

**English language teacher employability and identity:
An investigation into hiring experiences and beliefs in Australian
adult English language teaching**

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify that the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

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ABSTRACT

The employment landscape for many English language teachers in the adult English language teaching profession in Australia is becoming increasingly precarious. Although their endeavours significantly contribute to the success of Australia's international education sector, the employment of these teachers is increasingly marked by casualisation and, as such, instability. This study investigates what makes a teacher 'employable' in the context of the continuously changing neoliberal Australian job market. It examines the characteristics of teacher employability in the adult English language teaching sector in Australia, and how these reflect and influence teacher identity and teacher recruitment experiences. These issues are explored across four different domains of adult English language teaching, namely private language schools, university English language pathway/foundation programs, adult migrant English programs, and vocational English programs.

This study investigates the contingent nature of teacher employability in adult English language teaching in Australia using a critical qualitative framework. It first examines teacher job advertisements to identify the features of teacher employability that are considered to be the most important to teacher hirers. This is followed by an investigation – through surveys and interviews with teachers and teacher hiring managers – of what constitutes an 'employable teacher identity' for those working in English language teaching in this context. These participants' views of the employable teacher identity are then considered in relation to the discourses of English language teacher professionalism in the Australian market-orientated language education context. The findings suggest that English language teacher employability is a constant process of identity work, and that – in contrast to human capital theories of employability – teacher employability is managed not only by individuals but is constructed through relationships within the teaching context itself as well as the wider employment market.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Study overview and aim of study.....	1
1.2. Context of the study.....	3
1.3. Current literature and research gap.....	5
1.4. Theoretical positioning.....	6
1.4.1. Neoliberalism and education.....	6
1.4.2. Employability.....	7
1.4.3. Language teacher identity.....	8
1.5. Research significance.....	9
1.6. Outline of the methodology.....	9
1.7. Layout of the thesis.....	10
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	11
2.1. Introduction.....	11
2.2. Theoretical framework.....	11
2.2.1. Researcher positioning.....	11
2.2.2. Employability.....	12
2.2.3. Identity.....	14
2.2.4. Neoliberalism.....	15
2.3. Literature review.....	18
2.3.1. English language teacher employability.....	18

2.3.2. Teacher job advertisements.....	23
2.3.3. Teacher job interviews.....	26
2.4. Characteristics important to English language teacher employability.....	30
2.4.1. The ‘NNEST/NEST’ debate.....	30
2.4.2. Student perceptions of ‘non-native’ English-speaking teachers and ‘native’ English-speaking teachers.....	31
2.4.3. Teacher experience in Australian settings.....	33
2.4.4. Teacher expertise.....	34
2.4.5. Language proficiency and pedagogy.....	36
2.4.6. Teacher accent and linguistic racism.	38
2.5. English language teacher identity and employability.....	41
2.5.1. English language teacher identity research.....	41
2.5.2. English language teacher professional learning and professionalism	44
2.5.2.1.English language teacher professional development and learning in the Australian context.....	46
2.5.3. Teacher emotion.....	51
2.6. Neoliberalism and English language teaching.....	55
2.6.1. The commodification of English language teaching and learning.....	55
2.6.2. Neoliberal subjectivity and English language teaching.....	59
2.6.3. Precarity and English language teaching.....	62
2.7. Summary.....	65
2.8. Conclusion.....	66

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	68
3.1. Introduction.....	68
3.2. Methodological approach and research aims.....	68
3.2.1. Ethics approval.....	71
3.3. Research questions and types of data.....	71
3.4. Context, research participants and participant recruitment.....	74
3.4.1. Context.....	74
3.4.2. Participants and participant recruitment.....	76
3.4.2.1. Survey participants.....	77
3.4.2.2. Interview participants.....	78
3.4.3. Participant selection.....	80
3.5. Data collection and analysis.....	80
3.5.1. Online survey.....	81
3.5.1.1. Survey data analysis.....	84
3.5.2. Job advertisements.....	85
3.5.2.1. Job advertisement data analysis.....	87
3.5.2.2. Content analysis.....	87
3.5.2.3. Indexical analysis.....	92
3.6. Interviews.....	93
3.6.1. Interviews’ data collection.....	94
3.6.2. Interviews’ thematic analysis.....	94
3.6.2.1.The thematic analysis process.....	96
3.7. Trustworthiness.....	100
3.8. Limitations of methods.....	101
3.9. Conclusion.....	102

CHAPTER 4: TEACHER JOB ADVERTISEMENTS.....	103
4.1. Introduction.....	103
4.2. Characteristics of job advertisements.....	104
4.3. Overview of all employability attributes across job advertisements.....	107
4.4. Main employability attributes.....	108
4.4.1. Achievements.....	108
4.4.1.1. Minimum education.....	110
4.4.1.1.1. Stance patterns in minimum education mentions.....	110
4.4.1.2. Teaching qualifications.....	113
4.4.1.2.1. Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.....	114
4.4.1.2.2. TESOL qualification.....	115
4.4.1.2.3. Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA).....	116
4.4.1.2.4. Stance patterns in teacher qualifications mentions.....	116
4.4.1.3. Experience.....	119
4.4.1.3.1. Types of experience.....	120
4.4.1.3.2. Length of experience.....	121
4.4.1.3.3. An experienced teacher.....	121
4.4.2. Skills.....	122
4.4.2.1. Teaching and learning skills: Teaching and assessment.....	125
4.4.2.1.1. Evaluation of teaching skills.....	126
4.4.2.1.2. Teacher or trainer?	128
4.4.2.1.3. Erasure of the skilled teacher.....	129
4.4.2.1.4. Teaching pedagogy.....	130
4.4.2.1.5. Professional development and meetings.....	131
4.4.2.1.6. Teaching technology skills.....	132
4.4.2.2. Generic skills.....	133
4.4.2.2.1. Relational skills.....	133
4.4.2.2.2. Administration skills.....	136
4.4.2.2.3. Communications skills.....	136
4.4.2.2.4. Organisational skills.....	138
4.4.3. Knowledge and understandings.....	139
4.4.3.1. Working conditions.....	140
4.4.3.1.1. Contract type, length and hours.....	140
4.4.3.1.2. Employee benefits: Non-financial.....	143
4.4.3.1.3. Pay and other financial benefits.....	144
4.4.3.2. Organisational identity: Who we are.....	145
4.4.3.2.1. Who we are: Settlement and vocational English	146
4.4.3.2.2. Who we are: Academic/university pathways & General/Exam English..	147
4.4.3.3. Compliance.....	148
4.4.3.3.1. Visa and residency.....	148
4.4.3.3.2. Diversity and equal opportunity.....	149
4.4.3.3.3. Teaching regulations.....	150
4.4.3.4. Recruitment processes.....	150
4.4.3.4.1. How to apply.....	151
4.4.3.4.2. Shortlisting and interviews.....	151
4.4.4. Teacher attributes.....	152
4.4.4.1. Teacher attributes by job advertisement type.....	153
4.4.4.1.1. Teacher attributes in academic/university pathways English.....	154
4.4.4.1.2. Teacher attributes in general/exam English and settlement English.....	155

4.4.4.1.3. Teacher attributes in vocational English.....	156
4.4.5. Findings summary.....	157
4.5. Conclusion.....	160
 CHAPTER 5: TEACHER AND HIRING MANAGER PERSPECTIVES.....	 161
5.1. Introduction.....	161
5.2. Survey findings.....	162
5.2.1. Education and teaching qualifications.....	163
5.2.2. Experience.....	164
5.2.3. Generic and specific skills.....	165
5.2.4. Teacher attributes.....	167
5.3. Interview findings.....	169
5.3.1. Teacher employability as precarious professionalism.....	169
5.3.1.1. Teacher employability as professionalism.....	170
5.3.1.1.1. Teacher education, knowledge & community of practice.....	170
5.3.1.1.2. Engagement & reflection.....	175
5.3.1.2. Teacher employability as precarity.....	177
5.3.1.2.1. Experience.....	177
5.3.1.3.2. Flexibility.....	179
5.3.2. Performing employability in teacher job interviews.....	181
5.3.2.1. Approaches to teacher job interviews.....	182
5.3.2.2. Teacher job interviews as interaction ritual.....	185
5.3.2.2.1. Rapport building.....	185
5.3.2.2.2. Potential for faking.....	187
5.3.2.2.3. Understanding the teaching and learning context.....	188
5.3.2.3. Teacher job interviews as rational evaluation.....	189
5.3.2.3.1. A structured approach?	189
5.3.2.3.2. Are you committed to professional development?	191
5.3.2.3.3. Evaluating communication skills.....	193
5.3.3. Power, care and frustration.....	197
5.3.3.1. Power.....	198
5.3.3.2. Care.....	200
5.3.3.3. Frustration.....	204
5.4. Summary of findings.....	207
5.5. Conclusion.....	212
 CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION.....	 213
6.1. Introduction.....	213
6.2. Credentialism, professionalism and precarity.....	213
6.2.1. Teacher credentials: Gatekeeping or stewardship?	214
6.2.1.1. Gatekeeping.....	214
6.2.1.2. Stewardship.....	217
6.2.2. The emotion rules of teacher employability: Professionalism and precarity.	219
6.2.2.1. The emotion rules of professionalism.....	219
6.2.2.2. The emotion work of precarity.....	222
6.3. English language teacher interviews: What is the point?	225
6.3.1. Influences of rapport-building.....	226
6.3.2. Confident decision-makers and influential candidates.....	229

6.3.3. Are observations and student feedback the final stage of the recruitment process?	232
6.4. An employable teacher identity.....	233
6.4.1. Stability and instability at the heart of teacher employability.....	234
6.5. Conclusion.....	240
 CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION.....	 241
7.1. Summary of purpose and methodology.....	241
7.2. Summary of key findings.....	243
7.3. Research contributions and implications.....	245
7.3.1. Theoretical and methodological contributions.....	245
7.3.2. Implications for English language teachers in Australia.....	246
7.3.3. Implications for the English language teaching sector in Australia.....	248
7.4. Research limitations.....	251
7.5. Recommendations for future research.....	252
7.6. Final comments.....	254
 REFERENCES.....	 256
 APPENDICES.....	 292
Appendix A – Online Teacher Employability Survey	
Appendix B – Table B.1. Instances of Stance and Nominalised Clauses in Achievements General/Exam English Job Advertisements.....	302
Appendix B – Table B.2. Instances of Stance and Nominalised Clauses in Achievements Vocational English Job Advertisements.....	305
Appendix B – Table B.3. Instances of Stance and Nominalised Clauses in Achievements Settlement English Job Advertisements.....	307
Appendix B – Table B.4.. Instances of Stance and Nominalised Clauses in Achievements Academic/University Pathways English Job Advertisements.....	309

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Cross-tabulation of Research questions, data sources and data analyses.	74
Table 3.2 Survey Participants by Institution Type.....	77
Table 3.3 Interview Participants by Teaching & Hiring Domain Type.....	81
Table 3.4 Mean, Median & Standard Deviation of Survey Responses to Most Important Teaching and Learning Skills.....	85
Table 3.5 Number of Job Advertisement Types Used for Data Analysis.....	87
Table 4.1 Measures of Frequency, Mean, Median & Standard Deviation for Job Advertisement Type.....	105
Table 4.2 Frequency & Percentage of Employability Attributes Across all Job Advertisements.....	107
Table 4.3 Achievements Mentions Across Job Advertisements.....	109
Table 4.4 Frequency & Average of Teaching and Learning & Generic Skills References Across Job Advertisements.....	124
Table 4.5 Verbs of Planning, Teaching & Assessing in Teaching and Assessment Skills.....	125
Table 4.6 Frequency & Percentage of References to Knowledge & Understandings Subcategories.....	141
Table 4.7 Number & Percentage of Teacher Attribute Mentions Across Job Advertisements.....	153
Table 5.1 Twelve Highest Ranked Teacher Personal Characteristics from Survey Responses.....	168

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1 Example of Adult Migrant English Job Advertisement.....	90
Figure 3.2 Example of General/Exam English Job Advertisement.....	90
Figure 3.3 Example of Vocational English Job Advertisement.....	91
Figure 3.4 Example of Academic/University Pathways English Job Advertisement.....	91
Figure 3.5 Screenshot of Employability Main Codes in NVIVO.....	88
Figure 3.6 Screenshot of Skills Subcategory Codes in NVIVO.....	88
Figure 3.7 Extract from Familiarisation Notes (Teacher 3 Interview).....	98
Figure 3.8 Coding Example (Teacher 1 Interview).....	99

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACSF	Australian Core Skills Framework
ACTA	Australian Council of TESOL Associations
AE	Academic English
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CELTA	Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults
Cert. IV	Certificate Four
DELTA	Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
DESE	Department of Education, Skills and Employment
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
EA	English Australia
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Special Purposes
GE	General English
IDLTM	International Diploma in Language Teaching Management
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
LOTE	Languages Other than English
MA TESOL	Master of Arts in TESOL

NEAS	National English Language Teaching Accreditation Scheme
NEST	Native English-Speaking Teacher
NNEST	Non-native English-Speaking Teacher
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PTE	Pearson Test of English
TAE	Training and Assessment
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency
TOEIC	Test of English of International Communication
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
VET	Vocational Education and Training

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1. Study overview and aim of study

What does it mean to be an employable teacher in the context of adult English language teaching in Australia? This seemingly simple – yet theoretically, practically and pedagogically nuanced – question is the focus of this research study. Research in the areas of teacher education and English language teaching tends to be qualitative in its methodology, and this study is no exception. In other words, I do not intend to offer a definitive answer here to the question of what constitutes teacher employability in this context; rather, my objective is to better understand some of the key characteristics of what teacher employability means to teachers and hiring managers working within the adult English language teaching sector in Australia. In this, I am not an objective observer. My own teaching career started with a Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) and a desire to travel to South America: the goal was to live in Chile, learn Spanish and just take it from there. Things turned out quite differently, however. After obtaining the CELTA, I found myself teaching at one of the most reputable English language schools in Sydney, and I have since had a successful, much loved, enjoyable and professionally rewarding career as an English language teacher, Senior Teacher and (Acting) Director of Studies, Tutor and Lecturer. This has been my career trajectory. Yet, my northern English, working class background has also impacted who I am, and my researcher positioning.

This PhD research project evolved out of my Master's research degree. That project sought to uncover some of the beliefs invoked and practices employed in the hiring of teachers in the English language teaching (ELT) industry in Australia, with a focus on the supposed dichotomy between 'non-native' English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) and 'native'

English-speaking teachers (NESTs). Throughout this thesis, I will be using single quotation marks to highlight my critical stance towards some concepts, for example, the binary juxtaposition of ‘non-native’ and ‘native’ English-speaking teachers, as just noted. In this, I join with other researchers in emphasising the value-laden, essentialising discourses that imply that ‘native’ English-speaking teachers have an idealised linguistic, cultural and teaching superiority over ‘non-native’ teachers (Kiczkowiak, 2019; Selvi et al., 2023; Swan et al., 2015). Therefore, whenever the words ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ appear in this thesis, the quotation marks should serve to remind the reader that these terms are ‘so-called’ rather than fixed categories and perpetuate language-based teacher discrimination.

The findings from my Master’s research, (Phillips, 2017) which were based on data derived from a survey ($n=62$) and interviews ($n=10$), suggested that, in contrast with previous teacher employability studies in the UK and the USA (Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahboob et al., 2004), English language teaching in Australia is a more equitable employment environment for ‘non-native’ English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). My research also revealed teacher employment interviews to be a site in which the competency and legitimacy of teachers from a ‘non-native’ English-speaking background can be challenged by hiring managers. Areas of particular interest in my study were the assumptions and beliefs around these teachers’ accents and linguistic competence in relation to their teaching ability, and the different assumptions and beliefs driving hiring managers’ interpretations of hiring criteria, as influenced by the contexts in which they were hiring. In contrast with previous research, my study found that what makes a teacher employable is more complex than simply determining which hiring criteria are more salient than others (Alshammari, 2020; Clark & Paran, 2007; Mackenzie, 2020; Mahboob et al., 2004).

This current PhD research project has sought to further interrogate the assumptions and beliefs surrounding English language teacher employability through a survey and

interviews with teachers and hiring managers working in the Australian ELT field as well as through an analysis of teacher job advertisements in this same field. The main aim of this research is to better understand what these participants mean by teacher ‘employability’ (Ochs, 2012; Strauss & Feiz, 2014). It will be argued that the words and phrases these teachers and hiring managers use to describe teacher employability – and to therefore construct the ‘employable teacher identity’ – reveal feelings, epistemic stances and evaluations that indicate how these individuals see themselves and others in terms of what it means to be an employable teacher Australian adult English language teaching.

1.2. Context of the study

Teacher employability is very much context dependent. It concerns what goes on in a classroom once a teacher has employment, and whether this teacher’s experience, skills and characteristics are aligned with the needs and expectations of their students, colleagues and managers. It also encompasses external factors that can impact the teacher’s employment – for example, the institution, issues around profitability, student recruitment and marketing – as well as the wider socio-political environment and political economy of the country in which the teaching takes place. English language institutions in Australia, for instance, are heavily dependent on political decisions made not only by the Australian government but by overseas governments with regards to international education policy and the flow of international students onto Australian campuses. These decisions are important because the Australian international education sector is a significant contributor to the Australian economy; for the financial year 2022-2023, for example, this sector was worth \$36.4 billion to the Australian economy and was one of the top five Australian exports (Department of Education, 2024).

While Australia's international education sector is mostly dominated by universities and vocational education colleges (VETs), many international students attend English language courses to ensure that their English language skills meet university and workplace requirements. According to the Australian government established organisation, Jobs and Skills Australia the census data suggests that there were 2,700 teachers of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) working in Australia in 2021 (Jobs & Skills Australia [JSA], 2021). The data also suggests that at that time Australian TESOL teachers were predominantly female (76%), employed mainly part time (87%) and were on median weekly earnings of A\$2,053.

The English language teaching profession in Australia is also crucial for helping non-English-speaking migrants and humanitarian refugees settle into Australian society, for instance, through the Adult Migrant English program (AMEP). Adult English language teachers also teach English language skills courses in the vocational education and training sector (VET) as well as in technical and further education (TAFE) colleges. These AMEP, VET and TAFE English language courses are designed to enable migrants, as well as some first-generation Australian citizens, to improve their language skills so as to better integrate into, and be more able to contribute to, Australian communities.

Australian English language teaching then, tends to a diverse range of learner needs, all of which are differently context dependent. For example, as just highlighted, the type of English language institution and course which would cater to the language needs of a recently arrived adult migrant would not suit an international student arriving in Australia to commence a university pathways program with the aim of improving their academic English knowledge and skills. Similarly, the teachers employed in these different teaching and learning sectors are required, often stipulated by regulatory standards (Department of Education and Skills [DESE], 2018, 2021a, 2021b; DET, 2015; Department of Employment

and Workplace Relations [DEWR], 2015) to have particular levels of education (for example, an undergraduate degree) and TESOL specific teaching qualifications. It is for these reasons that the four main Australian adult English language teaching sector types are the context of this study. These sectors are the Australian Migrant English Program (AMEP), Private Language Schools, University English Language Centres, and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) (see Chapter 4, Section 3.4.1. pages 74 to 76 for a more detailed outline of the research context).

Teachers working in these different areas in the adult English language sector make an important contribution to the Australian economy, and to Australian society. Yet, as with many other professions, adult English language teaching employment is becoming increasingly precarious (Breshears, 2019; Edwards, 2018; Standing, 2011; Stanley, 2016, 2017), with casualised work and short-term contracts becoming the norm. It is in this context that the following question emerges: What does it mean to be seen as an ‘employable’ teacher in the adult English language teaching sector in Australia?

1.3. Current literature and research gap

The issue of discrimination based on ‘native’ speakerism, as evident in teacher hiring practices (Holliday, 2006), has been well documented in previous research dealing with adult English language teacher employability (Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Mahboob et al., 2004; Phillips, 2017; Ruecker & Ives, 2014; Selvi, 2010). The purpose here is not to add to this canon of work but to ask what English language teacher employment looks like for teachers in the adult English language teaching sector in Australia? This means a move away from the focus on employment bias against teachers with languages other than English (LOTE) backgrounds towards taking a more critical view (Fairclough, 1989; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Holborow, 2012b, 2013; Williams, 1976) regarding what it

means to be an employable teacher in adult English language teaching, especially since casualisation has become the employment contract norm in the Australian context. Perhaps understandably, given the high-stakes nature of employment interviews, there has been no research to date that offers an insight into how teacher employability is negotiated in teacher employment interviews. This project, therefore, has aimed to go some way towards closing these research gaps by problematising the idea of teacher employability, especially the ways in which employability is influenced by the neoliberal employment context in Australia, and the ways in which this impacts not only teacher employability, but also teacher identity.

1.4. Theoretical positioning

1.4.1. Neoliberalism and education

In the sphere of education, neoliberalism has had a far-reaching impact. In response to this, an increasing number of research studies – both theoretical and empirical – have explored the influence of the neoliberal project on various educational domains. It has been argued that the political economy of neoliberalism and the ways in which it has shaped, and continues to shape, education should be seen as a necessary frame through which to investigate research into language education (Block, 2017b). In this study, I define neoliberalism as an ideological project in which market-based freedoms are promoted and rationalised as the organising principle for all aspects of human life (Mirowski, 2014, 2019; Peck, 2010). The neoliberal project manifests in everyday life through phenomena such as deregulation, privatisation, increased flexibility of labour, and a reduction in welfare – all of which are based on the assumption that market-based competitive frameworks work well as the foundation for human relations – and these neoliberal practices are embedded in discourses that make them appear as ‘common sense’. Defining characteristics, or subjectivities (Houghton, 2019), of neoliberalism include individualism (Taylor-Gooby &

Leruth, 2018), entrepreneurship and self-branding (Wee & Brooks, 2010), accountability and responsibility (Shore & Wright, 2015) and commodification (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009; Heller, 2003, 2010a).

Block (2017a) has called for more research into the influence of neoliberalism on language education research, in general, and on language teacher identity, in particular. This research project, therefore, can be seen as providing a response to Block's call as English language teacher employability is part of the complex phenomena located at the intersection between education and neoliberal employment policies, practices and discourses. In investigating the experiences and beliefs of teachers and teacher hiring managers working within the English language teaching sector in Australia, this study has sought to examine the intersections between teacher employability and teacher identity.

1.4.2. Employability

The two central concepts in this research are neoliberalism and employability (Holborow, 2012a, 2012b; Williams, 1976). Three main perspectives on employability are central to this project: employability as the attributes we possess, employability as the skills we develop, and employability as processes central to identity (Clarke, 2017; Holmes, 2013) which, taken together, position English language teacher employability as a process of constant identity work (these perspectives are more fully explored in the next Chapter, section 2.2.2). Education-related employability research to date has been predominantly focused on graduate employment attributes and outcomes (P. Brown et al., 2003; Clarke, 2017; Collet et al., 2015; Harms & Brummel, 2015; Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Yorke, 2006). For the purposes of this current study, ideas inherent in the broader concept of employability in education have been applied to the more specific area of English language teacher employment. The widespread acceptance of the idea of employability is a reflection of the integration of Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1975) into Western political economic

thought (Keeley, 2007; Yorke, 2006). Human Capital Theory posits that it is the role of government to strengthen the conditions under which growth in human capital (a worker's individual capabilities) can be improved. As asserted by this theory, this strengthening is necessary as human capital is a precondition of continuous economic development in a globalised world (Yorke, 2006).

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), human capital encompasses individuals' attributes, learning, skills and talents, which are seen as not only central to the individual's ability to earn a living but essential for wider economic growth (Keeley, 2007). My study assumes a critical position with respect to the concept of employability as interpreted in Human Capital Theory. While the expansion of an individual's learning, skills and talents can certainly be viewed positively, the assumption that these positive individual endeavours should be undertaken with the explicit aim of increasing broader economic productivity can – and should – be challenged. By exploring what attributes of teacher employability are critical to being successfully employed (i.e., in gaining and maintaining employment), this research has endeavoured to enhance our understanding of what English language teacher employability means in the current context of adult English language teaching in Australia, and how these meanings influence teacher identity.

1.4.3. Language teacher identity

An exploration of English language teacher identity is at the core of this research. Barkhuizen (2017b) argues that teacher identity is multiple, complex and often contradictory, residing as it does both within the teacher, and outside, in the social, material world where its construction is discursively created (Barkhuizen, 2017b). Many external aspects of teacher identity are ideologically embedded in the social and material world, that is, discursively and materially interacting with the spaces in which teachers live and work.

One area of language teacher identity research that has not yet been theorised is the English language teacher's identity as 'employable'. While there have been many studies into various facets of language teacher identity, none have specifically explored what attributes of employability a teacher must demonstrate in order to be deemed employable in the current English language teaching context.

1.5. Research significance

Investigating what characteristics are important to English language teacher employability can further our understanding of what makes teachers employable – or not – in the English language teaching context in Australia. Further, an understanding of what teachers and hiring managers consider to be important can advance our understanding of what it means to be an employable teacher in this context, and in what ways these understandings of employability can affect teacher identity. An understanding of what makes a teacher employable not only draws attention to teachers' and hiring managers' lived experiences, careers, identities and professional development, but has implications for pre-experience teacher education and training. If we do not understand what makes a teacher employable in the current adult English language teaching context in Australia, how can we adequately educate, train and develop these teachers?

1.6. Outline of the methodology

This thesis presents a critical, qualitative study that has sought to further our understanding of English language teacher employability – its attributes and contexts – by taking into consideration how teachers and hiring managers position themselves in relation to meanings about teacher employability. The research participants in this study were adult English language teachers and teacher hiring managers from the four main teaching and learning sectors in adult ELT in Australia: private language schools, university English

language centres, the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and TAFE. The data collection and analysis in this thesis has three components: a basic descriptive statistical analysis of responses from a teacher employability survey delivered online; a content analysis and indexical analysis of 50 online teacher job advertisements; and a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with 11 teachers and 13 hiring managers. The interviews, which explored participants' beliefs and experiences in relation to teacher employability in their specific teaching and learning contexts, were guided by responses from the online survey, as well as examples of two teaching job advertisements.

1.7. Layout of the thesis

This thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 presents the literature review and outlines the theoretical framework underpinning this study while Chapter 3 details the methodology used in the study. Chapters 4 and 5 present its findings, with Chapter 4 presenting the analysis of the online job advertisements. Chapter 5 provides the analysis of the online teacher employability survey data followed by the participant interviews. Chapter 6 presents the discussion of the findings and is organised according to the three research questions provided in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3). Chapter 7 offers a conclusion to the thesis, and includes the study's limitations and implications for further research and practice.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter evaluates the existing literature that has informed the current research. The theoretical framework underpinning the study is presented in Section 2.2. Next, the literature on English language teacher employability is considered in Section 2.3, while Section 2.4 evaluates the key characteristics of teacher employability and examines areas such as native speakerism and employability in teacher job advertisements. Section 2.5 examines the ways in which researchers have approached identity in relation to teacher employability and Section 2.6 investigates the research on the neoliberal context of English language teaching. The final section, Section 2.7, summarises the literature and identifies the research gaps relevant to this study.

2.2. Theoretical framework

2.2.1. Researcher positioning

This investigation into what it means to be an employable teacher in adult English language teaching in the Australian context is theoretically underpinned by a critical approach that allows for the investigation of the contextually specific acts of meaning-making that position English language teachers as employable. In taking this critical approach, I assume that the idea of teacher employability is not value free. As highlighted in Chapter 1, the epistemological and ontological values driving this research are not only informed by social constructionism but are also influenced by my own personal biographical history and worldview. In other words, I position myself here not only as a humanist

educator, but as a critical qualitative researcher who values the voices, experiences and positions of those who have contributed to this research. In this, I am not only positioned as a member of the English language teaching sector in Australia but as someone who believes in the transformational power of education. What it means to be an employable teacher in the English language education sector is situated in the discourses of English language education (Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 2008) and the socio-political contexts in which this sector is located (Block, 2017b; Block et al., 2012). However, I am also situated within these discourses. My review of the literature that follows is therefore framed and enhanced by my position as an insider of the English language teaching sector and impacted by my critical lens informed by my biographical history, as described in Chapter 1.

2.2.2. Employability

There are three main perspectives on employability that are central to this project: employability as possession, employability as skills, and employability as process (Holmes, 2013). These three perspectives have influenced the development of my epistemological positioning on – and critiques of – how employability has been viewed in previous English language teaching employability research. Despite my understandings early in this project of teacher employability as the confluence of a teacher's achievements, skills, contextual understandings and personal attributes (Yorke, 2006), which represents a 'possession of attributes' viewpoint, as the research progressed, the notion that these factors implicate identity started to take on greater importance. While most of the broader employability research, together with much of the English language teacher employability literature, has focused on the possession of skills and attributes, there has been an increasing focus on how employability intersects with identity. Accordingly, this research project is interested in the ways in which the three main theoretical perspectives of employability – as attributes we

possess, as skills we develop, and as the processes inherent to identity – work together to shape what is meant by ‘being employable’ (Clarke, 2017; Holmes, 2013).

Central to the notion of employability is the accumulation of skills and knowledge, which is theorised in Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1975), where they are valued for their contributions to increased productivity and higher wages (Keeley, 2007; Quiggan, 1999). In the global knowledge economy, which is heavily reliant on the English language as its mode of shared communication, individuals’ learning, skills and personal attributes are seen as essential for personal and economic growth, and the resulting success that this growth is supposed to realise (Keeley, 2007). Indeed, the learners that English language teachers teach tacitly understand the discourses surrounding the importance of English language proficiency as a labour market skill (Luo & Daly, 2019). Students of English studying English as a foreign language (EFL) in their home country or English as a second language (ESL) in a ‘native’ English-speaking destination country undertake their studies in line with what Becker (1962) calls ‘human capital formation’ and ‘investment’. Human capital formation is the process by which the deliberate development of a skill or skills is undertaken, while investment is the expenditure in time, money and effort made to further this development (Baptiste, 2001). This links the global spread of English with its continued cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1990) as the international language of commerce and education. This is also where neoliberal theory, Human Capital Theory and employability align. As Holborow (2012c) points out, the creation of human capital is now a significant function of the education system, a focus which reconstructs educational endeavours as an adjunct of the economy. Neoliberalism’s need for continued economic growth requires a workforce ever more suited to the dictates of employers in a competitive global marketplace. From this perspective, educational investment equates to investment in future (higher) earnings, and is usually accompanied by economic success (Baptiste, 2001).

The effects of the hegemonic status of the English language coupled with the impacts of its acquisition as human capital affects the educational contexts of teaching and learning, both in terms of learners' and teachers' employability. Learning and skills need to be continuously updated so as to be and remain employable in an ever changing global economy.

2.2.3. Identity

In this research project, I approach identity not as a construct internal to the individual, but as a discursive, performative and socially interactive phenomenon (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; LaPointe, 2010; Paltridge, 2022). Identity can be seen as contextual, multifaceted and temporal; for example, a person can foreground or background different identity positions in varying situations – displaying, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, revising, contesting and/or accepting their identities in interaction with others. Not only is this type of 'identity work' co-constructed, it is mediated in conjunction with historic and socio-cultural practices and constraints. Identity is not necessarily articulated unitarily but is interdependent and may often be contradictory in nature. Moreover, identities are not 'natural' or permanent but require constant construction and recognition to be called into being (Paltridge, 2022). Identities are also performances that operate as products of social accomplishments and are reliant upon socially and culturally accepted tropes. Identities, therefore, are not fixed but emerge contextually and relationally. As identity is dynamic, dialogic, relational and multiple (Faez, 2011a, 2011b), it needs to be explored in the process of its evolution in specific interactional social contexts.

The 'English language teacher identity', therefore, includes the idea of the English language teacher as an occupational identity, and teachers' own biographical identities as well as those of their students and other stakeholders in the English language teaching domain. It also includes the specific socio-historic, socio-economic and socio-political

contexts in which teaching and learning takes place (Pennycook, 1998, 2007; Phillipson, 2004, 2008). Following De Costa and Norton (2017), and the Douglas Fir Group before them (DFG, 2016), this current project views the English language teacher identity as situated at the macro, meso and micro levels of social interaction. At the macro level, identity permeates all levels, ideologies and structures. In line with the social constructionist approach taken in this study, ideology is viewed as “constructions of reality ... which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction, or transformation of relations of domination” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 87). At this macro societal level, ideology structures – which include belief systems, cultural values, and political and economic values – all influence the social interactions that take place at the meso level, that is, in sociocultural institutions and communities such as the English language teaching profession. This continues into the micro levels of individual social interactions that occur – and reoccur – in everyday contexts, such as in the teachers’ common room and in the classroom. What it means to be an employable teacher is impacted by, and mediated through, these different levels of social interaction, and for this reason, the broader political-economic context within which teaching takes place must be taken into consideration.

In sum, then, conceptualising teacher identity as discursive, performative, and co-constructed at different levels of social interaction informs the view of teacher employability in this study, not as a static collection of attributes and skills, but as a constant process of identity work both dependent on and interdependent with the employment contexts in which teaching exists.

2.2.4. Neoliberalism

With respect to the macro level of social relations, English language teacher employability can be viewed against the backdrop of neoliberalism, which is a macro level

ideological structure that promotes particular discourses and practices to create social conditions that are seen as common sense and natural. Modern scholars have argued that neoliberalism, and its underlying political philosophy, is diffuse and somewhat opaque (McClanahan, 2019; Plehwe, 2009; Reinhoudt & Audier, 2018). Park (J. Park, 2021) in his work on language and subjectivity, suggests that neoliberalism is a complex phenomenon that encompasses a range of policies, practices and discourses. While these may manifest in diffuse ways, it is the neoliberal practice of flexibilisation of labour that has the most direct impact on teacher employability. Flexibilisation allows for the relaxation of workplace rights so that businesses can quickly adapt to ever-changing market demands. Stable, long-term work is viewed as detrimental to a business's ability to be flexible in addressing its needs, and for this reason, flexible work arrangements have become the norm. This more precarious employment landscape is characterised by neoliberal subjectivities such as individualism, entrepreneurship, self-branding, responsibility and commodification. To be seen as employable, workers need to continuously develop new skills and adapt to new ways of working.

As noted above, situating identity at the macro, meso and micro levels allows us to see how identity occurs at different layers of social interaction. Likewise, viewing neoliberalism as a macro, meso and micro socio-historical phenomenon can help us observe its impact at the societal and individual levels of social interaction. Both Marxism's views on neoliberalism, in terms of capitalist accumulation through the exploitation of labour (Harvey, 2005), and the Foucauldian view, which centres more on the micro operations of power, are useful here. From a Marxist perspective (Duménil & Lévy, 2004; Harvey, 2005), neoliberalism is seen as a particular stage of capitalist exploitation of labour in which the power of the capitalist class is maintained through flexible labour masquerading as entrepreneurial freedoms (among other things) (J. Park, 2021). The Foucauldian perspective

focuses on power as realised through discourses and technologies, that is, the mechanisms and techniques used by those in power to control and regulate individuals and society, and these discourses and technologies seek to create particular persona, or subjectivities. They explain how neoliberalism, as a macro level socio-historical structure, works with respect to subjectification, that is, how it works to construct possible or desirable person types through multiple policies, practices and discourses. In other words, neoliberalism can be seen as a mode of governmentality, “a form of activity aiming to shape, guide, affect the conduct of some person, or persons” (Gordon, 1991, p.2), in which particular ways of being are valorised as they align with the discourses of the prevailing neoliberal order. Language, therefore, can be seen to be central to the workings of neoliberalism (Atkinson, 2018; Block & Gray, 2016; Block et al., 2012; Hamid & Luo, 2016; Jeon, 2012; Shin, 2016; Shin & Park, 2016).

Research on the commodification of language, and the ways in which increasingly flexible and precarious job markets have led to communicative skills becoming a key characteristic of the ‘ideal worker’, is of particular relevance to this current research project (Gee et al., 1996; Heller, 2003, 2010b; Urciuoli, 2008; Urciuoli & LaDousa, 2013). Also important is research that problematises how neoliberal ideology has permeated not only language meaning and use, but the ways in which the world is viewed, particularly in relation to the neoliberal keywords used in educational settings (Holborow, 2007, 2012b, 2016; Mautner, 2005; Williams, 1976). Keywords reflecting neoliberal subjectivities such as ‘adaptable’, ‘effective’, ‘efficient’, ‘employability’, ‘flexible’, ‘team-work’, ‘leadership’ and ‘quality’ are all examples of what Mirowski (2014, p. 117) terms ‘creeping linguistic neoliberalism’. In the English language teaching and learning context, neoliberalism positions language as a resource to be used for economic profit. However, this position also highlights the contradictions in the ‘language as commodified resource’ trope. For instance,

neoliberalism demands that speakers adopt and use languages and identities flexibly to suit the needs of the economy while at the same time, and in the spirit of neoliberal competition, certain subjectivities are deemed to be more valuable than others. That is, neoliberal subjectivity values particular types of teacher ‘being’ and behaviours, for instance, those associated with ‘quality’ teaching and learning and ‘caring’ for students, although these tend to be mostly (and importantly) aligned with profit-driven imperatives. Further, these neoliberal framings of employability mean that teachers’ work is contingent on English language teaching and learning as a commodified, market-driven imperative dressed up as economic advancement and status aspiration. It is these reasons that employment in English language teaching in Australia is precarious as it is required to respond to the continued demands and fluctuations of English language as a marketable good in the international education market.

2.3. Literature review

2.3.1. English language teacher employability

Employability research emerged due to concerns about graduate employment and the pressures on higher education institutions to ‘produce’ students who add value to the economy (Blasko et al., 2002; Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Maher, 2005). More recently, employability discourses have started to position students and graduates as capable and informed individuals replete with the essential, and often generic and transferable skills, that are valued by employers for their contribution to effective workplace performance (Bennett, 2018). Some of the employability attributes currently deemed valuable by employers include leadership, communication and teamwork skills, as well as personal attributes, such as adaptability, commitment and motivation. These are required not only for recent graduates but for all those searching for work, as well as those already in work. As discussed in

Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.4 above, the idea of employability accompanied the restructuring of society, which started about 50 years ago. While this reorganisation was in part a result of de-industrialisation, the associated neoliberal practices of deregulation and flexibilisation of labour, together with the attendant discourses of accountability, commodification, entrepreneurship, individualism and self-branding, have naturalised and rationalised such changes (J. Park, 2021). Employability research is currently moving beyond the study of an individual's possession of traits to take into account multifaceted aspects related to identity, power and responsibility (Clarke, 2017; Reid, 2016).

Previous studies that have investigated employers' reliance on teacher employability skills during the recruitment of English language teachers have tended to approach this issue from the perspective of the supposed dichotomy between 'native' and 'non-native' English-speaking teachers. In the US context, for example, Mahboob et al. (2004) found that almost 60% of 122 administrators in English language programs in American universities considered native English-speaking to be a somewhat important criterion. These authors found that the greater the importance the program administrators placed on teachers being native speakers of English, the smaller the ratio of non-native English-speaking teachers on the teaching program (Mahboob et al., 2004). The most important hiring criteria, in order of importance, for these administrators were teaching experience, educational experience, recommendations and being a native English-speaker. Similarly, in the UK, Clark and Paran (2007) found that teachers being native English-speaking (NEST) was significant for hiring managers. Specifically, over 72% of the 90 hiring managers in their study, who were from private language schools, university English language programs and further education institutions, believed that NEST was either a moderately important or a very important criterion (Clark & Paran, 2007). However, these UK managers' rankings of the various hiring criteria was different to that found in the study of US managers conducted by

Mahboob et al. (2004). Of the 13 hiring criteria presented to the UK hiring managers in Clark and Paran's study, the NEST criterion was ranked seventh (teaching qualifications, performance in the interview, and teaching experience were the three most important) whereas in the US study by Mahboob et al., NEST was ranked fourth. Although the NEST criterion was ranked lower than in the Mahboob et al. study, this criterion was nonetheless important across the three teaching and learning contexts surveyed, leading Clark and Paran (2007) to conclude that the NEST criterion acts as a gatekeeping mechanism that excludes competent non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) through the recruitment process.

A study by Hayes (B. Hayes, 2013) of English language teacher hiring processes in Japanese universities highlighted similar structural and ideological issues impacting teacher recruitment. Hayes's focus was on foreign teachers' anecdotal experiences and their observations of how labour market constraints in Japanese university English language teaching limit career development for non-Japanese teachers of English. The study found that foreign university English language teachers in Japan are faced with contingent work characterised by the same type of precarity highlighted in other studies of employability (Phillips, 2017; Stanley, 2016, 2017). However, in contrast to the studies on hiring practices with regards to non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) reviewed above, Hayes found that in the Japanese university context, the poor Japanese language skills of foreign English language teachers was often excused, meaning that these teachers could still be hired irrespective of their limited Japanese skills. The conflation between English native speaker status and teaching ability has also been highlighted in discussions of professionalism in English language teaching (Stanley, 2013; Stanley & Murray, 2013; Thornbury, 2001). Hayes also found that, without excellent or near perfect spoken Japanese, it was difficult for foreign teachers to obtain standard employment contracts; the best teachers with minimal Japanese language skills could expect were short-term, part-time contracts. The findings of

this study highlight the importance of context in hiring practices and challenge the assumption that all native English-speaking teachers are privileged in recruitment and selection.

Meanwhile, in the Canadian English language teaching (ELT) context, Ramjattan (2015, 2019) has demonstrated the ways in which expertise in ELT has become synonymous with a particular aesthetic; that is, of the white, native speaker of English. For his study, Ramjattan interviewed 10 non-white English language teachers working in Canadian private language schools about their experiences of everyday discrimination at work as evidenced in micro-aggressions (defined as everyday racial slights). His findings revealed that teachers experienced everyday micro-aggressions – such as employers being confused about their names, questioning their linguistic background and citing customer preferences – as reasons for not hiring. Ramjattan concluded that by valuing the white ‘native’ English-speaking teacher, schools were in effect promoting an institutional regime of inequality, which conflicted with their claims that English language teaching and learning is a vehicle for intercultural communication.

In the Australian context, Phillips (2017) investigated the extent to which the NEST criterion was important for hiring managers when recruiting English language teachers. The findings of the survey ($n=164$) and interviews ($n=10$) in this study contrasted with those of Mahboob et al. (2004) and Clark and Paran (2007). In fact, the NEST criterion in the Australian study was ranked tenth out of the eleven designated hiring criteria by survey participants, with teaching qualifications, performance in the interview, and educational background ranked as the three most important criteria. The importance of NEST to hiring managers was more evenly divided, however, with just over half of all respondents attaching some importance to it, and just under half viewing it as unimportant. Phillips’ interview data suggested that although some hiring managers conflated linguistic ability with teaching

ability, there appeared to be a move away from the primacy of the ‘native’ English-speaking teacher in the Australian English language teaching context. Nonetheless, some of the hiring managers in their study commented on the market-driven demands of English language teaching in Australia, especially in private language schools, where the view of the English language as a product meant that teachers were seen as a form of ‘merchandise’. This meant that for some hiring managers, at least, a strong ‘non-native’ accent could be seen as problematic for students who pay considerable amounts of money to learn English in Australia. This study also found that teacher employability was impacted by the casualised and precarious nature of English language teaching, such that a teacher who did not perform well in the eyes of the students –whether ‘non-native’ or ‘native’ – would most likely not be offered further work.

More recent studies in the Australian context have considered the ways in which notions of ‘non-native’ and ‘native’ speaker intersect with other teacher characteristics. In a study titled ‘No-one would give me that job in Australia’, Nigar et al. (2023) explored how NNESTs’ professional identities intersect with their employment experience. Through an analysis of the written narratives of 16 NNESTs in Australia, Nigar et al. demonstrated how these teachers’ professional identities were impacted by hiring discrimination whereby socio-cultural factors such as of race, language and other cultural characteristics contributed to their limited employment prospects, despite being qualified to teach in Australia.

The literature just examined provides evidence of the types of criteria that are important to hiring managers in a variety of contexts: Australia, Canada, Japan, UK, and US. These studies point to the importance of the native English-speaking criterion for hiring teachers in many of these contexts. Another strand in English language teacher employability research examines the hiring criteria found in English language teacher job advertisements, as reviewed in the next section.

2.3.2. Teacher job advertisements

Early studies on teacher hiring criteria generated further research interest in teacher recruitment, and researchers turned to teacher job advertisements to investigate this area further. However, these studies tended to centre on the native speaker criteria. Selvi (2010), for example, investigated the prevalence of this ‘native’ speaker criterion in job advertisements posted on two of the largest international teacher job sites at the time: TESOL’s Career Centre and Dave’s ESL Café International Job Board. Selvi’s study found that native-speakerism was more important than relevant background and teaching experience on both of these job sites: 60.5% of job advertisements ($n=38$) on TESOL’s Career Centre, and 74.4% of advertisements ($n=157$) on Dave’s ESL Café International Job Board specified either ‘native’ speaker or ‘native-like’ speaker as a hiring criterion. This study highlighted the complex nature of discrimination in hiring practices. For instance, second and third degree discrimination was found in the job advertisements whereby distinctions between prospective teacher applicants were made based on country of passport – ‘native’ English-speaking countries such as Australia, Canada, UK, US, New Zealand and South Africa were specified – the location in which the academic/professional qualifications were obtained, and the variety of English spoken, with American English being the most valued. Selvi’s study confirms what Clark and Paran (2007) found, that is, that NNESTs are discriminated against at the point of application for teaching roles.

Extending Selvi’s (2010) work, Mahboob and Golden (2013) also investigated discrimination in teacher job advertisements. The focus of their study was on identifying the extent to which NNESTs’ background precluded them from being successful applicants in the recruitment process. Based on their analysis of 77 job advertisements from East Asia and the Middle East, their results showed that biographical prerequisites outnumbered professional prerequisites by five to two, and native English-speaking was stipulated by 79%

of the teacher recruiters as a prerequisite. In their discussion of the study's results, Mahboob and Golden (2013) noted the importance of a number of socio-political factors underlying the hiring criteria. For instance, they observed a division in the results between the two regions studied with regards to the importance of nativeness, which they attributed to the after-effects of colonialism in East Asia. As Holliday (2006) and others (Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 2008) have argued, the power structures inherent in colonial discourses have privileged the 'native' speaker such that the order of things (Foucault, 1980) organises what is legitimised, and what is not. What the studies reviewed thus far have in common is the privileging of the 'native' speaker in teacher hiring. Although Phillips (2017) identified a move away from the primacy of the native speaker hiring criterion in the Australian context, she did also note that linguistic competence and accent could be used as a limiting device in teacher recruitment interviews. This speaks to the complexity of discrimination in hiring practices, as overt instances of bias can be subsumed within other hiring criteria which still manage to have a restricting effect on teachers who do not fit the ideal conceptions of employability.

Ruecker and Ives (2015) examined online teacher recruitment spaces, again with a focus on native speakerism. Unlike the previous job advertisement studies, Ruecker and Ives conducted a critical discourse analysis of the textual and visual features of 59 teacher recruitment websites in China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Thailand. The results of their study show that in these recruitment spaces there was an idealised notion of the English language teacher: young, white, enthusiastic, and a native speaker from inner circle countries. Moreover, the ideal teacher candidate presented on these websites was seen as more motivated by money, travel and adventure opportunities than by the professionalism of the jobs themselves. Ruecker and Ives highlighted the use of colonial discourses of 'us' versus 'them', with the Western, white teacher as the norm, teaching the exotic 'other' (Said, 1978).

As well as positioning teachers and students through an Orientalist discourse, the online recruitment spaces also placed teachers and students within discourses of consumerism. It has been argued that the idea of being taught by white, ‘native’ English-speaking teachers offers a more authentic learning experience for East Asian students, which speaks to the social and economic power with being white, Western and first world (Ruecker & Ives, 2014).

As with the studies on English language teacher hiring criteria, more generally, the research on hiring criteria evident in teacher job advertisements has focused on the ways in which native English-speaking teachers remain the ideal against which all other teachers are assessed. Neglected in these studies, however, is an examination of what it takes to be hired as an English language teacher beyond the NEST versus NNEST dichotomy. Despite the discrimination inherent in these essentialising discourses, as already discussed, there are other contextual factors that impact hiring for all teachers. For both NEST and NNEST, work in the area of English language teaching in Australia is often precarious, with different teaching and learning contexts requiring different teacher characteristics, qualifications and experience. Beyond the native English-speaking hiring criterion, few studies have centred on what characteristics, experience, knowledge and skills are important to be considered as an ‘employable’ teacher. The next two sections outline research that deals with the characteristics, skills and experience – and also the identities – attributed to ‘good’ teachers. What is absent from these bodies of work is a critical examination of what teacher employability means beyond skills and attributes as possessions, that is, how employability is viewed across different teaching and learning contexts, and how teacher employability is related to teacher identity.

