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them (p. 72) which is in line with Martella et al. (2013) who claim that interview is an adequate method of data collection when observation is either
impractical or impossible (p. 331). Furthermore, interviews allow the researcher to capture what an individual thinks or feels (Lichtman, 2010).

The forty-minute structured open-ended individual interview covered issues related to English teaching, in particular how teachers get ready for class, how they feel in class, what approaches they use in class, what language they speak most in class (See Appendix C for the interview protocol).

Open-ended questions have a number of advantages including their flexibility, minimized restrain on participants' answers, an ability for a researcher to go into more depth, to clear up misunderstandings if needed, to establish positive rapport with a participant (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 416).

It must be pointed out that both sources of data collection supplemented each other and thus provided the researcher with rich qualitative data as well as facilitated researcher's deeper understanding of the data.

**Data Collection Procedure**

I started my data collection right after my project was approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects May 17, 2014. In order to reach perspective participants I contacted the faculty from the Department of Foreign Languages at one of the pedagogical universities in Petrozavodsk, Russia whom I know personally. Apart from that, being alumnus of the teacher education program myself, I used my personal connections.

By the end of May I had obtained contact information of around 30 perspective participants. A letter of invitation as well as informed consent were sent to every perspective participant via email or social networks (See Appendices D & E for the letter of invitation and informed consent). The letter of invitation contained my personal information (education, background) as well as my contact information. It also briefly described the study, in particular
its topic, significance, and methods of data collection. Most importantly, in the letter, it was announced that participation in the study was absolutely voluntarily and confidential. Finally, in the letter of invitation I expressed my great interest in the topic and hope for cooperation.

Informed consent was an official document. Basically, it included the same information as the letter of invitation. Its main purpose was to guarantee participants rights to participate voluntarily, to stay anonymous, and to withdraw at any point of research. Also, informed consent stated my obligations as a researcher to protect and respect my participants and the information they would share with me.

In June 2014 I received replies from the perspective participants. It turned out that not everyone who was eager to participate in my study met the inclusion criteria. Some rejected. Some did not respond to my letter of invitation at all. Finally, five teachers who met the inclusion criteria volunteered to participate in my study.

As a next step in my data collection process, I sent the participants a writing task via email or social networks. Upon the submission of the linguistic autobiographies, individual interviews were scheduled. Four interviews were conducted in person in a place suggested by my participants (a quiet cafe) in the city of Petrozavodsk, while one interview was conducted via Skype because the participant was not in the same setting as the researcher. In general, the interviews lasted 30-40 minutes. The data had been collected by August 13, 2014.

Data Analysis

One of the specifics of qualitative research is that there is no exact line between data collection and data analysis (Gay et.al, 2012). I started my data analysis from the very first interaction with my participants. Data analysis during my data collection helped me to navigate
through my research process. Data analysis after data collection allowed me to immerse fully into my qualitative data.

I decided to code the linguistic autobiographies first since I found it more logical and beneficial for my further interview analysis. The stories covered participants' English language learning and teaching journeys from the beginning (in the majority of cases, since elementary school) till modern days. Whereas the interviews focused mostly on the participants' teaching experiences (the last two-three years). Thus, analyzing the autobiographies first, and then the interviews, allowed me to walk through the participants’ English learning and teaching experiences in a chronological way.

The stories were written in English. I was reading each story thoroughly many times. Then, I identified common themes (codes) and analyzed them in relation to my research questions. After that, I categorized the codes. According to Gay et al. (2012), “A category is a classification of ideas or concepts; categorization, then, is grouping the data into themes” (p. 468). Before analyzing my verbal data, I transcribed the interviews. After that I requested each participant to read the transcript. Drawing on Pavlenko (2007) who argued that "all narratives should be analyzed in the language in which they were told and not in translation" (p. 173) interview analysis was done in Russian. I followed the same steps I used when analyzing the linguistic autobiographies: familiarizing myself with the data, examining the data, coding, and categorizing. After the codes and categories were identified I translated some parts of the transcripts into English and asked the participants to check the accuracy of my translation. All my participants were satisfied with the translation.

As a result of the linguistic autobiographies and interview coding, I identified the following six categories:
- **Journey to teaching** (Why and under what circumstances did my participants decide to teach English? What is their story of becoming an English teacher?)

- **Teaching philosophy** (What principles/ideas/theories guide my participants' methods of teaching English?)

- **Perceived professional challenges** (What challenges related to teaching English did my participants experience while navigating through their first years of teaching?)

- **Perceived professional success** (What do my participants consider as their success/achievement as teachers of English?)

- **Perceptions of selves as English teachers** (How would my participants describe themselves as teachers of English? Based on my participants' perceptions, how would their students and peer-teachers describe them as English teachers?)

- **Role of English in the participants' lives** (What role does English play in my participants' lives?)

Finally, I asked a peer expert with a background in research to review my data interpretation.

**Research Trustworthiness**

As rightly stated, "In qualitative research data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher" (Winter, 2000 as cited in Cohen et. al., 2011, p. 179). Cohen et al. (2011) consider 100% valid research impossible, thus they argue that researchers should "minimize invalidity and maximize validity" (p. 179). The trustworthiness of this study was enhanced by the following ways:
Multiple sources of data collection provided me with more accurate picture and reinforced my understanding of the research questions;

- Participants' review of the interview transcripts and translations;
- Peer-Review of my data analysis to verify my interpretations;
- Researcher's positionality as an insider but at the same time being "faithful to the voices" of the participants (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 3);
- Detailed description of the researched context; "Data are socially-situated, and socially and culturally saturated" (Martella et al., 2013, p. 84);
- Analysis of the authentic data "All narratives should be analyzed in the language in which they were told and not in translation" (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 173).

**Summary of the Chapter**

I used qualitative research design in order to explore what imagined linguistic communities Russian novice English teachers were contributing into and how it affected their perceptions of selves as English teachers at the time of this study. The research questions are analyzed from the insights of the five participants who are Russian novice English teachers working in Russian general education institutions at various school levels (elementary, middle, and high). Participants' profiles are included to this chapter. The study employed two methods of data collection which were an online linguistic autobiography and an in-depth follow-up interview. Procedures and methods of data collection and analysis are described in detail in this chapter. Furthermore, the ways used to enhance trustworthiness of the study are addressed in this chapter. Finally, in this chapter, I discussed my positionality as a researcher in this study. In the next chapter, narratives of the five Russian novice English teachers are presented.
CHAPTER FOUR
NARRATIVES OF FIVE RUSSIAN NOVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected through online linguistic autobiographies and follow-up in-depth interviews with five Russian novice English language teachers. This study investigates the impact of imagined linguistic communities into which the Russian novice English teachers are contributing on their perceptions of selves as English teachers. Throughout the study I was guided by the following research questions:
1. How do Russian novice English teachers perceive themselves as English teachers?

1.1 What imagined linguistic communities do English novice teachers in Russia position themselves into?

1.2 Does membership into imagined communities affect the way English novice teachers in Russia perceive themselves as English teachers?

The data are presented participant by participant. As a qualitative researcher, my responsibility was to interpret each woman’s autobiographic narrative and interview data as they were told to me. My interpretation is one of many possible interpretations given my ontological and epistemological perspectives. Each woman’s data were organized around the aforementioned research questions and following the categories presented below:

- Journey to teaching
  - Why and under what circumstances did my participants decide to teach English?
  - What is their story of becoming an English teacher?

- Teaching philosophy
  - What principles/ideas/theories guide my participants' methods of teaching English?

- Perceived professional challenges
  - What challenges related to English teaching did my participants experience while navigating through their first years of teaching?

- Perceived professional success
  - What do my participants consider as their success/achievement as teachers of English?

- Perceptions of selves as English teachers
  - How would my participants describe themselves as teachers of English?
Based on my participants' perceptions, how would their students and peer-teachers describe them as English teachers?)

Role of English in one’s life

What role does English play in my participants' lives?)

At the end of each participant data, an interpretive analysis is provided in order to reiterate and organize the findings as they were told and interpreted by me.

"The Way I Feel in Class Depends on Students' Manners": Elena's Perception of Self as an English Teacher

By the time of my data collection in August 2014, Elena had completed her second year of teaching English. She taught English at all school levels, precisely elementary, middle, and high, in a public school in Petrozavodsk, Russia. Elena graduated from the Department of Foreign Languages of a local pedagogical institution, with a degree in teaching German and English. She majored in German, while English was her minor. Beginning in the second year of her studies she had classes focused on the English language, such as English Grammar, History of English-Speaking Countries, Theory and Methods of Teaching English, and Practice of Intercultural Communication in English, to name just a few. Her student teaching experiences included a six-week practicum in German in the 4th year of studies, and a ten-week practicum in both German and English in the 5th year of studies.

Though Elena applied to enter a teacher education program, she did not envision herself as a teacher. She expressed her controversial feelings about teaching and being a teacher in her linguistic autobiography:

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18 All names and institutions are pseudonyms or have been omitted.
Since school years profession of teacher appealed to me. But I didn't think that I will be a teacher someday. (Elena, June 28, 2014, linguistic autobiography)¹⁹

Elena's attitude toward teaching changed drastically after her teaching practicums. Teaching English and German under the supervision of an "experienced" mentor teacher helped Elena to (re)construct her understanding of teaching and schooling, as well as to reconsider her professional choices. Reflecting on her student teaching experiences, Elena mentioned a crucial role of her mentor teacher, who became a role model for her. Furthermore, she implied that her enjoyment working with children was her personal revelation:

I decided to become a teacher after my practice at school [meaning student teaching]. I really enjoyed working with children and I had a very good mentor. She was so experienced and she taught me a lot of teaching things. And maybe during that practice I realized that I wanted to be like that teacher. (Elena, June 28, 2014, linguistic autobiography).

The biggest concern Elena had about in-service teaching was related to teacher-student interactions. For this reason, she expressed her apprehension in the following statement:

В принципе, чего я боялась на практике, конечно, что меня не полюбят дети, вот у меня был страх такой. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)²⁰

In essence, what I feared during the practicums, of course, was that students wouldn't like me, I had such fear. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

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¹⁹ As indicated in Chapter Four, the linguistic autobiographies were written in English while the interviews were conducted in Russian. Here and further on, original spelling and grammar have been preserved in linguistic autobiography excerpts. The interviews have been translated from Russian into English following Standard English though with some stylistic allowances.

²⁰ Original interview was conducted in Russian. The translation follows below in English.
The idea of teacher-student interactions is also captured in Elena's response to the interview question "How do you feel in class as a teacher of English?" \(^{21}\) Elena found it difficult to describe her feelings and perceptions as an English teacher in general. According to her, the way she felt in class depended tremendously on students' manners and level of motivation. For this reason, she commented in detail upon her feelings in class, depending on the group of students she was teaching last year. Below, I provided a short excerpt from Elena's detailed response in order to demonstrate the relationship between the way she felt as an English teacher and her students' characteristics (manners, level of motivation to learn English, level of English proficiency):

Смотря какой класс. Начальная школа 2 классы – в этом году мне очень нравится с ними работать, там умные дети на самом деле, они быстро схватывают, и притягательные сами по себе. Есть у меня проблемный класс 3 один, с которым у меня конфликты практически на каждом уроке... В 3а мне очень нравится вести уроки, а в 6 – просто от звонка до звонка... В 11 классе мне было некомфортно. В прошлом году они меня доводили до слез. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

It [the way she feels in class] depends on the group... Elementary school, 2nd grades - last year I really liked to work with them. In fact, the kids there are smart, they are quick learners, and well-mannered. I have one problematic group of 3rd graders, which I have conflicts with almost every lesson....I like to teach in the 3rd grade (another group), while in the 6th - I punch the time clock...In the 11th grade I felt uncomfortable. They drove me to tears. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

It is crucial to highlight that Elena did not mention any English-related and/or English teaching aspects that influenced her feelings and perceptions as an English teacher, apart from the ones

\(^{21}\) See Appendix C for interview questions
related to her students. According to her, the level of her comfort and confidence in class depended exclusively on students' discipline and manners. The excerpt below exemplifies

Elena's perspective:

...если дети воспитаны, они будут вести себя хорошо. Есть двоечники которые сидят тихо, спокойно, они ничего не делают, их ничему не научить, но они никогда не нагрубят тебе, а есть такие которые вот хамло... (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

...if children have good manners, they will behave themselves. There are flunkers, who are quiet in class, they don't do anything, you can't teach them anything, but they will never be rude with you, but there are those, who are rude fellows... (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

Not surprisingly, the challenges Elena faced as a novice English teacher were also related to her students:

- "дисциплины нет в классе" ("there is no discipline in class");
- "[ученики] не уважают взрослых, у них нет авторитета в лице школьного учителя" ("[students] don't respect adults, and they don't treat a teacher as an authoritative figure");
- "они [ученики] ничем не мотивированы учить иностранные языки" ("they [students] are not motivated at all to learn foreign languages") (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview).

The teaching context shaped Elena's teaching philosophy. During the interview, Elena claimed that she did not pursue any specific goals as an English teacher; rather, she was guided by a broad universal idea 'to teach':

Вообще как любому учителю, наверно, хочется, чтобы у детей не было так "в одно ухо влетает, в другое вылетает". Чтобы всё таки научились. Научить их хотя бы вот
Probably, as any teacher, I don't want it to be like "go into one ear and out the other". I want them to learn, after all. To teach them at least some minimum English, when they travel somewhere, they remember at least some basic phrases. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

Due to students' low level of intrinsic motivation, lack of discipline, and low level of English proficiency, Elena found herself limited in her teaching methods and techniques. Based on her response, the students were not capable of speaking and listening comprehension. Considering the teaching conditions, Elena used grammar-translation method most of the time. Below provided Elena's response to the question: "Can you name -tasks/activities you find the most effective teaching English in your class?":

No, because you can't talk with them. They don't know. In the 8th grade, there are the girls who attend private English courses. They can keep up a conversation, while with the rest of the groups, you cannot talk, i.e. talking doesn't work, listening comprehension is also a failure, however much I try they don't understand anything...They are more or less
fine with grammar, I mean if you practice-practice-practice it with them. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

The aforementioned teaching conditions challenged Elena's usage of English in her classroom. During the interview, she indicated that she had come to her class with the intention to speak English. However, later she realized that the students did not understand English and had no motivation to learn it. Elena's attempts to motivate students with prospective travel abroad opportunities were challenged by students' strong resistance, caused by their socioeconomic status: "У меня денег нет я не собираюсь заграницу ехать, мне это не надо" ("I don't have money. I'm not going abroad, I don't need it") (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview). For this reason, Elena spoke Russian most of the time in all the groups:

В начальной школе на русском, в принципе это понятно почему, в 5 классе тоже на русском потому что там слабые дети у меня... В 9 классе из 15 человек меня понимают на английском только 2-3 человек... 11 класс был сложный для меня класс, такой проблемный, там детям ничего не надо было. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

In elementary school - in Russian, it's clear why. In the 5th grade also in Russian because the children's English proficiency was very low... In the 9th grade, only 2-3 people out of 15 understand me when I speak English in class...the 11th grade was very difficult to teach, very problematic, the children there didn't want anything. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

However, Elena reported that she tried to speak more English in the groups of students who showed at least some interest in English. On this matter, she provided an example of how she approached students with varying aptitudes and levels of motivation to learn English. The
following interview excerpt shows the way Elena prioritized the students with higher levels of proficiency and motivation, by giving them tasks on developing language skills while keeping the rest of the class busy with text translation:

Well, the 8th grade, the biggest group, there are 5 girls who can keep up a conversation, and they understand what I say, so there are lessons when I work exclusively with them, give them reading or listening tasks, so that they speak English, and I give another task to the rest... Usually to translate, they like it, so that they at least can get good grades.

(Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

Though Elena spoke Russian for most of the time in class, her lesson plans were mostly written in English, with the exception of small details like exercise numbers, which she habitually wrote down in Russian. Elena admitted that her need to look at lesson plans interfered with class dynamics. She believed that when she gained more teaching experience, her lessons would be more dynamic:

С опытом может стать лучше именно структура урока, то есть можно уже будет уже не подглядывать, уже знаешь, что за чем идёт, и можно будет это уже быстрее делать и лучше, продуктивнее. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)
With more experience, precisely class dynamics can be better, in other words there will be no need to look at a lesson plan, you already know what goes after what, and it [teaching] can be done faster and better, more effective. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

Similarly to the perceived challenges, Elena's perceived achievement as an English teacher is related to her students, particularly to the development of their speaking skills. Having asked her students what they preferred to do (reading or speaking), Elena found out that the students were interested in speaking. To meet the needs of her students Elena designed her lessons with the emphasis on speaking. She considered the students' progress in speaking as her main professional success:

Они дружно сказали "хотим научиться говорить" в прошлом году. Ну, я и начала задания готовить и больше по текстам работать, и аудирование и всё, и в этом году они уже могут что-то сказать, лучше чем в прошлом. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

They said altogether "we want to learn how to speak English" last year. I started preparing activities and work more with texts, and listening comprehension and everything, and this year they can say something [in English], better than last year.

(Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

During the interview, Elena admitted that she was not much interested in participating in professional events (teacher conferences, contests), both locally and internationally. Among the reasons for the resistance and non-participation were lack of self-confidence and fear of performing in public:

Может быть, неуверенность, и то что я не люблю никакие конкурсы, ничего. Мне сложно дается выступление на публике. По этой причине я отказалась от учителя года. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)
Maybe, lack of confidence and the fact that I don't like any contests, nothing. It's difficult for me to perform in front of the public. For this reason I refused to participate in "Teacher of the Year".22 (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

Group participation is more appealing to Elena, though only "если тема будет интересной" ("if the topic is interesting") (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview). Unlike participation in professional events, Elena expressed more interest in attending events related to learning and teaching English, particularly with English speaking guests. She visited seminars for English teachers, organized by some teacher educators from Great Britain. Comparing the last two seminars, Elena liked the one attended in April of 2014. She found the content and its delivery interesting, easy to understand, and relevant to her teaching context:

... она очень понятно всё говорила, всё так живо, не скучно, презентация хорошая была, и методы обучения: как лучше в каком возрасте, в каком по карточкам.

(Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

... she [the presenter from Great Britain] spoke clearly, in an exciting way, not boring, the presentation was good, and methods of teaching - what is better at different ages, when to use cards. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

Elena's resistance to participate in professional development events was reflected in her self-perceptions. She believed that her peer teachers, in particular the head of the English department, would characterize Elena as "not creative enough, not participating in any contests" (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview). Also, according to Elena's perceptions, the head of the department treated her as "not experienced enough, as if we [Elena and one more novice teacher] are inferior" (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview). Elena felt that the head of the department "doesn't

22 An annual all-Russia Competition of general education teachers organized by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science.
take [their] information seriously" assuming that "she [the head of the department] knows better than others, and we [Elena and one more novice teacher] are so inexperienced and must listen to her" (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview). Apart from the lack of experience and lack of enthusiasm to participate in events, Elena assumed that the rest of the teaching staff would characterize her as a patient teacher. The idea of patience was mentioned by Elena in many of her responses. She described herself as a patient and calm teacher, despite the challenging teaching conditions. Apart from patience and calmness, she did not offer more words characterizing her as specifically an English teacher. It is noteworthy to mention that Elena believed that her students would also call her patient. Furthermore, they perceived her as a good, kind, and beautiful teacher of English.

In spite of the challenges Elena encountered in school, including low level of students' motivation to learn English, lack of discipline in class, students' low level of English proficiency, marginalization within the profession (colleagues' biased attitude toward novice teachers), Elena was determined to continue her work as a teacher of English. She found it quite challenging to describe herself as an English teacher. Instead, she summarized her experience as a teacher of English by trying to imagine herself in a different profession:

Всё-таки, в другой профессии я себя не вижу, меня много что устраивает. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

Nevertheless, I can't see myself in a different profession, I like a lot of things [about teaching]. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

In her linguistic autobiography, Elena also expressed her positive attitude toward teaching in general, recognizing communicative nature of teaching (dealing with people) as the
most "valuable experience" (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview). However, she did not mention anything about specifically teaching English:

   To be honest, to teach children is harder than it seems. To my mind, teaching is a good profession, because you communicate not only with children but with adults, your colleagues and children's parents. It's a very invaluable experience. (Elena, June 28, 2014, linguistic autobiography).

In the majority of her answers to the questions about specifically teaching English, Elena referred to teaching in general. Pondering upon the role of English in her life, Elena expressed ambivalence:

   Английский для меня (думает), наверно, как хобби, любимое занятие, приятное дополнение к жизни, так скажем. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

   English for me (thinking) is probably my hobby, favorite activity, a nice addition to life, let's say. (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview)

However, during the interview and in her linguistic autobiography, Elena never mentioned her use of English outside of the classroom.

**Interpretive Analysis of Elena's Data**

Initially not planning to teach, Elena (re)constructed her understandings of teaching English and reconsidered her professional choices after her student teaching. Right after graduation from the teacher training program, Elena secured a teaching position. She had been teaching English at all school levels for two years by the time of my data collection. Specific teaching conditions, such as extremely low level of students' English proficiency and lack of motivation to learn English, restricted Elena from speaking English in her classroom. As a result, Elena was also limited in teaching methods. She had to use grammar-translation method in most
of her classes, giving her students a chance "to get at least some good grades". However, she initially expected herself and her students to speak more English in class. For this reason, she prioritized the students who showed some interest in English by giving them the tasks on developing their language skills, while keeping the rest of the class busy with text translation. Elena perceived some of her students' progress in speaking English as her main professional achievement. Coping with students' severe resistance and non-participation, Elena pursued a broad aim as a teacher of English to teach her students some “basic phrases” in English. Lack of self-confidence and her "patient" and "calm" personality challenged her participation in teacher development events. Though Elena reported that she perceived English as her hobby and a favorite activity, she hardly ever mentioned English outside her classroom. Thinking of the way she perceived herself as an English teacher, as well as the way her students and peer teachers perceived her, Elena mentioned such traits as patience and calmness, without saying anything related to the English language. In spite of all the challenges Elena faced in her teaching context, she could not envision herself in any other profession.

"Authoritative Stage Director" or "Too Soft-Friendly Advisor": Anna's Perception of Self as an English Teacher

Anna had been working as a teacher of English for three years by the time of the data collection in July 2014. Similarly to Elena, she taught English at all school levels, including elementary, middle, and high, in a public school in Petrozavodsk. For instance, in 2013 she taught English to groups of 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 7th, 10th, and 11th graders.

In 2011, Anna graduated from the Department of Foreign Languages of a local pedagogical institution with a specialist degree in teaching French and English. Anna majored in French, while English was her minor. Similarly to Elena, Anna took English-centered classes,
such as *English Grammar, History of English-Speaking Countries, Theory and Methods of Teaching English*, since the 2nd year of her studies. Before Anna started teaching English, she had student taught French for six weeks in the 4th year of studies and French and English for ten weeks in the 5th year of studies in 2010.

Anna's English learning journey was not always smooth. As she wrote in her linguistic autobiography, "At primary school English was rather difficult to me. In the end we had a test and I didn't pass" (Anna, June 21, 2014, linguistic autobiography). Thanks to her mother's connections, Anna gained admission into an extensive English program in middle and high schools. From 5th till 11th grade, Anna was enrolled into the extensive English program, meaning that she had 5 English lessons each week (while regular English programs offered 3 lessons). In middle and high school, Anna did not excel at English. As she indicated in her linguistic autobiography, she "always had '4' for English and grammar was rather awkward to me" (Anna, June 21, 2014, linguistic autobiography). Also, Anna noted that it was her mother's dream, who was a teacher, to provide her older daughter with quality English instruction so that she could become an English teacher in the future:

Learning and teaching English was my mum's dream. She is a primary teacher herself but she wanted her elder daughter to be an English Teacher. I didn't understand that in school. (Anna, June 21, 2014, linguistic autobiography)

Anna admitted that the French language as her major was not her preference, but rather a necessity. The year Anna was applying for the foreign language teacher training program, the competition for French specialization was the lowest. Though Anna did not have any prior

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23 The grade system in Russia is based upon a 5-point scale.
knowledge of French, she decided to apply for the French-English specialization. In spite of her mother's will, Anna did not plan to teach:

After University I didn't want to be a teacher, no way. (Anna, June 21, 2014, linguistic autobiography)

However, after working as an office employee, Anna followed the advice of her friend, a novice teacher of English, to apply for a teaching position in general education. Still being skeptical about teaching, Anna entered the teaching profession:

Просто получилось. Думала "ну так, не надолго", а потом как-то втянулась, уже это намного интереснее, чем просто сидеть в офисе. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

It just happened. I thought "well, just for a short time" and then somehow I got settled into the job, now it's more interesting for me than working in the office. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

Anna's reluctance to teach resulted in confusion and sense of misdirection in the beginning of her teaching journey:

И я сижу в первый день и понимаю "Что я здесь делаю?". Наверно, это было две недели "Что я здесь делаю", потом как-то втянулась. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

On the first working day, I sit there [in school] and think "What am I doing here?"

Maybe, it lasted for two weeks "What am I doing here?", then I got somehow involved. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

Apart from confusion, Anna also felt embarrassed by her new social status as a teacher:

Просто вначале было немного, может, стыдно перед друзьями, что "Ой ты учитель" (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)
I was just a little, maybe, embarrassed to tell my friends and to hear "Oh, you are a teacher" (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

First teaching experiences allowed Anna to view her involvement with teaching in a different light. Her perspective on and attitude toward teaching changed drastically from absolute reluctance to acceptance of the teaching profession and her status as a teacher. The interview and linguistic autobiography excerpts below exemplify Anna's changed perspective about and attitudes toward teaching profession:

... My friend advised me to go to school because it wasn't so bad. And here we are. I am a teacher for 3 years and I liked it. (Anna, June 21, 2014, linguistic autobiography)

... я им свою точку зрения говорю "Почему работа учителем хуже какой-то другой?". Я могу назвать много плюсов, может быть, не самая огромная зарплата, но вполне... (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

...I tell them [her friends] my point of view "Why is the profession of a teacher worse than any other?" I can name a lot of pros, maybe the salary is not the biggest, but still... (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

Thinking about her image as an English teacher, Anna compared herself with a stage director who "directs their [students'] work" (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview). Analyzing the way she felt in class, Anna said that she was pleased with the authority and power she could exercise in class:

... даже если они не слушаются, я им говорю "пишем" или еще что-то, и они пишут. Вот это вот ощущение того, что кто-то делает то, что я говорю (смеется). Ну, как-то приятно так. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)
... even if they [students] misbehave I tell them "Write down" or something and they do.
This feeling that someone does what I say (laughing). It's so pleasant. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

On this matter, she made a strong statement about her perceived role and status as a teacher stressing her power and superiority:

... я понимаю, что Я - учитель, а они, как мои подчиненные. И поэтому, хотят - не хотят, им придется меня слушаться. И у меня больше рычагов влияния, чем у них в данный момент. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

...I understand that I am a teacher and they are like my subordinates. And so, whether [they] want it or not, they have to obey me. I have more leverage [over students], than they have right now. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

Anna's perceptions of self as an English teacher and the way she described her feelings in class were contradicting. Though Anna reported that felt powerful and authoritative in class, answering another question, she described herself as a too soft and friendly teacher of English. Apart from that, Anna characterized herself as open to suggestions from her students and flexible. Based on Anna's perceptions, her students would also mention that she was not strict enough. The fact that students shared their personal stories with her and asked questions unrelated to class agenda made Anna believe that her students would call her more trustworthy than the veteran teachers working in her school. According to Anna, her youth was the reason for students' trust and willingness to share their personal stories with her. Students perceived her "not as a friend, but rather as an older [in terms of age] advisor" (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview):

... видят во мне не то чтобы такого строгого учителя, который там только "учеба, учеба, учеба", а могут что-то спросить. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)
... [students] see me not as a strict teacher, who is always "Study, study, study!", but [they] can ask something. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

Evidently, there is a clear contradiction between Anna's perceptions of self as an authoritative "stage director" and a "too soft friendly advisor". During the interview, Anna declared that she was striving to become a strict authoritative teacher, while in real life it did not always happen. When she managed to be strict, she felt satisfied with her teaching. Furthermore, Anna claimed that not being strict enough was her disadvantage as a teacher. Based on Anna's interview responses, maintaining discipline in class, her greatest professional challenge, was caused by her lack of authority:

Самое трудное было с дисциплиной. У меня до сих пор проблемы, потому что я не выгляжу как строгий учитель, и у них такое отношение, как мне завуч сказала, больше как вожатая, страшая сестра. Вот с этим проблемы. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

The biggest challenge was discipline. I still have problems [to maintain discipline in class] because I don't look like a strict teacher, and they [students] perceive me, as the vice president told me, as a leader [in a youth camp], older sister. That's what I have problems with. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

Maintaining discipline is perceived by Anna both as a challenge and a professional achievement. Reflecting on her perceived professional success, Anna admitted that she could maintain discipline better even in problematic groups. According to her, it was much easier to establish her authority and control of the class in elementary school, because students "see her as a teacher, not as some girlfriend" (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview). Similarly to the interview with Elena, the majority of Anna's responses about her self-perceptions as an English teacher did not
touch upon any English related aspects. Anna's biggest concern was her power and authority in class and students' perception of her as a teacher. Anna indicated that only a strict teacher could maintain order and discipline in class. Talking about another challenge she faced in school, Anna admitted that she had difficulties with designing her lesson plans and then implementing them in the classroom. According to her, the reason for that problem was lack of teaching experience "because student teaching and [giving] independent lessons are two different things" (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview). In many of Anna's responses, she expressed lack of professional competence. Apart from being friendly, open, flexible, and not strict enough, she perceived herself as an inexperienced teacher "who hasn't reached over the bar" (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview). Again, by teaching experience Anna referred to methodology and class management, not linguistic or sociocultural competence. Based on her perceptions, her colleagues would describe her as sociable, ready to help, and not experienced enough. Anna's perceived lack of teaching experience prevented her from participation in professional events like conferences, seminars, and contests. She did not find herself competitive, which is captured in the excerpt below:

Пока я не вижу у себя потенциала. Ну не потенциала, может быть, но пока что у меня стремления чем-то поделиться, так что пока я не готова. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

I don't think I have the potential. Well, not potential, maybe, but I don't have any desire to share anything, that's why I'm not ready yet. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

However, Anna noted her professional growth. She claimed that she gained more confidence over her teaching experience. She explicated her claim by reflecting on her improved teaching prowess. She foresaw the outcomes of her beforehand designed lesson plan and was
able to address it to the demeanor of the class by changing the lesson plan either partly or completely. Anna viewed her newly acquired sense of teaching as her main professional success. However, generally Anna preferred to follow her beforehand designed lesson plan because that way "it's easier both for me and children. They know what to do and I know what to do" (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview). Her lesson plans were written exclusively in English for it provided her with a better understanding of what to teach and how:

