



Snapshots of teacher identity in English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) education in Australia: Insights for pre-service educators

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Abstract

This article presents a series of practitioner-focused identity “snapshots” drawn from interviews with experienced teachers of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) working in Australian schools. It supports pre-service and early-career EAL/D educators in understanding the lived realities of Australian EAL/D teaching through thematically organised insights based on teachers’ personal narratives and reflections. Based on interviews exploring personal experiences, classroom practices, and socio-political contexts, five key identity themes were identified: (1) *personal background shapes teaching identity*, (2) *teaching is deeply student-centred*, (3) *institutional and policy challenges impact classroom practice*, (4) *emotional labour is a significant part of the job*, and (5) *EAL/D teachers often become advocates*. These snapshots offer accessible, authentic accounts of Australian EAL/D teaching, designed to support reflective practice and professional learning in teacher education programs. Accompanied by a practical identity reflection toolkit, they translate teacher narratives into structured, applied learning. Addressing a gap in Australian EAL/D research, the study centres teacher voice through thematically organised practitioner accounts purpose-built to scaffold identity work in teacher preparation.

Keywords: Australian education, EAL/D teacher identity, pre-service teachers, professional learning, teacher voice, thematic analysis

Introduction

Understanding teacher identity is central to preparing educators for the realities of contemporary language classrooms, particularly in EAL/D contexts, where cultural, linguistic, and political complexities shape daily practice. While identity is often discussed in theoretical terms, this

study positions it as a pedagogical resource for teacher education. According to Varghese et al. (2005), teacher identity extends beyond the personal domain, functioning as a “critical component in the socio-cultural and socio-political landscape of the language classroom” (p. 22). In diverse educational systems such as Australia’s, where students bring rich cultural and linguistic resources, EAL/D teachers construct their professional identities within complex and often challenging teaching environments shaped by personal histories, institutional roles, and broader policy contexts (Janes & Chen, 2024; Mockler, 2011; Olsen, 2016). Supporting identity development is a core concern in teacher education (Farrell & Ives, 2015; Mockler, 2011) and should be central to initial teacher preparation (Kanno & Stuart, 2011). However, little research directly informs pre-service EAL/D teacher education (Richards, 2023), including within Australia. Where such work does exist, it seldom centres teacher voice or directly informs teacher education practice (Matthews et al., 2025). This study addresses that gap by presenting practitioner-narrated accounts of EAL/D teacher identity, drawn from interviews with eight highly experienced EAL/D educators working within Australia. Rather than full case studies, these are carefully curated ‘snapshots’ that show how EAL/D teachers construct, negotiate, and express their professional identities. The intention is pedagogical: to provide accessible, experience-rich insights that support identity formation and reflective learning among pre-service and early-career EAL/D teachers. In particular, the study explores how experienced EAL/D teachers describe the development of their professional identities and what their accounts can offer teacher education programs focused on preparing future educators.

Literature Review

EAL/D Teacher Identity and Identity Work

Within EAL/D teacher education, there is increasing recognition that identity development is central to preparing teachers for diverse, multilingual classrooms. The importance of identity becomes particularly evident when we consider the central function of teacher education: guiding individuals who were not previously teachers to become those who are. This process necessarily involves an identity transformation—a shift from “I am not a teacher” to “I am a teacher,” both personally and socially (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). At its core, initial teacher education is defined by this transition. In EAL/D contexts, where language, culture, and power structures are deeply embedded in everyday practice, *identity work* becomes especially salient. Identity work refers to the ongoing, reflective process through which individuals construct and re-construct their sense of self in relation to personal values, professional roles, and social contexts. In teacher education, this involves making sense of “how to be,” “how to act,” and “how to understand” oneself as a teacher (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Sachs, 2005). Crucially, part of engaging in identity work involves developing a clear and evolving understanding of what teacher identity is—and this is far from straightforward. Varghese et al. (2005) argue that teacher identity is not a fixed trait, but a dynamic construct shaped through the interaction of personal histories, institutional demands, and broader socio-cultural forces. Similarly, Mockler (2011) frames teacher identity as both practical and political, formed and re-formed throughout a teaching career. Richards (2023) reinforces this view, highlighting how identity is intertwined with teacher commitment, agency, classroom practice, and interactions with institutional norms. Engaging with the personal (e.g., beliefs, language background, life experience), professional (e.g., school roles, curriculum demands, mentoring), and socio-political (e.g., policy pressures, systemic inequality, language ideologies) dimensions of teaching (Mockler, 2011) is central to identity work, which plays a foundational role in shaping who teachers become. For both

teachers-in-training and teacher educators, this underscores the importance of creating space for reflection and critical engagement with the lived realities of EAL/D teaching in schools and society.

Identity Development in Teacher Education

Research shows that teacher identity develops through reflection and participation in professional communities. Kanno and Stuart (2011), using a situated learning lens, conducted a longitudinal case study of two novice ESL teachers over the course of a year. Drawing on interviews, classroom observations, reflective journals, and stimulated recall, they showed how professional identity took shape through day-to-day teaching practice and participation in school communities. Farrell and Ives (2015), in a reflective case study, examined the journal entries, classroom experiences, and stimulated recall interviews of an early career ESL teacher, demonstrating how reflective practice helped him surface and re-evaluate his pedagogical beliefs. Richards (2023) offers a synthesis of practitioner reflection, classroom vignettes, and prior research to highlight the ways identity is shaped through moments of relational tension, professional agency, and feedback, often emerging in impactful moments during the practicum and early-career teaching.

While these studies offer valuable insights, identity remains under-theorised—and, I argue, perhaps more importantly, *under-praxisised*—in many teacher education programs. I use this term to describe the limited translation of theoretical understanding into structured, practice-based components that reflect the real-world complexities of teaching. As Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) note, despite growing theoretical acknowledgment of the importance of identity development, it is often not explicitly or systematically embedded into the design of teacher education programs. Teacher education needs not only to map the theoretical value and influencing factors of teacher identity, but also to bring these dimensions to life. A recurring critique of initial teacher education is its failure to meaningfully bridge the gap between theoretical coursework and classroom realities, while at the same time one of the central aspirations of initial teacher education is to strengthen this theory–practice nexus (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Helping pre-service teachers understand what teacher identity might *look like* in action, through the voices and experiences of highly accomplished EAL/D educators working in the very contexts pre-service teachers are likely to enter offers one promising approach. Such practitioner narratives may help pre-service teachers contextualise abstract concepts, envision possible professional selves, and construct their own teacher identities in dialogue with real-world practice.

