Reflections on Language Teacher Identity Research is the first book to present understandings of language teacher identity (LTI) from a broad range of research fields. Drawing on their personal research experience, 41 contributors locate LTI within their area of expertise by considering their conceptual understanding of LTI and the methodological approaches used to investigate it. The chapters are narrative in nature and take the form of guided reflections within a common chapter structure, with authors embedding their discussions within biographical accounts of their professional lives and research work. Authors weave discussions of LTI into their own research biographies, employing a personal reflective style. This book also looks to future directions in LTI research, with suggestions for research topics and methodological approaches. This is an ideal resource for students and researchers interested in language teacher identity as well as language teaching and research more generally.

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REFLECTIONS ON
LANGUAGE TEACHER
IDENTITY RESEARCH

Edited by Gary Barkhuizen
CONTENTS

1 Language teacher identity research: An introduction
   Gary Barkhuizen
   1

2 Tangled up with everything else: Toward new conceptions
   of language, teachers, and identities
   Kelleen Toohey
   12

3 Teacher autonomy and teacher agency
   Phil Benson
   18

4 Becoming a language teaching professional:
   What’s identity got to do with it?
   Richard Donato
   24

5 Journey to the center of language teacher identity
   David Block
   31

6 Towards sociolinguistically informed language teacher
   identities
   Christina Higgins
   37

7 Language teacher educator identity and language teacher
   identity: Towards a social justice perspective
   Manka M. Varghese
   43
Contents

8 Recognizing the local in language teacher identity  
_Ahmar Mahboob_  
49

9 Narratives of identity: Reflections on English language teachers, teaching, and educational opportunity  
_David Hayes_  
54

10 The tension between conflicting plots  
_Julia Menard-Warwick_  
61

11 Multilingual identity in teaching multilingual writing  
_Suresh Canagarajah_  
67

12 Language teacher identity in troubled times  
_Brenda Leibowitz_  
74

13 Learner investment and language teacher identity  
_Bonny Norton_  
80

14 Identity, innovation, and learning to teach a foreign/second language  
_Jason Martel_  
87

15 Boundary disputes in self  
_Sarah Mercer_  
93

16 Understanding language teachers’ sense-making in action through the prism of future self guides  
_Magdalena Kubanyiova_  
100

17 Searching for identity in distance language teaching  
_Cynthia J. White_  
107

18 Second language teacher identity and study abroad  
_Jane Jackson_  
114

19 Becoming a researcher: A journey of inquiry  
_Yueting Xu_  
120

20 Identity and teacher research  
_Simon Borg_  
126
Contents

21 “This life-changing experience”: Teachers be(com)ing action researchers  
   \textit{Anne Burns}  
   \hfill 133

22 Teacher identity in second language teacher education  
   \textit{Jack C. Richards}  
   \hfill 139

23 Identities as emotioning and believing  
   \textit{Ana Maria F. Barcelos}  
   \hfill 145

24 Grappling with language teacher identity  
   \textit{Paula Golombek}  
   \hfill 151

25 Situating affect, ethics, and policy in LTI research  
   \textit{Peter I. De Costa}  
   \hfill 158

26 Language teacher identity in teacher education  
   \textit{David Nunan}  
   \hfill 164

27 Language teacher identities and socialization  
   \textit{Patricia A. Duff}  
   \hfill 170

28 Acknowledging the generational and affective aspects of language teacher identity  
   \textit{Lesley Harbon}  
   \hfill 176

29 “Who I am is how I teach”: Reflecting on language teacher professional role identity  
   \textit{Thomas S.C. Farrell}  
   \hfill 183

30 Questioning the identity turn in language teacher (educator) research  
   \textit{Xuesong Gao}  
   \hfill 189

31 “English is a way of travelling, Finnish the station from which you set out”: Reflections on the identities of L2 teachers in the context of Finland  
   \textit{Paula Kalaja}  
   \hfill 196

32 Language teacher identity as critical social practice  
   \textit{Brian Morgan}  
   \hfill 203
Contents

33 Critical language teacher identity
    *Ryuko Kubota*
    210

34 Who we are: Teacher identity, race, empire, and nativeness
    *Suhanthie Motha*
    215

35 Reflecting on my flight path
    *Masaki Oda*
    222

36 Feminist language teacher identity research
    *Stephanie Vandrick*
    228

37 Identity dilemmas and research agendas
    *Cynthia D. Nelson*
    234

38 Second language writing teacher identity
    *Paul Kei Matsuda*
    240

39 Writing teacher identity: Current knowledge and future research
    *Yin Ling Cheung*
    246

40 Multiple selves, materials, and teacher identity
    *Jill Hadfi eld*
    252

41 Language teaching identity: A fractal system
    *Vera Lúcia Menezes de Oliveira e Paiva*
    258

42 The intimate alterity of identity
    *Matthew Clarke*
    264

Index
    270
I have been grappling with the idea of identity for many years in my research—research with language teachers and language learners, study-abroad sojourners, immigrants, prisoners, and military personnel. I have theorized the concept in different ways and used various methodological approaches to explore identity. I have asked my research participants questions about their identity and to tell me identity stories. I have tried to figure out their identities from what they say in interviews and what they write in journals and surveys, and I have reported findings that describe and interrogate identity. I use the word “identity” a lot in my publications. But with all this activity I have never felt absolutely comfortable with what it means. Different theoretical perspectives inform different understandings and uses of identity—poststructuralism, sociocultural and dialogical theories, communities of practice, social identity theory—some more fashionable than others at different paradigmatic moments in time. But I am concerned with what it means to me. And since I have been an English teacher at college and high school levels and have been involved in teacher education for many years, I am interested in teacher identity, specifically language teacher identity (LTI).

We hear over and over again that LTI is hard to define, or that many definitions exist, or that we shouldn’t even try to define it. Every time a definition pops up in the literature there are both those who critique it and those who agree with it and use it to frame their own research work. When my graduate research students embark on an identity-related research project, for instance, they often begin to panic when confronted with the challenge of finding an appropriate theoretical framework to inform the conceptualization and design of their study. What is clear, is that they want to focus on the topic of identity—they see it as important and useful in their professional lives, and they find the idea of delving into people’s
identities intriguing. But once they start to explore the theoretical and empirical literature, things become a bit murky and choices are hard to make.

The aim of this book is to make things less murky. I like to think of it as *LTI unplugged*—a sort of stripping back of the sometimes complex rhetoric surrounding discussions of LTI. To achieve this I asked a number of experienced researchers in the fields of applied linguistics and TESOL to reflect on LTI within their areas of expertise—41 accepted the invitation! The aim of the book is thus to collectively explore and present understandings of LTI grounded in a range of relevant research fields from the perspective of experienced scholars and researchers. Drawing on their personal research experience, each contributor locates LTI within their respective area of expertise and research activity by considering their conceptual understanding or definition of LTI and the methodological approaches used to investigate LTI. The chapters are narrative in nature, with authors embedding their discussions within biographical accounts of their professional lives and research work. The chapters therefore include a limited number of references, to decrease the murkiness even further, and they take the form of guided reflections within a common chapter structure.

In sum, the book attempts to take stock of current thinking and research on LTI from the perspective of experienced researchers. It also looks forward—to future directions in LTI research, which includes making concrete suggestions for research topics and methodological approaches. When constructing their chapters the authors were asked to answer the following questions:

1. What do I see as the place of language teacher identity in my field of expertise/research?
2. What is my definition/conception of language teacher identity?
3. What future developments do I see for language teacher identity research in my field?

Each chapter starts with a brief biographical statement, outlining the authors' professional experiences and positioning themselves within their area of expertise/research. Three sections follow covering the questions above. Along the way authors weave into their answers their own research biographies, employing a personal reflective style. The chapters are short, focused, personal, and readable. All end with suggestions for research topics and related methodologies.

**Theorizing LTI**

Overall, then, the chapters offer a broad coverage of current thinking about LTI in a range of language education subdisciplines. In 2005, Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson, in a highly cited article, said that “Language teacher identity is an emerging subject of interest in research on language teacher education and teacher development. Yet relatively little attention has been paid to the ways in which...
teacher identity is theorized” (p. 21). Firstly, they are right in that LTI is currently gaining a lot of attention from researchers; at almost any conference nowadays one can find presentations and symposia on the topic, edited books and monographs are appearing, graduate researchers are writing dissertations and theses on LTI-related topics, and I know of at least two top-tier journals publishing special issues on aspects of LTI (e.g., *TESOL Quarterly*, 2016; *Modern Language Journal*, 2017).

Secondly, Varghese and colleagues point out that there has been little attention paid to theorizing LTI. That may have been the case a decade ago, but more and more, as I have pointed out above, we see attempts to make sense of LTI by drawing on various theoretical perspectives, particularly those borrowed from psychology, (socio)linguistics, general education, and even philosophy. This book contributes to these endeavors by theorizing LTI from the ground up; to start with the experiences and mostly unplugged reflections of the scholars and researchers who contributed chapters.

I realize that producing any single definition of LTI is improbable, exclusionary, and possibly counterproductive. However, in this chapter I am going to give it a try. Below, I present a definition of LTI that encapsulates the many ideas about LTI generated in the reflections of the authors in this book. To produce this definition, or more accurately a composite conceptualization of LTI, I conducted a content analysis of each chapter searching for the main themes that relate to theoretical ideas about LTI. I have tried to be as inclusive as possible, so that the many ideas in the chapters will to some extent be “visible” in the reduced definition. I acknowledge the danger of too much inclusiveness and too much reduction, to the point that the definition may become almost meaningless! However, I do believe that the exercise has produced a definition which provides a statement, tentative as it may be, about current thinking in a wide range of areas in which language teachers work, and in this book these include: language teacher education and professional development, second language writing, multilingual education, teacher reflection and research, (critical) pedagogy, teacher autonomy, distance teaching, materials development, and study abroad.

A definition, of course, is not a theory. What I propose is that my definition be interpreted variously from different theoretical perspectives as well as from different contextual realities (e.g., spaces where teacher education and language teaching are practiced), and possibly prompt alternative ways of thinking about LTI. From one particular theoretical perspective or set of contextual realities certain facets of the definition may be more or less relevant, and from other perspectives and realities other facets may be. Different arrangements of the facets—their interconnections and salience—would also reflect different theoretical perspectives and contextual realities. The definition, therefore, does not propose a grand narrative of LTI or claim ideological neutrality (Varghese, *et al*., 2005). Instead it welcomes relative, situated reflection, interpretation, development, and use by teachers and researchers. The definition, or composite conceptualization, is as follows:
Language teacher identities (LTIs) are cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical—they are both inside the teacher and outside in the social, material and technological world. LTIs are being and doing, and feeling and imagining, and storying. They are struggle and harmony: they are contested and resisted, by self and others, and they are also accepted, acknowledged and valued, by self and others. They are core and peripheral, personal and professional, they are dynamic, multiple, and hybrid, and they are foregrounded and backgrounded. And LTIs change, short-term and over time—discursively in social interaction with teacher educators, learners, teachers, administrators, and the wider community, and in material interaction with spaces, places and objects in classrooms, institutions, and online.

The definition explained

In this section, I consider the various facets of the LTI definition in turn. In doing so, I include excerpts from all the chapters in the book. They are not representative of the entire chapter from which they come—they are selected merely to serve an illustrative and supportive purpose for the particular facet under discussion.

1. Language teacher identities (LTIs) are cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical …

   LTIs are cognitive in that language teachers constantly strive to make sense of themselves; reflexively, they work towards understanding who they are and who they desire or fear to be. LTIs are also cognitive because they concern teachers’ beliefs, theories, and philosophies about language teaching, and they relate to both content and pedagogical knowledge. LTIs are also obviously social. They are enacted, constructed, negotiated, and projected with others—language learners, teacher colleagues, administrators, and policy makers—within both local (e.g., in the classroom) and more global contexts (e.g., the language teaching profession). Therefore, language teacher identity indexes both social structure and human agency, which shift over historical time and social context. Also important are the language teacher’s hopes and desires for the future, and their imagined identities (Norton).

   Norton’s excerpt makes reference to the social and the individual, and also to emotion—the hopes and desires of teachers. Barcelos links emotion to cognitions: The more central a belief and more connected to their emotions, the more influential it is to their identities. Norton further references the historical dimension of LTI, as does Menard-Warwick: I tell my students that we author our identities in discourse by drawing upon historically available resources—the resources that our lives have made available to us. These resources include teachers’ language learning experiences. Kalaja, for example, points to the contrast between the
desired teaching practices of the student-teachers she works with and the way they learned languages: *When envisioning entering the profession of teaching, the students would emphasize the social nature of learning English in contrast to their past experiences as learners of the language.*

Because LTIs are social, they are always negotiated, and thus ideological. Those involved in language education have different views about what is right and wrong, what is good and bad practice, and what should and what should not happen in classrooms, schools, and the profession as a whole, and some people have more power than others to make decisions regarding the outcome of these dilemmas. In critical pedagogy, for instance, Kubota says that *teacher identity is often located in a site where teachers and students struggle to negotiate their ideological difference.* In sum, considering the complexity of LTI, Clarke’s remark is apt: *I am fascinated by its paradoxical nature, as something that is at once individual and social, symbolic and material, familiar but alien, impossible yet also indispensable.*

2. … they are both inside the teacher and outside in the social, material, and technological world.

This facet of LTI reinforces the interrelationship between the individual dimensions of LTI and the social. “Inside” simply refers to the individual—aspects of LTI that are associated with a particular teacher, a particular physical body, whether they be cognitive, emotional or biographical. “Outside” refers to the external, social world, and Duff notes their connection: *Language teacher identity … arises out of the intersections within and across two particular sets of factors: (1) personal biography … and (2) local socio-educational contexts.* As does Cheung: *My identity as a second language writing teacher has evolved over time because of changes in internal and external factors. Internal factors refer to my emotional state … external factors, such as work environment and job circumstances.* “Outside” thus includes interactions with people and with spaces and places, but the nature of the inside-outside relationship is viewed in different, not necessarily opposing, ways.

Martel signals that identities can be designated or imposed from the outside: *In symbolic interactionist terms, actual identities refer to negotiated identity positions, an internal-to-the-teacher construct, while designated identities refer to role expectations, an external-to-the-teacher construct. Role expectations and identities are in continual, mutually shaping interaction with each other.* Varghese notes the centrality of language and power for negotiating and constructing LTIs in interaction: *Identities in discourse captures a more poststructuralist definition that underscores the importance of language, power, and situatedness in this definition.* And Mercer describes how the internal self and external context are dynamically integrated: *The self as a CDS [complex dynamic system] integrates context into the system as opposed to viewing contexts as being outside of the supposed internal self influencing from an external position.*
Also outside within ecological spaces is the teacher’s arrangement of and engagement with material objects such as furniture in classrooms and teaching/learning materials; for example, the way teachers prepare and use materials during lessons: *My professional identity plays an important role in my teaching not only in terms of how I teach but also how I present myself and the materials for teaching and learning* (Matsuda). While extends materiality to the technological world: *Reflection and critically adaptive learning … is closely related to identity formation in particular settings (e.g., moderating online discussion lists, providing feedback on assessments, working within multimodal distance environments, embarking on course design processes).*

3. LTIs are being and doing, and feeling and imagining, and storying. It is now widely recognized that LTIs are not something teachers possess, like an object, but rather something they do or perform—LTIs are relational. Farrell, for example, says: *For me the core of identity is manifested in how people enact roles in different settings.* Teachers perform being teachers, for example, when they give lessons in the classroom, grade assignments, and participate in professional development workshops. When they talk with parents about their children’s language learning progress they are performing their LTI. Morgan emphasizes the relational nature of identity: *The performative display of an alternative or transgressive image-text is always dialogic and negotiated, suggesting possibilities rather than certainties.* LTIs are neither certain, therefore, nor static.

From a complex dynamic system perspective, *Teacher identity … is a fractal system because it is a complex interactive system; it changes, self-organizes, and adapts to the environment* (Menezes). And from a sociocultural perspective, Golombek’s language teacher education work continues to grapple with tensions in LTI by exploring how teachers’ emotional and cognitive dissonance in response to classroom activity points to contradictions in feeling, thinking, and doing that can be mediated to promote teacher development. Emotions or feelings are associated with thinking and teacher activity in the doing of identity. But LTIs are not always about here-and-now performance—teachers, both pre-service and in-service, constantly imagine themselves and who they will be as teachers in the future: *The key distinctive theoretical contribution of language teachers’ possible selves, however, lies in foregrounding the central role that teachers’ future-oriented identity-relevant investment in those images plays in guiding their action* (Kubanyiova). Their imagined futures are very much connected, in other words, to their actions in the present, and also to their past, including teaching and language learning experiences.

Block says that *being a language teacher is an ongoing, narrated process which brings together experiences in the past and present, as well as those anticipated in the future.* LTIs are thus also storying—through the process of narrating who they are, teachers make sense of their experiences and indeed re-shape those experiences. In his research, for example, Hayes has found that *through teacher*
narratives it becomes clear that teachers exercise their own agency, have their own strongly held views of themselves as teachers, and are not merely passive instruments of larger geopolitical forces, unknowingly colluding in the linguistic-imperialist enterprise of English language teaching.

4. They are struggle and harmony: they are contested and resisted, by self and others, and they are also accepted, acknowledged and valued, by self and others.

Hadfield’s statement sums up this facet of LTI rather nicely: *My concept of teacher identity is a construction made up of multiple selves existing in the present as private and public selves and in the future as ought-to and ideal selves, which may coexist harmoniously or be in conflict.* Language teacher identities (or in Hadfield’s case selves) are always plural, or multiple, since teachers enact different aspects of who they are as teachers in different discursive encounters. At one time they could be instructors, at other times assessors, or heads of departments. And these various LTIs are not always in harmony with each other: *The dynamic, negotiated, and emergent nature of a teacher’s identity is not always benign and may create sites of contradiction and struggle* (Donato).

The struggle may extend to identities beyond those associated with being a language teacher. Canagarajah says, for example: *There is always the possibility that one will face tensions between one’s teaching and social identities.* However, these tensions keep one evolving as a teacher, responding to one’s changing identities and values, as he or she brings them to inform teaching practice. Gao points out that LTI struggles may emanate externally from powerful macro sources: *Professional identity is profoundly mediated or even sometimes constrained by the imposition of duties and expectations that are in line with cultural traditions and dominant societal discourses.* In this case, as with internal LTI struggles, teachers constantly engage in negotiation as they strive for LTI harmony.

Above, Canagarajah refers to an *evolving* teacher who learns or develops from those ongoing struggles, and Nunan refers to a positive shift in teacher education: *In terms of teacher education, there is a shift in focus away from a deficit model of instruction to the notion of the resourceful teacher: in other words, focusing on and building upon what novice teachers do know about, and can do in the language rather than on what they lack.* A sense of belonging to a community is one example of achieving some degree of harmony—in Xu’s biography, a teacher researcher community: *Identity is inevitably relational, which suggests that individual teachers need to join the community to which they desire to belong. Being part of the community will generate a sense of belonging, which enhances participation and performance.* Burns argues similarly noting the identity benefits of *be(com)ing* legitimized within a community of teacher researchers: *Teachers I have worked with frequently refer to their be(com)ing as researchers as a contextualised form of “finding recognition” (or being legitimated) that is personal, but also collegial, and institutional.*
5. They are core and peripheral, personal and professional, they are dynamic, multiple, and hybrid, and they are foregrounded and backgrounded. My LTI definition so far has suggested that any language teacher has multiple identities, which are dynamic; that is, teachers negotiate and construct different changeable identities in the process of interacting with others and with things in different contextual spaces. If teachers have multiple LTIs we need to ask: How do they interconnect? How do they relate to each other? Benson says: Each of my identities influences the others such that they really form part of a single, if complex and probably less than harmonious, personal identity. Borg makes a distinction between narrow and broad conceptions of LTI: We can thus contrast narrow conceptions of teacher identity which have an exclusive instructional focus with broader views of teacher identity where professional growth is also a fundamental element.

The relationship among a teacher’s multiple identities is not always harmonious, as I’ve pointed out above, and choosing to foreground one identity over others could possibly result in identity struggles, or identity dilemmas: I am interested too in how each of us inhabits and inherits many different identities; and how speaking from the vantage point of this identity or that can be fraught, can mean generalizing ourselves, distancing ourselves from our other identities, and thus, from ourselves (Nelson). Foregrounding or backgrounding one or more identities has consequences, therefore. Higgins thinks of language teacher identity as a form of role modeling and as a form of activism, whereby teachers agentively emphasize a particular aspect of their LTI for sociopolitical purposes.