Атмосфера такая потому что - английский у меня, значит на английском я и должна. В чем смысл на русском?! На русском я и так могу. По-английски как будто сама про себя думаешь, проговариваешь в голове урок весь... (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

Because the atmosphere is like this - I have an English class, then I should use English. What's the point of using Russian?! I can do it in Russian anyway. As if I use my inner voice to construct a lesson in my head in English, walk through [the lesson plan] in my mind... (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

Though Anna reported more confidence when teaching English, she still expressed nervousness before she entered the class. The sinking feeling “not to forget to do something, to revise something” happened before each lesson and before Anna went to bed (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview). Anna indicated that, during lessons, she felt pressure from her responsibility to follow educational and ethical policies as an educator:

...мало ли что не так скажешь ... они все запишут, родителям пожалуются, родители в суд... Поэтому следить нужно за всем, чем можно - и за внешним видом, и за тем, что говоришь, что показываешь и т.д. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)
...in case you say something wrong ... they [students] record everything, complain to parents, the parents go to the court...that's why I have to watch absolutely everything - appearance, what I say, what I show, etc. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

Despite the aforementioned constraint, Anna did not blindly follow the syllabus. Unlike the school vice-president, who was only concerned with "’Программа, работай на результат!’ Как роботы!"("’Syllabus! Be result-oriented!’ Like robots"), Anna aimed to boost students' intrinsic motivation to learn more about the target language and culture through incorporating additional materials:

... я пытаюсь хотя бы иногда им рассказывать то, что не в программе, показать что-то из жизни Англии, США. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

... at least from time to time I try to tell them [students] things that are not in the syllabus, to show them something related to England, America. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

Interestingly, Anna strived to create an image of herself as an authoritative teacher who was able to maintain discipline and order in class. However, she wanted to get her students interested in the target language and culture, and to perceive English not just as a mandatory school subject:

Мне кажется, что самое главное для меня, по крайней мере, это чтобы заинтересовать детей, чтобы они дальше учились, хотя бы смотрели хотя бы фильмы на английском больше, слушали музыку, чтобы им было интересно самим, а не просто в школе...в школе это как, из под палки... (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

I think that the most important thing for me is at least to get my students interested, so that they continue learning English, at least watch movies in English, listen to music in English, so that they find English interesting, not just as a school subject that they have to learn... in school it's like to work under the whip... (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)
Despite Anna's aim to promote the language and culture in her classroom, she put special emphasis on grammar "потому что дополнительная грамматика никогда не помешает" ("because additional grammar practice is never useless") (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview). Anna's students did not always share her goal of inspiring interest and positive attitude toward English. The excerpt below exemplifies Anna's need to shift from a culturally integrated lesson to a more simplified agenda; she had to meet course requirements and to deal with students' low level of English proficiency and non-participation in class:

...мы делали то, что они могут делать - там поискать в словаре, перевести, вставить слова, вот на таком уровне. А то, что они все время конючат "Давайте не делать", я говорю: "Есть программа, надо делать". (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

...we did what they could do, like to search for words in the dictionary, translate, fill in missing words, something at this level. When they whine "Let's skip it [an activity]" I say "There is the syllabus, we must do it". (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

For the same reasons, Anna found it difficult to speak English in class:

Но я стараюсь, конечно, на английском, но тяжело, тяжело в обычных классах разговаривать на английском... даже если вначале понимали, им сложно, и они не пытаются понять, потому что думают, что не поймут. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

I try, of course, to speak English, but it's difficult, difficult in ordinary classes [meaning regular, non-intensive English program] to speak English... even if they understood it [her speaking English] in the beginning, it's difficult for them, and they don't try to understand, because they think they won't understand. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)
The amount of Anna's English speech in class was limited by her students' reluctance to participate in class activities, their low motivation to learn English, and her need to cover the syllabus:

Well, the main things I say in English anyways, something they are supposed to understand "open-close", these main phrases, but the rest can be explained in Russian, so that they at least cover the syllabus, with this it will be easier for them further in school. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

As for the role of English in Anna's life, she claimed that she had "больше [английского] вне школы, чем в школе" ("had more English outside school, than in class") (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview). However, Anna's English functionality outside school was limited to popular media:

... я смотрю сериалы чаще всего на английском, я их не воспринимаю с переводом, если уж совсем никак, то приходится. У меня вся музыка на английском. Ну и если какие-то видео, tutorial хотя бы, это все я смотрю на английском потому, что так-то для меня это не проблема понять, а с переводом искать довольно-таки проблематично. Ну и все инструкции, даже в телефоне, где-то еще, они чаще всего на английском. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

... I watch series more often in English, I don't accept them in translation, but if it's impossible after all, then I have to [to watch in translation]. All my music is in English. Some videos, let's say tutorials, this all I watch in English because it's not a big deal for
me to understand, but it's difficult to find [videos] in translation. And all manuals, for example cell-phone manuals, are in most cases in English. (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

However, when it came to English, Anna could use only listening and reading skills in her daily life. She did not have any opportunity or need to speak English outside school. Her attempts to speak English during her vacations in Greece failed because the locals did not understand her self-perceived high English proficiency. According to Anna, her husband's "Russian accent" was more comprehensible to the Greek rather than "her" English:

Ну, с путешествиями, к сожалению, никак. Конечно, я пыталась в прошлом году в Греции, но у них такой английский, поэтому я просила мужа говорить. Я говорю: "У тебя акцент русский, и они его скорее поймут, чем мой. Мой английский они не понимают". (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

It [speaking English] didn't work on vacations. Of course, I tried last year in Greece but they had such English [meaning low level] that I asked my husband to talk. I told him: "You have Russian accent, and they most probably will understand it rather than mine. They don't understand my English". (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

**Interpretive Analysis of Anna’s Data**

Learning and teaching English was never Anna's priority. Anna was always pushed by her significant others toward learning and, then later, teaching English. By the time of data collection, Anna had been working as a teacher of English in a public school for three years. Her attitude toward teaching and being a teacher has changed drastically, from absolute rejection to full acceptance. Anna reported feeling quite confident as a teacher of English. However, her perceptions of self as an English teacher were contradicting. Thinking about the way she felt in
class, Anna compared herself with a stage director and claimed to be "pleased" whenever she could exercise her power and authority in class (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview). On the other hand, she described herself as a too soft, friendly, flexible, and open to suggestions from her students teacher. However, for Anna it was not easy to create an image of a strict teacher and establish her authority in class, mostly because of her youth. According to her perceptions, she was perceived as a "leader [in a youth camp]", "older advisor", and/or "older sister" by her students. Anna's feelings and self-perceptions as an English teacher were mostly related to her authority in class, and her ability to maintain discipline. Anna's teaching philosophy, teaching style, and teaching methods were also contradictory. Though Anna strived to create an image of herself as an authoritative teacher, she aimed to get her students interested in the target language and culture, and to perceive English as more than a mandatory school subject. Despite Anna's aim to promote the language and culture in her classroom, she used mostly grammar translation method. Due to her students' reluctance to participate in class activities and low motivation to learn English, Anna found it difficult to speak English in class. However, her lesson plan was written exclusively in English. The teacher claimed that used more English outside of school than she did inside. However, Anna did not have any opportunity or need to speak English outside school. Though Anna was confident about her language skills, she found herself a not enough experienced teacher. Generally speaking, Anna was positive about her teaching experiences and planned to participate in various professional events, both locally and internationally.
"Teaching English is like Driving a Car, Requires Experience": Olga's Perception of Self as an English Teacher

Olga had been teaching English for three years by the time of her participation in my study in July 2014. As Elena and Anna, Olga conducted English lessons in elementary, middle, and high school, in a general education institution in Petrozavodsk.

Her foreign language journey started in elementary school with the German language. Olga had been learning German throughout her general education for ten years, and then for five years in the department of foreign languages at the pedagogical university. She started learning English in middle school and got immediately interested in the target language and culture. Her successful English learning experiences fueled her desire to take extra English lessons, and then to enter the department of foreign languages:

It was really interesting to me to learn and speak English, to find out something new about English speaking countries. So, I was successful in it and decided to continue this way. (Olga, July 27, 2014, linguistic autobiography)

Similar to Elena, Olga was enrolled in a German-English program; she majored in German and minored in English. Similarly to Elena and Anna, Olga took English centered courses since the 3rd semester (out of 10 semesters). Olga student taught German in the 4th year of her studies and both languages (German and English) during her 9th semester in the program (the 5th year of studies). Olga graduated cum laude. She was granted a specialist degree in teaching German and English.

Though it was Olga's deliberate choice to apply for the foreign language teacher program, she planned to work as an interpreter upon graduation:
I didn’t want to be a teacher in the future, I really believed that it was not my thing to teach children. (Olga, July 27, 2014, linguistic autobiography)

However, Olga's experiences in the teacher training program made her reconsider her career plans. Her interest in learning English evolved into a desire to teach English:

...after studying for 4 years at the university [Olga mean studying specifically English because she was studying German for 5 years in the university] I understood that I began to like teaching English. I learned a lot from my teachers, so I decided to try myself as an English teacher. (Olga, July 27, 2014, linguistic autobiography).

Before Olga secured a teaching position, she had been on maternity leave for two years. During the interview, Olga indicated that a two-year break greatly impacted her first teaching endeavors. On this matter, Olga confessed that it was difficult for her to speak English fluently in class:

Сложно было мне беспрепятственно говорить, то есть поэтому я всё себе писала полностью и уже, естественно, если что, я себе подглядывала... просто забылись какие-то слова или, например, я знаю, что я их знаю, но иногда путаюсь немного в переводе. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

It was hard for me to speak fluently. I had to write everything down and in some cases I glanced [at her lesson plan]...I just forgot some words, or for example, I know that I know them [the words] but sometimes I get confused a bit with their meanings. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

Olga's English production problem was complicated by a psychological barrier. She reported to be afraid of making mistakes while speaking English in class, and consequently, of ruining her authority as a teacher. Her concerns are vividly captured in the response below:
Даже если я могла спокойно говорить, я это делала медленно, то есть я боялась ошибиться, потому что дети умные, и естественно, это им бы почувствовалось. Они бы почувствовали такую слабину учителя, и это бы потерялся бы авторитет. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

Even if I could speak normally I did it slowly. In other words, I was afraid to make a mistake because children are smart and of course they would feel it [mistake]. They [students] would feel a weak point of the teacher and the authority would go away. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

Olga's fear to lose her authority as a teacher was complicated by another problem she faced during her first years of teaching. Similarly to Anna's case, Olga's students did not perceive her as a teacher, and therefore they did not see her as an authority figure due to her young age:

Они, естественно, воспринимали молодого учителя не как учителя. Они пытались каким-то образом привлечь к себе внимание, и поставить себя выше их было очень сложно... (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

They [students, specifically in high school] certainly perceived a young teacher not as a teacher. They tried to attract attention to them, and it was very difficult to put myself above them [students]... (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

Olga claimed that thorough preparation for each lesson, particularly a detailed lesson plan which she could look at any time during a lesson, helped her to cope with her English production difficulties and strengthen her authority as a teacher:

Неее, ничего не делала, просто я говорила, я готовилась дома, но когда-то, может быть, более внимательно прописывала свою речь, более подробно, по крайней
Hands-on experience provided Olga with more confidence and competence, both linguistically and professionally. Over the course of three years of teaching English, her lesson plan was still written exclusively in English but became much more concise. It contained just the main information regarding class agenda such as activities, guidelines, exercise numbers, work modes (pairs, groups, individually), time, and an occasional "умная фраза" ("smart phrase") (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview). After three years of teaching English, Olga stressed the stark difference between the length, content, language, and, most importantly, the role of her lesson plan in the classroom:

During the first year of teaching, since I had been on maternity leave for two years, all my guidelines were in English and let's say there was an explanation [in Russian] in parentheses... though now, most interestingly, I don't write in Russian... so I used to think through all phrases, what alternatives could be, what we could discuss, wrote different scenarios but now I do it off the top of my head... (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)
Olga's self-perceptions as an English teacher underwent significant transformations. As stated earlier, the two-year maternity leave greatly affected Olga's first year of teaching English. The challenges Olga had in the beginning of her teaching career, including her insecurities about her English proficiency, her fear to make mistakes, and students' resistance to perceive her as an authoritative figure, caused profound loss of confidence and self-perceived status as an English teacher:

... в первые годы было сложно этого добиться, потому что сама себя чувствовала неуверенно, я сама была в себе не уверена, потому что если бы сразу после университета пошла, сразу после практики, было бы какое-то более четкое понимание того, что у меня статус учителя, и это должно приниматься детьми как бы то ни было... А тут была такая неуверенность... вообще поставить себя было невозможно. Они [ученики] просто, бывало, даже с абсолютным неуважением относились, считая меня чуть ли не студентом, хотя я их старше была значительно намного. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

... during the first years [of teaching] it was hard to gain it [respect] because I felt not confident, I was not confident about myself, because if I had started teaching right after graduation, right after the practicum, I would have had some clearer understanding of my status as a teacher and students would have taken it for granted... But I was so unconfident... it was impossible to position myself as a teacher. They [students] treated me absolutely disrespectfully at times, lowering my status to their level, though I was much older than they were. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)
After three years of teaching English at all school levels, Olga's self-perception as an English teacher changed drastically. She felt her power and she noticed students' changed attitude toward her:

Ну, я комфортно себя ощущаю. Ну я чувствую свой авторитет. Даже в старших классах, в любом случае... Чувствую уважение от них. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)


The turning point in Olga's perceptions of self as an English teacher happened after she gained an empowering teaching experience. Her thorough preparation for each lesson, as well as determination to establish her authority and credibility as an English teacher enhanced her self-perceptions as a teacher of English. Olga's response about her current feelings and self-perceptions as an English teacher expressed her strong confidence and perceived professional and linguistic competence:

...я сама поняла сама для себя, что я действительно могу, и я умею, и ничего здесь страшного нет, барьер этот я перешла... Почувствовала, что все у меня в порядке, мне в принципе ничего бояться-стесняться, и все хорошо - и речь, и знания – все это есть, просто надо было из глубины откуда-то достать и поверить в себя. Ну, и собственно и все. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

...I realized that I really could [teach English], and I know how to do it, and there is nothing terrifying here, and I overcame that barrier...I felt that I [as a teacher] was fine, I had nothing to be afraid-ashamed of, everything was good - speaking, knowledge - I had
it all, I just needed to get it from the back of my head and believe in myself. Well, that's it, in fact. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview).