The Australian EAL/D Teaching Context

The Australian EAL/D education context is shaped by the country's linguistic and cultural diversity. According to the 2021 Census, over 5.8 million people—22.8% of the population—speak a language other than English at home, with Mandarin (2.7%), Arabic (1.4%), Vietnamese (1.3%), Cantonese (1.2%), and Punjabi (0.9%) among the most common (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2022a). Additionally, 167 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are spoken at home by nearly 77,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, underscoring the enduring vitality of Indigenous linguistic heritage (ABS, 2022b). This multilingual landscape presents both opportunities and demands for educators, particularly when designing equitable and culturally responsive learning environments.

Unlike many international systems that rely on standalone ESL models, Australian EAL/D students are predominantly educated within mainstream classrooms. While specialist EAL/D teachers may offer targeted assistance through team teaching or parallel programs, responsibility

for the ongoing education of EAL/D learners—particularly beyond the early stages of English acquisition—rests largely with generalist classroom teachers. As Hammond (2012) observes, most EAL/D students spend most of their time in mainstream settings. This places a dual burden on educators: it requires all teachers to be language-aware, and it places EAL/D specialists in the critical position of building capacity within schools to support linguistically diverse learners. In such an environment, doing high-quality work in EAL/D is not a peripheral concern, it is a central professional responsibility. EAL/D educators play a vital role not only in supporting individual learners, but also in shaping inclusive school cultures and advocating for system-level change. The impact of this work is profound, as it directly influences the educational pathways of EAL/D students and the readiness of the profession to meet the needs of Australia’s increasingly diverse classrooms. Given this context, understanding how EAL/D teachers negotiate and articulate their professional identities is central to developing identity-focused approaches within teacher education programs.

Research Gap and Study Rationale

Although global research on language teacher identity is diverse and significant (e.g., Javahery, 2024; Poole, 2019), studies that focus specifically on the Australian context remain relatively limited. Matthews et al. (2025) highlight the lack of work that centres teacher voice in Australian EAL/D settings, especially research with clear pedagogical intent. As they note, “providing accessible models for theorising teacher identity, especially to early career teachers, holds strong value in initial teacher education” (p. 2). Several recent contributions have thoughtfully addressed the matter of teacher identity with strong relevance to the Australian EAL/D context. Ellis (2013), for example, explores how Australian ESL teachers’ own language biographies shape their professional beliefs and classroom practices. Ellis’s study of 31 adult ESL teachers found that those with rich, diverse language learning histories tended to approach their pedagogy with greater empathy and linguistic awareness. Ellis argues that these language biographies should be seen not only as a valuable part of teacher cognition but also as a pedagogical resource that can enrich teacher education. Nguyen (2017), in a study set in an Australian secondary school, uses activity theory to document how a non-native English-speaking pre-service teacher negotiated tensions between their personal beliefs and mentor expectations during an EAL practicum, highlighting how such contradictions can both constrain and catalyse identity formation. Nguyen and Dao (2019), through a narrative inquiry approach, explore how five post-graduate students reimaged their professional identities within an Australian postgraduate program through critical reflection and dialogue, particularly in response to dominant native-speaker ideologies. Similarly, Yang (2018), based in an Australian university context, offers a conceptual model of intercultural identity development for TESOL teachers working in multicultural classrooms.

While studies such as Ellis (2013) and Nguyen (2017) effectively highlight the value of structured identity engagement in teacher education, they do so largely through theoretical or analytic lenses. In contrast, there remains a notable gap in practitioner-informed materials designed to support identity development among pre-service teachers. This study responds to that gap by presenting a series of thematically organised identity snapshots—concise, narrative-rich accounts drawn from interviews with experienced Australian EAL/D educators. These snapshots offer insights into identity-in-practice, enabling pre-service teachers to engage with authentic voices, reflect on lived realities of practicing teachers, and explore their own developing sense of professional self.

To frame the inquiry and ground it in the lived experiences of classroom practitioners, this study poses the following question: *How do experienced EAL/D teachers in Australia describe*

the development of their professional identities, and what pedagogically relevant insights do their accounts offer for pre-service teacher education?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative design, using thematic analysis to explore how eight experienced EAL/D teachers actively working within Australia describe the development of their professional identities. The data analysed in this paper form part of a larger cross-national project (Matthews et al., 2025) that investigated teacher identity in both Sri Lankan and Australian contexts. While the original study drew on Mockler's (2011) tripartite framework, personal experience, professional context, and political environment, and used these categories to structure the interview protocol, the current study re-focuses on the Australian dataset with a clear pedagogical aim: to generate practitioner-relevant insights for EAL/D teacher education within Australia.

Participants

The participants in this study were eight Australian EAL/D teachers with between 5 and 30 years of professional experience ($M \approx 17$ years). While the focus was on those with backgrounds in secondary education, participants who had also taught in other sectors (e.g., primary or tertiary) were not excluded, and several brought that broader perspective. Their professional contexts spanned both metropolitan and regional locations, with roles ranging from classroom teaching to system-level advising. Many had held leadership positions and contributed to curriculum development. The group also represented diverse entry points into the EAL/D profession: some transitioned from subject-based teaching roles, while others entered directly through EAL/D pathways.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure a diversity of perspectives among experienced EAL/D teachers working in school settings. Inclusion criteria included a minimum of five years of teaching experience with EAL/D learners and that this experience was within the secondary education context. Recruitment occurred through professional networks known to the researcher, with additional participants identified via snowball sampling. The eight participants included here were drawn from the Australian cohort of a larger cross-national project on EAL teacher identity (Matthews et al., 2025). The group comprised Helen, Margaret, Elena, Mai, Amelia, Kate, Tessa, and Nina—pseudonyms used throughout to preserve anonymity. Their narratives form the basis of the thematic analysis, and each teacher's professional story is reflected through direct quotations in the sections that follow, with care taken to ensure balanced representation. Ethical approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the author's institution (Ref: HE23-054), and all participants provided informed consent to participate in the research.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews explored participants' personal backgrounds, professional practices, and experiences within broader institutional and policy contexts. Prompts were designed to elicit narrative accounts, with open-ended questions focusing on their development as EAL/D professionals. Interviews were conducted by a research collaborator (not the author), who was known to participants and positioned as a senior EAL/D educator. This familiarity supported rapport and contextually grounded discussion, though it may have subtly influenced how participants represented their experiences, particularly around professional values and

institutional critique. Each interview, conducted via video conferencing (Zoom), lasted 45–60 minutes. The researcher recorded and transcribed all interviews verbatim, yielding a final data-set of over 32,000 words.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) six-phase framework. This entailed: (1) familiarisation with the data through repeated reading of transcripts, (2) generation of initial codes using a semantic and inductive approach, (3) searching for candidate themes, (4) reviewing and refining thematic categories, (5) defining and naming the final themes, and (6) producing the report. Coding was undertaken manually by the author, and themes were developed through iterative reading and analytic memo writing.