2.3.3. Teacher job interviews

Constructing an employable identity in job interviews is integral to securing employment. The assessment of employability during interviews, as well as the social and linguistic practices that underpin such assessments, can be seen as sites where employment inequality is produced and maintained (Campbell & Roberts, 2007; Phillips, 2017).

Interviews require particular ways of communicating – both verbal and non-verbal – and can be viewed as sites where institutional and societal norms and structures are produced and maintained (Campbell & Roberts, 2007). To be employed as an English language teacher usually requires successfully ‘passing’ an interview although, of course, teachers can be employed casually without being interviewed. In the interview, the identity of the employable teacher is demonstrated. This is an identity (or identities) which sits well within the accepted expressions of what an English language teacher should be according to a variety of interested persons, such as students, teachers, hiring managers, school administrators, agents, school/institution sales and marketing teams. It also accords with the context-specific needs of the teacher recruitment at the time of hiring. In other words, it is not only a teacher’s experience and knowledge of teaching English but a myriad of other criteria according to which the teacher is assessed, and deemed employable for the position for which they have applied (Nigar et al., 2023; Phillips, 2017).

As well as interviews being a type of identity work, as just outlined, they can also be seen as an emotional process that involves interpersonal evaluation (Rivera, 2015). In a qualitative case study that explores the recruitment for entry level positions in elite professional consulting firms (finance, law and investment banking), Rivera (2015) demonstrates how hirers’ emotional responses to candidates in job interviews affected their hiring decisions. The findings from 120 interviews showed that the hiring decision makers relied on their subjective feelings, such as their sense of excitement and enthusiasm about the

job applicants, to evaluate these applicants and to subsequently make their hiring decisions. Rivera saw similarities in the emotional exchanges that took place during these job interviews to Collins' (2004) concepts of emotional energy and interactional ritual chains. Collins (2004, p. 49) defines emotional energy as "a feeling of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action" which occurs on a "continuum from enthusiasm, confidence and initiative at the high end, down to passivity and depression at the low end" (Collins, 2004, p. 134). In Collins' theorisation of interactional ritual chains, emotion operates at three levels: emotional energy at the micro level, interactions at the meso level, and group emotion and solidarity at the macro level. The theory suggests that people exchange emotional energy during their shared activities and interactions (micro level), they repeat these shared activities and interactions, which elevates the emotional energy (and avoid those that do not) (meso level), and the repetition of these interactions creates 'chains' (macro level) which become routinised into social structures (Baker, 2019; Collins, 2004). Collins (1990) argues that we gravitate towards people and interactions that increase our emotional energy levels, which means that, over time, those who generate more excitement and enthusiasm in others have more access to opportunities and resources. As Rivera (2015) highlights, employment interviews are key settings in which to test Collin's hypothesis because hirers will be more drawn to job candidates who increase the emotional energy than those who do not.

Despite little being known about English language teacher interviews, or how emotional energy operates in them, there is considerable research that has explored what facilitates best practice in employment interviews, more generally. Huthcutt and Culbertson (2011), for instance, contend that although the employment interview remains an enigma in many ways, a vast canon of literature informs us that well-designed employment interviews are predictive of job performance (M.A. Campion et al., 1997), albeit for reasons that are not entirely clear. An example of this gap in our knowledge about interviews is the extent to

which interviews capture candidates' job-related knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics, as opposed to more general cognitive abilities or traits, as identified by the Five Factor Model of personality (McCrae & Costa, 2013; McCrae & Costa, 1997; McCrae et al., 2005). The personality characteristics represented in the Five Factor Model are: *agreeableness* (e.g., generosity, kindness, honesty and modesty); *conscientiousness* (e.g., dependability, hardworking, motivated and disciplined); *extraversion* (e.g., active, energetic, enthusiastic and outgoing); *neuroticism* (e.g., anxious, tense, unstable and worrying); and *openness* (creative, curious, imaginative and wide interests) (McCrae & John, 1992). Research has indicated that interviewee characteristics such as extraversion and verbal skill usually lead to interviewers' positive initial impressions of these interviewees even in highly structured job interviews, and even when the evaluations are not necessarily job related (Barrick et al., 2012).

Still, employment interview research suggests that the more structured an interview is, the more valid its outcomes will be (M.A. Campion et al., 1997); Huffcutt, 2011; Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994; Huffcutt & Culbertson, 2011; Levashina et al., 2014). This research argues that interview structure is the single most important characteristic of an effective interview. Key features of employment interview structure shown to improve validity include using pre-specified questions, the responses to which are rated on a customised scale with benchmark answers (Huffcutt and Arthur, 1994; M.A. Campion et al., 1997), asking the same questions of all candidates; not using follow up questions and limiting prompting candidates; using multiple interviewers and the same interviewer for all candidates, and providing extensive interviewer training (M.A. Campion et al., 1997 Levashina et al. 2014).

As noted above, the importance placed on interviewee characteristics highlights concerns regarding the effect of impression management and the potential for faking during interviews (Levashina & Campion, 2006; Schneider et al., 2015). In the influential

Levashina and Campion study (2006), over 90% of undergraduate job candidates were found to be faking during employment interviews, and the use of interviewer follow-up questions increased the likelihood of faking. Unstructured interviews were found to be particularly open to being manipulated through faking (Barrick et al., 2009). Indeed, some interview research studies have found that the standard job interview structure can be unreliable at predicting future job performance (Moore, 2017), while others have found strong evidence that highly structured interviews are superior to unstructured interviews in predicting job performance (Huffcutt & Culbertson, 2011). More structured interview processes have also been shown to reduce discrimination (Wolgast et al., 2017) and rapport building, even in structured interviews, has been found to potentially influence subsequent interviewer evaluations of candidates (Barrick et al., 2012; Levashina et al., 2014). It has also been found that in unstructured job interviews, hiring managers' overconfidence in their predictions of candidates' job performance may not only fail to assist with personnel decisions, but can be detrimental to them (Kausel et al., 2016).

What this general employment interview research indicates is that the way in which an interview is structured, the amount of rapport building that takes place, candidates' personality characteristics, and their ability to employ impression management techniques, together with hirers' confidence in their own judgements can all impact interview outcomes. However, there is a gap in our knowledge about English language teacher employment interviews, specifically; for instance, very little is known about how English language teachers are interviewed, and to what extent factors such as those highlighted above impact teacher employability.

2.4. Characteristics important to English language teacher employability

2.4.1. The ‘NNEST/NEST’ debate

From a linguistic identity perspective, there are unanswered questions about the complexity hiding behind the overly simplistic dichotomy between ‘non-native’ and ‘native’ English-speaking teachers (Ellis, 2016; Faez, 2011a, 2011b). In a recent critical literature review of the scholarship in this area, Selvi et al. (2023) conclude that (non)native speaker/teacherhood is historically colonial, contextually enacted, and dynamically experienced as a socio-professional phenomenon. Teacherhood can be seen to combine with other identity categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and even passport and visa status, which make *a priori* assumptions about teachers as language users, and consequently their abilities as language teachers. There has also been some discussion concerning the discriminatory nature of the ideological positioning of native speakerism towards native English-speaking teachers as well. Rivers (2017) contends that native speakerism as a concept has yet to be empirically tested to determine the exact parameters of professional practice it is supposed to reflect. Although predominately focused on the context of Japanese university English language centres, the work of Rivers and others (cf. B. Hayes, 2013; Houghton & Rivers, 2013; Rivers & Houghton, 2013) challenges the accepted notion that all discrimination in language teaching is directed towards non-native speaking teachers. In the Japanese context, for instance, as was discussed in relation to hiring criteria for Japanese university English language teaching (B. Hayes, 2013), issues of employment and associated criteria were found to be contextually driven, and in some spaces native speaking teachers were similarly limited due to ideologies of native speakerism (B. Hayes, 2013; Rivers, 2013b, 2016). Rivers was particularly concerned that in directing attention to NNEST discrimination in English language teacher employment, we may be missing temporal and

spatial, and contextually-driven factors (Rivers, 2016, 2017). It is this gap in our understanding about how these factors may affect English language teacher employability that this study seeks to address.

2.4.2. Student perceptions of ‘non-native’ English-speaking teachers and ‘native’ English-speaking teachers

Despite some of the concerns just discussed with respect to the theoretical and practical implications of native speakerism, researchers have sought to better understand whether students have different perceptions of NNESTs and NESTs in the classroom. These studies pose important questions about the supposed primacy of NESTs, and underscore why teachers should be hired on their experience, knowledge and skills (Selvi et al., 2023). Many quantitative studies over the last 20 years have provided evidence that, when students are surveyed about their preferences for NESTs or NNESTs, they place greater importance on pedagogical, linguistic and personal characteristics than they do on language background (Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Mahboob, 2004; Pacek, 2005) and tend to have favourable attitudes towards NNESTs (Chang, 2016; Cheung & Braine, 2007). Specifically, Mahboob (2004) found that while NESTs are seen as having a wider vocabulary, to be fluent as speakers, and to have a sound knowledge of their own culture, NNESTs were found to be stronger grammar teachers and better at literacy tuition. These results were confirmed in a further study by Lipovsky and Mahboob (2010) that analysed students’ language of appraisal when they were discussing their perceptions of NNESTs and NESTs. This study found that while NESTs were praised for their pronunciation, conversational skills and vocabulary, a number of NNESTs were also positively evaluated for these skills. Moreover, NNESTs were positively appraised for their teaching of grammar, literacy skills, as well as for having sound teaching methodology, and were seen as empathetic, good language learning role models, all results that have been confirmed in other research (Ma, 2012).

In Japan and Vietnam, English university language learners surveyed in a quantitative study by Walkinshaw and Duong (2014) identified similar NNEST/NEST traits. NNESTs were considered to be good teachers of grammar, and easier to interact with due to their shared language and cultural background. However, NNESTs' pronunciation was deemed to be inferior to that of NESTs, whose English was easier to understand. NESTs were also perceived to be good models for pronunciation and correct language use, as well for as being culturally knowledgeable, but were seen to be poor teachers of grammar (Walkinshaw & Oanh, 2014). Overall, the respondents in this study rated teacher qualifications and experience, enthusiasm, ability to teach interesting and informative lessons, and familiarity with the local culture to be the most important characteristics of a competent teacher (Walkinshaw & Duong, 2012).

Whereas the above studies investigated student perceptions about their teachers at a particular moment in time, Moussu (2010) sought to compare the perceptions of students in 22 US university intensive English programs at both the beginning and end of a semester. Moussu focused on teacher contact time; the students' language background, English proficiency level and expected grades; and teachers' pronunciation, knowledge of grammar and physical appearance. Over time, the positive evaluations of the NNESTs remained slightly higher than for NESTs, pointing to the importance of contact time with teachers on students' perceptions of the abilities and competencies of NNESTs. Not all evaluations of NESTs, however, were positive. Of particular interest for this current research on teacher employability is Moussu's observation that her results indicate that students' attitudes towards NNESTs/NESTs are more influenced by the individual teacher, as well as student variables such as background, individual experience and personality. These results suggest that what makes a teacher good is not their linguistic heritage but a complex interplay

between their mastery of linguistic and pedagogical skills, together with individual teacher and student teacher variables (Moussu, 2010).

2.4.3. Teacher experience in Australian settings

In the Australian ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students) sector, where Enterprise Agreements (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2020), and their associated stepped salary scale, are common, years of teaching experience, expertise and knowledge can mean that a teacher is seen as too expensive to be employed (Stanley, 2016, 2017). While this is most commonly the case in the private language school sector, university English language centres (UELCs) are also under pressure from the Australian government's economising of education (Francis, 2020; Karp, 2020) alongside other external factors such as changes to government policy (Australian Council of TESOL Associations [ACTA], 2019; Button, 2019; Hon. Coleman, 2020; Wright, 2020), and, more recently, the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher employment. English language schools are often constrained by profit-based rationales that create downward pressures on these schools' operating costs. Of course, many English language institutions are private, for-profit businesses, and in an increasingly competitive language learning market, they need to remain profitable. However, profitability is not only important to owners or shareholders; maintaining and/or reducing operating costs is a significant part of managing a school in order to be able to employ teachers, and run courses for students (Stanley, 2016, 2017). However, for university English language centres, TAFE and the AMEP, this is not so much the case – or at least, it was not in the past. Increasingly, and in line with neoliberal imperatives, the workforce is often the first place where reductions in financial burdens can be found. In English language teaching in Australia, this cost-cutting can mean hiring inexperienced or minimally qualified teachers, that is, teachers who are on the bottom rungs of the salary step ladder, and thus inexpensive. Interviews with school directors, managers,

directors of studies, and sales and marketing managers in Australian private language schools, and in university English language centres (Stanley, 2017) reveal a picture of a teaching sector that does not always place a high value on the experience and expertise of teachers who are more expensive to recruit. Again, this is more prevalent in private language schools than in the other sectors. However, a study by Rivers (2013b) of English language teachers' employment contracts in the Japanese higher education sector showed a similar trend in the non-private sector. Although the focus of this study was the negative effects of a change in Japanese government policy on the length of university language teacher contracts, this study, as well as research by Stanley (2017), highlights the importance of contextual factors on employment in the English language teaching profession. Competition for permanent contracts in Australian ELT is fierce, with teachers needing to demonstrate that they are willing to 'go that extra mile' in a myriad of ways – such as unpaid professional development, materials creation, and extra pastoral care, to name but a few – in order to be considered permanently employable (Stanley, 2016).

2.4.4. Teacher expertise

Expertise is often seen as synonymous with experience or with performing a role with such ease and automaticity that it appears effortless (Farrell, 2013). Yet, expertise is not so easily defined. Indeed, there are no established criteria for English language teacher expertise because what is considered to be expertise is often contextually, and culturally, dependent (Tsui, 2005, 2009b). Despite this, it may be safe to assume that, on a practical level at least, the more expertise an English language teacher has, the more employable they would be. Moreover, it might not be too much of a conceptual leap to assume that with more expert teachers, the quality of teaching within a school/institution would be higher and that this would positively impact learning such that more students would be attracted to these places of learning. To take this line of argument further, it should not be unreasonable to

suggest that in such an environment, school directors/managers would be actively recruiting and seeking to retain expert teachers. Yet, in the current Australian English language teaching context, many teachers who would define themselves as having at least some expertise, find themselves in precarious employment situations in which short term, casual, and highly flexible contracts are the norm (Stanley, 2016).

In examining the reflections of three experienced ESL teachers on their teaching over two years, Farrell (2013) identified five main characteristics of teacher expertise based on data from these teacher participants' group discussions, interviews and journal entries. The most frequently occurring characteristic of expertise that emerged from this data was related to teachers' ability to exhibit a strong understanding of learners, and teaching and learning (Farrell, 2013). Such teachers are sensitive to their students' needs, motivations and anxieties, and engage in learner-focused teaching (Richards, 2010). Expert teachers have also been shown to reflect on their teaching, beliefs, values and practices (Farrell, 2013). Moreover, they engage in efficient, effective and informed lesson planning (Farrell, 2013; Tsui, 2005) in which they take responsibility for preparing lessons and modifying materials as necessary to suit the learning goals of their students (Tsui, 2009b). Flexibility is another key characteristic of expert teachers in that they are able to effectively attend to various classroom situations, answer student questions and responses, manage disruptions, and predict and prepare for problems (Tsui, 2009b). Expert teachers also tended to involve themselves in their community of practice, collaborating with other teaching professionals in professional development activities (Richards, 2010). Finally, expert teachers care about their students, and are actively involved with developing student learning outside of the class (Farrell, 2013).

2.4.5. Language proficiency and pedagogy

English language teachers are evaluated, not only in terms of their teaching capabilities, but also with respect to the beliefs and assumptions surrounding what an English language teacher should be (Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahboob et al., 2004; Phillips, 2017). It is taken *a priori* that advanced levels of English language proficiency and teaching success are related, a natural enough assumption given that in English language teaching, English is both the taught content and the medium of instruction. Despite this, defining exactly what constitutes ‘advanced’ language proficiency in the teaching context, and what is specifically meant by ‘teaching efficacy’ remains challenging and often problematic given the multitude of teaching and learning contexts, both locally and globally (Faez & Karas, 2017; Freeman, 2017). Most people teaching and working in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts would agree that language proficiency is an important criterion for evaluating teacher employability. Research has highlighted how teachers’ target language proficiency positively impacts students’ learning (Richards et al., 2013).

Yet, separating language proficiency from other areas of professional teaching competence can be challenging, and measuring how teacher language proficiency impacts learning can also be difficult. Research into teacher language proficiency and self-efficacy, as self-reported by teachers, has found that despite correlations between teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs and language proficiency, these relationships are often inconclusive and inconsistent results across studies and contexts have been reported (Faez & Karas, 2017). In other words, the relationship between a teacher’s target language proficiency, their teaching efficacy and student learning is much more complex than it first appears (Freeman et al., 2015). In terms of teacher employability, research seems to suggest that hiring managers assume that native English speakers (at least in some contexts) will be competent teachers, whereas non-native English-speaking teachers may not (Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahboob et

al., 2004; Selvi, 2010). Problematising teacher language proficiency in this way involves reconceptualising teacher proficiency not only in terms of general English language use but as a subset of clearly defined language skills required for effective teaching practice (Freeman et al., 2015). To investigate this, Canh and Renandya (2017) analysed video-recorded lesson extracts from three Vietnamese English teachers with varying degrees of English language proficiency, that is, band scores between 6 and 8, as measured by scores from the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The results of their analysis revealed that target language proficiency does influence classroom efficacy although the relationship is, as others have suggested (cf. Freeman et al., 2015), complex. In their study, Canh and Renandya (2017) found that the teachers who were graded as highly proficient in terms of their IELTS band scores used English in such a way as to limit the learning opportunities for their students. They also reported that, although the teachers' language confidence seemed to play a role in motivating learners, limited student interactions and opportunities to negotiate meaning, as observed in the classes of all three teachers, suggest that classroom language proficiency can positively impact learning efficacy. That is, a teacher's ability to use the English language skills they possess to create an environment pedagogically conducive to learning is as important as language proficiency.

Therefore, in terms of teacher employability, focusing on English language proficiency as an indicator of classroom proficiency belies the fact that a teacher's ability to use the target language in a pedagogically efficacious way is just as important for student learning. In fact, when considering learner engagement as a precondition for learning, the literature has very little to say in relation to a teacher's language proficiency (Dismore et al., 2019; Kuh et al., 2006; Mercer, 2019; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020; Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020; Zepke & Leach, 2010). As Mercer (2019) states, all teachers desire to see their students engaged in the learning process, and experience learning as an emotionally

satisfying and rewarding endeavour. Taking Skinner et al.'s (2008, p. 778) view that engagement is the “core construct, most prototypical of engagement, is behavioural participation in the classroom” one wonders to what extent a teacher's language proficiency negatively impacts students' learning. It is not just the teacher who is responsible for engaging students in learning, but the learner themselves, levels of institutional support, and the wider community (for example, students might perhaps have family support or other responsibilities) (Zepke & Leach, 2010). And while behaviours such as teacher-student rapport, positive classroom environments and designing student centred learning are seen as conducive to supporting learner engagement (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020), none of these are necessarily precluded if a teacher is not assessed as having ‘advanced’ levels of English language proficiency.

Yet, a teacher's language background, particularly if a NNEST, can impact evaluations of teaching competency during the recruitment process (Phillips, 2017), and their employability may be affected by hiring managers' perceptions of their linguistic ability in the interview process. Although linguistic ability has not been directly associated with teacher employability, some studies have highlighted the importance of the teacher's accent on student perceptions of teacher competence (Addison & Mountford, 2015; Lippi-Green, 2011; Phillips, 2017), as described in the next section.

2.4.6. Teacher accent and linguistic racism

Accent has been identified as important to perceptions of teacher competence. Studies have shown that there remain assumptions that accents from ‘native’ English-speaking countries are the most desirable (Buckingham, 2014; Li, 2009; Qiong, 2004; Tokomuto & Shibata, 2011). Qiong (2004), for instance, investigated the extent to which Chinese learners of English (in China) were aware of English varieties and found that 100% of respondents ($n=1251$) viewed British and American English as the only two standard

varieties. Based on these findings, Qiong argued that the beliefs exhibited by the student participants surveyed had been inculcated through textbooks and teaching materials, as well as through the wider discourses that suggest that American and British English are the only standards according to which the proficiency of learners of English should be measured. Also in the Chinese context, Li (2009) aimed to ascertain the preferred identity of 107 Chinese participants when speaking English, that is, whether there was a preference for sounding like a Hong Kong speaker of English, a Chinese speaker of English, or a native speaker of English. The data showed that an average of 81% of the participants surveyed preferred to speak English with a native speaker accent, and only 19% on average indicated a preference to speak English with a localised accent, and this was due to an interest in preserving their Chinese identity (Li, 2009).

In the Japanese context, a study by Tokomuto and Shibata (2011) explored the attitudes of Japanese, Malaysian and South Korean students towards their L-1 accented English. Previous research had suggested that Japanese students wished to attain either an American or British English pronunciation. Their data indicated that both Japanese and South Korean students had a proclivity towards native speaker accented norms whereas Malaysian students demonstrated pride in their L1 accented English. Tokomuto and Shibata's research is interesting in that, as Mahboob and Golden's (2013) research on native speakerism in teacher online job advertisements revealed, it appears that the historical and political backgrounds and contexts within which the English language learning takes place can impact the ways in which teachers are viewed by students, and as such implicates how elements of student and teacher identity could influence teacher employability.

Teacher accent and its potential to impact teacher employability also aligns with the more recent work on linguistic racism (De Costa, 2020; Dobinson & Mercieca, 2020; Dovchin, 2019, 2020a, 2020b; May, 202; Tankosić & Dovchin, 2023; Weber, 2015).

Linguistic racism is the ideologies and practices employed to conform, normalise and reformulate an unequal linguistic power between language users (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2015), placing culturally and linguistically different (CaLD) backgrounds in a deficit position based on how English or other additional languages are spoken. Further, linguistic racism manifests both in the beliefs and stereotypes and institutional structures which work together to the detriment of targeted language groups (Weber, 2015). As Flores and Rosa (2015) contend, and of particular relevance to English language teacher employability in Australia, whether members of racialised communities are accepted as engaging in appropriate language practices is typically determined by a white listening audience, not the speakers' actual language use. In line with this contention (Flores & Rosa, 2015), both Dobinson and Mercieca (2020) and Dovchin's (2020b) studies on linguistic racism in Australian universities demonstrate that international students experience linguistic invisibility on campuses. This means that, despite universities having policies on language diversity and inclusion, the almost exclusive use of English on university campuses is at odds with current academic thought on the importance of translingualism in education, and highlights the lack of privilege offered to languages other than English. Dovchin (2020b) further shows how linguistic stereotyping, based in preconceived negative perceptions, frames CaLD speakers as not speaking English well irrespective of how they actually speak due to their racial and ethnic appearance. Such judgements and preconceptions can have a profound influence on our subconscious attitudes to language use and the ways we perceive and categorise people (De Klerk & Bosch, 1995). As Phillips' (2017) research on teacher employability in Australian adult English language teaching found, some hiring managers can conflate a teacher's 'non-native' English speaking accent with teaching ability. Both accent discrimination and linguistic racism then can potentially influence a teacher's employability.

2.5. English language teacher identity and employability

2.5.1. English language teacher identity research

As has been examined so far, teacher employability calls forth a multitude of identities which are implicitly and explicitly demonstrated, evaluated, accepted and/or resisted throughout the English language teacher hiring process. Teacher employability and teacher identity are located at the intersections of multitudinous and often competing assumptions, expectations and needs from a diverse range of interested parties, such as agents, academic managers, students, and sales and marketing departments. Without gainful employment it can be difficult for teachers to develop their teaching skills and to further their language knowledge, both of which are necessary to progress their careers. As discussed in Sections 2.2.2 and 2.3.1 above, more recent conceptualisations of employability have moved beyond attributes and skills to view employability as a constant and complex process of identity work (H. Zhang et al., 2023). The concept of English language teacher identity has been increasingly viewed through a transdisciplinary lens (De Costa & Norton, 2017; Douglas Fir Group, 2016), and the idea of what constitutes a good teacher, or an employable teacher, is seen as contingent on changing pedagogical landscapes and associated ideologies and evaluations (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

A number of research studies have examined a range of teacher identities and contexts: how multilingualism converges with classroom practices and educational policies (Higgins & Ponte, 2017), how home tutors can successfully navigate multiple and conflicting identities (Barkhuizen, 2017a) and how the emotional demands that teachers face can influence identity formation (Song, 2016; Wolff & De Costa, 2017). Teacher identity research has also investigated preservice and novice teacher identity development (Kanno & Stuart, 2011; Yazan, 2017), teacher researcher identities (Norton & Early, 2011; Xu, 2013),

professional identities (Nguyen, 2017; Stanley, 2017), and identity development through experience and teacher education (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Here, I focus on two main areas of identity research that are central to English language teacher employability in the Australian context: emotion and professionalism/professional learning/development.

Teacher emotion (Benesch, 2019; Zembylas, 2003) and professional development are both important to the construction of teacher identity, and therefore employability, for two main reasons. As Benesch (2019) and Zembylas (2003) attest, the very foundations of teacher identity are affective, which implicates power and agency in our wider social contexts. How we feel, what we believe, how we act, and what we decide to act upon (or not) requires connection to be made between emotion, self-knowledge and the broader relational contexts in which we exist. This brings into view, as seen in the discussion of identity theory in Section 2.2.3 above, the identity work in which teachers engage at the macro, meso and micro levels of social interaction. Teacher emotions are seen not only as personal or private dispositions or qualities but as a type of socially constructed phenomena, and as practices that change across time and space (Benesch, 2019). Conceptualising emotions as mediated through and by the social worlds in which we live allows us to interrogate the ways in which emotion is authorised and regulated in institutions and workplaces. It is here that ‘feeling rules’, come into play. As Hochschild theorised in her seminal research on US flight attendants’ job training (1979, 1983), feeling rules relate to the instructions directed by management to workers about which emotions (typically lower-level) workers are supposed to display on the job, and which are central to positive appraisals of job performance. Hochschild was concerned about the implications for workers when how they felt did not match what the feeling rules required of them. Since this early

work of Hochschild's, the concept of 'emotional labour', or 'emotion labour'¹, has come to be defined as "the regulation of feelings and expressions performed to fulfill interpersonal work role expectations" (Gabriel et al., 2023). Building on Hochschild's ideas, researchers such as Benesch (2017, 2019, 2020) have taken a more critical view, contending that emotion labour is "the commodification of emotion management. It requires workers to apply the skills they routinely use in private acts of emotional exchange ... to the workplace. In the move ... emotion work becomes an aspect of a paid job" (Benesch, 2017, p. 41). In this way, teacher emotion becomes part of the affective economy (Ahmed, 2017; Kahl et al., 2019; Lehmann et al., 2019) in which the interconnections between emotions, affects and economic processes, as in neoliberalism, become apparent.

Inherent in all research into the English language teacher emotion labour since Hochschild's original studies is the central role that emotions play in the workplace, which is particularly notable among those most vulnerable to the effects of institutional power. It is this critical, post-structuralist perspective on power that this project's conceptualisation of emotion labour relies upon. For English language teachers, emotion work can take the form of responding in particular ways to the constant professional development displays that are framed as important to teacher employability (NEAS, 2019, 2022a, 2022b). Stanley (2016) found that the lived experiences of Australian ELICOS teachers demonstrate that these teachers felt the need to constantly 'go the extra mile' so as to remain vigilant and responsive to management and students' needs so as to remain employable (Stanley, 2016). According to Day and Sachs (2005), the apparent simplicity of the terms 'teacher learning' and 'teacher development' disguise what is in fact a highly complex emotional and intellectual endeavour. As such, both emotion and professional learning are implicated in teacher employability.

¹ I will use the term 'emotion labour' as opposed to 'emotional labour' here, in line with Benesch's (2019) view that the word 'emotional' has negative connotations, especially when considering that many more women work in the caring professions, in which most of the emotion labour research has been done.

2.5.2. English language teacher professional learning and professionalism

Teacher professional learning and professional development are both forms of identity work: they are both lifelong and multifaceted processes that are influenced not just by a teacher's prior teaching experience and beliefs but by the contexts in which the learning and development takes place (D. Hayes, 2019; Wyatt & Ager, 2016). Teacher professional learning programs (also referred to as in-service teacher education programs) adopt a bottom-up approach in which teachers have a more participative role, and these programs tend to be more customised to teachers' needs (Reed & Chappell, 2021; Scherff, 2018). This is in contrast to the top-down approaches of professional development, which 'happen' to teachers. Professional development is a one size-fits-all approach, for example, the large seminars that are attended by teachers, irrespective of their differing levels of experience and needs. The distinction between teacher professional learning and professional development is useful as it highlights the tensions between top-down as opposed to bottom-up approaches to teacher development. A similar distinction is found in Day and Sachs' (2005) 'managerial professionalism' and 'democratic professionalism'. Managerial professionalism is focused on compliance with external regulations, is systems driven (for example at the education policy level), is often reform-orientated, and as such is seen as serving political ends in a competitive and market-driven education environment. Democratic professionalism, in contrast, is driven from within the teaching profession itself, is focused on professional regulations as opposed to external regulatory frameworks, is collegial, and has elements of activism as opposed to the compliance and control of managerial approaches. An example of professional learning in the English language teaching context in Australia is English Australia's Action Research in ELICOS program (English Australia [EA], 2024) while an example of professional development is the constant updates to the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment – a non-TESOL qualification required to teach English in Australian

Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) despite the many protests about its inefficacy (ACTA, 2019, 2020, 2023).

The general consensus, however, in both English language teaching as well as in teaching more generally, is that teachers' learning and development, regardless of the form it takes, is associated with notions of professionalism. In general usage, to be 'a professional' or to 'be professional' denotes being trained and qualified to perform a particular job or role, requiring some level of specialist learning and development, is respected, and assumes certain qualities such as effectiveness, organisation and seriousness of manner (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2022). This type of broad dictionary definition, however, does not capture the contestation around what constitutes English language teacher professionalism (Copley, 2018; Vu, 2016), which is made more complex by the ways in which English language teaching is framed as a disciplinary field, a profession, a service and a business (Pennington & Hoekje, 2014). Similarly, how employability has been conceptualised as the possession of skills and attributes, professionalism is predominantly conceived of as trait based. That is, for an occupation to be seen as a profession, there needs to be an application of skills informed by theoretical knowledge, requisite certified education and training, the demonstration of some kind of social good, and governance by some form of organising body (Whitty, 2008). From this perspective, professionalism is framed positively, similar to being part of a discourse community that emphasises peer support and communities of practice as fundamental to learning (Johnson & Golombek, 2016; Swales, 1990; Wharton, 1995). However, like employability, professionalism can also be viewed through a critical lens, for example, as being shaped by particular ideologies (such as neoliberalism). This brings into focus how discourses of professionalism (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; Mockler, 2013; Stacey & Mockler, 2023) work to create "professionalism as a product of external forces" (Vu, 2016, p.134), that is, the top down,

managerial and organisational approaches to professionalism that often work to undermine teachers' ability to access the participative, democratic professionalism which is seen by many as more beneficial for longer-term teacher learning (Evetts, 2009; Reed & Chappell, 2021).

2.5.2.1. English language teacher professional development and learning in the Australian context

Research that examines the efficacy of teacher learning and development is wide and varied, covering: the positive effects of action research on teacher classroom performance at a Colombian university English language institute (Giraldo, 2014); English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teacher development needs in the UK (A. Ding & Campion, 2016); General English teacher transition to UK EAP courses (G. Campion, 2016); and English language teacher professional development in Vietnam and Japan (Hashimoto & Nguyen, 2018) and China (Pawan et al., 2017).

In English language teaching in Australia, very little is known about how teacher professional development or learning impacts teaching practice (Chappell & Redd, 2021), not only in the ELICOS sector (to which Chappell and Reed refer), but also in the AMEP (ACTA, 2019) and vocational English domains (Atkins & Tummons, 2017). Yet, there is a general belief that, despite the existing standards governing English language teaching, stipulating organisations also need to provide some form of teacher professional development (Department of Education, Skills & Employment [DESE], 2018, 2021a, 2021b; Department of Employment & Workplace Relations [DEWR], 2015), even though the requirements are vague and often managerial in nature (ACTA, 2019; Atkins & Tummons, 2017). In the ELICOS context, Burns (2017) argues that this top-down approach to professional learning means that it can be decontextualised and ineffective. In the AMEP (Adult Migrant English Program) context, this assertion definitely rings true. Changes made

to assessment tools under the Australian Core Skills Framework (Australian Core Skills Framework [ACSF], 2015)², and attendant mandated regulatory professional development, have been shown to decrease teachers' satisfaction with the ACSF (ACTA, 2019). In research conducted by ACTA (2019), teachers reported dissatisfaction with the high levels of administration, the compliance focus of ACSF, and its lack of ability to support AMEP's English language learners' progress. In the same study, teachers were asked how the ACSF affected teaching in the AMEP, with 62% ($n=303/490$) of respondents answering that the ACSF had negatively affected teaching. The research concluded that AMEP "professional development is now almost entirely focused on instructing teachers in compliance procedures" (ACTA, 2019, p. 29), providing further evidence for the managerial, compliance-based professionalism in this sector (Day & Sachs, 2004; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; Mockler, 2013).

Despite this, there is some evidence that alternatives to the overgeneralised, managerial approach to teacher development are available to English language teachers in Australia. As noted by Burns (2013), action research (AR) is one approach that involves teachers in identifying and investigating a classroom issue to gain a better understanding of an aspect of their classroom practice. Action research, which has been shown to have longer-term effects on teachers' approaches to teaching and learning, helps teachers critically evaluate their classrooms and materials (Edwards & Burns, 2016). Edwards and Burns (2016) conducted a survey ($n=16$) and interviews ($n=10$) with teachers who had taken part in English Australia's Action Research program. Their findings highlighted the positive effects of learning as evidenced in outcomes such as increased teacher confidence, enhanced feelings of connection with students, and recognition from management and their colleagues. They suggested, however, that for action research to be sustainable, management support

² The ACSF is an assessment tool used in the AMEP and Vocational English contexts to benchmark language, literacy and numeracy learning.

and teacher motivation are required. While the teachers in this study were described as ‘experienced’ (with an average of 15 years’ teaching experience), the authors did not make clear the contractual status of these teachers. However, considering that taking part in action research usually requires a six to nine month commitment (English Australia, 2024a), and, as the findings suggest, institutional support is required for the success of this type of program, it is unclear whether participating institutions would be willing to underwrite casual teachers’ participation in this type of action research programs.

In contrast with the Edwards and Burns study, Reed and Chappell (2021) did include information about the interviewees’ employment type in their examination of teachers’ satisfaction with their professional development. In this study, two out of the 10 teacher interview participants were described as casually employed. While some of the 92 survey respondents also described themselves as working part-time – either casually or on contracts – the actual numbers of contingently employed teachers was not made clear. Nonetheless, most of the participants in this study reported experiencing what Reed and Chappell refer to as ‘Traditional PD+’, that is, the more traditional top-down, generalised type of professional development workshops and seminars supplemented with occasional access to peer observations or other activities. In this study, in line with theories of democratic professional development, it was the teachers who had greater control and autonomy over their professional learning who reported more satisfaction with their development, although these teachers represented only a small proportion of the study’s total sample. Reed and Chappell concluded that professional development needs to ensure greater autonomy for teachers, more program flexibility, and opportunities for collaboration and reflection. All of these recommendations are in line with research best practice. However, as examined in Section 2.6.3 below with respect to precarious teaching work, contingently employed teachers typically report being less inclined to invest time in their teaching (Breshears, 2019;

Elshafei, 2022). This begs the question regarding the extent to which such teachers working in English language teaching in the Australian context – where casualised teacher employment is becoming the norm – are afforded opportunities to develop their teaching practice.

In response to just such a question, Edwards (2018) surveyed 16 teachers who had participated in the first iteration of an English Australia's Action research program, and interviewed five of these teachers, with was followed up with in-depth interviews with five more participants from a newer iteration of the action research program. Nine managers from both university and private ELICOS centres were also interviewed about their centres' teachers' participation in the program. Results revealed four key tensions. The first was where teachers had developed reflective mindsets through the program, but once it was completed, lacked the time for reflection in their everyday teaching. As observed by Edwards (2018), due to neoliberal policies and profit-driven imperatives, the hoped-for smaller classes and opportunities for peer collaboration and reflective teaching, recommended over 30 years ago (Clarke, 1994), remains wishful thinking. In the second tension, teachers reported desiring – and sometimes receiving and benefitting from – the positive recognition they received for their participation in the action research program; yet, other teachers experienced negative recognition in the form of disinterest from colleagues or a lack of celebration by managers for what they felt were achievements that were beneficial for the whole school and which therefore, in their view, should have been celebrated. Indeed, these types of negative responses led some of these teachers to feel even more isolated from their teaching contexts after the program.

The third tension is similar to the recognition-related tension in that, although the action research teacher participants felt more committed to their teaching and profession due to their participation in the program, their positive feelings were not institutionally

reciprocated. This type of tension should be seen in the context of the wider political-economic conditions in which English language teachers work, with Edwards making the connection between barriers to professional development and the flexibilisation of labour under neo-liberalism. As Stanley's research also attests (2016, 2017), the non-payment for professional development activities, the disincentive for employers to hire more experienced teachers, and profit-driven imperatives all undermine teacher professional development. The final tension was around how the teacher action research informed, as was its intention, curriculum development. Although some of the teachers reported success in integrating the results of their action research into their centres' curricula, others cited problems such as a lack of space in the curriculum and inflexible curricula. Moreover, the transience of ELICOS teacher employment limited the implementation of the action research for some participants; that is, participants reported not being employed long enough to see their research implemented.

The studies just surveyed all conclude that teacher development is best done in line with principles of democratic professionalism: with teachers' needs in mind, a focus on teacher autonomy, opportunity for collaboration, and adequate time allocated. What some of this research also demonstrates is that the neoliberal context within which English language teaching in Australia is situated can limit teachers' professional learning. Neoliberalism, it appears, does not unleash opportunities for lifelong learning; nor do discourses of entrepreneurial freedom promote personal growth in practice. Instead, teacher professional learning and development involves complex emotional investment and labour, some of which is not reciprocated or appreciated by the teachers' institutions. In the final section of this review of employability as related teacher identity, I will consider how teacher emotion is related to teacher employability.

2.5.3. Teacher emotion

As mentioned in the previous section, it was over 40 years ago that Hochschild (1979, 1983) argued that the conventionalised emotion required in many service-facing roles may come to assume the properties of a commodity. In other words, when gestures of emotional exchange become part of the market sector – and are bought and sold as part of labour power – then these feelings become commoditised (Hochschild, 1979, 1983). As Noddings' influential work on care in teaching has shown, relation is at the centre of this care (Noddings, 1984, 2006, 2007, 2012). In an ethics of care, relation is ontologically fundamental to human existence (Noddings, 1984) although, of course, not all care relations are equal relations. In teaching, a common understanding of care is centred around teachers' behaviour rather than the relation itself, which is an important observation that is also foregrounded in the theories of emotion labour described above (Noddings, 2012). As Tracy (2005) asserts, emotion labour must take into account the often unequal expressions of power in wider societal contexts to be properly understood.

English language teacher emotion labour has implications for teacher employability. As Pereira (2018) argues in his study of the affective economies of English teaching in Singapore, education as an ethical endeavour relies on caring relations between teachers and students. These relations often assume a deep emotional commitment on the part of teachers. Pereira links the identity of the 'good' teacher to the feeling rules that govern the technologies – the mechanisms and techniques used by those in power to control and regulate individuals and society – of evaluation, which prescribe teachers' emotional and professional competencies. Although Pereira's research primarily involved interviews with Singaporean secondary school English language teachers, he also examined teacher job advertisements as well as a government appraisal tool for teachers (the Enhanced Performance Management System) to offer insight into how emotion labour relates to wider

structures characterised by unequal power. Pereira's findings and discussion highlight the performative (Ball, 1997, 2003) elements of care as emotion labour whereby teachers need to be sensitive to regimes of evaluation but also be responsive to students' needs, and these are often in conflict. Emotion labour relies on teachers' passion and ability to navigate the affective economies of teaching, and teachers reported using 'magic time' – a category of unpaid work time (Kouritzin et al., 2022) upon which they must draw to go the extra mile for their students. The negative affect of this demand for emotion labour, as Pereira argues, is detrimental. As Murphy (2015) suggests, care can be appropriated by power, and conflating care with positive affect should be discouraged. As the old adage goes, in passion there is pain, and for this reason, teacher wellbeing should be an important consideration in emotion work.

Benesch (2017, 2020) investigated English language teachers' emotion labour based on interviews with 13 English language teachers at the City University of New York in the US and highlighted some of the tensions involved in this emotion work. Teachers were asked about their emotion responses to four areas of teaching which tend to be regulated: high-stakes literacy testing, feedback on student writing, plagiarism and student attendance. I will focus here on teachers' responses in the first two of these areas as teacher written feedback can be an emotionally-laden process (Geng et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2021). In high-stakes literacy testing, teachers reported feelings of ambivalence towards the testing, and experienced a sense of injustice or unfairness on behalf of their students as they questioned the utility of this testing. As a result, teachers felt the need to supplement their students' learning with other materials and assessments, thereby adding to their physical and emotion labour.

With regards to feedback on student writing, the teachers in the study felt a sense of obligation to help their students pass their writing tests, and this was the case even when

their own pedagogical principles conflicted with the university-wide standardised writing tests. This invoked in these teachers the sense that their work as ESL teachers was to provide a service to the wider university, which led to a clash of emotion in their feelings about their training and the actual job at hand. Teachers also reported, as with the teachers in Edwards's (2018) action research study, that emotion work was impacted by the time required to effectively perform the task. For Benesch's teachers, there was either too much time spent providing feedback on the students' writing, or not enough time. Teachers also expressed frustration and questioned their own teaching efficacy when they were faced with student work that lacked evidence of what had been taught. The same feelings were invoked when teachers felt that their students had not spent sufficient time on their writing. Benesch links this emotion work to the paucity of evidence on the efficacy of teacher written feedback and reminds us that the work of improving student writing is not teachers' alone.

Other studies on teacher emotion have highlighted the benefits of socially and emotionally competent teachers. Such teachers have been found to not only have more caring relationships and high quality classroom environments (Pianta & Hamre, 2009), but to promote learner enjoyment (Ahmadi-Azad et al., 2020), to be more effective (Buela & Joseph, 2015; Dewaele et al., 2018; Kim & MacCann, 2018), to be more motivating (Khalilzadeh & Khodi, 2018) and to be more self-efficacious (Klassen & Tze, 2014). As such, emotion work and a teacher's emotion abilities are clearly important to a teacher's employability. Emotional consonance is not, however, the only side of the coin salient to teacher employability. Even with the benefits highlighted, the emotional dissonance felt when a teacher's emotion work does not successfully align with their genuine feelings can cause negative affect. In the case of emotional dissonance, teachers can feel disempowered, an excessive burden for motivating students and can experience burn out, which can all impact teacher attrition (Acheson & Nelson, 2020; Acheson et al., 2016). Teachers can also

struggle with the negative emotional load felt when their students' learning is not progressing as desired or expected (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Teachers are also relying on emotion labour when they feel compelled to play the role of the 'ideal' teacher, and particularly when they encounter feelings in conflict with apotheosised images (Benesch, 2018, 2020; Brown et al., 2014). It is clear, then, that viewing English language teachers' affective abilities as personal characteristics can fail to capture the deeply emotional and relational work required of these teachers. It can also obscure the fact that teachers' emotion work can be misappropriated for the purposes of teaching and learning and organisational goals, which is exacerbated by the precarious material conditions in which many teachers find themselves.

Personality is also linked to emotion labour (Mróz & Kaleta, 2016). Teacher personality traits have been positively correlated to a range of teaching and learning variables, such as teacher work engagement and teacher effectiveness (Ahmadi-Azad et al., 2020; Dewaele et al., 2018; K. Ding et al., 2022; Khalilzadeh & Khodi, 2018; Kim & MacCann, 2018). Teachers who score high on 'agreeableness' tend to demonstrate understanding and warmth across varied classroom situations (Kim & MacCann, 2018). 'Extroverted' teachers are also credited with the ability to create positive learning environments, which leads to learner enjoyment (Ahmadi-Azad et al., 2020) and a teacher's extraversion is also implicated in their teaching effectiveness (Buela & Joseph, 2015). Work on the connections between teacher personality traits and effective teaching is relevant to the employment interview research (described above), which found that agreeableness is a useful predictor of job performance in service related positions and extraversion is related to advantages at work (Barrick & Mount, 2012; Barrick et al., 2001; Wilmot et al., 2019). This research suggests that particular trait-based personality types may be considered to be more 'employable' than others.

In conclusion, the literature on teacher professional learning, development and emotion seems to suggest that these various aspects of an English language teacher's identity can influence their employability. Moreover, teacher professionalism – conceptualised as the ability and desire to develop ones' teaching practice – can be seen to play out within the socio-historic and political-economic contexts in which the teaching takes place. This literature review has shown how English language teacher employability is a dynamic and expansive phenomenon, implicating multifarious aspects of teachers' work, identity and the contexts in which the teaching takes place.

2.6. Neoliberalism and English language teaching

2.6.1. The commodification of English language teaching and learning

According to Mahboob (2011), English is not only a language; it is an industry. With increased globalisation and the internationalisation of education, English has come to be marketed as a skill that creates employment opportunities for its users in a competitive market, and offers the chance for upward mobility and a valorised status (Ball, 2004; Mahboob, 2011). In other words, as the international language of commerce and education, English can be seen as a commodity that is bought and sold in pursuit of economic progression and status (Heller, 2010a; M. Kim et al., 2018). This neoliberal positioning of English can pose challenges and create tensions for teachers, the institutions they work for, and for students. In this environment, English language learners continue to look to 'native' English-speaking language destinations such as Australia for world-class higher education opportunities (Australian Trade & Investment Commission, 2024b). Access to these opportunities is predicated on particular levels of English language proficiency as assessed through language learning courses (English Australia., 2024b), high-stakes language tests such as IELTS or PTE, or university pathways programs, which are undertaken at

considerable cost. This is despite research in the Australian context indicating that language proficiency tests such as IELTS and the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) do not necessarily predict academic performance (Phakiti, 2008) as other variables such as learner motivation, personal values and the ability to self-regulate also impact language learning and academic performance (Phakiti et al., 2013).

Due to the considerable investment made by students, the English language teaching sector and its member institutions tend to put great emphasis on teacher ‘effectiveness’ and ‘quality’ which, as De Costa and Norton (2017) point out, typically leads to the commodification of teaching knowledge and practice. For many teachers, entry into this commodified English market begins with a commercially available English language teaching course and qualification, such as the CELTA. For other teachers – for example, those more experienced and possibly from language backgrounds other than English (LOTE) – this can also mean paying for English language tests to ‘prove’ their language proficiency is sufficient to succeed in an overseas context. Moreover, progression in one’s career often requires being able to afford, in both time and money, additional teaching qualifications to remain employable. All of these processes are given credibility through accreditation frameworks that not only reflect Australian employment laws and regulations in both the private and government-funded Australian English language sectors (DESE, 2018b; DEWR, 2015), but also contribute to the framing of Australia as a highly ranked, quality education destination (Australian Trade & Investment Commission, 2024b). Positioning English language teaching in these ways also tends to shape the subjectivities of teachers and learners (K. Houghton, 2019; J. Park, 2021). That is, what is expected of a ‘good’ teacher or a ‘good’ learner not only impacts these individuals’ identities, but for teachers, it also impacts their perceived employability. Over time, teachers usually become attuned to institutional and learner expectations, which can create tensions between their education and

training, identity and beliefs, and the ‘feeling rules’ of profit-driven, quality education discourses (Benesch, 2020; Dismore et al., 2018; Huang, 2019; Pereira, 2018).