According to Olga, the level of her comfort and confidence as a teacher of English is directly proportional to her years of teaching experience. The more she taught, the more confidently she perceived herself. On this matter, she compared teaching with driving a car, highlighting the complexity of teaching and schooling, teachers' prescribed duties, and responsibilities:

Набравшись опыта и, ну как сказать, мыслю намного быстрее. Я стала понимать, что я могу какие-то вещи делать сходу... Это же все равно не так легко в кучу все собрать. Это как на машине водить, надо и рукой, и ногой, и головой. И на светофоры, и на пешеходов смотреть. То же самое и здесь – увидеть все нюансы - кто тебя не слушает, кто отвлекается, было сложно. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

Having gained some experience, how to say it, I think faster. I realized I could do some things on the fly... Any way, it's not that easy to put everything together. It's like driving a car. You have to use both your hand, your leg, your head. To watch both traffic lights and pedestrians. The same here [in class] - to watch all details - who is misbehaving, who got distracted, it was difficult. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

Her personal and professional interests, as well as gained confidence motivated Olga to participate in two competitions for English teachers. The first one was Russian-wide and the second one was targeting English teachers from the former Soviet republics. In both contests, Olga designed and implemented a lesson plan her classroom, created a presentation for an English lesson using an interactive whiteboard, and finally, organized a workshop in the school where she was working. In both competitions Olga received the second prize. Among the reasons to participate, Olga mentioned the following:
Это было моё личное желание. Во-первых, на категорию. Во-вторых, честно говоря, мне эта тема давным давно была интересна, потому что я её не понимала (здоровьесберегающие технологии). (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

It was my personal will. First of all, to get the first qualification grade\textsuperscript{24}. Secondly, I had been interested in the topic [preventative health promotion] for a long time because I did not understand it. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

Olga's teaching philosophy stemmed from her own English learning and teaching experiences. Having overcome the fear to speak English herself, Olga aimed to empower her students to use the target language in order to express themselves. She encouraged her students to speak up in class and to be unafraid of mistakes, as she believed them to be a part of learning the language.

Drawing on her own English learning experiences, Olga justified her main aim as an English teacher as follows:

Вот я думаю, как раз таки эта цель и есть - не бояться высказываться на языке, потому что у меня у самой была такая проблема в школе; я очень была стеснительная, и даже если я знала как ответить на вопрос, мне сложно было перейти этот барьер и произнести все свои мысли на языке, поэтому я детей к этому и веду, чтобы они не стеснялись, пусть они скажут с ошибками, но они скажут. Я их подправлю, но при этом похвалю. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

I think this is actually my aim - to teach them [students] how to be unafraid to speak English because I had the same problem in school. I was very silent and even if I knew the answer it was hard for me to overcome that barrier and deliver all my thoughts in English. That's why I teach my students this, so that they are not silent in class, even if

\textsuperscript{24} See page 22 for more information about teacher qualification upgrade.
they say something with mistakes, what matters is that they say it (her emphasis), I'll correct them but at the same time I'll praise them. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

In order to motivate her students to speak the target language, Olga found it crucial to speak English in class. However, she pointed out that the amount of her English speech depended on the school level (elementary, middle, and high) and students' individual characteristics. Even when teaching Grammar in high school, she tried to use English in addition to Russian though, according to the language policy, English grammar should be explained in Russian at any school level. Olga's perceived professional success was also related to the development of her students' speaking skills. She provided an example of the group she had taught for two years. The students in that group were mostly silent. According to Olga, they "боялись говорить" ("were afraid to speak [English]" because previously they "только переводили, только делали упражнения, они никогда не говорили" ("only translated, just did exercises, they never talked") (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview). Olga claimed that she created a variety of activities to make the students speak "хотя бы по фразе, дальше по предложению" ("at least a phrase, then a sentence") (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview). After two years of hard work, she organized a demo lesson in that group to acknowledge her students' progress and encourage them to maintain good working habits. She concluded her response about professional success as follows:

...в конце концов они стали высказываться уже по 3-4 предложения ... кто-то чуть меньше, но они стали говорить и перестали бояться отвечать на вопрос. Ну вот, наверно, это самый большой мой успех. Olga, July 23, 2014, interview).

...eventually they [students] started speak out already with 3-4 sentences...some - a bit fewer, but they started to speak out and stopped being afraid to answer a question. Well, that's probably my biggest success. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)
Though Olga claimed that she focused predominantly on developing students' speaking skills, she also paid much attention to English Grammar. As stated earlier, Olga encouraged students' to speak up and never be afraid of mistakes. However, she noted that she usually corrected students' mistakes. Also, the second professional success Olga provided an example of a Grammar rule which every student in one of her groups learned thoroughly.

Based on Olga's responses, she constructed different images of self as a teacher depending on a group of students. According to her perceptions, some of her students would describe her as a kind teacher. Olga explained it in the following way:

"...есть такие классы, котрым я позволяю слабости, потому что они очень ответственные. Они очень изумительные дети, и я к ним по-доброму отношусь." (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

"...there are groups which I allow more, because they are very responsible. They are wonderful children, and I treat them in a kind way." (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

However, sometimes she "приходится вести себя по-разному" ("has to behave differently") in order to "в жестких рамках их [учеников] держать" ("hold them [students] within strict limits") (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview). With this in mind, Olga assumed that some of her students would definitely describe her as a strict teacher. As for Olga's self-perceived image as an English teacher, she named responsibility, her readiness for each class, as her primary characteristic as a teacher of English. Furthermore, she described herself as an understanding and soft teacher, because her own English learning journey was not easy. She asserted that she attempted to address her students' needs and characteristics, be open to them, to compromise, and to negotiate. As for her colleagues, she assumed they perceived her "нейтрально, может быть, позитивно" ("neutral, maybe positive") and also would mention her responsibility. Though I
asked Olga to describe herself as an English teacher, her responses were focused on the general principles behind her teaching philosophy. In the description of herself as an English teacher, Olga did not specifically mention any English-related aspects and/or characteristics of herself as an English teacher. However, answering another question she pointed out her motivation to further develop her language skills:

...иногда бывает так, что проверяешь себя, потому что попадаются какие-то там сложные статьи, которые порой без словаря не переведешь, потому что ну термины, полно же лексики, которую в обиходе не встречаешь. И мне вот интересно, насколько я понимаю, т.е. мне интересно развивать саму себя, в том числе в английском языке, потому что я на 100% знаю, что я не на 100% знаю английский язык. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

...sometimes it happens so that I check myself, because there are some difficult articles, which it's impossible to translate without a dictionary because of terminology, there are lots of words, which you don't face in daily life. And I'm interested to find out how much I understand, in other words, I'm interested in self-development, including English, because I'm 100% sure that I don't know English 100% well (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview).

After struggling through her introductory years of teaching, Olga felt satisfied with her performance as a teacher of English, as well as with her job in general:

So, nowadays I am an English teacher and I really like what I do. I enjoy speaking English, enjoy teaching children and I don’t want to change anything in my life. (Olga, July 27, 2014, linguistic autobiography)
Thinking about the role of English in her life, Olga relegated it predominantly to her professional sphere of life:

Английский это что [пауза] нет, ну в моей жизни это, конечно, много значит. Во-первых, это моя профессия, карьера, ну т.е. в любом случае пол жизни связано с ним, потому что приходя на работу, готовясь к своей работе, все равно ты только с языком. Очень мне нравится, естественно, конечно, слушать что-то на английском языке, читать... (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

English is (pause) well, in my life it, of course, means a lot. Firstly, it's my job, career. Well, in any way half of my life is connected to English. Going to work, getting ready for it, in any case you use only English. I like to, obviously, of course, listen to something in English, read... (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

**Interpretative Analysis of Olga’s Data**

Inspired by her foreign language teacher education experiences, Olga decided to invest herself into teaching. She graduated cum laude from the pedagogical university with a specialist degree in teaching German and English. Olga majored in German throughout all her general and higher education, for 10 and 5 years respectively. However, she felt passionate about the English language which she started learning as a minor in middle school. Olga had been on maternity leave for two years before she secured a teaching position. By the time of the data collection, Olga had been teaching English for 3 years at all school levels (elementary, middle, and high).

Olga's aim as a teacher of English, which was to motivate students to speak up in class, stemmed from her personal English learning and teaching experiences. As a student, Olga used to be a silent student and felt it difficult to express her opinions in English in class. As a novice English teacher, Olga experienced the same difficulty. She claimed that a two year maternity leave
negatively affected her language skills. Olga's insecurities about her English proficiency were complicated by her fear to make a mistake, which would ruin her authority as a teacher. As a young educator, Olga found it challenging to establish her authority and credibility as an English teacher. Olga's self- and professional development as well as thorough preparation for each class improved her English skills and enhanced her perceptions of self as an English teacher. Not only Olga managed to overcome the language barrier, but also some of her students. She perceived her students' new enthusiasm to express themselves in English as her biggest professional success. Gained confidence as well as personal and professional interests motivated Olga to participate in two competitions for English teachers. Though Olga perceived herself as a confident and competent English teacher, she expressed her interest in professional development. Speaking broadly, Olga was satisfied with her performance as a teacher of English. Apart from school and preparation for classes, Olga hardly ever used English for personal purposes.

"My Dream of Becoming a Teacher Came True. Now I am a Happy Teacher of English":

**Darina's Perception of Self as an English Teacher**

Darina had been teaching English in a public school for three years by the time of the data collection. However, it should be mentioned that she had been on maternity leave from February 2013 to January 2014. Darina is the only participant in my study who applied for a teacher education program with the intent to teach English after graduation. For Darina, becoming a teacher was not just a career choice, but a personal dream:

When at school I have always dreamed of this wonderful profession... After graduating my dream of becoming a teacher came true. (Darina, July 10, 2014, linguistic autobiography)
Darina's passion about learning and teaching English manifested itself in middle school. She got inspired by her successful English learning experiences, as well as by her English teacher and parents:

English was my favorite subject, I liked this language from the very beginning of my study. My English teacher is a great woman. She inspired me to devote my life to English. Also my parents helped me much. My father tried to help me learn English words. (Darina, July 10, 2014, linguistic autobiography)

Darina demonstrated persistence and determination in achieving her educational and professional dream. Her first attempt to apply for the pedagogical university was not successful. So, Darina entered the Department of Teaching English in the pedagogical college, a type of a postsecondary educational institution (not higher) in Russia which provides basic professional education. After one academic year in the college, Darina reentered the pedagogical university and was accepted into the Finnish-English program. Similarly to the previous participants, Darina minored in English while Finnish was her major. Darina was supposed to student teach Finnish in the 4th year of studies and both Finish and English in the 5th year of studies. However, unlike my other participants, Darina was officially employed as a teacher of English during both of her teaching practicums; she taught Finnish as an elective. Instead of teaching English twice a week under the supervision of a mentor teacher (as proposed by the curriculum of the teacher training program), Darina had a teaching load of around 35 hours per week. In addition to conducting classes, she maintained paper work and other teacher responsibilities during the practicums. In 2011, she obtained a specialist degree in teaching Finnish and English. After graduation, Darina taught English at all school levels (elementary, middle, and high) in a rural setting. That school, however, was special for her because she had studied there herself, and
then worked there as a teacher of English during her practicums. After a year, Darina moved to the town of Kostomuksha and was employed in a gymnasium, a type of a secondary education institution in Russia with an emphasis on humanities and arts. There she taught English in elementary and middle schools. Apart from conducting English lessons, Darina was a classroom teacher.

Similar to Olga's, Darina's teaching philosophy focused on developing her students' communicative skills and overcoming their fear of speaking English:

Цель - чтобы дети заговорили на английском, могли общаться, если выйдут в какую-то англоязычную страну или встретятся с человеком, который знает язык, чтобы они могли объясниться, не стесняясь, не боясь. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

Aim - so that children start speaking English, be able to communicate if they go to some English-speaking country or meet a person who speaks English, so that they [students] can explain themselves, without any shyness, without any fear. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview).

Though Darina's students had a rather low level of English proficiency, Darina claimed that she tried to speak more English than Russian in her class. She implemented the communicative language teaching method, while her predecessor had used grammar-translation. For this reason, according to Darina, her students had difficulties in comprehending and responding to her English speech. On this matter, she argued:

...им непривычно, видимо, потому что тот учитель, они там не разговаривали вообще, они просто переводили тексты. Они даже не понимали меня сначала. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)
...probably, they [students] are not used to [English in class] because that teacher, they didn't talk at all [in English], they just translated texts. They [students] didn't even understand me in the beginning. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

Nevertheless, Darina was consistent with her main aim as a teacher of English, which is to develop her students' communicative skills. In order to stimulate her students to use more English in class, she tried to respond in English to all their questions, even if they were in Russian:

Даже если они мне задают вопрос там, допустим, на русском языке, то я им все равно отвечаю по-английски. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

Even if they [students] ask me a question in Russian, I answer it in English. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

However, it should be noted that Darina wrote her lesson plans in Russian habitually.

Considering her students' level of English proficiency, as well as their learning styles and personal characteristics, Darina did not expect them to speak correctly, either grammatically or syntactically. Rather, she fostered their motivation and attempts to speak English. Similar to Olga's perspective, Darina believed that mistakes were a natural part of a learning process. On this account, she said:

Я им всегда говорю "Ошибайтесь, ничего страшного, хоть как-то скажите". (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

I always tell them, "Make mistakes, there is nothing wrong about it, at least say something [in English]". (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

The main challenges Darina faced during her first years of teaching English were also related to students' low English proficiency. During the interview, she confided that the textbooks
proposed by the curriculum did not address the students' low English proficiency. So, she had to redesign the syllabi and teaching aids for each group. Apart from that, Darina indicated that she had to accelerate the pace of her syllabi in order to meet the federal educational requirements. Like Elena and Olga, Darina perceived her students' progress in learning English as her biggest professional success. Darina claimed that one of her students was among the winners in an all-Russia competition of the English language. Reflecting on her teaching and students' learning, she highlighted relative progression of her students' performance in English, and attributed their progress to her professional achievements:

*Для меня достижение, что они хотя бы начали что-то говорить, потому что я пришла, они вообще молчали.* (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

*For me this is an achievement, that they [students] started to speak up something, because when I came [to that school], they were really silent.* (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

During the interview, Darina shared that her students' success empowered her as a teacher of English. She reported feeling pleased when her students were doing their best in her class:

*Ну, и мне, конечно, приятно, что они начинают что-то понимать, разговаривать хотя бы пытаются.* (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

*Well, it's pleasant, of course for me, that they [students] started to understand something, at least to try to talk [in English].* (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

Thinking about her feelings and perceptions as an English teacher, Darina clearly asserted that she had become more confident, not in terms of the language production (as in Olga's case), but methodologically:
Ну, я, конечно, поуверенней стала себя чувствовать. В каких-то моментах уже знаю, как себя вести, и если в каких-то моментах что-то не получается, знаю, как это исправить. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

Well, of course, I started feeling more confident. In some cases, I already know how to behave, if in some cases I have troubles doing something, I know how to fix it. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

In her response, she explicated the difference between the teaching contexts she had experienced (in the rural school and the gymnasium). The transition from pre- to in-service teaching was smooth for Darina since she was familiar with the rural school; she had felt very comfortable there as an English teacher. While conversely, in the gymnasium, "коллектив был новый, дети другие, больше человек в классе" ("the staff was new, the children were different, [and there were] more students in class") (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview). According to Darina, her lack of confidence was caused only by the new working conditions. She claimed that in the gymnasium she felt confident about her professional preparedness and English competence because she was teaching at elementary and middle school:

В силу того, что я работала с малышами, у меня не было такой неуверенности, потому что в прошлом году у меня были дети до 5 класса. Когда я пришла в гимназию, поэтому не было неуверенности в своей профессиональной подготовке. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

Since I was working with kids, I was confident, because last year I taught kids in elementary school and 5th graders. When I came to the gymnasium, that's why I was confident about my professional preparedness. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)
Darina's adjustment to the new school conditions is reflected in her perceptions of self as an English teacher. As mentioned above, one of the reasons for Darina's lack of confidence was the new teaching staff. In her opinion, her colleagues would describe her as a reserved, shy, and calm teacher. However, she would describe herself as a sociable and cheerful teacher. As Darina indicated during the interview, she distanced herself from her considerably older colleagues; this positionality explains the contradictions between her perceptions of herself and her perceived colleagues' attitudes toward her. Apart from that, as the majority of my participants, Darina mentioned the idea of discipline and thus the necessity for being strict in class. She perceived herself as a strict but understanding teacher of English. As for her students, she felt that they would also call her strict, demanding, and merry. Similarly to the rest of my participants, Darina did not express any English-related aspects, though the interview questions targeted her perceptions specifically as an English teacher.