The researcher clustered initial codes based on conceptual similarity and recurrence across participants. For example, early codes such as *language learning challenges*, *multilingual upbringing*, and *schooling outside Australia* consistently emerged in participants' reflections on their entry into teaching. Through repeated review, these were grouped into a broader category focused on personal background. In later stages of analysis, this category was refined into the theme *Personal Background Shapes Teaching Identity* after observing how these personal histories shaped EAL/D practice. This same iterative process occurred across all themes. Codes were not simply grouped; they were also examined in terms of their narrative function, specifically how they expressed identity in ways likely to resonate with pre-service teachers. Attention was given not only to the frequency of a code, but also to its relevance, emotional tone, and contextual richness within the interview.

To support trustworthiness, an audit trail was maintained that documented coding decisions, theme development, and analytic reflections over time. These included electronic logs of code revisions related to interpretive choices, as well as records of peer debriefing discussions. Interpretations were discussed with peers during regular analytic debriefings as part of the larger study from which this subset of data was drawn, a process shown to be effective in unpacking divergent perspectives and enhancing interpretive clarity (Matthews, 2023). Member checking was undertaken during the data collection phase, with participants provided with their interview transcripts and invited to review and confirm that they represented a fair and accurate account of their views. While thematic saturation was not a primary aim of this practitioner-focused study, thematic coherence was supported by the high degree of consistency observed across participant responses. The use of a relatively homogeneous participant group enabled in-depth exploration of shared identity patterns relevant to EAL/D teacher education.

Five overarching identity themes were identified through this process: (1) *personal background shapes teaching identity*, (2) *teaching is deeply student-centred*, (3) *institutional and policy challenges impact practice*, (4) *emotional labour is a significant part of the job*, and (5) *EAL/D teachers often become advocates*. These themes are presented in the next section, each illustrating a key dimension of teacher identity through direct teacher voice.

Findings: Thematic Snapshots of EAL/D Teacher Identity

Theme 1: Personal Background Shapes Teaching Identity

This theme explores how EAL/D teachers' formative life experiences, such as their schooling, migration journeys, language learning challenges, or early exposure to teaching, shape their sense of purpose, classroom values, and professional outlook. These personal histories often serve as the foundation for empathy and inclusive practice. Teachers shared personal histories that shaped their journey into EAL/D teaching, often linking formative experiences to current

pedagogical values. Helen, for instance, recalled a formative moment from high school when newly arrived EAL/D students joined the class. A geography teacher asked Helen, without formal training or instruction, to support these students both inside and outside the classroom. This early encounter sparked an awareness of language support and a personal capacity to assist others:

I remember being in high school and my geography teacher... she asked me, Helen, can you know take these ones under your wing... So, I was like their support inside and outside of the classroom... That really impacted me — Helen

Margaret also reflected on how both past experiences as a language learner and early teaching opportunities contributed to the development of professional identity and instructional approach as an EAL/D educator:

I do remember thinking back to when I was studying a language at A level and what really helped me in that situation... repetition and all that kind of thing as well. So, I think my past experiences and then my early experiences as a teacher have definitely shaped how I now teach English, particularly where I am at the moment — Margaret

Elena described a pivotal moment during a practicum, forming a strong connection with a mentor teacher who also had a migrant background. The experience affirmed a sense of belonging and helped clarify the kind of EAL/D teacher they wished to become:

I just felt so at home following her and witnessing what she was doing with those kids... she was also a migrant... and we were just exchanging stories of when we first came to Australia... I thought, yeah, this is the space I want to be — Elena

Mai drew on an upbringing as the child of immigrant parents who faced linguistic barriers in Australia's education system. Firsthand awareness of language disadvantage now underpins a strong sense of responsibility as an EAL/D educator:

My parents were immigrants into Australia and when I started schooling, they could not speak a word of English ... There wasn't a lot of EAL/D support back then... I think that's made me very conscientious and aware of students who I come across who are coming from language backgrounds that are not English speaking — Mai

Amelia described a transformative experience as a teenager participating in a year-long exchange program in Austria. Immersion in a foreign education system not only inspired a passion for languages but also fundamentally shaped the values brought to EAL/D education:

The opportunity came up when I was 16 for me to go on an exchange and live in Austria for one year... That was probably the biggest factor that has influenced me becoming a teacher and a languages teacher specifically... being schooled in a completely foreign language... really impacted how I approach language teaching — Amelia

Kate described how early academic struggles, and a sense of linguistic difference became key sources of empathy and pedagogical insight. What once felt like a weakness is now recognised as a deep source of strength in shaping their EAL/D teaching identity:

I used to think it was a negative that I struggled at school, but now I believe it's a positive and it's made me a good teacher... I understand the embarrassment of not knowing concepts, having a funny accent... those experiences of me as a learner have informed my practice as a teacher — Kate

Tessa traced the decision to become an EAL/D educator back to early experiences learning languages in school, which led to overseas travel and informal teaching. This journey, rooted in personal and academic exploration, eventually crystallised into a clear professional identity:

I started learning a language in Year 8 and continued through to high school. And that then influenced me into wanting to travel overseas... where I completed the rest of my [university] degree and started teaching friends English. And that's how I decided that I wanted to be an English teacher — Tessa

Nina reflected on how experiences living overseas and observing EAL/D teaching during practicum placements gradually shaped an interest in language and culture, eventually leading to retraining as an EAL/D educator:

It wasn't really... I mean I was a university student, but I wouldn't say it was my student experiences, it was more just life experience. And during my practicums, I saw EAL/D teachers and was able to be part of their sessions... Then I lived overseas, and that experience probably made me more interested in language and culture in general. So that's why I retrained to become an EAL/D teacher — Nina

Participants' professional identities were deeply rooted in their personal histories. Experiences such as schooling, migration, and multilingualism emerged as formative influences, shaping their beliefs about language and educational equity. Personal narratives continued to inform their pedagogical practices. For pre-service teachers, this theme highlights the importance of recognising and reflecting on how their own cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds shape their emerging identities and classroom approaches.