In the context of pre-service teachers’ experiences of study abroad, Jackson says: Through linguistic and extralinguistic performance, pre-service and in-service teachers may assert different aspects of themselves in diverse social and cultural contexts and circumstances, whether in their home environment or abroad. In study abroad situations, especially when sojourners are learners of the host country’s language, teachers constantly negotiate (or juggle) multiple identities in order to learn, live, and teach in an unfamiliar environment. Vandrick considers gender identity to be one of the major identities that comes to the fore and affects one’s teaching, one’s relationship with students, colleagues and administrators, and one’s sense of self in the academic world. In this excerpt it is evident that gender is a core identity category for language teachers. Vandrick’s comment raises the interesting issue of how and why teachers negotiate or are designated core and peripheral identities.

6. And LTIs change, short-term and over time—discursively in social interaction with teacher educators, learners, teachers, administrators, and the wider community … That LTIs are constructed discursively in social interaction reflects a poststructuralist perspective on identity. This view has, over the past two to
Language teacher identity

three decades, become accepted and been increasingly employed to frame
discussions on LTI in teacher education (and teaching practice) and in LTI-
related research. Language, as one available semiotic resource, is central in
understanding the relationship between teachers and their social worlds (i.e.,
the people and social structures with which they interact). Language connects
people to the social, and it is through the language choices they make that they
negotiate a sense of self, as Mahboob says: The linguistic choices that we make
allow us to project and negotiate our identities with others and this is shaped by the
context (context here includes an understanding of users, uses, mode, and time) in which
such interactions take place.

As discussed earlier, LTIs are dynamic within any particular short-term
discursive encounter, but they also change over time: Language teacher identity,
in my view, is a teacher's perception and understanding of what resources he or she has
accumulated through past experiences inside and outside of the classroom in order to
respond by taking action in teaching at the present time and in the future (Oda). De
Costa expresses the same idea, specifically in relation to teaching practice:
Language teacher identities are constantly evolving and are developed through pedagogical
practice. And Harbon extends time even further, so that LTIs are passed on
dialogically from one generation to the next: A language teacher's identity, as
deconstructed in my own language teacher education curriculum program, starts from
reflection across the generations as the embarkation point.

7. … and in material interaction with spaces, places, and objects in classrooms,
institutions, and online.

This facet of LTI focuses on the interaction and the relationships among
teachers, non-human objects, and the ecological spaces in which they are
“entangled,” both micro and macro: The new materialism line of thought … may
change approaches to language teacher identity research so that we focus attention not
only on the person who is defined as teacher, and the people around them, but also on
the material and symbolic arrangements that together assign particular identities to
particular bodies (Toohey). An obvious example of material interaction is the
use of classroom teaching materials: Each teacher used the materials very diff erently,
and when talking to them after the lesson I was struck by the extent to which each lesson
reflected diff erent principles the teachers believed in (Richards).

But materiality extends to the arrangement of things and spaces and their
interaction with teachers’ lives and practices in the process of identities
construction. Leibowitz’s use of words, such as “gatekeeper,” “powerful
knowledge,” and “environment,” in the following excerpt creates an image of
an ecology of possibility in which her identity is embedded and shaped: I no
longer see myself as strongly as the gatekeeper to one powerful knowledge and way of
knowing. I am imbued with a sense of possibility that I can learn from my students and
from the environment. And to end, Motha comments on the power of LTI as a
construct beyond its connection to individual teachers or spaces in which they
practice, such as classrooms and schools, to the profession as a whole. This is taking LTI into new theoretical territory: *More recently, I’ve become concerned with the power of teacher identity not only in the lives of individual teachers or groups of teachers but as a construct that underpins the profession, that actually creates the logic for the profession.*

**Future directions in LTI research**

When inviting authors to write for this book I asked them not only to theorize LTI within their own professional biographies but also to think forward to future directions in LTI research. Each chapter includes a section in which authors look ahead to research directions within their particular areas of expertise, and concludes with concrete suggestions for topics and related methodologies. These are very useful indeed, and I hope they generate ideas for further LTI research, especially for graduate students searching for dissertation topics.

The suggested research areas, topics, and methodologies are too many to summarize easily here. However, there are some common themes: Overwhelmingly, methodologies are those variously referred to as (socio)constructivist, interpretivist and qualitative, particularly narrative, feminist, and (auto)ethnographic approaches. These are also critiqued. Associated methods include mixed methods, surveys for large populations, social network analysis, teacher reflection, focus groups, classroom observation, and, of course, interviews. The call for longitudinal research that involves extended periods of data collection is consistent.

A broad range of topic areas include the following:

1. Transformative research, research on LTIs that brings about change—to teaching practice, language learning, and broader social structures;
2. Competing and contested LTIs, from the perspective of self and others;
3. The construction of LTIs online, in social media, and in interaction with material non-human things;
4. Emotion, and affective aspects of LTI;
5. The relationship between teachers’ language learning histories and LTIs;
6. Linguistic choices and sociolinguistic knowledge;
7. Teacher agency in relation to pedagogical practices, and language-in-education policies;
8. LTI in neoliberal times, and within contexts of inequitable schooling practices;
9. Collective as opposed to individual LTIs;
10. Teachers of young learners;
11. The development of LTIs in multilingual contexts, both local and macro, including conflict zones;
12. Teacher aspirations, imagined future identities, and ideal selves;
13. Teacher professionalism and long-term professional development;
14. The interface between LTI and classroom practice and critical language pedagogy.
Organization of the book

In deciding how to order the chapters in the book, two options appeared to be evident, both of which I eventually abandoned. The first was to group chapters according to the theoretical perspectives the authors take on language teacher identity. In some cases chapters presented easily identifiable similarities, but at the same time, there were differences significant enough for me not to want to group them together. The second option was to group chapters by subject matter, or the authors’ area of research expertise, obvious candidates being teacher education, second language writing, teacher research, and critical conceptualizations of LTI. This too proved to be problematic, since even within these subjects there are subgroupings, some of which begin to verge on compatibility with other subject areas. And within these different subject areas theoretical perspectives vary quite considerably.

In the end I decided not to group or order the chapters in any particular way, thus allowing readers to dip into the book at any place that grabs their attention—it may be the author, or the title, or the subject area covered. Having said that, in sequencing the chapters I did try to find some link between one chapter and the next, in case readers choose to start at the very beginning. The link may not be obvious to readers (and to be honest I might even have forgotten it myself!). Nevertheless, this is not important since each and every chapter has something important to say about LTI, as you will discover.

Reference

TANGLED UP WITH EVERYTHING ELSE
Toward new conceptions of language, teachers, and identities
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Introduction
I am Canadian and currently live and work in and around Vancouver, British Columbia, but I was born and lived until my late 20s on the Canadian prairies. My first teaching job was with Plains Cree children in a school in a small town in northern Alberta. My second teaching job was teaching English at night school to immigrant adults, many of whom were Chilean refugees after the 1973 coup. I think of the challenges I experienced in both positions as something like knots in entangled yarn, and I have been trying to untangle them ever since: throughout my graduate studies; my PhD dissertation about Swampy Cree-speaking students learning English in northern Ontario; my university teaching of English as an additional language teachers and of Indigenous and heritage language teachers; my research with children learning English at school; my collaborative classroom research with teachers; and most recently, the research I do with my colleague, Diane Dagenais, investigating language and literacy learning through engagement with a variety of digital technologies. Our emphasis in this recent work has not been so much on teachers, but rather on student learning, although teacher experiences are of course a logically necessary direction we will pursue in the future. In this chapter I trace how my thinking on teacher identity and language teaching has evolved along with developments in our field, and with my accumulated experience working with teachers.

The place of language teacher identity in my work
My graduate studies began at the University of Alberta, where I was mentored by the Indigenous scholar and linguistic anthropologist, Dr. Carl Urien. Learning
about Cree culture and language, and the richness and potency of anthropological writing, convinced me of the relevance of anthropological research in education generally. Then, as an EAL teacher of adults in graduate school, I also became interested in how anthropological insights and research methods could be relevant in language teaching. This was not a common approach to language teaching scholarship in the late 1970s and 1980s when I worked on my doctorate at OISE in Toronto, and I sometimes struggled to find colleagues who shared my interests, my research methods, and concerns.

However, in the 1990s and early 2000s, I began to explore with others how sociocultural theory as explicated by cultural psychologists might illuminate aspects of language learning. I published studies on identity construction in classrooms where children were learning English, and the relationship of identity with the use of classroom resources, culminating in *Learning English at school: Identity, social relations and classroom practice* (Toohey, 2000). In this book, I examined how student identities became formed at school and how those identities had consequences for students’ opportunities to access classroom resources and to engage in conversations and practices that might further their language learning. It appeared to me that sociocultural theory helped us see the interrelations of identity, activities, and resources (or the “stuff” of the world).

The groundbreaking special issue of *TESOL Quarterly* on Language and Identity came out in 1997 (edited by Bonny Norton), and I saw this issue as making space in language education literature for those of us whose interests in language learning were not primarily linguistic. From then on, our field energetically took up identity scholarship from sociology, postcolonial cultural theory, feminism, and many other fields, as we considered how student and teacher identities were implicated in language teaching and learning. Several authors wrote about how constructions of teacher identity had important effects on relations among teachers and their students, as well as on institutions and ideologies about language learning and teaching. In particular, there were important discussions of the challenges of non-native English-speaking teachers or non-white teachers of English to construct identities of competence in classrooms dominated by discourses of “native-speakerism.” However, this scholarship also pointed out the “human agency” often revealed in individual teacher efforts to overcome or change the discourses that subordinated them. This work posited a tension between how sometimes we are assigned identities that may or may not be congruent with how we see ourselves or how we wish to be seen, and our efforts to assert perhaps different, more desirable identities. It also made links between local negotiations of identity and broader group negotiations of power, considering how certain discourse practices inequitably gave some people easy access to resources, and others much less.

My current theoretical interests necessitate for me shifts in how I understand identity, and as I am only beginning this exploration, my discussion here is tentative and incomplete. I have with colleagues recently become interested in the work of feminist techno-scientists, philosophers, anthropologists, historians of science, and
others aligned with “new materialism” theory who do not accept that anyone or anything has fixed attributes or clear and inherent boundaries, making the notion of “identity” somewhat problematic (e.g., Barad, 2007). These theorists argue the process of identification (seeing people and things as having distinct identities) and the positing of individual agency, make it difficult to see how people, discourses and non-human things are in agential relationships that result in reciprocal transformations. For these theorists, the actual process of identity-making should be studied to reveal for what purposes people, discourses, and things are separated one from another, how such separations are effected, what the histories of such categorizing are, and how hierarchies are made of particular identities.

The new materialism line of thought (necessarily only briefly outlined here), may change approaches to language teacher identity research so that we focus attention not only on the person who is defined as teacher, and the people around them, but also on the material and symbolic arrangements that together assign particular identities to particular bodies. We will need to examine carefully the relationships and activities in which these bodies are situated and the symbolic and material forms that support those relationships and activities. Many use the metaphor of all these elements being entangled, and argue that we cannot see people or things as isolates in an entangled world.

New conceptions of language, teachers, and identity

Similar to processes of identity-making, it seems to me that applied linguistics, usage theories of language, and contemporary observers of language use in super-diverse urban centers, are documenting how language boundaries are blurred, and “translanguaging” enables people to express themselves more fully and to widen the circles of people with whom they communicate. If speakers are not maintaining the distinctness of languages that language teachers and linguists have traditionally perceived and taught, and if boundaries between languages are coming to be seen as unclear, it may be that we will see that positing language boundaries (identification) is a social process that benefits some speakers over others. Instead of prizing speakers/writers of a standard language with no “negative transfer” from another less prestigious language, we may begin to investigate the communicative wealth of multilinguals who have many linguistic resources on which to draw.

As for teachers, we will need to examine carefully the ecologies in which particular teachers work, how these environments came into being, what practices are enabled/constrained in these environments, what resources are available, what processes result in teachers getting identified as different from their students, or from their colleagues, and so on. These particularities (and more) will make it difficult to limit research to how teachers see themselves or how others might see them. As environmental philosopher James Gibson pointed out, “Any sense of ‘who one is’ is meaningless without the world that supports action” (cited in Mace, 2005, p. 198).
Besides teaching university classes to teachers of English as an additional language, of heritage and Indigenous languages, my most prolonged experience working with teachers was within the Teacher Action Research Group (reported in Denos, Toohey, Neilson & Waterstone, 2009). Working extensively for five years with teachers in classrooms with linguistic and other diversities, as they conducted research in their own classrooms, made me uncomfortably aware of the limitations of theoretical or practical suggestions a university-situated teacher could make about school practices, if the wider contexts (“the world that supports action”) in which school teachers worked were not taken into account. These wise and experienced teachers patiently showed us, the university-based members, what their classrooms were like, what constraints they experienced in trying to make change in those classrooms, and how much they wanted to understand their students and classroom practices deeply, despite challenges of time and resources. Their desires for action and change were not often supported by the school worlds in which they worked and their frustrations, but their occasional triumphs became important to our group as we struggled to understand teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students in particular classrooms, at a particular time. For these teachers of children, even the term “language teacher” was not a good fit, as they worked in schools where they taught not only language but also the provincial curriculum, and they also engaged intimately with the children and their families in matters that had little to do with traditional language teaching. Of course, they also taught children of a range of different abilities and orientations to the world. So, for them, having a “language teacher identity” did not describe adequately what they did everyday, and this showed dramatically how identity labels (EAL learner; language teacher) might obscure as much as they reveal.

**Future developments in language teacher identity research**

I think it will be interesting in future work that aligns itself with new materialism to examine how language teacher identities get created in various milieux, and how these identities get entangled with classroom resources, school and government policies, discourses about learning and teaching, and so on. I also think that future work will examine the boundaries we have been accustomed to seeing around languages and their ownership, as scholarship on translanguaging and the globalizing of multilingualism practices continue, and usage-based models of language acquisition proceed. Such work will perhaps destabilize our ideas about distinct languages and identities and bring constantly to our attention how political and economic practices are evident in local interactions. There are also potential breakthroughs in considering language teaching more multimodally than we may have heretofore, with increasing scholarship that examines how bodies and other modes are recruited in service of communication.

Diane Dagenais and I have recently been investigating how child language learners (notice the ascription of fairly limited identities to such persons) interact
with various digital technologies, with possible effects on their language and literacy learning. Trained as we are in paying close attention to language as data, we are trying to expand our gaze, to “educate our attention” to see “learning occurring as people make their way through their daily lives, developing skills in perceiving and attending to … their sociomaterial … surroundings … and improvising new solutions to new problems and ecologies” (Ingold, 2001, p. 152). Teachers, as well as children who come to school having histories of interactions with others who use diverse means of expression and communication, are also developing new skills and improvising solutions to new problems in their daily interactions with their social and material surroundings. The convoluted phrase, “children who come to school having histories of interactions with others who use diverse means of expression and communication” is intended to focus our attention on the experiential, language, and other resources such children bring to school, and also to focus our attention on the challenges and ecologies these children face in their daily school lives. The new ecologies they face will not only require them to assume school language and literacy practices, if these can even be entangled from all the complexities of school life. Such a view may help us shift from seeing home/school language and literacy differences as an explanation for why some children struggle in school to taking into account many other things beyond language. As researchers, we are interested in investigating practices and learning activities that have promise for engaging not only the children who have always been so engaged, but also those who have not been served well by schools in the past. We are heartened by how multimodal and multilingual learning objects and activities appear to capture the attention of such children and how these objects and activities might provide new ecologies that can lead to more equitable opportunities for all children. At the same time, we need to understand more fully what old and new problems and ecologies teachers encounter in schooling sites, and to consider as researchers, ways to learn, with teachers, how to collectively address these. It is likely we will not be framing these issues as identity issues exactly, but as ever-shifting responses to new teaching ecologies.

Directions for future research

I began this reflection thinking about the knotty challenges I encountered in my first two teaching jobs in which children and adults were learning English (as well as many other matters) and as I was learning to inhabit a “teacher identity.” The questions that puzzled me then continue to be challenges for me and I hope future researchers will address some of those questions. They are, in no particular order:

1. When teachers share limited experience with their students, how can they, in Ingold’s (2001) words, “educate the attention” of their students and themselves to respond to new problems and new ecologies?
2. How might educational ecologies be changed so that both students and teachers become co-investigators of new solutions to new (and old) problems?
3. How might new conceptions of language and literacy in the context of new technologies and new environments for expression and communication, become maps for educational change?

4. How might researchers and teachers together conceptualize teacher identities in ways that destabilize inequitable schooling practices, and honor teachers’ as well as children’s desires to learn and make change?

References


From sociology to applied linguistics

Before I was an applied linguist I was an EFL teacher, and before that I was a student of sociology. As a sociology student in the 1970s I was fascinated by the so-called “structure vs. agency” debate. How far are our thoughts and actions determined by social structures? What role does individual agency play in determining the course of our lives? At first, I favored the view that the force of social structures could only be challenged by collective agency. But more nuanced views of the relationship between social structure and individual action were emerging at that time, and I was also influenced by life historians who viewed social processes through the eyes of individuals who directly experienced them.

And then the social structures of Margaret Thatcher’s Britain determined that I needed to get a job and it would not be in sociology. Agency led me to a postgraduate teaching qualification and then to a succession of EFL teaching positions overseas. For several years I was less occupied by sociological questions than I was by the questions of how to explain the more arcane features of English grammar. But eventually I developed a sociological view of language teaching and learning, which led me to masters and doctoral degrees and an academic career in applied linguistics.

Teacher autonomy and identity

My biography probably explains why, as the field of applied linguistics has moved in an increasingly “social” direction, I have tended to move in the opposite direction through a persistent concern with diversity and individual difference. Autonomy, or the capacity of individuals to exercise control over their lives, has been a key idea...
that I have explored in work on learner and teacher autonomy (Benson, 2011). Looking back on this work, I see two themes that refuse to go away. First, autonomy only makes sense if we acknowledge the long-term character of meaningful learning. Autonomy is not so much about controlling one’s actions today or tomorrow (though that may be part of it), but of directing current actions towards longer-term goals. Second, however strongly we assert a “social” view of autonomy, based on interdependence rather than independence, autonomy loses value as a distinctive concept if it fails to connect with individuality. A fundamental condition of autonomy-oriented teaching, for example, is that we see our students as people with individual (albeit socially conditioned) past and future trajectories of learning.

In the early 1990s, I attended a professional development workshop in Hong Kong at which the facilitator, Bob Jordan, asked us to reflect on what we thought was the biggest challenge in our teaching. My answer was that I really did not know who my students were. Where had they come from and where were they heading? From this arose an interest in narrative, quickly followed by an interest in learners’ and teachers’ identities. From the outset, I was attracted to the strand of narrative sociology that sees identity as an ongoing outcome of the stories we tell about ourselves. In my work on teacher autonomy, therefore, I am fascinated by teachers’ stories of unique trajectories of language learning, language use, and language teaching on which their language teacher identities are based. These stories are, I believe, the perfect place to explore interactions between structure and agency in language teachers’ work.

Autonomy and identity are linked, in my view, through the idea that any sustained process of learning is also a process of becoming. Learning a language is a process of becoming a person who learns and, one hopes, uses the language. Learning to teach a language is a process of becoming a person who teaches it. In each case, learning is a matter of developing an identity—a “language learner,” “language user,” or “language teacher” identity—and for most of the teachers I have worked with all three identities are involved. Much of my work in teacher education has been with Asian non-native-speaker teachers of English. These teachers spend many years learning English as a second or foreign language to the point where they are capable of teaching it. They then spend additional years learning to teach. Their learning takes place at school and university, in varied out-of-class settings, and, often, during periods of study abroad. Developing identities as English language learners, users, and teachers necessarily involves autonomy, because it must be self-directed across a variety of settings over many years. It is inconceivable that these identities could be the outcome of simply being taught a language and how to teach it to others.

Identity is important to my work on teacher autonomy, therefore, because it sets the compass for the long-term processes of autonomous learning that lead individuals eventually to become language teachers. From this point of view, autonomy is more than being able to control one’s learning; it also involves directing learning towards long-term identity goals. In this kind of learning, we learn “something” because we
want to become “somebody.” Identity signals the kind of “somebody” we want to become (e.g., a “language teacher”) and autonomy signals our capacity to channel learning efforts in that direction. Teacher autonomy can be defined in two ways: (1) situationally, as the freedom granted to teachers to exercise their discretion in teaching, and (2) attributionally, as teachers’ internal capacity to exercise this freedom productively. The structure vs. agency debate is at work in these definitions, which touch upon the degree to which teachers’ decisions are constrained by social and institutional structures, or are products of teachers’ agency. Some teacher autonomy studies emphasize the constraints, while others foreground teachers’ capacity to create spaces for autonomy within these constraints.