In the context of global English language teaching, the TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) teacher is familiar to many, despite these teachers being in the minority of English language teachers worldwide (Moussu & Llurda, 2008). The image of the typically white, often male, ‘native’ speaker of English from the Anglosphere who teaches English as a way to travel the globe – as suggested by the study by Ruecker and Ives (2014) described above – is embedded in the psyche. However, this image of the barely-qualified backpacking teacher can be seen to indirectly (negatively) impact the material conditions of the career minded, experienced and more qualified language teachers, as suggested in the work by Stanley (2016, 2017), Stainton (2018a, 2018b) and Bernstein (2023). The issue of ‘TEFL tourism’ (that is, volunteer English language teaching), and its implications for the wider English language teaching sector, has been gaining more attention from researchers in recent years. For example, Stainton (2018a, 2018b), in her studies on TEFL tourist teachers, takes a tourism management perspective to highlight the ways in which volunteer English language training and teaching is packaged as a commodified product that is similar to mass tourism. Stainton’s etic research presents an image of the wider English language teaching sector as a purely commercial endeavour which, due to teacher attrition and the lack of qualified teachers, is reliant on English-speaking tourists to survive (Stainton, 2018b). The TEFL tourist teachers in Stainton’s study were predominantly British, American, South African, Irish and Australian (in line with volunteer TEFL tourist teacher recruitment), which only reinforces the more widely accepted discourse that it is ‘native’ English-speaking teachers who are the most employable (Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Mahboob et al., 2004; Phillips, 2017; Ruecker & Ives, 2014; Selvi, 2010). Bernstein (2023), in his study of the online TEFL certificates used to qualify teachers in the TEFL volunteer tourism space,

argues that the rise of commodified spaces for volunteer English language teaching frames teaching qualifications as cheap, easy and accessible to virtually anyone. Bernstein asserts that this type of positioning of qualifications and teachers negatively impacts the credibility of more comprehensive teacher qualifications and “further entrenches a negative professional perception of the vocation” (Bernstein, 2023, p. 92). This highlights the wider, more global issues related to the commodification of English language teaching, and shows what contributes to the often low status of those teaching in this sector and why English language teaching providers are able to exploit teachers (and learners) for commercial gain where highly qualified and experienced Australian English language teachers are pitted against their less experienced colleagues in the employment market (Stanley, 2016, 2017).

Considering the more widely recognised and valorised English language teacher qualification, the CELTA, and its associations with the commodification of language in a different light, Block and Gray’s studies (2012, 2016) examine how this pre-service TESOL qualification prepares teachers to teach English for the purposes of skills acquisition required for the world of work. Block and Gray’s work highlights the tensions in how teacher education courses are designed and marketed as producing effective and reflective teachers, yet their technocratic reductionist orientation – that is, the time pressures involved in providing short, marketable courses – encourages CELTA trainers to limit opportunities for self-evaluation and reflection, instead focusing attention on helping teachers pass the course (Gray & Block, 2012). As Pennycook (1994) pointed out 30 years ago, reflective practitioners are not what English language providers need at the entry point into the commodified space of English language teaching (as offered by the CELTA). Short teacher education courses like the CELTA are designed to produce, in the first instance, English language teachers who can learn the basics of teaching pedagogy so they can use highly commercialised textbooks to deliver standardised lessons to the education market (Gray &

Block, 2012). In later work, Block and Gray (2016), argued that this approach to English language teaching and learning tends to deskill and discredit English language teachers. This approach also frames teachers, particularly those who are more experienced and highly qualified, as service providers for customer students, thereby creating subject positions that serve to define and govern ways of behaving and being (Foucault, 1988).

2.6.2. Neoliberal subjectivity and English language teaching

The macro level positioning of English language learning as an imperative for economic advancement and social mobility affects the lived and subjective experiences of learners, teachers and other stakeholders. As Houghton (K. Houghton, 2019) and Mirowski (2014) contend, it is our quotidian encounters with neoliberalism that tacitly shape the ways in which we understand ourselves and our worlds. Many of our daily brushes with neoliberalism are experienced in and through language; that is, it is at the intersection of lived and subjective experience, societal practices and ideological processes that language becomes a fulcrum for disseminating neoliberal subjectivities (Martín Rojo & Del Percio, 2019; J. Park, 2021; Shin, 2016; Shin & Park, 2016). In English language teaching, cultural artefacts (Gray, 2010) such as study abroad programs, coursebooks, and English language (EL) proficiency tests are some of the key ways in which neoliberal subjectivities (Foucault, 1980, 1988; K. Houghton, 2019; J. Park, 2021) are inculcated in teachers and learners.

Mahboob (2011) argues that myths of ‘Standard English’ fuel the English ‘fever’ (Cho, 2015; Choi, 2021; Krashen, 2003; Lee, 2014; J. Park, 2009; Song, 2018) which justifies the commitment to discourses that commodify English as crucial linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Xiong & Yuan, 2018). Kubota (2016) argues that study abroad programs – and English language textbooks and proficiency tests, as suggested here – constitute products that are part of the ‘social imaginary’ (Rizvi, 2013; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Taylor, 2004). Similar to Bourdieu’s concept of the ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1986), the social imaginary

has been conceptualised by Taylor (2004) (cf. Rizvi and Lingard, 2010) as “a way of shared thinking in a society by ordinary people, the common understandings that make everyday practices possible, giving them sense and legitimacy” (p. 34) and this shared way of thinking becomes common sense in a community. Lee (2014) investigated English ideologies, class, neoliberalism and parents of early student abroad students in South Korea. Lee reported that for the Gangnam (one of the wealthiest areas in South Korea) parents in his study, English study abroad (mainly to the US) was not seen as a necessity but was instead a signal of their membership in this exclusive Gangnam community, and as such, a symbol of prestige and financial superiority. Other study abroad research studies have similarly highlighted the buying and selling of English linguistic capital as parents’ driving motivation in pursuing such programs for – and sometimes with – their children (Chew, 2012; Song, 2018).

For adult English language learners in Australia, as in other contexts, the impetus for learning English varies depending on learners’ individual needs and goals. These motivations play out in conditions which, as this literature review makes clear, views individual aspirations through a lens which valorises the ongoing accumulation of human, social and cultural capital. The aspiration is that, by investing in these resources, economic prosperity will flow in the form of access to privileged opportunities in work and life (Becker, 1975; Bourdieu, 1986, 1991). As Bourdieu (1986, 1991) and others make clear (P. Brown et al., 2015; Foucault, 1980; Marginson, 2017), the simplistic causality implicit in this neoliberal dream does not always yield positive results. For instance, studies have revealed a range of issues, in addition to language difficulties, faced by international students when studying abroad (Sawir, 2005). In the Australian context, international students’ experiences can bring them into contact with linguistic racism (Dobinson & Mercieca, 2020; Dovchin, 2020) while the stereotyping of students as ‘migration hunters’ can lead to disconnectedness, vulnerability and marginalisation (Tran & Vu, 2016) and other students

may face discrimination and poor employment conditions in the labour market (Nyland et al., 2009). It appears that the aspirations of prosperity that are implied in English language learning discourses do not eventuate for all.

It has been argued that ELT coursebooks, and the English language teaching sector itself, enthusiastically embrace English language learning as part of the wider ideological framework of aspiration, competition, individualism and self-realisation in the free market (Block et al., 2012; Copley, 2018; Gray & Block, 2012, 2014; Gray, 2010). In critically examining the values and assumptions inherent in UK-produced ELT coursebooks over a period of 40 years, Copley (2018) and Gray and Block (2014) have revealed how these texts have changed in terms of their ideological stance. Copley's qualitative content analysis, for example, traces the transitions in these texts away from discourses that embrace collective ways of analysing and solving societal issues towards discourses of human capital and linguistic instrumentalism (Kubota, 2011) in the service of enhanced employability and economic opportunity. In a similar vein, Gray and Block's (2014) quantitative and qualitative analyses chart the textual elision of the working-classes and working-class life from ELT coursebooks coinciding as they say, with the neoliberal tinged rise of global ELT. Other studies have also demonstrated how neoliberal values are represented in English language textbooks to validate particular versions of social relations, which are most often aligned with the views of dominant powerful social groups. In these studies, ELT textbooks were found to encompass ideas related to the market and consumerism (Babaii & Sheikhi, 2017; Daghigh et al., 2022), entrepreneurship and business values (Su, 2022) and celebrity culture, branding and personal responsibility (Shah et al., 2023). Through these textbooks, students meet a world where a commitment to hard work, passion and individualism are positively evaluated and presented as the norm, and as such the expectations of teachers are framed in the same way.

This discussion of professionalism, performativity and ideal characteristics of teacher employability has shown that, to be evaluated as effective, teachers need to embody particular characteristics. In a highly casualised sector, teachers who embody the ideal neoliberal subjectivities of passion, commitment and hard work are seen as employable.

2.6.3. Precarity and English language teaching

The neoliberal practice of flexibilisation of labour has led to precarious work for English language teachers due to the relaxation of labour laws under policies of deregulation aimed at promoting competition (J. Park, 2021; Standing, 2011). In this approach, stable, long-term work is considered to be inflexible and not responsive enough to the dynamic needs of global markets, and it is for this reason that contingent work has become, for many, the new norm. The resultant neoliberal workforce is itself expected to be continuously flexible; that is, constantly acquiring and developing new skills, such as networking, teamwork and collaboration, to remain employable (Gee et al., 1996; Urciuoli, 2008). As far back as 1993, even the doyen of modern capitalist management practices, Peter Drucker, was warning that the result of the new knowledge economy would be an underemployed and unemployed class (Drucker, 1993). In that same year, the Sydney-based Adult Literacy and Basic Actions Coalition (O'Connor, 1993) was also warning that to achieve maximum flexibility, widespread subcontracting of business functions would be required, and that this would lead to the fragmentation of workers into a core of multi-skilled staff and a periphery of casualised, contingent workers.

Casualised work is typically precarious work. In the Australian context, casual work is generally understood to mean positions without employment benefits, rights and conditions, although it does not necessarily equate to irregular work (Burgess et al., 2008; O'Donnell, 2004). Precarious work has been defined in a variety of ways. Alongside this local Australian understanding of casual work, it is Standing's view on precarious work that

captures the position of many teachers currently working in the English language teaching sector in Australia. According to Standing (2011), the hallmarks of precarious work are labour market insecurity, income insecurity and skills reproduction insecurity.

In English language teaching in the Australian context, there exists a core of more securely employed teachers and a periphery of more contingently employed teachers. This is the situation not only in the ELICOS sector, as described in Stanley's studies (2016, 2017) as described above, but also in the AMEP and Vocational English sectors. In a recent submission to the Australian government concerning future policy directions for the teaching of English to migrants and humanitarian visa holders, the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) outlined the various issues related to precarious teaching work, and the overall precarity faced by the adult English language teaching sector, which has been negatively impacted by neoliberal bureaucratic standardisation and competitive contracting (ACTA, 2023; J. Park, 2021). English language providers and the teachers they employ must comply with standardised training qualifications regulations, despite such qualifications not being suitable or necessary for English language teaching. Yet, compliance is required if these providers want to be registered as training organisations. The ACTA report (2023) makes clear the connection between the competitive contracting framework which governs adult migrant English provision and the instability of the employment offered to teachers. With respect to teacher professionalism, as discussed above, the ACTA report elucidates the links between short-term contracting and teachers' commitment to professional development and professionalism. As Standing (2011) points out, a key feature of precarity is skills reproduction insecurity. Those working in this sector are quite justified in asking: Why should teachers feel confident in developing their professional practice, if security and stability in employment is lacking?

Apart from Stanley's work (2016, 2017), and the ACTA report just discussed, there is little research into precarious teaching practices in the English language teaching sector in Australia. There is, however, more research on the incidence of precarious work in higher education, and some of this work points to the increasing precarity for teachers on pathways to university English language programs, both in Australia (Kaktiņš, 2018) and in the UK (A. Ding & Bruce, 2017; Fulcher, 2009) although it is in Canada that precarity in the context of adult English language teaching is better understood. The Canadian research is perhaps most relevant to the Australian context as both have similar colonial backgrounds with a long history of first peoples' occupation, and both are now sought after destinations for English language learners, migrants, refugees and international students.

In examining previously published survey and interview research on the employment of Canadian English language teachers (from the late 1990s to 2018), Breshears (2019) found that teachers laboured under precarious employment conditions. Part time, temporary work was common as was holding down multiple teaching jobs, coupled with low pay and unpaid work. Similar to the ACTA (2023) report, Breshears concluded that government policy related to education funding, language and immigration had negatively impacted not only teacher employment but teachers' professional identity. The idea that precarious work often involves unpaid work was confirmed by Kouritzin et al. (2022) in their investigation of the 'gigification' of English language teacher work in two Canadian ESL/Academic English university departments. Kouritzin and colleagues conducted a content analysis of teacher job advertisements and held semi-structured interviews with nine teachers and one administrator to explore how teacher professional identities are influenced by working conditions, which is also a focus of this current project's study of teacher employability in the Australian context. They found that while the job advertisements they analysed framed teaching as a professional endeavour, for example, through an emphasis on teaching credentials and

experience, the lived experiences of the teachers interviewed suggested that overwork and underpay, as well as feelings of insecurity due to the surveillance nature of student evaluations, were prevalent. On the other hand, the administrator interviewed commented on the need for teachers to be flexible and available to meet the changing demands of student enrolments, highlighting the neoliberal flexibilisation of the sector; that is, teachers were required to conform to organisational demands in order to be seen as employable.

A final point needs to be made regarding precarity and English language teaching as it relates to teaching quality and continuous professional development, both motifs central to neoliberal discourses of education (Peters & Green, 2021; Singh et al., 2021; Stacey & Mockler, 2023). Research suggests that English language teachers' precarious working conditions negatively impact not only the quality of student learning but teachers' wellbeing (Breshears, 2019; Elshafei, 2022), their desires and opportunities for professional development (Elshafei, 2022; Sun, 2012), and novice ESL teachers' desire to remain in teaching (Valeo & Faez, 2013). All of these studies draw attention to the disconnect between the discourse of quality and the discourse of continuous professional development, both of which are foundational to the competitive discourses of neoliberalism. Flexibilisation, which unshackles business from the demands of secure labour, is promoted as a kind of entrepreneurial freedom for individual workers as they are at liberty to seek better opportunities in the job market. In reality, as the above studies attest, precarious work for most teachers does not equate to power and agency, as the discourses of entrepreneurship would have us believe, but is instead disempowering.

2.7. Summary

The review of teacher employability-related research presented here has shown that employability and teacher identity work together in a complex socio-historic and political-economic context that is fraught with contradictions and tensions. It has been argued that

while the relationship between various aspects of teacher identity and neoliberalism has been studied, to date these elements have not been brought together to problematise the view of teacher employability as the possession of attributes and skills. Nor has identity work been examined in this context. Moreover, it is not yet understood what the characteristics of teacher employability are for the English language teaching sector in Australia, specifically. This is what this project has aimed to investigate.

Furthermore, while many studies, as noted in this literature review, have problematised the profit imperative of neoliberalism and its impact on teaching and teachers' experiences, none have explored how those working in the English language teaching sector in Australia feel about their work being shaped by these practices and discourses. It is also unclear in much of the research cited how casual teachers feel about the conditions under which they labour. There is also a gap in our knowledge with regards to English language teacher employment interviews. Other than Phillips' (2017) study, which found that hiring managers appear to conflate teacher accent with teaching ability, no research to my knowledge has offered insight into what happens during English language teacher interviews. It is these gaps in current knowledge that this research project seeks to address.

2.8. Conclusion

This literature review has evaluated three main areas of research that are important for an examination of English language teacher employability: teacher characteristics, teacher identity, and English language teaching in a neoliberal setting. The review has revealed three main research gaps. The first is that no research to date has examined what teacher employability means in English language teaching in the Australian context. Secondly, there has been no research that has explored and problematised employability in the English language teaching sector and how employability is influenced by skills, attributes, identity and context. Most previous research seems to assume that all English

language teachers labour under conditions sufficiently stable to warrant an ongoing and dynamic commitment to their work. Thirdly, it is unclear how employability is negotiated in teacher employment interviews. This research project has sought to better understand these issues and other elements of English language teacher employability across four different teaching sectors in Australia by exploring how teachers and hiring managers position themselves in relation to these understandings of teacher employability. The next chapter presents and justifies the research methods employed to investigate these issues.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

Drawing on the literature review presented in Chapter 2, the aim of this chapter is to outline the methodological approach of the study which has sought to address the overarching research question of what makes an English language teacher employable in Australian adult English language teaching. The chapter first provides an overview of the relativist, constructionist methodology adopted in this study, followed by the research aims and research questions. It then describes the context of the study and the participants, including participant recruitment. Next, it documents the research instruments and data collection procedures, followed by the data analysis method, with examples of the analysed data provided as illustration. Finally, the study's limitations are discussed, and the chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter.

3.2. Methodological approach and research aims

This study is firmly located within a critical, qualitative methodological approach and its research focus is broadly centered on language and meaning. As language can be seen as a meaning-making resource (Braun & Clarke, 2022), the data and analyses presented here involve interpretations of situated and contextualised meanings. However, these interpretations do not appear in a vacuum; they are the result of my own meaning-making processes, which have been influenced by my own experiences and positionings with respect to broader cultural and socio-historical phenomena. For instance, my positioning as a novice education researcher with a background in English language teaching and education

management means that I have both insider and outsider perspectives with respect to the question of teacher employability. I regard my researcher subjectivity – which I have aimed to critically engage with and reflect on – not as a bias that threatens the analytic validity, but as a valuable research asset (Braun & Clarke, 2022). My researcher positioning aligns ontologically and epistemologically with a relativist, constructionist view of the world which does not aim to objectively seek to find a singular reality or truth (Burr, 1998; Burr & Dick, 2017; Gergen, 2015). Instead, what is of interest in this study is the meanings that are produced and constructed in relation to English language teacher employability and the implications of these meanings. I am interested here in what language does and what ‘realities’ it creates in relation to English language teacher employability. The methodological and analytical aim of this study, then, has not been to provide a definitive answer on what teacher employability is, but to explore how it is framed in teacher recruitment advertisements, and what employability means to teachers and hiring managers working in the English language teaching sector in Australia.

As employability can be taken to be a socially constructed notion and a product of the socio-historical, and political economic contexts in which it is situated, it is inherently subjective. Teacher employability is constructed through discourse, and in culturally and historically specific ways that have productive power, which Foucault called ‘disciplinary power’ (Foucault, 1977, 1979, 1988). While disciplinary power works to influence, and often prescribe, ways of being and acting in the world, these ways of being and acting are not static. Powerful discourses can be – and are – resisted, resulting in them being neither enacted nor inculcated (Fairclough, 2003). This discursive production and construction of identity is important to the theoretical, methodological and analytical approaches driving this research project. It is through the ways in which teachers are hierarchically observed, judged and rewarded for their attributes and behaviours that their employability is constructed.

However, this construction can be challenged and confronted; that is, teachers and hiring managers are not passive recipients of discourses of English language teacher employability. In accordance with this view, this research has endeavoured to account for the ways in which the research participants in this study position themselves in relation to these discourses. In other words, the data collected from the surveys, job advertisements and interviews in this project were analysed in such a way as to address the ways in which language is used to construct realities through discourse, and to evaluate these constructions of realities in relation to the socially constructed systems of power which create the rules by which teachers are employed. From the theoretical perspective, my analysis has drawn upon the principles of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (see e.g., Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Huckin, 1997) as well as the work of Raymond Williams (1976) and Marnie Holborow (2012b, 2013) on cultural and neoliberal keywords.

Although this research draws on critical positions with respect to employability, it is also understood that multiple perspectives on teacher employability exist – for instance, contextual, temporal and spatially, and individual and organisational – and for this reason, the aim has been to examine some of these perspectives by drawing on three different data sources, and employing three different analytical techniques. Although one of these analytical techniques, descriptive statistics, introduces a basic method of quantitative analysis to the project, the overall research paradigm is not mixed methods. As Brown (2014) points out just because a research project is not pure qualitative (or pure quantitative) does not make it a mixed methods design. This project's design is one of methodological triangulation where different methods have been used on the same object or occasion (Cohen, et al., 2018). The overall research design and intention, then, is qualitative; I have not aimed to offer a singular definition of teacher employability in adult English language

teaching in the Australian context, but to generate ideas that will contribute to the discussion of what it means to be an employable teacher in this context.

3.2.1. Ethics approval

This project was approved by The University of Sydney's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) under application number: 2019/HE000821. This approval aligns with the University of Sydney's Research Code of Conduct (The University of Sydney, 2023) together with the University of Sydney's Research Data Management Policy (The University of Sydney, 2014). Both of these policies outline the University's commitment to and expectations of university researchers' obligation to comply with the requirements set out for responsible research practice in accordance with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (Australian Research Council, 2018).

In addition, the policies set out above require the set up and approval of a research data management plan supported by access to the University of Sydney's Research Data Store, in accordance with the University of Sydney's Research Data Management Procedures (The University of Sydney, 2015). These policies require all research data to be securely stored on the university's Research Data Store. This research project was carried out in accordance with the obligations just outlined.

3.3. Research questions and data types

As outlined above, this research aims to explore what English language teacher employability means in the context of adult English language teaching in Australia. The research questions guiding this investigation are:

RQ1.

What employability attributes are considered important to being an employable English

language teacher in adult English language teaching in the Australian context?

RQ2.

- a) How do English language teachers demonstrate employability attributes during English language teacher employment interviews?
- b) How do hiring managers identify employability attributes during English language teacher employment interviews?

RQ3.

- a) How do English language teachers position themselves in relation to teacher employability in the current context of adult English language teaching in Australia?
- b) How do hiring managers position themselves in relation to teacher employability in the current context of adult English language teaching in Australia?

To address these research questions, three different sets of data were collected and analysed: responses from an online survey; 24 participant interviews (11 teachers and 13 hiring managers); and 50 teacher job advertisements. The online survey and interview participants were English language teachers and teacher hiring managers in Australia and the (online) job advertisements were designed to recruit English language teachers in this context.

The purpose of the online survey was to obtain a general understanding of the main employability attributes, as discussed in the employability literature (Clark & Paran, 2007; Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Mahboob et al., 2004; Ruecker & Ives, 2014; Selvi, 2010). A basic descriptive statistical analysis was performed on the survey responses to examine which teacher employability attributes were seen as the most important. In addition, 50 English language teacher job advertisements were collected for

analysis. Both of these sets of data were examined using directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and indexical analysis (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Silverstein, 2003; Strauss & Feiz, 2014). As understanding the views of English language teachers and teacher hiring managers was important to this research, 11 teachers and 13 teacher hiring managers were also interviewed. The aim of these semi-structured interviews was to explore these teachers' and hiring managers' beliefs and experiences with regards to teacher employability, using the online survey responses and two job advertisement examples as a guide for the discussion. The interviews were thematically analysed following Braun and Clarke's guide (2012, 2022). These three data sets – that is, the online survey responses, the job advertisement data and the interview data – were used to respond to RQ1 while the teacher and hiring manager interviews were used to address RQ1, RQ2 (a and b) and RQ3 (a and b). Table 3.1 presents a cross tabulation of the research questions, data sources and data analyses.

Table 3.1

Cross-tabulation of Research questions, data sources and data analyses.

Research Question	Type of Data	Quantity	Method of Analysis
RQ. 1	Questionnaire	49	Descriptive Statistics (Brown, 2014; Fisher & Marshall, 2009; Roever & Phakiti, 2018) performed on Likert Scale questions Frequency Counts of Teacher Personal Attributes
	Job Advertisements	50	Directed Content Analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) Indexical Analysis (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Strauss & Feiz, 2014).
	Teacher Interviews Hiring Manager Interviews	11 13	Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2019, 2022)
RQ. 2	Teacher Interviews Hiring Manager Interviews	11 13	Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2019, 2022)
RQ.3	Teacher Interviews Hiring Manager Interviews	11 13	Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012, 2019, 2022)

3.4. Context, research participants and participant recruitment

3.4.1. Context

In the year-to-date March 2024, there were 741,224 international students on student visas in Australia (Department of Education, 2024). Many of these overseas students were enrolled in various education courses in a range of contexts, such as higher education, vocational education and training (VET), and English language intensive courses (ELICOS). While

some of these students were enrolled in primary and secondary schools, these environments were not of interest to this study of teacher employability. Not all of the international students in Australia require English language tuition, but for those who do, many will study an English language course either for the purposes of undertaking further study (a university degree for instance), for work (which might require an English exam such as IELTS) and/or for travel purposes. English language courses are also provided for free to adult migrants and refugees for settlement purposes under the Adult Migrant English program (AMEP), although these learners are domestic rather than international students.

The contexts of interest in this study are those in which English language tuition is provided, and these contexts fall into two broad categories. In the first group, the courses are relatively short (such as those referred to above as ELICOS) and are not awarded a nationally-recognised qualification by the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). In Australia, the providers of these types of courses are known as private language schools, or ELICOS providers, and they typically offer general English courses (from beginner to advanced proficiency levels) as well as exam English courses such as the International English Language Test (IELTS) and the Pearson Test of English (PTE). In the second group, the courses provided are recognised by the AQF framework and these are typically English language courses provided in the vocational education sector (VET) or by the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). Often, the providers of these vocational and AMEP courses are privately owned institutions, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), although there are also publicly funded education providers in this context known as TAFE (Technical and Further Education) which are located in each of the Australian states and territories.

These distinctions, however, are not always so clearly defined. For instance, some RTOs and TAFEs provide shorter, non-accredited English language courses which were once predominantly the sole domain of the ELICOS sector, while some private language

schools (traditional ELICOS providers) now also offer nationally accredited English language courses. The types of courses offered by these different institution types has an impact on teacher employment. Due to regulatory requirements around English language teacher education and qualifications, employers must recruit teachers with the appropriate credentials. Some of these regulations are particularly relevant to providers listed as RTOs, such as the stipulation that English language teachers must have training and assessment qualifications. Teacher employability, therefore, not only comes with a regulatory component, but is also impacted by the type of course taught (e.g., whether or not the English language course is accredited on the Australian Qualification Framework), learner type (e.g., visa status) and institution type (e.g., catering for different courses and student types) (Stanley, 2020). For the purposes of this analysis, the contexts of interest were categorised according to the four sector types and the predominant English course type provided. These are:

- Australian Migrant English Program (AMEP) – language course type: Settlement English
- Private Language Schools – language course type: General/Exam English
- University English Language Centres – language course type: Academic/University Pathways
- Technical and Further Education (TAFE) – language course type: Vocational English

3.4.2. Participants and participant recruitment

For this research project, participants needed to be recruited for the online survey and the interviews. An overview of who these participants were, and how they were recruited is provided below. Table 3.2 provides information about the survey participants.

Table 3.2*Survey Participants by Institution Type*

Teachers		Senior Teacher		Hiring Manager		Institution Type Total
Institution Type	<i>n</i>	Institution Type	<i>n</i>	Institution Type	<i>n</i>	
Private Language School	17	Private Language School	0	Private Language School	3	20
University English Language Centre	12	University English Language Centre	1	University English Language Centre	4	17
TAFE	5	TAFE	0	TAFE	3	8
AMEP	3	AMEP	0	AMEP	1	4

3.4.2.1. Survey participants

After a pilot online teacher employability survey was conducted in early March 2020, permission was sought and obtained from the administrators of #AusELT (#AusELT, 2018) to post the live survey on a prominent Australian English language teaching Facebook page. The survey was posted on this page in early April 2020 and was live for three weeks. Unfortunately, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Australia's borders closed in late March 2020, and some English language teachers were already starting to lose work, while the sector as a whole was particularly vulnerable to the effects of these border closures (English Australia, 2021, 2022; Patty, 2020). In this more restricted context, the survey elicited 36 responses. For these online survey participants, informed consent was sought by uploading a Participant Information document with the survey link on #AusELT.

Completion of the survey was taken as informed consent (this was outlined in the Participant Information document). The survey responses were anonymous as participants were not asked for identifying personal information. Online survey responses were further anonymized at the analysis stage by numbering the responses received from one to 36. The online survey was also subsequently sent to the interview participants (as described in the next section), and this generated a further 13 responses. In total, there were 49 responses to the online survey; 37 of these were from teachers (one was a senior teacher) and 11 were from hiring managers. As with the online survey responses, although the survey link was emailed to interview participants, the survey responses were anonymous to the extent that it was not possible to determine which response was from which participant (other than if it was from a hiring manager, or teacher). As with the online survey responses, the additional survey responses generated from the interview participants were further anonymized by numbering the responses from 37 to 49.

3.4.2.2. Interview participants

The interview participants were recruited in four ways: an expression of interest question on the online survey; a direct email campaign (to hiring managers only); an advertisement for the research posted on an English language teaching community page on Facebook; and word of mouth. Six teachers and one hiring manager were first recruited as interview participants via the online survey. Due to these low numbers, however, it was deemed necessary to broaden the recruitment. Teacher hiring managers were therefore directly emailed a research interview expression of interest (EOI).³ A total of 130 emails were sent to hiring managers in the four institution types indicated in Table 3.1. Of these 130 EOI emails, 10 hiring managers opted out of receiving the further communication link, and

³ This was done in accordance with Australian spam legislation (ACMA, 2020), which sets out senders' responsibilities in relation to consent to spam, sender identification and ease of unsubscribing.

after removing these managers from the email list, a total of 120 ‘invitation to participate in the research’ emails were sent to the remaining hiring managers. These emails included the Participant Information Statement, the Participant Consent Form, two samples from the job advertisement data (with identifying information removed) and a link to the online survey. From this direct mail campaign, an additional 10 hiring managers were recruited, and signed consent forms were received.

A research advertisement was posted on the #AusELT Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/AusELT/>) to supplement the direct recruitment of hiring managers. As a result of this advertisement, an additional two hiring managers were recruited for the interviews. This advertisement also generated some word-of-mouth interest in the research, and I was subsequently contacted via email by six teachers who were interested in taking part in the project, three of whom I had worked with previously. The research information was emailed to these teachers, and consent forms were returned; five of the six committed to taking part in the interviews.

At the end of the interview participant recruitment phase, the total number of participants was 24: 11 teachers and 13 hiring managers. Of the teacher participants, seven were female and four male; one female teacher and two male teachers identified as non-native speakers of English. The hiring manager participants were made up of nine female and four male participants, with one of the female hiring managers identifying as a non-native speaker of English. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participant Consent forms were emailed to participants to sign and return before the interview took place. At the beginning of the interview, consent was obtained again for the recording of the interview. Further all participants were informed that they could stop the interview at any time, were not obliged to answer any questions they were not comfortable with, and could request the interview data to be deleted at any time. All interview participants consented to

the audio recording of the interviews. As the majority of the interviews were conducted via Zoom, all video recordings of the interviews were immediately deleted, with only the audio recording saved for the purposes of analysis. All interview data were anonymised by assigning the letter T plus a number for teacher participants (for example, T1, and the letters HM plus a number for hiring managers (as in HM 10). Only the teaching and learning sector in which the teacher or hiring manager worked were included in the presentation of interview data excerpts in the findings and discussion. Table 3.3 presents the interview participants and their teaching and hiring domain type.

3.4.3. Participant selection

As mentioned above, participant recruitment and selection were affected by the situation in which the English language teaching sector in Australia found itself as a result of the Australian government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, convenience sampling of participants needed to be adopted, and those participants who indicated interest in taking part in the research were recruited and all of the data from these participants were used for data analysis.

3.5. Data collection and analysis

The online survey provided the first set of data, and these were collected during a three-week period from early April 2020. The job advertisement data were collected between May and December 2020. The participant interviews were conducted between mid-August 2020 to early December 2020, and subsequently transcribed. This section describes the process of data collection and analysis.

Table 3.3*Interview Participants by Teaching and Hiring Domain Type (n=24)*

Teachers (<i>n</i> =11)		Hiring Managers (<i>n</i> =13)	
Teaching Domain Type	<i>n</i>	Hiring Domain Type	<i>n</i>
Academic/University Pathways English	3	Academic/University Pathways English	4
General/Exam English	5	General/Exam English	6
Vocational/Settlement English	2	Vocational/General/Exam English	1
Settlement English	1	Vocational English	1
		Settlement English	1

3.5.1. Online survey

As outlined above, after a small pilot study was conducted in early March 2020, the online teacher employability survey was posted online to the #AusELT (#AusELT, 2018) Facebook page for a period of three weeks from the beginning of April 2020. The survey was hosted online by Qualtrics, and the responses were anonymous (see Appendix A for a copy of the online survey).

The survey was designed to reflect how employability is conceptualised in this research project (based on the literature, as described in Chapter 2). It focused on eliciting from respondents information about: education type, teaching qualifications, experience, generic and specific skills, and personal attributes, that is, information relevant to employability within their teaching and learning contexts (Fugate et al., 2004; Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Urciuoli, 2008; Yorke, 2006). In particular, the components of the teacher knowledge and skills section (see Question 9, Appendix A), were developed from a review

and synthesis of the teacher cognition (Borg, 1997, 2011, 2015); teacher expertise (Tsui, 2003, 2005, 2009a, 2009b), and second language teacher education literature (Burns & Richards, 2009; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Richards, 2010). The only area of employability not addressed in the survey was ‘knowledge and understandings’, which is conceptualised in the literature as contextual knowledge and understandings of the teacher’s employment context as well as macro-economic impacts on the labour market, including material aspects of employment such as working conditions, and employers’ recruitment patterns and processes (Hillage & Pollard, 1998). There were two reasons for not including this aspect: it has not been included in other English language teacher employability related research (Alshammari, 2020; Clark & Paran, 2007; Mackenzie, 2020; Mahboob et al., 2004; Ruecker & Ives, 2014; Selvi, 2010) and it was determined to be too difficult to elicit from an online survey. As such, issues pertaining to the importance of contextual knowledge and understandings in teacher employability were investigated through the job advertisement data and the participant interviews.

The survey contained a total of 17 main questions across three sections: the first section, ‘About You’, contained seven questions; the second section, ‘The Characteristics of an Employable Teacher’, contained eight questions; and the third section, ‘Expression of Interest in Taking Part in Further Research’, contained one question. In Section 1, the seven questions (Q1-7) elicited data, such as the position of the respondent (teacher or hiring manager), institution type, native English or non-native English speaker status, qualifications, and length of time working in the English language teaching sector. The nine questions in Section 2 (Q8-12) focused on the attributes of employability when hiring teachers and comprised the major part of the survey. In this section, Q8, Q9, Q10 and Q11 had an additional open ended question marked Q8.A, Q9.A, etc.. In this second section, respondents were asked about which qualifications and length of experience, teaching and

learning related knowledge and skills, generic skills, and finally personal attributes were important when hiring teachers. In Section 3, the final question (Q13) was used to call for expressions of interest to take part in the interview stage of the research.

Three survey questions were on a 5-point Likert Scale, with 5 being Extremely Important, to 1 being Not Important at All. The first of these questions (Q8), related to the importance when hiring of a teacher's qualifications and experience, and subsumed 14 sub questions asking about education and qualification type, 'native' speaker status, years of teaching experience and technology and blended learning experience. The next (Q9), asked about teaching and learning specific knowledge and skills, and subsumed 12 teaching and learning knowledge and skills questions. Finally for the 5-point Likert Scale questions, Q9 asked about the importance of generic skills when hiring teachers.

As mentioned, questions 8-11 also had an additional open-ended question in which respondents were offered the opportunity to provide additional comments. In Section 2, Q11 asked survey respondents to select and rank the 10 most important personal attributes for a teacher out of a list of 26. This list of personal attributes was developed through a search of the attributes frequently used in teaching English as a second language (ESL) position advertisements on Seek.com.au (<http://www.seek.com.au>). For the purposes of the survey design, the decision was made not to use a Likert Scale for each of these personal attributes as it was felt that an additional 26 Likert Scale questions could cause respondent fatigue. Moreover, it was decided that attempting to determine how important any given attribute might be on a 5-point Likert Scale would be too challenging. It is quite likely that many of the attributes would have been rated as very important, or extremely important. Instead, asking respondents to rank the 10 most important attributes was seen as a way of generating more diverse responses which could be discussed further in the interviews.

3.5.1.1. Survey data analysis

Most of the survey data were included in a basic descriptive statistical analysis in which the mean, median and standard deviation were calculated for each of the 5-point Likert Scale questions (J. Brown, 2014; Fisher & Marshall, 2009; Roever & Phakiti, 2018). The responses to Q4 in Section 2, which asked the participants to rank the 10 most important teacher personal attributes, were counted and ranked according to frequency of mentions. As noted earlier in the description of the methodology, the focus was not on generating statistically significant data from which to generalise to a wider population but to obtain a general understanding of how the survey participants viewed the various attributes of teacher employability, and to use this information to guide the discussion in the semi-structured interviews. Table 3.4 provides the results of the survey data from Q9 in Section 2, which asked respondents to rank on a 5-point Likert Scale the importance of teachers' teaching and learning skills, with 1 being not Important at All, and 5 being Extremely Important. The findings of the survey data can be found in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2).

Table 3.4.

Mean, Median and Standard Deviation of Survey Responses (n=48) Most Important Teaching and Learning Knowledge and Skills

Teaching and Learning Skill	Mean	Median	SD
Ability to build rapport with learners	5	5	0
Ability to deliver student centred learning	5	5	0
Ability to reflect on own teaching	5	5	1
Ability to reflect on student learning	5	5	1
Ability to create a collaborative learning environment	5	5	1
Understanding of teaching and learning strategies	4	5	1
Ability to implement teaching and learning strategies	4	5	1
Ability to understand and deliver on teaching and learning outcomes	4	4	1
Knowledge of English vocabulary including idiomatic language	4	4	1
Knowledge of English grammar	4	4	1

3.5.2. Online job advertisements

Job advertisements were chosen as a source of data on English language teacher employability as they are an important tool for recruiting teachers. Job advertisements not only provide informational content about the role being advertised (e.g., responsibilities and duties) but also provide information about the type of person desired, or at least considered suitable for the advertised position. As job advertisements are often the first interaction a teacher has with a potential employer, they can play an important role in how an employer or an organisation is viewed. A job advertisement, therefore, has both informational and

persuasive aims as the employer's intention is to motivate potential employees to apply for the advertised position, and to communicate to these potential employees elements of the employer's branding (A. Blackman, 2006). For these reasons, the job advertisement data were viewed as an essential part of the hirers' organisational discourse, offering insight into how employers represented themselves, the teachers they aimed to attract as employees, and the desired employability attributes (Lačka-Budura, 2015). As such, the job advertisement data were seen as key cultural artefacts that could be analysed to identify the kinds of language used to support the discursive production of what it means to be an employable teacher in particular employment contexts (Nuttall et al., 2013).

To identify advertisements for analysis, alerts were put in place for teaching jobs in Australia published on the Australian job websites, Seek (<https://www.seek.com.au>), Jora (<https://au.jora.com>) and Indeed (<https://au.indeed.com>) between May 2020 and early December 2020. The criteria used for the alerts were that the advertisements must be for adult English language teaching across the four different teaching domains noted above (ELICOS teacher, AMEP teacher, Academic English teacher, Vocational English, etc.) and for the positions to be located in Australia. The final data set comprised 50 job advertisements that met the above inclusion criteria; these included roles for teachers (no senior teacher positions, for example) and any contract type for example part time, casual and fixed term contracts. Job advertisements for teaching overseas, children, or teenagers were excluded. None of the job advertisements included and analysed for this project were from institutions at which any of the interview research participants were employed, and therefore no hiring manager participant had any role in constructing the job advertisements used as data in this study. Table 3.5 below shows the number and type of job advertisements collected for the data analysis.

Table 3.5

Number of Job Advertisement Types (n=50) Used for Data Analysis

Job Advertisement Type	Number of Job Advertisements
Academic/University Pathways English	9
General/Exam English	22
Settlement English	9
Vocational English	10

Figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 provide examples of job advertisements from each of the four teaching and learning sector.

3.5.2.1. *Job advertisement data analysis*

The main focus of the job advertisement data analysis was to identify how teacher employability was discursively positioned in the job advertisement data, and a secondary focus was to determine whether particular employability characteristics were positioned as more or less important to teacher employability in the four different teaching contexts. Two analytical steps were taken: the first was a directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and the second was indexical analysis (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Strauss & Feiz, 2014). The job advertisements findings can be found in Chapter 4.

3.5.2.2. *Content analysis*

Based on understandings of employability attributes gleaned from the literature (see e.g., Brown et al., 2003; Hillage & Pollard, 1998) a directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), using the qualitative data analysis software NVIVO, was used to identify

key employability attributes in the job advertisement data. The coding in a directed content analysis is guided by theory as well as by the coding used in previous research studies.

Figure 3.5 below shows the four main employability codes in NVIVO used in the directed content analysis. In an iterative process, the coding identified themes subsumed under the four main employability attribute categories to offer a more nuanced understanding of what the main employability attributes refer to. Figure 3.6 shows how the main code for the category ‘skills’ was further explicated. This coding process was undertaken for all four of the main employability codes.

Figure 3.5.

Screenshot of Employability Main Codes in NVIVO

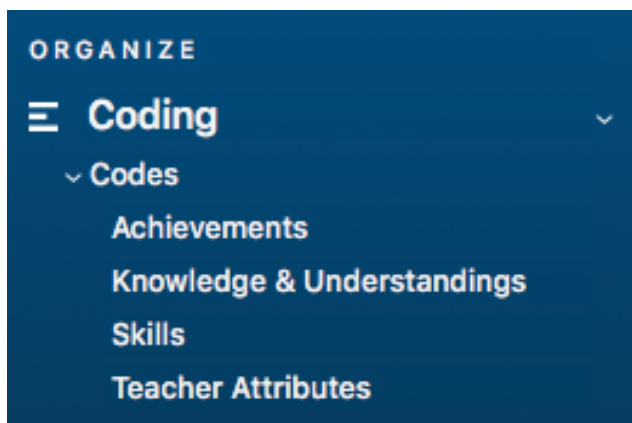


Figure 3.6.

Screenshot of Skills Subcategory Codes in NVIVO

Name	Files	Referen...
▼ 2.1 Teaching and learning...	43	194
○ 2.1.1 Pedagogy.Dig.ped	17	34
○ 2.1.2 Teach.Assess.Skil...	40	121
○ 2.1.3 LMS&Teachtech.	8	13
○ 2.1.4 PD&meetings	15	25
▼ 2.2 Generic skills	35	157
○ 2.2.1 Communication	20	29
○ 2.2.2 Administration	12	33
○ 2.2.3 Organisational sk...	11	20
○ 2.2.4 Relational skills	28	65
○ 2.2.5 Gen.Tech.	10	10

The analysis of the job advertisements used T-units (Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Hunt, 1965; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998) and noun phrases (González-Álvarez et al., 2011; Payne & Huddleston, 2002; Rijkhoff, 2002) to count the instances of employability attributes in the data. T-units were developed by Hunt (1965) to measure the syntactic complexity of young students' writing, and used to measure the smallest word group which can be considered a grammatical sentence (Nordquist, 2019). The following definitions of T-units and noun phrases were used:

- one independent clause and its dependent clauses (Bardovi-Harlig, 1992)
- a sentence fragment is a clause which is missing a subject, or a verb, or is an incomplete thought, including noun phrases (Bardovi-Harlig & Bofman, 1989)
- a noun phrase consists of a noun as a head which stands alone or is accompanied by one or more modifiers (Payne & Huddleston, 2002)

Examples of these units of analyses are:

- one independent clause and its dependent clauses:
“You will ensure all aspects of the program including delivery, assessment and records administration meet the compliance requirements for ASQA, AMEP and SEE contract requirements.”
- a sentence fragment (in which the subject and auxiliary verb is missing):
“Promote student attendance to minimise absenteeism and contact students to discuss absence, identifying barriers and supporting their return to class.”
- a noun phrase:
“Two years’ experience in TESOL teaching”

Figure 3.1.

Example: AMEP Job Advertisement

AMEP Teacher

AMEP Teacher

The Company

... is a National Not for Profit organisation passionate about empowering individuals and communities through their commitment to make a difference by providing opportunity. An exciting opportunity has become available for an experienced Teacher with a flexible teaching approach to work on the Adult Migrant English Program at the ... campus on a casual basis.

The Position

Delivering all aspects of accredited training and assessment, your responsibilities will include:

- Assist with the development, design & implementation of the training program
- Work collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure desired client numbers, attendance targets & training delivery hours are achieved
- Develop & maintain effective relationships with clients and key stakeholders
- Provide flexible learning delivery, adapting resources & delivery methods to meet the needs & goals of clients
- Participate in agreed community and / or cultural activities, functions & meetings

The Successful Applicant

- Minimum of a recognised undergraduate degree of at least three years duration
- Post graduate TESOL qualification in Adult Education is preferred
- Bachelor of Education with TESOL Major or equivalent, that includes a **practicum**
- Either a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment TAE40116 or Diploma or higher in Adult Education is desirable
- Demonstrated knowledge & expertise in the achievement of client learning outcomes & high level of client participation, retention & completion rates
- Effective & flexible facilitation & engagement style that delivers positive outcomes across disadvantaged & culturally diverse clients

Culture and Benefits

- Diverse organisation that values people who bring vision and passion to their roles
- Casual working hours to top up your income
- Supportive team environment

... is an equal opportunity employer

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are encouraged to apply

Only applicants with the right to work in Australia will be considered for this role

Right to live and work

You must have the **right to live and work** in this location to apply for this job.

Figure 3.2.

Example: General/Exam English Job Advertisement

English as second language/ESL/ELICOS Teacher

Private Advertiser

... is seeking an English as a second language teacher to teach General English Elementary to Upper-Intermediate.

You **MUST** be organized, committed, professional, reliable, supportive, creative, and patient.

In addition to **having experience** working at an RTO, you MUST have:

- Experience teaching General English levels/ courses
- Bachelor Degree obtained or recognised in Australia and;
- A recognised postgraduate TESOL qualification such as CELTA OR
- Bachelor of Education with a TESOL major or equivalent

If you believe you are the right candidate, please email a brief CV with a Cover Letter stating your availability. As this is a casual position, you MUST be in ... in at the time of your application.

The application form will include these questions:

- Which of the following statements best describes your right to work in Australia?
- Do you have a current Working With Children (WWC) Check?
- Do you have experience working for a registered training organisation (RTO)?
- How many hours are you available to work per week?

Figure 3.3.

Example: Vocational English Job Advertisement

Sessional Teachers - EAL

The full suite of EAL Certificates are delivered at ... to students who want to learn or consolidate English language skills.

Positions:

Expressions of Interest are sought for appropriately qualified and enthusiastic teachers to teach in our EAL courses at different campus locations. These EAL courses include computer and numeracy units.

Applicants must have:

- a teaching degree and/or relevant undergraduate or postgraduate Language, Literacy & Numeracy qualification
- for EAL, a TESOL qualification (or specialisation) at Bachelor level or above
- a current Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, either the TAE40110, including the TAE40116 and the TAEASS02 Unit, or TAE40116
- current Working with Children Check or VIT registration
- relevant teaching experience

Applicants must demonstrate:

- excellent computer skills
- a developed digital pedagogy
- strategies for engaging and retaining students
- VET sector quality and compliance knowledge and understanding
- capacity to work with a diverse cohort
- innovative teaching methodologies

How to apply:

The application should include a current CV and a covering letter outlining in detail the applicant's suitability for the position. Include any additional subject area expertise such as numeracy and or IT.

The letter of application and CV should be emailed to ...

Applicants will then be selected to attend an interview via zoom.

Figure 3.4.

Example: Academic/University Pathways English Job Advertisement

Academic English Teacher

About Us

... College, the University of ... comprises a co-educational Residential College, Theological School and Pathways School, incorporating a sizeable Foundation Studies, Academic English, and Young Leaders programs. ... College Foundation Studies is an award-winning program that prepares over 2,000 overseas students for entry into the University of ..., and other leading Australian Universities.

About the Role

... College Academic English Program is a pathway program which helps to improve students English language to transition into ...

Applications are sought for the position of Academic English Teacher. Reporting to the Program Manager, this role of Academic English Teacher will require delivering face-to-face classroom lessons, along with consulting students on course progress and providing additional student support when needed. Academic English Teachers are required to assess and mark tests, homework and assignments, as well as be available for meetings related to their subject and the broader Pathways School program.

The successful candidate will hold any Degree/Diploma (3 year minimum) plus a recognised TESOL certificate; or any Degree/Diploma (3-year minimum) including TESOL method. Due to COVID-19, we are currently delivering classes online, therefore, the successful candidate will be required to work from home until it's reasonably safe to resume face-to-face teaching on campus.

Salary Range: Level 1 to Level 3 FTE \$61,170 to \$66,830 p.a. plus 10% superannuation and 17.5% leave loading.

Contract Type: Fixed-term position commencing 30 September 2020 until 18 December 2020 Please note, this position is full time (1.0 teaching).

Benefits:

- work in a warm and collegiate environment
- access to funded professional development
- access to wellbeing programs such as an EAP program, Pilates classes and heavily discounted gym memberships
- work-life balance and flexible fair work arrangements

To Apply: Applicants must be Australian Citizens, Permanent Residents or hold a valid work permit or visa. The successful applicant must secure, or be in the process of securing, a Working with Children approval.