Theme 2: Teaching Practices are Deeply Student-centred

This theme highlights how EAL/D teachers prioritise student wellbeing, engagement, and inclusion in their classroom decision-making. Participants frequently described an ethic of care and a commitment to cultural responsiveness that informed their personalised, student-centred practices. Their pedagogical approaches reflected a relational orientation to teaching, shaped by a deep sense of responsibility to support and empower diverse learners. For instance, Helen reflects on a commitment to relationship-building with students and their communities by learning students' home languages. The actions described illustrate a deeply student-centred approach, focused on empathy and cross-cultural understanding:

I found someone that could teach me Vietnamese. So, I'd go to this family's house and I'd teach the wife English for an hour and then the husband would

teach me Vietnamese... it helped me to build a bridge between the students and the families that were in the schools... I thought if you can have a few words in the language of the students ... you're connecting with them and understanding a little bit more about the world view that comes through language — Helen

Margaret reflects on a role within the Intensive English Centre (IEC) and the broader community, emphasising the importance of long-term student wellbeing and success. A commitment to building relational trust and fostering integration beyond the classroom illustrates a sustained, student-first approach that defines this teaching identity:

We're invested in these students for them to be successful within [our regional township], and within the community and we want them to be and they want to be and it's about how we can facilitate that for them and how we can involve their community and you know have this relationship with each other, that then continues when they go to mainstream [schooling] but we set that up for them — Margaret

Elena reflected on the example set by a former teacher, describing the kind of learning environment now modelled, one where students feel included, challenged, and respected. The account reflects a student-centred practice that avoids deficit thinking while maintaining high expectations:

Even then I knew that this is how you'd want students to feel in the classroom — to feel included and challenged and respected and honoured... [former teacher] always knew how to push us... but not dumb anything down, which was lovely — Elena

Mai described how a personal history as a language learner shaped attentiveness to the nuances of classroom communication. Rather than assuming student understanding, Mai foregrounds patience and the deliberate unpacking of meaning:

That's been, you know, an important aspect of my teaching, is making [language] explicit and not making assumptions that they're comfortable with the word just because it's, you know, considered common... I think that's made me very aware [of] the language I use and how I unpack that in the classroom — Mai

Amelia described how working in diverse classrooms helped sharpen focus on responsiveness to individual student needs. The teaching approach is framed as a continual reflection on what works best for the specific learners present in any given classroom:

So obviously there was stuff around [diversity] that makes you be a bit more mindful of who it might be in your classroom and how you can cater for those students — Amelia

Kate connects early schooling struggles to a reflective and compassionate teaching approach. The resulting pedagogy places student needs at the centre of instructional design:

I now practice my teaching in a way that never brings shame upon the learner... the learner guides where we're going, how we get there... If they don't understand a concept that's because I haven't delivered it well enough — Kate

Tessa described how a parenting role shaped the classroom ethos, viewing teaching as holistic and deeply relational, encompassing not only language and academic content, but also students' behavioural, emotional, and social development:

I still think it's important to teach them not just academic skills... it's their behavioural skills and social skills that I teach my children; I'm teaching the same skills to these students in school — Tessa

Nina described teaching Afghan refugee girls with no prior schooling as a turning point in shaping classroom structures that prioritised emotional safety, confidence-building, and immediate success. The resulting pedagogy emphasises care, trust, and scaffolding as central to supporting vulnerable learners:

I've seen a big group of Afghan girls come in, some of them were 12 or 13 and hadn't been to school before... So, you must think, how do I make this safe for them? How do I build their confidence?... It's about having a classroom where they can be successful straight away — Nina

Across the interviews, teachers described a strong ethic of care that positioned students' needs, wellbeing, and lived experiences at the centre of their pedagogical decisions. Responsiveness and flexibility were viewed as key to effective teaching, particularly in linguistically diverse classrooms. For pre-service teachers, this theme highlights the importance of remaining attuned to learners' realities and adapting practice accordingly.

Theme 3: Institutional and Policy Challenges Impact Teaching

This theme captures how structural and policy-level factors, such as curriculum mandates, funding constraints, standardised testing, and administrative decisions, shape the daily practices and professional identities of EAL/D educators. Teachers described negotiating systemic limitations, advocating for student needs in rigid frameworks, and navigating institutional pressures that often clash with their pedagogical values. Teachers also reflected on how institutional directives, resourcing limitations, and education policy pressures shaped their day-to-day practices and professional identities. For example, Helen described how immigration and asylum policies limited students' access to education, emphasising the impact of structural exclusion on both learning and teacher morale. The reflection reveals not only frustration with systemic inequities but also a deeply held belief in education as a universal right:

I guess this one would come back to again... the people are still in limbo... and how that impacts and disrupts learning for students. The policies... asylum seekers weren't previously able to access university courses... I keep thinking education should be free for all, regardless of visa status — Helen

Margaret reflected on the influence of formal policy frameworks on early teaching identity, recalling the United Kingdom's *Every Child Matters* policy, which required daily student interaction and measurable learning progress. While the policy was directive, it was embraced as a guide for building relational, accountable classroom practices:

I think the one which is probably in my early years as a teacher, we had a policy called Every Child Matters in the UK... that was very much about ensuring that

every student made expected progress... but it was also about classroom interaction, and it was about having an interaction with each student every day. I think that really... made an impact — Margaret

Mai expressed concern about the implications of recent government initiatives aimed at addressing teacher shortages. The reflection highlighted the belief that some appointments risk lowering professional standards, particularly for EAL/D students, and affirmed a strong belief in the importance of quality teaching for equity:

I found out last night... a teacher who I consider to be perhaps underqualified has been given permanent appointment through that government initiative... I feel offended that someone like that might be in front of a classroom supporting language students... it probably just strengthens my belief in who I am and what I want to do — Mai

Amelia reflected on how the broader political and policy climate impacts the perceived value and purpose of EAL/D work. The account described the emotional toll of fluctuating media narratives and shifting migration policies, while affirming the enduring social contribution of EAL/D teaching:

In terms of teaching English as an additional language... I think you can feel at times more valued or less valued depending on the political landscape... when the policies are more open, I guess, you sort of feel like, okay, yes, I'm part of creating this diverse multicultural society. And when the policies are a bit more closed off... it might not seem that way depending on who's in government — Amelia