Teacher autonomy can also be understood as involving the development of a strong identity as an individual language teacher. An alternative posed by Freeman and Cornwell (1993, p. xii) has stayed with me over the years: “Is learning to teach a matter of replicating how other teachers do things? Or does it depend on coming to grips with one’s own ways of thinking and doing things in the classroom?” Here, the structure vs. agency debate is cast in a new light, as a choice for individual teachers. Do we accept that our teaching is determined by social and institutional constraints by following what other teachers do and always have done? Or do we try to open up spaces within these constraints for our individuality as teachers to emerge? In an influential article on language teacher autonomy, Little (1995, p. 78) argued that “there is a sense in which, whatever her subject, the teacher cannot help but teach ‘herself’.” Freeman and Cornwell’s second alternative, therefore, depends on the teacher developing a strong sense of self-identity that would allow her, at times, to teach against the grain of social and institutional constraints.

**Language teacher identity**

My conception of language teacher identity is linked to a broader view of identity as a multifaceted phenomenon involving at least six main facets: embodied identities we are born with as physically separated beings; reflexive identities, or our own views of our selves; identities projected in interaction with others; identities recognized by others as they interpret the identities that we project; imagined future identities, and socially constructed identity categories (Benson, et al., 2013). There is often discussion about which of these facets best represents the idea of identity. For example, is identity a matter of how we see ourselves or how others see us? In my view, identity involves both of these facets and more. There may also be conflicts between different facets of identity; for example, between projected and recognized, or between reflexive and imagined identities. In this sense, identities are always “in process” and “identity work” is the work of striving for, while never quite achieving, coherence among their different facets.

Identities are also often described as “multiple” and, in this sense, a language teacher identity might be one of several important identities that a person maintains. My own biography tells me that I am a language teacher but also much else besides. It also tells
me that each of my identities influences the others such that they really form part of a single, if complex and probably less than harmonious, personal identity. Language teacher identity, in other words, is not just a sense that I am a language teacher. It is also a highly individual sense of the kind of language teacher that I am. It is not just a matter of fitting into and playing out the social role of language teacher. It is also a matter of how I interpret that role, incorporate it in my larger sense of self, and, I hope, of how that self enriches my work as a language teacher.

**Autonomy and agency in teacher identity research**

Research on language teacher autonomy began around the mid-1990s and has not been strongly connected to research on language teacher identity, which began around the same time. The connections between teacher identity and teacher autonomy that I am making in this chapter are, I believe, being made for the first time. In some recent papers, however, teacher identity has been linked to the idea of teacher “agency” (e.g., Glas, 2015). While my interest in identity emerged from reading in the area of life narratives, the interest in identity in the applied linguistics literature is connected more to the sociocultural turn of recent years, in which “agency” tends to have been favored over “autonomy.” Future research on language teacher identity is, thus, more likely to develop in interaction with the idea of teacher agency than with teacher autonomy.

While this is not the place to attempt to untangle the conceptual distinction between autonomy and agency (Benson & Cooker, 2013) some comment may be in order in so far as it may influence language teacher identity research. Sociocultural theorists object to autonomy, because they see it as representing an illusory ideal of an unconstrained capacity to control the course of one’s life. The idea of the “autonomous individual” is illusory, because our sense of autonomy is, itself, socially conditioned. Researchers have, thus, often adopted Ahearn’s (2001, p. 112) widely cited definition of agency as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act,” which, in a sense, reins in agency by emphasizing that it is not opposed to, but conditioned by social structure. At the same time, in data analysis, agency most often describes actions that escape, or go against the grain of social conditioning and constraint. While there is a contradiction in this, the implications for research on language teacher identity are similar in each case. If language teacher identities are largely conditioned by social circumstances and agency is manifest only in sporadic acts of resistance or unpredictable behavior, there is little scope for research that delves into the evolution of language teacher identities over the course of individual teachers’ lives, or research into how these identities might, themselves, escape from the webs of social and institutional constraint in which they are entangled.

Reflection on my own language learning and teaching careers, suggests that I do, to a large degree, replicate how other teachers do things, as a consequence both of social conditioning and the constraints under which I work. At the same time, there is something that consistently tells me that this approach is not quite right,
and that I also need to come to grips with my own ways of thinking and doing things. Freeman and Cornwell’s (1993) questions do not, in this sense, represent a clear-cut choice. They are more two opposing forces in my work that are constantly struggling to get on top of each other. In a recent paper that adopts a sociocultural view of teacher agency, Glas (2015) argues that individuals do not “have” agency; rather, agency is “achieved” in situational contexts. It is important to me, however, that the exercise of my agency is more than “situational.” The achievement of agency, I hope, leads to learning that leaves a trace on my identity as a language teacher. Such traces of learning contribute, perhaps, to the development of dispositions and habitual practices that go against the grain of social conditioning and constraint. It is also important that my agency has acquired a certain collective character through, for example, connections with networks of teachers and researchers who have adopted an interest in autonomy as part of their teacher identities. My hope is that, whether it is concerned with teacher autonomy or teacher agency, there will be space in future research on language teacher identities for studies that investigate teachers’ own contributions to the long-term development of their identities.

Directions for future research

As connection between language teacher identity and teacher autonomy/agency have largely proceeded independently of each other, the connections between them are ripe for research. The three suggestions below are based on projects I have been involved in and the references to published work could serve as a starting point for future studies.

1. How do teachers create spaces for the exercise of autonomy and agency in their work, and how is this related to the language teacher identities they have developed over their careers? (Benson, 2010).
2. What are the roles of autonomy and identity in the transition from learning a language to becoming a teacher? How do teachers develop the “authority” to teach a language they have learned either as second or first language? (Benson, 2012).
3. How do language teacher identities develop, both individually and collectively, in different educational settings? (Gu & Benson, 2015).

References


BECOMING A LANGUAGE TEACHING PROFESSIONAL

What’s identity got to do with it?

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Introduction

I admit from the start that I do not consider myself among those researchers who examine issues of language teacher identity as the primary focus of their studies. Perhaps this confession says something about my own professional identity as a researcher. I am, however, active in foreign language education theory, research, and practice and, as a language teacher educator, I have an intense interest in how K-12 and university language teachers and language teacher educators develop as professionals. My research has always been guided by the tenets of Vygotskyan sociocultural historical theory. In the context of teacher education, Vygotsky’s theory maintains that a teacher’s relationship with students, academic content, and pedagogy is not direct, but rather mediated through various types of tools and signs, most notably linguistic signs, that are appropriated during one’s personal language learning history, academic training, and clinical experiences. These experiences, as I will try to show in this chapter, have the potential to mediate and create the language educator’s professional identity.

Against this backdrop, I found myself reflecting carefully on the issue of teacher identity in my own research. Despite the fact that I do not situate myself centrally in the identity research literature, the concept of teacher identity has indeed emerged and been explored in several of my studies. In these studies, I invoked the concept of teacher identity to document teacher development, to explain classroom interactions, and to explore what it means to become a professional language educator. In this reflective commentary, I review three of my studies to illustrate the important role of identity in foreign language teacher education and professional development, my working definition of the concept of a professional identity, and the areas of needed research in this field. In other words, I will try to answer the question: What does identity have to do with my work?
The three studies that I will review, conducted with colleagues and former graduate students, are intended to illustrate the role of identity in understanding how language teachers situate and orient themselves to their professional work. Each study represents a specific time in the life of teachers or foreign language professionals who differ in years of experience, levels of academic preparation, and contexts of instruction. In the first study (Antonek, McCormick, & Donato, 1997), I illustrate the pathways of two foreign language student-teachers who, through their weekly portfolio reflections during their clinical experience, revealed how they forged a professional identity in the situated conditions of their classroom. The second study (Donato, Tucker, & Hendry, 2015) follows the professional lives of ten graduates from doctoral programs in applied linguistics as they crossed the border from student to practicing professional as university language teachers, language acquisition researchers, or language program administrators. The third study (Donato & Davin, 2014) investigates the sources of a novice teacher’s discursive practices during classroom instruction. In this study, we illustrate how the student-teacher’s current discursive practices can be traced to his own personal history as a language learner and the enduring emotions of that experience on his emerging teacher identity and beliefs about what it means to provide effective language instruction.

Through these studies, I hope to show the important role that language teacher identity plays in understanding and explaining pre-service and in-service teacher preparation for professional life. Additionally, by examining the role of identity in professional development across different levels of professional practice, we can begin to explain why educational innovations are often sites of struggle, contradiction, and resistance, how professional identities are dynamic, and how they are transformed when moving across major life boundaries, such as from being a language student to a language teacher or from a graduate student in applied linguistics to an applied linguistics professional.

The student-teacher portfolio as autobiography

The following study (Antonek, McCormick, & Donato, 1997) indicates my own belief about the role of identity in educating future language teachers and in preparing applied linguists for the field. In a study of two student-teachers, Ed and Marianne, we monitored the use of a newly designed working portfolio as a mediating tool for the student-teachers’ reflections on teaching and for assisting them in identifying and analyzing critical teaching events that took place each week in their classes. Each weekly portfolio entry required a single self-selected piece of evidence that was meaningful to the student-teachers and that revealed an insight that they learned about themselves as a teacher during that week. In a four-column matrix, the students identified the entry, stated why they selected it, composed a succinct theme of the entry, and explained what they had learned from it. In this way, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action were united. What we
discovered was that for Ed and Marianne, as for many others who participated in the portfolio project, a theme of the vast majority of their entries focused on who they were becoming as teachers and the sources of these discoveries, (i.e., their developing professional identities). Moreover, when portfolio entries and themes were compared, we noted that their emerging and ever-changing professional identities derived from two different sources. For Ed, his identity as a new teacher was externally determined, based primarily on observations of his interpersonal relationships with his students and how they reacted to his instruction, how much they cooperated, and how engaged they were in the lesson. For Marianne, her sense of self as teacher developed out of her own personal feelings about herself as a teacher that were shaped by the appraisals of her cooperating teacher. The point of this study was to show the unique trajectory of personal and professional formation as a teacher and the pathways to this identity that emerged out of reflection in and on action in the context of affect, human relations, and subject matter teaching. A second important finding of the early study was that establishing one’s professional identity was mediated in myriad ways during clinical experiences and was as important to these novice teachers as learning about teaching practices.

**Conceptualizing language teacher identity**

From my own perspective, language teacher identity, or any professional identity for that matter, is defined as the simultaneous enactment of an agent’s subjectivity in real-time discursive (semiotic) processes situated in local, social, and historical circumstances. I believe my personal definition reflects some contemporary theorizing on identity and emphasizes one’s subjectivity (agent) in social and symbolic interactions of various kinds (discursive processes) during which conscious or unconscious thoughts of the self are creatively negotiated (or not) in situated activity (enactment), and where ways of relating the self to the world emerge (local and historical circumstances). This definition is based on the non-essentialist poststructuralist view that individuals embody multiple senses of the self (i.e., subjectivities) that are in a state of continual change and are managed through thinking and speaking in and through various modalities of communication. I also agree with the view that the dynamic, negotiated, and emergent nature of a teacher’s identity is not always benign and may create sites of contradiction and struggle, as I will show in the study below.

In a recent study (Donato, Tucker, & Hendry, 2015), we wanted to assess if our ways of mentoring doctoral students in applied linguistic and language education supported students’ transitions to professional life. To this end, we examined ten former PhD students of applied linguistics and foreign language education and asked them in interviews and on questionnaires about their experiences during the border crossing from graduate student to practicing professional in various fields of applied linguistics. What we were interested in learning was how participants perceived their previous training as doctoral students, in what ways they expressed
their transitional experiences to professional life, and what impact this movement from one domain to another might have had on their identities as researchers, scholars, and participants in the community of practice of applied linguistics. From a personal perspective, the study allowed me to understand more deeply the role and concept of a mutable identity and subjectivity in the narratives of the lived experiences of these participants. The study also situated the role of identity research in the real circumstances of my own professional life as a faculty member who prepares future foreign and second language teachers and teacher educators for university positions or as administrators of language centers and institutes.

Two findings emerged from this study, which reflect my personal view of professional identity discussed above. First, when asked to provide advice to a new graduate student for transitioning from the world of graduate student to that of a university faculty member, all respondents strongly suggested in some form that, in addition to preparation for research, graduate students lacked experience with departmental, university, and community service and were shocked by the demands placed on them in their new positions. Indeed, one noteworthy finding of this study is that, in the majority of responses, the commitment to service required by a university faculty member was far beyond what respondents had imagined as part of their future professional identities-in-practice. One respondent remarked, “There are many roles [in the university] beyond the traditional researcher identity.” This observation is not to suggest that research experience was not evaluated as being as important as other aspects of graduate student life. On the one hand, all respondents spoke of the need to commit to research endeavors as a means of shaping one’s identity as a practicing applied linguist in a university setting. It was clear that previous research experience during graduate work in light of present positions was instrumental and critical for self-identifying as a professional and, as one respondent stated, “played a very central role in this identity-building process.” On the other hand, the lack of preparation for service during their graduate studies presented challenges when transitioning to professional life and was not a part of their professional identity upon graduation from their respective programs. Newly encountered local circumstances created, therefore, a rather seismic shift in views of the self in relationship to an institution in which they once felt relatively safe and secure.

A second interesting finding of this study reflects the role of modalities of communication and discursive environments on one’s newly minted professional identity. Shifts in discourse practices concerning what can be said, to whom, and how, reflecting Bourdieu’s concept of the legitimate speaker (Bourdieu, 1991), had an effect on the former students’ professional identities and created an interior struggle to reconcile private beliefs with public discourses. One participant was dismayed because she often felt silenced during meetings when the topic of approaches to language education arose. The faculty that she joined did not share her specialist views of language instruction, which she carefully studied and researched during her doctoral program. Attempts to discuss the topic from her
perspective as an applied linguist and from her public position as a junior faculty member was met with opposition and, at times, hostility. Other former students felt that their mode of communication was required to change. Where once they could speak the language of the discipline to those who shared a common knowledge base, the new initiates to the academy were required to speak to a variety of constituencies outside of their field about their work. As one respondent noted, “sometimes I feel like I’m experiencing an identity struggle.” Despite some struggles, one theme emerged clearly. Despite identity struggles and contradictions that these former students experienced as they crossed the border, they all found creative solutions to internal conflicts and were able to align themselves with local and social conditions of the workplace without losing sight of what one respondent refers to as her “core principles.” From my perspective, these cases reflect my view of identity as a creative process of negotiating new subject positions and relationships of the self to the world while, at the same time, acknowledging one’s own subjectivity so that it is not entirely compromised or co-opted in the process. What this research has taught me is that shifting subjectivities and identities does not mean abandoning or losing a sense of oneself in the world; rather it means creatively engaging with, responding to, and renegotiating the self in ways that contribute to one’s own personal growth and development as a professional.

Future developments in language teacher identity research

Although much has been written about identity from various theoretical perspectives, research still remains to be done to understand fully the role and importance of teacher identity to language teaching professionals. A new study that I have undertaken with Kristin Davin (Donato & Davin, 2014) has raised many questions in my mind about the relationship of language teacher identity to the disappointing outcomes of some teacher education programs and the apparent resistance to educational innovation that often reveals itself in teacher statements like “I do that already,” or “Everyone does that; this is nothing new.” This observation is not to paint a negative picture of foreign language teachers. Certainly many successful, committed, and thoughtful novice and experienced language educators are in language classrooms everywhere in the world. I point out this observation to begin my discussion of where language teacher identity research may be headed and areas of research that may help us solve some of the vexing issues surrounding pre-service teacher training, in-service professional development, and implementation of innovative language programs.

In the study with Davin, we attempted to determine why certain traditional ways of interacting with students in the target language persisted during the student-teachers’ clinical experiences, despite the best efforts of the teacher education program to mediate explicitly the novice teachers’ attention to their classroom discursive practices. Answers to similar questions often refer to teacher cognition, teacher beliefs, lack of connection between university-based work and
schools, and a host of other reasons that have been carefully put forward. One area, however, that is often mentioned in theory but has not been carefully researched is the consequences of one’s identity as a language learner in the past to an emerging identity as a language teacher in the present. From a sociocultural theoretical perspective, the question is, therefore, what are the consequences of a novice teachers’ ontogenetic development as language learners on how they view their professional identity as language instructors?

In one case, we discovered that a very dedicated non-native-speaking student-teacher of French continually insisted on conservative rituals of decontextualized, time-consuming, and unnecessary pronunciation drills with his advanced French class to the detriment of communicative interaction with his students. When we interviewed him and analyzed his written commentaries on his background as a language learner, we discovered that, while studying in France, one of his teachers chastised him publically in class and consistently assigned him below average grades for his inaccurate pronunciation. He reported that this situation, in turn, resulted in serious threats to his previously formed identity as a good language learner. Johnson (2015) states that Vygotsky’s concept of perzhivanie captures how one’s lived experiences in the past, especially those that are emotional and deep-seated, shape and influence future actions, to which I would include one’s language teacher identity and teaching practice. Research on this Vygotskyan concept is an area that deserves greater attention in language teacher education research. Research methods need to be established that can capture valid depictions of teachers’ identity as past language learners and how these identities might connect to particular aspects of their teaching practice that may challenge our understanding and defy explanation. Operationalizing perzhivanie and capturing past experiences is therefore one challenge of this line of research.

**Directions for future research**

From my perspective as a language teacher educator who has come to understand the importance of the concept of identity for teacher preparation and a teacher’s future professional life, I offer three new directions for identity research that I think will benefit the profession.

1. Research is needed into how one’s past experiences as a language learner have an impact on the new teacher’s emerging professional identity and teaching practice. These studies need to capture not just fact-based experiences but the visceral feelings, attitudes, and emotions that arose during learning a new language and connect these emotions to both the past learner identity and present teacher identity. Using thought-based data mapped onto practice-based data may be a way to capture this relationship.

2. Research is needed on teacher education programs that address identity as a core concept and as an essential part of a teacher’s professional development.
Carefully designed studies that document how young professionals establish their identities in the field will humanize teacher education and move it beyond simply familiarization with educational policy, technical procedures for carrying out lessons, and matrices of competencies to meet (see Martel, 2015, for a good example of what this research might look like). Additionally, these studies will contribute to our understanding of what it means to rethink language teacher education in identity terms.

3. Given the amount of recent attention to re-conceptualizing doctoral education, we need studies of the outcomes of our doctoral programs on the professional identities of our graduates. Many doctoral programs prepare students for only one aspect of their professional life—grant writing and research. Serious conflicts may occur when graduates enter the academy in terms of limitations to participation in various forms of discourse, threats to their identity when confronted with opposing theoretical subject positions or subtle forms of racial prejudice, and struggles to balance life and work while engaging in high stakes communities of practice. To this end, more ethnographic case studies or phenomenological studies that follow graduates of doctoral programs into their professional lives to investigate their experiences and the effects on their professional identities and (inter)subjectivities are needed.

References


Positioning myself

“You’re a native speaker of English. You can teach English.” In so many words, Miquel responded to my musings about how I could afford to stay in Barcelona for a few months back in early January 1979. As it happens, Miquel was right and after a day or two of visiting language academies in Barcelona, I landed a job at Berlitz. The Berlitz method was about the teacher performing very simple acts (e.g., lift a pen and ask “what’s this?”) and this suited me well as I had no idea how to teach English. The aforementioned few months turned into years and over time I moved from absolute ignorance about language teaching to a more comprehensive understanding of language learning processes coupled with a repertoire of teaching strategies that seemed to work fairly well in my classes. A crucial element in this development was a year-long RSA (Royal Society of Arts) Adult-TEFL diploma course that I did at the British (Council) Institute in Barcelona during the academic year 1981–1982. Through this course I not only gained a great deal of knowledge about English language teaching, but I also developed a real enthusiasm for the profession. A few years later, I completed an MA in applied linguistics and as the 1980s turned into the 1990s I was well established, working at a highly prestigious language-teaching outfit in Barcelona. Then, crisis struck in 1995 when I finished my PhD: I was infected with grand ideas about having an academic career and leaving behind the world of TESOL to which I had devoted myself for almost 18 years. In 1996, I moved to London to take up a lectureship at the Institute of Education, University of London (now University College London), which proved to be a critical turning point in my professional (and personal) life. And this move is the starting point of this chapter, in which I reflect on language teacher identity research.
The place of LTI in my working life

As I developed as an academic in London in the latter part of the 1990s, I noticed how I was becoming more and more disconnected from the day-to-day practice of language teaching and how my reading and research interests were becoming more and more embedded in the social sciences (in particular sociology) and not applied linguistics. My communications with fellow academics and non-academics were progressively about matters outside of the classroom, even if they had an impact on what went on in classrooms. Key terms arising included globalization, migration, multiculturalism, multilingualism, and identity, and I was drawn to phenomena, behavior and events that did not always include language as a clear mediator. All of this led me to publish a paper in which I discussed the gap between SLA researchers and language teachers, a relatively hot topic in applied linguistics in the 1990s (Block, 2000). In this article, I suggested that SLA publications were often about issues that were not of direct interest to language teachers because researchers and teachers inhabit different discourse communities, with different relative statuses, world views, and stances towards knowledge. I did suggest possible ways forward and around the gap, such as collaborative research, action research, exploratory practice and theory-practice mediation, but I ended the paper somewhat negatively, lamenting my own drift away from language teaching concerns.