Darina was satisfied with the quality of her professional preparedness and did not mention any difficulties related to her English proficiency either as a student or a teacher. Regardless, she kept developing her English skills, particularly grammar, vocabulary, and receptive skills (listening and reading):

Хотелось бы, конечно, совершенствовать. Я сейчас стараюсь, если есть свободное время, постоянно там что-то, делать какие-то задания, находить там, смотреть видео, новости в интернете... решать стараюсь какие-то тесты сложные, находить, упражнения тоже всякие делать, слова учить...Фильмы смотрю. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

Of course, I'd like to develop [my English proficiency]. I do my best now, if there is free time... to do some activities, to find, watch videos, the news in the internet... I try to do
some difficult quizzes, to find, to do some exercises, to learn vocabulary... [I] watch movies [in English]. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

During the interview, Darina's enthusiasm and excitement about teaching English was obvious. Her commitment to teaching can be justified by her relatively short maternity leave. Though women in Russia can be on maternity leave up to three years, Darina had been away from teaching English in school only for half a year. It should be noted that, during the maternity leave, Darina taught English to kids twice a week in a private English course. Due to her personal reasons (marriage, birth of her daughter, moving from the village to the town), Darina did not have enough spare time to participate in professional events. However, she volunteered to become a school representative for an all-Russia English proficiency competition for general education students. She found the competition in the Internet, planned, and organized the competition in the school where she was teaching. Thinking about the source of her initiative, she said:

Мне интересно это все, мне вообще очень нравится в школе работать. Посмотреть результаты, мне интересно было, как они напишут работу эту, вообще какой у них уровень. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

It's all interesting to me. I like to work in school very much. I was interested to see students' results, how they would perform, what [English proficiency] level they had.

(Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

During the interview, Darina shared her professional goals. Similarly to Olga, Darina was determined to upgrade her teacher qualification. Furthermore, she would be willing to participate in professional events, both locally and internationally:
Я хочу развиваться и дальше, категорию получить и так далее, и в конкурсах поучаствовать и в местных, и в региональных. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

I want to further develop myself, to get the first teacher qualification grade and so on, and to take part in competitions both local and international. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

Both in her linguistic autobiography and during the interview, Darina expressed her love and commitment, not only to teaching English but also to the language itself. She attributed great meaning and importance to the role English played in her life. Her teaching journey started with a childhood dream to become an English teacher, which later developed into her deliberate choice to become an English teacher:

After graduating my dream of becoming a teacher came true. Now I am a happy teacher of English in a beautiful town. I like my profession very much. (Darina, July 10, 2014, linguistic autobiography)

Thinking about the role of English in her life Darina confided her passion for English:

Для меня английский (думает) - это моя, прежде всего, работа, это моя любовь с детства... Для меня это призвание, наверно. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

For me, English (pause) is first of all my job, this is my love since childhood... For me it's my calling, probably. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

**Interpretive Analysis of Darina’s Data**

Since early childhood, Darina wanted to become a teacher of English. After her application to the pedagogical university was rejected, Darina entered the pedagogical college (not university). After one academic year, Darina was enrolled in a Finnish-English program at

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25 See page 22 for more information about teacher qualifications.
the pedagogical university. Though Darina majored in Finnish, she worked as a teacher of English during both of her practicums. After graduation, Darina obtained a teaching position in the rural setting where she had taught English during her practicums. She taught English at all school levels, including elementary, middle, and high. The only problem Darina had during her first year of teaching was her students' low level of English proficiency and consequently, a mismatch between the textbooks and the students' language abilities. Later, Darina moved to the town of Kostomuksha where she was employed as a teacher of English in elementary and middle schools in the local gymnasium. Unlike the rural school, the gymnasium was a totally new experience for her. Due to the new teaching setting and the unfamiliar staff, Darina reported feeling a lack of confidence. However, she was satisfied with the quality of her professional preparedness and language skills. As an English teacher, Darina aimed to develop her students' speaking skills so that they could use English for their own purposes. In order to gauge her students' English skills, Darina organized an all-Russia English proficiency competition in the gymnasium, on a voluntary basis. She perceived her students' progress in English as her biggest professional success. Darina was also motivated to maintain and develop her English competence through quizzes, grammar exercises, and popular media. Furthermore, she was determined to participate in local and international professional events and upgrade her teaching qualifications. She perceived English foremost as her job, but also as her greatest passion. She described herself as a strict but merry teacher who met her students' interests and needs. In her linguistic autobiography, Darina described herself as a happy teacher and a happy woman whose professional dream came true.
"Me in Class and Me during Recess are Two Different Persons": Nina's Perception of Self as an English Teacher

Nina had finished her second year of teaching English by the time of my data collection in August 2014. She experienced teaching in two different contexts. During her first year, Nina was teaching English at all school levels (elementary, middle, and high) in a public school in Petrozavodsk. Later, she moved to St. Petersburg where she was teaching English only in elementary school (grades 1-4).

Like the other study participants, Nina started learning English in elementary school. Looking back at her English learning journey, she noted that English lessons at school were not appealing to her. Only when Nina attended an English drama club, she became motivated to learn English. In her linguistic autobiography, she wrote the following:

At school my English classes were not so exciting and interesting. That's why I went to English school "English + theatre". From that moment I realized that I wanted to learn foreign language. (Nina, August 13, 2014, linguistic autobiography)

Nina's growing interest in English made her apply for the Department of Foreign Languages at the pedagogical university. However, as with all of my participants except Darina, Nina did not consider teaching as one of her career options upon graduation:

I have never thought that I will be an English teacher. (Nina, 13 August, 2014, linguistic autobiography)

Nina is the only participant in my study who majored in English. Similarly to all my participants, she student taught English (her major) in the 4th year of her university studies, and English and German (her minor) in the 5th year. Nina obtained a specialist degree in teaching English and German in 2012. Where Elena and Olga's perspectives changed due to successful student
teaching experiences, Nina's perspective on teaching English was affected by her ability to communicate with people from all over the world:

Talking with people all around the world is the best present ever! After that [traveling abroad] I realized that I wanted to teach other people. (Nina, August 13, 2014, linguistic autobiography).

Nina's teaching philosophy was shaped by her personal experiences as an English learner and speaker. As stated above, Nina decided to teach English to children after she enjoyed her privilege of speaking English abroad. Though formulated broadly, Nina's aim as an English teacher emphasized the cultivation of her students' agency to participate in global communication. Nina expressed her opinion regarding the importance of speaking English, saying the following:

На самом деле, считаю, что люди должны изучать. Это настолько приятно, когда ты куда-то приезжаешь и можешь говорить, болтать. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

In fact, I believe that people should learn [English]. It feels that much [more] pleasant, when you come somewhere and can speak, chat [in English]. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

For her, the ability to speak English meant the ability to express oneself. Nina formulated her aim as an English teacher as follows:

... научить, дать детям возможность как-то раскрыться больше. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

... to teach, to provide children with more chances for self-expression. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)
Like Darina, Nina wrote succinct lesson plans in Russian. Similarly to Darina and Olga, Nina focused on developing students' communicative skills. She aimed to empower her students by developing their motivation to learn and speak English. She perceived it as her professional responsibility to promote the usefulness of learning and speaking English in modern world. Her teaching philosophy reflects these perspectives:

Научить говорить, понимать речь, и самое главное, чтобы они поняли, что им это нужно, что им это в жизни пригодиться, потому что даже некоторые родители по-прежнему считают, что английский не нужен. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

To teach them how to speak [English], understand English, and most importantly, to explain to them that they need it, that it will come in handy in their future lives, because even some parents still think that there is no need in English. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

For this reason, Nina found project work most effective in teaching English because projects emphasized students' action, interaction, and sense of autonomy. Also, Nina stressed the importance of speaking English in class. Only because of the age of her students and their beginner level of English proficiency, Nina combined English and Russian in her classroom. According to Nina, "чем старше, тем больше языка я ввожу" ("The older students are, the more English I speak in class") (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview). Maintaining discipline in class was another teaching principle that Nina constructed based on her previous experiences. She formulated it as follows: "Лучше дисциплина, больше результата" ("The better discipline is the better results are") (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview). Following this principle, Nina created an authoritative image of herself as a teacher. Thinking about the way she felt in class, Nina highlighted the stark difference between her feelings and behaviors, in and out of class:
Я учитель очень строгий, требующий, ну наверно, справедливый. У меня поблажек на уроке не бывает. Несмотря на это, дети любят меня... На самом деле какая я на уроке и, допустим, на перемене - два разных человека. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

I'm a very strict, demanding, well, probably fair, teacher. I don't give my students an easy time. Nevertheless, children like me... In fact, me in class and me during recess are two different persons. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

Nina described herself as a strict, demanding, but fair teacher of English. She also mentioned being creative and patient. Thinking about how her students would describe her, Nina noticed the paradox between her image as an authoritative teacher and students' positive attitude toward her. Nina felt that her students "loved" her. She believed they would describe her as a nice and "for some reasons kind" teacher, though according to Nina, "доброты особо на уроке нет" ("there is no kindness at all in class") (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview). As for Nina's colleagues, Nina had two different experiences communicating with peer teachers. First, at the school in St. Petersburg, Nina established positive interactions with her colleagues. She believed that they would note her responsibility and readiness to help. She claimed that her peer teachers provided her with guidance and advice when needed:

Мне нравится коллектив. Ну, коллектив пятьдесят на пятьдесят - и молодые, и кто уже с опытом. Кто с опытом со мной делились этим опытом, мне помогали, подсказывали... (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

I like the teaching staff. The staff is fifty-fifty, both young and those already having experience. Those with experience shared that experience with me, helped me, directed...

(Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)
Conversely, at the school in Petrozavodsk, interactions with her peer teachers were Nina's biggest challenge as a novice teacher of English. The teaching community did not accept the newcomer. Nina could not find any reason for such a negative response aside from her status as a novice teacher:

... потому что я была, наверно, единственная самая молодая, поэтому меня не очень-то любили почему-то. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

... because I was probably the only young teacher, that's why they [my colleagues] didn't really like me for some reason. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

Nina believed that the teachers from the school in Petrozavodsk would describe her as a "молодая вертихвостка... с завышенной самооценкой... ни с кем не хочет сама общаться" ("young prima donna... with an inflated ego... [who] does not want to interact with anyone") (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview). Nina's status as an outsider and lack of support from her peer-teachers complicated Nina's transition from the teacher education program into in-service teaching. During the first year of teaching, Nina experienced considerable difficulties in implementing teaching practices and completing required paper work. During the interview, she highlighted the gap between the knowledge acquired in her teacher training program and its practical application:

В прицнипе, сложности были во всем сначала, потому что в универсе, вроде как, и научили, но практики не было практически никакой и касаемо всего: как заполнить журнал, то есть сколько домашнего задания задавать, и особо никто не помогал в этом, не подсказывал, поэтому учились всему сама. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

In fact, I had difficulties with everything in the beginning because they sort of taught us in the university, but there was mostly no hands-on experience regarding everything -
how to fill in class registers, how much homework to give students, no one helped, no one assisted, that's why I learnt everything myself. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

Through trial and error, Nina gained valuable teaching experience and a sense of self-dependency which helped her to construct her own teaching style. In particular, she mentioned how she internalized the way she would approach her classes; in other words, she "разработала в голове свой урок" ("constructed [her] lesson in [her] head") (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview). Based on her students' performance, Nina realized that her teaching methods were effective. Nina perceived her professional growth, illustrated by her effective teaching, as her greatest professional success:

Based on students' performance, I see that there is progress and I work well... Well, probably, the biggest reward - many parents thank me, because I improved the children's performance profoundly. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

Navigating through her teaching experiences, Nina acquired a habit of self-reflection, a critical analysis of her teaching that she also considered as a sign of her professional development:

I understand what, where, how. I understand what I do well, what I do badly, what I need to change, what I need to work on. Now I have a clear understanding [of teaching] and there is a desire to teach so far. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)
Adjustment to teaching prevented Nina from participation in professional events. Nina claimed that she would like to participate in conferences, both locally and internationally, in the future. Nina's interest in professional events was similar to Darina's and Olga's. First of all, Nina wanted to get more knowledge of subject matter and to upgrade her teacher qualification (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview).

While Olga, Darina, and Elena considered English to be either a job or a hobby, Nina pinpointed the communicative role of English in her life. Originally, it was travelling and the ability to communicate with people that inspired Nina to teach English. During the interview, she expressed her privilege to understand and be understood by others via the English language:

Английский в моей жизни - это большой подарок и плюс, потому что везде, где я могу его применить, когда могу именно общаться с людьми, понимать людей из разных стран - это больше чудо... Конечно, хорошо, что помогает мне в работе, это тоже большой плюс, но вот именно для себя, что я могу общаться с другими людьми - это чудо какое-то. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

English in my life is a big gift and advantage, because everywhere where I can use it when I can communicate with people, understand people from different countries - it's a big miracle... Yes, of course, it's good that it [English] helps me in work, this is also a big pro, but for me personally, the fact that I can communicate with others - it's just a miracle. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

In her linguistic autobiography, Nina described her English journey as being "not difficult, fabulous, full of new ideas, emotions and feelings" (Nina, 13 August, 2014, linguistic autobiography). Reflecting upon her teaching experience, she called it "the best experience I've ever had in my life" (Nina, 13 August, 2014, linguistic autobiography).
Interpretive Analysis of Nina’s Data

As a student of the pedagogical university, Nina did not envision herself as a teacher. Traveling abroad and her ability to communicate with foreigners by means of English inspired Nina to teach English to children. Having obtained a specialist degree in teaching English and German, Nina entered the teaching profession. Her first year as a teacher of English at all school levels (elementary, middle, and high) was extremely challenging. Despite all of Nina's attempts to establish positive relationships with her peer-teachers, she was not accepted. Devoid of support and guidance from her more experienced peers, Nina had to cope with the challenges of teaching and schooling alone. As a result, Nina gained valuable teaching experience and, most importantly, a clear understanding of her profession. Based on her students' academic performance, she considered her teaching effective. Nina's teaching philosophy was grounded in the communicative function of the target language. She perceived her main aim as an English teacher to provide her students with more opportunities for self-expression and communication. For this reason, she tried to speak more English in class. Among Nina's main teaching principles were emphasis on speaking English in class and maintaining strong discipline. Following the second principle, she created an authoritarian image of herself as a teacher of English. She described herself as a strict, demanding, but fair teacher. To Nina's surprise, based on her perceptions, the students would characterize her positively. For Nina, her ability to speak English was perceived as a gift. Speaking generally, she described her English journey as "not difficult, fabulous, full of new ideas, emotions and feelings" and her teaching English experience "the best experience" of her life (Nina, August 13, 2014, linguistic autobiography).
Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, I presented the data of five Russian novice English teachers. The data focused on their English learning and teaching experiences in Russian context. The narratives constructed from the data cover a long time span, starting with the participants' first English learning experiences in the elementary school in the 90s up to their English teaching in general education institutions at present. Each teacher participants’ narrative construction describes each participants' development into an English teacher by highlighting her significant lived experiences which impacted her perceptions of and attitudes toward English learning and teaching. Though the five participants met the rigid selection criteria, my construction of their narratives represents the uniqueness and diversity of each English language journey. For example, teaching English was Darina's childhood dream. The woman demonstrated persistence and determination dealing with personal and academic constraints in achieving her dream. Whereas, Elena had not considered teaching as her career option till she gained positive student teaching experiences.