Kate described how political discourse and government refugee policies have had a direct and lasting impact on their professional identity. The account highlighted an emotional and ethical orientation toward advocacy, shaped by media portrayals of students and the systemic challenges faced within the education system:

You kind of end up taking on the cause a little bit, particularly if you work with new arrivals or refugee families... I feel very proud of my profession, and I feel very proud of my students and their families... When you hear things in the media and political positions, you just want to invite them in your classroom for a day just to see the joy and how beautiful these students are — Kate

Tessa discussed how the departmental policy requiring rapid student transition out of the Intensive English Centre (IEC) has shaped professional identity as an EAL/D educator. The policy's time pressures have required a more targeted and pragmatic teaching approach, while maintaining sensitivity to the needs of refugee-background learners:

The need to move the kids through the IEC so fast... I feel like that's had influence on the development of my identity... It's made me need to prioritise things very specifically... because it's such a small scope [of time] ... especially for refugee students — Tessa

Nina shared how the ongoing teacher shortage crisis has directly shaped their professional identity. The de-prioritisation of language support staff contributed to a persistent sense of professional disempowerment and frustration:

My entire program... is not running, right? Because I never am given the time to do my job. Which is really disheartening... those specialist positions... are the very first thing to be... bottom rung on the ladder in terms of school staffing — Nina

Teachers described navigating institutional and policy pressures while holding fast to their core values. Their professional identities were shaped not only by personal commitments and pedagogical ideals, but also by systemic constraints. For pre-service teachers, this theme offers a sober but necessary insight: teaching is as much about navigating systems as it is about classroom practice. Developing a professional identity means learning to work within—and at times around—institutional and policy realities while maintaining a strong sense of purpose.

Theme 4: Emotional Labour is a Significant Part of the Job

This theme explores the emotional intensity of EAL/D teaching, especially in contexts involving migrant, refugee, and linguistically diverse students. Teachers described the ongoing emotional labour required to support students facing trauma, navigate systemic limitations, and build deep relational trust in their classrooms. Although often overlooked, this emotional investment was portrayed as a defining and enduring part of the EAL/D professional experience. Teachers highlighted the emotional intensity of EAL/D teaching, describing how empathy and personal investment were central to their work with students from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Helen reflected on the emotional weight of working with children from detention centres and how these experiences shaped a strong commitment to social justice. The reflection emphasised deep personal connections formed with students and the moral discomfort experienced when it was perceived that their humanity was overlooked or undermined in public discourse:

I kept thinking ... these are like little humans here ... I know them, I know their names... these are people that I'm working with... — Helen

Margaret described the emotional sensitivity required to build trust and credibility with culturally diverse students. The reflection centred on personal positionality and the subtle but persistent emotional labour involved in connecting across cultural and social differences:

I think now I am quite conscious of being, particularly for our students, a white middle-class middle-aged woman telling them what they can and can't do... I do remember consciously thinking I don't want these students to think I'm just coming in here and not being able to have any kind of... anything in common with them — Margaret

Mai described a transformative shift in teaching identity after beginning work with international students, many of whom were separated from their families. The account highlighted a role akin to that of a “surrogate parent,” underscoring the emotional responsibility that may be assumed by EAL/D teachers:

I was particularly drawn to the international students who were experiencing the same struggles that I had... when I picked up the EAL/D classes, they saw

me as a surrogate mother to them... a lot of them were living in Australia without their parents around them... it was just a completely different experience of teaching for me — Mai

Amelia reflected on how observing a child's language acquisition offered a renewed perspective on students' learning experiences. This growing awareness of the emotional world of language learners informed an empathetic teaching approach and reinforced a strong sense of responsibility toward student wellbeing:

I do feel that having a small child has made me able to step a bit more into the shoes of the students that I'm teaching... watching how my son has learned language... gave me a little bit of an insight into what my students... might be going through as well — Amelia

Kate reflected on the deep emotional connection formed with EAL/D students and families, describing a practice grounded in empathy and care. The approach involves treating students as if they were one's own children, a perspective that underscores the personal investment brought to the teaching role:

You always understand that the person you have in front of you is that parent's most precious thing in the whole world... I treat that child as if they are my own child, in the sense of my dedication to them and the respect I show them and the respect I show their families — Kate

Tessa described how the roles of parent and teacher often blend in the classroom, emphasising the emotional responsibility involved in guiding not only language learning but also social and behavioural development, particularly for students lacking strong support networks:

As a parent... I almost parent the kids at times... it's not just teaching language. I'm also teaching them the behavioural and social skills I teach my own children, because they're not showing them in class — Tessa

Nina shared how constant role changes and redirection from core EAL/D responsibilities took a significant emotional toll. The experience was described as destabilising and exhausting, highlighting how a lack of consistency and recognition within the role contributed to emotional strain:

And this year and last year I have just felt like a casual teacher, but worse than a casual teacher because I come expecting to do my job and then I'm told I'm not... So at least if you were a casual teacher, you know what you're expecting each day. But has been very, yeah, just up and down like a roller coaster every day — Nina

Teachers carried deep emotional responsibility for their students. Many spoke of the difficulty of "switching off" after work, the emotional toll of witnessing student hardship, sometimes likening themselves to parental figures. These experiences point to a dimension of EAL/D teacher identity that is relational and affective. For pre-service teachers, this theme emphasises

the emotional demands of the profession, highlighting the need for reflective practice, self-care, and supportive school cultures that acknowledge this labour as central to the work of teaching.