Nevertheless, I have never completely disconnected from language teaching as my academic teaching over the years has kept me focused, at least to some extent, on issues directly related to it. Between 1996 and 2012, when I worked at the Institute of Education in London, I was, at different times, the coordinator of MA programs in modern foreign language teaching and learning, TESOL, and bilingual education. On several occasions during this period, I taught on an MA module focusing on language teacher education and development. Teaching this module put me in direct contact with debates taking place around key issues, including what “training,” “education,” and “development” might mean; teacher learning and cognition; the content of language teacher education courses; and how language teachers develop careers.

But I think what I always found interesting was teachers as people, and this led me to the notion of language teacher identities (hereafter LTIs). If the gap article cited above saw me focusing on professional identities, or in any case, one’s sense of self as having the occupation of language teacher, subsequent work was about French, Spanish, and German nationals living in London and working as teachers of French, Spanish, and German, respectively. As someone who had left his home country (the US) at the age of 22 and, in essence, never gone back, I was interested in how these individuals lived their lives as transnationals in multilingual and multicultural London. I conducted periodic interviews with a cohort of nine teachers, charting their narrated life trajectories, first as teacher trainees on a PGCE course, then as newly qualified teachers, and then as experienced teachers in their own right. What I found was parallel, though interrelated, strands of identity development in my
informants. On the one hand, they were adapting to a new educational system and this brought to the fore any number of issues around how educational systems not only socialize individuals into compliant citizenship, but also socialize individuals into ways of doing education. The latter came to the fore as the teachers in my research often spoke about how education in the UK was different from what it was in their home countries. On the other hand, the teachers in my research were real people with real lives, and as they stayed in London, year in year out, they became Londoners and a little less what they had been before they arrived in London.

But what are LTIs exactly?

In my work on identity over the years, I have tended to work according to a definition I elaborated some ten years ago, with reference to what I then termed “the broadly poststructuralist approach to identity that in recent years has been adopted by many social scientists, including applied linguists” (Block 2014 [2007], p. 32). Identities were then defined as:

socially constructed, self-conscious, ongoing narratives that individuals perform, interpret and project in dress, bodily movements, actions, and language. Identity work occurs in the company of others—either face-to-face or in an electronically mediated mode—with whom to varying degrees individuals share beliefs, motives, values, activities, and practices. Identities are about negotiating new subject positions at the crossroads of the past, present, and future. Individuals are shaped by their sociohistories but they also shape their sociohistories as life goes on. The entire process is conflictive as opposed to harmonious, and individuals often feel ambivalent. There are unequal power relations to deal with, around the different capitals—economic, cultural, and social—that both facilitate and constrain interactions with others in the different communities of practice with which individuals engage in their lifetimes. Finally, identities are related to different traditionally demographic categories such as ethnicity, race, nationality, migration, gender, social class, and language.

(p. 32)

In talks and publications produced since I wrote these words, I have added other categories, such as occupational identity, and specifically LTIs, which I have more recently defined as “how individuals, who both self-position and are positioned by others as teachers, affiliate to different aspects of teaching in their lives,” adding that they are “related to factors such as one’s ongoing contacts with fellow teachers and students as well as the tasks that one engages in, which can be said to constitute teaching” (Block, 2015, p. 13).

But perhaps this is a very instrumental view of LTIs and it is therefore worthwhile to go back to the previous definition of identity in general to fill matters out. In
this sense, being a language teacher is an ongoing, narrated process, which brings together experiences in the past and present, as well as those anticipated in the future. LTIs are constructed via (or emerge from) interactions (both face-to-face and electronically mediated) with others: fellow teachers, students, supervisors, and any number of more distant stakeholders such as parents or companies who might be paying tuition fees. In such interactions, there is an element of self-presentation and the inhabiting of particular positions via the deployment of multimodal resources (language, but also dress, gestures, physical bearing, and so on). LTIs are ascribed to individuals by all of the aforementioned others (fellow teachers, students, and so on) with whom language teachers come into contact. Ultimately, LTIs may be seen as part and parcel of membership in communities of practice, that is, “aggregate[s] of people who come together around mutual engagement in … common endeavor[s]” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 464), or as his/her participation in fields, that is, domains of social practices constituted and shaped by particular ways of thinking and acting (e.g., education, football, cinema, etc.) (Bourdieu, 1984).

However, there are rougher edges to LTIs, which need to be considered as their negotiation in ongoing interactions and life events is not generally simple or harmonious. First, the intersection of LTIs with other identity dimensions, such as race and gender, are often conflictive. In different contexts around the world, gender bias and racism may have an impact on experiences essential to the construction of LTIs such as hiring, long-term career development processes, or indeed acceptance by students. Second, the poststructuralist approach to identity outlined above might lead one to conclude that LTIs are forged by individuals acting with a large dose of unfettered agency. It is worth noting that while “individuals are shaped by their sociohistories but they also shape their sociohistories as life goes on,” these sociohistories, or simply social structures in day-to-day life, are real and mighty shapers of what individuals can and cannot do (or, indeed, be). More broadly, the LTIs emerge from social milieux, which are part of larger social structures constituting society at large. Here, we move into the realm of power as a key element in future research on LTIs.

Future developments for language teacher identity research

Over the past several years, John Gray and I (2016) have attempted to apply our ongoing interest in political economy to some of the basic elements of LTI constitution. We have focused on language teacher training programs and specifically on post-observation feedback sessions, in which after having observed a lesson in situ, a teacher trainer comments on that lesson in conversation with the trainee teacher who has just taught it. We are interested in how these sessions, despite a quasi-egalitarian, exchange-of-ideas veneer, are, in fact, very much directed by notions of good practice and on-the-spot efficiency and time management, all of which is embedded in the changing status and life conditions
of teachers in neoliberal times. When we refer to the conditions of teachers in neoliberal times, we are thinking about neoliberalism as the current stage of capitalism, which entails a range of phenomena, activities, and behaviors, including ongoing attempts to reduce the welfare state via cuts in public spending, the privatization of public services and spaces, the introduction of regressive tax regimes favoring the wealthy, and the deregulation of the financial markets. And we are thinking about how in neoliberal regimes, education is about the production of workers with the right dispositions, knowledge bases, and skills sets that will allow them to participate in global capitalism as effective neoliberal citizens.

The significance of all of this for LTI research is that while we need to continue to take into account everything I have written thus far about identity in general, adding it to the specific case of LTIs, we also need to look at the bigger picture. We thus need to examine and develop understandings of how LTIs emerge from moment-to-moment interactions and how they are shaped by institutions, but we also need to examine how all localized activity and institution-level activity is conditioned by the kind of economic regimes we live in. This means taking into consideration the lessening of the status of teachers in general around the world, which has resulted from the class realignment that has been one of the pillars of neoliberalism. Teachers, once so paradigmatically middle class in many societies around the world, have effectively been declassed and reduced to mere in-person servers, acting in increasingly bureaucratized, routinized, and invigilated work regimes. In addition, in many contexts they have been repositioned as precaritized labor where once teaching labor meant job stability. And these changes in education in general have come to affect language teachers as well. The long and the short of the matter is that LTIs are changing as the political economy that envelops them changes, and this reality needs to be taken on in future LTI research.

**Directions for future research**

Researching LTIs in this way will mean the adoption of a variety of methods. First, there is narrative-based research (Barkhuizen, 2014), as the stories that teachers tell about their lives—past, present, and future—are an essential part of any understanding of how language teachers do being in the real and imagined worlds that they both inhabit and construct. Linguistic ethnography (Snell, *et al.*, 2015) provides us with the tools to analyze interactions which constitute language teaching with a view to charting how subject positions emerge and how these coalesce into more stable behavior patterns that may be seen as foundational to LTIs. Critical discourse analytic processes and procedures (Wodak, 2015) are of use for the analysis of documents relevant to language teaching practice, and perhaps more importantly, the various circulating discourses about language teaching which exist, be these language education research publications or declarations by politicians and pundits in the media (just to cite two examples). Finally, the incorporation of a political economy perspective into LTI research necessitates
macro-level, speculative theorizing, which is about establishing links between all of the previous and the economic base of society.

References


6

TOWARDS SOCIOLINGUISTICALLY INFORMED LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITIES

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Teacher development and sociolinguistics

In this chapter, I want to discuss how my own professional identity as a sociolinguist and discourse analyst shapes how I teach students in my US-based university, most of whom are graduate students who have been or intend to become English language teachers in EFL contexts such as Japan and Korea. Though I was not trained in the field of teacher education or in TESOL, I often find myself in the position of training graduate students who identify first and foremost as English language teachers, and I suspect many other applied linguists out there are in a similar situation. My own training is not too far afield from this area, as it was in English linguistics, and more specifically, the sociolinguistics of English as a global language. My research has largely focused on how multilingual people use English in their daily lives—largely outside of educational settings—as part of their linguistic repertoires. I have focused my research on two contexts, Tanzania and Hawai’i, where I have researched the linguistic practices of multilingual people, including code-switching and other forms of translanguaging in the workplace, in public health education, and in the family. I have also examined language ideologies in multilingual linguistic landscapes, and I have studied the English-infused multilingual practices of young people in popular culture and in social media.

I have also been a language teacher. As a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I taught English for academic purposes, and I also had the opportunity to teach Swahili as a foreign language. Both of these language teaching experiences underscored the importance of starting with language use as the basis for my language teaching. In teaching academic writing, for example, I worked with my students to critically evaluate samples of academic writing in their own varied areas of study in order to identify genre differences and conventional
expectations of different disciplines. In teaching Swahili, I used as much realia as possible, including newspaper articles, news broadcasts, popular music, and popular fiction. As a teacher, I never really saw much difference between what I treated as teaching materials and what I treated as sociolinguistic data. In fact, I have analyzed many of the same materials I used to teach Swahili from a discourse analytic perspective and published these findings (e.g., Higgins, 2009). However, in my role as a professor who teaches survey courses in sociolinguistics to aspiring language teachers, I have sometimes struggled to find ways to engage my students deeply in sociolinguistic topics, as they are often understandably more interested in the practical matters of the language classroom, which are often constrained by ideologies that are not informed by sociolinguistic realities. In this chapter, therefore, I want to discuss how I attempt to navigate what I perceive as a gap between my own professional affiliations with studying language in the world (beyond the classroom) and most of my students’ affiliations with the more rigidly institutional setting of language teaching.

**Language teacher identity and sociolinguistics**

In my teaching, I aim to expand the professional identities of my students by enriching their understanding of language *use*, which I view as foundational to the field of language *teaching*. For me, language teaching should be informed by what people actually do with language in the world, and I believe that language teachers have a responsibility to prepare their language learners for the myriad ways that English is used as an intercultural mode of communication. Hence, I view much of my teaching as an opportunity to develop among teachers a greater understanding of how language works in society, and I invite them to think about how their own future imagined classrooms can be connected to language use beyond the classroom. In imagining their own professional identities, I want my students to consider who their language learners might be communicating with in the future and what sort of encounters they might actually experience as they go about designing lesson plans and materials that will be motivating and useful.

As someone who is fascinated by regional and social dialects, linguistic creativity, translingual language play, and the appropriation of English for local purposes, I do often find myself at odds with my students, however, whose English language ideologies have strongly been shaped by constructs that are often quite different from what I find significant in my own research and in sociolinguistic investigations of English as it is used across the globe. One of these constructs is *native-speakerism* (Holliday, 2006), or the idea that the only legitimate form of English is associated with (white, affluent) monolingual speakers residing in the Global North, and that the “best” methodological frameworks for teaching and learning English (such as communicative or task-based language teaching) originate from there as well. Most of my students are in fact L2 English users, and despite their multilingual capabilities, many of them express deference, and even deficiency, when it comes to identifying
Towards sociolinguistically informed language teacher identities

I think of language teacher identity as a form of role modeling and as a form of activism. I view language teachers as people that can act as role models for their own students, which is particularly true for the L2 English speaking students at my university in the US. Since most English language learners in EFL contexts are taught by someone who shares their first language, it makes perfect sense to me to promote the idea that these English teachers ought to act as target language speakers. I also see this as a political move in that it challenges native-speakerism. A Korean teacher who speaks Korean as an L1 and fluent English should be the role model for learners in Korea, rather than a monolingual American. This leads to the importance of the construct of bi/multilingualism, which provides an alternative to the problematic
dichotomy of native/non-native, which places L2 teachers in a subordinate position. Of course, discussions with aspiring teachers of what it means to be bilingual unveil other problems, as I have seen most clearly in workshops that I teach during summers for groups of in-service teachers from Korea who come to Hawai‘i for professional development in ELT. The teachers’ participation in the workshops is competitive and hence they are typically seen as the best qualified English teachers of their respective regions. At the beginning of these workshops, I get to know them a bit by asking those who identify as bilingual to raise their hands. In a class of 20 participants, all of whom speak Korean and English with extremely high proficiency, I usually get one or two people who tentatively raise their hands. Most explain that being bilingual means having “perfect” Korean and “perfect” English, and hence, they are unwilling to identify as such. My goal is to deconstruct this idea of perfection by the end of our session and to acknowledge the different ways that their bilingualism can be treated as a resource in their teaching practice. Encouragingly, over the years that I offered this workshop, I have witnessed a slight increase in the number of people who have initially raised their hands and who do feel that they are bilingual despite the ideologies circulating that position speakers of English in EFL contexts pejoratively as non-native, rather than bilingual.

On the activism side of things, I generally align with the key thinkers in critical pedagogy in seeing language teaching as an opportunity to talk about societal problems and social change. While many of my students are uneasy with an overtly political or activist approach to language teaching, I try to present activism as scalar, and I encourage my students to take on an activist stance at whatever end of the scale they are comfortable with. For some, the idea that English is pluricentric is a radical stance and a political concept that they are willing to try to embrace. For others, viewing language teaching as a means of intercultural awareness can be an activist move, as it challenges conventional approaches to teaching culture that operate on essentialisms and stereotypes. Following scholars, such as Liddicoat and Scarino (2013), intercultural pedagogy involves not just learning the language of the “other,” but also about becoming aware of how we think, know, and learn about first and additional languages, cultures, and ways of being in the world. Being an intercultural language teacher requires developing ways for learners to create their own personal meanings about their experiences in their first and additional languages, and to facilitate dialogue and reflection about their responses. I often address this with my students in discussions of politeness in language. We talk about politeness in languages, such as Japanese and French, and then we discuss how English also has ways of indexing politeness, albeit in very different forms. Most of my students have come to think of English as a language that is lacking in politeness and one that is simply “direct,” but a deeper reflection and comparative analysis among students of different L1 backgrounds usually reveals a range of perceptions regarding what qualifies as polite and direct. At the higher end of the activism scale, I encourage my students to critically examine the role of English around the globe, and to analyze the social, political, and economic impacts it has
on societies. Since language teaching can (and in my mind, should) engage with the social contexts in which learners learn, we read and discuss studies that show how English teachers use their teaching spaces as sites to examine social problems in society, including the disparities caused by the importance of English itself in countries like South Korea (e.g., Shin & Crookes, 2005).

**Future directions in language teacher identity research**

One direction forward in language teacher identity research would be for more studies to examine teachers’ own practices in the classroom and to relate them to those teachers’ experiences beyond the classroom. It is important to see how teachers grapple with real-world English and classroom-based English in their teaching practice, and also to see whether they find ways to weave their real-world English into their pedagogy. In my experience working with aspiring teachers of English at my university with a range of L1s, I have seen that their own experiences in the world using English have opened their eyes to the pluricentric nature of the language. Through casual interviews and more formal journal entries, I know that many of these individuals have themselves engaged in a great deal of lingua franca communication in English, and that as a result, they have re-examined the basic assumptions of what it means to speak English. I believe this is also true for the aspiring teachers in my courses who are L1 speakers of English. Their use of English in the world also encourages them to value greater exposure to different kinds of English in order to increase their ability to comprehend different accents of English. This leads to the important issue of developing language teaching materials that go along with sociolinguistically informed teacher identities. Here, much work remains to be done in providing ELT professionals with textbooks and other materials that provide examples of language learners using English in authentic ways.

Another promising direction is for more research studies to be carried out that relate classroom teaching practice to teacher identity. Many studies of language teacher identity make use of interviews and other retrospective forms of data in which the teachers reflect on their teaching practice and other aspects of their professional identities. On the other hand, studies of teaching practices in the classroom by and large ignore questions of teacher identity. It would be fascinating to see how teachers’ narratives about themselves as teachers relate to their own teaching practices. An example of such research is Menard-Warwick’s (2008) study of teachers who identify as intercultural language teachers, which made use of interviews with the teachers as well as classroom observations and recordings of classroom practice. She studied how two teachers defined their own intercultural identities and then examined how they approached intercultural issues with their ESL students. The study does not seek to prescribe ways to teach from an intercultural viewpoint, but rather, suggests that if teachers reflect on their own cultural trajectories in preparation for their work as language teachers, they will be in a better position to help their students to navigate their own intercultural encounters.
Directions for future research

The following is a list of topics that would benefit from future research:

1. The effects of sociolinguistic knowledge on teachers’ beliefs about materials and curriculum design;
2. The role of sociolinguistic variation in language teacher identity, particularly in relation to institutional constraints in their teaching contexts;
3. The relationship between teachers’ own experiences in using additional languages and their language ideologies for the classroom;
4. Intercultural identities among language teachers and intercultural pedagogy in language classrooms.

References

7

LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATOR
IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE
TEACHER IDENTITY

Towards a social justice perspective

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Italy, India, and the United States

Growing up as a South Asian woman in Italy, I have always grappled with understanding my linguistic, racial, gendered, geographical, and class identity; literally, figuring out my place in the world. Concomitantly, my household (with a communist father) was steeped with a sense of the existence of global injustice in the world and I was taught to see that such deep inequities had more to do with the differential resources that people and nation states had rather than anything to do with individual effort or lack of effort. Both of these sets of experiences—as an individual and within my family unit—and their interaction, have led me to understand that identity development and formation is a key aspect of our lives and that although having an agentive quality, identities are influenced largely by sets of resources that are available to people and that they draw upon.

Fast forward to my master’s in TESOL years at the University of Pennsylvania. While I was taking courses for this program, I was teaching English to students at the university and I remembered continuously grappling with how what I was learning during my graduate program could be applied to my everyday work as an ESL teacher. When I decided to focus on the learning and development of bilingual teachers in the under-resourced area of North Philadelphia for my dissertation, I initially decided that I would focus on a professional development series that these teachers were engaged in to see how what they were learning was being transferred to the classroom. However, the more time I spent in that setting and by drawing on my frames of reference from my childhood, I recognized that these teachers were actually involved in figuring out their own professional identity. I understood the development of this professional identity as taking place within an ecology of
various contexts but also at an individual level, and that both these levels existed within a racial, gendered, linguistic, and classed hierarchy.

In this chapter, I discuss my understanding of language teacher identity as a field, my definition of it, as well as what future developments I foresee for this as a critical focus of scholarship in the interrelated areas of applied linguistics, bilingual education, and English language teaching.

**Charting the relationship between language teacher identity and teacher education**

The concept of identity has always been meaningful for me as is clear in the brief personal narrative articulated above. Language teacher identity is both a concept and now a discipline that I understand as significant for the larger areas of scholarship and practice in which I situate myself.

Overall, my interest in researching language teacher identity has taken me in various directions: one has been to figure out conceptual frameworks for framing this work; another has been in expanding our understanding of the knowledge base of various types of language teaching—so the idea being that if we can focus on trying to understand the identity development and the everyday work of language teachers, we should be able to understand their knowledge base more clearly; and last, the concept of language teacher identity has allowed me to examine more closely the social locations of teachers and how their social locations influence their practice and their students.