To be considered for this role, you must submit a current copy of your resume, cover letter and your response to the key selection criteria as outlined in the position description.

Applications close on ...

Enquiries: ...

3.5.2.3. *Indexical analysis*

After the thematic analysis was completed, an indexical analysis was undertaken (Strauss & Feiz, 2014). As discussed in Chapter 2, an indexical analysis of identities indicates the ways in which they are continuously established, contested, negotiated, shaped and reshaped in different contexts. In this study, an indexical analysis of the job advertisements was used to explore two concepts central to the aim of this project: how the ‘employable teacher identity’ is discursively constructed in these job advertisements, how these identities reflect the larger ideological processes and structures that shape teacher employability, and what this implies for English language teacher employment.

This type of analysis presupposes that abstract concepts related to personal, organisational, and societal expressions of identity, identity affiliation and disaffiliation, and of stance and agency are indexed in discourse and, as such, can be identified through indexical analysis. An individual’s stance – both affective and epistemic – refers to their feelings, attitudes, perspectives and positions, which are enacted, created, negotiated and re-negotiated in discourse (Strauss & Feiz, 2014). The process of ‘taking a stance’ is seen in actions involving emotional, epistemic, moral and conceptual evaluations, for instance, in emotive assertions and moral judgements about what is acceptable and what is not; what is ‘us’ and what is ‘other’; what is ‘employable’ and what is ‘unemployable’.

The indexical analysis examined the affective and epistemic stance was taken by hirers with respect to the importance of the employability attributes indexed in the job advertisements. The content analysis assisted the indexical analysis as it allowed patterns of language and meaning within the employability attributes across all four different teaching domains to be revealed, and nuanced differences between them to be identified. For example, when examining the language used to index ideal teacher attributes across the different teaching domains, the analysis revealed that General/Exam English teachers, and to

a lesser extent Settlement English teachers, were indexed as needing to demonstrate more extraverted personality attributes. However, as the indexical analysis also showed, these semiotic emblems pointed to contextually different meanings. For example, for General/Exam English teachers, extraversion was further indexed to the pursuit of fun and dynamic engagement, while for Settlement English teachers it most often pointed to the transformational nature of education.

Another area of interest was the ways in which modality was used to indicate the attributes deemed necessary to teacher employability and the stances that hirers took towards these employability attributes. The indexical analysis foregrounded, for instance, the ways in which some hirers used high deontic modality – that is, modal and semi-modal expressions such as ‘must’ and ‘need to’ – to stipulate a teacher’s education and qualification type. Examples of modality used in these ways in the job advertisement data are: ‘*Applicants must have: a teaching degree*’ (Vocational English, ID. 24) and ‘*The successful candidate will hold a recognised TESOL certificate*’ (Academic/University Pathways English, ID. 42). I argue here that this modality indexes the importance of the quality and regulatory frameworks to Australian English language teacher employability.

To summarise, the directed content analysis enabled existing theoretical understandings of employability attributes to be used to organise, code and further examine the English language teacher employability characteristics present in the job advertisement data. Then, the more in-depth indexical analysis foregrounded the ways in which teacher employability was contextually and discursively framed in adult English language teaching in the Australian context.

3.6. Interviews

The final stage of the data collection involved semi-structured interviews, the purpose of which was to:

- a) discuss and further explore the most important features of teacher employability using the survey analysis and two job advertisement samples as a guide
- b) discuss how participants felt they were able to either elicit (hiring managers) or demonstrate (teachers) employability characteristics in job interviews
- c) discuss how participants felt in relation to what it means to be an employable teacher in adult English language teaching in the Australian context

3.6.1. Research interview data collection

In total, 24 participant interviews were conducted by the researcher, 21 via Zoom, and three face to face. There were 11 English language teacher interviews, and 13 interviews with hiring managers. The majority of the interviews took place between early August 2020 and December 2020, with two interviews taking place in March 2021. The majority of the interviews lasted an hour; two lasted 45 minutes and one was just over an hour. The interviews were audio recorded on Zoom (the video recording was deleted) and transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

3.6.2. Thematic analysis of the interview data

In the interviews, although an interview protocol was not used, I used the survey responses and two examples from the job advertisement data as a frame for the discussion with participants. I was interested in hiring manager and teacher participants' views on employability and their attitudes and experiences of the teacher hiring process. The analysis of the interview data, therefore, involved examining how the teacher and hiring manager participants viewed teacher employability not only in their own teaching and learning context, but in the profession more generally. In analysing the interviews, I wanted to foreground the teachers and hiring managers' own accounts of their attitudes and

experiences and as much as possible to give voice to them (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In taking this more experiential approach to the interview analysis, I was cognisant of my own reflexive interpretations of their voices and the underlying critical constructionist theoretical and paradigmatic assumptions in my study. However, by using a thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2022) model, I ensured that my interview data were collected and analysed in such a way that took into account the subjective experiences of my research participants while also acknowledging and embracing the influence of my researcher position (Byrne, 2021).

Braun and Clarke (2012) describe thematic analysis as a method for “systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set” (p. 57). The aim of a thematic analysis is to make sense of meanings and experiences in relation to particular topics and research questions. For my part, during this project, this sensemaking was done actively, and accordingly, I acknowledge my active position in this project's knowledge production. This reflexive positioning (Starfield, 2013) towards the thematic analysis of the interviews involved critically evaluating my role as researcher, experienced English language teacher and teacher manager. As discussed in Chapter 1, and highlighted again at the beginning of this chapter, my experience as an English language teacher in private language schools and in university settings, as well as my education management experience in the ELICOS sector, has been a valuable asset to this research. At the same time, I do not claim to be an impartial bystander in this investigation into English language teacher employability in the Australian context as I have been a member of this professional community for over 15 years. Instead, I have used my professional experience, knowledge and understandings to help interpret and make sense of the data I have collected and analysed for this project. As Braun and Clarke (2019) and Byrne (2021) point out, a reflexive approach to thematic analysis reveals the researcher's interpretative stance towards

the dataset, the theoretical assumptions and the researcher's own analytical skills and resources. With this in mind, it is not expected that my interpretations of the data would or should be reproduced by another researcher, given that no two researchers have the same lived experiences from which to elicit these. Rather, a reflexive approach to thematic analysis is about a researchers' thoughtful engagement with their data and the analytic process (Byrne, 2021).

By making clear my insider and outsider status and perspectives on the topic of English language teacher employability in Australia, my aim is that the analysis and interpretations of what teacher employability might mean, as presented here, are seen from this standpoint. As making this position clear was most important in the participant interviews, I informed all of the interview participants that I myself had teaching and education management experience in English language teaching settings in Australia. The interviews were conducted and analysed, therefore, with the knowledge that from this position as both researcher and experienced member of this profession, I was part of the construction of meaning during the interview process.

3.6.2.1. *The thematic analysis process*

The coding and generation of themes from the interview data followed a phased process (Braun & Clarke, 2022), which was designed to understand what participants believed was important to teacher employability, how they felt teacher employability could be demonstrated and elicited in employment interviews, and how they positioned themselves in relation to the discourses around teacher employability. Although Braun and Clarke (2022) outline a six-phase process, I found that the analytical stages were much less easily demarcated, and tended to be recursive in the hands of a novice qualitative researcher such as myself. However, As Byrne (2021) points out, Braun and Clarke's phased thematic analytical process should be seen as a guide and applied in a flexible manner as guided by

the research questions. I was able to distinguish the boundaries of five phases as outlined below, however the recursive and reiterative nature of the whole process was sometimes quite challenging, and was certainly not as linear as the process outlined suggests.

Phase 1 of the thematic analysis process involved familiarisation with the dataset and commenced with the transcription and editing of the teachers' interviews (in Word/Office 365). Taking into consideration the ethical concerns raised by using a speech to text transcription service such as that in the Microsoft Office 365 Suite, the interview files to be transcribed were uploaded one at a time, and I endeavoured to complete the checking of the transcriptions within a two day period. Once the interview files had been transcribed and edited, the file was saved to my laptop and then securely stored on my Research Data Store (as outlined in Section 3.2.1.). The interview file uploaded to Microsoft Word in the Office 365 Cloud was then deleted. Although Microsoft Office 365 transcription software was used to assist with the transcriptions, it was necessary to listen to and edit every interview at least twice to ensure that they were being transcribed as accurately as possible. This was followed by a re-reading of each transcribed interview at least three times to get a sense of their overall meanings. I then made familiarisation notes for each interview and wrote an overview of all the teachers' familiarisation notes. I then repeated this process for all of the managers' interviews. Figure 3.7 provides an extract from the familiarisation notes for Teacher 3 (General/Exam English).

Phase 2 involved identifying segments of the data that captured meanings or concepts relevant to the research questions and adding code labels to these segments. This was an iterative process, and once a saturation point was reached whereby the reading and coding was not generating new insights, all of these code labels were collated, and relevant segments of the data were compiled under each code. Figure 3.8 shows an example of

coding from Teacher 1's interview where the teacher is discussing their experiences of discrimination in hiring processes.

Figure 3.7.

Extract from Familiarisation Notes Teacher 3 Interview

Overall a positive attitude towards teaching and personal experiences of EL teaching.
Second part of career – not interested now in management/development at that level but very much in developing as a teacher/practice
Understanding of role of a ELICOS teacher as one of providing an experience to students, not outcome focused (teaching GE).
Lack of accountability in learning/results – rolling intakes so context
Positive emotions – a great deal of satisfaction from teaching, matches personality and relied on personality to develop practice at first.
Links own identity to workplace – somewhere that fits identity and expressions of that, some places would not.
Curiosity important to teacher development – CELTA recognised as not enough – need to build on this.
Fact of being 'alone' in the classroom with students is a great development tool – self teaching requires self-reflection
Considers student needs and difficulties in lesson planning – something that taught on CELTA – pedagogy important
Experience an important tool for development – asking questions of yourself and students and language
Supportive teaching environment – also important for development
Knowledge sharing

Phase 3 involved generating, developing and reviewing the coded themes in Phase 2. The aim was to identify any unifying ideas in the job advertisement data that responded to the research questions. This process involved going back to the codes and the dataset as a whole to ensure that the emerging themes made sense in relation to the whole dataset and the research questions. In this phase, it was important to consider the core idea or central organising concept of each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2022) so as to ensure that the themes were conceptually important as opposed to being summaries of the data.

Figure 3.8.

Coding Example Teacher 1 Interview

T1. Yeah, for sure I had more than one experience about that pretty much straight away. In my CELTA group there were six of us. Two of us were Indians and one was American, two of them were Swiss and so on. Now I don't know whether to put it directly but they did they did get responses to their resumés which was something that I didn't honestly initially. I also felt that as soon as they see the Indian nationality er all the other questions start creeping in. So again how I put myself with that is that I got a, I got a B on CELTA and I was actually the only one who got one in my batch. And I was the last to be employed. So I'm not sure what happened with that	Race based discrimination – other non – Australians on CELTA but only two POC Discrimination – nationality based – see the name, not interested & is a gateway to other biases CELTA graduated highest in class but last to get a job Faced issues getting first role – puts down to discrimination Hierarchy for teachers of different nationalities
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Phase 4 continued this process of refining, defining and naming of themes. Here again, it was important to ensure that the themes were capturing conceptually important ideas relevant to the research questions. To ensure this, I considered what story each theme was telling as opposed to what the theme was summarising. Although, I had been making familiarisation notes since Phase 1, the final phase of the process, Phase 5, involved the writing up of the interview findings. This process was also iterative, and more nuanced understandings of the themes became evident during this writing up. This final process of drafting and redrafting helped refine the themes and their meanings in relation to the

research questions. The findings of the interview analyses can be found in Chapter 5 (Section 5). The discussion of the survey and interview findings together with the job advertisement findings were then brought together in the discussion chapter of the thesis (Chapter 6).

3.7. Trustworthiness

As qualitative research focuses on situated meaning, issues related to subjectivity, credibility and trustworthiness are important. As Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 290) explain, “a trustworthy study is one whose findings are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of”. In endeavouring to achieve trustworthiness in this project, I have made explicit my reflexive researcher positioning, as discussed above, but have also addressed Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) four criteria of quality in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

The data collection process in this study was guided by two main strategies to establish *credibility*. First, three different data sources were used: an online survey, teacher job advertisements and participant interviews. This triangulation of data allowed for the incorporation of different viewpoints on English language teacher employability and helped give greater plausibility to the findings and discussion. Second, for the interview data, interview participants were encouraged to review their transcribed interviews and provide comments and updates, where appropriate. All interview participants were emailed a brief overview of the study’s findings and interpretations, and comments and feedback were invited.

Transferability was established by providing detailed descriptions of the design of the study, its methodological approach and theoretical foundations. Details were also provided about the data collection and participant recruitment procedures to further contextualise the project should future researchers be interested in comparing and

contrasting their English language teacher employability research results with those of this study. With respect to *dependability* and *confirmability*, I have explicated why and how the project was undertaken and have documented and provided evidence of my data analyses throughout the research process. In this chapter, and in the two findings chapters that follow (Chapters 4 and 5), I have provided data examples to allow readers to assess the claims I am making. The overall trustworthiness of this research ultimately rests on the appropriacy of its claims. As outlined in Chapter 1, this investigation into English language teacher employability in the Australian context does not intend to offer a definitive answer to what teacher employability means; instead, the aim has been to explore some of its facets at a particular time and in a particular space with the hope that our collective understandings may be deepened.

3.8. Limitations of methods

The potential limitations in relation to the data collection relate mainly to the issues around participant recruitment and the relatively small size of the data sets. Across all datasets, only a small number of participants were from the Vocational and Settlement English language teaching contexts, and, even though the views of teachers and hiring managers in ELICOS and university academic English pathways settings were better represented, they still only constitute very few voices in the much larger English language teaching profession in Australia.

As already acknowledged, my position as both an insider and outsider in this research process has been valuable, and I have recognised my own role in the research process and the ways in which the meanings of teacher employability have been indexed, analysed and constructed in this research. Any limitations in the data analysis may stem from my novice status as a qualitative researcher. Therefore, if my analyses seem more descriptive than interpretative in some parts, this is common for researchers such as myself who are in the

process of gaining more analytic experience (Braun & Clarke, 2023) and this is acknowledged as a crucial part of becoming a qualitative researcher.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach, researcher positioning, research steps, and analytical approaches taken to attend to the question of what is important to the employability of adult English language teachers in the Australian context. First, the research aims and questions were provided, followed by details about the types of data collected, the context in which they were collected, the research participants, and how they were recruited. This was followed by a description of how the three data sets were collected and analysed. Issues related to the trustworthiness of the research study were discussed, and a brief overview of the research limitations was provided. In line with the methodological and theoretical underpinnings of this project, it was made clear that the data and analyses were aimed at eliciting interpretations of teacher employability rather than objective meanings. The next chapter presents the findings of the job advertisement content analysis and the indexical analysis.

CHAPTER 4: Teacher Job Advertisements

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Morgan, 1993) and the indexical analysis (Blommaert, 2007; Ochs, 2012; Strauss & Feiz, 2014) of 50 English language teacher job advertisements. These job advertisements were downloaded from the Australian job websites Indeed, Jora, and Seek between May 2020 and December 2020. The aim of these two analyses was to respond to RQ1: ‘What employability attributes are considered important to being an employable English language teacher in adult English language teaching in the Australian context?’. This chapter also offers some discussion of the job advertisement findings. With so much analyses to present, my aim in this chapter is to start to contextually ground my analyses, as opposed to only presenting them, by drawing connections between the job advertisement results and the literature as discussed in Chapter 2. This discussion is then further elaborated on in Chapter 6.

As outlined in Chapter 3, these job advertisements were categorised according to teaching position and one of the four teaching and learning sectors: Academic English/University Pathways English; General/Exam English; Settlement English; and Vocational English. For the content analysis, the teacher employability attributes were coded under four main categories: Achievements; Skills; Knowledge and Understandings; and Teacher Attributes. These four employability categories contained subcategories, as described further below.

This chapter commences with a descriptive statistical overview of the job

advertisement characteristics (for example job advertisement type, word count), and describes the frequency of employability attribute mentions in the four employability categories across all the job advertisements. Each employability category is addressed in a separate section below, which includes both the content analysis and indexical analysis discussion for that category. The first of these four sections discusses Achievements, and its three subcategories: Minimum Education, Teaching Qualifications, and Experience. The second section addresses Skills and its subcategories, Teaching and Learning Skills and Generic Skills. The third section discusses Knowledge and Understandings, and its four subcategories, Compliance, Organisational Identity, Working Conditions, and Recruitment Processes. The fourth section addresses the final main category, Teacher Attributes. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings from the job advertisement analyses.

4.2. The job advertisements' characteristics

A total of 50 English language teacher job advertisements were categorised into four teaching and learning sectors. As there are different numbers of job advertisements in each domain sample, the findings presented in this chapter are based on different percentages, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 shows that job advertisements for teachers of General and Exam English comprise the majority of the job advertisements, with a total of 22 advertisements representing 44% of the total sample. The next largest group was teacher job advertisements recruiting for Vocational English teachers, with a total of 10 job advertisements, representing 20% of the total sample. There were nine job advertisements each for teachers for Settlement English programs and Academic/Pathways English, each representing 18% of the total sample.

Table 4.1

Measures of Frequency, Mean, Median and Standard Deviation for Job Advertisement Type
(*n*=50)

Job Advertisement Type	Frequency	Percentage of Total Job Advertisements	Word Count			
			Total	Mean	Median	SD
Academic/University Pathways English	9	18%	3621	402	384	1.24
General/Exam English	22	44%	5911	269	279	1.59
Settlement English	9	18%	5697	633	527	3.29
Vocational English	10	20%	4286	429	384	2.76

Table 4.1 also gives an indication of the job advertisements' lengths. The General and Exam English job advertisements are the shortest in length with a median of 279 words while the Settlement English job advertisements are the longest with a median of 527 words. Job advertisements for Academic/Pathways English and Vocational English teaching positions are similar in length, both with a median of 384 words.

The job advertisements were analysed to identify their overall format (Walters & Fage-Butler, 2014b) and elements (Rafaeli & Oliver, 1998). While a more detailed analysis of the 'move structure', or genre analysis (Bhatia, 2012) could have been done, it was not deemed to be necessary as the focus of the research was to understand which employability characteristics were considered to be important for hiring; that is, the purpose was not a linguistic analysis aimed at identifying the job advertisements' typical move structure and

communicative purposes (Upton & Cohen, 2009). Instead, the job advertisement data were analysed as examples of organisational texts that index (Blommaert, 2007; Ochs, 2012; Strauss & Feiz, 2014) hirers' assumptions about what it means to be an employable teacher – and to extrapolate this to the English language teaching sector in Australia, more broadly (Nuttall et al., 2013).

The analysis of the job advertisements reveals that this sample of adult English language teacher job advertisements contains different combinations of the elements commonly identified in job advertisement research:

- job description, job requirements, the offer (salary and other incentives), and the application procedure (van Meurs et al., 2006)
- organisational identity, human resource needs, and personal requirements to fulfil the role (Rafaeli & Oliver, 1998)
- title, organisational identity, job description, personnel specifications, practical information and contact information (Walters & Fage-Butler, 2014)

Of these, five common elements in the job advertisements' format were identified. These are: headline, organisational identity, job description, job requirements and recruitment processes (interview information was included in the practical information cited by Walters & Fage-Butler, 2014). The headline move includes the job title and recruiter name; the organisational identity move incorporates elements of the hirer's culture, values and purpose; the job description move includes details about the main purpose of the advertised role, its responsibilities and duties, as well as the pay, conditions and benefits; the job requirements move includes education and qualifications, skills and experience, personal attributes, availability and compliance; and finally the recruitment processes move includes information on how to apply, recruiters' contact details, and recruitment selection and

processes information. All 50 job advertisements included the headline, job requirements and recruitment processes moves; however, the organisational identity and job description moves were not present in all job advertisements. While all Academic/Foundation English and Settlement English job advertisements included organisational identity and job description moves, they were included in only 19 of the 22 General/Exam English advertisements, and nine of the 10 Vocational English job advertisements.

4.3. Overview of all employability attributes across all job advertisements

Table 4.2 demonstrates that the employability attribute of Knowledge and Understandings was the most well represented of the four attributes. It was also the only employability attribute that was mentioned in all 50 of the job advertisements in the sample. The number of job advertisement references to Knowledge and Understandings ($n=762$) represented over 50% of the total number of employability references ($n=1503$).

Table 4.2

Frequency and Percentage of Employability Attributes Across all Job Advertisements ($n=50$)

Employability Category	Number of Job Advertisements Referencing Employability Attribute	Frequency of Employability Attribute	Percentage of References to Employability
Knowledge & Understandings	50	762	51
Skills	45	347	23
Achievements	48	294	20
Teacher Attributes	39	100	7

The next most prominent employability attribute was Skills. The number of Skills references across the job advertisement attributes sample represented 20% ($n=347$) of the total sample ($n=1503$), with 45 of the 50 job advertisements referencing this attribute. The employability attribute of Achievements was the third most represented in the job advertisement sample, mentioned in 48 of the 50 job advertisements. There were 294 references to Achievements, representing 20% of the total number of employability references. The employability attribute that was the least well represented across the job advertisement sample was Teacher Attributes. The 100 references to this attribute represented 7% of the total employability attribute references, and it was referenced in 78% of the job advertisements. Therefore, across the four main employability attributes, the most referenced was Knowledge and Understandings, followed by Skills, then Achievements, and finally Teacher Attributes.

The next section presents the findings from the analysis of the main employability attributes categories and subcategories in the following order: Achievements, Skills, Knowledge and Understandings, and Teacher Attributes. Although Achievements was the third most referenced category, I have chosen to present it first here as its subsections incorporate the two essential attributes of teacher employability in Australia, those of education (degree educated), and holding TESOL specific teaching qualification. Without these two minimum attributes a teacher cannot, according to the Acts and Standards governing Australian English language teaching, be employed (DESE, 2018; 2021a; 2021b; DEWR, 2015).

4.4. Main employability attributes

4.4.1. Achievements

The subcategories of the Achievements employability category, as shown in Table 4.3 below, were found in the job requirements section of the job advertisements. While all of these subcategories were frequently referred to in the advertisements, Teaching Qualifications was the most well represented. The Teaching Qualifications subcategory refers to the level and type of English as a Second/Additional/Other language-specific qualification stipulated by the hirer, while Minimum Education refers to the minimum level of general education required for the position, for example a diploma, an undergraduate or master's level degree. As above, although Teaching Qualifications sub category was most referenced, I start here with Minimum Education as an undergraduate degree is the foundational requirement for teacher employment as stipulated by the Acts and Standards governing Australian adult English language teaching (DESE, 2018; 2021a; 2021b; DEWR, 2015). Following Minimum Education is Teaching Qualifications, then Experience.

Table 4.3

Achievements Mentions Across all Job Advertisements (n=50)

Employability Attribute Subcategory	Number of Job Advertisements Referencing Employability Attribute	Number of Employability Attribute Mentions	Average Number of Employability Attribute Mentions per Job Advertisement
<i>Achievements</i>			
Teaching Qualifications	48	133	2.8
Experience	43	107	2.5
Minimum Education	42	54	1.3

4.4.1.1. *Minimum education*

Minimum Education was the least frequently mentioned of the Achievements employability attributes, with 84% of the job advertisements stipulating a minimum degree level and type. The average number of references to Minimum Education per job advertisement was also the least. With regards to degree type, the most referenced was an undergraduate degree in any discipline (37 references), followed by an undergraduate education degree (15 references). A postgraduate (Masters) level degree as a minimum level of education was referenced in only two job advertisements, both of which were Academic/University Pathways job advertisements.

4.4.1.1.1. Stance in minimum education mentions

The job advertisements used combined patterns of stance to describe the degree type minimally required for teacher employment. Patterns of stance reflect a speakers', or writers' attitudes, feelings, perspectives and positions taken in discourse (Strauss & Feiz, 2014). Stance-taking, therefore, necessitates the actions of evaluating something, or someone – we have an emotive reaction, we have a view of what is morally right or wrong, or what is normal or peculiar. We may be absolutely sure of our stance or position, or less sure. Across a spoken or written text, patterns of stance become visible through the words (and other forms of communication) we use. For example, we might use modal verbs such as 'must' to indicate obligation, or affective intensifiers such as 'highly' to strengthen the emotional content of an expression.

Such patterns of stance were seen in the 42 job advertisements that stipulated minimum education, where over half (55%) positioned their organisation as strongly committed to a particular degree type, and this rose to 75% for teaching qualifications. This was done through reference to an Australian standard (awarded by an Australian

university/equivalent), the use of modals and semi-modals of high obligation (‘must’, ‘will’, ‘need to’, etc.) as well as the use of the evaluative adjectives such as ‘recognised’, ‘appropriate’ and ‘suitable’. Judgments were often expressed through the hirers’ expression of their deontic authority, where they called on the rights inherent in their roles to determine teachers’ future actions (Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012). These deontic rights allow hirers to make requests for ‘recognised, appropriate and suitable’ degrees, for example, and to present these “in truth” (Foucault, 1977); this is a recognition that “marks the gaps, hierarchies, qualities, skills and aptitudes” (p.181) of a teacher’s education background. As Strauss and Feiz (2014) argue, it is the use of stance – both affective (mood, attitude and feelings) and epistemic (degrees of certainty personal/institutional knowledge) – which indexes our perspectives in discourse. Examples of stance patterns from job advertisements are shown below (for all examples, see Appendix B, Table B1); the patterns described earlier are in bold (the word ‘MUST’ in example (b) was also capitalised in the original job advertisement):

Our ideal candidate must be degree qualified (a **recognised degree** in any discipline or equivalent) (General/Exam English, ID. 3)

You **MUST** have: Bachelor Degree obtained or **recognised** in Australia and ...
(General/Exam English, ID. 4)

... **you will have:** A **recognised** bachelor degree (Vocational English, ID. 26)

Mandatory Requirements: Bachelor Degree **awarded by an Australian university or tertiary institution**, or its onshore or overseas equivalent that is at least three years full-time duration or its part-time equivalent (Vocational English, ID. 32)

Applicants **will need to have**: A **recognised** university undergraduate degree or higher or equivalent (Settlement English, ID. 35)

Mandatory Requirements: Undergraduate degree of at least three years duration **awarded by an Australian university or tertiary institution**, or its onshore or overseas equivalent (Settlement English, ID. 39)

To be **successful** in this role **you will have**: A **recognised** degree (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 45)

Requirements: A **recognised** degree (Academic/ University Pathways, ID. 46)

These stance features index the ways in which some hirers also sought to align themselves with the quality regulatory frameworks that are so important to neoliberalism and its discourses (Jarvis, 2014). Being recognised as a quality English language education provider is essential to being a valued member organisation in the English language teaching sector in Australia (NEAS, 2022b). Voluntary paid membership of quality assurance organisations such as the National English Language Accreditation Scheme (NEAS) helps providers promote a discourse of quality, for example, by upholding high standards through

the approval of English language teacher qualifications. While NEAS's quality framework prescribes that teachers' degrees be 'recognised' (NEAS, 2022a), the peak Australian body for English language teaching, English Australia, forgoes this 'recognised' designation and chooses instead to state that 'recognised' means a three year degree (EA, 2023). Although one could argue that the Acts and Standards that determine these Australian ELT quality frameworks suggest 'quality' is important to Australia's position in the international education market (DESE, 2018b; DET, 2015; Education Services for Overseas Students Act, 2000; Tertiary Education & Quality Standards Agency Act [TEQSA], 2011), they do not in fact stipulate any form of mandatory recognition of English language teachers' degrees (in contrast to the ways in which regulations do for primary and secondary school teacher degrees). One must then ask, why is it that some hirers add the evaluative word 'recognised' to the teacher's minimum education? Is it that these institutions are attempting to position themselves as so focused on quality that they require even more than the qualification frameworks? Is it that these hirers – while maybe not actively – demand a 'recognised' degree as they are subconsciously subscribing to the idea that some degrees, and from some places, are more valid than others? Or is it that by invoking the idea of 'recognition', quality assurance frameworks and language providers seek to govern at a distance (C. Freeman, 2007)? This may be an example of the creation of an institutional checking strategy that necessitates teachers to provide a 'recognised' account of their education and themselves, an account which may serve, for some teachers, as the first hurdle to clear before they can be considered to be employable.

4.4.1.2. Teaching qualifications

All Vocational and Settlement English job advertisements mentioned the employability attribute Teaching Qualification (100%) while 96% of the General/Exam

English teacher advertisements, and 89% of the Academic/Foundation Pathways advertisements mentioned this attribute. These findings, suggest that – along with a degree – English language teachers require a TESOL specific teaching qualification to be employable.

In 50 of the 133 references (38%) to Teaching Qualifications, the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (which is not an English language teaching specific qualification but a vocational training one) was the most referenced qualification. The next was a TESOL qualification, with 45 references (34%), where, for example, hirers stated that they required ‘*an Australian recognised TESOL qualification*’ (GE/Exam English ID. 2) or ‘*a TESOL qualification*’ (GE/Exam English ID. 8). This was followed by the Cambridge English Language Teaching to Adults certificate (CELTA), with 13 references (10%). The least referenced qualification, with four mentions, was the Certificate IV in TESOL, which is an English language teaching qualification offered by a variety of Australian Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and accredited on the Australian Qualifications Framework.

4.4.1.2.1. Certificate IV in training and assessment

The content analysis of the advertisements shows that the different teaching and learning sectors have preferences for teaching qualification types. All Vocational English job advertisements (100%), and 89% of Settlement English job advertisements stipulate the requirement for the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE). The Certificate IV in TAE is a vocational training qualification rather than an English language teaching qualification, and was originally created to train teachers in competency-based assessments in Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses and is very much still mainly focused in that area. As such, the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment is perceived by many in the profession as not suitable for teaching English as a second or other language (TESOL)

(ACTA, 2020). Despite these limitations, the Certificate IV in TAE is a stipulated qualification for teaching with RTOs, which is why all of the demands for the TAE as a teacher qualification in the job advertisement sample were made by RTOs. For these organisations, ensuring compliance to qualification regulatory frameworks is essential, even if the qualifications demanded by the regulations are considered by some in the English language teaching profession as not adequate.

4.4.1.2.2. *TESOL qualification*

With 45 mentions, the next most referenced teaching qualification was the generically described TESOL qualification. The General/Exam and Vocational English job advertisements referred to this qualification the most, followed by the Academic/Foundation and Settlement English advertisements. The fact that many hirers requested a generic TESOL qualification, as opposed to a more specific one (such as the CELTA) could indicate their desire to address a broader audience by not setting a boundary around a certain ‘type’ of TESOL qualification. The TESOL qualification in these advertisements, however, was indexed in the same way as the degree requirement – for example, through the inclusion of the evaluative epithet ‘recognised’ – although it is never made clear who is recognising these qualifications, as in these examples; ‘...*Australian **recognised** TESOL qualification*’ (General/Exam English, ID. 2) and “*A **recognised** TESOL qualification with at least 12 hours of practicum*’ (Vocational English, ID. 22). Part of the need for recognition is pedagogical in that a TESOL qualification should include a classroom-based teaching practicum (8 of the 50 job advertisements mention a practicum).⁴ A practicum was requested more in Settlement and Vocational English advertisements, and less so in General/Exam English, with no mentions by Academic/Foundation Pathways hirers.

⁴ The length of a practicum ranges from 12 hours (General/Exam English) to 60 hours for Settlement English.

4.4.1.2.3. The Cambridge English Language Teaching to Adults Certificate (CELTA)

The Cambridge English Language Teaching to Adults certificate (CELTA) was the next most referenced teaching qualification, with 13 (10%) mentions. Of these 13 mentions, 12 (92%) were in the General/Exam English job advertisements, and one mention (8%) was in an Academic/Foundation Pathways job advertisement. The importance of CELTA to the English language teaching profession, particularly in private language schools, is well known within the sector. The CELTA qualification is promoted on the Cambridge English website as the gold standard teaching qualification (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2022) and it is the most widely recognised pre-service English language teaching qualification in the world (RMIT, 2022). Despite these accolades, an Anglophone qualification like the CELTA has been criticised for continuing to deeply and tacitly embed native speakerism in English language teaching training (Lowe, 2020; Lowe & Lawrence, 2018; Mahboob, 2011; Phillipson, 2008). Others critique the overly prescriptive and superficial nature of CELTA's classroom skills toolkit (Stanley & Murray, 2013). Nevertheless, this job advertisement sample demonstrates the continuing importance of this teaching qualification to some teacher hirers in General/Exam and Academic/University English courses.

4.4.1.2.4. Stance in teacher qualification mentions

As with the Minimum Education employability attribute, the job advertisements revealed the use of particular linguistic features to index employers' stance towards different teacher qualification types. The most commonly used was the impersonal nominalised clause. In simple terms, a nominalised clause is when the verb (or adjective) in a sentence is changed into a noun and so in using a noun, who is 'doing' the action of the verb is obscured. This process of nominalisation makes discourse more abstract and impersonal and as such has ideological functions such as removing agency which has consequences for

understanding power relations (Billing, 2008). In the job advertisement data, the preference for the impersonal nominalised clause removed the more personal second person pronoun ‘you’ for stipulating teacher qualification requirements, as in ‘*Essential Requirements: A suitable TESOL qualification or qualification that contains TESOL as a method*’ (General/Exam English, ID. 9) and ‘*Mandatory Requirements: ... A recognised specialist TESOL qualification*’ (Settlement English, ID. 39) (Biber, 2006; Fairclough, 1993; Helgesson & Holmberg, 2020). Over half (almost 60%) of General/Exam and half (50%) of Vocational English teacher job advertisements used these nominalised clauses when stipulating teacher qualifications. The second person pronoun ‘you’, however, was used more frequently in Academic/Foundation English (56%) and Settlement English teacher job advertisements (33%) (see Appendix B, Table B1).

By using nominalised clauses, hirers downplay that they are making high obligation subject demands with regards to teaching qualifications. This allows them to occupy two positions: one tacitly aligns with the standards and quality frameworks that mandate teaching qualifications while the other seeks to create solidarity with the teacher audience by obscuring the employers’ role in upholding the authority of these standards. The result is that information about qualification requirements often comes across as unnecessarily impersonal in job advertisements that have higher levels of nominalisation. What could have been expressed as a declarative statement such as ‘*We require that you have a recognised TESOL qualifications such as CELTA*’ is expressed as ‘*Requirements: ... TESOL qualification (e.g. CELTA)*’ (General/Exam English, ID. 15). Also commonly used (often in nominalised clauses) are deontic adjectives such as ‘*Required*’, ‘*Essential*’ and ‘*Essential & Preferred*’ in place of declarative statements such as ‘*We require that you ...*’, ‘*It is essential that you ...*’ and ‘*We prefer that you ...*’.

The use of nominalised clauses can also disguise the real-life bureaucratic meaning-making processes that constitute mandatory requirements for English language teaching qualifications. Clauses that could have been expressed as ‘It is Australian government regulations which mandate that teachers have teaching qualifications which are recognised in Australia, or by an Australian Standard’ (although this is rather longwinded) are reduced to ‘*Mandatory Requirements*’ (Vocational English, ID. 32) or ‘*Qualifications/Requirements – Mandatory*’ (Settlement English, ID. 38). Of course, while brevity can be of great importance when writing job advertisements, such reductions seem to transgress the norms of solidarity and persuasion typical of the job advertisement genre (Fu, 2012; Helgesson & Holmberg, 2020). The result is that potential employer and potential employee appear to be linguistically placed in more ‘traditional’ positions of authority and control, rather than in the more equal relationships espoused by the supposedly new work order (Gee et al., 1996; Helgesson & Holmberg, 2020).

Where the job advertisements do speak directly to desired applicants using the second person pronoun ‘you’, this appears as the subject of the clause, and is often accompanied by high levels of modal obligation, as in ‘*You **MUST** have: A recognised postgraduate TESOL qualification such as CELTA*’ (General/Exam English ID. 4) (‘**MUST**’ is in bold italics and has capitalisation in the original job advertisement). In the Academic/University Pathways English job advertisements, the second person pronoun ‘you’, in conjunction with the future predictive modal ‘will’ was preferred, as in ‘*the successful candidate will hold a recognised TESOL certificate*’ (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 42). This structure functions to both soften the obligation and make the ideal applicant more visible, inviting them to respond to the ‘*you will hold a recognised TESOL qualification*’, with the corresponding first person ‘I have a current Cert. IV ...’ or ‘I have a recognised TESOL qualification’. Nonetheless, regardless of whether a hirer uses a more

demanding ‘must’ or a softer ‘will’ in conjunction with the subject ‘you’, the interaction in both expressions centres around the individual applicant taking responsibility for possessing a particular qualification before applying for a position. For the potential teacher applicant, then, the boundaries for the desired teacher type are made clear at the outset: only teachers with particular types of qualifications should apply. While Helgesson and Holmberg (2020) argue that the increased use of the second person subject ‘you’, and a decrease in first and third person subjects in the personal requirements stage of a job advertisement creates a space for applicant/employer negotiation of personal qualifications. However, the opposite is the case here. Nominalisation is used to replace the hiring institution as active subject that stipulates the qualification type, together with the use of noun phrases as third person pronouns to impersonalise the teacher applicant. This works to remove responsibility for the qualification demands away from the hirer and onto the teacher applicant. These strategies work discursively to ensure that potential applicants are clear about the type of teacher the institution considers employable, that is, one who has successfully obtained education and teaching qualifications recognised as equivalent to an Australian standard.

4.4.1.3 Experience

The third subcategory of employability attributes is Experience. This covers the type of teaching experience (course type) and the length of teaching experience (in years), and is stipulated as a minimum requirement in the job advertisements for a prospective teacher to be considered employable. Of the total sample ($n=50$), 46 job advertisements (96%) referenced Experience. All Settlement and Vocational English (100%), 89% of Academic English/Foundation Pathways, and 86% of General/Exam English job advertisements referenced teaching experience. Both length of experience and particular types of experience were valued across all job advertisement types. Of a total 90 references to teaching

experience, 53 (59%) included the type of experience a teacher required for the advertised role, with 37 (41%) mentioning the length of experience a teacher required for the role.

4.4.1.3.1. *Type of experience*

The type of experience is understandably related to the English language course type for which the teachers are being recruited. Each of the four different teaching domains requested particular types of experience specific to the courses and contexts in which the teachers would be teaching. For example, for General/Exam English language teachers, experience of teaching at all levels of English (from Beginner to Advanced) are foregrounded in some of the job advertisements, as in the following examples: *‘Have IELTS or Cambridge Main Suite teaching and or testing experience’* (General/Exam English ID. 2) and *‘Ability to teach all levels of General English classes’* (General/Exam English ID. 7). Academic English/Foundation Pathways job advertisements made explicit the type of teaching experience required, as in *‘Experience in teaching high level academic English (highly desirable)’* (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 44) and *‘For teaching in the Pre-Master’s Program, an awareness of the academic requirements and literacies required in postgraduate study is highly desirable’* (Academic /University Pathways, ID. 46). For Vocational English, in addition to English language teaching experience, experience in literacy and numeracy teaching was also valued, as in *‘Ideally you will have experience teaching language, literacy or numeracy to youth and adults in TAFE settings’* (Vocational English, ID. 25). In Settlement English, experience of working with migrants and humanitarian visa holders was also valued, as made clear in the following, *‘... candidates with experience and expertise in English language tuition to eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants ...’* (Settlement English, ID. 35). In addition to these various types of experience, in Vocational and Settlement English, experience working with the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) (ACSF, 2015), and the vocational competencies at least to

the level of the course being taught in these contexts, was a stipulated requirement. These types of requirements are of particular importance to the standards set for RTOs (DEWR, 2015).

4.4.1.3.2. Length of experience

With respect to the number of years' experience required for a role, at least two years was the most mentioned, followed by three and four years. Despite teaching experience being valued across all sectors, it was only in the General/Exam English job advertisements that newly graduated English language teachers would be considered (ID. 3) and fully supported (ID. 22). More extensive experience – typically expressed by the words 'considerable' or 'significant' – was required for the Vocational and Academic/University Pathways English positions.

4.4.1.3.3. An experienced teacher

Another common pattern found in the advertisements was that of the nebulously framed 'experienced teacher'. The majority of all job advertisement types (67% of Academic/University Pathways, 82% of General/Exam English, 78% of Settlement English and 70% of Vocational English) did not explicitly state what this experience might be, merely requesting 'an experienced teacher'. The imprecise nature of this descriptor may have been a conscious recruitment strategy that allowed institutions to cast their hiring net as wide as possible by not limiting teacher experience to a particular type or length.

The fact that most references to 'an experienced teacher' were found in General/Exam English job advertisements, coupled with the aforementioned potential for hiring newly qualified teachers in this particular domain, might be related to the constraining effects of the 'Step' pay rate system under which many teachers in this sector are employed (Stanley, 2016, 2017). In this system, a teacher becomes more expensive with each year of

experience. The Steps are based on 20 hours of face-to-face teaching in full time positions, covering 48 weeks of teaching a year. They start at Step 2 (teachers who have just qualified) and graduate to Step 12 (teachers with over 11 years of experience and with a higher-level qualification such as a DELTA or Master of TESOL). For many schools, however, financial viability concerns mean that less experienced teachers – who are cheaper to employ – are more desirable, especially when recruiting for lower-level proficiency classes. As the majority of General/Exam English job advertisements did not stipulate a certain length of experience (but focused instead on the *type* of experience required), the employer's ability to speak to a wider range of teachers – both more and less experienced – may indicate that they were taking the opportunity to employ a capable but less experienced teacher in preference to a more experienced, but also more expensive, one. In contrast, the experience required of teachers in the other teaching domains was reflected in the teaching requirements in these domains. An Academic/University Pathways English teacher, for instance, is typically a teacher with some English language teaching experience specific to that context, as is a teacher working in the Settlement English and Vocational English domains.

The minimum requirements of education, qualifications and experience may also be, to some extent, temporally contextual. Post-COVID-19, many English language teaching institutions in Australia are finding that the recruitment of teachers has become more difficult, and that, despite the stipulations expressed in the job advertisement data in this study, in the present situation, some hirers may be willing to make concessions not previously considered in order to fulfil their recruitment needs.

4.4.2. Skills

The subcategories of the employability attribute Skills are: Teaching and Learning Skills (i.e., skills directly related to the practice of teaching and learning) and Generic Skills (i.e., all-purpose, general skills, such as communication skills and team skills, that are

required in and transferable to all workplaces). Both of these types of skills were important to the teacher hirers. As shown in Table 4.4, Teaching and Learning Skills were mentioned in 86% of the job advertisements, with a total of 195 references and an average of 4.5 mentions per job advertisement. Generic skills, on the other hand, were mentioned in 70% of the job advertisements, with a total of 153 references and an average of 4.6 mentions per job advertisement.

There were four further subcategories within Teaching and Learning Skills: teaching and assessment skills were the most referenced, followed by pedagogy skills, professional development and meetings skills, and teaching technology skills. Of the five subcategories within Generic Skills, relational skills were the most referenced; followed by communication skills, administration skills, organisational skills, and general technology skills. Across all skills (except for teaching and assessment skills), the job advertisement data gave more weight, on average, to generic skills rather than teaching-specific skills. Table 4.4. shows the data for the various subcategories of Skills.

Table 4.4.

Frequency and Average of Teaching and Learning and Generic Skills References Across All Job Advertisements (n=50).

Teaching and Learning Skills				Generic Skills			
Skill Category	Number of Job Advertisements	Number of References	Average Number of References per Advertisement	Skill Category	Number of Job Advertisements	Number of References	Average Number of References per Advertisement
All Teaching and Learning Skills	43	195	4.5	All Generic Skills	35	160	4.6
Teaching and Assessment Skills	40	121	3.0	Relational Skills	28	65	2.3
Teaching Pedagogy & Digital Pedagogy Skills	17	34	2	Communication Skills	21	30	1.4
Professional Development & Meetings Skills	15	25	1.7	Administration Skills	12	33	2.8
Teaching Technology Skills	8	14	1.75	Organisational Skills	11	22	2
				General Technology Skills	10	10	1

4.4.2.1. Teaching and learning Skills: Teaching and assessment

The Teaching and Assessment Skills referenced in the job advertisements typically outlined the main duties and responsibilities related to the advertised teaching role. These teaching duties and responsibilities were predominantly expressed in action verbs, which articulated ways of acting and being a teacher. Specifically, these verbs identified particular actions and behaviours associated with teaching competence in the phases of planning, teaching, and assessing in teaching practice. Table 4.5 shows these three phases of teaching practice and their associated actions, as represented in the job advertisements.

Table 4.5

Verbs of Planning, Teaching and Assessing in Teaching and Assessment Skills

Teaching Stage	Verbs
Planning	Adapt; design; develop; organise; plan; prepare; produce; tailor
Teaching	Adopt; assess; conduct; deliver; demonstrate; engage; evaluate; identify; implement; interact; lead; manage; monitor; motivate; organise; perform; propose; provide; recognise; report; supervise; support; tailor; teach; train
Assessing	Assess; conduct; consult; correct; deliver; document; evaluate; identify; maintain; mark; monitor; perform; prepare; record; report

The majority of the verbs in Table 4.5 capture what a teacher is expected to do in their teaching practice, which is to create, change, do, act, behave, see, feel, say and think. Much of this indexing, however, is achieved through the generic language of managerial discourse (Brennan, 1996; Cook, 2012; Day & Sachs, 2004; Mayer et al., 2008; Mockler, 2013; Taubman, 2009). Across all of the job advertisement types, there were generic

statements about teaching responsibilities which foregrounded instrumental procedures (manage, deliver, prepare, produce, assess, conduct, deliver, monitor, report) with a focus on ‘managing’ learners and documenting their learning outcomes for accountability purposes (Brennan, 1996; Mayer et al., 2008; Taubman, 2009).

Similar teaching competencies and skills were foregrounded across the four job advertisement types. All job advertisements framed English language teachers as competent and multi-skilled language educators who effectively plan student-centred lessons and engage learners in a dynamic classroom environment. Such teachers were also framed as having the ability to evaluate and understand student needs, to consult with learners, and to monitor and support their learning. What was tacit in the (brief) job descriptions offered in much of the job advertisement data was that teaching work is multifaceted, complex and highly emotional work (Gkonou et al., 2020).

4.4.2.1.1. *Evaluation of teaching skills*

There were differences in how the job advertisement types valued different teaching skills, which revealed the subtle variations in employable identities across the four domains. For instance, in the Academic/Pathways English advertisement data, the evaluative focus was on the teaching behaviours required to effectively manage and support learners (e.g., effective planning, effective delivery and effective classroom management). In this context, teachers were required to ‘*deliver teaching programs in a professional and effective manner*’ (Academic/Pathways English, ID. 45) and ‘*manage classes and students effectively*’ (Academic/Pathways English, ID. 47). Teachers were also required to have the skills to engage and support students, identify learner difficulties and to identify students ‘at risk’ (of what was not made clear).

In the General/Exam English job advertisements, the evaluative stance towards teaching behaviour was focused on quality (e.g., excellent classroom management, delivery

of high quality communicative lessons, provision of high level student engagement) and on student-centred learning. For General/Exam English teachers, the focus was on the '*ability to motivate and engage learners in a classroom environment by creating innovative lessons, and delivering dynamic, engaging and interactive class content*' (General/Exam English, ID. 21). Hirers for Academic English and General/Exam English teaching positions both framed desirable teaching skills as 'student centred', 'high quality' and 'effective'. Keywords such as these point to the economic value of teaching skills, as expressed in education marketisation discourses (Fairclough, 1993; Hasan, 2003; Mautner, 2010). Effective teaching of the highest quality is seen as competitive; it not only places the teaching institution in a 'leading' position in the marketplace but also increases a teacher's chances of employment, which usually rests in the hands of an undisclosed arbiter of quality and effectiveness.

In Settlement and Vocational English job advertisements, teaching skills were also evaluated as needing to be both effective and of high quality. However, here there was an additional emphasis – particularly in Settlement English job advertisements – on situating these skills in a service-orientated culture. Vocational teachers for example, '*Lead and manage effective teaching and learning within the classroom*' (Vocational English ID. 32) while Settlement English teachers have '*Excellent skills in training facilitation and assessment within vocational area*' (Settlement English ID. 33). In Settlement English job advertisements, teachers' skills are deployed in the service of '*meeting contract requirements*' (Settlement English, ID. 36) and to ensure '*high levels of client participation, retention and completion rates*' (Settlement English, ID. 37). Settlement and Vocational English teaching skills were described in abstract terms through nominalised clauses, which suggests that the hirers in these contexts assume their audience of teachers will understand what is actually meant by these denotationally vague terms (Urciuoli, 2008). Moreover, as

Urciuoli (2008) asserts, indeterminate skills such as ‘*lead and manage effective teaching*’ and ensuring ‘*high levels of client participation*’, due to their vagueness, seem designed to cover a range of disparate practices, knowledge and ways of acting and being, as expressed in neoliberal, managerialist discourses. Indeterminate expressions such as these are strategically deployable depending on who deploys them, for what audiences and for what purposes. In these job advertisements, what might have once denoted pedagogically-specific teaching skills have come to connote aspects of neoliberal subjectivities, such as effectiveness, leadership and customer satisfaction. In these job advertisements, then, what were once aspects of the teacher self and social interaction in teaching and learning have been reconceptualised as generic tasks, transferable skills and productive contributions (Urciuoli 2008), which renders teachers’ skills as both generic and managerial, as shown in Table 4.5 above.