Theme 5: EAL/D Teachers Often Become Advocates

This theme captures how emotional investment and ethical conviction lead EAL/D teachers to adopt advocacy roles on behalf of their students. Participants described challenging school norms, addressing equity issues, and engaging with broader political and institutional systems. Advocacy was expressed as a sustained commitment to justice for linguistically and culturally diverse learners, often grounded in strong emotional connections and a deep sense of professional responsibility. For example, Helen spoke passionately about the ethical and political dimensions of teaching, particularly in relation to refugee and asylum-seeking students. Her account included visits to detention centres, advocacy for more equitable policies, and a strong sense of obligation to support students and challenge systemic injustice:

We'd go and just support and visit the families that were there in detention like with the kids... and seeing the plight of asylum seekers in this country has been also something that I'm passionate about and feel like we need to look at the social justice side of it — Helen

Margaret reflected on advocacy through language education, describing efforts to empower students with critical literacy and socio-political awareness. The role of the language teacher was framed as supporting students to understand and use the power of language in transformative ways:

I think using... enabling [students] to understand the power behind language and how they can use language themselves has been something that I have become quite passionate about with our students — Margaret

Elena expressed a deep commitment to advocacy rooted in equity, describing how an ideological stance shapes both classroom practice and professional interactions across educational settings:

If you're coming from this ideology that education should be not just of quality, but it's equitable... equitable is sort of, you know, the North Star... as a language teacher you would ensure that that's what's happening in your space... not just in the classroom that I work in, but in how you speak and how you advocate for these learners — Elena

Mai described how lived experiences as a child of immigrants and a deliberate decision to work in schools with high EAL/D populations were driven by a desire to serve students with similar backgrounds. Roles were actively pursued to support advocacy for linguistic and cultural inclusion:

When I actually became a teacher I went to school communities that had high density populations of EAL/D learners specifically because I wanted to make a difference in that area... knowing that I could go into that school environment and work with people who had similar experiences to me... there was, you know, a definite reciprocal nature to the transactions we had in the classrooms because they knew that I understood what some of them were going through — Mai

Amelia described a strong alignment between the role of the language teacher and the moral imperative of public education. Reflections centred on access, equity, and the broader social significance of EAL/D work, highlighting how these values fuel her ongoing advocacy for linguistically diverse students:

The public purpose of education, that moral imperative, especially of public education, is for me really tied up with being a languages teacher because it's all about access... It's all about equity as well... that's the foundation I think of my identity, as a teacher and as a language teacher for sure — Amelia

Kate discussed how experiences with refugee students shaped a willingness to challenge discriminatory views in the media and among peers. EAL/D teaching was described as a values-driven profession, with strong advocacy for students framed as a source of professional pride:

Before I would hear people sort of make throwaway comments that were racist, and I probably wouldn't speak up whereas now I do speak up because I feel very proud of my profession, and I feel very proud of my students and their families... It's made me stronger as an EAL/D teacher and it's made me really have to think about what are my values... there are extra values on top of [standard ones] that I identify with as an EAL/D teacher — Kate

Tessa spoke about how working closely with refugee students shaped professional priorities as an educator. The experience prompted a re-evaluation of conventional success metrics and deepened the understanding of equity:

Working specifically with refugee students for the majority of my EAL/D teaching has influenced my professional identity because it's made me more empathetic... not all students are going to obtain maybe the level that you set for them... but knowing that they'll attain a level within themselves that's achievable for them... that's made me re-evaluate what's more important than just like ticking department goals — Tessa

Nina explained how political values, shaped by early life experiences, directly influence professional decisions. A commitment to public education and equitable access emerged as a form of advocacy:

That's why I'm still in public school, I haven't you know, haven't even thought about teaching in a private school. Yeah, my kids are going to go to public school... they're all about funding public services and things like that — Nina

For many teachers, teaching extended beyond the classroom and into the realm of advocacy. Whether through pushing back against inequitable policies, or amplifying student voices, these educators positioned themselves as agents of change. Advocacy was described not only as a professional responsibility but as a natural outgrowth of emotional investment and ethical commitment. For pre-service teachers, this theme reinforces that EAL/D teaching involves active engagement with systems and structures. It offers educators opportunities to take a stand and help shape the conditions their students encounter.

Discussion

This study offers a practitioner-focused account of EAL/D teacher identity that centres the lived experiences of eight Australian educators. Through an analysis of five core themes, the study shows how teacher identity is shaped by formative personal histories, oriented around student needs, negotiated within institutional and policy constraints, sustained through emotional labour, and often enacted through advocacy. These findings extend existing scholarship (e.g., Mockler, 2011; Richards, 2023; Varghese et al., 2005) by grounding theoretical insights in vivid practitioner voice, making identity work more visible, contextualised, and accessible for pre-service teachers and teacher educators alike.

The findings illustrate how the professional identities of EAL/D teachers are shaped through the interaction of personal, pedagogical, structural, emotional, and ethical dimensions. First, teachers consistently traced their teaching identities to formative personal experiences, such as migration, language learning, or family histories, which shaped their values, empathy, and sense of purpose, echoing prior research on identity (Farrell & Ives, 2015; Pavlenko, 2003). These backgrounds often mirrored those of their students, particularly learners from migrant and refugee contexts, and informed a strong ethic of care. Second, their practices were deeply student-centred, marked by attentiveness to learners' linguistic and cultural diversity, and shaped by a commitment to relational, responsive teaching. Third, teachers described how institutional and policy-level constraints, such as curriculum mandates, limited staffing, or funding cuts, frequently challenged their autonomy and required ongoing negotiation between systemic expectations and pedagogical ideals. Fourth, emotional labour emerged as a persistent feature of their work, especially when supporting students navigating trauma, displacement, or educational interruption, aligning with Richards' (2023) account of the centrality of emotional and affective experiences in shaping teacher identity and classroom practice. Finally, teachers often took on roles as advocates, challenging deficit narratives, resisting inequitable structures, and championing the rights and needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Rather than existing in isolation, these five dimensions were deeply interwoven: professional identity was grounded in personal history, student relationships, structural realities, emotional engagement, and ethical responsibility.

These findings have clear pedagogical implications. For pre-service teachers, the identity snapshots presented in this study offer concrete and credible models for reflective practice. Rather than treating identity as a static characteristic to be "declared" in teaching statements, these narratives position identity as something that develops over time (emergent), is shaped through interactions with others (relational), and is influenced by the specific contexts in which teaching and learning take place (contextually grounded). Teacher educators might draw on these themes to develop activities, case-based discussions, or guided journaling that invites pre-service teachers to explore their own developing identities in light of real-world classroom practice.

On reflection, it is evident that the five themes identified in this study reinforce and shape one another in dynamic ways. Personal background often informs student-centred practice, particularly when teachers' own migration or schooling experiences cultivate empathy (Park, 2012; Varghese et al., 2005). This commitment to students becomes more complex within institutional constraints, requiring pedagogical compromise and resilience (Pennington & Richards, 2016; Tran-Thanh, 2024). Emotional labour, in turn, often arises from navigating these tensions, sustaining teacher–student relationships despite structural limitations (Miller & Gkonou, 2018). Advocacy emerges at the intersection of all these forces, as teachers draw on personal values, emotional investment, and ethical judgment to challenge deficit discourses and promote equity (Matthews et al., 2025). Together, the themes form an interactive identity

framework that reflects the complexity of EAL/D teaching. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that this thematic framing is, by necessity, a form of analytical reduction. The effort to deconstruct professional identity into five discrete themes or “snapshots” serves a pedagogical purpose—supporting reflection and accessibility. However, identity itself is not experienced in thematic isolation. It is emergent, fluid, and context-dependent, shaped by the interplay of forces that do not always lend themselves to neat categorisation. As such, the thematic analysis presented here should be understood not as a definitive taxonomy but as a heuristic device—a tool for making sense of a complex, holistic phenomenon. A critical stance remains essential to ensure that such frameworks generate insight without masking the richness or relational entanglement of lived professional experience.