In terms of a conceptual framework, I have ventured outside the confines of the traditions of my formal linguistics background to draw on sociocultural frameworks to understand language teacher development and teacher identity. I have viewed language teacher identity as being created within the co-evolution of agency and structure; how as individuals and groups they can develop and "make things happen" within structural opportunities and constraints. This perspective is one that I see as being significantly influenced by my childhood and the understanding instilled in me of the influence of the resources that people have access to in terms of their identity formation. The marginalized nature of much of language teaching underscores the advantage of looking at language teacher identity development as an interaction between resources and individual agency.

One of the reasons I have examined language teachers’ professional identity is to understand their knowledge base more clearly, and thus to think through their preparation. In my work on bilingual teachers, I identified two critical aspects of their knowledge base that are not traditionally addressed in their professional development—language policy and advocacy. I was able to understand these by closely following four teachers in their classrooms and schools. Using Lave and Wenger’s (1992) work on communities of practice and understanding the process of learning to become a bilingual teacher as “participation and becoming” allowed me to focus more on the active agentive roles of these teachers, such as that of
language policymaker and advocate, as well as to consider how their work settings and personal backgrounds influenced these roles. These findings have made me consider how the roles of language policymaking and advocacy can be built into their teacher preparation programs.

Last, language teachers’ and linguistic minorities’ needs and identities go beyond language and are inextricably linked with issues of race, ethnicity, gender, immigration, class, and religion as shown by a number of scholars (Cahnmann & Varghese, 2006; Motha, 2014). Therefore, an important part of my investigation of the professional identities of language teachers has been their personal backgrounds and social locations (their race, ethnicity, gender, class, and religion). I have been engaged in this work in both my scholarship and in my teaching. During my early experiences preparing teachers to teach linguistic minorities, I learned that I had students who had chosen the profession in response to what they felt was a calling rooted in their Christian beliefs. Prompted by this experience, and because English language teaching had for a while largely tended to ignore this population, I became interested in investigating how their understanding of Christianity influenced the development of novice EFL and ESL teachers. I am currently considering ways of theorizing language teacher identity that brings out more centrally their social locations as central aspects of their practice and their professional identity development.

Overall, I have used my research in language teacher identity as a central way of thinking of and putting into practice my work in preparing English language and bilingual teachers. By focusing mainly on teacher identity rather than teacher knowledge and skills acquisition, I have put more effort into understanding and supporting what language teachers are becoming as individuals and professionals in terms of their roles and their work environments. I have also worked with teachers in my teacher education programs on exploring the racial, linguistic, gendered, classed, and religious dimensions of their personal identity and having teachers reflect on how these relate to their professional identities as language teachers (Alsup, 2006).

**Identities in practice, identities in discourse, raciolinguistic ideologies**

I see the value of being open to different ways of defining language teacher identity. When we co-authored our article on theorizing language teacher identity (Varghese, et al., 2005) one of the impetuses was to put together the various ways we had come to our definitions and our ways of studying language teacher identity. It is useful to start with a working definition, and the one that I start off with is that language teacher identity is an interaction of how we see ourselves as language teachers (English language, bilingual, or foreign/world language teachers) and how others see us—a claimed and an assigned identity (Varghese, et al., 2005).

I still see the usefulness of the notion of *identities in practice* and *identities in discourse* (that we use in our article) as two useful concepts to draw on when attempting to define language teacher identity. By drawing on identities in practice, the definition...
of language teacher identity rests on a sense of a core professional identity that is created by a set of individual experiences and material resources, and that changes and evolves as language teachers go through their teacher preparation program and through their classroom and school settings. On the other hand, identities in discourse capture a more poststructuralist definition that underscores the importance of language, power, and situatedness in this definition. In this vein, there is not a singular definition of language teacher identity, which would vary according to the context and the set of power relations as well as the discourses available to individual teachers and a community or network of teachers in that particular context.

There is another aspect to my definition of language teacher identity that I do not believe we brought out sufficiently in the article, and that is the raciolinguistic (Flores & Rosa, 2015) nature of our professional identity. In their discussion of raciolinguistic ideologies, Flores & Rosa (2015) argue that “the ideological construction and value of standardized language practices are anchored in what we term raciolinguistic ideologies that conflate certain racialized bodies with linguistic deficiency” (p. 150). The authors use the framing of raciolinguistic ideologies to argue against appropriateness-based models of language that teach “language-minoritized students to enact the linguistic practices of the white-speaking subject when appropriate” (p. 152). While the authors use the term raciolinguistic to define the ideologies behind what are considered appropriate language practices and that these are connected to certain people or bodies, I am using the term here to highlight the importance of raciolinguistics for language teacher identity. Or as Motha (2014) writes in her monograph about English language teachers, “In a discussion of English language teaching, it would be naïve to attend to teachers’ racial identities without addressing their linguistic identities. On a superficial level, these two may appear to be distinct, if loosely related, dimensions of difference, but a careful deconstruction of whiteness helps us to see that they are actually inextricable one from the other” (p. 499). One could make a similar argument about bilingual teaching, as well as world language/foreign language teaching.

I think that using an example and using these three (identities in practice, identities in discourse, raciolinguistic identities) different but interrelated notions of language teacher identity here would be useful. Let’s take my own experience on becoming an ELT teacher and compare it with that of one of my classmates in the TESOL master’s program at the University of Pennsylvania, Tom, a white male from an inner circle country. By using identities in practice we can discuss both of us sharing a certain core professional identity related to the program we were in, the community of practice that we were both part of in terms of our program, and the settings in which we taught, although identities in practice would also call out our distinctive sets of personal experiences coming in and the diverse ways we experienced our program because of our differences. On the other hand, identities in discourse would focus on how my colleague and I are constructed as language teachers by the discourses available to us mainly via language and power, and the understanding of being “a good language teacher.” But at the same time there is a
sense of a notional choice since discourses can be contradictory and competing. By bringing in a raciolinguistic focus, the understanding of a “good language teacher” would be signaled by the categories of being a white, male, inner circle English speaker. Identities in practice would have me examine my language teacher identity more as a material reality and the construction of myself as a language teacher in relationship to that reality, while identities in discourse would focus on the discourses of whiteness, maleness, and English linguistic appropriateness. The language that is used to denote and discursively construct my language teacher identity (and that is repeated and embodied through the way we carry ourselves and how others perceive us) would be highlighted with an attention to how power circulates in creating this specific language teacher identity/subjectivity/positionality.

Where we go from here

It is difficult to not acknowledge the increased buzz around the scholarship on language teacher identity. There have been a number of books on this topic, both monographs and edited volumes, as well as special issues in top tier journals in the field devoted to it. Although there have been many more studies devoted to EFL and ESL teachers, in the future, I anticipate that we will see more work on language teacher identity that focuses on bilingual, multilingual, and world language teachers. There will also be more research on the role of emotions and the relationship between the body and language teacher identity. Along with an increased focus on language teacher cognition, the relationship between language teacher identity and teacher cognition will be an area of investigation. Last, as in other areas of teacher education, I anticipate that more work will be conducted on the relationship between teacher education programs, language teachers, and the students that they teach.

Research methodologies in language teacher identity will predominantly continue to be qualitative, including the use of discourse analysis; possibly being more collaborative as well such as using Participatory Action Research (PAR). However, from an accountability perspective, there has been more of a push to connect how language teachers learn to how they eventually teach, and in turn, how to connect this to student outcomes. Consequently, teacher education programs have increasingly been a focus of research in language teaching and this will also be the case around the scholarship of language teacher identity. Due to the increasing demand/need for accountability of language training programs and to the consideration of how they are related to student outcomes, it may become important to use mixed methods in understanding the process and outcomes of these programs and how they are related to language teacher identity. Riazi & Candlin (2014) write that mixed methods enables researchers to collect and analyze data in a more comprehensive manner and address research questions that cannot be fully investigated with a single approach. A number of the studies in a TESOL Quarterly Special Issue on novice professionals (Farrell, 2012) used mixed methods to examine the gap between teacher preparation and the first years of teaching,
Responses collected from surveys, for example, were used to corroborate interview findings, which identified how professional development activities, support systems, and teaching contexts could enhance or inhibit teacher efficacy.

**Directions for future research**

In the particular areas of scholarship and teaching that I am interested in, there will continue to be more research on how racialized, gendered, classed, religious, and linguistic identities and positionalities of language teachers play out and how such identities come to be enacted according to teachers’ specific contexts. For example, research on “non-native speaker” language teacher identity will continue to make this concept more complex by showing how it relates to others (such as race, gender, and social class) and also how teachers’ identities as “non-native speakers” are embodied and enacted differently according to the settings they are in.

There promises to be more work around the theorization of language teacher identity in the future. This theorization will reflect new paradigms that the field of applied linguistics and English language teaching will engage with, particularly those that take on an increased transdisciplinary perspective with a renewed focus on transnationalism, translingualism and superdiversity (The Douglas Fir Group, 2016). Ultimately, the theorization, practice, and research on language teacher identity will be influenced by this and other novel perspectives and trajectories, and hopefully, with an explicit social justice and equity-minded goal in mind.

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RECOGNIZING THE LOCAL IN LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITY

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College days

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the kind of research I focus on today is a result of rather futile (at that time) discussions on language, identity, power, and access during my undergraduate days. As a student doing my honours in English literature at Karachi University in the early 1990s, I would often get into heated debates about why we needed to focus on British literature and read criticism of that literature written by (mostly) dead white men. Why, I argued, did we not also read literature written in English by people from around the world, or, criticism that related the classics to our contexts? To me, it made little sense to be reading Shakespeare as if we were British youth growing up in the nineteenth century.

Disillusioned by the curriculum in my English literature program, I opted to move into linguistics. Here, I naïvely thought, I would be able to focus on language in today’s world rather than be stuck in nineteenth- and twentieth-century British and American literature and literary criticism.

The linguistics program, I was to discover soon, was not about linguistics, but about training us to become English language teachers. “English” in our program was projected unproblematically as a language best spoken by the British (and, for some, the Americans) and our job was to learn about this language—including the phonology of received pronunciation—with the eventual goal of teaching this language to our students. The problem of teaching a foreign accent and grammatical patterns alien to the context of the students was never questioned. In addition, not only was the appropriacy of adopting western methods in a Pakistani context never discussed, but there was also an underlying hint of contempt of local teachers and traditional teaching practices. So, here again, I was frustrated by a lack of recognition or discussion of the local. I did not find my colleagues’ or my identities reflected in
the program. I found little, if any, sympathy in my discussions with my colleagues or lecturers on the nature of language or language variation and how language(s) were used, taught, and learnt in our contexts. While some of the lecturers were interested in these issues on a personal level, it was not reflected in their lectures.

Early reflections on language teacher identity

The key goal of both programs (literature and linguistics), it seemed, was to train the students to become language teachers. While they differed in terms of what the best training for these future teachers should be, there were quite a few similarities. English language teachers were seen as people who would teach their students “English” as described and codified in formal textbooks. This “English” was native-speaker English, which, while absent from the local context, was seen as the goal of language learning. In this context, teachers’ own identity, their voice, their understanding of the context and of their students, their ideas about language or experiences with language teaching and learning were not considered important. A language teacher’s projected identity, as envisioned (but unarticulated) in these programs, was segregated from all their other identities. They were expected to teach a language alien to them and in ways that they had not experienced themselves.

My questions about the place of “local” in understanding and teaching English were first addressed theoretically at the TESOL Summer Institute, Vermont, 1995. After a long discussion of my experiences at Karachi University with Professor Shikaripur Sridhar, Professor Sridhar walked me to the bookstore at St. Michael’s College, took out a book from the shelf and handed it to me saying, “Read this.” This volume, *The other tongue* (1992), edited by Braj Kachru, was indeed the book that I needed to read. Here, for the first time, I saw a critical and informed discussion of English in a post-colonial world. This volume, if I am to single out one book, introduced me to theoretical and practical implications of questioning the monolingual bias in applied linguistics and TESOL, and opened up possibilities that my previous educational experiences had denied. Work on “World Englishes” provided a theoretical framework for looking at issues of localization of language and language teaching/learning; and, it affirmed my identity as a user of “Pakistani English” and a “non-native” English-speaking teacher (NNEST) of English.

Towards a personal understanding of language teacher identity

Research on World Englishes, or, to place this within a broader context, language variation and NNESTs, continues to have a tremendous impact on my understanding of language teacher identity. Understanding language variation (Mahboob, 2015) helped me to observe how language relates to who is using it, with whom, for what purpose, and using which modality(ies). The linguistic choices that we make allow us to project and negotiate our identities with others and this is shaped by the context (context here includes an understanding of users,
Recognizing the local in language teacher identity

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uses, mode, and time) in which such interactions take place. However, this, for me, is not the only source of teacher identity. I see teacher identity (within a schooling context; so, not including other aspects of teachers’ lives) as a combination of at least three aspects:

1. Teachers’ use of language
2. Teachers’ classroom practices
3. Teachers’ presentation of curriculum

All three aspects are interrelated and language plays a crucial role in all of them. The first aspect focuses on how language teacher identity is shaped by and negotiated through the linguistic choices they make. For example, the choice of using a formal register in the classroom may project an identity of being distant and formal, while using informal and colloquial language may project an identity of being friendly and open. Of course, these are projections and how these are actually perceived and interpreted by students will vary based on a number of factors. Since language choices are based on who one is interacting with, teachers will use different languages depending on whom they are talking with (e.g., students, colleagues, parents, administration, etc.), and this will also impact their identities.

The second aspect focuses on teachers’ classroom practices, which include both a linguistic dimension (how language is used to organize and realize these practices) as well as other actions. These practices and their perceptions by different stakeholders will impact teachers’ self- and other-perceived identities. The third aspect, the curriculum, is itself construed through language (as used in textbooks and other curricular material) and is presented and taught by teachers using language and different practices. Here, the textbooks/curriculum themselves, their interpretation and presentation by teachers, and their perception by stakeholders (mostly, but not only, students) together impact teacher identities.

While these three aspects show how language (variation) relates to teacher identity, they do not include a clear positioning of “local,” which is something that has always been a concern to me. In order to focus on the role of “local” in language teacher identity, I like to draw on Jim Martin’s (2010) SFL-informed work on identity and, in particular, the notion of “allocation” and “affiliation.” Language allocation refers to the sum of semantic resources that an individual is “given” or “allocated” based on who they are, where they grew up, etc. Affiliation refers to the groups (and the discursive practices of these groups) that a person may want to be associated with. I interpret allocation, in the context of language teacher identity, as the collection of experiences that a person brings with them in becoming a teacher, their community-based beliefs about teaching and learning, as well as their linguistic abilities (including, but not restricted to, the target language). Affiliation, in this context, relates to professionally (as opposed to individually or culturally) defined beliefs and practices and the way that these are described and taught through teacher education programs; training that leads language teachers to
develop explicit and declarative knowledge about language as well as about language teaching/learning. Based on this, teacher identity, for me, is the space (the tensions and the synergies) between the resources that an individual teacher is allocated and what s/he affiliates with; a teacher’s professional identity is shaped by and negotiated in relation to what they bring to the school/classroom and what they are expected to do/perform.

Looking backward, moving forward

The arguments of my college days regarding the recognition of the local in both understanding language as well as researching and theorizing language teaching and learning seem to be partially vindicated in some of the recent literature in areas such as critical applied linguistics, NNEST studies, World Englishes, and English as a lingua franca. This work helps us in understanding the issues that I experienced and debated during my undergraduate days. Based on this new work, we now know that the differences in how English is used in different contexts is a natural outcome of language variation and change; we know that the reasons for native-speakerism are not professional, but rather political and historical, and that being a native speaker is not a criterion for evaluating teacher success; and we know that preference given to western-based pedagogical approaches and teaching/learning materials is not necessarily effective in or appropriate for all contexts.

While things have changed quite a bit in some research and language teacher education, this is not the case for all (sub)fields. For example, my review of some recent PhD dissertations based on work in Pakistan show how local teachers and students live and work in contexts that have hardly been researched or theorized. In many cases, teachers teach based on their allocated resources and beliefs and, as necessary, reinterpret any training and professional support received to reinforce their allocated beliefs and practices. This is where, by exploiting the tensions and synergies between their allocated and affiliated resources, these teachers negotiate their identities. For university academics, who are more vested in textbook and academic knowledge, such recontextualization of academic work is not always acceptable and leads to a negative stereotyping of local teachers (as I observed during my days at Karachi University). This suggests that while some work has been done, there is a lot more to do in order to provide better and more localized training for and support to teachers.

Directions for future research

If, as hypothesized earlier, language teacher identity is potentially construed and negotiated in terms of the tensions or synergies between a teacher’s allocation and affiliation of pedagogical as well as discursive practices and beliefs, then this needs to be investigated. As of now, I am not familiar with any research that has investigated this, but it would be interesting to do so. Doing this may require us to
extend the current work on teacher cognition by integrating detailed linguistic analysis of teacher talk—both in and out of the classroom—that includes teachers’ classroom as well other school-related discourse. An analysis of teacher talk in out-of-class situations with different stakeholders will give us an understanding of how teachers negotiate their identity in a range of context by varying their linguistic choices. An analysis of their language, especially their use of appraisal resources, can also help us to understand what values they hold dear and what things they like or dislike, how these positions are encoded in their discourse, and how this might relate to their self-perception as well as their perception by others. An analysis of their language in class can help us to better understand their practices, including both teaching practices and classroom (and other) management. Their linguistic, discursive, and other practices can then be studied in relation to local beliefs and practices as well as in relation to the literature that these teachers are exposed to in their context (as well as other current literature) to get a better sense of how their allocated and affiliated resources interact and are represented in teachers’ performed behavior and practices. This work, grounded in an understanding of the local, can then be used to train teachers in ways that recognize and respect their context and identities rather than trying to supplant these with models and identities coming from alien (mostly western) contexts.

References


9

NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY

Reflections on English language teachers, teaching, and educational opportunity

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Teacher narratives, context, and educational policymaking

For the last 20 years, one of my central preoccupations has been to write about the lives and careers of so-called “non-native-speaking” teachers of English (I dislike the term but use it because it remains dominant in the literature). Initially, this was stimulated by unease at the curriculum and methodological prescriptions I saw adopted in state education systems by officials and teacher educators who, having been for higher degrees in western countries, came back to champion the new orthodoxy of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in their home countries. It seemed to me, and this was confirmed by teachers themselves, that the push to implement a western-style CLT was so far out of touch with the classroom realities and possibilities for most teachers in the countries where I was working—Thailand and Sri Lanka among them—that someone should try to bring these contextual realities to the attention of a wider audience in the hope that this would then influence educational policymaking. Of course, the notion that policymakers might actually read these kinds of articles, let alone that they should have any kind of influence on policy, reveals as much about my relatively youthful naïveté at the time as it does anything else. Nevertheless, an early paper, Prioritising “voice” over “vision”: Reaffirming the centrality of the teacher in ESOL research (Hayes, 1996), was published in System, based on teacher narratives I gathered in Thailand where I was working in the early 1990s. So began, for me, a journey that I feel is not only important in contributing to local understandings of the complex realities of teaching and learning English worldwide but also central to my own understanding of self, and, thus, to my identity as a language teacher and trainer. Through a reflection on aspects of that journey I hope, in this chapter, to underline the value that narrative research can have in understanding teacher identity as multiple, as
situated and constructed in local social contexts and influenced by power relations both within and outside those local contexts. In this reflection I shall make use of narrative data gathered in Thailand and Sri Lanka, which has featured in other published papers over the years.