Yet, such denotationally vague language might not just be used under the assumption that this is the kind of language that the teacher audience will understand. Across all job advertisements – that is, not just in Settlement and Vocational English advertisements – the evaluation of teaching skills is expressed in the vague and imprecise terms characteristic of managerial lexis (Kolsaker, 2008), or, as argued by Holborow, ideological keywords (2013). The purpose of this corporate language appears to be to align these job advertisements and the institutions they represent with the business models (Cook, 2012) prevalent in neoliberally framed conceptions of education.

4.4.2.1.2. *Teacher or trainer?*

Another denotational shift (Urciuoli, 2008) that was seen in the job advertisement data was away from teachers and towards trainers and assessors. For Urciuoli (2008), denotational shifts, occur when a word, such as teacher, which once denoted specific sets of knowledge, skill and ways of being, move, or shift to take on new meanings. This process

then raises questions who has the power to reconceptualise ways of being, and to what ends. In the job advertisement data, this shift from teacher to trainer could be seen in some of the General/Exam English job advertisements, but it was more obvious in the Settlement and Vocational English job advertisements. Here nominalisation was deployed to locate teaching skills within the sphere of corporate training skills discourse, the effect of which was to render invisible the teacher and the teaching, and the learner and the learning. Teaching became ‘*excellent skills in training facilitation and assessment*’ (Settlement English, ID. 38), ‘*expertise in the achievement of client learning outcomes*’ (Settlement English, ID. 36) and ‘*delivery of English training and assessment*’ (Vocational English, ID. 29). As noted above, indexing skills in this way strategically positions these employers as aligned with corporate values (Urciuoli, 2008) and a utilitarian vision of education and teaching. Thus, teaching skills are reimagined as ways of being and acting – ‘technologies of the self’ – that are seen as transformational and productive, that is, achievement and outcomes-orientated (Foucault, 1988; Lemke, 2019). In this view, a teacher’s individual skills are things to be acquired, evaluated and measured and they have the capacity to bring about desired outcomes, such as student learning outcomes, student progression, and resources that meet training package and contract requirements. Therefore, as a combination of teaching skills productively contributes to an institution’s strategic goals, a teacher needs to align their professional identity with these institutional identities and goals to be considered employable.

4.4.2.1.3. *Erasure of the skilled teacher*

Although English language teachers’ skills were portrayed in the job advertisements as complex and multifaceted, similar to what was seen in the Achievements employability attribute discussed above, the teacher – as a person with these skills – was often hidden from view. That is, the teacher as an active subject in the practice of teaching was not a dominant grammatical pattern in the job advertisement data. While some job advertisements used the

second person pronoun ‘you’ to point to the teacher as an active participant in the processes of teaching, the majority of the advertisements removed the teacher from this active subject position, replacing them with an impersonal noun phrase. By erasing – or at least concealing – the teacher as an active agent, power was taken away from the teacher, and more discursive importance was placed on their actions and activities rather than on them as individuals with particular skills. In a highly casualised sector, more importance is placed on the teacher having the right credentials and experience, being able to be flexible and work at short notice, and to work on short term contracts. In this context, teacher hirers are not engaged in a ‘war for talent’ (P. Brown et al., 2004) but in a battle to fill often pressing recruitment needs. In this reality, the writers of these job advertisements do not need to speak to an idealised person, but to a teacher who has the right credentials, experience and skills for the immediate recruitment need, and who is, most importantly, available. In a sector characterised by precarious employment and recruitment, it is contextual circumstances that can be seen to be driving this impersonalised relationship between potential employer and employee, not only discursively, but materially. The employable teacher then, in this context, does not need to be ‘ideal’ but a teacher with a ‘bundle of skills’ (Urciuoli, 2008) who is able to fill a casual, and often immediate teaching gap.

4.4.2.1.4. Teaching pedagogy

The next subcategory of skills, Teaching Pedagogy Skills (including Digital Pedagogy), was mentioned 34 times across 17 teacher job advertisements. Vocational and Settlement English job advertisements made the most reference to this skill set (Vocational, 11 mentions; Settlement 9 mentions), followed by General/Exam English (7 mentions) and Academic/Pathways (5 mentions). Digital pedagogies were considered the most important for Academic/Pathways job advertisements, while for General/Exam English advertisements, the ability to use a variety of teaching methodologies was considered important (*‘use a*

variety of teaching methodologies', ID. 12), as was the ability to design curriculum components and teaching materials (*'Develop and write components of curriculum as directed'*, ID. 12). In Settlement English job advertisements, materials design, and the ability to apply a range of teaching methods and demonstrate current knowledge and skills in vocational training and learning were important, as these are requirements for teaching in RTOs. Vocational English job advertisements mentioned digital pedagogies, curriculum design, innovative teaching methodologies and current vocational teaching knowledge and skills.

4.4.2.1.5. Professional development and meetings

The subcategory Professional Development and Meetings was referenced 25 times across 15 job advertisements. Vocational English advertisements had the highest number of mentions, with 3 mentions per advertisement. This was followed by General/Exam English, with 1.5 mentions per advertisement, and Settlement and Academic/University Pathways English both with an average of 1 mention per advertisement.

There were differences in the ways in which professional development and meetings were indexed in the advertisements. In the Vocational English advertisements, professional development was positioned as being required to maintain regulatory currency. Professional development key words (Holborow, 2012b; Williams, 1976) in the Vocational English advertisements were clustered around participation in professional development for the purpose of maintaining quality and validating teaching as well as to display a commitment to self-development. Only Vocational English job advertisements included desired professional development activity types, that is, teachers in this domain were required to demonstrate currency of relevant knowledge and skills through a combination of activities including *'relevant professional development, attendance at language and literacy conferences,*

association membership, subscriptions to language and literacy journals’ (Vocational English ID. 32).

General/Exam English and Settlement English job advertisements were somewhat similar in how they approached professional development and meetings skills. Their focus was on in-house moderation and validation meetings, although Settlement English advertisements also mentioned maintaining industry currency and associations as a way of demonstrating professional development.

Academic/University Pathways English job advertisements made the least mention of professional development and meetings, with an average of 1.4 per advertisement (across four advertisements). For Academic/University Pathways English teachers, participation in professional development and meetings was centred around organisational and teaching goals as in *‘actively participate in professional development activities to enhance the professional activity of the ELC’* (Academic/University Pathways English, ID. 43) and *‘stay up to date with changes in the subject area to support the advancement of teaching practices’* (Academic/University Pathways English, ID. 49).

4.4.2.1.6. *Teaching technology skills*

General/Exam English and Academic/University Pathways English made the most reference to teaching technologies skills. Given the fact that teaching moved online at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that these providers were some of the most negatively affected (EA, 2021, 2022), it is not surprising that the job advertisements explicitly requested that applicants have the ability to teach online and to have experience using online teaching platforms, such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom. The Settlement and Vocational English job advertisements did not refer to either particular learning management systems or online teaching and learning experience. For Settlement English, the only reference to technology was in relation to the ability to update learners’ portfolios, and the sole Vocational English

advertisement reference to technology was generically framed as the ability to use educational technologies and learning management systems to support learning (Vocational English, ID. 32).

Across the four different teaching and learning sectors, the ability to use a range of technology-based teaching and learning tools, as well as specific platforms, was most important in General/Exam and Academic/University Pathways English and less so in Settlement and Vocational English.

4.4.2.2. *Generic skills*

4.4.2.2.1. *Relational skills*

With respect to Generic Skills (sometimes called ‘soft skills’), the most referenced (Nghia, 2019) across all job advertisement types were relational skills. These skills operate at three levels: with students (supporting and mentoring skills), with colleagues and management (team skills) and with the organisation (customer service skills). Regardless, they were all presented in generically descriptive ways. With respect to teachers’ relationships with students, the advertisements placed teachers in a supportive, mentoring role that was focused on addressing students’ needs both inside and outside of the classroom. There were references to teachers providing additional learning support, course advice and guidance, and monitoring learners’ welfare across all job advertisement types. Also evident was the importance of teachers’ relational skills in developing rapport with students, building and maintaining cohesive, collaborative, and productive relationships with colleagues, management, as well as the wider educational and business communities. There was, however, some variation in which relational skills were foregrounded in the different job advertisement types.

In Academic/Pathways English and General/Exam English job advertisements, teachers' relational skills were concerned with interpersonal relations with students, colleagues and the teaching management team. With students, teachers' relational skills were needed to *'provide support to ensure the student is able to overcome various barriers to more effective academic progression where required'* (General/Exam English, ID. 12), for *'Promoting inclusivity and establishing good relationships with students to encourage learning'* (Academic/University Pathways English, ID. 49), teachers were required to be *'... keen to provide a supportive approach to assist the individual learner to exceed their expectations'* (General/Exam English, ID. 13) and to *'Develop a strong rapport with international students on the campus'* (General/Exam English, ID. 7). At the levels of teacher and colleague relationships, and teacher and management relationships, teachers' relational skills were required to: *'help create a team environment within the Academic Department'* (General/Exam English, ID. 14), *'... collaborate with colleagues across the College'* (Academic/University Pathways English, ID. 49), *'... connect with all kinds of people and be the "face" of the school'* and have a *'Demonstrated ability to contribute effectively as a constructive and proactive member of a team'* (Academic/University Pathways English, ID. 49).

In the Settlement and Vocational English job advertisements, teachers' relational skills were indexed at all three levels. In these advertisements, the teacher was placed in a supporting and mentoring role in teacher/student relationships although there was also a focus on relations with management and on institutional objectives in which teachers were required to have the ability to connect with and develop relationships with the wider educational and business communities. At the level of teacher/student relations, in Settlement English advertisements, references to teachers needing to support and guide their students most often related to maintaining student attendance, reducing absenteeism and

identifying student barriers to learning. Teachers were required to *‘Promote student attendance to minimise absenteeism and contact students to discuss absence, identifying barriers and supporting their return to class’* (Settlement English, ID. 38), *‘Work collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure desired client numbers, attendance targets & training delivery hours are achieved’* (Settlement English, ID. 36, 38) and *‘Identify barriers to learning to support student attendance’* (Settlement English, ID. 34).

With respect to the teacher/colleague and teacher/management relationships, Settlement and Vocational teachers’ relational skills were called on to *‘link with industry, schools, universities, other TAFE and VET providers’* (Vocational English, ID. 39) and *‘develop effective working relationships with students, client groups ... industry reference groups, student events and forums ...’* (Vocational English, ID. 39). Settlement English teachers were charged with *‘Maintaining strong relationships with key site staff, industry, the community, referral agencies and employers during training and Vocational Placements and providing updates on progress to relevant stakeholders’* (Settlement English, ID. 38) and *‘Linking with industry, schools, universities, other TAFE and VET providers’* (Settlement English, ID. 39). A denotational shift away from the student as learner towards the student as customer and client – and teaching as the delivery of a service, with customer service being indexed as an important general skill – was also evident in the relational skills required. While this shift was evident across all job advertisements, it was most explicitly expressed in Settlement and Vocational job advertisements, as exemplified by: *‘Develop & maintain effective relationships with clients and key stakeholders’* (Settlement English, ID. 36), *‘Demonstrated commitment to quality customer service’* (Settlement English, ID. 41), *‘a customer centric approach’* and *‘Outstanding customer service, along with a professional approach is essential’* (Vocational English, ID. 26).

To be considered employable, then, English language teachers need to be able to demonstrate the capacity to undertake complex emotion labour (Babatunde et al., 2021; Hochschild, 1983; Horner et al., 2020) that takes the form of relational skills focused on achievement and success as related to students' learning and employers' organisational objectives.

4.4.2.2.2. Administration skills

Administration Skills were the next most referenced skills in the Generic Skills broader category, accounting for 20.6% of the total Generic Skills mentions. On average, Settlement English job advertisements made the most reference to administration skills, followed by General/Exam English, Vocational English and Academic/University Pathways job advertisements. Across all job advertisement types, the most common teacher administrative duties were recording student attendance, keeping records of lesson plans, developing learning and assessment outcomes, and providing written feedback on students' progress. In Settlement English advertisements, there were additional skills not seen in the other advertisements. Administrative activities such as conducting exit interviews, updating a Trainer HR Matrix, and ensuring the use of appropriate, current resources, forms and documents were explicitly mentioned in these advertisements.

Administrative skills are therefore also important to a teacher's employability, more so in Settlement English with its greater focus on meeting contractual obligations (Settlement English, ID. 33, 38).

4.4.2.2.3. Communication skills

The third most referenced Generic Skill was Communication Skills. The majority of references to the teachers' desired communicative ability were in the General/Exam English advertisements (52.3%), with the remainder equally spread among Academic/University Pathways and Settlement and Vocational English advertisements.

Communication Skills in these advertisements typically involved highly evaluative stances. In Academic/University Pathways English, the ideal teacher's communication skills were described as effective, advanced, exceptional and highly developed (Academic/University Pathways English, ID. 45, 47, 49, 50). In General/Exam English, they were evaluated as good, excellent, fluent, high level, outstanding and highly developed (General/Exam English, ID. 1, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17). Settlement English teachers' communication skills were described as confident, effective and fluent (Settlement English, ID. 33, 38) while in the Vocational English job advertisements, communication skills were required to be excellent and highly developed (Vocational English, ID. 26, 28, 29).

This affective stance was used to position a teacher's communicative ability as needing to be at the highest level possible of a gradable scale. Yet, there was no explicit mention of what this gradable scale was although one could argue that, given the wealth of research showing bias towards a 'native' standard of English (Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Ruecker & Ives, 2014; Selvi, 2010), this unspoken scale was most likely related to elements of native speakerism still prevalent in the English language teaching sector in Australia (Holliday, 2006; Kabel, 2009). Moreover, as discussed in the Achievements section above with respect to the nebulous 'recognised degree', it was unclear who gets to evaluate what constitutes 'excellent' or 'outstanding' communications skills and against what standards these evaluations are made. For those hirers who stipulated a need for teachers to demonstrate 'high level communication skills', it would be assumed that a teacher's language ability would be assessed at some point during the recruitment process. However, whether this would take place during the shortlisting phase of recruitment, during the interview, or – if offered work – on the job, was unclear.

While there was a tacit understanding of a 'native English' or 'native-like English' speaker teacher in these advertisements (e.g., in the evaluative descriptors such as

‘excellent’, ‘exceptional’ and ‘outstanding’), the advertisements did also point to the benefits of English language teachers’ multilingual abilities. Of the 29 references to Communication Skills, eight mentioned additional language skills, one made explicit the need for a bilingual Chinese teacher (General/Exam English, ID. 2), and a further two made clear that Mandarin speakers were preferred (Vocational English, ID. 28, 29). One General/Exam English advertisement requested that applicants should have ‘*subcontinent language skills*’ (General/Exam English, ID. 16) while another hirer in this same context highlighted as desirable ‘*the ability to speak more than one language*’ (General/Exam English, ID. 7). Clearly, then, a teacher’s communicative repertoire plays a key part in their employability, and this is not limited to their English language skills.

4.4.2.2.4. Organisational skills

Settlement English job advertisements made the most reference to organisational skills, with Academic/University Pathways, General/Exam and Vocational English advertisements. The most prominent organisational skills across all job advertisements were the ability to display attention to detail, to manage time (including meeting deadlines), and self-management.

While teachers’ organisational skills, as expressed in these advertisements, were not imbued with the same level of positive evaluative judgement as other skills areas, they were nonetheless subjected to high levels of positive appreciation although at the same time they appeared within bland generic framings that could have been lifted from any job advertisement. Some of the more commonly used evaluative descriptors of organisational skills were ‘*excellent time management*’ (General/Exam English, ID. 19), ‘*strong planning skills*’ (Settlement English, ID. 33, 38) and ‘*high attention to detail*’ (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 49). Other organisational skills seen as important to teacher employability were the ability to meet deadlines, manage multiple tasks and to self-manage, as in this

example, *‘You will pride yourself on your organisation and time management abilities, which enable you to achieve tight deadlines whilst maintaining high attention to detail’* (Academic/University Pathways English, ID. 49).

The organisational skills referenced in these job advertisements index another key neoliberal subjectivity: taking responsibility for the self, which is clearly important to teacher employability. Teachers should be able to control, monitor and organise their environment. They should be able to use their organisational skills to be efficient, effective and productive, motifs already demonstrated for other areas of these job advertisements, such as teaching and learning skills, administration skills, communication skills and relational skills. In the highly casualised English language teaching profession, where being ‘work ready’ is key, teachers who present as well-organised and self-managing are less likely to require a manager’s time and effort to supervise, which improves organisational efficiency (P. Brown & Souto-Otero, 2020), and this positions these teachers as highly employable.

4.4.3. Knowledge and understandings

The next employability attribute to be discussed is Knowledge and Understandings, which captures employment specific awareness that is external to the actual practice of teaching, that a teacher requires to navigate their specific teaching context and to manage career expectations. It includes knowledge of the general English language teacher labour market as well as context specific understandings of employers, working conditions and expectations across different domains. Demonstrating awareness of such knowledge is seen as key to making oneself more highly employable (P. Brown et al., 2003; Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Yorke, 2006). The following section will present the findings of each of the Knowledge and Understandings subcategories, starting with Working Conditions, followed by Organisational Identity, Recruitment Processes and finally Compliance. Table 4.6

provides an overview of the content analysis of these Knowledge and Understandings subcategories.

4.4.3.1. *Working conditions*

Working Conditions had the highest number and highest average mentions across all Knowledge and Understandings subcategories. This subcategory was further analysed into four categories: contract type, length and hours; pay and other financial benefits; non-financial employee benefits; and locations and travel. Of these four, contract type, length and hours were the most referenced, followed by non-financial employee benefits and locations and travel. The least number of references were for pay and other financial benefits, with less than 50% of the job advertisements mentioning this.

4.4.3.1.1. *Contract type, length and hours*

Contract type, or length or number of hours a teacher could expect upon employment was referenced in all Academic/University Pathways English job advertisements (100%), followed by Settlement English (77%), Vocational English (70%) and General/Exam English (59%). It will come as no surprise to anyone who has recently taught in the English language teaching sector in Australia, that these references to contract type, length or number of hours were predominantly for casually contracted, temporary work, for between 20 to 25 hours a week. Of the 50 job advertisements, only one was for a permanent role (Settlement English, ID. 40) and another was for an ongoing, full-time role (Vocational English, ID.

Table 4.6.*Frequency and Percentage of References to Knowledge and Understandings Subcategories*

Knowledge & Understandings Sub categories	Number & Percentage of Job Advertisements Referencing Knowledge & Understandings Subcategory	Number of References to Knowledge & Understandings Subcategory	Average Number of References per Job Advertisement to Knowledge & Understandings Subcategory
Compliance	45 (90)	164	3.6
Organisational Identity	48 (96)	200	4.2
Recruitment Processes	45 (90)	153	3.4
Working Conditions	45 (90)	237	5.3

All of the General/Exam English and Academic/University Pathways job advertisements were for casual, temporary positions. Some fortunate teachers, however, were being offered the opportunity to potentially move on from this precarious employment to an ‘ongoing’ position if they were to excel in their casual role, as evidenced by the following examples: ‘*opportunity for ongoing work for those who excel in their teaching role*’ and ‘*with likely opportunities for further and increased teaching assignments for subsequent intakes*’ (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 46). This carrot and stick approach to employment was also seen in other job advertisements: ‘*whilst initially a casual position, full and part time contracts will be available to suitable applicants*’ (General/Exam English, ID. 22) and ‘*appointments may be permanent, fixed term, full time, part time, or casual with the possibility of a further term, and/or permanency*’ (Settlement English, ID. 35).

It is important to highlight other differences in the contracts that English language teachers were being offered across the four domains. In Academic/University Pathways programmes, the contracts were typically for a defined period, for example ‘*30th September to 18th December*’ (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 42) or ‘*for five week terms starting on 8 October, 12 November, and 8 January*’ (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 44). One of the Academic/University Pathways job advertisements mentioned that they were developing an ‘*eligibility list*’ (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 44) and another noted ‘*a casual register*’ (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 43). General/Exam English job advertisements expressed a need for teachers to be able to work both day and evening shifts, to be initially willing to be included in a casual pool of teachers or on a relief list, and to be willing to accept as little as two days’ work per week. Despite the majority of the work in Settlement and Vocational English also being casual, it was in these sectors that the only permanent and ongoing work was to be found. Clearly, when it comes to a teacher’s

employability, teachers must be willing and able to take on casual, temporary work with the hope that a more permanent position may eventuate should they be deemed suitable once appointed.

4.4.3.1.2. Employee benefits, non-financial

Vocational English job advertisements made the most reference to non-financial employee benefits, followed by Academic/University Pathways English, General/Exam English, and finally Settlement English. Many of these references to non-financial employee benefits centred around prospective teachers having the opportunity to work in supportive team environments under flexible conditions, where the potential for personal and professional learning was seen as a positive opportunity for skills and knowledge development.

All of the job advertisements presented working environments with a supportive culture and a focus on professional development as being beneficial, and this allowed employers who described their workplaces in this way to be characterised as hirers of choice. There was, however, a contradiction in the ways in which it was positioned as an employee benefit, and the ways in which professional development was framed as a necessary part of teaching and learning skills. In the discussion of teaching and learning skills above (Section 4.4.2.1.), professional development was presented as being required to maintain regulatory requirements, thereby allowing some predetermined regulatory or assessment-driven outcome to be achieved. It is suggested here that these different framings of professional development reflect ideological tensions between professional learning and professional development whereas professional learning centres on the expansion and refinement of teaching practice while professional development may lead to professional learning but does not equate to it (Mockler, 2013). The findings presented here suggest that while some of the more supportive teaching environments valued professional learning as an opportunity to

expand and further teachers' pedagogical practice, other environments seemed to view professional learning in its newer, indexical form as professional development with a focus on regulatory and measurement-orientated performance, often with a view to standardising practice (Day & Sachs, 2004; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; Mockler, 2013).

4.4.3.1.3. Pay and other financial benefits

As mentioned above, teacher's pay and other financial benefits were the least referenced across all Working Conditions mentions. Where these were mentioned, the majority were in Settlement English job advertisements, followed by General/Exam and Vocational English, and finally Academic/University advertisements.

Teachers in Settlement and Vocational English could find some of the highest levels of pay/salary. In Settlement English language teaching, teachers could expect salaries (per annum, pro rata) in the range of \$75,000 to \$101,000 (Settlement English, ID. 35, 40) and an hourly casual rate of around \$83 per hour (Settlement English, ID. 41). Vocational English teachers could expect salary levels of (pro rata) in the range of \$71,000 to \$103,000 (Vocational English, ID. 25, 30, 32).

Academic/University Pathways teachers were the next best paid. In this domain, teachers can expect an hourly pay rate for the short contracts they are most often employed on to be around \$101.00 per hour (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 44) and the annual pro rata to fall within the range of \$61,170 to \$91,394 (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 42, 48). The pay for General/Exam English teachers paled in comparison. In these job advertisements, hirers had a tendency to cite the Teaching Award – such as Educational Services, Post-Secondary – which stipulated the pay and other conditions for teachers, perhaps as a way of mitigating the fact that pay in this sector is low compared to the other teaching domains (Stanley, 2016, 2020). Where pay or salary was mentioned for General/Exam English teachers, it was in the range of \$50,000 to \$66,000 per annum

(General/Exam English, ID. 12; ID. 22) or between \$40-60 per hour (General/Exam English, ID. 2, 18). This low pay of General English teachers warrants this type of teaching being described as the ‘economy class’ of the sector (Stanley, 2016).

4.4.3.2. Organisational identity: *Who we are*

Organisational Identity has been subdivided into three sections: ‘Who we are’ (organisational identity, values, beliefs and achievements), ‘What we do and who we cater to’ (programs/courses or services provided, affiliations and internal/external stakeholders) and ‘What is our purpose’ (organisational goals and outcomes of organisational goals/service). The majority of the references to Organisational Identity were related to ‘Who we are’, followed by ‘What we do and who we cater to’ and finally ‘What is our purpose’. Due to space limitations, the following section will focus on ‘Who we are’ as this is the element of organisational identity that most closely aligns with person/organisational fit (De Cooman & Pepermans, 2012). This is because people tend to be attracted to organisations that demonstrate traits similar to their own (Lievens et al., 2007; Wilden et al., 2010).

The majority of references to ‘Who we are’ were in Settlement and Vocational English job advertisements, followed by General/Exam English, and finally, Academic/University Pathways English. When articulating ‘Who we are’, all job advertisements relied on high levels of positive evaluation to outline the organisation’s values and beliefs. Credibility was established to position the organisation as a reputable employer, and this was achieved by calling on the organisation’s history (particularly the year it was founded), its size and reach, its focus on quality education, and its team and their experience. There were some nuanced differences, however, in how Settlement and Vocational English employers positioned their organisational identity, as compared to how Academic/University Pathways and General/Exam English providers located theirs.

4.4.3.2.1. *Who we are: Settlement and vocational English*

When referencing the ‘Who we are’ of organisational identity, Settlement and Vocational English providers tended to draw on their often long associations with local communities, thereby highlighting their prestige (status, influence, power) as well as their altruistic and interpersonal values and beliefs (De Cooman & Pepermans, 2012; Lyons et al., 2006). Vocational English providers established their credibility by calling on their prestigious history, such as ‘... *has a long history as an education provider in ...*’ (Vocational English, ID. 26), ‘*a history of serving ... communities for over 130 years*’ (Vocational English, ID. 32), ‘*For over 85 years ... has been supporting communities to thrive*’ (Vocational English, ID. 23) and ‘*in operation since 2008*’ (Vocational English, ID. 28). Settlement English providers tended to establish their credibility by drawing on a competitive frame, highlighting their reputation for quality such as, ‘*a leading provider of education ... with a proud history of setting the benchmark for quality service*’ (Settlement English, ID. 40), ‘*our industry leading, renowned organisation*’ (Settlement English, ID. 39) and ‘*a leading provider of education and training*’ (Settlement English, ID. 34).

‘Quality’ was a key theme that was used to establish who these employers were, with statements such as ‘*we pride ourselves on the quality of training we provide*’ (Vocational English, ID. 30), ‘*a leading education provider expert in delivering high quality vocational training*’ (Vocational English, ID. 27) and ‘*our strength comes from our experienced staff and quality assured training programs*’ (Vocational English, ID. 26). The job advertisements drew on interpersonal relations to further their credibility as employers of choice such as in ‘*industry experts who impart their wealth of experience to the workforce of the future*’ (Vocational English, ID. 30), ‘*our highly skilled and qualified training team*’ (Vocational English, ID. 27) and ‘*a great culture and supportive team environment*’ (Settlement English, ID. 41).

Organisational altruism was also highlighted to frame hirers as *‘passionate about empowering individuals and communities to make a difference by providing opportunity’* (Settlement English, ID. 36, 37) and as *‘supporting communities to thrive by empowering local students’* (Vocational English, ID. 23). Diversity as an organisational value was also important to hirers’ benevolent positioning: *‘diverse organisation that values people who bring passion and vision to their roles’* (Settlement English, ID. 36, 37) and *‘we value diversity in the backgrounds, ideas, work styles and perspectives of our team’* (Settlement English, ID. 34).

4.4.3.2.2. Who we are: Academic/university pathways and general/exam English

The Academic/University Pathways and General/Exam English providers positioned their organisational identity in terms of reputation and status (prestigious values). Some of these references were outward looking and globally focused, as in *‘since our inception ... has led to improve the world around us’* and *‘... have an outstanding global reputation’* (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 44) while others laid claim to their reputation, as in *‘a leading establishment, with a strong reputation for quality, excellence and student success’* (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 47) and *‘the preferred pathway to ...’* (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 46). Academic/University Pathways advertisers also promoted diversity as key to their organisational identity, as in *‘the University values inclusion and diversity, respect and integrity’* (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 44), *‘values social and cultural diversity’* and *‘encompasses a diverse working environment’* (Academic/University Pathways, ID. 49).

For General/Exam English job advertisements, hirers drew more upon interpersonal values, personifying their organisations as extraverted and agreeable (Widiger & Costa, 2013), as in *‘our exciting team’*, *‘a strong and energetic team’* (General/Exam English, ID. 19), *‘a new and exciting college’* (General/Exam English, ID. 18), *‘we have a fantastic team*

of highly qualified, enthusiastic professionals, ‘*we work hard to ensure that our students learn in a friendly and supportive environment*’ (General/Exam English, ID. 5) and ‘*our fantastic team*’ (General/Exam English, ID. 7).

4.4.3.3. Compliance

Compliance was divided into four further subcategories: visa and residency, diversity and equal opportunity, teaching regulations, and work health and safety. Over 50% of the job advertisements (26) referred to teachers needing to comply with visa or residency regulations, with the majority of Compliance mentions related to work health and safety, followed by diversity and equal opportunity, and finally visa and residency.

4.4.3.3.1. Visa and residency

Unsurprisingly, teachers needed to be in possession of a valid visa or have residency status in order to teach in Australia. To drive home the importance of applicants being legally allowed to work in Australia, most hirers employed high levels of obligation, with modals and adverbial clauses being used to make this point, as in ‘*applicants must have appropriate work rights in Australia*’ (General/Exam English, ID. 18) and ‘*only applicants with the right to work in Australia will be considered for this role*’ (Settlement English, ID. 36).

Worth mentioning in relation to visa and residency rights was how these rights seemed to intersect with ‘recognised’ education and qualifications (see Sections 4.4.1.1. and 4.4.1.2.). Although my analysis neither found (nor sought) a direct correlation between these two variables, a simple comparison between those employers who made statements concerning visa and residency rights in their job advertisements, as opposed to those who did not, revealed that the same hirers also used the evaluative language of ‘recognised’, ‘suitable’, ‘relevant’ and ‘appropriate’ in relation to minimum education and qualifications. Of the 26 job advertisements that included visa and residency rights as necessary

requirements for employment, 23 (two General/Exam and one Settlement English job advertisements do not) also made clear that a recognised degree or teaching qualification was necessary for employment. It is possible that – at least discursively – by invoking visa and regulation compliance as well as education and qualification compliance, these employers may have been indexing their (perhaps unconscious) bias towards English language teachers from particular contexts and backgrounds. Such biases have been found in other contexts to be related to teachers' and other professionals' visa status and educational backgrounds (Mahboob et al., 2004; Nigar et al., 2023; Ruecker & Ives, 2014; Selvi, 2010; Wolfgram, 2021).

4.4.3.3.2. Diversity and equal opportunity

An important way in which organisations promoted their identity was by extolling their organisational values with respect to diversity and inclusion, although it must be noted here that diversity and inclusion also involves compliance with Australia's anti-discrimination laws (Attorney-General's Department, 2023a). References to diversity and inclusion were found in 30% of the job advertisements and there was an average of 2.5 mentions per advertisement. Settlement English, Academic/University Pathways English and Vocational English advertisements made the most and clearest commitments to diversity and inclusion. In contrast, only one General/Exam English job advertisement referenced these. There is a distinction, however, between being genuinely committed to diverse and inclusive work environments as an institutional value, and making statements that reflect a commitment to regulatory compliance. While there is not enough space here to further examine this distinction, there was certainly an observable contradiction in the values of diversity and compliance. Teachers working precariously in English language teaching in Australia might wonder why it is that employers are so eager to push their diversity and equal opportunity credentials in some spheres, but not in others; that is, the right to work

should include the right to work in just and favourable conditions (Attorney-General's Department, 2023b).

4.4.3.3. Teaching regulations

Teaching Regulations were the most important to Settlement English, followed by Vocational English. For teachers in these two domains, ensuring compliance with, and demonstrating an understanding of, a range of regulatory frameworks was deemed necessary to be considered employable. Frameworks mentioned in both of these advertisement domains were ASQA (Australian Skills Quality Authority), the National Standards for Registered Training Organisations (DEWR, 2015) and the Vocational Education and Training (VET) regulations.

Meanwhile, in Academic/University Pathways and General/Exam English job advertisements, compliance with teaching regulations did not seem to be as important. Where mentions were made, they were related to knowledge of ELICOS compliance, NEAS requirements, the Education Services for Overseas Students Act ([ESOS] 2000), and VET regulations; however, it is unclear why an understanding of these compliance frameworks was necessary.

4.4.3.4. Recruitment processes

Recruitment Processes was separated into three subclasses: 'How to Apply', 'How to Contact' and 'Interviews and Shortlisting'. Most references in the advertisements were to 'How to Apply', followed by 'Shortlisting and Interviews', and then (closely) by 'How to Contact'. For reasons of space, only How to Apply, and Shortlisting and Interviews are discussed here.

4.4.3.4.1. *How to apply*

The ways in which a teacher could apply for a position were similar across all job advertisement types, albeit with several notable differences. All hirers required a curriculum vitae (CV) and a cover letter that addressed the role's key selection criteria, provided evidence of their qualifications and gave information on referees (usually two). The General/Exam English teacher job advertisements were more interpersonally-orientated in that over half of these advertisements named and provided the email address of a key decision-maker, such as a Director of Studies or an Academic Manager, to whom applicants should apply. The majority of the Vocational English, Academic/University Pathways English, and Settlement English job advertisements, in contrast, directed applicants to the hirer's own careers page on their website, or directed them to apply directly via the host website's (Seek or Jora) 'apply now' icon. This meant that the recruitment processes in these job advertisements appeared to be more impersonal and institutional; on the other hand, the General/Exam English hirers appeared to be more personal and informal in their communications with potential employees.

4.4.3.4.2. *Shortlisting and interviews*

General/Exam English hirers made the most mentions of shortlisting and interviews, followed by Vocational English, Academic/University Pathways, and Settlement English. General/Exam English hirers made it clear to their audience that '*only shortlisted candidates will be contacted*'. Together with the 'how to apply' stipulations, these references to hirers only contacting shortlisted candidates reinforced the importance of teachers addressing the key criteria, as explicitly stated in the advertisement. The act of shortlisting quite possibly also points to the busyness of recruitment decision-makers in this context. As noted above, the General/Exam English job advertisements tended to provide decision-makers' names and email addresses for applicants to contact, which made their recruitment processes appear

more personal; however, the drawback of this approach is that these decision-makers might be more likely to be frequently contacted during the recruitment process, thus taking up their time. One way to reduce workload, therefore, is to rely on the ‘only shortlisted candidates will be contacted’ approach, which sends the message to applicants that ‘if we have not contacted you, please, do not contact us’.

4.4.4. Teacher attributes

In the job advertisements, Teacher Attributes were attributed to either personality e.g., *fun and exciting* (General/Exam English ID. 18) or work-related characteristics e.g., *a bilingual Chinese and English IELTS teacher* (General/Exam English ID.2) or to both e.g., *a dynamic and innovative AMEP teacher* (Settlement English, ID. 39). Of the 50 job advertisements in the sample, 39 included a total of 193 references to the type of teacher attributes required for employment. Table 4.7 presents the numbers and percentages of these teacher attribute mentions across the four domains.

General/Exam English job advertisements made the most mentions of teachers’ personal characteristics, suggesting that a teacher’s personality or their emotion work (Benesch, 2018, 2019, 2020) were more highly valued in this context than in the other three domains. However, teachers’ affective abilities and traits were also valued in Vocational English and Settlement English job advertisements, although less so in Academic/Pathways English advertisements. Only Vocational English job advertisements indicated a slight preference for work-related teacher characteristics. That said, work-related characteristics were also important to General/Exam English hirers, with almost 20% of their teacher attribute mentions indexing teachers’ work-related characteristics. The frequency of personal characteristics mentions across all job advertisement types were: ‘passionate’ (13), ‘dynamic’ (11), ‘supportive’ (10), flexible (9), ‘innovative’ (9), ‘team player’ (9), ‘creative’ (7), ‘motivated’ (7) and ‘enthusiastic’ (6). For work-related characteristics, the frequency

was: ‘teacher’ (17), ‘ELICOS’ (12), ‘experienced’ (11), ‘qualified’ (11), ‘TESOL’ (8), ‘English’ (60) and ‘trainer’ (4). These teacher attribute frequencies, however, were not equally distributed across the four job advertisement types.

Table 4.7

Number and Percentage of Teacher Attribute Mentions (n=193) Across all Job Advertisements (n=50)

Job Advertisement Type	Number & Percentage of Job Advertisements Referencing Teacher Attributes	Number & Percentage of Teacher Attribute Mentions	Number and Percentage of Teacher Attribute Type Mentions	
			Personal Characteristics	Work Related Characteristics
Academic/University Pathways English	4 (8%)	12 (6%)	10 (5%)	2 (1%)
General/Exam English	18 (36%)	108 (56%)	70 (36%)	38 (20%)
Settlement English	7 (14%)	34 (18%)	28 (14%)	6 (3%)
Vocational English	10 (20%)	39 (20%)	19 (9.8%)	20 (10%)

4.4.4.1. Teacher attributes by job advertisement type

As mentioned above, a teacher’s personal characteristics or emotions appeared to matter more in General/Exam English teaching contexts, in comparison to the other domains. The most important personal attributes for General/Exam English teachers were: passionate (7), dynamic (6), creative (5), motivated (5) and team player (5). For the Settlement English hirers, the most important attributes for a teacher were: dynamic (5), flexible (4) and

passionate (4). In the Vocational English context, the job advertisements suggested the key teacher attributes were: supportive (3), innovative (3) and enthusiastic (3). Finally, in the Academic/Foundation English job advertisements (where the least mentions to teacher characteristics were made), the important characteristics were: team player (3), passionate (2), flexible (2) and creative (2).

To better understand these differences in desirable personal characteristics, these personal descriptors were categorised in accordance with the five-factor model of personality (John & Srivastava, 1999; Judge et al., 2013; Widiger & Costa, 2013). The categories in this model are: agreeableness (cooperative, empathetic, helpful, understanding, trusting); extraversion (active, assertive, excitement seeking, sociable, optimistic); conscientiousness (dependable, driven, ethical, organised, motivated); openness to experience (creative, curious, flexible, imaginative, independent minded); and neuroticism (anger, anxiousness, hostile, self-conscious, volatile) (John & Srivastava, 1999; Judge et al., 2013; Widiger & Costa, 2013). The aim of examining variation in desired teacher characteristics according to this model was to identify whether particular English language teacher personality traits were favoured in certain teaching contexts and whether these differences were connected to employability in these contexts.

4.4.4.1.1. Teacher attributes in academic/university pathways job advertisements

Academic/University Pathways job advertisements mostly referenced teacher attributes related to Agreeableness and Open to Experience. The traits mentioned in these job advertisements included: empathetic, encouraging and helping (Agreeableness), and creative, flexible and able to enjoy challenges (Open to Experience). The traits of empathy, of being encouraging and helpful, point to the ethics of care that underpins the emotion labour of teachers' work (Carter, 2009; Gkonou & Mercer, 2017; Noddings, 2012; Pereira, 2018). Indeed, it has been argued that relational caring (Noddings, 2007) is at the core of 'good

teaching’ (Dewaele et al., 2018). Given the pressure associated with the high-stakes Academic/University Pathways English domain, teachers are required to balance – perhaps more so than in other contexts – their pedagogical practice (and the needs of the academic English courses on which they teach) and the actual needs of students. In fact, concern for learners and their needs is a significant feature of English for Academic Purposes teaching (Alexander, 2012; Bruce, 2011; G. Campion, 2016). One reason for this elevated concern is the difference between the assumed English language proficiency level of the learners, and their actual language abilities. Teachers who practice empathy, are encouraging and helpful, and who are curious with a creative and imaginative intellect (as reflected in the Openness to Experience trait) might well be the teacher type that best suits these academically and professionally challenging environments.

4.4.4.1.2. Teacher attributes in general/exam and settlement English job advertisements

The General/Exam English and Settlement English teacher attributes mentioned in the advertisements were oriented towards Conscientiousness and Extraversion. The Conscientiousness traits most commonly mentioned for both General/Exam and Settlement English were commitment, drive and organisation, while the Extraversion traits were related to being dynamic and passionate. It may not be surprising that many of the General/Exam English teacher personal attributes presented as ideal were clustered around the action and energy-based attributes of Extraversion, such as ‘bubbly’, ‘energetic’, ‘enthusiastic’, ‘exciting’, ‘outgoing’ and ‘upbeat’. Yet, it is worth noting the difference in how ‘dynamic’ was used to describe General/Exam and Settlement teachers. For General/Exam English teachers, dynamic was used mostly as a pre-modifying adjective of the noun ‘teacher’ as in ‘dynamic, enthusiastic and interactive ESL teachers’ (General/Exam English, ID. 19), ‘have an engaging and dynamic classroom presence’ (General/Exam English, ID. 2) and ‘a suitably qualified, dynamic ELICOS teacher’ (General/Exam English, ID. 3). In Settlement English

job advertisements, on the other hand, the ability to be ‘dynamic’ was not expressed as a direct personal quality of the teacher (although it was generally found under the heading ‘About You’) but as a skill related to the teacher’s ability in the teaching and learning environment, as in ‘has the capacity and desire to handle multiple tasks in a high pressured and dynamic environment’ (Settlement English, ID. 33, 34, 35). Here there is a subtle difference between the dynamic teacher in the General/Exam English advertisements and teachers who can teach in a ‘dynamic environment’ in the Settlement English advertisements. This conceptualises teacher qualities as being embodied in the teacher as opposed to teaching qualities being practiced in the profession of teaching (Gore et al., 2004).

4.4.4.1.3. *Teacher attributes vocational English job advertisements*

Desired attributes for Vocational English teachers tended towards Conscientiousness, and to a lesser extent, Agreeableness and Extraversion. In this context, teacher traits that were considered to be important to employability were being committed, motivated, self-motivated and values-driven. Vocational job advertisements also referred to, to a lesser extent, Agreeableness (e.g., altruism and concern for others) and Extraversion (energy, enthusiasm and passion). As shown in Table 4.7 above, Vocational English was the only job advertisement type which appeared to value both personal and work-related characteristics in almost equal measure. In this context, the professional characteristics of being qualified and experienced were almost as important as the prosocial relational emotions expressed in being conscientious, agreeable and extraverted. There was a slight tendency in this domain, however, to align with work-related descriptors, which might be related to the regulatory requirements in this sector. That is, Vocational English teachers are required to align with vocational teaching practices, which require industry-specific currency of knowledge and skills, and this may be the reason why there was less emphasis, in this sample of job advertisements at least, on teachers’ personal attributes.

4.4.5. Summary of job advertisement findings

In summary, a content and indexical analysis was employed in this chapter to better understand the employability attributes present in 50 adult English language teaching job advertisements in the Australian context. Of these 50 job advertisements, nine were recruiting for teachers for Academic/University Pathways, 22 were for teachers of General/Exam English, nine were for Settlement English, and ten were for Vocational English.

For anyone with experience and knowledge of the English language teaching profession in Australia, it will come as no surprise that the job advertisement analysis found that employable English language teachers are required to be degree educated, with postgraduate teaching qualifications specifically related to the contexts in which they work. For General/Exam English and some Academic/University Pathways employers, the teaching qualification of choice is the CELTA, although for other hirers in this latter domain any relevant, recognised or suitable postgraduate English language teaching qualification is acceptable. English language teachers in Settlement and Vocational English require a postgraduate level English language teaching qualification, as well as a training and assessment qualification in adult education, such as the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE), which allows teachers to work as ‘trainers’ in Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). Although the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE) is not an English language teaching qualification as such, most Settlement and Vocational English employers are RTOs, and Australian government regulations stipulate that teachers in this sector must have this entry level qualification.

One of the main findings in relation to a teacher’s minimum education and qualification requirements is that the sectors’ alignment with regulatory bodies – some of which are officially sanctioned (as with the TAE) and others not (as with NEAS’s and some employers’ preference for the CELTA) – is that the provenance and type of education and

qualifications a teacher has may, discursively at least, create a hierarchy of worth (P. Brown & Souto-Otero, 2020; Di Stasio, 2014). This means that some teachers will automatically be seen as more employable depending on the type of credentials they have. Further, as some hirers make clear that an Australian visa and residency status are part of the application pre-screening, some teachers may choose not to apply for roles if they have previously faced English as first-language based discrimination. This illustrates the ways in which education, qualifications and where a teacher is from can influence their employability status.

It is not surprising that employable English language teachers need to have the subject knowledge, skills and experience relevant to their teaching and learning contexts. The analysis presented here, however, has revealed that a teacher's specific teaching and learning skills are presented in the generic terms of managerialist discourses of education (Day & Sachs, 2004; Mockler, 2013; Taubman, 2009). This is particularly true with respect to the ways in which teacher professional learning is positioned as professional development aimed at assisting employers to achieve their organisational goals. Another key finding is that a teacher's pedagogical practice, although important to employability, takes second place to their ability to deploy their teaching and learning skills, as well as their generic skills, in the service of emotion labour (Benesch, 2018, 2019, 2020; Hochschild, 1979, 1983). This pattern was most clearly highlighted in the importance (across all job advertisement types) of a teacher's relational skills. To be seen as employable, English language teachers are required to foreground their caring abilities (Noddings, 1984, 2007, 2012; Pereira, 2018), for instance, in the ways they are required to not only help students attain their desired learning outcomes, but to assist the organisation to achieve their strategic goals.

Teachers' attributes were also considered to be important to their perceived employability, and the kinds of attributes they were invited to foreground were found to be contextually important and linked to the employers' projected organisational identities. That

is, to render themselves more employable, teachers could work on exhibiting different types of emotion in different teaching and learning settings. In General/Exam English and Settlement English contexts, teachers could foreground more ‘extraverted’ emotions, such as enthusiasm, dynamism and passion, and more ‘conscientious’ type emotions such as being committed, organised and values-driven. Academic/University Pathways teachers could demonstrate emotion related to ‘agreeableness’, such as being empathetic, encouraging and supportive while also drawing on their ‘openness to experience’ by showing they are keen to be challenged, and are creative and flexible. For Vocational English teachers, the most prevalent emotion rules were those related to being conscientious, such as being motivated, autonomous and ethically driven.

For all four domains, quality, efficiency and effectiveness discourses related to the ways in which teachers teach, but also to their administrative and communication skills. Despite the silence in these job advertisements regarding the ‘native’ English-speaking teacher’ versus the ‘non-native’ English-speaking teacher (Holliday, 2006; Phillipson, 2008; Rudolph et al., 2015; Selvi, 2010; Selvi, 2014), the ways in which teachers’ communication skills were highly positively evaluated suggests that language-based discrimination is still prevalent in English language teaching, but was being hidden in these advertisements.

In relation to what an English language teacher needs to know and demonstrate with regards to the knowledge and understandings of their sector, it is clear that irrespective of the teaching and learning domain, all English language teachers must be willing and able to accept that their work will be precarious in nature. All but two of the jobs advertised were for short-term casual positions, although several hirers dangled the carrot of further work for those teachers able to demonstrate the right employability attributes. Also important was for teachers to understand that to be seen to be employable, there are many and various aspects of compliance that need to be adhered to. Being compliant with various teaching and work

health and safety regulations was shown to be the most important in Settlement and Vocational English advertisements while subscribing to the values of diversity and inclusion appeared to be less salient for General/Exam English hirers than for the other three domains.

4.5. Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter point to the ways in which English language teachers in Australia need to be able to draw on specific skills, emotions, knowledge and understandings to be seen as employable. Although there are similarities across the employable identities of Academic/University Pathways, General/Exam, Settlement and Vocational English teachers, there are also nuanced differences, as described above. The next chapter presents the findings of an online teacher employability survey and the results of interviews with 24 teachers and hiring managers. Combined with the findings from the advertisements in the four domains as presented in this chapter, these survey and interview findings will offer a clearer picture of what it means to be an employable teacher in the English language teaching sector in Australia.