Conclusion

This study contributes to ongoing conversations about EAL/D teacher identity by offering a series of accessible, narrative-based “snapshots” drawn from the lives of experienced educators in Australia. Key findings can be linked back to the themes that emerged from the TESOL teachers:

- Personal Background Shapes Teaching Identity
- Teaching Practices are Deeply Student-centred
- Institutional and Policy Challenges Impact Teaching
- Emotional Labour is a Significant Part of the Job
- TESOL Teachers Often Become Advocates

The identification of these themes suggests that teacher identity is shaped by factors such as personal histories, student-centred values, classroom experience, emotional investment, and a deep sense of social responsibility.

Above all, this study affirms the need for identity work that is both research-informed and classroom-connected—work that reflects the complexity of the EAL/D profession while equipping the next generation of educators to navigate it reflectively, relationally, and ethically. To support practical application, an identity reflection toolkit aligned with the five themes is provided in Appendix A, with additional illustrative quotes in Appendix B to extend engagement with practitioner voice. This toolkit represents one response to the *underpraxis*¹ of identity in teacher education, bringing theoretical insight into dialogue with the practical realities of learning to teach in multilingual classrooms. For teacher education, the value of this research and its accompanying resources lies in its ability to make the complex process of identity formation visible, and, crucially, *teachable*. By centring teacher voice, this study challenges standardised models of teacher professionalism. It affirms, for example, that teacher identity should not be conceived of as emerging solely through compliance with frameworks such as the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2017), but also through systematic reflection and authentic connection to students and context. While such standards offer a shared language and provide an accountability scaffold across the profession, they do not fully capture the affective and relational dimensions of EAL/D teacher identity, as illustrated by the practitioners in this study.

¹ I use the term “underpraxis” to describe the insufficient translation of theoretical concepts into structured, practice-based engagement. In this context, it highlights how teacher identity—though acknowledged in the literature—remains largely absent from the tools, pedagogical activities, and curriculum structures that shape initial teacher education.

While frameworks such as the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2017) offer a comprehensive framework for teacher performance and development, they primarily foreground behavioural indicators of professional competence. Notably, *teacher identity* is not explicitly recognised within the standards, despite its evident influence on professional practice. This presents a significant gap for EAL/D teacher education, where relational and emotional dimensions are not peripheral, but central to classroom work. The five themes identified in this study show that emotional commitment, identity negotiation, and advocacy are not incidental to teaching—they actively shape how teachers develop and enact their pedagogy. For teacher educators, this underscores the importance of creating space in courses and professional experience for identity work that honours teachers' lived experiences.

As with any small-scale qualitative inquiry, this study is limited by its sample size and geographic scope. The eight participants represent diverse and compelling voices, but all were based in Australia. While the narrative approach prioritises depth over breadth, future work might explore how intersecting dimensions, such as gender identity, language background, and teaching context, shape identity formation across larger or transnational cohorts (e.g., Matthews et al., 2025). The findings of this study are shaped by the researcher's background and interpretive choices. These factors should be considered when applying insights drawn from the current study to other contexts. To build on these findings, future research could adopt longitudinal or cross-contextual designs. Longitudinal studies might trace how identity evolves across key career stages, from pre-service preparation into sustained classroom practice. Cross-contextual comparisons — for instance, between rural and urban EAL/D settings, or between different international contexts — could illuminate how structural and cultural condition's mediate identity formation. Integrating identity reflection tools into teacher education programs and evaluating their long-term impact would offer valuable insight into how identity work can be scaffolded pedagogically.

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Appendix A: Identity Snapshot Reflection Toolkit for Pre-service EAL/D Teachers

Framing and Purpose

This toolkit is designed to support identity work among pre-service teachers engaging with the five themes presented in this study. Informed by the SOLO taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 1982), the prompts guide learners from surface observations toward deeper integration and application of ideas. The questions serve as flexible entry points and may be adapted, expanded, or rephrased to suit different contexts and learner needs. Several prompts encourage direct engagement with participant quotations to foster relational-level learning — inviting students to interpret meaning, connect insights to broader identity themes, and reflect on their own developing practice. Additional illustrative quotes and thematic commentary appear in Appendix B.

Theme 1: Personal Background Shapes Teaching Identity

- What aspects of your own schooling or upbringing influenced your decision to become a teacher?
- What cultural, linguistic, or educational experiences might shape how you relate to your future students?
- How do your personal experiences shape your beliefs about language, learning, and student diversity?
- Choose a quote from this theme that resonates with you. What does it reveal about the relationship between personal history and teaching identity? How does it connect with your own experience or values?

Theme 2: Teaching is Deeply Student-centred

- What does student-centred teaching mean to you?
- What strategies can help you understand and meet the individual needs of EAL/D learners?
- How does a student-centred approach influence classroom decisions, relationships, and outcomes?
- Identify a quote from this theme that illustrates student-centred practice. What does it reveal about the teacher's priorities, and how might it inform your own approach?

Theme 3: Institutional and Policy Challenges Impact Teaching

- What school-level policies or systems have you noticed during your placement?
- How might these policies support or constrain EAL/D teaching?
- How can you navigate the tension between institutional constraints and your own pedagogical values?
- Find a quote that reflects a teacher's response to institutional or policy pressures. What insights does it offer about navigating constraints while maintaining professional integrity?

Theme 4: Emotional Labour is a Significant Part of the Job

- What emotional challenges have you observed or experienced during teaching placements?
- What strategies could help teachers manage the emotional demands of their work?
- How is emotional labour connected to care, advocacy, and teacher identity in EAL/D settings?
- Select a quote that captures the emotional labour involved in EAL/D teaching. What does it reveal about the teacher's commitment, and how might you prepare to sustain yourself emotionally in the profession?