Exemplifying the diversity of English language journeys, the teachers' narratives show certain conformity to some patterns. For example, all the teachers considered discipline as a crucial prerequisite for effective learning and teaching. As such, the teachers expressed their need in creating an authoritarian image of themselves as teachers of English.

In the next chapter, I discuss major themes emerging from my data and how these themes are connected to the existing literature on non-native English speaking teachers' perceptions of selves as teachers of English.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THEMES FROM THE NARRATIVES

The final chapter of this study on Russian novice English teachers' perceptions of selves as English teachers offers the discussion of the emerging themes relevant to the following research questions:

**How do Russian novice English teachers perceive themselves as English teachers?**

- What imagined linguistic communities do EFL novice teachers in Russia position themselves into?
- Does membership into imagined communities affect the way EFL novice teachers in Russia perceive themselves as English teachers?

The discussion is constructed around the following themes:

1. Imagined Linguistic Communities of Russian Novice English Teachers
   1.1. The Relevance of Native vs. Non-Native English Speaker Dichotomy to Russian Novice English Teachers
   1.2. Russian Novice English Teachers' Perceptions of Their English Proficiency
   1.3. Russian Novice English Teachers' Investments into Imagined Linguistic Communities

2. Russian Novice English Teachers' Perceptions of Selves as Teachers of English

3. Russian Novice English Teachers' Conceptions of A Good English Teacher

Considering the discussion of the aforementioned themes, implications from findings are underlined in terms of further research, teacher education in Russian context, and teaching English in general education in Russia. I conclude the study with some reflections.
Imagined Linguistic Communities of Russian Novice English Teachers

Findings of this study enabled understanding of the five Russian novice English teachers' English learning and teaching experiences as well as their perceived English language proficiency. In this section, I discuss the study findings related to the first research question which is: What imagined linguistic communities do Russian novice English teachers position themselves into?

The Relevance of Native vs. Non-Native English Speaker Dichotomy to Russian Novice English Teachers

The participants of my study demonstrated complex perceptions of their English language proficiency and the role of English in their lives. Unlike many studies on NNESTs' perceived English language proficiency, including Kim (2011), Park (2012), Pavlenko (2003), Reves and Medgyes (1994), and Xuan (2014), this study findings revealed that none of my participants engaged with native - non-native English speaker dichotomy. Based on my data, the discourse of native speakerness did not have any relevance and significance to the teachers. The concept "native speaker" was never used by any of my participants. Talking about the professional development events Elena attended last year, she mentioned two workshops organized by the "specialists from Britain". Another teacher, Olga, wished to practice her English skills with "англоговорящие знакомые" ("English speaking acquaintances") regardless whether English was their mother tongue or not:

Я думаю, если бы откуда-то у меня появились бы знакомые англоговорящие, даже не обязательно, чтобы это был их родной язык, и если б это был единственный способ общения, я думаю, что я бы зацепилась за эту возможность, но пока что у
I think if I get English-speaking acquaintances, it's not even necessary that English is their mother tongue, and if it [speaking English] was the only way to communicate, I think, I would grab this opportunity, but I haven't got such an opportunity so far. But I'd love to get it. (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview)

Unlike the participants in the aforementioned studies, the participants in my study did not compare their English language proficiencies with the ones of NESTs'. Having carefully analyzed my participants' linguistic autobiographies and interview transcripts, I have not encountered any instances of reference and/or comparison between native and non-native speakers of English. Olga touched upon the issue of pronunciation, though in relation to her students, not to herself, claiming that some of her students spoke English "как немцы" ("as if they were Germans"). The teacher said that she "taught her students the right pronunciation", meaning the British English variety. Another participant, named Darina, used videos in English in her class, on a regular basis. She did not mention native speaker pronunciation as a key criterion for video selection. Based on the interview, Darina used videos in order to maintain students' interest and boost their attention span by introducing "something new" in class. The concept of "English-speaking countries" was referred to only twice throughout the data. According to Anna, she incorporated additional materials about English-speaking countries, in particular England and America in order to ignite her students' intrinsic motivation to learn the target language and culture. Also, according to Darina, her main aim as an English teacher was to prepare her students for basic communication in English while traveling to English-speaking countries or meeting people who speak English. Darina's focus on developing students'
communicative skills may be determined by the location of the region, and particularly the town where she resided and worked. The town of Kostomuksha is located 30 kilometers (19 miles) away from the border with Finland, which makes it easy for Kostomuksha residents to visit Finland for different purposes (shopping, recreation, education, business). However, Darina did not specify Finland as her students' possible travel destination.

Irrelevance of the native - non-native speaker ideology to my participants is predetermined by the specifics of Russian context, in particular the role and status of English in the community as well as my participants' personal English learning experiences. As stated in Chapter two, the functionality of English in Russia covers only a limited number of domains, such as international business and commerce, technology, advertising, and education. English is never used as a tool for interpersonal communication in the multilingual country. As such, the context does not grant any opportunities for authentic interpersonal communication in English. Based on the data which covered the teachers' English learning and teaching experiences since childhood up to the present day, only Elena mentioned her interactions with native speakers of English in the local context ("specialists from Britain"). Both Olga and Nina participated in international contests for English teachers. However, those events targeted Russian-speaking teachers of English and used Russian as a working language. It is wrong to claim that my participants have never interacted in English either with native or non-native speakers of English. As Nina and Anna indicated, they used English as a tool for communication during their travels abroad. However, interactions in English seem to be rather occasional and not always meaningful, as illustrated in Elena's experience on a Greek resort. Furthermore, as stated in Chapter Two, the English language is not a medium of instruction in general and higher education institutions, including the ones attended by my participants. In addition, none of my
participants studied or resided abroad. On this matter, it is crucial to note that the existing research on NNESs' perceptions of their English language proficiency (Kim, 2011; Norton, 2000, 2001; Park, 2012; Pavlenko, 2003; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Xuan, 2014) focus on "heterogeneous contexts" where NNESs encounter a range of preconceptions and ideologies regarding the ownership of English and legitimacy of NNESs (Park, 2012, p. 134). Park's (2012) findings exemplify the impact of homogeneous and heterogeneous contexts on the linguistic and professional identity construction of the Chinese teacher of English, named Xia. Similarly to my study findings, Park (2012) revealed that Xia’s perceptions of her English language proficiency were positive when she was in China (p. 134). However, when Xia came to the U.S., she felt linguistically "powerless" and marginalized "due to a host of ideologies shaping who is seen as a legitimate owner and user of English" (Canagarajah, 1999; Widdowson, 1994 as cited in Park, 2012, pp. 136-139). Drawing on Braine (1999), Pavlenko (2003), similarly to Park (2012), explains the greater relevance of native - non-native dichotomy to the international students in her study, rather than to her American participants, "... it was their [international students'] competence and professional legitimacy as English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) teachers that were oftentimes challenged by colleagues and students alike" (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 256).

According to Block (2007), the context where English is regarded as a foreign language, as in the case of Russia, is a "relatively unfertile ground for TL-mediated [target language] identity work, [and] contrasts markedly with naturalistic adult migrant settings ...[and] study abroad context" since it does not provide conditions for new self-positioning in relation to the target language (p. 144). Following Buzzelli and Johnston's (2002) terminology, the relations between assigned identity, imposed on one by others, and claimed identity, the identity or
identities one acknowledges for oneself, differed greatly depending on context (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 23). Park's (2012) findings vividly exemplify Block's (2007) and Buzzelli and Johnston's (2002) ideas. Xia’s experiences in American context made her reposition herself and her English language legitimacy in relation to Western and Chinese communities as well as become repositioned by the members of these communities (Park, 2012, p. 137).

Following from these premises, I can speculate that Russian novice English teachers' perceptions of their English language proficiency and legitimacy as English speakers and teachers can be reshaped in the context where they have to draw on their English language resources, specifically where English is considered as the dominant language. Researching the impact of study and/or teaching abroad experiences on Russian English teachers' perceived English proficiency and status in the profession can contribute to the existing body of knowledge about NNESTs' construction of linguistic and professional identities.

**Russian Novice English Teachers' Perceptions of Their English Proficiency**

My study findings revealed the complexity and certain ambiguity of the teachers' perceptions of their English language proficiency. On the one hand, the five teachers did not question their English language proficiency. For example, Anna expressed strong perceptions of her language skills. She confided that her attempts to speak English during her vacations in Greece failed because the locals did not understand her self-perceived high English proficiency. According to Anna, her husband's "Russian accent" was more comprehensible to the Greek rather than "her" English:

Конечно, я пыталась [говорить на английском] в прошлом году в Греции, но у них такой английский, поэтому я просила мужа говорить. Я говорю: "У тебя акцент
Of course, I tried [to speak English] last year in Greece but they had *such* English [meaning low level] that I asked my husband to talk. I told him: "You have Russian accent, and they most probably will understand it rather than mine. They don't understand *my* English". (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview)

In the interview excerpt provided in the previous subsection, Olga expressed her willingness and readiness to communicate with people using English. Another participant, Nina, explicitly indicated her privilege of speaking English in a foreign context. She acknowledged her ability to interact with foreigners as a "big gift and advantage". Olga is the only participant in my study whose perceptions of her English language proficiency underwent significant transformations. Before Olga secured a teaching position, she had been on maternity leave for two years, which greatly impacted her first teaching endeavors. She confessed that it was difficult for her to speak English fluently in class so she had to write everything down and refer to her lesson plans frequently to build her confidence. Olga's English production problem was complicated by a psychological barrier. She reported to be afraid of making mistakes while speaking English in class, and consequently, of ruining her authority as a teacher. Hence, Olga equated speaking/using English perfectly to being an authority figure as an English teacher. Regular practice of English skills and thorough preparation for each lesson helped Olga to overcome her English production difficulties. At the moment of my data collection, Olga expressed full satisfaction with her English language proficiency, yet there was some lingering self-doubt deep inside her.
Furthermore, all the teachers stated that they attempted to speak English in class and expected their students to speak English too. However, teachers' intentions were challenged by students' low level of English proficiency, lack of motivation to learn English, and/or negative attitude toward learning and schooling in general. Concurrently, four teachers out of five expressed their strong interest in participating in international teacher development events. The fifth one, Elena, expressed reluctance due to her fear to perform in public and lack of self-confidence. It is crucial to highlight that though the participants demonstrated relative confidence about their English skills, all of them preferred Russian as an interview language without explaining the reasons for their choice.

Interestingly, though the teachers in this study did not challenge their English language proficiency, all of them expressed their need and motivation to develop their language skills. For example, Darina was satisfied with the quality of her professional preparedness and did not mention any difficulties related to her English proficiency, either as a student or a teacher. Regardless, she kept developing her English skills, particularly grammar, vocabulary, and receptive skills (listening and reading) via different media (Internet, videos, movies, etc.) available to her. Being satisfied with her current language abilities, Olga demonstrated motivation to further develop her language skills, both in Russian and English. She recognized the life-long nature of learning a language, no matter whether it is an L1 or L2.

Teachers’ ambitions to develop their English skills can be determined by lack of authentic interactions in English in a local community. As stated earlier, the local context does not provide any opportunities to utilize English as a tool of communication outside the classroom on a regular basis. All in all, for the five Russian English teachers, my study revealed the teachers’
positive perceptions of their English proficiency as well as their determination to further develop their language skills.

**Imagined Linguistic Communities**

Cook (1999) argues: “Consciously or unconsciously, people proclaim their membership in particular groups through the language they use” (p. 195). In this subsection, I discuss the imagined linguistic communities into which my participants, Russian novice English teachers, position themselves within Russian contexts through the power of imagination.

As stated earlier, the context of this study, particularly the target-language environment and the teachers' English learning trajectories within this context, differs considerably from those explored by the scholars interested in the relationship between English learning, identity construction, and learners' investment in the target language (Kim, 2011; Norton, 2000, 2001; Park, 2012; Pavlenko, 2003; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Villarreal Ballesteros, 2010; Xuan, 2014). Unlike the participants of the aforementioned studies, my participants have never been immersed in the "heterogeneous" contexts where they had to position themselves and be positioned by others in relation to their English language proficiency and legitimacy (Park, 2012, p. 137). In contrast with Pavlenko (2003), who illustrated two distinctive imagined linguistic communities into which her participants were investing before taking SLA class, I revealed the complexity of my participants' investments into imagined linguistic communities.

Similarly to the members of "native speaker" imagined community (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 257), my participants' English development strategies, as well as their teaching practices, reflected their orientation toward Standard English as the only legitimate form of the language. All the study participants considered mastering English grammar and following language norms to be a crucial part in language learning and teaching, disregarding meaning and literacy. For
example, despite Anna's aim to promote the target language and culture in her classroom, she put special emphasis on grammar "потому что дополнительная грамматика никогда не помешает" ("because additional grammar practice is never useless") (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview). Another teacher, Olga, encouraged her students to speak up in class and to be unafraid of mistakes. However, due to the ways in which Russian educational context dictated learning and teaching of the English language, Olga stated that her major focus was on form rather than on meaning. Darina's interest in students' English proficiency level motivated her to register the school where she was teaching for an all-Russia English proficiency competition.

However, my participants also possessed some characteristics which are in line with Pavlenko's (2003) description of the members of a "non-native speaker/ L2 learner" imagined community (p. 259). Similarly to the participants in Pavlenko's (2003) study, my participants expressed the need and motivation to develop their English language skills, particularly enlarging their vocabulary, developing receptive skills, and mastering grammar rules predominantly by means of popular media and grammar exercises. For instance, Darina listed watching videos, Internet news, doing quizzes, and memorizing vocabulary as tools to develop her English skills. In contrast with Pavlenko (2003), whose members of the L2 learner imagined community were striving for the native speaker competence, I argue that my participants aimed to reach the foreign language communicative competence (Inoyazychnaya Kommunikativnaya Kompetenciya). Using the data provided by my participants and having graduated from the same teacher education program as my participants, I can claim that the teacher education program emphasized the foreign language communicative competence as the main target of English learning and teaching in Russian educational institutions. As stated in Chapter Two, according to the Federal State Educational Standard, developing learners' foreign language communicative
competence, which encompasses linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic components, is the main objective of teaching a foreign language in Russian general education institutions. In line with my study findings and my personal experiences as an English learner in Russian educational context, scholars from Kazan Federal University in Russia highlight foreign language communicative competence as "the dominant purpose" of English teacher training in Russia (Fahrudinova et al., 2014, p. 38). Fahrudinova et al. (2014) define foreign language communicative competence as:

a certain level of language proficiency, speech and social-cultural set of knowledge, skills and abilities that enable to vary acceptably and appropriately their [learners’] communicative behavior in a communicative way depending on the functional predictors of foreign language communication and creates the basis for the qualified information and creative activities in various fields. (p. 36)

Drawing on Zimnayay's scholarship (1989, 2003), the following definition was utilized in the teacher education program where my participants obtained their teaching degrees:

Иноязычная Коммуникативная Компетенция (ИКК) - это готовность и способность субъекта выражать свои мысли и понимать чужие в реальной действительности, пользуясь иностранным языком26.

Foreign language communicative competence is the readiness and ability of an individual to express his/her thoughts and understand others' in real life setting by means of a foreign language.