CHAPTER 5: Teacher and Hiring Manager Perspectives

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents two sets of findings: the findings derived from a basic descriptive statistical analysis of data from a teacher employability survey (49 survey respondents: 37 teachers and 12 hiring managers), and the findings from a thematic analysis of 24 participant interviews (11 teachers and 13 hiring managers). The purpose of the interviews was threefold, and directly related to all three research questions of this PhD project. First, the aim was to discuss, using the results of the online survey as a guide, what the interview participants felt were the most salient features of teacher employability. Second, the interviews endeavoured to explore participants' perceptions of how key employability attributes were elicited and demonstrated during teacher job interviews. Third, the interviews were used to understand how the participants positioned themselves in relation to the attributes of an employable English language teacher. The survey and interview findings offer insight into the ways in which the notions of an ideal, employable teacher are defined, accepted, rejected and/or contested by those working in the adult English language teaching sector in Australia.

The chapter is organised as follows. In the first section, Section 5.2, the findings of the online survey results are presented, followed by the findings of the teacher and hiring manager interviews, in Section 5.3. There are three central themes that respond directly to each of the three research questions. Starting with RQ1, the theme 'teacher employability as precarious professionalism' explores which employability attributes are considered most important for teacher employability (Section 5.3.1). The theme 'performing employability in teacher job interviews' responds to RQ2, and seeks to understand the ways in which teachers

and hiring managers justify the employable teacher identities that need to be demonstrated in job interviews (Section 5.3.2). The final theme, ‘power, passion and frustration’, examines how teachers and hiring managers typically take up different positions of power and emotion labour and seeks to understand what being an employable English language teacher means to these participants (Section 5.3.3). This section shows how the positions the participants adopt foreground the stability and instability in constructions of English language teacher professional identities, and the analysis brings together the ideas underpinning the main employability themes that emerged from the interview data. The final section of this chapter (Section 5.4) summarises these key themes, before the chapter ends with the conclusion (Section 5.5).

5.2. Survey findings

As discussed in Chapter 3 (Methodology), an online survey (see Appendix A) was administered in the first phase of this project and was designed to collect data from teachers and hiring managers about English language teacher employability. The survey elicited 49 responses from these two sets of participants: the majority of the responses were from teachers (75%) and the remainder of the responses were from hiring managers (25%). The majority of these participants (41%) were from the private language school sector, just over a third (35%) were from the university English language teaching sector, 16% were from the TAFE (Technical and Further Education) sector, while the smallest number of survey participants (8%) were from the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) sector (Chapter 3, see Table 3.1). Just over three quarters of the survey respondents identified as ‘native’ English-speaking, and just under a quarter identified as ‘non-native’ speakers of English. In terms of gender, 61.2% of respondents identified as female, 36.4% as male, and 2% as non-binary.

The survey was designed to elicit the education type, teaching qualifications, experience, generic and specific skills, and personal attributes that respondents viewed as the most important for teacher employability in their teaching and learning contexts. They were asked to rate the importance of these attributes on a 5-point Likert Scale, with '5' being 'Extremely Important', and '1' being 'Not important at All'. The most salient of the descriptive statistical findings from the survey will be presented here as follows: education and teaching qualifications (Section 5.2.1), experience (Section 5.2.2), generic and specific skills (Section 5.2.3) and personal attributes (Section 5.2.4).

5.2.1. Education and teaching qualifications

All of the teachers and hiring managers responded that they were qualified to teach English as a second/other language in Australia. In addition to an undergraduate degree, the English language teaching qualifications reported by most of the respondents was the Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), with 57% of respondents reporting the CELTA as their only or an additional teaching qualification. The next most reported qualification was the Masters of TESOL, with 39% of respondents citing this as their only or an additional teaching qualification. As shown in the job advertisement analysis in Chapter 4, despite the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE) not being an English language teaching specific qualification, it is still valued in the English language teaching sector in the Australian context. Almost a quarter of the survey (24.4%) respondents reported holding the TAE in addition to one or more English language teaching specific qualifications. Overall, the survey respondents were very experienced in English language teaching, with just over half (51%) having nine or more years of experience in the sector, and almost two fifths (36.7%) with between three and eight years of teaching experience. Less experienced teachers made up the remainder of the cohort, with just under one tenth (8.14%) having no experience up to two years' teaching experience. These teacher

and hiring manager respondents, therefore, can be seen as having valuable knowledge and experience of working in adult English language teaching in Australia.

Unsurprisingly, given the various regulations that stipulate the minimum English language teaching qualifications required for teaching in Australia, all of the respondents agreed that holding an undergraduate degree is very important for teacher employability. The CELTA was the only English language teaching specific qualification (out of nine choices) that was rated as ‘very important’, reflecting its highly regarded position in global English language teaching as a qualification of quality and opportunity (IH, 2020). All the other English language teaching qualifications recognised in Australia (for instance, the Master of TESOL, the Graduate Certificate in TESOL, and the Diploma of English Language Teaching to Adults) were rated as ‘moderately important’. The only qualification that respondents rated as ‘slightly important’ was Certificate IV Training and Assessment (TAE), as mentioned above, perhaps signalling the low regard in which this qualification is held by many in the English language teaching sector more broadly, but particularly in the area of adult migrant English teaching (AMEP) (ACTA, 2019).

5.2.2. Experience

Research has demonstrated the importance of teaching experience for developing the knowledge and skills needed to be considered a competent teacher (G. Campion, 2016; Johnson, 2005; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Tsui, 2005, 2009a, 2009b). With this aspect of teacher employability in mind, the online survey asked participants to rate the importance of years of experience on a scale from 0-1 years in two year increments up to 11 or more years. This scale was based on how teaching experience is remunerated in accordance with the Australian Education Services (Post-Secondary) Award 2020 (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2020) and other Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (i.e., the agreements between employers and employees which stipulate employment conditions such as pay, hours worked, etc.),

such as those from Navitas English in Sydney and Perth (Navitas English Services, 2020, 2023). For all survey respondents, while all of the years of experience on the scale were considered to be ‘moderately important’, 5-7 years yielded a median of 4 on the 5-point Likert scale, as compared to 3 for the rest of the data. The possibility that there was perhaps some difference in importance to a teacher having 5-7 years’ experience was explored in the interviews (and is discussed in the sections below). However, the finding that for both teacher and hirer survey participants experience is only moderately important at all levels of a teacher’s career indicates that there are other variables that may be more important to being considered an employable teacher.

5.2.3. Generic and specific skills

Survey participants were asked to rate the importance of a range of skills and knowledge specific to teaching and learning, as well as a range of generic skills. Both the pedagogical and practical knowledge and skills related to English language teaching were considered to be more important to teacher employability than the generic skills. Of the 12 abilities provided in the survey Q9 related to teaching and learning specific knowledge and skills, the five most important were: ‘ability to reflect on own teaching’, ‘ability to reflect on student learning’, ‘ability to create a collaborative learning environment’ and ‘ability to build rapport with learners’; and ‘ability to deliver student centred learning’. All of these five options were rated as ‘extremely important’, with a standard deviation of 1, indicating that the majority of participants were in agreement regarding the significance of these abilities to teacher employability. The most agreement, however, was seen in relation to the ‘ability to build rapport with learners’ and the ‘ability to deliver student centred learning’, as both were rated as ‘extremely important’ and had a standard deviation of 0, indicating that all survey participants agreed that these abilities were of utmost importance to teacher employability. As with the job advertisement findings presented in the previous chapter, teachers’ relational

abilities, as well as their appreciation of the importance of the learner in English language teaching pedagogy and practice, appear to be highly significant factors in teacher employability.

Of the 14 generic skills that the survey participants were asked to rate according to importance, 13 were rated as ‘very important’, with low variance (standard deviation of 1), which suggested that the majority of participants were in agreement about the importance of these generic skills. Of these 13 generic skills, ‘self-management’ was the only one with a median of 5 (as opposed to 4, as for all the other skills). However, ‘spoken and written communication skills’ was rated as ‘extremely important’ (with a standard deviation of 1 and a median of 5), suggesting that being able to communicate well in both spoken and written forms was considered to be essential to teacher employability. This finding is somewhat different to what was found in the job advertisement data (see Section 4.4.2.2.3). In the job advertisements, only 18% of the mentions for Generic Skills were for ‘communication skills’, and less than half of all job advertisements (42%) mentioned a requirement for ‘communication skills’. Clearly, although the ability to speak and write well is important to being seen as an employable English language teacher, there appears to be some variation in how this skill is viewed by different stakeholders in the English language teaching context.

The finding that ‘spoken and written communication skills’ is considered important to teacher employability can also be seen in relation to another of the survey questions (Q8), which asked participants to evaluate the importance of a teacher’s first language background, that is, whether a teacher’s language proficiency needed to be a ‘native’ speaker of English or a ‘native-like’ speaker of English, an issue that has been the subject of considerable debate and interest in English language teaching for several decades (Holliday, 2006, 2009, 2013; Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; G. Park, 2012; Ramjattan, 2015, 2019; Rudolph et al., 2015; Ruecker & Ives, 2014; Selvi, 2010; Selvi, 2014). All but one

($n=49$) of the survey participants responded to this question, and the result was that being a ‘native’ speaker of English was rated as ‘very important’ (mean and median 4, standard deviation of 1) whereas being a ‘native-like’ speaker was rated as ‘extremely important’ (mean and median 5, standard deviation of 1). These results suggest that while being a ‘native-like’ English speaker is more important than being a ‘native’ speaker, thereby indicating at least some movement away from native speakerism in English language teaching (Holliday, 2006; Phillipson, 2008), the importance of being a ‘native’ English speaker still holds sway in considerations of what makes an English language teacher employable. The relationship between communication skills and language background are explored further in the interview themes further below.

5.2.4. Teacher attributes

The final section of the survey asked respondents to choose 10 personal characteristics out of a list of 26 that they believed were the most important for teacher employability. Table 5.1 below shows the 12 personal characteristics that were ranked highest.

The highest ranked personal characteristic was ‘engaging’, and this descriptor was chosen by almost 79% of respondents, making this attribute the most important for teacher employability among the survey participants. The characteristics ‘approachable’ (61.7%), ‘enthusiastic’ and ‘collaborative’ (both (55.3%)) were also considered important. Being ‘adaptable’ was also important, with 51% of respondents choosing this characteristic. The remaining seven personal characteristics in this top 12, were chosen by between 49% of respondents (‘supportive’), down to 43% for all of the bottom five.

These survey results bear some similarity to the job advertisement findings from the previous chapter in that the most important personal characteristics tend to focus on the relational strengths or emotion work of teachers.

Table 5.1.

12 Highest Ranked Teacher Attributes from Survey Responses (n=47)

Teacher Attribute	Position Rank	Frequency Count	Percentage
Engaging	1	37	78.7%
Approachable	2	29	61.7%
Enthusiastic	3	26	55.3%
Collaborative	3	26	55.3%
Adaptable	4	24	51.1%
Supportive	5	23	48.9%
Dedicated	6	22	46.8%
Creative	7	20	42.6%
Empathetic	7	20	42.6%
Flexible	7	20	42.6%
Patient	7	20	42.6%
Positive	7	20	42.6%

As can be seen from Table 5.1, four of the 12 highest ranked personal characteristics were also found to be the most frequently mentioned in the job advertisement data: ‘creative’, ‘flexible’, ‘supportive’ and ‘enthusiastic’. However, in the job advertisement data ‘engaging’ as a characteristic was most often expressed as a style of teaching instruction, that is, teachers being able to engage their students in learning. Ideas related to what being an ‘engaging’ teacher might mean to employability was

explored further in the participant interviews, and is discussed under the theme below (Section 5.3.1.1.2). The characteristics of ‘adaptable’ and ‘flexible’ were also felt to be relevant to teacher employability, and these characteristics are also discussed in the interview themes (Section 5.3.1.3.2) of this chapter. Overall, the most highly ranked personal characteristics for teachers, as shown in Table 5.1, are concerned with a teacher’s ability to relate to and understand the needs of learners as well as those of their colleagues and their profession.

As mentioned above, the key findings of the survey were explored in more detail with the interview participants to gain a deeper understanding of what makes a teacher employable in the English language teaching context. It is to the findings of those interviews we now turn.

5.3. Interview findings

5.3.1. Teacher employability as precarious professionalism

With respect to the employability attributes that were most important to the interview participants, two interrelated albeit different and contested themes emerged around the key ideas of professionalism and precarity. I have designated the intersection between these two themes as ‘teacher employability as precarious professionalism’. These interconnected themes capture the ways in which both teachers and hiring managers drew upon ideas of English language teacher knowledge, skills and conduct in their interviews (Farrell & Richards, 2007; Leung, 2009; Pennington & Richards, 2016; Tsui, 2003, 2005, 2009a, 2009b) to create a discourse of professionalism that underpins teacher employability. It has been argued that a teacher’s professional identity starts to develop during their pre-service education, at which time the teacher is initiated into the knowledge and behaviours required for effective classroom practice, and continues as they further their experience of classroom teaching, their reflective practice and their

participation in a teaching community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Developing specific teaching competencies and being recognised as having gained these, and then continuing to develop them, are seen as a crucial aspect of developing employable teacher attributes. At the same time, calls to professionalism invoke the precarious employment foundations under which teachers labour in the English language teaching context. Paradoxically, some of the key employability attributes a teacher requires to be seen as employable also leave them at risk of being seen as unemployable. That is, characteristics such as experience and flexibility, which are called on to cultivate professionalism, are the same characteristics that can lead teachers towards unemployability, or into precarious positions. This tension lies at the heart of teacher employability in a sector that relies on casual employment to remain profitable.

The professionalism aspect of ‘teacher employability as precarious professionalism’ is explored below, starting with how employability as professionalism can be seen through the lens of teacher education, developing knowledge, and being a member of a community of practice. It will then be seen how being an engaging and reflective teacher is also important to the professionalism as employability theme. Finally, the conflicting nature of these professional attributes will be examined to show how the experience and flexibility gained from developing ‘professionally’ as a teacher can work against them being seen as employable.

5.3.1.1. Teacher employability as professionalism

5.3.1.1.1. Teacher education, knowledge and community of practice

To be employable, as shown in the advertisements introduced in the previous chapter, at the very least, an English language teacher needs to be qualified and able to apply in the English language classroom the knowledge gained from their pre-service

teaching qualification/s. In the interviews conducted for this study, all of the teachers and hiring managers (in all of their different contexts) acknowledged the foundational importance of pre-service teacher education as well as engagement in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) as the first steps for teachers to become language aware and to develop teaching competence. In particular, they noted how the pedagogical and practical knowledge of English language teaching – as evident in discourses of teacher cognition and language education (Borg, 2006, 2015; Burns & Richards, 2009) and teacher language awareness (Andrews, 2007) – were foundational for constructing the identity of an employable teacher. These attributes were seen as being on a continuum because teachers' ability and experience evolve with practice in the context of an established community of practice. The following Academic/University Pathways English hiring manager commented:

Pre-service teachers I notice that they're so focused on the grammatical competence bit ... it's all about learning the grammar and you get once you learn the grammar that's it that's all you need to know, and then you realise that's a little bit more to it than that and then you kind of move on to the discourse competence ... structures of text, stretches of text, how we analyse text and genre whether you know it's spoken or written, and then you realise actually that's not enough, either ... there's the sociolinguistic competence, the pragmatic competence and the strategic competence. (HM2, Academic/University Pathways)

The following Academic/University Pathways English hiring manager focused on the importance of supporting teachers as they develop professionally:

You can't throw a teacher into an academic course with no understanding of academic culture, no understanding of the requirements and assessment ... it's not fair to throw

them in a deeper water than they are allowed, you know they can't swim in. They have to stay in the beginning in the shallow water and then you support them with a lot of buddy mentoring, peer mentoring, professional development. (HM4, Academic/University Pathways)

The teachers also discussed the importance of developing pedagogical and practical knowledge as the foundations of employability, as shown in the following teacher's reflection:

Yeah, I do yeah I think so I mean I think you have to be curious though, I think you have to be constantly building on the CELTA. I mean the CELTA is a short, taster course. I didn't know anywhere near as much as I know now when I came out of the CELTA about grammar about you know grammar and things like that so it is up to you I think. (T3, General/Exam English)

Teachers also commented on the valuable support that came from being a member of a community of practice, which helped them develop their language awareness (as highlighted above) and enhance their classroom practices. Teacher observations were also an important part of this process, as noted by the following two teachers:

And that was a really steep learning curve for me in terms of you know being a good classroom manager ... So I had to learn from colleagues who had more experience than me. You know how do you deal with this situation and that situation? I did not know these things before I came into the job so I had to draw on different traits that I didn't even have yet I had to build on, row on row on row. (T4, General/Exam English)

Personally ... I like that somebody observes me, and I get feedback which is direct because it's not about taking it personally or otherwise, it is personal, and you should take it personally. (T1, General/Exam English)

Another aspect of developing professionally and being seen as employable, as mentioned in the interviews, was a teacher's ability to be 'engaging' and 'reflective', discussed in the next section.

5.3.1.1.2. Engagement and reflection

Employable teachers were also described by the interviewees as being engaging and reflective. However, being engaging was not necessarily seen as a personal characteristic, as suggested in the job advertisement and survey data, but as a type of conduct, a way of 'being' and 'doing' teaching. That is, being seen as engaging in this context is not the same as being seen as 'interesting'. Instead, the engaging teacher is one who is capable of drawing on emotion work to be reflective, which involves taking into consideration the different ways in which students learn and making that learning contextually relevant and purposeful; in other words, to engage in pedagogies of engagement (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). All respondents viewed being an engaging teacher in this way. At the same time, they all noted that an engaging teacher was able to effectively deploy their content and practical knowledge (Golombek, 1998) so as to motivate students in their learning. An engaging teacher was seen to be dynamic and purposeful but also demonstrating the capacity – or desire – to reflect on how this type of engagement affects students' learning. In this way, a teacher's commitment to reflective practice was viewed as central to their ability to be seen as an employable teacher.

From the teachers' perspective, being an engaging teacher also meant being able to empathise with students – attempting to understand their experiences and reflecting this

understanding in contextually relevant learning, as shown in the following comment by a General/Exam English teacher:

Yeah engaging, I guess it's, I mean to me at least it's, it's what's the word engaging means that students want to learn and I think that you know making them actually be interested in learning. However you do that whether it's you know through a topic or something else to inspire students to want to learn it's going to if they're happy, they're going to learn a lot better than if they're not interested ... and I think the relevance to their lives making it something that they can use outside of class and making it something that you know they would be interested in yeah. (T6, General/Exam English)

Teachers in the AMEP and TAFE contexts expressed similar ideas about the ability to engage students, although these teachers (and some of the hiring managers), also commented specifically on the needs of learners and their communities as well as the contractual requirements of these contexts. Below a hiring manager explains what being engaging means in their AMEP context:

You really do need somebody who can engage students in the classroom and because ... there could be issues of all sorts of descriptions in there then you really need somebody who, who, who fits well and is able to engage those students at all levels. So in AMEP you think of the community that will be involved or engaged with people from other countries ... so you could have a Chinese community or a Burmese community, and an Afghan community ... and there will be a leader in each of those communities and it's really important to be happy to engage with those because

usually the leader is the person who will or will not send most appropriate clients to the college for English classes. (HM12, Settlement English).

In other words, as noted by the AMEP teacher below, engaging learners in the AMEP context involves not just engaging interculturally to encourage students to come to class, but displaying high levels of affective commitment to students and their needs:

Engaging means for me I would think there's two perspectives. OK when you're in the classroom of course you need to engage like you need to design your teacher materials, right so that the kind of materials need to engage students' learning ... but another for me engaging is in the social life because the AMEP students are different from like ELICOS, so socialising with students is also engaging as well. So ... from time to time ... we had lunch together or and then we can talk about we're not talking about the study, we talk about their family issues ... we have a round table we have lunch together so everyone can talk about their family things. So this time for me also is you know it is engaging as well. (T10, Settlement English)

The ability to reflect on teaching and learning was considered to be an integral part of a teacher's ability to create engaging learning for their students, and this relied on teachers being able to engage in positive emotion work to motivate students. The following hiring manager with both Vocational and General/Exam English hiring experience explained that, while these abilities are ideal, they are not necessarily expected:

Yeah, you're never going to be able to teach anyone if they don't like you ... You've got to be able to deliver a lesson that has an outcome, though, like you should be able to be able to put your lesson plan together and say OK, at the end of the day I want to be able to see this from you guys and disseminate that information so the students

know what you want from them as well. And yeah, at the end of the day, yeah, you should be able to sit back and ... OK, look on a scale of, you know one to five where did that lesson sit? What could I do better if I teach that class the next time, so that is important but it's important also in self-reflection that you don't beat yourself down. Not every lesson is going to be fantastic, and I don't have an expectation of you doing a fantastic lesson. I don't come to work and do a fantastic job every day, I'd be so tired putting that on my head. So what you want is just consistency, that's all. (HM10, General/Exam & Vocational English)

Engaging learners and reflecting on teaching practice was also important in university English language centres, as this hiring manager observed:

You know unless they can teach a learner centred class and focus on reflective practice, and, developing certain areas of their teaching, are they approachable and supportive and all that sort of thing, they are the main things. (HM3, Academic/University Pathways)

Therefore, for a teacher to be seen as employable they must be able to draw on professionally sanctioned knowledge, skills and behaviours, which develop and are ideally practised within a community of supportive and experienced teachers. This ideal, however, is not always the reality. All of the participants discussed the ways in which the precarious nature of English language teaching in Australia impacts a teacher's employability, as discussed in the next section.

5.3.1.2. *Teacher employability as precarity*

The precarity of employment for English language teachers in Australia affected the participants in the four domains in similar ways although there were some subtle distinctions. All the teachers and hiring managers recognised how employability attributes such as teachers' experience, knowledge and skills combined with the market imperatives of the sector to impact teachers' employment. There were prominent differences, however, between the General/Exam English, the Settlement and Vocational English participants regarding the need for experience. All of the participants acknowledged that the meaning of the term 'flexibility' was opaque, although they did understand it as teachers being required to be subservient to their organisations' need to meet changing demands and budgetary concerns. As these demands were reported across all domains, a selection of examples is provided below. These examples show how the seemingly positive employability attributes of experience and flexibility are both used to rationalise the employment precarity of the sector.

5.3.1.2.1. *Experience*

The relationship between experience and precarity was most evident in the private language school domain, particularly in the recruitment of teachers for General/Exam English courses. In this context, teachers need to have the appropriate amount of experience so as to be classroom-ready, but not so much that they are too expensive to hire because the more experienced the teacher, the more precarious their position. As explained by the hiring managers below, newly qualified CELTA graduates were positioned as ideal as they represent 'best value for money':

But if we do need to hire somebody ... most of the time we're looking for a recent graduate, CELTA graduate, so Step two or Step 3. (HM7, General/Exam English)

We're really keen on getting the cream of the students who have done the CELTA ... and try to get those guys into our classrooms. (HM9, General/Exam English)

Not all CELTA graduates, however, were seen in the same light. As research on hiring discrimination suggests, some teachers are seen as more employable than others (Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Ruecker & Ives, 2014; Selvi, 2010). One teacher participant, who is from a background other than English, recalled how they had graduated at the top of their CELTA course and had over 15 years' experience as a primary and secondary school teacher overseas. However, they did not feel that they were seen as 'the cream of CELTA students' when they graduated. This teacher recounted how being a new CELTA graduate with no English language teaching experience in Australia was seen as a barrier to employment by hiring managers who interpreted language-based discrimination as catering to the needs of a demanding student market:

Again, I didn't have experience at that point and the DoS told me that you know we have demanding students at our institute, and they want teachers to be native either Australian, British or American, and may not receive you too well initially so think just about it and possibly at this point I will not be able to offer you work but if you come back with experience we will. Now the good part was that yes when I came back with six months experience they did employ me, and then it was great after that. (T1, General/Exam English)

For managers hiring General/Exam English teachers, a teacher's experience was also important in other ways. These participants often discussed hiring decisions as stemming from budgetary concerns, that is, they needed to consider a prospective teacher's stepped pay rate, which suggests that overall staffing costs was one of the most challenging aspects of

teacher recruitment in this domain. On the other hand, the General/Exam English teachers were also clear about how their experience could place constraints on their employability, which illustrates the demands placed on English language providers to run profitable schools: more experienced teachers were more costly and impacted schools' bottom lines.

5.3.1.12. Flexibility

Key to being seen as an employable teacher across the four teaching and learning sectors was teachers' flexibility. Although flexibility and adaptability were sometimes discussed in similar ways, adaptability was more often discussed as a classroom-based ability whereas flexibility was more related to being able to understand and adjust their behaviours to suit a school's operational demands. Thus, adaptable teachers were seen by the participants in this study as being able to modify lessons in real-time to suit their students' needs and to deal with unexpected language-based challenges in creative ways. Such teachers were also viewed as being able to adapt to changes in how the teaching was delivered, which was particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic when teaching needed to be rapidly moved online. Being flexible, on the other hand, was most often conceived as a teacher's understanding of – and ability to accommodate – employers' operational needs, such as changing timetables (for example, from day to evening classes) and changing courses or levels. For hiring managers, flexibility was crucial to a teacher being seen as employable; that is, knowing that a teacher would accept the need to adjust to operational demands meant that they were seen as more employable. In this way, flexibility was viewed not as a skill but as a practice – something that a teacher does rather than what a teacher has. Again, it was managers hiring General/Exam English teachers who most valued teachers' understanding that flexibility was required in response to operational demands. As the following hiring manager explained:

From my point of view in terms of doing staffing and stuff having that kind of attitude
OK no worries I you know I understand that you know things will change and I'm
OK with it. (HM8, General/Exam English)

Another hiring manager, however, pointed out the following contradiction: they
needed teachers experienced enough to teach on various courses and at different levels
(which required more experience) but were not allowed to hire these more experienced
managers due to directives coming from senior management:

It has been about their ability to cover different levels different classes that comes
down to experience as one point, and a second point is the pressure I get from up
there to make sure things are reasonably balanced in terms of teacher steps. So it's not
nice, or fair but it is the way it is um but primarily it's about having you know
teachers that are able to cover any kind of class basically. (HM9, General/Exam
English)

The General/Exam and Academic/Pathways English teachers were the most aware of
the need to be flexible in response to operational demands. For these teachers, flexibility was
not a choice but a necessity (T2, T4, T6,) and it was not achievable for all teachers, for
example those with families and other commitments (T6, T1). Being flexible also meant not
complaining about the precarity of the work offered (T2) and taking on the risks of
precarious work in the hope that more stable work would follow (T7). Teachers understood
flexibility, therefore, as the need to make life as easy as possible for their employers, and
there was a tacit understanding that commitment to a school's operational demands would
stand them in good stead in times when work was scarce, as confirmed by this teacher :

The people who are not flexible and not adaptable ... you're going to be the first to go once the student numbers drop. And they always are. (T4, General/Exam English)

This discussion of the theme ‘teacher employability as precarious professionalism’ has aimed to bring together the ways in which teacher employability depends on teachers being able to draw upon and develop the knowledge and skills of English language teaching deemed essential for working in the sector while also accepting – and in many ways acquiescing to – the precarity of a sector in which teachers who are willing and able to meet organisational stipulations for flexibility (associated with casualisation) are favoured. The next section considers how these key employability attributes are identified in teacher employment interviews.

5.3.2. Performing employability in teacher job interviews

Job interviews are a key part of any recruitment process (Huffcutt & Culbertson, 2011; Moore, 2017). Yet, little is known about the approaches taken in English language teacher job interviews to determine who is, and who is not, considered an employable teacher. Employability research, as previously mentioned, has tended to focus on the hiring discrimination faced by LOTE teachers, as evidenced in job advertisements (Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Selvi, 2010) and on recruitment websites (Ruecker & Ives, 2014). What has not been studied is how employability attributes are identified and displayed in English language teacher interview situations. Thus, the aim of my second research question was to explore how hiring managers and teachers felt teacher employability characteristics were elicited and demonstrated during interviews. The second theme of ‘performing employability in teacher job interviews’ therefore brings together interview participants’ insights as well my own constructions of how hiring managers elicit, and teachers demonstrate, the abilities, skills and experiences required for employability. Two key sub-themes emerged. In the

‘teacher job interviews as interaction ritual’ sub-theme, the focus is on how less structured approaches to the interview process tend to foreground, and evaluate, a teacher’s emotional (Collins, 2004; Rivera, 2015) and relational energy (Baker, 2019; Owens et al., 2016) to ‘get a feel’ for what the teacher would be like in the classroom. The second sub-theme, ‘teacher job interviews as rational evaluation’, focuses on the more structured approaches to interviews and the questions and set tasks that are used to elicit teachers’ abilities and skills, and to thus predict their employability. This sub-theme highlights the ways in which hiring managers frame their teacher job interviews as objective and rational, despite relying on the interviewees’ relational energy to make their hiring decisions. Both of these sub-themes highlight the ways in which hiring managers depend on their subjective reasoning, supported by post-recruitment observations and student feedback to assess a teachers’ employability. Teacher interviews as ‘interaction ritual’ will be explored first, followed by teacher interviews as ‘rational evaluation’. Before discussing these key themes, however, I will first provide a brief overview of some key aspects of English language teacher recruitment across the four domains, as identified through the participant interviews.

5.3.2.1. *Approaches to teacher interviews*

Irrespective of their teaching and learning context, all of the hiring managers were involved in recruiting for casual teaching positions, and those teachers deemed suitable were offered ongoing casual work when it became available. Teachers’ post-recruitment suitability was most often assessed through student feedback as well as teacher classroom observations which occurred within the first few weeks of the teacher commencing their casual employment. Positive classroom observation evaluations, together with a lack of negative feedback from students, was typically taken as an indication that the teacher was performing competently and therefore suitable for further ongoing, casual employment. However, the opposite was also true. If a hiring manager had concerns after observing the

teacher's classroom and/or the teacher received negative feedback from students, they would not be offered more work. In addition to new casual recruits, hiring managers also relied on relief teacher registers to cover classes over the short term when regular teachers were on holiday or sick. None of the hiring managers had recruited for anyone other than casual teachers in recent memory.

The preferred method for interviewing teachers was face-to-face. For the General/Exam English hiring managers (HM6, HM7, HM8, HM9, HM11), and the one Vocational and General/Exam hiring manager (HM10), employment interviews were typically one-on-one, with the hiring managers themselves interviewing the candidate. In the university English language centre context, where most of the hiring was done for Academic/Pathways English teachers, there was a mix of face-to-face, one-on-one interviewing (HM1, HM3, HM4) and an assessment centre/group interview approach (HM2, HM4, HM5). One of these hiring managers (HM4) reported that in their setting, interviews were done with two hiring managers. The hiring managers recruiting for AMEP and Vocational teachers, on the other hand, reported using panel interviews with typically three interviewers (HM12, HM13).

All of the teacher participants were employed at the time of the interviews for this research, and the majority were in casual ongoing positions (T1, T3, T4, T5, T6, T10, T11). One teacher had recently left English language teaching to pursue a corporate training role with an education start-up company (T7), while another (T8) had recently moved into a new permanent role as an Academic English tutor and coordinator. The two other teachers (T2, T9) were working in university English language centres teaching Academic English, and were on sessional contracts (i.e., during semester time only). The majority of the teacher participants reported their recruitment experiences as being face-to-face, one-on-one interviews with a hiring manager who was typically a Director of Studies or occasionally a

Senior Teacher (T1, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8). One of the university English language centre teachers teaching Academic English (T2) reported having a panel interview with two hiring managers. Another (T9) reported having experienced both the assessment centre/group interview approach and an informal ‘chat’ with two hiring managers. The two AMEP teachers reported that their interview experiences were with a panel of either two or three interviewers.

All interview participants reported that their interviews were on a continuum between more structured and less structured. Both of these types of interview used past behaviour and hypothetical situation questions to ascertain the teacher’s suitability for a role. The key distinction, however, was that the more structured interviews used additional standardised methods such as teaching specific tasks – for example, a mini-lesson planning task, or tasks used to identify the aims and structure of a lesson. The less structured interviews did not use set teaching focused tasks. Recruitment methods ranged from the less structured ‘informal chat’ approach to the more structured and formal approach of an assessment centre. All of the teachers had attended an interview for their current roles and were able to recall at least some part of their interview. Perhaps unsurprisingly, teachers were usually not able to recall their interview experiences in detail, which was in contrast to the hiring managers, who were all able to recall in detail at least some of the common interview questions they used with teacher candidates. The hiring managers who used a more structured approach to interviews (e.g., having set questions and tasks they used with all teacher candidates) were able to more fully explain their interview processes (HM2, HM3, HM8, HM12). All other hiring managers admitted to taking a less structured approach in that they did not have set questions or tasks that they used identically with all candidates.

5.3.2.2. Teacher employment interviews as interaction ritual

5.3.2.2.1. Rapport building

In constructing the theme of ‘teacher job interviews as interaction ritual’ (Collins, 2004), the hiring managers tended to rely on the recall abilities of the teacher interviewees to recount positive and negative past teaching behaviours, and this was the predominant way in which teachers’ affective abilities and teaching skills were evaluated, and for their future performance to be predicted (Clement, 2009). Both hiring managers and teachers recalled using and responding to past behaviour questions (e.g., “Tell me about a time when”) and these tended to be used more than hypothetical situation questions (e.g., “What would you do if”). Past behaviour questions were used to encourage teachers to reflect on their classroom experiences and these questions were directly related to the relational aspects of teaching (e.g., “How do you deal with difficult students?”). These types of past behaviour questions were seen as providing a clear sense of a teacher candidate’s suitability as they were designed to surface their approaches to building rapport and care in their teaching, which was thought to reflect the teacher’s desire to support and motivate students (Noddings, 2012; K. O’Connor, 2008). The following AMEP hiring manager explained how important it was for a teacher to be able to demonstrate their emotional and relational capacities to be seen as employable:

Yeah so I think with rapport when I ask, when I talk about the importance of rapport and then I say what kind of things can we do to build rapport ... some teachers need a little bit of drawing out but I think those that really get that those the students are humans, you know adults as well is really important and that some of these people are really completely feel really vulnerable and whose first language is not English they kind of get a loss of identity and so teachers who can sort of understand that it is so

much more as I say beyond the teaching and I can identify that getting to know students, creating that very safe environment in the classroom, understanding that outside of the classroom as well it's really important so those are the kind of things that I want to hear somebody saying. (HM8, General/Exam English)

Central to these displays of emotional and relational energy being seen as employable traits was the hiring managers' confidence that these energies would transfer to the classroom. The hiring managers reported that it was important that they felt a positive emotional connection with the teachers. For example, if they did not feel any emotional energy (Collins, 2004) in the interview, they could not imagine how the teacher would be able to generate positive emotional responses with their students, as positivity was required to motivate students' learning. The teachers also believed that one of the most important ways in which they could demonstrate their employability was to establish a rapport with the hiring manager. Positive body language, such as eye contact, gestures and smiling, were seen as demonstrating their confidence and enthusiasm, indicating to the hiring manager that this type of energy would be transferred into the classroom. This ability to build immediate rapport and exude confidence with a hiring manager was seen as indicative not only of their relational abilities but that these abilities would encourage future students to view them as competent and effective, as the following General/Exam English teacher explained:

I think it's rapport, if I can build rapport with you in an interview in within 5 minutes or even in less time than that I think it's established. And if I'm able to do that with you, then am I able to do that in the classroom, or am I not able to do that then I'm not able to do that in the classroom. And, so I think that rapport is so incredibly important because you walk into a classroom and you're on your own, and it's happening and those students they want to make up their minds about you immediately. Is this new

teacher that's walking in someone who can handle things that are thrown at them or not, and I think the confidence that you exude is a huge indicator of what you can and can't handle and that gets like I said it's hard to quantify but I think that gets communicated quite instantaneously (T4, General/Exam English).

5.3.2.2.2. *Potential for faking*

Both teachers and hiring managers commented on the fallibility of predicting a teacher's competence by how they recounted experiences, and the extent to which they could predict whether a teacher would be able to connect with students based on their emotional energy and relational abilities in an interview. They all acknowledged that interviews are performative and that teachers can 'fake' emotion and attempt to manage interviewers' impressions (Tsai & Huang, 2013) so as to align themselves with the characteristics stated in the job advertisements. Being an effective teacher was also part of the performative nature of the interaction as ritual theme, as highlighted by the following teacher and hiring manager:

So saying someone who's enthusiastic, who is energetic and if you're working in ELICOS, we can turn it on for half an hour interview, I mean honestly, like really saying ... we want someone creative or we want someone innovative, everyone thinks they're creative, everyone thinks they're innovative. No one's sitting there going I'm boring as batshit, OK and no one sitting there saying that, so it kind of seems superficial to ask. (T8, Academic/University Pathways English)

And, and, I will say, it's, it's terribly hard and we've made some dreadful choices based on ohh this you know they've responded exceptionally well. They're bright and bubbly and really engaging. The students hate them and they're not self-reflective and it's just it's really difficult. (HM13, Vocational English)

5.3.2.2.3. Understanding institutional context

A final aspect identified within the ‘teacher job interviews as interaction ritual’ theme was the importance of teachers being able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of their English language teaching contexts. While all of the hiring managers noted the importance of this contextual knowledge, it was most important to managers recruiting General/Exam, Vocational and AMEP English teachers. General/Exam English hiring managers, in particular, wanted to see whether teachers – even newly graduated teachers – understood that students were customers (although this terminology was not specifically used in teacher interviews) and that students’ experiences outside of the classroom were just as important to the teachers as those inside the classroom. This focus on the student experience included being alert to students’ homesickness and mental health issues (HM8) and being able to direct them to local services and amenities, where necessary (HM3, Academic/Pathways English). Being familiar with the broader sector’s regulatory bodies and frameworks was also seen as important (Academic/Pathways English (HM2), General/Exam English (HM8) and Vocational English (HM10)). Also important for Vocational and AMEP English teachers to demonstrate was their willingness to support students by connecting with their lives outside of the classroom, and understanding barriers to their attendance and progression. For example, teachers might help them outside of class activities by, for example, liaising with family members, with schools or with migrant services (HM12, HM13). This need for teachers to demonstrate these types of contextual understandings illustrates, yet again, the ways in which a teacher’s emotion work is important to their employability.

5.3.2.3. Teacher job interviews as rational evaluation

5.3.2.3.1. A structured approach?

The second main theme, ‘teacher job interviews as rational evaluation’, relates to the more structured approaches used in English language teacher interviews to predict a teacher’s employability. Even these more structured interviews, however, were only partially aligned with the ways in which structured interviews are described in the literature (Levashina et al., 2014; D. Zhang et al., 2018). This was because the teacher recruitment interviews included only two of the content components and two of the evaluation components previously attributed to structured interviews in other contexts (M. Campion et al., 1997; Levashina et al., 2014). With respect to the content component in the teacher interviews, the techniques used by hirers involved questions derived from a job analysis and the same questions were asked of each applicant. The evaluation component involved relying on the same interviewer/s for all applicants, and in the interviewer or recruitment training. Even though the hiring managers interviewed for this study employed apparently objectively framed structured approaches in their interview methods and techniques, in fact, very little in their interviews seemed to reflect the many years of research related to the reliability and validity of employment interviews (Arseneault & Roulin, 2021; M. Blackman, 2002; Engel, 2013; Huffcutt & Culbertson, 2011; Huffcutt et al., 2013; Levashina & Campion, 2006). Therefore, although the ‘rational evaluation’ in these structured teacher employment interviews was seemingly based on standardised methods, a hiring manager’s actual ability to reliably predict a teacher’s employability seemed to be more dependent on rapport building, and on classroom observations and student feedback once the teacher was employed, than on the validity of the interview itself. In this regard, one hiring manager commented:

But in terms of their classroom performance? We do classroom observations once a month for the first three months and gauge from that whether or not they're on the ball and also student comments. Students will complain as you know the moment the students think the teacher doesn't know what they're doing. They will complain because they're paying money and it's a product, yeah. No complaints is good, yeah, for the first week, yeah ... so that's really how we would do it. (HM11, General/Exam English).

The most common tasks used by hiring managers, and recalled by teachers across all four domains, involved the teacher candidate answering grammar questions, talking through a lesson plan, responding to a particular type of language or skills problem, identifying the structure and aims of a lesson and/or providing teacher written feedback (the last example was found only in Academic English contexts) (T1, T6, T10, HM2, HM3, HM4, HM8, HM11, HM12). As the General/Exam English hiring manager below makes clear, a teacher's pedagogical awareness and their emotion work both need to be displayed in their interviews:

Yeah and I think that why the interview process for me is, really, really important as that's when I can ask those questions to find out whether those teachers do actually know those fundamental things. So ... as we know English language ... having those technical skills is extremely important but also having the ability to build rapport very well with students is also very, very important ... So the kind of questions and activities that I would do in the interview process hopefully draws out to make sure those teachers do understand the basics of the structure of a lesson, and what the student needs, and being able to react to student needs, and so on, and planning especially. (HM8, General/Exam English)

The most highly structured teacher interviews were from the AMEP domain as hiring managers were required to undergo specific interview training. However, other hiring managers, (HM2, HM3, HM10, HM6) also indicated that while they had had some recruitment process training through the International Diploma in Language Teaching Management, this did not specifically include interview training. Further, AMEP hiring manager mentioned having a set of scripted questions from which they cannot deviate:

When it comes to state government entities ... you are provided with a set of questions that you can only ask to all interviewees so you can't really deviate too much on that. (HM12, Settlement English)

Efforts were made to increase objectivity in the interviews through the use of assessment centres and panels in the AMEP, TAFE and university language centre contexts, and these attempts at objectivity were strengthened by relying on multiple interviewers whose ratings of interviewees were moderated in some way (HM2, HM5, HM12, HM13). Overall, the more structured interview processes allowed hiring managers to move beyond merely assessing a teacher's emotional and relational capabilities, which empowered teachers to be able to showcase more of their language and pedagogical awareness and expertise.

5.3.2.3.2. Are you committed to professional development?

One interview question common to all hiring managers, regardless of whether the interview was more or less structured, concerned a teacher's commitment to professional development (PD) (Day & Sachs, 2004). Even so, there were marked differences in the types of PD that teachers from the four domains were expected to discuss in response to this question. In General/Exam English and Academic/University Pathways, past behaviour

interview questions focused on PD that involved reflecting on teaching practice such as, “tell me about some of the professional development you have undertaken in the last 12 months”. The expectation was that teachers would discuss any PD they had undertaken either within a workplace or outside of the workplace (HM3, Academic/University Pathways). For AMEP teachers working in the Vocational English and Settlement English domain, PD questions tended to be more concerned with compliance, upgrades to the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE) and other contractual obligations (T11, HM12, HM13). While both hiring managers and teachers in Vocational English and Settlement/AMEP English did mention PD that was more focused on teaching (for example, pronunciation sessions or online teaching), these teachers’ PD was more aligned with what Richards and Farrell (2005) call ‘teacher training’, that is, training required for industry regulations or compliance purposes. Yet, there are also regulatory PD requirements for General/Exam English and Academic/University Pathways providers. The ELICOS Standards (DESE, 2018b) which govern these domains, for example, stipulate that providers must provide ongoing PD for teachers, and implement a PD program every year.

For these reasons, when a hiring manager and/or the school or institution they represented highly valued PD, having a teacher display their commitment to PD during the interview was especially important. As mentioned above, all English language providers are required to provide PD to their teaching staff and to have an ongoing PD program, yet, additional and external PD was often pursued in the teacher’s own ‘magic time’, that is, the unpaid time during which casual teachers are expected to perform work-related duties (Kouritzin et al., 2022). This additional PD was important for teachers to discuss during their job interviews to be seen as more employable, and this was particularly the case in Academic/University Pathways English (HM2, HM3, HM4). Indeed, not displaying these

PD ‘feeling rules’ (Benesch, 2019, 2020; Hochschild, 1979, 1983; Pereira, 2018) could be detrimental to teachers’ being seen as employable, as explained by one hiring manager:

One particular teacher in his interview I said to him and so where do you feel you need to develop professionally, how do you feel you should develop? And he goes nah, I’m good I’ve done my professional development. I said yeah but what else do you feel in future you know that you may need to keep developing? And he said you mean personally or ... ? And I said no professionally. And he said no, no I’m pretty much, I’m pretty much there, I’m good. And so I didn’t hire him. (HM5, General/Exam English)

5.3.3.3.3 *Evaluating communication skills*

The final aspect of the ‘teacher job interviews as rational evaluation’ theme was the assessment of a teacher’s communication skills during the interview. It is in this aspect that claims to a hiring manager’s objectivity in assessing a teacher’s communication skills were revealed to be linked to the needs of the student market and neoliberal discourses of quality. That is, they were clearly framed within discourses of accent, race-based discrimination and linguistic racism masquerading as ‘consumer’ dictates (Dobinson & Mercieca, 2020; Dovchin, 2020a, 2020b, Flores & Rosa, 2015; Mahboob, 2011; Ramjattan, 2015, 2019; Rudolph et al., 2015; Selvi, 2014); Skutnabb-Kangas, 2015; Tankosić & Dovchin, 2023) because the importance of ‘communication skills’ was only discussed for teachers from language backgrounds other than English (i.e., ‘non-native’ English speaking teachers). Although the survey results indicated that ‘spoken and written communication skills’ were ‘extremely important’ to teacher employability (Section 5.2.3), all of the hiring managers (except for the Vocational/TAFE English and AMEP hiring managers) spoke of evaluating a teacher’s accent only if the teacher was not a ‘native speaker’ of English. While none of the

hiring managers seemed to have any qualms about interviewing ‘non-native’ English-speaking teachers, the General/Exam English and Academic/University Pathways English hiring managers specifically invoked accent as a way of evaluating the applicant’s communication skills. On the other hand, Vocational/TAFE English and AMEP hiring managers did not do this, and in fact, saw significant benefits for their students in hiring ‘non-native speakers’ of English (HM12, HM13). The only hiring managers to not mention accent as a potential recruitment hurdle for teachers were the sole ‘non-native’ English-speaking hiring manager (HM4, Academic/University Pathways English) and a hiring manager who grew up in a multicultural, English as a second language, environment (HM5). The implications of a teacher’s ‘non-native’ English-speaking status was not confined to their accent, however, but extended to racial discrimination and the expectations of demanding students, particularly ‘European’ ones (HM6). According to one of the General/Exam English teacher participants (of Indian heritage), demanding Europeans and their expectations were the reason for their teaching contract being revoked:

Once I got my first break, I had a really bad experience with one of the English schools that I was working with. So I had a class ... and they all had really nice things to say about me, they were really happy. And the new girls who joined, I think who were European, and erm, all they said actually to the management was that we don’t er, that we’d like her to talk a little slower. But I don’t know how it was interpreted because I was called in the next day, and I was just told that oh they cannot understand your accent and you know it would be, I mean it would be nice if you just don’t come in from tomorrow which was really shocking for me. (T1, General/Exam English)

This accent-based discrimination was also evident in the way ‘unintelligible’ accents were connected to the quality of the teacher and the school, as reported by the following Vocational and General/Exam English hiring manager (from a private RTO):

However, if we do meet you in the interview and we feel that pronunciation is OK, going on then, yeah, but we can’t have that issue and we have never hired anyone like that either. Yeah, because you can’t, basically, you know, because you can’t. It’s not that you, you shouldn’t do that, that you can’t do that. I know lots of schools where there are teachers teaching and it’s you know, we’ll call them the dodgy schools because that’s what they are and so there are dodgy teachers. (HM10, General/Exam and Vocational English)

Another General/Exam English hiring manager was even more explicit about their school’s hiring policy with respect to linguistic and race-based discrimination:

Erm, we certainly interview both. It wouldn’t be a barrier, background ... the school has a loose policy of only employing native speakers, but it’s not set in stone at all and, and if I was blunt, I think it’s largely about how they look rather than their actual language strength. You know, traditionally this was, a lot of Europeans came here, so they want people who looked Australian, but that’s really faded with the South Americans coming here now far more it’s not such an issue. (HM6, General/Exam English)

In summary, while the hiring managers all took different approaches to teacher interviews – with some, such as HM6 above, adopting race-based criteria – all believed their approaches to be valid and usually successful at eliciting teacher employability traits and abilities, which they saw as predictive of teaching ability. However, some teachers, as well

as some hiring managers, did question the validity of the interview process, citing teachers' use of impression management techniques and the potential for faking during the interview (Levashina & Campion, 2006; Schneider et al., 2015). Despite claims to objectivity and validity, some interview research studies have found that the standard job interview can be unreliable at predicting future job performance (Moore, 2017) although other studies have produced strong evidence that highly structured interviews are more effective in predicting job performance than unstructured interviews (Huffcutt & Culbertson, 2011). Further, more structured interview processes have been shown to reduce discrimination (Wolgast et al., 2017), while rapport-building – even in structured interviews – has been found to influence subsequent interviewer evaluations of candidates (Barrick et al., 2012; Levashina et al., 2014). In addition, research has found that the outcomes of unstructured interviews are particularly impacted by candidates' self-presentation efforts (Barrick et al., 2009). That is, in unstructured job interviews, hiring managers' overconfidence in their predictions of the candidates' future job performance can not only fail to assist with personnel decisions, but can be detrimental to them (Kausel et al., 2016). These discrepancies between the employment interview research and how hiring managers in the English language teaching sector see their recruitment interviews as valid can perhaps be explained by the precariousness of employment in this sector. Objectivity in hiring processes is considered to be important for professionalism, and as recruitment processes are viewed as a reliable and necessary part of hiring, it would be virtually impossible to consider recruiting teachers without first conducting an interview (Huffcutt & Culbertson, 2011) no matter how unreliable the results may be. In reality, all of the recruitment discussed in the interviews for this study was for short term casual teaching, and, although the stakes were higher in some sectors (university language centres, in particular) and for some non-native English-speaking teachers with accents, regardless of whether hiring managers employed a more or less

structured approach to hiring, any bad recruitment decisions could be mitigated by the precarity of the work. In fact, it was the student feedback and initial teacher observations that acted as the (perhaps more objective) evaluation of a teacher's ability in the classroom, and it is these mechanisms that act as the true evaluative assessments in the recruitment of teachers.