**Understanding language teacher identity in local contexts**

From my experience in Thailand I came to realize that English teachers’ identities in Thai secondary schools were not linked primarily to their subject but aligned with their positions within the education system; that is, first and foremost they were teachers in the Thai education system and, secondly, they were teachers of English as a subject. Both in Thailand, which has never been colonized, and in postcolonial Sri Lanka, there are common threads to English teachers’ identity that go beyond identification with the language. Evidence from the narratives I have gathered over the years indicates that an important element in many teachers’ sense of identity is their commitment to a larger educational enterprise manifested through their actions as individuals concerned about the social welfare of their students as much as their performance as teachers of English in the classroom. That is, for most teachers their responsibilities go beyond teaching the subject to encompass a commitment to education as a means to expand opportunities open to children in the long-term and in their day-to-day interactions to contribute to the everyday welfare of their students. Bandara, a Sri Lankan teacher, commented that there was a view that teachers are people “who manage and keep the children under control … But to me a teacher is more than that. I mean, he’s an individual who makes an impact on a child, on a young learner’s life.” While he derived great enjoyment from teaching itself—“it’s seeing how children develop. I mean, it’s that kind of gleam in their eyes, the way they show that they understand”—he was also concerned to overcome barriers to achievement which originated beyond the classroom. When faced with challenging student behavior he would ask himself: “Why’s he doing this? Does he come from the family background that is not very conducive to his learning or some kind of disturbed family or a single parent family? And yes, I began to look into the lives of students and then the further context.” A particular problem Bandara had to deal with in Sri Lanka was the impact on children in schools resulting from female labor migration, leaving children without their primary caregiver in a context where females are still expected to be homemakers as well as breadwinners. A similar situation exists in Thailand, though migration is more likely to be internal, from poor rural areas to the large cities. Orapan, an educational supervisor, painted a picture of poor rural communities in which schools struggle to cope with children who are left to be brought up by their relatives while their parents go elsewhere in search of work. Though this might be an economic necessity, she was fearful of the effects of emotional deprivation in particular on young children.
We do have the problems in the small schools outside the city that I visited. The students are not with parents. The students are with grandparents, relatives, or some other people. Parents are somewhere else. They just think that you have the shelter, you have food and that’s enough. You have the money, their father and mother have gone after money and we give the money, that’s enough. That’s not enough for young kids like that. They need more than that. They need love, care, attention, hug and kiss, touch.

These teacher preoccupations are notably absent from mainstream English language teaching (ELT) literature. Yet, from narratives of teachers in Sri Lanka and Thailand, it is clear that a view of language teacher identity as being solely bound up with expertise in the language and proficiency in teaching methods is seriously deficient. Birch (2009, p. 4) comments: “When we restrict our teacherly attention to sanitized speech functions, facile interactions, and simplistic intercultural communication, we fail to imagine realistic alternatives to our status quo.” International ELT textbooks and methodology handbooks restrict themselves to these aspects of communication while teachers in Sri Lanka and Thailand are far more concerned to find alternatives to a status quo, which diminishes educational opportunity for their students.

Inevitably, over the years, I have also questioned my own positioning as a native speaker of English and someone deemed by others as an “expert” in English language teaching (my business card said in Thai ผู้เชี่ยวชาญการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ, which translates as “English language teaching expert”). I realized that my commitment to my work was bound up with my own identity as someone who had “escaped” the limited choices available to most children from a working-class background through the opportunities offered by a good education. My experience was in contrast to the majority of children from similar backgrounds to mine who were “born to fail” as a research report of the 1970s put it (Wedge & Prosser, 1973)—a situation which, depressingly, does not seem to have changed since then (NCB, 2013). Increasingly, I came to see myself as a teacher for whom the opportunity to learn English was inextricably bound up with access to educational opportunity for all children within a national education system and not just the privileged few. I was much less concerned with my position as an English language “specialist” whose job it was to “improve” English language teaching through the latest methods and technologies. Even now, my concern remains that as English language education is structured at present it continues to contribute to the disempowerment of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in most countries where it is taught as a foreign language. This is an increasing problem, given the global trend to introduce English ever earlier in schools, allied to requirements to pass an entrance exam that includes English as a condition for access to higher education. Worldwide, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, the urban and rural poor, tend to be taught by less well-qualified teachers in less well-resourced schools (see for example, Bélanger & Liu, 2008, for a study in Vietnam). Nor do their families have the financial resources to
avail themselves of the private tutoring through which the better-off maintain and even enhance their competitive advantage (Choi, 2005). As a teacher, I believe that it is important to promote equality of opportunity through education rather than accepting inequality as inevitable, and I also believe that my subject, the English language, has the potential to serve many roles other than the much-criticized language of global capitalism, both at the individual level through enhancing students’ opportunities in their post-school lives and at wider levels as a tool for conflict transformation (Kennet, 2011) and peacebuilding (Birch, 2009).

**Conceptions of language teacher identity**

Views of English language teachers as, for example, peacebuilders are not common but as I have shown above, through teacher narratives it becomes clear that teachers exercise their own agency, have their own strongly held views of themselves as teachers, and are not merely passive instruments of larger geopolitical forces, unknowingly colluding in the linguistic-imperialist enterprise of English language teaching. This is not to say that the teaching and learning of English is value-neutral. In postcolonial Sri Lanka it continues to be used as a marker of social status and attempts to democratize the possession of English through education have not been universally successful. There also remains a tendency for some non-native-speaking teachers to ascribe preferential qualities to native-speaker models of English, particularly UK and US accents (Jenkins, 2007). However, there are also counter examples from my own research of teachers who are very aware of native-speaker dominance and the need to resist this. One of the Thai teachers was highly critical of the practice of using western textbooks in Thailand: “The problem is why imported? Why imported? … We have brains, we have very good things here in Thailand. Why don’t we use the resources in Thailand to make something good?”

Just as language teachers may be implicated in the maintenance of standard language ideology, they may also be equally resistant to it. What is important, then, in considering language teacher identity is that we recognize its complexities. Once we do this and reject simplistic notions of teacher identity, we can then more readily appreciate its multifaceted nature and come to realize the myriad influences upon the identity of every single teacher of English.

As English language teachers, our identity is shaped by our connection to the language, our view of the purpose of education in general, and language education specifically, within national education systems, how those purposes are instantiated within particular educational institutions, and how we approach the day-to-day business of teaching. All of this is, of course, also influenced by our multiple personal histories within our various social worlds, as, *inter alia*, children and students ourselves, as partners and parents, members of social networks of friends and professionals, and so on. Indeed, it would be difficult to name anything that did not in some way shape our identity. It is unfortunate, therefore, that all too often teachers are viewed as simply implementers of someone else’s vision of
teaching. The vast majority of the English language teachers with whom I have come into contact throughout the world have been conscientious professionals who think deeply about their roles as teachers within their education systems and whose primary concern is to help their students to learn a language that may be of benefit to them in the future and, as a minimum, helps them to appreciate other cultures and ways of life. These teachers have a strong sense of duty and work extremely hard, often at considerable cost to themselves. This is exemplified in comments made by one Thai teacher who explained that she worked so hard, late at night and early in the morning “because I would like to do it. I enjoy doing it. It’s my job. Whenever I was assigned to do something, I’ll do my best” and another who said, “the thing that stimulates me is I just would like to be a good teacher.”

**The power of narratives in language teacher identity research**

Once we move beyond simplistic notions of language teacher identity and come to appreciate that there are facets of teachers’ lives just as important as the methods they use, we open up a world of possibilities for important research. One of these, highlighted above in the comments from Thai teachers about why they work as hard as they do and which has yet to be investigated, is the human cost of self-sacrifice and self-neglect in the service of one’s students as ever greater demands are placed upon teachers. Given the constant intensification of teachers’ work, one must question whether teachers in Thailand and Sri Lanka will be able to maintain the kind of commitment they have revealed in the narratives I have gathered. There is evidence from other countries that teacher “burnout” is becoming increasingly common, but we know little of whether this phenomenon is also experienced by language teachers. A related topic for investigation is the status of teaching in general, and that of language teachers in particular, in specific contexts. It seems that teachers are often blamed by politicians, the media, and the public at large for every failure in the education system, even though they have no control over such things as the curriculum and examination formats. At a time when teaching is subject to ever-increasing, and often ill-informed, scrutiny of this type, both teacher recruitment and teacher retention are sources of concern. What is the impact on teachers’ sense of identity when their professionalism is denigrated by society at large?

How can we best explore these kinds of issues? As individuals we make sense of our worlds through the stories that we tell about our experiences and so I contend that it is through narrative research in its various forms—such as (auto)biographies, autoethnographies, oral histories, life histories, or in-depth interviews—that we can come to an understanding of the relationship between teachers and their social worlds, to uncover and appreciate the meanings of local social practices of language teaching within specific educational contexts. Whether it is as spoken or written text, narratives have the power to present the individual agency of teachers as a counterpoint to the predetermined, often negative positionings ascribed to them.
by others. But, even so, the stories we tell are not only about the individual. We make connections between our individual experience and collective forces and institutions in our wider societies and our narratives can reveal how we interpret and respond to those forces and institutions. Furthermore, collectively our narratives have the power to uncover commonalities as well as differences in our experience as teachers across the world, which may then help us to move beyond the “native” and “non-native” divisions to an enhanced understanding of what ties us together as language teachers as well as what makes us all unique.

**Directions for future research**

To conclude I present three topics, among many possibilities, which I feel are important to investigate through narrative research.

1. **Autoethnographies of individual teachers**, exploring their personal experience and connecting it to wider social meanings and understandings of education generally and English language teaching in particular. The more we make public the subjectively experienced realities of schooling in particular contexts, including a teacher’s own education, professional training, classroom practice, conditions of work, and broader experience of his/her educational system, the greater the possibility that, collectively, these realities will eventually inform educational policymaking.

2. **Studies of language teachers in conflict zones**, particularly how they position themselves amidst everyday occurrences of violence. What motivates them to continue teaching? What value do they feel an additional language has to their students in these situations? Violence against teachers and students and attacks on schools are commonplace in many countries, including Thailand where, according to a UNESCO (2010) report, 90 teachers and other education workers had been killed in the southern provinces between January 2007 and July 2009, and 304 schools burned down between 2004 and 2008. Set against backgrounds such as this, what role do language teachers have in peacebuilding?

3. **Portrayals of teachers in the media** and how language teachers feel about these. Such portrayals are usually negative. English language teachers in Thailand, for example, are routinely criticized for having inadequate levels of English, for not implementing the official curriculum as intended, and for their students’ failure to score well in national exams. How do these portrayals affect their sense of identity? How do they maintain their motivation to teach in these circumstances? Do these portrayals affect their relationships with their students and their local communities, and in what ways?

Research in these areas would enrich our understanding of language teachers and teaching immensely, contributing to a more complete picture of language teacher identity in all its complex manifestations worldwide.
60 David Hayes

References


THE TENSION BETWEEN CONFLICTING PLOTS

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Identity, in the end, rests in the tension between conflicting plots, a lasting tension between the dramas we inherit, consciously or not, and the drama we choose to write for ourselves. (Viviano, 2001, p. 19)

Family drama

With this quote, I begin my teacher identity reflection as I began my dissertation. Viviano was writing a memoir entitled Blood washes blood as a way to uncover his Sicilian roots. I was introducing an ethnographic study that had begun as an exploration of literacy practices with Latina immigrants studying English, but which was quickly overtaken by what my research participants really wanted to talk about: the changing gender relations in their families (Menard-Warwick, 2004, eventually published as Menard-Warwick, 2009).

My interviewees were recent immigrants to California, a state where most people come from elsewhere. Viviano’s family settled in California two generations back. I was born in California, and I live here now. But when people ask where I’m from, I say, “I am in the fifth generation of people in my family who have moved into or out of California, often more than once.” After living elsewhere most of my life, I brought my family to California in 1999 so I could go to graduate school and transcend my identity as an English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor in a small-town community college.

California is a site in the global imaginary where people come to write the drama for themselves.

In stating this, I suddenly realize that unlike most Californians, I am living within several hundred miles of my birthplace, in a life similar to my grandparents’ life. Like
them, I arrived at middle-class, middle-aged respectability after a peripatetic and politically radical youth. Am I still inheriting their drama? Or am I writing my own?

Now, having introduced myself, I will continue examining the tension between plots and the extent to which I am writing my own drama, as these issues apply to my academic discipline and to my teacher identity research, past and ongoing.

**Disciplinary drama**

When I wrote my dissertation, I was a former ESL teacher, finishing my PhD in Education at University of California Berkeley and just about to take my current job as professor of linguistics at University of California Davis. Ever since, I have had to theorize pretty hard to demonstrate that the narratives I find compelling are actually a proper topic for research in education or linguistics.

When asked my disciplinary identity, I tend to call myself a “critical applied linguist.” Critical means attending to power, linguist means attending to language … applied means? Language in use? Language in people’s lives? I fall back on remembering that traditionally, applied linguists attended to learning, and that is still what applied means for me.

So what does teacher identity have to do with all that? Bear with me through a narrative digression. I embarked upon teacher identity research after crashing hard into teacher identity realities during my dissertation data collection. It was December 2002, I was at my research site, and a Latina immigrant, “Pilar,” was introducing her newly arrived sister-in-law to me and her ESL teacher, “Jean.”

Pilar explained that her sister-in-law didn’t speak any English. Turning to me, she added, “Maybe you can help her.” Jean interjected, “In English, Julia, in English.”

I had been strategically violating the ESL program’s English-only policy for months. But it was that conversation which convinced me not only that I needed to wrap up my data collection and get out of there, but also that my next research project should be about teachers.

After ten years teaching ESL to adult immigrants, I’d thought I understood what it meant to be an ESL teacher; I wanted to understand students’ perspectives. However, that conversation made me realize that Jean and I had very different professional identities. Like me, Jean was a well-educated, middle-class Anglo-American woman, who had acquired conversational Spanish skills, and who wanted to help newcomers. But at that moment, I felt closer to Pilar, a Mexican immigrant, who like me was an emergent bilingual, choosing to live on the border between English and Spanish.

Within the ESL program, Jean and I had constructed conflicting plots.

As I fled my research site, I couldn’t help recalling my early encounters with Spanish during the years I became an ESL teacher. My linguistic and professional identities intertwined in Seattle, in the early 1980s, when I was in my early twenties. I decided to study Spanish after hearing the testimonio of a Salvadoran refugee couple. I don’t remember their whole story but it involved soldiers entering
a classroom and killing the teacher. I learned Spanish very quickly because I joined what was then called “the sanctuary movement” and spent a lot of time with Central American refugees over the next several years, as I finished my undergraduate degree and got a master’s in TESOL. My first job with degree in hand (1988) was teaching English at a university in revolutionary Nicaragua.

“Wait a minute,” I thought in 2003. “There was a whole lot about language and power that I didn’t understand when I left for Nicaragua. But I see it all more clearly now. How do Latin-American English teachers handle these tensions?”

To answer that question, I got a Fulbright grant and spent most of the next decade making periodic visits to a small university in northern Chile, where I found tentative answers having to do with neoliberalism, popular culture, and the historical transition between dictatorship and democracy (Menard-Warwick, 2013).

This is how my teacher identity research connects to critical applied linguistics: when I look at language learning, I can’t help thinking about power relations. And I tend to find teachers in the middle of both.

**Definitional drama**

The definition for identity that I offer my students is similar to Viviano’s definition quoted above: it’s both how we see ourselves and how we are seen by others. When I cite the literature, I draw on Blackledge and Pavlenko’s contention that identity is a negotiation between “self representation” and the ways that “others attempt to reposition particular individuals or groups” (2001, p. 249). However, at the time of my conversation with Jean and Pilar, I was steadfastly avoiding the word “identity” to talk about my own research. My theoretical impasse lay not so much in the tension Viviano describes, but rather in the poststructuralist argument that identity is constructed moment by moment in discourse. While this perspective made sense to me, I couldn’t figure out how to reconcile it with my interest in life history narrative. Yes, the Latina immigrants I interviewed demonstrably constructed identities in the process of recounting arguments they’d had with their parents, but by telling me these stories, they were unmistakably contending that in order to understand their current efforts to learn English, I needed to know where they were coming from.

Sitting on a beach several months later, I realized I would never get my dissertation written unless I confronted this issue directly. And I think I realized simultaneously that Bakhtin’s theories of language in narrative (1981) could resolve this particular tension between plots and push me past my writer’s block.

How do I explain this resolution now? I tell my students that we author our identities in discourse by drawing upon historically available resources—the resources that our lives have made available to us. It was this insight that allowed me to move forward with theorizing not only learner identity for my dissertation, but also teacher identity in both Chile and California (Menard-Warwick, 2013). For example, one Chilean English teacher, “Diego,” told me about traveling to
Peru to watch the Pink Floyd movie *The Wall*, after Pinochet’s dictatorship banned it in his homeland. By watching this (English-language, anti-militarist) film in the first place and by telling me about it later, Diego authored himself as a critically conscious global citizen, despite US and UK support for the Pinochet regime. When he told me the story (in 2006), Diego and other interviewees were finding that English-language popular culture was the best (and often the only) way to interest the next generation of Chilean youth in the English language, despite these students’ relentless critiques of US imperialism, then being fueled by the Iraq War.

That is, popular culture products, like *The Wall*, help Latin Americans critical of English-speaking countries to develop bilingual identities, while maintaining a sense of political agency. As Morgan wrote in 2004, “identity is pedagogy,” and my research in Chile explored the various English-speaking identities, authored by English teachers out of historically available resources, which allowed them to demonstrate to their students that they in turn could use this global language to make their own meanings.

**Current drama**

Having spent a little over a decade (1989–1999) as a part-time, temporary instructor at my college in Washington State, I moved to California to get a PhD. Now, in late 2015, having spent a little over a decade climbing the ladder from graduate student to full professor, I find myself, paradoxically, facing a similar sense of alienation as when I left my former college, my professional identity still in tension with the institutional plots conflicting around me. The two worst years of my career were 2010–2012 when I was ESL director at UC Davis. As a result, I endorsed my department’s decision to close our MATESOL program. Although I started my research career by looking at English learning and teaching, in recent years I have mostly collected data on Spanish learning. Thus, to some extent I have moved away from my own teacher identity. While I trained MATESOL students, and when I served as ESL director, I was simultaneously a linguistics professor and an (former) ESL teacher. Ironically, now that I have the freedom to be simply a critical applied linguist … I find my ESL teacher identity resurgent. Increasingly, I am drawn to community volunteering, and increasingly I realize that ESL pedagogy is something I can offer.

However, as an ESL volunteer, I remain a critical applied linguist, and so I am an overly reflective volunteer, who finds herself increasingly on the border between research and service. Thus, while volunteering, I have also begun investigating the reciprocal linguistic identity development of individuals and communities, teachers, and schools. Since 2011, I have assisted with a tutoring program at a bilingual elementary school, where we teach English to Spanish-speaking parents and Spanish to English-speaking parents. In 2014–2015, I conducted an ethnographic study of all the parent programs at the school, examining the extent to which bilingual participation was even possible. Initially apprehensive about how the
parents would regard my shift in identity (from teacher to researcher), by June I saw that my efforts to understand had integrated me further into the community.

Immediately afterwards, I flew to Guatemala to serve as visiting ethnographer on a University of Texas study abroad program, designed to prepare teachers for schools in diverse communities, like the one where I volunteer. The Texas students taught English to Guatemalan children, an activity they began to criticize as they learned about the politics of language. Watching their teacher identities develop as they reflected on their work, I felt like I was watching my own development on fast forward. In August, I visited Nicaragua for the first time in many years, and enjoyed soul-searching conversations with a young friend who is teaching English there now, as I taught English in 1988. When she said, “I didn’t come to Nicaragua so my students could work in call centers,” I heard the tension between conflicting plots in her voice. Another friend, Katie Masters, my former MATESOL student and now co-author (forthcoming), is conducting dissertation research precisely on the politics of English teaching/volunteering in Nicaragua. Though I’d returned to ESL to get away from the conflicting plots of academia, I find no escape from critical analysis of language teacher identities.

Directions for future research

If identity is pedagogy (Morgan, 2004), then future research in this area should be centrally concerned with transformations in linguistic identities and ideologies (e.g., from ethnocentric to intercultural) as educators adapt pedagogically to teaching contexts that are themselves undergoing profound changes. To understand the mutual constitution of teachers, schools, and communities, I continue to find ethnographic methods most helpful, and to theorize this, I conceptualize identities as fundamentally relational (Eakin, 1999). That is, language teachers develop identities in relation to those of their students, and in relation as well to the relations between languages, which are in turn related to the relations between communities, peoples, and nations. When contemporary teachers adopt neocolonial identities (“helpers of the less fortunate”), they enact colonial pedagogies. However, my own border crossing continues to convince me that learners and teachers can still engage in solidarity through language education.

In thinking about the teacher identities necessary for enacting pedagogies of solidarity, I am dusting off my copy of Pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 1999), and remembering that in dialogue, “there are neither utter ignoramuses nor true sages; there are only people who are attempting together to learn more than they now know” (p. 71). But I also find helpful Canagarajah’s Translingual practice (2013), that is, trans as in transition, trans as in transgression, trans as in transformation. A translingual identity is one in which individuals and communities adopt new linguistic practices in order to communicate across social barriers. My current research explores this—at a bilingual elementary school, within a study abroad program, and through interviews with people (many of them teachers) who have
learned languages other than English and used them for work or volunteering. The plots in these intertwining sites are complicated, but not actually in conflict. The drama continues, and we are writing it together.