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26 The definition was taken from the researcher's notes in Methods of Teaching English class. During the data analysis, I also asked two of my participants to provide me with a definition of foreign language communicative competence if it was ever utilized during their teacher education. The participants’ notes revealed the same definition.
Evidently, the two definitions of foreign language communicative competence provided above do not target native speaker competence. This approach to ELL&T in Russia parallels Labov's (1996) statement that one group should not be evaluated against the norms of another (as cited in Cook, 1999, p. 194).

Following from these premises, English learners in Russia, including my participants, do not view English native speaker competence as their primary goal in learning English. As indicated by all my participants, their main aim as teachers of English is to prepare their students for intercultural communication. For example, Nina perceived it as her professional responsibility to promote the usefulness of learning and speaking English in a modern world. Her teaching philosophy reflects these perspectives:

Научить говорить, понимать речь, и самое главное, чтобы они поняли, что им это нужно, что им это в жизни пригодиться, потому что даже некоторые родители по-прежнему считают, что английский не нужен. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

To teach them how to speak [English], understand English, and most importantly, to explain to them that they need it, that it will come in handy in their future lives, because even some parents still think that there is no need in English. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

Following Pavlenko's (2003) conceptualization of imagined linguistic communities, I also revealed that my participants possessed some characteristics of "Multilingual/ L2 user" imagined community (p. 261). Though the teachers in my study continued to develop their English language skills, they did not feel deficient and self-marginalized with regard to their current English language proficiency. These findings resonate with the aforementioned studies on NNESTs’ perceptions of their English proficiency. In my study, the four teachers expressed
motivation and interest in participating in international teacher development events. Olga explicitly indicated her wish to establish connections with English-speaking people. Also, my participants' teaching philosophies focused on developing their students' communicative skills in order to empower them with the ability to use English for their own purposes. Moreover, Anna's and Nina's usage of English during their travels abroad exemplify their perceived advantageous status as speakers of English.

According to Pavlenko (2003), Cook's (1992, 1999) notions of multilingualism and multicompetence became "therapeutic" for some of her initially self-marginalized participants (p. 263). Some of Pavlenko's (2003) participants, as the ones in Park (2012) and Xuan (2014), reconceptualized the legitimacy of English language learners and users as well as shifted their self-perceptions toward bilingualism or multilingualism. Following Cook's (1999) terminology of an L2 learner as the one who is still learning the target language and an L2 user as the one who can use it (p. 187), I claim that my participants represent a hybrid linguistic identity as English learners and users. Though my participants did not use English as a tool for interpersonal communication on a daily basis, they expressed and exemplified their readiness and motivation to use it in interactions with foreigners. Based on the analysis of my data, I also claim that my participants fit into the community of multicompetent language users, possessing "the knowledge of more than one language, free from evaluation against an outside standard" (Cook, 1999, p. 190). However, an in-depth exploration of Russian novice English teachers' perceptions of their English language proficiency in a context where they have to draw on their English resources could be provided through an empirical study.
Russian Novice English Teachers' Perceptions of Selves as Teachers of English

In this section, I address the second research question: How do Russian novice English teachers perceive themselves as English teachers?

As stated in the previous subsection, the proposed study revealed that the participants do not engage in "a never-ending elusive quest for NS [native speaker] competence," rather they strive for foreign language communicative competence (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 259). Positioning themselves both as L2 learners and users, the teachers did not demonstrate any signs of self-marginalization and/or deficiency regarding their linguistic and professional status as Russian novice English teachers.

Unlike many studies on NNESs' perceptions of their linguistic and professional legitimacy as English speakers and/or teachers (Kim, 2011; Norton, 2000, 2001; Park, 2012; Pavlenko, 2003; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Xuan, 2014), my study revealed no relationships between teachers' perceived English language proficiency and their perceptions of selves as English teachers in Russian general education context. For instance, in Pavlenko (2003), students' perceived professional legitimacy differed depending on the imagined linguistic community they were investing into. In my study, teachers' relatively strong language identity, "the assumed and/or attributed relationship between one’s sense of self and a means of communication" (Block, 2007, p. 40), was not significant in constructing their English teacher identity. Drawing on several scholars, language teacher identity is defined as a "transformational and transformative"(Varghese et al., 2005, p. 23), context-bound composite of teacher cognition, knowledge, learning, and development, formed and negotiated through language and discourse (Gee, 1996; MacLure, 1993 as cited in Varghese et al., 2005, p. 23; Tsui, 2007, p. 657).
In an early study on NNESTs' self-images, the majority of the participants (NNESTs from Brazil, Mexico, Hungary, Israel, Russia, Sweden, Yogoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria) stated that they "were not very much hindered by their language difficulties" (Reves & Medgyes, 1994, p. 363). Commenting upon this finding, Reves and Medgyes (1994) speculated that the participants did not consider English proficiency a crucial factor for maintaining teaching efficacy, which parallels my findings and strongly resonates with Kim (2011), Park (2012), Pavlenko (2003), and Xuan (2014).

Varghese et al. (2005) rightly point out that "in order to understand teachers, we need to have a clearer sense of who they are: the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which they claim or which are assigned to them" (p. 22). Drawing on Leung et al. (1997), Block (2007) argues that language identity represents three types of relationship with the language: expertise, affiliation, and inheritance. In the previous subsection, I presented the findings regarding my participants' perceived English expertise, their beliefs about their English proficiency (Block, 2007, p. 40). In Chapter Two, I discussed the context where my participants were born, raised, educated, and employed. In particular, I explicated the status and role of the English language in the community. Further in this section, based on my study findings, I address the teachers' language affiliation, "the individual’s attitudes towards and affective connection to a language... the extent to which a person identifies with and feels attached to a particular form of communication", as a crucial factor determining my participants' perceptions of selves as English teachers (Block, 2007, p. 40).

First and foremost, the teachers' perceived role of English in their lives was attributed to their professional endeavors. The teachers explicitly indicated that they viewed English as their job, a life-long calling, and a career. Elena minimized the role of English in her life, describing it
as "приятное дополнение к жизни" ("a nice addition to life") (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview). Anna, thinking about the role of English in her life, compared its usage in and outside the classroom. The teacher claimed that she "[имеет] больше [английского] вне школы, чем в школе" ("[had] more English outside school, rather than inside"), though her usage of English outside school was limited to popular media, such as watching series and listening to music in English (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview). While the four participants considered English as their job, Nina pinpointed the communicative role of English in her life. Originally, it was travelling and the ability to communicate with people that inspired Nina to teach English. During the interview, she expressed her privilege to understand and be understood by others via the English language. She also mentioned that English in her life was a big gift and advantage, which enhanced her professional sphere of life. It should be noted that Nina is the only participant in my study who majored in English in the university as well as throughout her general education, whereas the other four participants majored in other languages (Finish, German, and French) at tertiary levels. Though all my participants engaged in the same activity, teaching English in general education institutions in Russia, Nina's language affiliation differed from the rest of the teachers, reflecting her different sense of herself and of her lived experiences in relation to the world (Wenger, 1998). On this matter, Wenger (1998) provides an example of two stone-cutters; when they were asked what they were doing, one said he was cutting a stone while another claimed that he was building a cathedral (p. 176). In order to understand the impact of language studies on English teachers' imagined linguistic communities, more empirical evidence is required.

Teachers' perception of teaching English as their job responsibility is reflected in their descriptions of selves as teachers of English. Based on my data, while describing themselves as
English teachers and thinking about their students' and colleagues' perceptions of them as English teachers, none of my participants named any characteristics related to English language proficiency. Only Olga's first teaching experiences after a two-year maternity leave indicated the impact of her self-perceived low level of English proficiency on her perceptions of self as an English teacher. Olga's insecurities about her English language skills caused her profound loss of self-confidence and students' disrespectful attitude toward her. Though, at the time of my data collection, the teacher felt absolutely confident about her language abilities. Olga, as the rest four participants of my study, referred to teacher authority as a prerequisite for positive self-perceptions as an English teacher because teacher authority is equated with respect from students. For this reason, lack of authority and students' reluctance to perceive them as authoritative figures were viewed by my participants as the biggest challenges during their first teaching endeavors.

Teachers' perceptions of selves as English teacher were revealed to be shaped by the general idea of teaching, though contextually saturated. In particular, the four teachers characterized themselves as strict and demanding, whereas Elena named patience and calmness as the main characteristics of her as an English teacher. Authoritative teachers maintain positive teacher-student interactions by being fair, open to suggestions, flexible, and understanding. As such, based on my participants’ perceptions, their students would characterize them in a broad way either as being strict or kind or both. Reflecting on their teaching practices, some participants revealed contradictions between their self-perceptions as English teachers and their perceived students' attitudes toward them as English teachers. For example, Nina was amazed by the paradox of her own self-perceptions. The teacher claimed being strict and demanding in class where "доброты особо на уроке нет" ("there is no kindness at all in class") (Nina, July 22,
2014, interview). Though based on her perceptions, "дети любят меня, они всегда рады [меня видеть]" ("students love [her] and are always glad [to see her]") (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview). Another participant, Anna, stressed the relations of power in her class pinpointing her superior role as a teacher and subordinate status of her students, "... я понимаю, что Я - учитель, а они, как мои подчиненные" ("... I understand that I am a teacher and they are like my subordinates") (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview). However, Anna believed that her students would describe her as not strict enough and perceive her "не как друг, может, старший советник" ("not as a friend, maybe as an older advisor") (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview). Whereas the participants' perceptions of selves as English teachers and their perceived students' attitudes toward them as English teachers are interconnected and emphasize teacher-student interactions and relations of power in class, the teachers' perceptions of their colleagues' attitudes toward them was different. Teachers' professional legitimacy was revealed to be challenged by educational stakeholders, particularly by peer-teachers, whereas linguistic legitimacy - not. Three participants out of five believed that their peers perceived them as not enough experienced teachers. Elena felt that the head of the English department "doesn't take [Elena's and one more novice teachers'] information seriously" assuming that "she [the head of the department] knows better than others, and we [Elena and one more novice teacher] are so inexperienced and must listen to her" (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview). Nina also touched upon the issue of marginalization within the profession. According to Nina, she was rejected by the more experienced peers for no specific reason though Nina attempted to establish positive interactions with her colleagues. The rest of my participants felt that their peers would acknowledge their responsibility and readiness to help to peer teachers.
Lastly, though the teachers did not address their lack of self-confidence in English instruction when they were describing themselves and their self-perceptions as English teachers, throughout the data I noticed a number of references to their perceived lack of self-confidence. Though Anna reported to be more confident when teaching, she still became nervous before she entered the class. The sinking feeling "не забыть сделать это, повторить то" ("not to forget to do something, to revise something") happened before each lesson and before Anna went to bed (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview). According to Darina, her lack of self-confidence as a teacher of English was caused by the new teaching conditions (unfamiliar teaching staff and students, unawareness of school norms and traditions, the difference between rural and urban settings, etc.). However, the teacher felt confident about her English proficiency. For Elena, lack of confidence was more personal rather than professional characteristic. Due to the low level of self-confidence and fear to perform in public, Elena was reluctant to participate in professional events (teacher conferences, contests). Olga is the only participant in my study whose lack of professional self-confidence was caused by her perceived low English proficiency. After a two-year maternity leave, Olga was insecure about her English language abilities. However, later she gained confidence through hands-on teaching experience and thorough preparation for each lesson.

In sum, the study revealed that the relationship between teachers' imagined linguistic communities and their perceptions of selves as English teachers was insignificant. The main factor which influenced participants’ professional self-perceptions is their perceived authority in class. The study revealed teachers' lack of self-confidence caused by various reasons, including new teaching conditions, lack of practical knowledge, marginalization within the profession, and
individual characteristics. In the next section, I present the study findings about my participants' desired image of an English teacher.

**Russian Novice English Teachers' Conceptions of a Good English Teacher**

The results of my study offer a distinct portrayal of an ideal English teacher in Russian educational context from the insights of five Russian novice teachers of English. The participants were not explicitly asked to describe an ideal English teacher. However, the data gathered through their linguistic autobiographies and follow-up in-depth interviews, provided me with a clear understanding of what English teacher my participants desired to become. Based on the findings, an image of an ideal English teacher represents a complex system of interconnected teacher characteristics, such as authority, efficiency, teaching experience, and confidence. It is crucial to note that these findings are culturally and contextually situated and saturated. In the proposed study, teachers' conceptions of a good English teacher were constructed within a specific political, economic, sociocultural, and educational context. It is noteworthy to mention that the empirical evidence of the teachers' conceptions of a good English teacher constructed in Russian context is lacking. As such, an in-depth exploration of Russian novice English teachers' conceptions of a good English teacher is required.

**Authority**

Absolutely all five teachers indicated holding power and being an authoritative figure in class as the main prerequisite for effective English teaching and learning. Taught by an authoritative teacher, students are believed to do homework consistently, follow class policies, behave well in class, and engage in class activities. From my participants' perspective, teacher authority does not only enhance learning and teaching but also cultivates students' respectful attitude toward the teacher and the class. Throughout the study, my participants said "authority", "discipline", and being "strict" 27 times in total comparing with 4 instances of mentioning
"kindness" and 1 instance of mentioning "friendliness". Apart from explicit indication of authority and power, my participants used various language structures to convey the idea of teacher dominance in class, like "... поставить себя выше их [учеников]" ("... put myself above them [students]") (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview), "... я понимаю, что Я - учитель, а они, как мои подчиненные" ("... I understand that I am a teacher and they are like my subordinates") (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview), "доброты особо на уроке нет" ("there is no kindness at all in class") (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview), "в жестких рамках их [учеников] держать" ("hold them [students] within strict limits") (Olga, July 23, 2014, interview), etc. The teachers viewed discipline-related problems as well as students’ inconsistent preparation for class as a result of their lack of authority. For this reasons, they were constructing an authoritative teacher image. For instance, Nina's practices and behaviors in and out of class differed tremendously:

Я учитель очень строгий, требующий, ну наверно, справедливый. У меня поблажек на уроке не бывает. Несмотря на это, дети любят меня... На самом деле какая я на уроке и, допустим, на перемене - два разных человека. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

I'm a very strict, demanding, well, probably fair, teacher. I don't give my students an easy time. Nevertheless, children like me...In fact, me in class and me during recess are two different persons. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

Another teacher, Anna, claimed that not being strict enough was her "disadvantage" as a teacher (Anna, July 9, 2014, interview). Based on her interview responses, maintaining discipline in class, Anna's greatest professional challenge, was caused by her lack of authority. As such, Anna, as the rest of the participants were constructing their authoritative teacher image. On this matter, Ter-Minasova (2005) named "rigid, severe, and distant kind of teacher-student relations"
as one of the characteristics of English teaching in Russian general education institutions caused by the rigorous Soviet educational policies and teaching practices (p. 448).

**Efficiency**

Based on the four participants in my study, it can be inferred that a good English teacher is the one whose students demonstrate academic achievements. Similarly to Elena, Nina, and Olga, Darina perceived her students' academic achievements as her biggest professional success. Reflecting on her teaching and students' learning, Darina highlighted relative progression of her students' performance in English, and attributed their progress to her effective English teaching:

Для меня достижение, что они хотя бы начали что-то говорить, потому что я пришла, они вообще молчали. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

For me this is an achievement, that they [students] started to speak up something, because when I came [to that school], they were really silent. (Darina, July 27, 2014, interview)

Similarly to Darina, Nina evaluated the quality of her English instruction by the academic performance of her students:

По результатам детей я вижу, что результат есть, и работаю я хорошо... очень сильно даже за этот год я детишек подтянула. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

Based on students' performance, I see that there is progress and I work well... I improved the children's performance profoundly. (Nina, July 22, 2014, interview)

**Teaching Experience**

Based on my data, teaching experience is seen both as crucial characteristic of an ideal English teacher and an essential tool for constructing an ideal English teacher image.