5.3.3. Power, care and frustration

The final theme, 'power, care and frustration', responds to RQ3, 'How do English language teachers and hiring managers position themselves in relation to teacher employability in the current context of adult English language teaching in Australia?' This theme brings together the ways in which teachers and hiring managers negotiated their understandings and experiences of teacher employability in English language teaching in Australia to align with – and in some cases resist – different aspects of the discourses of employability (Becker, 1975; P. Brown et al., 2015; P. Brown & Lauder, 2016; Gray & Block, 2012; Holborow, 2013, 2018; Yorke, 2006) evident in the new work order (Gee et al., 1996). As shown in previous sections in this chapter, teachers and hiring managers have very similar understandings of teacher employability attributes; that is, these attributes are viewed as a teacher's possession of particular skills and a demonstration of particular behaviours. Yet, the ways in which the participants in this study experienced employability highlight the tensions that lie behind the idea of an 'employable teacher identity'. As such, the ideas discussed in the following sections explore the ways in which teachers and hiring managers make sense of disparate employability identity positions. First, the concept of 'power' is used to examine how hiring managers and teachers draw on the discourses of empowerment (and disempowerment) inherent in their institutional roles, which underpin both the possibilities and limitations associated with being able to act on (or not) what it means to be an employable teacher. 'Care' explores how teachers consider an ethics of care to be

essential to teacher employability while ‘frustration’ explores the negative emotion work underlying discourses of teacher employability. This discussion highlights the way in which the precarity of work resulting from flexibilisation has destabilised teachers’ abilities to see a future for their professional selves, thereby limiting their capacities to progress as English language teachers in Australia.

5.3.3.1 Power

Both teachers and hiring managers in this study drew upon their biographical histories and positions within the English language teaching profession to attest to their credibility in understanding what it takes to be an employable teacher in this context. For hiring managers, the power that stems from this knowledge inheres not only in their institutional authority (Foucault, 1977, 1982) but in their power to act, to classify what does and what does not constitute an employable teacher, and to act upon these classifications in situations such as job interviews and classroom observations. Hiring managers across all domains (HM12, HM15, HM17, HM18, HM20, HM 21, HM22, HM23) spoke of the need to see a teacher as embodying employability, particularly the characteristics of engagement and dynamism, as these excerpts highlight:

If I were to walk past your classroom, our classrooms have glass walls, if I were to walk past your classroom, what would I see in your class? Engage from their response whether or not they are dynamic, whether they’re teacher focused, always standing in front of the class, you know. Everybody listen to me or whether they’re engaging students to work collaboratively in groups and really drive their own learning.

(HM11, General/Exam English)

... they seem to be largely taught just to go through the book from start to finish ... I was having to bust a gut to actually tell to put the book down and to do

communication and things like moving the, getting the students to move during the lesson. (HM6, General/Exam English)

Yet, these institutionally aligned positionings of teacher employability reveal tensions, which mostly stemmed from two of flexibilisation's key tenets: precarious work as normative, and the expectation that teachers will work to continuously develop their skills (see also the discussion of 'frustration' further below). All but one of the hiring managers had extensive English language teaching experience themselves, which meant they were cognisant of, and empathetic to, what it means to be an English language teacher in a predominantly casualised teaching world. Yet, their power to affect change was mostly ignored and there was an obvious tension in their knowing what an employable teacher is and understanding the precarity of the work while at the same time being blind to the fact that, due to their privileged managerial positions, they could attempt to agitate for change. It was when discussing teacher pay, the Step System, in particular, that the hiring managers revealed their inertia regarding the consequences of a teacher having 'too much' experience, as the following examples attest:

We are so constrained by those KPIs ... but there is no choice other than to recruit teachers who are less experienced and so on ... so yeah I the staffing, the cost thing is a massive, it makes most of the decisions really ultimately to be honest. (HM8, General/Exam English)

Of course what they get paid, I don't know the answer to that. I know it's difficult, I worked as a casual for 10 years myself. I've also seen it from the management end when you get the fluctuations and you've got no choice but to let people go. I don't have a solution for that one I'm afraid ... I think you just have to be realistic in

choosing your profession, maybe that's what it comes down to. (HM5, General/Exam English)

No sessional, all casual. Yeah, because, yeah, you just can't ... you can sort of see the numbers coming in in the next four or five months, but you can never, you never know what's going to happen ... And that's the thing too, because of the ebb and flow of the industry, this is why you don't have or we don't have permanent part-time teachers. (HM10 General/Exam English/Vocational English)

The above comments highlight the ways in which hiring managers position themselves as disempowered, as cogs in a wheel, and with no agency. There is, of course, some truth to this. Hiring managers, while typically more securely employed, have to manage competing responsibilities, such as budgets and staffing, and as many teacher and hiring managers in this research attest, teacher managers are typically supportive of and empathetic to teachers' precarious positions. Nonetheless, this relinquishing of their power to act in response to the faceless 'ebbs and flows of the industry' and the 'no choice but to let people go' indexes their acquiescence to market-driven imperatives. As the findings presented thus far suggest, many of the processes behind employability are relational, and therefore, it may be expected that it is in these relational processes that resistance to taken-for-granted assumptions can flourish.

5.3.3..2. *Care*

Whereas the hiring managers in this study drew upon their biographical histories and the power inherent in their institutional roles to position themselves as sanctioning neoliberal conceptualisations of teacher employability, for the teachers, their idea of what it meant to be employable mostly stemmed from an ethics of care (Noddings, 2007, 2012), which was

centred around the relational, emotional and intuitive foundations of teaching; in other words, the teachers placed the student-teacher relationship at the heart of employability. Pedagogies of care were not only essential to the teachers' own conceptualisations of what teaching is, but reflected the discourses of teacher employability prevalent in English language teaching, more broadly. Teachers often drew on the metaphor of teaching as involving 'passion', that is, the employable teacher acts from a position of love and compassion, as stated by this General/Exam English teacher: "The fact that I love to do it drives me to do a better job ... it doesn't matter how I get it across I have to, and that's the passion" (T1). Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, when teaching moved online, the opportunity to teach and interact with their students was important to another teacher: "Even when I taught that private student, it was great having that interaction, it's something I really love, I really love it" (T2, General/Exam English). Despite this, having a love of teaching was not seen as being synonymous with being valued as it can be in other types of work:

I love teaching, this is who I am this is my being but you know when I looked at my options, I go OK ... I've taken my teaching skills and moved all the way to the other side of the world have applied them in a different field which is valued. (T7, General/Exam English)

Some teachers drew on the discourse of education as 'transformational', with the teacher variously metaphorically constructed as a gardener carefully nurturing and tending to their learners' needs (T1, General/Exam English) or a magician who conjures self-belief in their students where no one else has been able to (T5, General/Exam English). What this means is that English language teaching is not just about teaching language but requires a range of caring abilities, as explained by this Academic/University Pathways teacher:

You need to have a lot of patience, you need to be very empathetic to what your students' needs are, you understand their problems, you take time to explain, you take time to set up a context of a lesson for the students which I mean, these are all the personality or the characteristics of, that we as an ESL teachers have. (T2, Academic/University Pathways English)

For AMEP teachers, this pedagogy of care requires them to take on the highly complex emotion work (for which they are not trained) of supporting migrants and refugees, many of whom have experienced trauma in their lives and who come to the English language classroom with complex literacy needs (T5 & T10, Settlement/Vocational English; T11, Settlement English). The Settlement English teachers, whose contexts are directly impacted by contractual changes and obligations, saw their care and understanding of learner needs as being in opposition to the bureaucratic, top-down approach taken by faceless government officials. These tensions were often discussed in relation to the move toward competency-based learning with its focus on job-ready skills, which many teachers have resisted due to their belief in the superiority of language acquisition-based pedagogies of English language teaching (T5, T10, T11). The following Settlement/Vocational English teacher made such tensions clear:

I resist that you know, you know that kind of like so called skills based I still preferred using the daily teaching materials so you're actively focused on students' language point so they are able to build up their language ... it's a really stupid program the new framework, it shouldn't be like that because the government doesn't

understand at all they just ... you know that the migrants I mean they just want people to finish and get a job. (T10, Settlement/Vocational English)

Teachers also foregrounded the tensions inherent in pedagogies of care when they problematised how caring impacts teacher identity. For these teachers, caring about student learning and students' individual needs meant that they needed to be continuously adaptive, either concealing or revealing aspects of their identities in order to build connections with their students. In this way, the teachers showed that they were aware of the need to 'perform' employability for different students and highlighted how pedagogies of care intersect with emotion work and an employable identity. These tensions were summed up by one General/Exam English teacher as follows:

Erm, well I think, I think I definitely read the room. So if my quirkiness is not going to work for a certain set of students, I reel that in quick smart and if any aspects of my personality is not going to gel with students then I completely pull that back and pull it in. And then I try and figure out what works, what clicks with this group because the group dynamic from one class to the next is so unique, so different. So ... in that way it's acknowledging what does and doesn't work and tailoring it to that group for what's going to work best for them. (T4)

For some teachers, this need to perform certain roles for students was problematic. One commented that an English language teacher has to be "an all singing, all dancing performer" (T8, Academic English/University Pathways) while another reported that they have to "go out of their way to be popular with students because they'll worry they'll receive negative feedback and ... won't be given work ... I'm just like wow, this is really the

context that people are working under” (T9, Academic English/University Pathways). Other teachers noted that English language teachers work in a de-professionalised space where fun can replace learning (T3 & T7 General/Exam English). Tensions such as these were also evident in the next, and final, aspect of this theme, that is, teachers’ exasperation regarding how employability-related expectations can limit their future career possibilities.

5.3.3.3. *Frustration*

If a pedagogy of care, as just described, centres around the role of positive affect as crucial for teaching and teacher employability, then ‘frustration’ can be seen to be the opposite of care. Frustration mostly derived from the instability of contingent work as well as from the contradictions between precarity being the norm in the sector yet continuous professional development being seen, at the same time, as integral to teacher employability. This ideal of the contingently contracted yet professionally-minded employable teacher embodies the characteristics of neoliberalism whereby teachers are expected to have the entrepreneurial spirit required to develop as a teacher. That is, the employable teacher is seen as not resting on their laurels but ceaselessly seeking out opportunities to advance their skills and teaching competencies through professional development (PD).

Being subservient to the requirements of continuous PD is one of the essential characteristics of teacher employability, as already reported (see e.g., Chapter 4, Sections 4.4.2.1.5 and 4.4.3.1.2; and Section 5.3.2.3.2 above in this chapter). The teachers in this study all understood the importance and necessity of developing their teaching practice (see Section 5.3.1.1.1) and saw the value of in-service classroom observations and the professional learning opportunities that come from working within a community of practice. Yet, for these teachers, the instability of casual work was not only contentious due to what it does not offer to them, but also due to what is expected from them. Teachers’ dissatisfaction, therefore, stemmed not only from the precarious work in their sector – with its contradictory

demands for highly qualified, committed, caring teachers coupled with low pay and short term contracts – but also from the disconnect between these conditions and expectations. They understood that the dangling carrot of continued work was being framed within the discourses of PD. Behind their frustration was a sense of the futility in subscribing to the discourses of professionalism when future visions of career progression were nebulous and progression seemingly unattainable. Teachers from all the domains expressed their exasperation about this situation. I would like to end this section, therefore, with some of their voices, which effectively capture the positions inherent in the theme ‘power, care and frustration’.

We do we do have professional development but sometimes I mean as a casual, sometimes as a casual, to be honest as a casual if I’m not paid why do I need to do that? Cos our time is also precious as well. I mean and also we don’t have incentives to do it. So why should I? I mean maybe I’m a bit selfish or whatever but for me no, you know? And do you use a lot of your own time anyway with all of this admin work, of course, but we’re not paid for that so yeah, this is why I always say to my colleagues, like when you see the future, it’s not worth it. (T10, Settlement/Vocational English)

Yeah, er, yes, that’s right because you can’t get a permanent position so you also don’t have the opportunities to actually do a lot of things that you want to do, the things that you’re trained to do. OK for example like writing curriculum, designing courses, or designing assessments. Or you know being part of research projects or something just because you are a casual teacher you don’t get all this opportunities. Yes, it’s very limiting. And then all you’re hired for, the only thing you are hired for

is just to teach, and that's all. And you're paid by the hours, you know. (T2, Academic/University Pathways English)

You know, professional developments and things, but yet it's kind of like you, you can acquire all this professional development, but how is your job going to change essentially when it's so dependent on you know, how many students come in in the next cohort kind of thing? So I do sort of question you know if I were 25 or 30 now, would I go into this? Would I do something else completely different or would I just do it as a temporary thing because I just look at and think, you know, well, unless you want to be a manager, what is there? You know, what are your openings as a teacher? (T9, Academic/University Pathways English)

I feel extremely burnt out a lot of the time and often think, ohh I could earn more money working, you know, night shift at Coles. Why am I even here doing this? I think I feel devalued sometimes when we're not recognised with the wage that should go along with it. And expected to do so many compliance activities. And the whole centre, it's not even just about our wage but the centre is not paid well enough to make it viable business. And in fact our centre is up and down all the time as to whether we're viable to stay open and that's really stressful. So yeah, it's extremely stressful. I'm so grateful that the students are so lovely and appreciate what I do so much, otherwise I couldn't continue. (T11, Settlement English)

I mean, I would love, I would love to do more training, yeah I'd love to do more study. I guess the thing is a lot of the study that you do there's not very far you can go, you know, there's senior teacher or there's a management role. There aren't that many avenues in ELICOS, in the type of school that I work at. So I don't have, I don't

really have any desire to be a head teacher, I don't really have a desire to work in management so for me the study would purely be for my own professional development and I'd love to do it but it's ... whatever study I do it's not going to make a huge difference to my remuneration so it would be for myself it wouldn't necessarily be for work. (T6, General/Exam English)

5.4. Summary of findings

This chapter has presented the findings of a teacher employability survey ($n=49$) and 24 semi-structured interviews with 11 teachers and 13 hiring managers in the English language teaching sector in Australia. The survey findings were used to frame the interview discussions, which explored some of the key attributes of English language teacher employability in this context. Unlike the survey, which addressed RQ1, the interviews were designed to respond to all three research questions (i.e., RQ1, RQ2 (a), (b), and RQ3 (a), (b)). The basic descriptive statistical survey results and the thematic analysis of the interviews together provide a clearer understanding of what English language teacher employability means to teachers and hiring managers in this context.

In terms of their education, teachers working (or seeking to work) in this sector in Australia must be degree-qualified and possess a teaching and learning specific pre-service English language teaching qualification. The teaching qualification of choice for entry into the private language school sector is the CELTA, while other in-service qualifications, such as the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE) and the Master of TESOL were required for teachers working in Vocational English and AMEP, and Academic/University Pathways English, respectively. Yet, teaching qualifications, as shown in the theme 'power, care and frustration', discussed above, could act as both a credential permitting entry into English language teaching or a limitation for teachers who wanted to develop professionally, or progress their careers by changing roles or sectors. While the cost and time needed to gain

additional qualifications were barriers for teachers, at the same time – for General/Exam English teachers working in private language schools at least – there was a further disincentive because being more qualified (and more experienced) often meant being less employable due to market-driven budgeting constraints in that domain.

The extent of a teacher's experience and their employability were viewed differently across the four domains. While the survey found that 5-7 years was slightly more important to employability, in the interviews it was made clear by the participants that for General/Exam English teachers, in particular, this same experience could be a double-edged sword. Newly qualified teachers with little or no teaching experience were seen as 'value for money'; however, as these same teachers become more experienced, they also become more costly, and therefore less employable. There was also some indication that for teachers with language backgrounds other than English, being a newly qualified CELTA teacher could mean having to further prove oneself and gain more teaching experience before being considered employable, especially if seeking employment with providers who might consider themselves 'high quality'. For Vocational English and AMEP teachers, while experience was highly valued, it was more often linked to regulatory and contractual compliance than to pedagogy.

In relation to 'teaching and learning specific skills', the results of the survey suggested that a cluster of five student-centred, relational skills were the most highly valued (all were rated 'extremely important'). Three of these five had a standard deviation of 1: 'ability to reflect on own teaching', 'ability to reflect on student learning' and 'ability to create a collaborative learning environment'; and two displayed no deviation at all: 'ability to build rapport with learners' and 'ability to deliver student centred learning'. Of the generic skills, the most important was 'spoken and written communication skills'. The interviews explored these skills in more depth with the participants and found that they were related to

the survey question dealing with ‘personal attributes’, in which being ‘engaging’ and ‘approachable’ were ranked as the most important, followed by ‘enthusiastic’ and ‘collaborative’, and then ‘adaptable’ and ‘supportive’.

The interview findings suggest that these personal attributes and skills did not necessarily require a teacher to ‘be’ engaging, approachable, adaptable, etc. as such, but to see these attributes as an important aspect of their teaching practice. In other words, teachers ‘do’ engaging, approachable and adaptive teaching as a form of social practice in which their autonomy is exercised but also constrained (Haslanger, 2018). This was evident in the teachers’ appreciation that to to be seen as employable, they needed to ‘perform’ and demonstrate these attributes and skills not only inside the classroom, and outside of it, but also during their interviews. One of the clearest indications of teachers needing to perform these display rules (Benesch, 2018; Hochschild, 1979, 1983) was the distinction between ‘adaptability’ and ‘flexibility’. Although the teacher participants talked about both of these attributes during their interviews, adaptability was most often indexed as a classroom practice (e.g., changing a planned lesson to cater to in-the-moment student needs) whereas flexibility was indexed to the ways in which teachers were either tacitly or explicitly required to adjust to the organisations’ demands as needed (e.g., changing timetables, courses, or shortening of contracts).

Yet, it was not enough for teachers to have the appropriate education and teaching qualifications, experience, and skills to be seen as employable, they also needed to be able to demonstrate these in the employment interview and be assessed for them. Ultimately, it was this co-creation, negotiation and performance of the employable identity that was central to being offered employment.

The most common approach to the teacher interviews were one-to-one, face-to-face interviews with a hiring manager. In Academic/University Pathways English, there was a

mix of this approach and the assessment centre approach. In Vocational English, there was a mix of the one-to-one, face-to-face approach and panel interviews, while in the AMEP, panel interviews were preferred.

Interviews were conducted on a continuum between less and more structured, with the most structured interviews employing set teaching tasks to ascertain a teacher's pedagogical knowledge. The less structured interviews (i.e., those without set tasks) relied on past behaviour questions to elicit from the teachers the ways in which they would deal with particular teaching situations and types of students. For both the more and less structured interviews, importance was placed on a teachers' emotional and relational energy and their ability to build a connection with the hiring manager, which was seen as indicative of the kinds of interactions that the teacher would go on to have with students. Irrespective of the interview approach, to be seen as employable, teachers needed to demonstrate both their emotional and relational abilities as well as a sound foundation in English language teaching pedagogy. The findings also showed that teacher evaluations based on the interviews relied on hiring managers' subjective evaluations (although this was less so in the AMEP), which were supported by student and observational feedback if the teacher was employed. Despite hiring managers tacitly appealing to the reliability and validity of their interview processes, in reality, student feedback is seen as an essential part of the casual teacher recruitment process, with negative student feedback holding enough sway to lose a teacher work. It was also considered to be important in the employment interviews that the teacher displayed a positive commitment to professional development (PD). At the same time, interviews could be a site of accent and race-based discrimination. For instance, while the survey rated 'spoken and written communication skills' as the most important generic skill for teacher employability, the hiring managers in this study only cited communication skills as important if the teacher was from a first language other than English background.

This bias towards teachers with ‘non-standard’ accents was most evident in the General/Exam English domain, and to a lesser extent, in the Academic/University Pathways English domain. The justification for such a bias was usually put down to ‘demanding students’, with ‘European’ students claimed to be the most demanding with respect to accent and race-based expectations.

Finally, the interview findings lend some weight to Stanley’s findings (2016, 2017) that two cultures of professional identities – management and teachers – exist within the English language teaching sector in Australia. While Stanley (2016) found in her study that many teachers were unhappy in similar ways to the teachers reported in this study, for example, due to low pay, precarious work, lack of career development, the findings from the interviews in my study suggest that many teachers remained passionate and dedicated to their students, and to English language teaching, generally, despite their frustrations with the precarity of the work. It was the teachers’ ability to draw on their emotion work, their love of language and their passion for interacting with and supporting students, that enabled them to navigate the vicissitudes of this precarious work. Hiring managers also demonstrated an understanding of, and empathy towards, teachers who faced the problems of this highly casualised workforce. Inertia, however, was a more common response from the hiring managers. Despite their understanding of the teachers’ frustrations, many hiring managers simply had not considered the ways in which they could advocate for changes to the English language teaching sector’s reliance on precarious work, or its reliance on teachers’ emotion work to maintain organisational profitability. The findings in this chapter suggest that to be considered employable, an English language teacher must display and perform professionalism, engagement and flexibility in the face of this precarity. Notions of professionalism, therefore, appear to be more in line with hiring managers’ professional identities and the demands of the Australian English language teaching sector, than with

teachers' material realities. Despite many hiring managers' protestations to the contrary, it is difficult to see how English language teaching in Australia can be seen as a profession while it continues to exploit teachers' emotion labour and their precarity in order to survive.

5.5. Conclusion

The findings of this chapter, together with those from Chapter 4, explicate the education, qualifications, skills, emotions, knowledge, and understandings required to be considered an employable English language teacher in Australia. Building on the job advertisement findings detailed in Chapter 4, this chapter has offered additional perspectives based on teachers' and hiring managers' perceptions about employability as derived from a thematic analysis of the survey and interview data. What has been revealed is the importance of a range of professional and emotion-related attributes that are required by teachers to not only do their work, but to be seen to be doing this work by hiring managers, and students. This chapter's findings have contributed to the existing research on employability, more generally (Hogan et al., 2015; Holmes, 2013) and teacher employability research, specifically (Alshammari, 2020; Mackenzie, 2020). They have enhanced our understanding of the importance of teacher employment interviews as a site within which employability is perceived and negotiated. The next chapter will discuss the combined findings of Chapters 4 and 5 in the context of the previous employability literature to demonstrate the significance of this study in furthering our understanding of what makes teachers employable in the English language teaching context in Australia.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the most important points arising from the findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5. As some discussion was necessarily presented in those two chapters, the current chapter seeks to broaden and deepen the discussion to consider the wider implications of the findings. The chapter begins with a discussion of the attributes seen as the most important to English language teachers' employability, and as such responds to RQ1 (Section 6.2). Next, the discussion turns to the ways in which these teacher employability attributes are evaluated in English language teacher job interviews, which addresses RQ2 (Section 6.3). This is followed by a discussion of the ways in which teachers and hiring managers position themselves in relation to what makes English language teachers employable in the adult English language teaching context in Australia, which responds to RQ3 (Section 6.4). Finally, I summarise the main arguments (Section 6.5) before presenting the conclusions, contributions, limitations and implications of this research in the concluding chapter, Chapter 7.

6.2. Credentialism, professionalism and precarity

This section discusses the findings that address RQ1: 'What employability attributes are considered important to being an employable English language teacher in adult English language teaching in the Australian context?' Section 6.2.1 describes how the teacher credentials of education, qualifications and experience provide the foundation for teacher professionalism yet can also function as a regulatory gatekeeper that limits a teacher's employment opportunities (and their career development). It is argued in Section

6.2.2 that, if these credentials were to operate differently, that is, where credentials moves beyond imposing regulatory and institutional barriers towards harnessing the diversity and expertise available in the English language teaching sector in Australia. Section 6.2.3 argues that English language teacher professionalism, includes a set of attributes, behaviours and skills that serve to uphold discourses of ‘quality’ teaching. While these may be beneficial to students’ learning, organisations, and to the sector as a whole, they rely heavily on teachers’ emotion labour. In other words, for teachers to be seen as employable, they must draw on these emotion labour resources, to align themselves with not only the emotion rules of their particular teaching and learning contexts, but with the rules of precarity that underpin the English language teaching sector in Australia as a whole.

6.2.1. Teacher credentials: Gatekeeping or stewardship?

6.2.1.1. *Gatekeeping*

As a result of the global massification of the further education and higher education sectors in Australia, a particular type of education has come to be valued by the labour market (Di Stasio et al., 2016). In this market, a teacher’s degree is not necessarily valued as an indicator of their learning and knowledge but is more likely to be viewed as a form of credentialism that is used to set the initial bounds for teachers’ employment. Credentialism frames education as a “currency of opportunity” (P. Brown & Souto-Otero, 2020, p. 95), which mediates the relationship between educational attainment and the labour market. In the job advertisement data discussed in Chapter 4, the keyword (Holborow, 2016; Stubbs, 2010; Williams, 1976) ‘recognised’ is repeatedly used to denote a teacher’s degree and qualification type; however, its use involves ideological work that takes place in an area of contestation, that is, the labour market (see Holborow 2016; Williams 1976). It is here, at this site of competing ideologies, that words are used to express taken-for-granted meanings

which belie their status as indicators of particular social norms and practices (Holborow, 2016). While it is not surprising that all teachers working in Australia need to be degree-educated (DESE, 2018b, 2021b; DEWR, 2015), what is noteworthy is that the inclusion of the word ‘recognised’ in job advertisements add an extra layer of evaluation, which suggests that the degree has become a site of ideological evaluation. In other words, reference to a ‘recognised degree’ serves to demarcate certain degree-holders from others, thereby creating a scale of academic worth (Di Stasio, 2014).

The use of the word ‘recognised’ in this context, I argue, implies a logic that has been noted in other studies of teacher recruitment (Daoud & Kasztalska, 2022; Mackenzie, 2020; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Nigar et al., 2023; Ruecker & Ives, 2014; Selvi, 2010), that is, the use of this word tacitly – and perhaps unconsciously – invokes native speakerism. Previous teacher job advertisement research has found that a teacher whose first language, education background, passport and citizenship status are from an anglophone country is usually presented as the ‘ideal’ English teacher, especially in English as a foreign language contexts (Mackenzie, 2020; Mahboob & Golden, 2013; Ruecker & Ives, 2014; Selvi, 2010). This situation reflects what Lowe (2015, 2020) calls ‘centre qualification bias’ in which the centre (as opposed to the periphery) is seen as representing the historical, political and economic power vested in standard American and British English as ‘prestige’ variants (Hilgendorf, 2018; Phillipson, 2008). As described in Chapter 2, Lowe (2015) investigated the native speakerism evident in Japanese university English language programs (at the level of English language teachers’ master and doctoral degrees) and his conclusions reveal a qualification hierarchy according to which qualifications awarded by ‘native’ English-speaking institutions in the political west are located at the pinnacle. Meanwhile, in Australia, as the Acts and Standards governing English language teaching do not stipulate ‘recognised’ degrees, it is unclear – on the surface at least – why some hirers have chosen to

include this descriptor in their advertisements. I argue here that the use of ‘recognised’ to differentiate degree type indexes a bias (a ‘centre qualification bias’) that some institutions rely on in their recruitment processes. This bias draws not only on native speakerism but also on the authority of bureaucratic systems to sanction what is acceptable and what is not (Foucault, 1977). In other words, recruitment processes give credibility to practices that measure and classify the abilities, value and characteristics of teachers who possess ‘recognised’ degrees (as opposed to those who do not). If there are in fact ‘recognised’ degrees, the logical extension is that there are ones that are not. The implication that can be derived is that a ‘recognised’ degree is one conferred by an Australian university or from an overseas institution with a reputation on par with those found in Australia. Indeed, this ‘equivalence’ idea is stated explicitly in some of the advertisements. At the discursive level, this creates a powerful norm, one in which teachers holding this ambiguously described Australian or Australian equivalent degree are seen as the standard. This norm then functions to discourage teachers without these ‘recognised’ degrees from applying for teaching positions, and adds a perceived additional layer of regulatory compliance for some teachers. This point is made explicit in one of the General/Exam English job advertisements, which states, ‘Overseas qualifications may be accepted if assessed and approved by NEAS’ (ID. 10). Similar disincentives have been highlighted in previous research on barriers to employment for: English language teachers in Australia (Nigar et al., 2023), migrant workers in Australia (Dovchin & Dryden, 2022), migrant and refugee professionals in the US (Wolfgram, 2021), and for ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students in the US, with regards to access to college degrees (Kanno & Varghese, 2010).

As noted above, teaching experience was found to be an important aspect of teacher employability. The findings highlighted the tensions in private language schools between

the more experienced teachers and the higher costs to schools to hire them, which is due to the use of the Step System of pay. While this tension does not exist in all of the English language teaching domains, there is no doubt that the Step System has a limiting effect on some teachers' job opportunities and perhaps their career progression.

6.2.1.2. Stewardship

One of the core tenets behind employability, in general, is that possessing employability skills and experience allows teachers to navigate the ever-changing employment landscape in a globalised, competitive neoliberal world (Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Keeley, 2007; UK Commission for Education & Skills, 2009; Yorke, 2006). Yet, the findings of this thesis, that teaching qualifications and experience can limit employability, challenge this assertion. Not only does their experience (and presumably their skills) make some teachers more expensive to hire – and therefore less attractive to employ – but a lack of specific domain content and context knowledge, for example, in Academic/University Pathways settings, can also limit a teacher's employability in the sense that it is difficult to transfer from one domain to another. A teacher with five years' General English teaching experience would find it difficult to transition into an academic English role at a university without experience of teaching academic English. Campion (G. Campion, 2016) found that despite General English teaching experience being a common route into Academic English teaching, there has been little research that explains how this transition occurs. Similarly, an Academic English teacher wanting to move into teaching Settlement English would be thwarted if they did not possess the Certificate IV in TAE, and would also find the curricula, as well as the contractual and regulatory requirements challenging without previous experience in this context.

Despite this, the English language teaching literature has yet to address the hiring requirements for content and context-based experience across this sector as it relates to

teacher education (Barkhuizen, 2016; Kanno & Stuart, 2011), the development of teacher expertise (Tsui, 2003, 2009a, 2009b) and how this impacts teaching experience and employability. Existing theories of teacher professional development/learning experience examine teacher development in general but do not take into consideration the neoliberal context and managerialist discourses that impact teaching and learning (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; Mockler, 2013; Sachs, 2015). Moreover, they have not specifically considered the English language teaching profession. In other words, there is silence surrounding the impact of precarious work on the development of teacher experience and expertise, and therefore employability. The question, then, is how do English language teachers further their professional practice through experience when most of the teaching work in this sector is short-term and casualised?

Of course, English language teachers in Australia do develop their skills and qualifications, their professional lives do progress, and many schools, institutions and providers do value teacher learning and the contribution made by the many English language teachers who help make the sector a rewarding environment in which to work. Nonetheless, the findings of this study suggest that the sector is not – but should be – discussing the importance of credentials for teacher employment. How do we harness the ‘professionalism’ that ‘recognised’ degrees and standards profess to further? How do we benefit from the experiences of teachers from a diversity of cultural and language backgrounds if the ‘recognised’ qualifications discriminate against them and uphold native speakerism discourses which should have no place in contemporary teaching and learning?

One way to benefit from such diverse experiences is through the practice of stewardship (Pollock, 2022). Unlike gatekeeping, which limits access to employment and promotes exclusivity through background-based elitism, stewardship valorises different perspectives, promotes trust, and gives the benefit of the doubt. A stewardship approach sees

the value in education backgrounds that are not ‘recognised’, and in teachers who are ‘different’ or who might not have the ‘right’ experience. Whereas credentialism seeks to assert control, stewardship relinquishes it. In a profession that aims to foster learner autonomy, curiosity and creativity as the foundations for learning, it may be asked why these values are not invoked when hiring. The findings of this study suggest that many teacher hirers do approach teacher recruitment in more considered ways – over half of the job advertisements analysed made no mention of ‘recognised’ degrees – it is perhaps to these institutions and their recruitment practices that we can turn for a stewardship benchmark for recruitment. As Ruecker and Ives point out (2014), the professionalism on which standardised teacher education and qualification frameworks depend should not be used to discriminate against some teachers while favouring others. Instead, education and qualification frameworks should work towards more robust recruitment practices to ensure that competent teachers are hired, irrespective of their language or national background.

6.2.2. The emotion rules of teacher employability: Professionalism and precarity

6.2.2.1. The emotion rules of professionalism

As explained in previous chapters, teachers need to embody a set of characteristics to be seen as employable, and this ‘embodiment’ involves complex emotion work (Benesch, 2017; King, 2016; Martínez Agudo, 2018; Schutz & Zembylas, 2009). As Gkonou and Miller argue (2020), emotions are crucial to teacher identities, classroom practice and notions of professionalism. That teacher emotion labour should play a vital role in teacher employability is not a surprising finding. However, when the additional emotion labour that is required to navigate the often precarious work environment of the English language teaching sector is taken into consideration, the connections between emotion work and teacher employability are further accentuated. Moreover, teachers’ relational capacities and

their emotion work are implicated in discourses of teacher professionalism, which capture a teacher's ability to exploit their disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical content, skills and personal attributes to encourage student learning. Emotion work is also required for teachers to embody discourses that present the teaching professional as a neoliberal entrepreneur. Neoliberal entrepreneurship demands a commitment to professional development and an adherence to the practices of flexibilisation, which only serves to further entrench the precarious nature of these teachers' work.

Being an 'engaging' teacher was found in this study to be the most important attribute of teacher employability, and some of the practices implicated in this descriptor included the teacher's ability to plan, prepare and deliver engaging lessons, and the need to understand students' needs and personalise their learning. These findings support previous work on pedagogies of engagement (Mercer, 2019; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020), which view student engagement as the "holy grail of learning" (Sinatra, Heddy, & Lombardi, 2015). These pedagogies suggest that – in addition to learners' own actions – teachers' actions, and their response to and relations with their students positively impact learners' achievements, motivation and enjoyment (Mercer, 2019; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020; Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020). Many of the principles of learner engagement – e.g., creating a positive and collaborative learning environment, developing and encouraging autonomous learning, being approachable and empathetic, and working with learner individual differences (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020) – were cited by this study's interview participants as not only central to their classroom practices, but as integral to maintaining their passion for teaching. Yet, what is missing from these engagement principles is a discussion of contemporary contextual issues, including the precariousness of teachers' working conditions.

While the literature on learner engagement (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4.4) focuses mainly on how teachers can influence learners to engage, little, if anything, has been

mentioned with respect to teachers' emotion labour, which resides at the heart of pedagogies of learner engagement. The assumption seems to be that English language teachers need to offer their 'all' in the service of their students, yet little consideration is given to what 'giving their all' means for teachers themselves. One example of the silence surrounding this issue can be illustrated by a reflection task provided in Mercer and Dörnyei's book 'Engaging language learners in contemporary classrooms' (2020, p. 12). In this task, teachers are asked to consider the contexts of their work and how their teaching is affected by their institution and its policies, as well as the broader sociopolitical context within which the target language is being taught. While the authors of this book note that much in the learning context is beyond the teacher's control, the task's main purpose is to identify issues that can inspire "collective and wider systemic action to address learner engagement at various local, regional and perhaps even national levels" (p. 12). As inspirational and well-meaning as this task is, one wonders about the reality of such endeavours in the real-world. For instance, the teachers in my study were vocal about their frustrations, which mostly stemmed from their perceived lack of agency working in their various English language teaching domains. Their frustrations included not being listened to by their managers with regards to new materials development or about ideas for courses, and, of course, these were exacerbated by the constant demotivating effects on their engagement as a result of their insecure, casual and short-term work (see Chapter 5, Section 5.5.3.4). Therefore, it could be argued that the sector's desire to increase (or maintain) learners' engagement may be better facilitated by making structural changes to the sector's business models rather than only focusing on what individual teachers are doing in their classrooms. The current business models have determined that teacher employment conditions that prioritise institutions' desire for flexibility and the profit imperative are more important than working towards ensuring more motivating, secure and longer-term work for their teachers.

This reliance on teachers' emotion labour in pedagogies of learner engagement also means that teachers' personal attributes can be exploited. Personality-driven attributes were some of the least referenced in the job advertisement data, and hiring manager interviewees were reluctant to suggest that personal attributes are the teacher characteristics they look for in an employable teacher. Indeed, they preferred to frame teachers' personal attributes as skills borne out of their education, experience, knowledge and pedagogical practice. That is, these hiring managers seemed to be framing teacher employability as teacher professionalism. Yet, instead of viewing a teacher's personal characteristics as a valuable part of their individual and unique character, they have been reconfigured as skills that can be drawn into the service of learning and organisational goals. Urciuoli refers to this as the "worker-self-as-skills-bundle" (2008, p. 211) whereby terms for skills "formulate aspects of personhood and modes of sociality as productive labor" (p. 211). Personal attributes such as care and empathy, for instance, which underpin much of the emotion work required of teachers, were bundled together in one of the advertisements described in Chapter 4 as: 'provide a supportive approach to assist the individual learner to exceed their expectations' (ID. 13). The idea of 'supporting learners', while vague, implies two types of value for the labour market: as a skill and as a personal attribute, both of which have been defined as important to employability. The use of expressions such as these index particular aspects of personhood in the service of productive goals and, in this way, a teacher's emotional capacities are constructed as being important to the teacher's employability in the affective economies of teaching (Pereira, 2018).

6.2.2.2. *The emotion work of precarity*

The findings of this study have shown that also important in the affective economies of teaching are the attributes of adaptability and flexibility. These two attributes were ranked fifth and tenth out of 26, respectively, by the online survey participants. Flexibility also

emerged as a key interview theme based on discussion with both teachers and hiring managers. Despite these attributes often being seen as interchangeable, my findings point to a nuanced difference between the two. Adaptability was seen as a classroom-based skill (e.g., adapting to student needs by changing a lesson plan) whereas flexibility was most often described as teachers needing to adjust their behaviour to suit organisational needs (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.1.3.2). As described in Chapter 2, flexibility is a long held tenet of neoliberal ideology and is central to the new work order (Gee et al., 1996). According to the principle of flexibilisation as applied to labour, long-term, stable work is seen as impeding an organisation's ability to quickly adapt to market circumstances. This is particularly true in the English language teaching sector in Australia which is not only highly dependent on the international student market for its survival, but is also impacted by changes in government immigration and visa policy, which have consequences for student recruitment and education policy (Oliver et al., 2017). The impact of flexibilisation was noted by both the teacher and hiring manager participants in this study. As described in Chapter 5, many of the hiring managers lamented the difficulties they faced in attempting to manage their staffing budgets. These challenges, however, were not only due to dealing with financial constraints but also because they felt a sense of responsibility towards the teachers they were employing, and those they were not. This led some of them to feel guilt, which was heightened as many of these hiring managers had once been teachers themselves. Meanwhile, the teachers were very aware of the need to be flexible in response to operational matters because, as the job advertisement data attested, the majority of the language teaching work for English language teachers in Australia is contingent. Moreover, teaching work only exists if there are students to teach. The teacher participants all understood that not being seen as flexible could – and often did – mean not being offered continuing teaching work and could have a limiting effect on their ability to progress in their teaching careers.

Flexibility also intersected with precarity in that teachers were acutely aware of the impacts that negative student feedback and evaluations could have on their opportunities for continued employment. Similar to the findings in a study by Kouritzin et al (2022), the teacher participants in this study discussed issues relating not only to evaluations of their knowledge and pedagogical skill, but also their emotion work in the classroom whereby they are called on to be always dynamic, supportive and available. The teachers who were the most vulnerable to negative student evaluations were from the General/Exam and Academic/University Pathways English domains. Yet, the legitimacy of student evaluations can be contested (Pineda & Seidenschnur, 2021) as they are often based not only on teachers' classroom practice but also the course content (which is mostly beyond their control) and the 'fit' that individual students may feel with particular teachers (Feistauer & Richter, 2016). For these reasons, researchers have called for student evaluations of teaching to be based on multiple measures of teaching quality (Esarey & Valdes, 2020) and to include, for instance, peer evaluation and self-evaluation (Ching, 2018). The findings of my study suggest that despite English language teachers being subjected to multiple types of evaluation methods, the measures on which these evaluations are based tend to be opaque. As discussed in the next section, initial post-employment classroom observations and student feedback can act as an often vaguely communicated arbiter of a teacher's ability which can impact the continuance of a their employment. In addition, anonymous student surveys such as the i-Graduate International Student Barometer (iGraduate., 2024) are not only used to evaluate the student experience but to wield significant power whereby schools and institutions – and, as such, their managers and teachers – are positioned in the marketplace as being more or less effective and engaging than their competitors. This competitive environment is a feature of the globalised international education market, which means that

teachers (and institutions) are only as good as their last (teaching) evaluation, as any person working in sales can attest.

Despite these limitations, flexibility was not framed negatively by all of the teachers. In fact, for some teachers, flexible working conditions can offer opportunities for higher (casual rates of) pay, the ability to travel and pursue other interests, and the ability to take on teaching work with multiple employers. Despite these benefits to precarious work, as will be discussed in the next section, for the majority of teachers in this study, the positive aspects of precarious work did not offset its limitations.

6.3. English language teacher interviews: What is the point?

In relation to teacher job interviews (RQ2), it was seen in Chapter 5 that English language teacher interviews function as a type as interaction ritual which, despite hiring managers' confidence that their interview processes and the decisions they generate are both objective and rational, tend to rely on interactional affect and subjectivity (Highhouse, 2008). This may be related in part to the overreliance on the less structured interview format for evaluating a teacher's potential job performance. This section discusses the ways in which a focus on rapport-building can influence hiring managers' evaluations of teachers' abilities during interviews (6.4.1) and how hiring managers' confidence in their recruitment decision-making processes does not take into consideration the impact that candidates' impression management techniques can have on interview outcomes (6.4.2). The section ends with a critique of the utility and predictive validity of casual teacher interviews, given the reliance on initial post-employment teacher observations and student feedback as a way of determining teacher employability (6.4.3).

6.3.1. Influences of rapport-building

Employment interviews are undoubtedly an essential part of the recruitment and selection process for teachers in the English language teaching sector in Australia. All of the teacher participants in this study reported being interviewed for teaching roles, despite many of these roles being casual and temporary. As the findings here have shown, both teachers and hiring managers viewed rapport-building during interviews as probably the most important method of predicting a teacher's suitability for a role. This was reflected in the theme that emerged through the analysis presented in Chapter 5 that the teacher job interview acts as a type of interaction ritual (Collins, 2004; Rivera, 2015) in which feelings of solidarity are generated between interviewer and interviewee. The assumption is that a teacher's ability to build a positive connection with interviewer will transfer to their future students in the classroom. The teachers in this study understood that establishing this rapport during interviews is key to being seen as employable.

As discussed above in relation to learner engagement, rapport-building is viewed as important to the creation of classroom settings conducive to learning, and previous research has suggested that rapport-building is more important for teachers than it is for students and teacher recruiters (Kiczkowiak, 2019). However, the predictive validity of rapport-building during an interview as indicative of a teacher's future teaching performance should be called into question, as it has been for over a decade in the applied psychology literature (Barrick et al., 2012; Barrick et al., 2009; Barrick et al., 2010; Swider et al., 2011; Swider et al. 2016), the industrial, occupational and organisational psychology literature (Barrick et al., 2012; Highhouse, 2008) and the sociology literature (Rivera, 2015). Researchers in these fields have all raised concerns about the impact on interview outcomes of interviewers' impressions of candidates that are based on rapport-building (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.3). At stake is the issue of whether a candidate's ability to make a good first impression reflects

their actual ability as a teacher, especially given that a casual teacher can be (easily) replaced with another teacher should issues arise post-employment. This is not to say, of course, that experienced teacher hiring managers are so swayed by positive affect during the interviews they conduct that this overrides all other job-related information, but rather that an over-reliance on rapport-building as indicative of future teaching performance should be considered for the negative influence it may exert.

While ‘going with the gut’ is a common sense response in recruitment, generally (Rivera, 2015), it is more likely to occur in unstructured or less structured interviews (Dana et al., 2013), and its rapport-building effects are known to correlate strongly with interviewer evaluations of candidate responses earlier rather than later in structured interviews (Swider et al., 2016), influence employment outcomes such as job offers (Barrick et al., 2010), and strongly relate to interviewers’ evaluations of candidate responses to structured questions (Barrick et al., 2012). Much of the research that has studied rapport-building in interviews has focused on the initial stages of the interview, and in highly structured interview settings (and with young, American college students in mock interview scenarios). However, the great majority of English language teacher interviews tend to be less structured, and rapport-building is a core feature of these interviews and this process continues throughout the interview, that is, it is not confined to the beginning, as is the case in more structured interviews. The risk in this approach is that many teacher interviews may be rendered ineffectual due to their reliance on rapport-building assessments as a predictor of good teaching. Moreover, with rapport-building being seen as an essential part of English language teacher employability, and a vital component of learner engagement pedagogies, the issue is to what extent does rapport-building during the interview, beyond initial interview impressions, influence evaluations of teacher competence and as such job offers. As Barrick et al. (2010) have argued, it may be expected that an assessment of a candidate’s

ability to build rapport and the impression this can have on an interviewer would have a higher validity if this were predicated on job relevant characteristics such as general mental ability, agreeableness, emotional stability and conscientiousness (all characteristics important to teacher employability, as discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.4.4). The extent to which the interview questions for the teacher participants in my study were predicated on job performance related content was unclear. Despite these limitations, initial impressions and rapport-building can be useful predictors of job performance for certain job types, especially those requiring high levels of personal interaction and emotion work with customers. Research has found that some casinos, for instance, rate a candidate's ability to interact with the interviewer as a key aspect of the hiring process (Gatewood et al., 2010). The firms in Gatewood et al.'s study assumed that a candidate's efficacious rapport-building during the interview would transfer to their interactions with customers. In fact, this is similar to the type of interaction ritual chain set off by rapport-building between hiring managers and teacher candidates; as seen in my study, the hiring managers assumed this ability to build rapport would transfer to the classroom with students. However, given that Barrick et al. (2012) found that the candidate characteristics of extraversion and verbal skills contribute to interviewers' initial impressions, and with these also being important teacher employability attributes, the effectiveness of English language teacher job interviews in predicting teacher classroom ability based on initial impressions, rapport and personal traits could be in a justifiably risky place. Despite hiring managers claims that it is a candidate's teaching ability and skills – and to a lesser extent, personality – that are being assessed at teacher job interviews, one wonders what is actually being evaluated. That is, it could be argued that the reliance on rapport-building and other signals of affect to evaluate teacher suitability are obscuring other job-related interview content, some of which perhaps may be more predictive of a teacher's abilities in the classroom.

Despite these risks, good and effective teachers are still hired. What is not known, however, either from the findings of this study or (to my knowledge) from any other study of teacher employability, is the connection between interviewing practices and teacher attrition, particularly in the casualised teaching space and in relation to actual or perceived poor teaching. Considering the reputational risks associated with ineffectual hiring practices – for the hiring manager, teacher and the school or institution – it would be worth investigating how teacher personal characteristics mediate rapport-building and interviewer assessments of teacher suitability, together with subsequent teacher employment outcomes and their impacts.

6.3.2. Confident decision-makers and influential candidates

The hiring managers in this study appeared to be confident in their recruitment processes and judgements of teacher candidate suitability, despite some recognition of the fallibility of these processes. Teacher candidates, on the other hand, seemed to be more alert to the potential for candidates' faking during interviews. The fact that the teacher interviewees in this study – all of whom were experienced teachers, with the majority having quite considerable job interview experience – were more cognisant of the influence of impression management techniques than the hiring managers, is an interesting finding. Although several hiring managers did offer examples of the consequences of their poor interview decisions (e.g., teachers not being suitable or students not 'liking' the teacher), it was the teachers themselves who highlighted the opportunities that interviews presented in terms of self-presentation tactics, particularly the use of self-promotion techniques (Barrick et al., 2009). This finding is similar to the results reported in studies of impression management and faking in job interviews in other contexts, that is, that a candidate's self-promotion can have a positive effect on interviewers' initial impressions (Swider et al.,

2011). Self-promotion is clearly related to a candidate's ability to build rapport with their interviewer/s.