References


11

MULTILINGUAL IDENTITY IN TEACHING MULTILINGUAL WRITING

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Language teacher insecurity

There was a time when I thought that mastering pedagogical theories and methods would provide me authority and expertise, hiding my identity differences in the English teaching profession. But my linguistic (i.e., non-native), national (Sri Lankan), and racial (i.e., Asian) identities always got in the way. However confident I became with my pedagogical expertise, I couldn’t run away from questions of identity. This chapter narrates my journey in understanding that teacher identity is central to pedagogy, and developing connections with my social identities to enhance my teaching of multilingual writing.

Some problematic experiences first. I am teaching English composition in an ESL class as a graduate teaching assistant in the University of Texas at Austin in 1988. On the first day of class, as part of the introduction, I mention that we will adopt a critical orientation to the power of English, considering how we can make a space in the course for the rich rhetorical and literacy traditions we bring from our own diverse communities. Two Iranian male students openly challenge me. They say that they have come all the way from their countries to learn English language in the US. They have no time for critique. And why should they listen to a Sri Lankan telling them “bad things” about English when they expected an American teacher to instruct them? They don’t attend the next class.

I am teaching basic writing in a remedial ESL class in the City University of New York on a cold winter morning in 1995, having just become a faculty member. As I begin the course, explaining the syllabus and requirements, I overhear a student in the back mumbling to her neighbor, “He has a bad accent!” She walks out of the class a few minutes later and never comes back. My mind goes back to a similar event in the University of Texas a few years earlier, when a fair-skinned,
blond-haired student, left the class on the first day. However, she couldn’t avoid taking my advanced writing course a few semesters later as there were few sections available. I learned that she was from Argentina and had German ancestry. As she was seated in my office for a student conference one day, I casually asked her why she had walked away from my earlier course. She said that my skin and hairstyle reminded her of tribal Indians in her country, and she couldn’t bring herself to learn English from such a person.

These events have taught me that my nationality, accent, and body can get in the way as students learn English writing from me. Not all experiences have been negative though. Those who remain in my courses till the end of the semester usually go away with a different impression. There was that bright Chinese student who came to my office to say goodbye in fall 1997. Before leaving, he asked me cryptically, “So how did you do it? What is your secret?” After some follow up questions, I realized that he was asking how I had managed to master the language and become a successful faculty member. As such students spoke to their peers, some students begged to be let into my classes, saying that their native-speaker teachers didn’t understand their challenges in language and writing or seemed to disparage them.

Teacher identity as pedagogy

While the bad experiences taught me that identity cannot remain occluded in teaching, the positive experiences conveyed to me that it can actually be a resource. To begin with, I realized that I can be a role model to multilingual students. As a multilingual myself, and having done ESL writing courses in my own early education, I could demonstrate to my students that there is no reason to despair. Their linguistic, cultural, and rhetorical challenges, seemingly intractable at times, can be negotiated successfully. Also, because of my multilingual background, I could understand their rhetorical and linguistic challenges better. I have insights into the complexity of these challenges and ways of addressing them by drawing from my background.

But more importantly, I realized that my identity shapes my pedagogy. My values (such as the critical orientation that I wanted to adopt towards the power of English as an imperialistic language) need not be irrelevant or limiting. They can enrich my teaching, providing perspectives on multilingual writing that my students might find empowering and my colleagues would consider innovative. In fact, my identity informed my own writing in English. I had struggled between the values embodied by Tamil and English as I learned academic writing. My preference for the personal voice, indirect styles of development, and narrative modes of thought were considered alien to English writing. My teachers had presented English writing to me as objective, direct, and logical. But I knew that the personal, indirect, and narrative had their own logic and complexity. Therefore, I worked hard to merge both traditions in my English academic writing. I appropriated English norms according to my own identity and values. I gradually discovered that though this strategy was risky, it also accounted for the creativity and individuality in my writing.
I gradually developed the confidence to incorporate these insights into literacy in my teaching. If my multilingual students adopted styles of writing or language norms that deviated from those of native-speaker norms, I told them that I understood the arguments they were developing. I even appreciated the uniqueness of their expression. However, I also alerted them that these features could be incomprehensible to native-speaker readers who are used to a different set of norms. Therefore, I encouraged these students to both understand the dominant norms of writing in English and adopt ways to bring their own voices into their texts. I gave them examples from my own writing to show how I myself practiced what I considered a hybrid form of writing. I also challenged them to consider the needs and expectations of diverse audiences.

Initially, I didn’t have much help in connecting my identity to my teaching in writing pedagogy. In general, writing teacher training in L1 composition has focused more on developing the knowledge of rhetorical traditions and composition models in a product oriented manner. It is assumed that an expertise in the knowledge of these traditions and models would make one a good teacher. This orientation informs teacher preparation courses in most English departments in the US. The state of ESL writing is even farther away from accommodating teacher identity as pedagogy. The dominant assumption in some institutions is that teachers should focus on grammar, organization, and structure to develop writing as a skill for ESL students as they don’t have the competence to engage with higher order issues of voice or style. Many teachers of multilingual writing consider their expertise as relating to grammatical and textual knowledge.

Compounding these limiting orientations are the contingencies of time and effort needed to train teachers of writing in higher education. As composition is a required course for all students in American universities, many graduate students and part-time faculty members are pressed into service at short notice to handle these numerous writing classes. When I arrived in the US for graduate studies, I was given a quick orientation on textbooks and activities a week before classes in order to teach a writing course for multilingual students. Such rudimentary training still continues in many institutions.

However, there is now an evolving realization that writing teachers would appropriate this professional training and knowledge in relation to their own values and experiences (Dryer, 2012). In other words, identity cannot be kept away from the ways in which teachers take up, interpret, and apply rhetorical knowledge or grammar teaching skills. There is a growing awareness that teaching of writing in general, and multilingual writing in particular, should address the values, beliefs, and identities of teachers for effective and relevant instruction.

**Developing language teacher identity for diversity and change**

Based on my experiences, I consider language teacher identity as intrinsically pedagogical (Morgan, 2004). One’s identity is part and parcel of one’s teaching
practice and expertise. It is not peripheral or additional to one’s syllabus, curriculum, or methods. Identity shapes pedagogical practice. I also draw from Wenger’s (1998) notion of communities of practice to hold that being or becoming a teacher involves developing one’s knowledge, beliefs, and practices into an identity—one that provides coherence to all of them in relation to one’s teaching practice. In other words, teaching is the embodiment of one’s knowledge, skills, beliefs, and practices into an appropriate teacher identity. The construction of a coherent teacher identity is not easy. It involves drawing from the diverse social identities one enjoys, many of them seemingly unconnected to teaching. The language teacher identity is a “nexus of multimembership” (Wenger, 1998), bringing together the social memberships and identities one enjoys outside the teaching profession to inform one’s professional practice. These other identities and memberships can enrich one’s teaching identity if they are merged in a constructive and strategic way. There is always the possibility that one will face tensions between one’s teaching and social identities. However, these tensions keep one evolving as a teacher, responding to one’s changing identities and values, as one brings them to inform teaching practice.

This orientation to teacher identity as a nexus of multimembership affirms the place of diversity in teaching. It suggests that language teachers are not clones of one another. They are each different, according to their experiences, backgrounds, and values. Such diversity in the teaching profession is not only good for the students, thus making them engage with different orientations to the subject. It is also good for the profession. This orientation to teacher identity ensures that the profession always changes. As we bring in different values and identities to our common professional objective, we ask new questions, develop new applications, and construct new orientations that reconfigure the methods and objectives of our teaching. In this way, teacher identity contributes to the dynamism and vitality of the profession.

The efforts I took in appropriating English language and rhetorical structures according to my multilingual and multicultural identity led gradually to the notion of “transposition” (Canagarajah, 2002). It involves merging the competing rhetorical traditions of a multilingual to creatively devise a new discourse or text. It has become widely shared among teachers and scholars in composition as a way to accommodate the rhetorical traditions multilingual students bring with them. Writing teachers now realize that hybrid writing, which merges diverse rhetorical traditions and cultural thought patterns, is not difficult or incoherent.

As I continued to engage with my multilingual experiences and evolving scholarship on multilingualism, I developed the realization that the notion of languages as separate and autonomous is a myth. I was learning from other communities of practice, such as sociolinguistics, that languages are always in contact, generating new meanings and grammars. I have found ways to merge this realization of translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2013) into teaching practice by considering how students might think in Chinese and write in English, or write
their outlines in Chinese and their essays in English, or even bring Chinese expressions for special rhetorical purposes into their English writing. While the notion of “transposition” limited hybridity only to rhetorical features, translanguaging enabled me to extend this possibility to grammatical features. This notion is challenging to a lot of scholars in multilingual writing who think that deviating from Standard English is unwise or shuttling between languages might lead to interference. However, my identity suggests otherwise. The translanguage forms of writing I am practicing in my own life influence the way I teach English writing to multilingual students. In this way, I keep learning from my experience, reconfiguring my identity, and revising my teaching.

Negotiating conflicting identities in the classroom

There are challenges in practicing this orientation to language teacher identity in classrooms. Research is needed to understand the constraints and possibilities for teachers to develop such a nexus of membership for teaching multilingual writing. Some of the challenges involve the following: institutional policies (such as native-speaker target or English-only classrooms) that stifle the expression of multilingual teacher identities; dominant social ideologies that treat monolingualism and homogeneity as more efficient for successful communication and which might lead also to biases that perceive those who adopt multilingual appropriations of English as deficient; students who are influenced by such ideologies and who may demand normative and instrumentalist forms of teaching that go against the values and beliefs of multilingual teachers. Teachers have to negotiate these challenges with sensitivity, patience, and tact as they shape an appropriate teaching practice. Rather than perceiving these challenges as constraining, they should also consider them as affordances to shape their identities and teaching practice in constructive ways.

This negotiation of competing identities should be researched to provide useful directions for multilingual teachers. Classroom-based studies can reveal how teachers negotiate these challenges in their instruction. We need inquiries into how teachers modify or revise their teaching practice and identities to take into account the expectations of their institutions, society, and students. Certain methods that are useful are: participant action research, where the teachers themselves study how they negotiate these challenges; or ethnographies, where outside researchers study how these challenges shape teaching practice and identities.

Efforts should also be taken to undertake teacher development in writing to address identity as key to expertise. Though insights can be borrowed from second language teaching, where beliefs and identities are increasingly addressed in professionalization, writing instruction may pose its own challenges and variations. There are also special challenges confronting multilingual teachers. They are always faced with native-speaker norms and authority and so feel insecure in representing their identities in English teaching. Teacher education programs should consider
how multilingual teachers can be helped to draw effectively from their diversity for teaching practice. Self-awareness, reflexivity, and agency can be developed through diverse strategies: i.e., journaling during teaching on their changing thoughts and experiences; narratives that might enable teachers to represent, analyze, and reflect on their own learning/writing strategies; safe institutional spaces where multilingual teachers meet among themselves to share their experiences and feelings for reflection, analysis, and collective development.

Directions for future research

As I continue my teaching career, I realize that the tensions in negotiating identities are never fully resolved. In fresh institutional and policy contexts, I have to renegotiate my identities as I keep evolving as a teacher. I consider it important, therefore, to study the following questions to help my fellow multilingual teachers in addition to facilitating my own development. It is important to research the trajectories of multilingual teacher identity development. Thus, we would understand if there are typical stages of development, and ways of negotiating the challenges along the way. To facilitate this understanding, we may benefit from more autoethnographies of multilingual teachers on their identity development and challenges. A particularly challenging policy concern is the way emerging language ideologies might be negotiated in the classroom, when traditional ideologies still dominate. We have to focus on the challenges in accommodating translingualism in academic writing and the role of multilingual teachers in facilitating this pedagogy.

Moreover, we have to recognize that a teacher’s identity development is never a private or lonely activity. It occurs among others in classrooms and has implications for one’s colleagues and students. Therefore, we have to study the processes of negotiating teacher/student relationships in multilingual classrooms and their role in teacher identity development. Note also that the teacher’s identity changes have an effect on students, and vice versa. Therefore, we have to observe the co-construction of identities of both students and teachers in multilingual writing. Similarly, teachers with diverse language identities may shape each other’s identities and facilitate mutual professional growth. For this, we have to explore the collaboration between native and non-native-speaker teachers for mutual learning and sharing of expertise. Such research questions and approaches would throw useful light on teaching as a community of practice, where different participants in the teaching/learning activity shape each other’s identities for mutually beneficial outcomes.

References


From general to higher education

I began as a teacher of English in various high schools in the Western Cape, South Africa, in the 1980s—a time of repression and then of great flux. Towards the end of the decade there were limited amounts of desegregation of schooling. I did my master’s, consisting of action research, on a mixed-race group of students all learning English as a first language. For the African students in my class at that time, their home languages would have been indigenous languages—principally, IsiXhosa in the Western Cape. They had previously learnt all their subjects through the medium of English, taught to them as a second language. Due to the way apartheid structured our lives, they tended to learn English in an acquisition-poor environment. The students thus had extremely varied levels of proficiency in English and equally varied educational biographies and cultural capital. My next job was as a research-based language-across-the-curriculum practitioner at the University of the Western Cape during the early 1990s, before and after apartheid was abolished, and before and after the advent of democracy in South Africa. The university drew students from mainly rural and working-class backgrounds. This move allowed me to investigate language in relation to academic literacy more closely, and to understand the role of language in learning and its relationship to broader issues of academic literacy, class and privilege. After a stint in the national Department of Education I returned to the University of Stellenbosch, as the Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning. There I had the privilege of being able to conduct research on language policy within a highly politicized and fraught environment. The policy favored the use of Afrikaans at the undergraduate level and within the administration. Many believed this to be unfair, excluding of speakers of other languages. There,
too, I was able to conduct action-based research on language in writing and academic literacy, this time with master’s-level students. During apartheid the two official languages were English and Afrikaans. Post-apartheid there were formally eleven official languages, but both English and Afrikaans remained more established and codified. In all of these situations I have been the speaker and teacher of a dominant language, English, in contexts where not everyone has had opportunities to achieve full proficiency in this language. Thus, at many stages during my career I have been able to consider the relationship of language to academic literacy, as well as the relationship of language to issues of identity and power.

Why pay attention to language teacher identity?

A language teacher’s identity informs everything he or she does, yet it is by and large tacit, not often interrogated, and often not interrogated systematically. I have become increasingly conscious of the need, and have written about this, for reciprocity and symmetry, where an academic or a researcher should not expect a learner to have to reflect on their identity and related issues, if they, as lecturer or researcher, have not done so too (Leibowitz, 2011). We tend to assume that self-awareness in learners is useful—awareness about how they learn and about their values towards learning and aspirations for the future. This is well and good, but as lecturers do we model this process in our own professional work? If we have not participated in such reflective processes—which may at times be uncomfortable for us, as it may be for students—how do we fairly support students through these reflective and introspective processes?

It was in 2010 onwards when I was integrating support for language and academic literacy into a master’s module for medical health science students (Leibowitz, 2013) that I was reminded, once again, how identity, emotion, and power relations might influence interactive approaches to learning. In this case I was encouraging students from different language and educational backgrounds to give each other feedback to written assignments and felt strongly that I should have spent more time with the students, encouraging them to consider how their own identity positions might have influenced their interactions with each other. If I had spent more time supporting them in this way, I should have done so from the position of humility and self-awareness, where I, too, had subjected my language teacher identity, as well as my identity as a language user, to interrogation. If I had explored my language teacher identity prior to this, I would have become more aware of the limitations of my knowledge of self in relation to others in a diverse society.

A further reason why attention to language teacher identity is important pertains to the role of the language teacher-as-researcher. In this role, too, one should be very mindful about one’s values, as these consciously or unconsciously inform either one’s approach to research, or to the interpretation of the research. Values
should be acknowledged and worked with, rather than denied (Howe, 2009). I was never more aware of this than when, as a staff member at the University of Stellenbosch, I conducted evaluative research on the university’s language policy, both in 2004 and 2006. The climate for the second study was fraught. Some were arguing that the requirement enshrined in the policy that Afrikaans be the primary language at undergraduate level, was highly exclusionary. Others, both among the student body, alumni, and the university’s council (its chief governing body) maintained that this requirement was necessary because the university had a responsibility to maintain the academic function of the Afrikaans language and because this was one of the few remaining universities that catered for Afrikaans-speaking students. More background about the policy environment is available at Leibowitz (2015). Key lobbyists for this latter position maintained that as an insider to the institution, my leadership of the research team as an insider to the university would have compromised the objectivity of the study. An alternative study by a reputed social scientist was called for. This study led to very similar conclusions, but the presentation to the Language Committee by the social scientist who had led the alternative study, in my view, revealed strongly his own language and identity-related biases.

A final reason why attention to language teacher identity is so important concerns the identity of language teacher in the role of language-across-the-curriculum practitioner. Over the decades, and due to my involvement in debates about the role of language in the curriculum and the role of language in learning, I have been witness to discussions on the role of language and thus of the role of language practitioners in learning. Some take the position that language teachers provide a service—a fairly marginalized one at that—to “fix the student.” This may lead to the teacher having an identity as marginalized, isolated, and “other.” Others maintain that language is central to teaching and learning, and that therefore the language teacher should work in a collaborative manner, side by side with lecturers. However, I have felt myself and have seen others on occasion inflate our own role and importance as language teachers and participate in turf wars. This tendency can be mitigated by a more thorough understanding of the role of language in learning and teaching, both of its centrality as well as its embeddedness.

What is language teacher identity?

A language teacher identity is many-layered: one has an identity as an individual, onto which is layered an identity as a teacher, and onto that an identity as a language teacher. One cannot divorce one’s identity as a language teacher from aspects of one’s identity as an individual. Thus, how I see myself and how others see me, as a middle-class, female, middle-aged white speaker of the dominant language, English, is not divorced from how I see myself and am seen as a language teacher, or how I see others, including, importantly, those I teach. It is also not divorced from how I see other language teachers with whom I teach or collaborate.
My understanding of the concept of “identity” includes more than how I am seen or see myself. It includes my concerns, commitments, or what drives me to achieve what I aim for (Archer, 2000) in life or professionally. In this case, my inner concerns and commitments were initially, as a high-school teacher, to teach my students to speak and write proficient English. But as time wore on and I became aware of the role of language in learning, my concerns were much more with how to encourage students to learn the dominant language and ways of writing and speaking academically, so that they could be successful at school, and later, at university. In a more recent period I maintain this concern, but am more driven to understand the more varied ways we can encourage students from different educational backgrounds to learn. I am also motivated to explore, with academics, where and how there might be space to experiment with genres, modes, and forms of literacy. I am aware of the role of powerful literacies, but as I watch the dominance of modes change, for example from print literacy to digital literacy, I have become aware that powerful modes are contestable. By way of example, when apartheid ended and media that had been dominated by people of one race group became open to others, there was still a strong sense among the powerful classes of the norm that everyone had to adhere to. So when speakers of African languages became newscasters on the main English language radio, there was a wave of complaints about the mispronunciation and changed inflections of words. Nowadays the flow of these complaints has abated somewhat, but not altogether. Recently I heard a white speaker of English chastise a black talk show host for wasting time by allowing callers to ask “how are you?” when they began their contributions. (Asking “how are you” and sometimes receiving a reply, is a strongly idiomatic form of South African languages that is adopted by African language speakers when speaking English. I find it particularly friendly and human.)

The university is a conservative institution, and it is the last place where changes in forms of communication are accepted or tolerated. Students have begun campaigns at several South African universities to “decolonize” the curriculum. This has unleashed energy among many educationists to reconsider what should be taught and how. This, in turn, has an impact on my language teacher identity. I no longer see myself as strongly as the gatekeeper to one powerful knowledge and way of knowing. I am imbued with a sense of possibility that I can learn from my students and from the environment. I am enthusiastic to understand how and which more varied linguistic forms and ways of knowing are indeed possible. The direct effect on my identity as a language teacher is that while I do have much knowledge and experience, I am less all-knowing and more in need of assistance, from students or others in society, than I might have thought myself to be twenty or thirty years ago.

All of the above suggests that my language teacher identity is partly of my choosing, vis-à-vis my concerns and commitments. But it is also foisted on me by societal changes, by how I am positioned by society, and it is influenced by how I react to this.
**Going forward**

Events in my own country as well as international events have rocked some of my footing in this world. At the international level the intense wave of migration and the contestation of the power of the liberal, or neoliberal Western institutions and rational-cognitivist or humanist ways of thinking have left me wondering about which languages are most powerful, and which ways of thinking hold sway. In terms of world languages, is English still the lingua franca, and when will Chinese take its place? This has substantial implications for my image of myself as teacher of the pre-eminent world language. In South Africa, a decision has just been made by the national Department of Basic Education that schools should consider providing optional Chinese classes after school. Confucius Institutes have already sprung up at several South African universities.