According to the teachers, the level of their confidence as a teacher of English is directly proportional to years of their teaching experience. The more they were teaching, the more confidently they perceived themselves in class. This finding is in line with several studies on the
impact of years of teaching experience on teachers' self-efficacy (Karimwand, 2011; Nikoopour et al., 2012; Wolters & Daughtery, 2007). From Olga's perspective, teaching is similar to driving a car in sense that it requires much practice in order to efficiently maintain the complexity of teaching. As stated in the previous section, some of the teachers shared their perceived lack of teaching experience which prevented them from participation in teacher contests. Anna refused to participate in teacher events because she did not feel enough knowledgable and hence, competitive. Others expressed strong motivation to participate in professional development events in order to gain more knowledge of subject matter. Olga took part in an English teacher competition to master her skills in using interactive blackboard as well as to learn more about ways of preventative health promotion. Elena indicated that with years of teaching experience she expected her lesson to become "more effective" (Elena, July 7, 2014, interview). Anna and Nina perceived their more experienced peers as a credible source of knowledge.

**Self-Confidence**

Teachers self-confidence, teachers' beliefs about their professional capabilities (Tschannen-Moron & Hoy, 2001), is seen by my participants as a key to teacher authority and credibility. According to my participants, the level of teacher self-confidence in English instruction is increased because of gained teaching and schooling experiences. Such perspective can be justified by the participants' status as novice teachers and hence, lack of hands-on teaching experience. In the majority of responses, teacher self-confidence was referred to methodological mastery, rather than self-perceived English proficiency. For instance, Anna claimed that she gained more confidence in English instruction over her teaching experience. She explicated her claim by reflecting on her improved teaching prowess. She foresaw the outcomes of her beforehand designed lesson plan and was able to address it to the demeanor of the class by changing the lesson plan either partly or completely. However, after three years of teaching,
Anna still became anxious and nervous before each lesson. As indicated earlier, Olga is the only participant in my study whose lack of professional self-confidence was caused by her perceived low English proficiency. After a two-year maternity leave, Olga was insecure about her English language abilities. According to the teacher, her luck of self-confidence prevented her from establishing her authority and credibility as a teacher.

**Implications for Research, Teaching, and Teacher Education**

Findings of this study focus on several implications for further research, teacher education, and teaching English in Russian contexts.

The study should be considered as an initial attempt to cast light on Russian novice English teachers' perceptions of selves as English teachers in relation to their perceived English language proficiency. My search for relevant literature targeting Russian contexts produced no results. Hence, the findings of this study require more empirical evidence to be considered credible. An in-depth exploration of Russian novice English teachers' professional and linguistic identities could be provided through a longitudinal case study and multiple methods of data collection, including observation of teaching and in-depth follow-up interviews. Also, the findings of the study opened myriad research directions. For instance, more research is needed to examine different variables which can affect Russian novice English teachers' perceptions of selves as English teachers. These variables could relate to English teachers (for instance, teachers' English learning experiences in general and high education, student teaching experiences, travels/and or study abroad), teacher education programs (institutional policies, mentor teachers' role, English instructors' role), and teaching sites (educational level, school policies, school setting). Furthermore, in this study, all the participants had never studied or
resided abroad. As such, I suggest a comparative analysis of Russian novice English teachers’ who studied and resided abroad with those who were only exposed to Russian contexts.

The findings of this study are also expected to be practitioner-oriented and to contribute to tailoring teacher education curricula and initiating teacher development events (workshops, seminars, etc.). Teachers can be engaged into critical dialogue about the status of English in the global and local contexts, ownership of English, linguistic and professional legitimacy of NNESs, multicompetence, etc. According to Pavlenko (2003), critical praxis enhances imagination and provides more identity options for English learners/users/teachers. Furthermore, the proposed study opened up the richness and complexity of Russian novice English teachers' experiences as English learners, speakers, and teachers in Russian contexts. Being aware of novice teachers' challenges, preconceptions about teaching and learning, and their self-perceptions can guide teacher educators toward adequate and appropriate professional teacher preparation.

Finally, the findings of the study can be relevant to in-service English teachers in Russia. The study proposes that teaching practices reflect teachers' investments into various actual and imagined linguistic communities. Consciously or subconsciously, teachers can impact English learners' perceptions of and attitudes toward the English language and their perceived statuses as Russian English learners. As such, the study can foster teachers' understandings of English learning and teaching and help them reexamine their teaching practices in order to promote students' agency and linguistic legitimacy.

**Reflections and Concluding Remarks**

I learned a great deal while conducting this study. The most important lesson was the complexity that came with conducting qualitative research. As a result of conducting this study, I
address my increased awareness of the issues explored as well as the complexity of qualitative inquiry. First, the data were not collected in a naturalistic setting. Observation of the participants' teaching would have provided me with deeper understanding of the issues explored, including teachers' perceived English language proficiency and their perceptions of selves as English teachers. Second, linguistic autobiographies were found not effective as a method of data collection in this study. The participants provided extremely concise narratives where they outlined the main steps of their English learning and teaching experiences. However, in-depth follow-up interviews allowed me to solicit rich qualitative data. Third, the research questions were explored from the insights of only five participants. Hence, the findings may not be relevant to other populations of Russian novice English teachers. Furthermore, the study sample is homogeneous in terms of gender. Though I did not exclude males from the study, I managed to recruit only female teachers. Finally, as a qualitative researcher, my responsibility was to interpret each woman’s autobiographic narrative and interview data as they were told to me. However, I should admit that my interpretation is one of many possible interpretations given my ontological and epistemological perspectives. Being my first experience in conducting empirical research as well as the only study on Russian novice English teachers' perceptions of selves as English teachers, this study should be considered as an initial step in exploring Russian novice teachers of English.

This study has given me new insights about conducting qualitative research and coming to understand what it means to study novice Russian English teachers’ perceptions of selves as English teachers. My hope is to use the results of this study and future work to continue to add to the existing body of knowledge around what it means to teach English around the world in general, and in Russia in particular. My current and future research will provide me with ways to
give back to my country and all the teachers who are committed to improving the English language education in the years to come.
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Appendix A

Typical Schedule of an English Teacher in a General Education Institution

Number stands for the grade.

Letter stands for the group. Russian letters are used.

For example, 6A means that this is a group "A" of sixth-graders.

Below is provided Anna's weekly schedule as of February 2, 2015

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Olga's weekly schedule as of February 2, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
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Appendix B
Task-Based Protocol

Dear colleague!

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

As you may know, the current study focuses on Russian novice English teachers and investigates teachers' perceptions of selves as English teachers. You are eligible to participate in this study because you are an English teacher; you have no more than three years of teaching experience; you are Russian; you received your teacher education in Russia, and never studied or resided abroad.

It is critical to highlight that participation in this study is **absolutely voluntary.** All the information you share with me will be **completely confidential** and will be used only for the purposes of this study. To ensure confidentiality, please create a **pseudonym** which will be used in the study instead of your name. Please note that you can withdraw from this study at any point.

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

```
Think about the process through which you became an English teacher and write a story that covers your development into a language teacher. You may start from the first English classes you had as a student and proceed to the present day, when you are an English teacher. Think of the reasons why you decided to invest in English language learning, and why you decided to become a teacher of English. Think of significant moments, events, and people who influenced you. Feel free to use any format, structures, and vocabulary.
```

Please, send your story via email to krisnav@mail.ru or in vk.com (Кристина Навныко) as soon as possible.

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments regarding the task and/or any other issues related to the study, do not hesitate to contact me via email (krisnav@mail.ru), vk.com, or by calling 911-437-07-38.

**Thank you very much for your interest in this research! Your participation is extremely valuable for this study!**
Привет, (имя). Как дела? Спасибо огромное за проявленный интерес к моему исследованию. Спасибо большое за потрясающую историю. Я действительно ценю твое время и зинтересованность в моем исследовании. Перед тем, как мы начнем интервью, хочу уточнить, какой язык для тебя предпочтительнее, русский или английский?

Как ты уже знаешь, мое исследование о Русских молодых учителях английского, как ты и я, и об их ощущениях и восприятии себя в этой роли.

As you already know, my study focuses on Russian novice English teachers, like you and me, and investigates teachers' self-perceptions.

Как ты уже поняла, интервью - это второй метод сбора информации. Я задам тебе несколько вопросов о твоем опыте преподавания английского языка. Интервью длится около 40-50 минут. Хорошо?

As you may guess, an interview is my second method of data collection. I'm going to ask you some questions about your English teaching experiences. The interview will last for about 40-50 minutes. Is that okay?

Это форма-согласие, которую ты подписала ранее. Пожалуйста, прочитай ее еще раз. Важно отметить, что информация, которой ты со мной поделишься во время интервью, абсолютно конфиденциальна, и будет использована только в целях этого исследования. Вместо твоего имени, я буду использовать твой псевдоним, который ты уже придумала. Также важно отметить, что ты можешь отказаться от участия в исследовании в любое время.

Here is the informed consent you signed before. Please, read it carefully one more time. It's important to say that the information collected during this interview is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study. Also, instead of your name, I will use the pseudonym you already created (when you submitted your story). Finally, I want to make sure that you know that you can withdraw from this study at any point.
How do you feel? All right? If you need anything during the interview, please let me know. I would do my best to make this experience positive and memorable for you.

**Participants' qualifications:**

Where did you receive your teacher training?

Где ты получил(а) педагогическое образование?

How many years have you been teaching? What levels?

Сколько лет ты преподаешь английский? В каких классах?

**Core questions**

- **Describe your regular lesson, please.**
  - Опиши основные черты твоего урока.
- **What tasks/activities do you find the most effective teaching English?**
  - Какие задания ты считаешь наиболее эффективными при обучении английскому языку?
- **What is your main goal as a teacher of English?**
  - Какова твоя основная цель как учителя английского языка?
- **What language do you speak most often in class? English or Russian?**
  - На каком языке ты чаще говоришь в классе?
- **What about your students? What language do they tend to speak more in class?**
  - А твои ученики? На каком языке они чаще говорят на уроке?
- **What language (L1/L2) do you use getting ready for classes (when you make notes/ write a lesson plan etc.)? Why?**
  - Какой язык ты используешь при подготовке к урокам (конспект урока, записи, напоминания)?
- **What would you say are your major successes as an English teacher? (if any)**
  - Каковы твои главные профессиональные успехи?
- **What are the major difficulties you face/faced as an English teacher? (if any)**
  - С какими трудностями ты столкнулась/сталкиваешься, будучи учителем английского?
• Did you participate in any local events related to teaching English (olympiads, competitions, conferences) as a student's advisor and/or a participant?
  o Ты участвовала в каких-либо местных (городских, региональных) мероприятиях, связанных с английским языком, в качестве научного руководителя и/или участника?
• Did you take part in any international events as a student's advisor and/or a participant? If no, would you like to participate?
  o Ты принимала участие в международных мероприятиях в качестве участника и/или научного руководителя? Если нет, хотела бы?
• How do you, as a teacher of English, feel in class?
  o Как ты себя ощущаешь в классе?
• How would you describe yourself as a teacher of English?
  o Как бы ты себя описала в качестве учителя английского языка?
• What are 3-5 words that 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?
  o Назови 3-5 слова, которые наиболее точно характеризуют тебя как учителя английского языка? Почему именно эти слова?
• How would your students describe you? In your opinion. The way you feel it.
  o Как ты думаешь, как бы тебя описали твои ученики?
• Colleagues? How would your colleagues describe you?
  o А коллеги? Как бы они тебя охарактеризовали?

(Имя), спасибо огромное за участие в моем исследовании. Я ценою твое время и заинтересованность. Твой опыт изучения и преподавания английского языка очень важен. (Name), thank you very much for participating in my study. Your time and participation are highly appreciated, and definitely will contribute to the existing knowledge on novice English teachers' self-perceptions.
Appendix D
Letter of Invitation

Hello!

My name is Kristina Navnyko. I'm from Petrozavodsk, Russia. Currently, I’m a graduate student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA, pursuing my M.A. degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

I’m conducting my research on Russian novice English teachers’ perceptions of selves as English teachers. Being a novice English teacher myself, I find the topic of this study beneficial for all educational stakeholders, specifically for novice teachers and their students. Based on my English learning and teaching endeavors, I know how challenging it may be for a teacher born and raised in a non-English-speaking country to teach a foreign language. The findings of this study are expected to improve English teacher training programs in Russia.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to write your English language learning and teaching story and then you will be interviewed. You can choose any format, vocabulary, and structures for your story. The story will be sent online (via email). A 40-minute follow-up interview will cover issues related to your English teaching experiences.

Participation in this study is absolutely voluntary. If you decide to participate, your identity will be protected by a pseudonym. Also, you can withdraw at any point. For more details about privacy and confidentiality, read the consent form attached to this letter.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter! Your English learning and teaching experiences are unique and highly valuable for this study. Without any doubt, your participation would contribute enormously to the research on Russian novice language teachers’ self-perceptions.

If you have any questions don’t hesitate to ask me.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Best wishes,

Kristina Navnyko
M.A. in TESOL candidate at IUP
Appendix E

Informed Consent

You are being invited to participate in a study on Russian novice English teachers’ perceptions of selves as English teachers. As an English teacher who has no more than three years of teaching experience, your participation in this study is highly valuable. Please read the following information very carefully. If you have any questions, you are more than welcome to ask them by contacting me and/or my thesis chair using the provided contact information below.

The purpose of this study is to investigate Russian novice English teachers’ perceptions of selves as English teachers. You will have an opportunity to reflect on your English learning and teaching experiences. Your contribution to this research will help to shed light on the way novice language teachers perceive themselves at the beginning of their teaching career. The findings of the study are expected to improve teacher education programs in Russia.

Your participation in this study is absolutely voluntary. If you decide to participate, all information provided by you will be completely confidential and will be used only for the purposes of this study. To ensure confidentiality, you will create a pseudonym. Also, the data will be stored on a password-protected computer and will be accessed only by the researcher. It is important to mention that you can withdraw from this study at any point by emailing Ms. Navnyko. In this case, all of the information gathered from interactions with you will be destroyed.

The information gained from this study may be published in journals or presented at conferences without saying participants’ names and any other identifying information. Your identity will be protected by a pseudonym.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement on the next page. You will be given a copy of the informed consent. If you decide not to participate, just leave the form on the table.

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).

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Project Director: Kristina S. Navnyko  
Candidate for MA TESOL  
Leonard 105  
Indiana, PA 15701  
Phone#: 724-541-2885; 911-437-07-38  
Email: ybpt@iup.edu, krisnav@mail.ru

Thesis Chair: Dr. Gloria Park  
Associate Professor  
Sutton 346  
Indiana, PA 15705  
724-357-3095  
gloria.park@iup.edu

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I have read and understand the information on the form. I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that there is no compensation for participating. I understand that my records are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any point. I have received a copy of the Consent Form to keep in my possession. I understand and agree to the conditions of this study as described.

If you have read this information and have consented to participate, please sign the form below.

Name (PLEASE PRINT) __________________________________________________________

Signature _________________________________________________________________

Date ______________________________ _________________________________

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

_________________________ _________________________________
Date Researcher’s Signature