Theme 5: EAL/D Teachers Often Become Advocates

- What does teacher advocacy mean to you?
- What situations might require you to advocate for EAL/D students?
- How does advocacy shape teacher identity and professional practice?
- Choose a quote that illustrates advocacy in action. How does the teacher position themselves as an advocate, and what can this teach you about your own responsibilities in the role?

Extension Activity – Identity Snapshot Creation

Invite students to write a short “identity snapshot” of themselves as emerging teachers. They may draw on one or more themes, engage with a selected quote, and reflect on how personal experience, values, and teaching context shape their evolving professional identity.

Appendix B. Thematic Quote Table

This appendix presents additional illustrative quotes with brief commentary to further unpack the themes discussed in this study. These quotes, along with those in the main body of the text, can be used in conjunction with the Identity Snapshot Reflection Toolkit (Appendix A) to scaffold reflective learning among pre-service teachers. Together, the two appendices aim to support identity-focused reflection and dialogue within teacher education programs.

Theme	Participant	Quote	Commentary
Personal background shapes teaching identity	Kate	<i>I used to think it was a negative that I struggled at school, but now I believe it's a positive — and it's made me a good teacher... Those experiences of me as a learner have informed my practice as a teacher. *</i>	Kate reframes personal academic struggle as a source of pedagogical empathy, showing how vulnerability can inform professional identity.
	Margaret	<i>I saw the importance of education, and I think that has very much come from my parents. My father... he was the first person to leave his area — his council estate... I think that was important, and he instilled that in me from an early age — that it was important to be able to choose, and that education gave you those choices and options. †</i>	Margaret connects teaching identity to formative family influences, viewing education as a pathway to agency and mobility. A parent's experience of transcending social barriers underpins a commitment to student empowerment.
	Elena	<i>My mother was an English teacher and a science teacher... She would sometimes take me to her classrooms when I was little... I've always played teachers with my siblings and neighbourhood kids and pretended to be the teacher, writing alphabet letters on a chalkboard... I think my mum somehow influenced me to become a teacher. †</i>	Elena's identity is shaped by early experiences observing and emulating a parent in the classroom. This intergenerational influence positions teaching as a relational and care-driven practice rather than simply a chosen career.

(Continued)

Theme	Participant	Quote	Commentary
Teaching practices are deeply student-centred	Helen	<i>I found someone that could teach me Vietnamese. So, I'd go to this family's house — I'd teach the wife English for an hour, and then the husband would teach me Vietnamese... It helped me build a bridge between the students and the families that were in the schools... *</i>	Helen's decision to learn students' home languages reflects a relational pedagogy rooted in cultural empathy and mutual exchange.
	Mai	<i>Having children of my own has helped me to be a version of a teacher that I would want in front of my own kids. †</i>	Mai draws on parental experience to frame teaching as an act of care. The goal of treating students as one would want their own child treated reflects a deeply personal commitment to student-centred practice.
	Amelia	<i>You must really think about that and think, well, is that actually the reality? Or is that, you know... what's... is that how I want to approach this? Is that going to be the best for these kids in front of me? †</i>	Amelia articulates pedagogical reflection grounded in ethical responsiveness, demonstrating a readiness to question assumptions and tailor practice to learner needs.
Institutional and policy	Helen	<i>The policies... asylum seekers weren't previously able to access university courses... I keep thinking education should be free for all, regardless of visa status. *</i>	Helen critiques systemic inequities, showing how immigration policy restricts educational access for EAL/D learners.
	Kate	<i>I have had other experiences very early in my career where EALD was just tacked onto something. So, it was just tacked on to the normal, everyday process — it wasn't embedded and part of it. So, I think, for early career teachers, it's important that they get to experience an embedded EALD program or practice within a school as part of their practical experience or practicum. †</i>	Kate notes that EAL/D is often marginalised in school structures, revealing the need for embedded language support and institutional modelling in teacher education.

(Continued)

Theme	Participant	Quote	Commentary
Emotional labour is a significant part of the job	Tessa	<i>Working specifically with refugee students for the majority of my EALD teaching has influenced my professional identity... It's made me more empathetic... Knowing that they're attaining a level within themselves that's achievable for them — that's mainly re-evaluated what's more important than just, like, ticking department goals. *</i>	Tessa contrasts rigid performance metrics with refugee students' lived realities, highlighting a redefinition of success that centres student dignity over compliance.
	Helen	<i>I know them, I know their names... These are people that I'm working with... So, I was always very aware of the way the media could play with these issues — to the detriment of families... *</i>	Helen identifies the emotional weight of working with vulnerable students, reflecting entanglement between professional role and personal investment.
	Nina	<i>This year and last year, I have just felt like a casual teacher — but worse than a casual teacher — because I come expecting to do my job, and then I'm told I'm not. So at least if you were a casual teacher, you'd know what to expect each day. *</i>	Nina's account reveals how shifting roles, and institutional ambiguity can erode a teacher's sense of professional identity. Her emotional fatigue reflects the psychological toll of uncertainty and feeling marginalised within school structures.
	Mai	<i>There was a lack of compassion that I experienced — that I didn't want other students to have to go through... I felt that growing up. Yeah. †</i>	Mai traces a strong affective commitment to students back to her own experiences of feeling unsupported in school, showing how care becomes both pedagogical and ethical work.

(Continued)

Theme	Participant	Quote	Commentary
EAL/D teachers often become advocates	Helen	<i>We'd go and just support and visit the families that were there in detention — like with the kids... And seeing the plight of asylum seekers in this country has been something I'm passionate about... *</i>	Helen moves beyond classroom duties to engage in direct social justice work, embodying the role of teacher-advocate.
	Kate	<i>So, people who don't hold a strong ideology toward EALD pedagogy and immigration in Australia... it does tend to have a negative impact on their own practice. It doesn't impact mine. But I do try to guide them gently and with kindness — to help them see how their ideology could be softened, if they're open to it. †</i>	Kate acts as a quiet advocate within the profession, challenging deficit perspectives on EAL/D learners through relational diplomacy and values-driven leadership.
	Elena	<i>I would advocate for their, you know, needs — well-being, academic needs — online... It's nice, because then you are connected to people who share the same values... So, for me, part of my learning is learning from these guys. †</i>	Elena advocates across institutional and professional spaces, supporting student well-being while contributing to learning communities aligned with shared values. Advocacy here is relational, reflective, and continuous.

Note: * = Quote appears in the main body of the manuscript

† = Quote appears only in this appendix