It is not surprising that the hiring managers in my study all had confidence in their recruitment processes given that they all had extensive experience in their teaching and learning sectors, and all held positions in which they were responsible for hiring. Moreover, all of these hiring managers worked at English language schools, institutions, university language centres, or for Adult Migrant English Programs (AMEP) providers and TAFEs that would be considered as some of the most reputable in Australia. Despite this, only the hiring managers from the AMEP/TAFE domains reported having specific interview technique training, although some of the other hiring managers had been exposed to training in recruitment processes through the (International) Diploma in English Language Teaching Management (English UK., 2024; Hockley, 2022). As the findings in Approaches to Teacher Interviews outline show (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2.1), the typical English language teacher employment interview is conducted face-to-face with a hiring manager, and although many hiring managers stated that they use more structured interview elements than others, these interviews on the whole cannot be described as highly structured (other than perhaps in the AMEP and in some TAFE settings). Most hiring managers did not use the same questions for all candidates in the interviews, asked follow up questions and did not use candidate rating scales. Together with their seeming lack of awareness of candidates' impression management tactics, this points to a general overconfidence in their hiring interview techniques and subsequently their judgements about candidate suitability.

Overconfidence is not unusual. Despite subjective probability (i.e., confidence in one's own judgement) being imperative to the field of cognitive and decision sciences (Hastie & Dawes, 2009; Ratcliff & Starns, 2013), and so important to recruitment decision making, it has rarely been considered in the personnel selection literature (Kausel et al.,

2016). Only Highhouse (2008) has discussed overconfidence as related to hiring decision-makers' failure to consider their own hiring judgements as being subject to error. This blind spot is most clear in the continued use of semi-structured and less structured employment interviews (Dana et al., 2013; Levashina et al., 2014). It is interesting that even when human resource personnel are aware of the evidence suggesting that structured interviews are the more objective option, their belief in unstructured interviews is difficult to shake (Lievens et al., 2005; D. Zhang et al., 2018). In addition, research suggests that hiring decision-makers cannot easily detect instances of deceptive impression management in interviews (Roulin et al., 2014, 2015). As the teacher participants pointed out in their interviews for this study, with interview experience comes the knowledge of what it is that hiring managers are aiming to elicit from them, and as one teacher explicitly stated, self-promotion tactics are something that "we can turn on for a half an hour interview" (T8).

Of course, the findings in this study with respect to how hiring managers elicit employability characteristics from teachers during interviews relies on the interviewees' self-reports and my thematic analysis skills. Yet, despite these limitations, the finding that English language teacher interviews depend on a combination of rapport-building, interviewer confidence in their interview techniques, and candidates' impression management tactics foregrounds the deeply interpersonal and relational work in which both hiring managers and teachers are engaging during teacher job interviews. This is relevant to the recruitment stages that take place after the casual teacher employment interview. The finding that post-employment teacher classroom observations and student feedback contribute to perceptions of a teacher's employability means that, similar to a point made by Kausel et al. (2016), a hiring manager's confidence in their decision-making ability is likely to not only be associated with the job type (casual) they are recruiting for but also with the successive stages in the selection process (classroom observations and student feedback).

This allows for a more nuanced understanding of the selection practices employed in the recruitment of casual English language teachers in the Australian context.

6.3.3. Are observations and student feedback the final stage of the recruitment process?

The use of post-employment teacher observations and student feedback as the final arbiter of a teacher's employability suggests that, in the predominantly casual teaching contexts described here, these observations and evaluations are used as the final stage of the teacher selection process. The questions raised in relation to the predictive validity of teacher job interviews, given their reliance on subjective probability and rapport-building in a sector which mainly depends on semi-structured interviews, leads one to ask whether the well-documented importance of the employment interview (in some, but not all teaching and learning contexts) has been diminished. Instead, due to the nature of short term, casual contracts, and the importance of initial student responses to a teacher's teaching abilities, these initial post-employment observations and student feedback may be significant contributors towards a teacher's employability. Future research is needed here, but if, for casually employed teachers at least, post-employment classroom observations and student feedback can be used as the final arbiter of a teacher's employability, this implicates a new, and potentially final stage in the casual teacher recruitment process.

This finding has ethical implications for the casual teacher recruitment process, however. If teacher observations and student feedback are in fact being used as a recruitment decision-making tool, teachers need to be made aware of this. While I am not claiming that all post-interview teacher observations and negative student feedback lead to a loss of work, but if, as mentioned by some of the teachers in this study (T1, T4, T6), teachers have the general sense that they are only as good as their last class, then the dual purpose of initial classroom observations and student feedback as a late stage recruitment tool should be made clearer. All of the teachers in this study valued peer and management support, and student

feedback. However, if early observations are going to be used to evaluate a teacher's ongoing employability, rather than used for professional development purposes, this should be made clear to candidates earlier in the recruitment process.

6.4. An employable teacher identity?

This last section of this chapter considers the ways in which the hiring managers and teachers in this study positioned themselves with respect to some of the attributes of teacher employability, that is, how they made sense of what it means to be an employable teacher, therefore responding to RQ3. As the Chapter 5 findings suggest, hiring managers called on their professional and institutional identities to determine what is and what is not an employable teacher identity in their contexts. In contrast, the teachers drew on their subjective experiences of the embodiment and performance of affect, particularly care, engagement and passion in their teaching, which were considered to be central to being seen as an employable teacher in the adult English language teaching sector in Australia (see Sections 6.2.2.1 and 6.2.2.2). In this way, the hiring managers and teachers' views on what it means to be an employable teacher suggest that employability in this context reflects social positioning (Lawson, 2022; Slade-Caffarel, 2024) whereby the rights and obligations of these two sets of participants can be seen as part of a matched pair. As Lawson (2019, p. 15) asserts: "The rights associated with any particular position ... are always internally or constitutively related to obligations attached to certain, usually different, positions and their occupants. These matched rights and obligations thereby constitute a fundamental form of social relation". Inherent to the hiring manager role is the right to confer power over who is and who is not considered employable, which is constitutive of the power relations innate to manager/managed positions (Lawson, 2022; Slade-Caffarel, 2024). That is, the exercising of a right by one position (the hiring manager) leads to an obligation from the other (the teacher) to do what is expected or requested, whether they want to perform the action or not (Lawson,

2019). This unequal power relation can be seen as an expression of positive and negative deontic power (Lawson, 2022), which, as discussed below, points to the stability and instability at the heart of the teacher employable identity. This stability and instability is similar to Holmes' (2013) suggestion that graduate employability can be seen as an "always-temporary relationship" (p. 550) that is dependent upon the context, employment opportunities and the decisions of recruitment gatekeepers.

The final section of this chapter (6.4.1) then considers how this stability and instability is at the heart of the teacher employable identity in adult English language teaching in Australia and discusses the ways in which hiring managers and teachers experience some of the tensions inherent in these unequal roles differently. The discussion centres around the ways in which teachers and hiring managers draw on elements of agency and power in relation to three contested areas of teacher employability: precarious work and professional development, and teacher accent.

6.4.1. Stability and instability at the heart of teacher employability

To be seen as an employable teacher means negotiating the process of becoming an English language teacher. The process might begin – as it did for many of the research participants in this study – with a love of language and learning, a curiosity about the world and an innate desire to want to help people. For others, becoming a teacher is something they have fallen into, for instance, they had a love of travelling which they found could be funded by teaching English as a second language (Stanley, 2013). In the interviews, the teachers and hiring managers discussed with me their personal histories, and recounted how they first became English language teachers, and for the hiring managers, how they moved on to become teacher managers. In terms of positioning, this shift from teacher to manager helped situate hiring managers' knowledge of – and authority in – defining what does and what does not constitute an employable teacher. For teachers, their power in determining what is and

what is not an employable teacher identity stemmed from their biographical histories and teaching experiences. For the teachers, their position centred around what it means to be employable with respect to the student experience – students’ learning, enjoyment and learning outcomes; the innate desire to help students achieve these as well as caring about their students is, for teachers, what lies at the heart of teaching (Noddings, 1984, 2006, 2007, 2012). Interestingly, not one teacher in this study expressed a desire to move into teaching management and one General/Exam English teacher explicitly stated that they had no desire to become a head teacher or to move into teaching management (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.3.3). This may be an indication that there are, for some teachers at least, two cultures in English language teaching in Australia, with management on one side and teaching on the other (Stanley, 2017).

As mentioned above, the areas of teacher employability where there were the most divergence in the teachers’ and hiring managers’ positions (across all sectors and course types) were professional development and precarious work, and accent (in private language schools and university English language centres). First, in relation to teachers’ professional development, all of the hiring managers held similar positions with respect to the importance of this aspect of teachers’ work, that is, they believed that this was an essential way in which employability could be demonstrated during teacher job interviews (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2.3.2). While the teacher participants in this study all highly valued the opportunities for professional development that emanated from their day-to-day teaching practice (such as reflective practice, in-house scheduled professional development sessions, yearly observations, peer teaching, student feedback, etc.), they were less enamoured with the assumption that, as casual teachers, they were often expected to take part in professional development meetings or sessions which were outside of their casually contracted hours. This was an area of some contestation for some of the hiring managers as well, as they

believed that the conditions of work and pay had been made clear (e.g., in the job advertisement and at interview) and that all teachers – irrespective of their contract type – should commit to in-house professional development. Hiring managers drew on employment law to support these views in that casual teachers are paid higher rates of pay for a day's work, and are in effect, being paid for these professional development sessions. These kinds of tensions between what is considered to be paid and unpaid work have been nicely captured in Kouritzin et al.'s term 'magic time' (2022). Magic time is the time that teachers (and other precariously employed workers) must find – and this is typically their own (unpaid) time – to satisfy often opaque work responsibilities and to thereby remain employed. There is a tension here, therefore, between the right that hiring managers feel they have to encourage professional development as essential to teacher employability, and the undue obligation placed on teachers in a typically precarious work environment to undertake professional development activities during their 'magic time' (Kouritzin et al., 2022). As Stanley (2016) points out, those making the decisions about what constitutes paid and unpaid teaching work are typically in stable, long-term employment, as were all the hiring manager interviewees in this study (although many had also been, given the nature of global English language teaching, in casual teaching positions themselves at some point in their careers).

The authority to decide what is and what is not 'acceptable' in terms of an English language teacher's accent was another example of how teachers and hiring managers position themselves differently with respect to teacher employability, although this was only evident in the more competitive teaching domains of private language schools and university English language centres. As research has not yet established a direct link between teacher accent, language proficiency and teacher efficacy (Faez et al., 2017, 2019), some researchers have called for teacher English language proficiency to be reconceptualised as pertaining to the tasks and language required for managing classroom learning (Freeman et al., 2015;

Freeman, 2017). Yet, as shown in my study, some teacher hiring managers in the Australian context continue to negatively conflate accent with teaching ability (Phillips, 2017). The findings suggest that an evaluation of a teacher's communication skills was only referenced in relation to teachers from language backgrounds other than English (Chapter 5, Section 5.3.3.3), which again highlights hiring managers' (relative) power to determine what is and what is not an acceptable teacher accent and as a consequence employability. Findings which, unfortunately, add weight to the issues of linguistic racism ongoing in the Australian context (Dobinson & Mercieca, 2020; Dovchin, 2019, 2020a, 2020b; Nigar et al., 2023).

Despite extolling the benefits of employing teachers from language backgrounds other than English, the power vested in the evaluative positioning of the 'other' (Said, 1978, 1993) is inherent in assessments of whether a teacher's accent is sufficiently intelligible. Of course, sometimes a teacher's accent may well be unintelligible and therefore a barrier to student learning; yet it is unclear how such evaluations are made. The othering pointed out in Said's theories of Orientalism is revealed in the continued genuflection at the altar of native speakerism (Holliday, 2006, 2009, 2018). Language and accent-based discrimination, and linguistic racism (De Costa, 2020; Dovchin, 2020; May, 2023; unfortunately, still exists in the English language teaching sector in Australia (Nigar et al., 2023) and in the Australian context, more broadly (Dovchin, 2019, 2020; Dovchin & Dryden, 2022; Fotovatian, 2010, 2014; Tankosić & Sender, 2023), and it is also evident in international English language teaching contexts (Guo, 2009; Ramjattan, 2015, 2019). The findings in Chapter 4 revealed that the use of words such as 'recognised', 'appropriate' and 'suitable' to describe teacher education and qualifications (along with Australian visa and immigration laws) discriminated against people from particular countries. A hiring manager's ability to sanction what is and what is not an acceptable 'English' accent for teaching purposes only adds to the negative profiling and background-based employment discrimination faced by some English

language teachers, which can directly affect their employment opportunities. As Flores and Rosa (2015) point out, the question of whether an accented speakers' language use is deemed acceptable or not, is often determined by a white listening subject. Nonetheless, teachers are not passive recipients in the face of such othering discourses. As one of the teachers in this study powerfully asserted: "it's really hard for me put on an accent and I don't want to because this is how I'm actually speaking, and if I believe if my pronunciations are OK I think it should work" (T1, General/Exam, English).

The final tension evident in the ways in which teachers and hiring managers positioned themselves is related to precarious work. While the hiring managers were generally empathetic to the plight of teachers who face precarious working conditions, it was only the hiring managers recruiting teachers for General/Exam and Vocational English who described the market-driven imperatives underpinning precarious work as being inevitable. As the findings in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.3.4.1) suggest, the hiring managers in these sectors were reluctant to consider ways in which the 'profession' might change so as to be able to offer more secure conditions to the teachers it employs and on whom it relies for success. Of course, while change at the level of the sector (and above) would not necessarily be easy, the inertia implicit in this position contrasts starkly with the dynamism expected from casual teachers in service of 'quality' teaching (as achieved through a combination of Extraversion and continuous professional development). Their reticence also highlights the contrast between the stability of most managers' positions and the precarity of most teachers'.

Many teachers do not have the opportunity to luxuriate in stable work. The findings in the 'frustration' theme (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.3.3) reinforce what has been found in the literature about the precarity in the adult English language teaching sector in Australia (ACTA, 2023; Kaktiņš, 2018; Stanley, 2016, 2017) and overseas (Breshears, 2019; Elshafei, 2022; Kouritzin et al., 2022; Sun, 2012; Valeo & Faez, 2013). This body of research shows

that precarious work is not only detrimental to teachers in terms of their time, pay and wellbeing, and professional and career development, but it has wider impacts related to teacher attrition and student learning. All of the teachers in this study resisted the idea, implicit in neoliberal subjectivities, that they should have full responsibility for maintaining their own employability. Instead of agreeing that the ideal employable teacher is one who seeks to make an enterprise of their life (K. Houghton, 2019), who constantly updates their skills, and who is continuously flexible in the face of the needs of their employer and the wider sector, teachers pushed back against these neoliberal obligations. That is, they seemed to be enduring these conditions while attempting to embody an ethics of care as the antithesis to the instability of their work.

It is in these contested spaces of what it means to an employable teacher that some of the more profound differences in the power inherent in the discourses of employability were detected. English language teaching's institutional power inheres in the sanctioning of what is and what is not 'recognised' as education and qualifications; it is articulated in the right kind and length of teaching experience, in the acceptable accents, and ultimately, in the power to classify what an employable teacher is (or what the sector would like to promote as being). This power is mediated through the participants that make up the sector: the hiring managers, the institutions they represent, the bureaucratic processes, the quality frameworks, as well as the teachers themselves, and the learners and agents. At crucial moments in the teacher recruitment process (e.g., during shortlisting, interviewing and post-interview observations), it is the hiring manager who wields the most power to sanction what constitutes a teacher's employability. That said, teachers should not be seen as passive recipients of others' power to label; instead, their power lies in positioning themselves with respect to what it means to be employable, which resides somewhere in the liminal space

between a teacher identity that is adaptive, caring and knowledgeable and the challenges inherent to precarious work.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the many and varied facets of what it means to be an employable English language teacher in the adult English language teaching sector in Australia. The findings have been based on an online teacher employability survey, 50 teacher job advertisements, and interviews with 26 interviewees (13 English language teachers and 13 teacher hiring managers) across four teaching and learning sectors. Given the diversity within these different teaching and learning sectors it is unsurprising that there are some differences in what it means to be employable across these domains. Yet, the participants' perceptions of what makes a teacher working in this sector employable are more similar than different, for the most part. The findings of this study show that teacher employable identities are shaped not only by the situatedness of their contexts, but by the neoliberal practice of the flexibilisation of the labour force which, more often than not, underpins the precarious spaces in which teachers practice and perform their employable identities. These identities quite often rely on teachers' emotion labour to not only help their students navigate their learning paths, but to navigate the tensions inherent in the discourses of professionalism that impact their own lives as English language teachers. The next chapter concludes the thesis with a summary of the study, its contributions, implications for practice for teachers and for the sector, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

7.1. Summary of purpose and methodology

This research project has undertaken a critically orientated, qualitative investigation using a combination of methods – an online survey, teacher job advertisements, and interviews with teachers and hiring managers – to explore what teacher employability means to key stakeholders in the adult English language sector in Australia. The main aim of the study was to examine what characteristics of employability are deemed important to teachers and hiring managers across four domains of English language teaching in Australia to better understand what makes a teacher employable. These domains were A) Australian Migrant English (AMEP) program – language course type: Settlement English; B) private language schools - language course type: General/Exam English; C) university English language centres – language course type: Academic/University Pathways; D) Technical and Further Education (TAFE) – language course type: Vocational English. This project has also explored the ways in which a teacher’s ‘employable identity’ intersects with discourses of English language teacher professionalism – as situated in market-orientated language education contexts – and to highlight the temporal and contingent nature of teacher employability in a precarious employment landscape.

The study has investigated aspects of the teacher identity that index employability, not only from the institutional perspective – for example, in the form of job advertisements – but also from the individual teacher and hiring manager perspectives. The interviews conducted for this study revealed how employability attributes are negotiated, shaped and contested during teacher recruitment, which adds a new dimension to our understanding of the beliefs and practices that underpin recruitment practices and employability discourses. In

a departure from previous teacher employability research (see Chapter 2), this study has broadened the theoretical and methodological scope such that it moves away from viewing English language teacher employability predominantly through a discriminatory lens focused on native-speakerism towards considering it from within its neoliberal frame. This has led to a more nuanced portrayal of teacher employability, one which accentuates its dynamic, contextual and processual nature.

The methodology of this study has incorporated three approaches. First, the responses of an online survey were analysed using basic descriptive statistics to establish a foundational understanding of the employability attributes most important to teachers and hiring managers working in the English language teaching setting in Australia. These findings were useful in framing discussions with the teachers and hiring managers in the semi-structured interviews, which were designed to create the space for discussions to develop more organically as well as to explore issues emerging from the survey. The goal of the thematic analysis of the interview data was to capture the experiential perspectives of the teachers and hiring managers while maintaining a critical approach to teacher employability as embedded in neoliberal discourses. For the job advertisement data, the use of a directed content analysis and an indexical analysis allowed for the identification and exploration of those employability aspects most salient to institutional hirers. The content analysis first made visible which employable identity categories were mentioned in the job advertisements and the indexical analysis identified the linguistic resources used to index and label stance patterns within these employability categories, and to offer insight into hirers' discursive production of teacher employability in the English language teaching context.

It is worth noting that the approaches taken in this study have been framed within the tradition of critical discourse analysis (CDA). The CDA approach has made it possible to bring together the different analyses into a coherent whole by linking textual descriptions

and interpretations of teacher employability to neoliberal discourses of what it means to be an employable teacher in the Australian context.

7.2. Summary of key findings

The key findings were discussed in detail in Chapter 6 but will be briefly summarised here. RQ1 was designed to explore the attributes that Australian English language teachers and hiring managers consider to be the most important to English language teacher employability. The findings suggest that important to employability are teachers' knowledge credentials and emotion work which reflect a commitment to the kinds of pedagogies of engagement that drive student achievement and institutional goals. It was also shown that, while both hiring managers and teachers see professional development activities and opportunities as important to furthering teaching practice, it is important that teachers align themselves with neoliberal discourses of flexibilisation and continuous professional development to be seen as employable, whether this alignment is truly felt, or not. Rather than being conceptualised as static 'possessions' of skills and characteristics however, as in much of the previous employability literature, the attributes of teacher employability have been seen here as involving an ongoing identity project. The teacher employment interview can viewed, therefore, as the crucial first step in the emergence of an employable teacher identity. It is during the interview that a teacher is either accepted – or not – into a community of practice. This acceptance is also predicated on initial post-employment teacher observations and student feedback which function as a way of evaluating the teacher's ongoing employability. Once validated, it is the teacher's responsibility to self-manage their employability through an iterative process of reflection and self-evaluation, not only as related to their own teaching but also with respect to the constantly changing casual teaching environment and its relational dynamics.

RQ2 was formulated to better understand how employability attributes are addressed during teacher employment interviews. It was found that, rather than focusing primarily on teachers' pedagogical and content knowledge, interviewers tended to rely on interactional affect and their own subjective reasoning to make employment decisions. This reliance on rapport-building to predict a teacher's future relational abilities with students, however, does not take into account the impact that candidates' use of impression management techniques can have on interview outcomes. These findings raise important questions about the validity and utility of casual teacher interviews, especially given that teachers are more likely to demonstrate their employability after they have been employed. In the casual teaching landscape, the classroom 'pop in' and /or full observation, together with student feedback is usually a more useful indicator of a teacher's ongoing employability. Therefore, rather than being a reliable indicator of a teacher's employability, the casual teacher employment interview is implicated as a potential screening mechanism used to evaluate a teacher's initial capabilities with a teacher's ongoing potential for casual employment assessed in relation to student feedback, and classroom observations.

RQ3 explored how teachers and hiring managers position themselves in relation to English language teacher employability in the Australian context. The findings highlight the tensions that exist between teacher identity, notions of teacher professionalism, and the power differentials underlying the ongoing and dynamic process of teacher identity work required in the precarious, neoliberally-framed English language teaching sector. These tensions reveal the contradictions in a sector that demands highly-qualified, emotionally intelligent, contextually adaptive and skilful teachers to drive its 'quality' agendas. It is these agendas that construct English language, language teaching, language teachers and language learners as commodities that lie at the 'heart' of an endlessly competitive cycle driven by the

profit imperative. This cycle valorises the nebulous objectives of efficiency, effectiveness and excellence over the lived experiences and material lives of those who sustain the sector.

7.3. Research contributions and implications

This study has made theoretical and methodological contributions to English language teacher employability research. The study also has implications for English language teachers, and to the English language teaching sector in Australia.

7.3.1. Theoretical and methodological contributions

From the theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the existing body of research on English language teacher employability. In contrast to previous teacher employability research, this project has widened the investigative scope. In other words, it has moved beyond teacher employability research that is focused on the dichotomies inherent in ‘native speakerism’ to theorise teacher employability as a dynamic and ongoing site of contextually relevant identity work operating in a precarious world of work. The significance of revealing the more interpersonal interactions in this contingent employment landscape is that it challenges the notion of teacher employability as a static possession of skills and attributes that can be used to discriminate against individual teachers in the hiring process. Instead, teacher employability is seen as an iterative performance of identity that is contingent not only upon the teacher themselves to manage but relies on the management of relationships within the teaching context and the wider employment landscape. This has important implications for teacher employability, and for teacher identity research. The teacher ‘employable identity’ highlights how identity creation and development can be found at micro levels of social activity and relationships, meso levels of sociocultural institutions and communities, and macro levels of ideological structures. In contrast to human capital theories of employability, which focus on individual career development, teacher

employability, as conceptualised in this thesis, is not seen as the sole responsibility of the teacher to manage. Rather, it involves a complex interplay of social actions and relationships, teaching contexts, employment landscapes, and ideological positions which come together to open up or limit opportunities for teachers to develop their employability and, consequently, their teaching careers. What would also be interesting to consider theoretically, is if the conclusions of this study transfer to other adult English language teaching contexts overseas. Researchers in contexts similar to and different from the Australian one may like to take up this concept of a teacher employable identity for their contexts, thereby adding to the notion of teacher employability as highly contextualised.

From the methodological perspective, this study has demonstrated the benefits of data triangulation by using surveys, job advertisements and interviews to investigate the meanings associated with employability derived from a range of stakeholders. Not only does this triangulation contribute to the methodological landscape in employability studies research, it has strengthened the objectivity of this study's analyses and allowed for the voices side-lined by neoliberal employability discourses to be heard. A CDA-framed analytical approach also encourages the voices of these participants, as well as my own researcher's voice, to be seen as part of wider societal discourses that both shape and are shaped by the sociohistorical context in which teacher employability and English language teaching in Australia are situated. In these ways, the findings of this research not only enhance our understanding of what it means to be an employable English language teacher in Australia but showcase the benefits of drawing on different stakeholder perspectives to create more nuanced understandings.

7.3.2. Implications for English language teachers in Australia

The findings from this research has implications for professional practice. For teachers in the English language teaching profession who are looking for employment, it is

hoped that the findings presented here will make more intelligible the oftentimes amorphous notions of teacher employability that lie behind teacher recruitment processes. In drawing on these findings, it is hoped that teachers will be better positioned to understand what aspects of their own teacher identity need to be foregrounded and/or developed in order to be seen as employable across the four teaching and learning sectors investigated in this study. This knowledge may increase teachers' understanding of how to more effectively approach teacher employment interviews that appear to be more focused on rapport-building, displays of relational ability, and a commitment to professional development. This may be useful in helping to produce more positive interview outcomes.

Despite the English language teaching sector in Australia lauding teacher commitment, professionalism and career-mindedness, as well as promoting it as being essential for teacher employability, very little practical career development guidance and support is made available to teachers. This research may serve to illuminate a path along which English language teachers' can travel to further their careers. It is hoped that by developing a better understanding of education, qualifications and experience requirements, as well as the need for ongoing professional development, teachers can be more equipped to successfully navigate their career paths. Teachers may also need to be more aware that – in some TESOL contexts, at least – higher levels of experience and expertise can be detrimental to their employability. With this in mind, teachers may choose to obtain additional qualifications for the purpose of career advancement, they may stand up for their rights with management, or they may simply prefer to remain on casual contracts due to the flexibility and monetary benefits such contracts can offer. However, in this age of flexibilisation in which contingent work seems to meet the needs of institutions more than the needs of teachers, the findings of this research underscore the ways in which teachers'

work and longer-term career prospects is crucial for the ongoing success of the English language teaching sector in Australia.

I have emphasised in this thesis my critical stance towards the sectors' reliance on precariously employed teachers to maintain its global reputation for quality, and I believe that enhancing our knowledge and understanding of the impact of flexibilisation, and the sector's commitment to this business model, is vital for improving the collective working lives of English language teachers. Without these teachers' expertise, emotion labour and commitment to student learning (which underpins the sector's claims to teaching excellence), the sector's much feted quality may well be at risk in the not too distant future. Armed with this knowledge, teachers at all levels of experience and expertise and across all domains of the English language teaching sector may need to demand that the sector take their employment conditions more seriously. If English language teaching is a profession, as so many participants in this research and other studies have argued, then teachers – emerging, developing and established – need to be treated as such, and offered more stable working conditions.

7.3.3. Implications for the English language teaching sector in Australia

There are two main implications of this research for English language teaching in Australia. The first relates to the tensions inherent in a professionalised sector that depends on a business model underscored by flexibilisation and which is constantly promoted by discourses of quality and innovation. The second highlights the importance of robust teacher employment interview practices to underpin the quality teaching so valued by the sector.

It may be possible for those in more secure positions in the English language teaching sector in Australia to manage the contradictions involved in being a professional, a casual worker, and a high-quality, innovative teacher. It seems, however, that for many teachers, trying to ignore these inconsistencies may be more fraught than acknowledging

them. As shown by the findings in this study, teacher employability exists at the intersection between the teacher, the teaching context and the wider employment context. It is imperative for the success of this sector that all parties make a concerted effort to remedy the issues described in this thesis. All those working in Australian adult English language teaching, not just its hiring managers and other stakeholders can no longer default to a position of inertia where the idea that ‘this is the way things are’ is upheld. If the English language teaching sector in Australia, and its key stakeholders, is intent on asking for the qualities of innovation, leadership and courage to be demonstrated by its teachers, then surely there should be more critical reflection about whether these qualities are truly reflected in the sector’s business models and conduct. For instance, is the Step System so entrenched that it cannot be reviewed? Are student numbers and class/course predictions really so unpredictable that more stable, long-term work cannot be offered (if not to the many, then at least to the few)? For a sector that prides itself on special relationships with student recruitment agencies, government bodies, and other partisan organisations, why is it so challenging to strategically plan for a reduction in the dependence on casualisation for the majority of its teachers? Teacher employment conditions have not been framed as important, at least when it comes to the themes, papers and discussions around English language teaching that have been regularly foregrounded in conferences (national and international) in recent years. It may come as no surprise that the most popular themes in these conferences relate to ‘excellence’, ‘quality’, ‘innovation’ and ‘professionalism’. The findings of this research study suggest that the sector should direct these very qualities towards investigating how the English language teaching sector in Australia can become less dependent on casualised work in order to survive. To this end, teacher education providers, TESOL organisations such as the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA), English Australia and NEAS should work together to not only create employment best practice

frameworks to ensure the continued professionalism of the sector but work to educate and prepare those entering Australian English language teaching with a more comprehensive understanding of teacher employability and ways to address such challenges in their local contexts. ACTA, English Australia and NEAS already advocate to government and other regulatory bodies on issues pertaining to English language teaching in Australia. There is no reason why this advocacy cannot also include work which aims to highlight and reduce the sectors' reliance on precarious employment conditions.

The second implication for English language teaching in Australia relates to teacher employment interviews. The findings presented here suggest that a reliance on less structured approaches to casual employment interviews, teacher/interview rapport-building, and hirer managers' confidence in the effectiveness of their recruitment processes all call into question the utility and validity of casual teacher job interviews. Quality teaching surely starts with quality recruitment practices. However, English language teaching providers' recruitment processes and practices do not appear to be aligned with the standards that have been recommended for years by employment interview researchers. Employment interview standards should be benchmarked sector-wide, particularly for those institutions whose membership with quality assurance bodies such as NEAS and English Australia form part of their commitment to quality learning outcomes. Hiring managers should be specifically trained to conduct employment interviews (as are some managers in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)) and this training should take into consideration the body of research that shows that interviewers are prone to overconfidence in their judgements, and that interviewees regularly employ impression management techniques during interviews, both of which can impact teacher employment outcomes.

7.4. Research limitations

This study has three main limitations. The first stems from the teaching contexts from which the job advertisements and participants were selected. The majority of the data were collected from, private language schools and university English language centres who were predominantly recruiting General/Exam English and Academic/University Pathway English teachers. The voices, in terms of the interview, job advertisement and survey data, for the Australian Migrant English Program (AMEP) - Settlement English teachers, and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) - Vocational English teachers, have been included in this study, their views are less well represented than those from the General/Exam and Academic/University Pathway English domains. Therefore, while the findings of this study have provided new insights into English language teacher employability across all four of these domains, they do not equally encompass meanings of employability from all four. Future research may attend to this limitation by engaging a wider range and number of research participants, especially from the Settlement and Vocational English teaching domains, to add a broader range of experiences and beliefs on teacher employability.

The second limitation relates to the project's epistemology, that is, the lens through which the meanings of teacher employability have been interpreted. As my understandings and conceptualisations of teacher employability and identity developed throughout this project, so did my interpretations of the research data and methods. This created the space for me to reflect on my analyses, and to subsequently and iteratively review, update and challenge my own interpretations. For instance, working within the project's critical qualitative framework, I initially intended to approach the interview analyses indexically, in a similar way to the job advertisement data analyses. When analysing the research participant interviews, however, I realised that to understand these participants' lived experiences and interactions with teacher employability, a more experiential orientation to

these sets of data made more sense. Retaining more of the participants' thoughts, feelings and beliefs in the analyses and findings than I had initially intended has had the effect of giving more voice to individual participants' employability experiences. This shift demonstrated to me the importance of always situating employability not merely as theory, but as an ongoing process in the lived experiences of those teachers and hiring managers working in Australian English language teaching.

The final limitation concerns the time period during which the research project data was collected, that is, over the nine-month period in 2020 when Australia and much of the world went into 'lockdown' due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, teacher employment in this sector in Australia became even more precarious than it had been at any other time in its history. Australian borders were closed, and international students were prevented from entering the country. The consequence was that many English language providers closed completely, and the ones who managed to remain open did so with vastly diminished teacher employment opportunities. It is possible that the views expressed by the teacher and hiring manager participants in this study may have been influenced by this dire situation, and that the job advertisements analysed were not typical representations of hiring criteria given the state of the sector. Nonetheless, despite these limitations, the research findings offer insights into English language teacher employability in Australia at a significant time and it is hoped that they will provide direction for future studies on teacher employability in this context.

7.5. Recommendations for future research

While this study has offered new understandings of English language teacher employability and identity in the Australian context, and of some of the recruitment practices that underpin teacher employment processes, these insights have opened up further questions and more areas for future investigation.

First and foremost, future research could incorporate a wider and more diverse range of perspectives on what English language teacher employability means in the Australian context, and how employability impacts teacher identity. This could include more diversity in the teachers' backgrounds and experiences, as well as in the teaching and learning contexts, and could extend to other stakeholders. It would be interesting for example to better understand how teacher job advertisement writers – such as human resources personnel – view teacher employability, and in what ways their perceptions shape the discourse of employability represented in these advertisements. It would also be worth investigating how novice teachers view employability and how their emerging teacher identities develop in a predominantly casualised teaching landscape. Further, given the indications of accent discrimination in teacher employment interviews, it would be worthwhile exploring the interview experiences of teachers from language backgrounds other than English in relation to accent bias and lingua-racism, and in what ways this has impacted their employability. Another potentially interesting area of research would be the burgeoning online English language teaching space, and how issues of teacher employability and identity are situated in these contexts.

Next, as there have only been a few empirical studies of teacher employment interviews in English language teaching, an understanding of the range of variables that impact teacher employment interviews – and therefore 'quality' teaching – would be a good place to start to extend our knowledge in this area. For example, what are the determinants of teacher performance across the different English language teaching and learning sectors, and how do employment interview questions elicit responses related to job performance? Rapport-building in teacher employment interviews also warrants further scrutiny. Future studies could consider the ways in which rapport-building in pedagogies of engagement intersect with and influence hiring managers' evaluations of teacher candidates. They could

also interrogate how rapport-building is moderated by candidates' use of impression management techniques during interviews. Such investigations could also examine the extent to which the focus on a candidate's ability to build rapport during an interview is based on interpersonal connections rather than being job-related. Further, given that extraversion and communication skills, both central to teacher employability, are also integral to impression management tactics used during job interviews, future research could consider to what extent interviewers are evaluating teacher personality traits as opposed to future teaching performance.

The final area for further research draws attention to the value of a cross-disciplinary approach in teacher employability research. Given that theoretically and practically speaking, employability spans a range of disciplines, future teacher employability research could draw on colleagues' knowledge and expertise from fields such as sociology, business and economics, occupational psychology and human resource management. For example, a cross-disciplinary collaboration could investigate the ways in which English language teaching in Australia might reduce its reliance on casual teaching labour. Such an exploration may assist in developing more nuanced understandings of the impact that notions of teacher employability have on teacher identity while also offering the English language teaching sector in Australia the opportunity to continue to develop its global reputation for quality in English language teaching.

7.6. Final comments

Finally, this project has gone some way towards responding to the overarching question of what makes an English language teacher employable in Australia. My hope – at the end of this long but rewarding research journey – is that my endeavours may act as a provocation for others to take up more research where this study leaves off. In problematising the notion of English language teacher employability, my hope is that all

those who work in this sector can collectively work towards enhancing the conditions that shape teachers' work, lives and identities.

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APPENDIX A

Online Teacher Employability Survey

English Language Teacher Employability

If you haven't already done so, please ensure you read the Participant Information Statement and have signed the Participant Consent form both of which were attached to the email sent to you about this research. These documents provide information with regards your consent to taking part in the research, and how to withdraw from participating at any time.

This research is interested in English language teacher employability in the Australian adult English language teaching sector. Employability is taken to mean the achievements and experiences, generic and specific skills, and personal attributes which increase the likelihood of a teacher being employed, and maintaining employment.

Of specific interest is what you as English language teachers, and teacher hiring managers within Australian ELT see as the characteristics of an employable teacher for your teaching and learning context. Your responses to this survey will be used as a guide for discussion in the follow up interview as outlined in the Participant Information Statement you have been sent.

Section 1 – About you

1.

Are you a manager responsible for hiring English language teachers? ☐

Are you an English language teacher? ☐

Other (please specify)

2. To which gender do you most identify?

Female ☐

Male ☐

Prefer not to say ☐

Prefer to self-describe ☐

3. What type of institution do you work for?

Private Language school (ELICOS) ☐

University Foundation/Pathway ☐

TAFE ☐

Adult Migrant Programme ☐

Other (please specify)

4. What is your school's/institution's usual method of interviewing English language teachers?

Face to face – hiring manager and candidate

☐

Face to face – panel * and candidate

☐

Assessment centre with **no** face to face interview

☐

Assessment centre with individual face to face interview

☐

Assessment centre with panel face to face interview

☐

Computer mediated interview (Zoom/Skype etc.)

☐

Phone interview

☐

No interview

☐

Other (please specify)

* more than 1 interviewer

5. Do you consider yourself a native or non-native speaker of English?

Non - Native ☐

Native ☐

6. What TESOL teaching qualifications do you hold?

Certificate IV in TESOL

☐

Certificate IV in Training and Assessment

☐

CELTA (or equivalent)

☐

Trinity Certificate in TESOL (or equivalent)

☐

Graduate Certificate in TESOL (orequivalent)

☐

DELTA (or equivalent)

☐

Graduate Diploma in TESOL (orequivalent)

☐

Master of TESOL

☐

Master of AppliedLinguistics

☐

None of the above

☐

7. What is the length of your teaching experience in the English language teaching sector (including overseas)?

None	
0-2 years	
3-5 years	
6-8 years	
9-11 years	
11 years +	

Section 2 – The characteristics of an employable teacher

8. Qualifications and Experience

When a teacher is being recruited, how important do you consider these qualification and experience criterion to be.

Please, tick one box for each criterion according to the scale below.

Qualifications	Not applicable	Not important at all	Relatively important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Australian (or equivalent) qualified undergraduate degree						
Australian (or equivalent) qualified TESOL related postgraduate degree						
TESOL qualified Cambridge CELTA (or equivalent)						
Certificate IV in TESOL						

TESOL qualified Cambridge DELTA/Diploma of TESOL (or equivalent)						
Certificate IV Training & Assessment						
Language Proficiency	Not applicable	Not important at all	Relatively important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
‘Native’ English speaker						
‘Native-like’ English speaker (IELTS/equivalent 8+)						
Years of Teaching Experience	Not applicable	Not important at all	Relatively important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
0-1						
2-4						
5-7						
8-10						
11+						
Technology and blended learning	Not applicable	Not important at all	Relatively important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
General ICT ability (Office Suite, email, etc.)						
Interactive classroom tools/technologies (Google Docs, Kahoot, etc.)						
Online learning platforms (Blackboard, Canvas, etc.)						

8. A. If you have anything further to add, please do so here:

9. Teaching & learning specific knowledge and skills

When a teacher is being recruited, how important do you consider these teaching and learning knowledge and skills criterion to be?

Please, tick one box for each criterion according to the scale below.

Teaching & learning knowledge and skills	Not applicable	Not important at all	Relatively important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Knowledge of English grammar						
Knowledge of English vocabulary including idiomatic language						
Understanding of teaching & learning theory						
Understanding of teaching & learning strategies						
Ability to implement & evaluate teaching & learning theory and strategies						
Ability to reflect on own teaching						
Ability to reflect on student learning						
Ability to build rapport with students						
Ability to deliver student centred learning						
Ability to adapt & design materials to suit students' needs						

Ability to create a collaborative learning environment						
Ability to understand & deliver on teaching and learning outcomes						

9. A. If you have anything further to add, please do so here:

10. Generic skills

When a teacher is being recruited, how important do you consider these generic skills criterion to be? Please, tick one box for each criterion according to the scale below.

Generic skills	Not applicable	Not important at all	Relatively important	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Very important
Spoken and written communication skills						
Organisation skills						
Attention to detail						
Maintaining accurate records (assessments, attendance etc.)						
Team work						
Customer service skills						
Time management						
Flexibility/adaptability						
Problem solving skills						
Self-management						
Commitment to professional development						
Resilience						
Ability to act on feedback						

Uses initiative						
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10. A. If you have anything further to add, please do so here:

11. Personal attributes

Below are a number of personal attributes (taken from ELT job advertisements) which a teacher may or may not possess, and which may or may not contribute to being regarded as employable.

Please tick up to 10 which you feel are the most important characteristics of which could contribute towards a teacher being regarded employable.

Personal attribute	Most Important?
Approachable	
Adaptable	
Calm	
Caring	
Collaborative	
Creative	
Dedicated	
Empathetic	
Energetic	
Engaging	
Enthusiastic	
Flexible	
Friendly	
Innovative	
Inspiring	
Interactive	
Kind	
Motivated	
Outgoing	
Passionate	
Patient	
Positive	

Reflective	
Sense of humour	
Supportive	
Understanding	

11. A. Please add any other characteristics you feel are important here:

12. If there is anything further you would like to add with regards to English language teacher employability and identity, please add your comments here:

Section 3 Expression of interest in collaborating in further research

The second stage of this research explores, in more detail, the characteristics of English language employability.

This second stage will require participants to take part in a participant/researcher interview (approximately 45 minutes) exploring English language teacher employability for your context and more generally.

If you may be interested in taking part in this second stage of research, and would like to express your interest in being contacted at a future date (no obligation to partake), please indicate so by ticking the box below.

13. I would like to express my interest in taking part in the next stage of this research (no obligation)



I can be contacted on:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey, it is much appreciated.

Warm regards,

Victoria

APPENDIX B

Table B1

Instances of Stance and Nominalised Clauses in Teacher Achievements (Degree and Qualification) Across General/Exam English Job Advertisements

Job Advertisement ID.	Achievements	
	Degree	Teaching Qualifications
2.		<i>Essential & preferred:</i> ...Australian recognised TESOL qualification
3.	<i>Our ideal candidate must</i> be degree qualified (a recognised degree in any discipline or equivalent)	<i>Our ideal candidate must</i> hold a recognised TESOL qualification (<i>preferably</i> Cambridge CELTA)
4.	You MUST have: Bachelor Degree obtained or recognised in Australia and;	You MUST have: A recognised postgraduate TESOL qualification such as CELTA OR
	You <i>are required to have:</i> a recognised degree or equivalent	You <i>are required to have:</i> ... recognised TESOL qualification.
5.	You <i>are required to have:</i> ... a recognised degree in education with TESOL method	is a recognised qualification delivered by an education provider registered with government as being eligible to deliver nationally recognised qualifications
6.	a recognised degree is <i>a must!</i>	A CELTA or TESOL qualification... is <i>a must!</i>
7.		you will need: A CELTA or

		Certificate IV in TESOL
9.		Essential Requirements: A suitable TESOL qualification or qualification that contains TESOL as a method
10.	Essential Requirements: ... A recognised degree in any discipline	Essential Requirements: ...A recognised TESOL/CELTA qualification
11.		Essential: A recognised postgraduate TESOL qualification
12.	Must have a minimum of a Masters Qualifications in Educational Studies (or equivalent) focusing on the teaching of underage students from an Australian University.	
13		A recognised TESOL qualification or qualification that contains TESOL as a method (such as CELTA or Certificate IV in TESOL)
14.		you will have ...Possess appropriate tertiary qualifications and CELTA qualification
15.		TESOL qualification (e.g. CELTA)
16.	Must have ... Recognised degree or equivalent preferred	
17.		Essential Criteria ... Appropriate qualifications
19.		successful applicants must possess ... Cambridge CELTA or equivalent
20.		should have ... Cambridge CELTA (or equivalent).
21.		A suitable TESOL

qualification or qualification
that contains TESOL as a
method

22.

***Successful applicants will
have...A recognised*** TESOL
qualification with at least 12
hours of practicum

Table B2

Instances of Stance and Nominalised Clauses in Teacher Achievements (Degree and Qualification) Across Vocational English Job Advertisements

Job Advertisement ID.	Achievements	
	Degree	Teaching Qualifications
23.	Mandatory Requirements: A recognised university undergraduate degree or higher in education or equivalent with a TESOL major; Mandatory Requirements: ... A recognised university undergraduate degree or higher in education or equivalent with a TESOL major;	Mandatory Requirements: a recognised AQF8 or higher TESOL qualification or equivalent;
24.	Applicants must have: a teaching degree and/or relevant undergraduate or postgraduate Language, Literacy & Numeracy qualification	Applicants must have:... a current Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, either the TAE40110, including the TAELLN411 Unit and the TAEASS502 Unit, or TAE40116
25.		Note * Applicants who do not have a complete Certificate IV in Training and Assessment or equivalent (TAE40116), or TAE40110 with the relevant upskill units of TAEASS502 and TAELLN411 cannot be considered
26.	...you will have: A recognised bachelor degree the ideal candidate must have:	...you will have: A recognised postgraduate qualification in Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL). the ideal candidate must have

	recognised university undergraduate degree or higher or equivalent	...a recognised AQF 8 or higher TESOL qualification or equivalent
27.	<i>the ideal candidate must have ...a recognised</i> university undergraduate degree or higher in education or equivalent with a TESOL major	
29.		A recognised postgraduate TESOL qualification
30.	<i>Appropriate</i> post- secondary qualifications,	TAE50111: Diploma of Vocational Education and Training, or equivalent <i>(preferred)</i>
31.	<i>Essential</i> A recognised Teaching and TESOL Post Graduate Qualification	
31.	<i>Mandatory Requirements:</i> Bachelor Degree awarded by an Australian university or tertiary institution, or its onshore or overseas equivalent that is at least three years full-time duration or its part-time equivalent	

Table B3

Instances of Stance and Nominalised Clauses in Teacher Achievements (Degree and Qualification) Across Settlement English Job Advertisements

Job Advertisement ID.	Achievements	
	Degree	Teaching Qualifications
33.	The <i>Ideal Candidate will Possess</i> the Following Additional Education and Experience: <i>Qualifications/Requirements – Mandatory ...a recognised</i> undergraduate degree or diploma - a formal qualification awarded by an Australian university or tertiary institution, or its overseas equivalent	<i>Qualifications/Requirements – Mandatory...a recognised</i> undergraduate or postgraduate TESOL qualification TAE40110 – Certificate IV in Training and Assessment <i>is essential</i> for this role
34.		<i>Ideally</i> TAE40116 or TAE40110 and upgrades
35.	Applicants <i>will need to have:</i> A <i>recognised</i> university undergraduate degree or higher or equivalent; Applicants <i>will need to have:</i> A <i>recognised</i> university undergraduate degree or higher in education or equivalent with a TESOL major	It is <i>preferable</i> for lecturers to hold the <i>Certificate IV in Training and Assessment TAE40116, or TAE40110</i>
36.	The <i>Successful</i> Applicant: Minimum of a <i>recognised</i> undergraduate degree of at least three years duration	
37.		Either a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment TAE40116 or Diploma or higher in Adult Education <i>is desirable</i>

38.	Qualifications/Requirements – Mandatory... a recognised undergraduate degree or diploma	Qualifications/Requirements – Mandatory ... A recognised postgraduate TESOL qualification.
39.	Mandatory Requirements: Undergraduate degree of at least three years duration awarded by an Australian university or tertiary institution , or its onshore or overseas equivalent;	Mandatory Requirements:... A specialist Adult Literacy qualification - including but not limited to, emerging foundation skills courses recognised by ASQA
41.	If you have; A degree or teaching qualification recognised by TAFE	

Table B4

Instances of Stance and Nominalised Clauses in Teacher Achievements (Degree and Qualification) Across Academic/University Pathways English Job Advertisements

Job Advertisement ID.	Achievements	
	Degree	Teaching Qualifications
42.		The successful candidate will hold ...a recognised TESOL certificate;
45.	To be successful in this role you will have : A recognised degree	To be successful in this role you will have : An appropriate English language teaching qualification (i.e. TESOL)
46.	Requirements : A recognised degree	
50.		Required (as minimum) : Suitable TESOL qualifications or qualifications containing TESOL