Surely the emigrations from Africa and the Middle East to Europe call into question the feasibility of linking language to nation state as tightly as we have done. Of course this notion is not equally set in all parts of the world, and in my own country, we have eleven official languages, and several unofficial languages. Here, too, we have substantial migration from Francophone and Arab-speaking Africa (for example, Somalia). Migration is not new. North America has experienced waves of migration for centuries. For me as a language teacher, these movements do raise questions about how I see myself in relation to others. In terms of rights and responsibilities, the questions are raised: Whose languages have rights? Is there such a thing as “language rights”? If not, how do we understand individuals’ rights to learn languages or to learn through languages? What are the implications for language teachers? What new or different opportunities are there for language teachers?

A local significant phenomenon that has grasped public imagination about the curriculum and culture and the need to decolonize this, has been student protest at two universities in 2015. This movement is referred to as “Rhodes must fall,” with reference to a statue of arch-colonialist, Cecil John Rhodes, which had until 2015 enjoyed pride of place at the University of Cape Town. The statue has been moved to a less central spot, but questions about what kinds of knowledge we want in our curriculum have been inserted into public discourse. The debate is still in its infancy. Here again there are implications for language teacher identities. How do I see myself in this time of flux and contestation? What should the role and identity of the teacher of English be? Am I helping to maintain the dominance of a colonial language? Could my role be to contribute to seeing language differently?

A final influence on my own thinking about the way forward is the literature on feminist new materialism and writers such as Karen Barad and Lenz Taguchi. These writers call into question the dominance of humanist thinking, where the subject is all-seeing and separate from the world it sees and interprets. This body of writers talk about a “diffractive” research method that sees difference and flux as the basis of seeing and research rather than fixity and categorization. The question of who I am as the language teacher and researcher of language and learning...
requires much exploration. So much linguistics since the enlightenment has been about description and categorization—how do we start viewing language as in flux, and as part of the physical as well as material intra-actions without a clear beginning and end? Within these intra-actions, would we even use the concept of language teacher identity?

**Directions for future research**

Current developments give rise to the following questions.

1. The idea of “language teacher identity”—is this still a feasible notion? How fixed is one’s identity? Is this concept helpful, and how can we use it to advance our thinking through our roles in times of contestation, flux, and movement across borders?

2. How does one understand the role of the language teacher within broader considerations about the curriculum, educational success, and student difference? Are we teachers? Boundary crossers? Partners to the disciplinary specialists? Are we missionaries with our own brands and products for sale to the natives, or are we interpreters between knowledges, cultures, and world views? What attributes or processes would be required from us to become interpreters or brokers?

3. What are new avenues for research and methodology within a socio-materialist framework? How would the language teacher, who is no longer the all-seeing subject, position him or herself in relation to the data? What forms of creativity could this way of researching unleash?

4. Are we guardians of the riches of the past, or are we path bearers to new and uncertain futures?

**References**


Introduction

I have, for over two decades, been centrally concerned with the conditions under which language learners speak, read, and write the target language, and how relations of power enable or constrain opportunities to learn (Norton, 2013). Growing up in apartheid South Africa, I researched struggles over language rights and social change; now living in multilingual Canada, debates on language and identity remain vibrant and important. I have argued in my research that language learner identity is central to the process of language learning, and that a learner’s investment in the language and literacy practices of a classroom has an important impact on language learning progress. In this view, language learning is enhanced if learners can claim more powerful identities in social interaction, and where power relations with interlocutors are inequitable, learners may seek to reframe such relationships in order to claim greater legitimacy as speakers.

An important extension of this work concerns language teaching, language teachers, and language teacher identity. Of primary interest is the extent to which language teachers promote learner investment in the language practices of their classrooms, and whether the teacher can expand the range of identities available to language learners. As I argue and illustrate in this chapter, promoting learner investment may necessitate shifts in teacher identity, as well as challenge conceptions of what it means to be a successful or legitimate teacher. Further, an expanded model of investment, which locates investment at the intersection of identity, capital, and ideology (Darvin & Norton, 2015) may provide a useful analytical tool for future research on language teacher identity.
Defining language teacher identity

What I have learnt from both language learners and teachers is that “language” is not only a linguistic system but also a social practice in which identities and desires are negotiated. I have therefore defined identity as “the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2013, p. 4). This definition acknowledges that language teacher identity indexes both social structure and human agency, which shift over historical time and social context. Also important are the language teacher’s hopes and desires for the future, and their imagined identities (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Language teachers need to navigate relations of power in the classroom and understand the possibilities and limitations of their institutions and communities. Like language learners, language teachers can reframe their relationships with others in order to claim more powerful identities from which to teach. Thus, while identity is conceptualized as multiple, changing, and a site of struggle, the very multiplicity of identity can be productively harnessed in the interests of more productive language teaching.

If teachers are to promote learner investment in the language practices of their classrooms, what implications does this have for language teacher identity? To provide an illustration of the implications of learner investment for language teacher identity, I will share the experiences of an English language teacher in Vancouver, who was struggling with considerable attrition in her adult education classes. In a term paper, Keeley Ryan (2012) compared two adult education classes, before and after she had read a considerable body of research on identity and investment in my graduate seminar at the University of British Columbia. In her first adult education class, the number of students dropped from 25 to 9 over a period of three months. As she notes, “I asked my colleagues what they thought I should do about the situation. I was told that this phenomenon was quite common, that my students were just not motivated to complete the course” (p. 4). Ryan was not satisfied with this explanation, and in her second adult education class, after reading extensively about learner investment, she decided to adopt a very different set of practices in her teaching. She began the class with a comprehensive questionnaire in which the students provided information on their experiences of learning English, their expectations of the class, and their hopes for the future. As Ryan learnt more about the students, not only from the questionnaire, but also from observations of classroom activities, she altered her practice “to reflect what [she] imagined their idea of a good school would look like” (p. 6). In this second class, there was very little attrition, with 25 of 29 students remaining till the end of the class. As Ryan explains, “I tried to match the subject positions of the majority of the class, as expressed through the questionnaire, with the language practices of the classroom, in order to maximize the investment of the majority of the students” (p. 19). Ryan
emerged from the second class with a greater sense of accomplishment and legitimacy as a language teacher.

In order to investigate and better understand the experiences of teachers, such as Keeley Ryan, I have worked with Ron Darvin to develop a more comprehensive model of investment, which locates investment at the intersection of identity, capital, and ideology (see Figure 13.1). The model challenges teachers to reflect on the extent to which classroom events and practices are indexical of more systemic ideological practices, and raises the following three questions for research on language teaching (Darvin, 2015, p. 597):

1. To what extent do teachers recognize and respond to the material, unequal lived realities of learners, and their multiple identities?
2. What dominant ideologies and systemic patterns of control circumscribe the realities and experiences of language learners and teachers? How does the world view of teachers position learners?
3. To what extent and in what ways do teachers recognize the linguistic and cultural capital that language learners bring to class?

An examination of these questions has important implications for language teacher identity. What is the relationship of the teacher to the world of the classroom, the institution, and the community? How is that relationship structured across time, and in diverse social and educational contexts? What are the teacher’s hopes and possibilities for the future? An enhanced understanding of the relationship between investment, identity, capital, and ideology will provide greater insight into language teacher identity.

![Diagram of Investment Model](image-url)
Language teacher identity: Insights from teaching and research

While I have done much collaborative research with language teachers and graduate students in a range of international contexts, I have for over a decade focused on the African context, and Uganda in particular, to explore questions of identity and investment in language learning and teaching, and the educational opportunities provided by advances in digital technology. What we have found is that both Ugandan students and their teachers are highly invested in new literacies because the internet, mobile phones, digital cameras, and other digital technologies have expanded what is socially imaginable for students and teachers, and extended the range of identities available for them. Advanced education, professional opportunities, study abroad, and other opportunities have become part of imagined futures and imagined identities. In our research, we do not suggest that what is socially imaginable is also socially available in the African context. However, it has been clear to us that as students and teachers have developed valued digital skills they have also gained increasing cultural capital and social power. By way of illustration, the investments of female teachers in digital practices have been particularly profound. One Ugandan teacher named Betty, for example, noted that she “felt like a man” when using a digital camera:

I feel very powerful like a man because I had never held a camera in my life. I have always seen only men carrying cameras and taking photos in big public functions like maybe independence celebration, political rallies, and wedding ceremonies. But now as I move in the community taking pictures with my camera, I feel I am also very powerful, like a man.

(Andema, 2014, p. 91)

In the process of navigating my identity as a researcher in the Ugandan context, I have also drawn on my own identity as a teacher to reframe relationships with research participants who are teachers (Norton & Early, 2011). Amongst many other researcher identities, including “international guest,” and “collaborative team member,” Margaret Early and I argue that the identity “teacher” helped to reduce power differentials between ourselves as researchers and the teachers as participants. In a focal group meeting in a secondary school in rural Uganda, for example, I introduced the discussion by explicitly claiming the identity “teacher”:

We’re very interested in what are your particular challenges that you find in teaching. Because obviously we are all interested in improving education. [Teachers: Mm.] Obviously. We are all teachers. [Teachers: Yes.] So we need to identify first of all the particular challenges that uh—that you—that you have in your own subject areas.

(p. 429, italics added)
In another extract in this data set, it is clear that the identity “teacher” is not only a professional designation, but also indexes the way teacher identity is constructed in the context of institutional space. Our focus group meetings took place in the principal’s office, the only place in this school where we could locate a private interview space. However, the following debate ensued about who should sit where in this politicized context (pp. 429–430):

BONNY: Um. I think I’m—I’ll probably have to sit over here—
ABEDNIGO: It’s okay. You can sit on the principal’s chair.
BONNY: Sit on the principal’s chair.
SPEAKERS: [laughter]
BONNY: Uh.
ABEDNIGO: And—
BONNY: Yeah. I’d—Just in the interest of—
MUSA: [inaudible]
MARGARET: Do you want your notepad?
BONNY: Yeah thank you. Um. Actually I feel kind of awkward sitting in the principal’s chair [laughter].
BONNY: So I might end up sitting on top of this table.
KAIKARA: Yeah, Bonny, come and sit here—I can sit on the other side.
BONNY: Oh. Okay.

In identifying and making sense of this data, Early and I drew on conceptions of the “small story” in narrative inquiry to better understand the ways in which we related to the Ugandan teachers in our study. As Bamberg (2004) notes, whereas big stories may be oriented toward life histories, small stories are situated in small talk and chitchat, but nevertheless provide a “narrative construction of self” (2004, p. 368).

**Teacher identity, transdisciplinarity, and the African Storybook**

For over two years (2013–2015), I worked with The Douglas Fir Group (2016) to help develop a transdisciplinary framework for second language acquisition (SLA), in which I represented the identity perspective. The deliberations of this group resulted in a framework that recognizes language learning as a complex phenomenon, existing along three interrelated dimensions of social activity: macro contexts of social action and interaction, meso contexts of sociocultural institutions and communities, and macro levels of ideological structure. While The Douglas Fir Group sought to capture transdisciplinarity with respect to language learning, in an increasingly multilingual global context, it was not within the scope of the work to conduct a comprehensive examination of transdisciplinarity with regard to language teaching.

To address this gap, Peter De Costa and I are using The Douglas Fir Group’s (2016) transdisciplinary perspective as a guiding framework for a special issue of *The Modern Language Journal* on “Transdisciplinarity and language teacher identity.”
This special issue, with contributions from leading scholars in language teacher identity, will capture the multifaceted and transdisciplinary nature of language teacher identity research. It will respond to real-world concerns of second and foreign language teachers and teacher educators as they attempt to navigate the three dimensions of social activity (micro, meso, and macro). Consistent with the 2015 model of investment, The Douglas Fir Group holds that it is often only when the semiotic resources of learners—and we will argue, teachers—at the classroom interaction level (micro) are valued by the school (meso) and society (macro) that optimal language learning and teaching results are obtained.

In addition to co-editing the special issue with De Costa, I will be working with Espen Stranger-Johannessen on a joint paper for the special issue that examines language teacher identity in Uganda, in the context of our collaborative work on the African Storybook (AS) project (http://www.africanstorybook.org/). This initiative of the South African Institute for Distance Education consists of an online repository for traditional and contemporary African stories that allows teachers, parents, and other users to download, translate, adapt, and upload digital stories appropriate for young African children. Our paper examines how teachers advance the goal of improving the early literacy of Ugandan children in local languages, as well as English, from Grades 1 to 4. Data were collected in three rural Ugandan schools from July to December 2014, and we found qualitative research methodologies the most generative for our purposes. Stranger-Johannessen and I will draw on the constructs of identity, investment, capital, and ideology to help explain findings from the study, and relate these findings to The Douglas Fir Group’s transdisciplinary framework. Our preliminary analysis suggests that shifts of identity are associated with changing pedagogical practices in the use of these stories, and the ways the digital stories can promote investment on the part of young learners. At the same time, an understanding of the way ideology impacts language learning and teaching in Ugandan classrooms is central to the analysis.

Directions for future research

In our chapter on future directions in identity research, De Costa and I suggest that future identity work will explore how teacher identities have evolved in the wake of globalization and neoliberal impulses (De Costa & Norton, in press). How are the global movements of people, ideas, goods, and services affecting language teaching and language teacher identity? What are the impacts of accountability measures, school ranking practices, and the pursuit of profit? How will debates on the native/non-native language teacher evolve? To what extent will issues of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation remain vibrant?

My own research program will continue to focus on the ways in which advances in digital technology are impacting the identities and investments of language learners and teachers in both wealthy and poorly resourced communities across global sites. At the same time, given my work as a language teacher educator in a
tertiary institution, I will continue to learn from language teachers, such as Keeley Ryan, who challenge me to consider the relevance of identity theory for classroom practice, and the importance of classroom practice for the advancement of theory. Is research on the identity of the language teacher educator the next frontier?

References


IDENTITY, INNOVATION, AND LEARNING TO TEACH A FOREIGN/SECOND LANGUAGE

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Language teacher identity as catalyst

Language teacher identity (LTI) has had a significant influence on my career as a language professional to date, even if I have not always been aware of it. While teaching French at a high school in suburban Boston, I reveled in my department’s decision to get rid of our third-year textbook and to engage in designing our own thematic units. However, in my last year at the school, a new administrator mandated the reintroduction of a textbook, which grated against my passion for content-based curriculum development and my desire to provide my students with learning experiences that fostered critical thinking. In identity terms, my agency as a foreign language teacher was challenged, and I no longer felt like I could be the teacher I wanted to be in that space. Ultimately, I resigned from this job, took another high school French teaching job for a year, and then began my doctorate in second language education. It was in graduate school that I found a vocabulary for representing and theorizing the feelings and experiences I had as a secondary French teacher, which has helped me find my voice as a language teacher educator and scholar.

Not surprisingly, my research in this incipient phase of my scholarly career has focused on LTI and on the intersection between LTI and the implementation of educational innovations, with a particular focus on traditional foreign language contexts in the United States. It is through this principal lens that I offer my thoughts in this chapter on the current state of and future directions in LTI theory and research.

LTI and innovation

The biographical experiences described above contributed to my engagement with LTI as a tool for theorizing the life course of educational innovations. As a teacher...
Jason Martel

educator who works with both pre- and in-service teachers, innovation is a core aspect of my message, for it is the vehicle by which the field of language teaching extends and improves, in constant dialogue with research. This being said, I consider traditional foreign language teaching in the United States to be rather entrenched in less-than-effective instructional, curricular, and assessment practices. I am deeply invested in seeing the field move forward, and LTI helps me understand the factors that contribute to the ultimate success or failure of attempted innovations.

I have been deeply influenced by Freeman’s ideas concerning the relationship between identity and innovation. In a recent book chapter (Freeman, 2013), he described frames for analyzing change: a manifest approach, which focuses on the “observed, publicly documented, and measured,” and a latent approach, which highlights the “idiosyncratic and contextual” (pp. 125–126). These two frames represent different conceptualizations of the loci, processes, and units of change, and this is where identity comes into play; in the manifest view, change is represented through observations of behaviors and actions, while in the latent view, it is represented through teachers’ sense-making and identity construction. By focusing on sense-making and identity, researchers might see into the future of innovations, for it is hypothesized that a teacher’s identity claims more strongly predict the outcome of an innovation than his or her actions/behaviors, which may or may not reflect agreement with the innovation. This perspective has shaped recent papers I have authored on pre-service foreign language teachers’ identity construction and informs research projects I am currently conducting with in-service foreign language teachers related to the implementation of content-based instruction and ACTFL’s (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Integrated Performance Assessment. To date, the identity/innovation interface has been explored by only a few language education scholars (see Trent, 2014, for an excellent example), and I hold that this framework’s eye toward the future invests it with much promise for producing helpful research, especially in the conservative context of American foreign language teaching.

The identity/innovation interface is of special interest to pre-service teacher educators, as preparation programs are arguably the time during which language teacher candidates are exposed in the most structured and concentrated fashion to forward-thinking theories, research findings, and practices. For this reason, I have advocated with Andie Wang for an “identity approach” to language teacher education (Martel & Wang, 2015), following Vélez-Rendón’s (2010) claim that “the field [of language teacher education] continues to operate from a traditional perspective favoring mechanistic and transmissive models that overlook the social nature of learning” (p. 645). An identity approach to language teacher education shifts from a training/coaching orientation to exploring the various ways in which current theory and research interface with future teachers’ plans for inhabiting their roles in the classroom. In other words, it assists them in making sense of their profession and in interpreting the critical incidents that bear upon the formation of their emerging self-concepts. Miller (2009) proposes basic elements of an identity
approach, such as critical reflection, yet a more robust elaboration is warranted, as is research that connects language teachers’ identity construction with student learning outcomes.

To summarize, LTI holds potential for shedding light on the trajectories of innovations in language teaching. From a teacher education perspective, a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between innovation and identity may assist teacher educators in the development of strategies that facilitate successful implementations (e.g., critical reflection), which is ultimately teacher education’s desired goal. However, it is vital to remember that theory and practice should be in constant, mutually shaping dialogue, which raises important questions of ethics and agency as they relate to innovation. I will return to these issues below.

**My take on LTI**

Definitions of LTI abound, representing a variety of theoretical stances. This proliferation is generally seen as a boon in that it leads to a fuller, more multifaceted understanding of the construct. In my research so far, I have connected principally with symbolic interactionist conceptualizations of identity construction, which are founded on core sociological constructs like the looking-glass self and role-taking (see Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003). I have also connected with the literature on teacher socialization (Zeichner & Gore, 1990), which has remained surprisingly quiet in regard to teacher identity in recent decades. In expanding teacher socialization to include identity, I have borrowed a fruitful set of constructs from Sfard and Prusak (2005) called “actual” and “designated” identities—the former referring to “stories about the state of affairs” and the latter consisting of “narratives presenting a state of affairs which, for one reason or another, is expected to be the case, if not now then in the future” (p. 18). In language teacher education terms, actual identities represent teacher candidates’ personal conceptualizations of themselves, while designated identities are the identity positions that various significant others, like university professors mentor teachers, and standards of professional practice want them to take on. In symbolic interactionist terms, actual identities refer to negotiated identity positions, an internal-to-the-teacher construct, while designated identities refer to role expectations, an external-to-the-teacher construct. Role expectations and identities are in continual, mutually shaping interaction with each other, and I would argue that the distinction between the two constructs is relatively poorly made in research on LTI.

My reading into the literature cited above has led me to formulate the following working definition of LTI, which corresponds with Farrell’s (2011): LTI is an internalized set of meanings associated with the role of language teacher that are negotiated and constructed in interaction with others and/or generated and maintained by oneself. This definition distinguishes LTI as a role identity—a finer-grained entity than one’s larger identity, which is composed of the amalgam of role identities that reflect the multiple roles one fills in life. In addition, it highlights the
equal hands that society, specific educational and work contexts, and one’s own agency have in shaping language teachers’ identities. In other words, language teachers receive constant messages throughout their lives (both during and outside their careers) about what a language teacher should do and be, yet they ultimately get to choose whether they intend to fold these messages into their self-concepts.

As much as this definition of LTI resonates with me, I admit to worrying that many in our field consider it outmoded and would argue that we have moved from a relatively stable, even static conceptualization of identity (as indicated by words like “internalized”) to one that highlights the construct’s in-the-moment, performative nature. I do not see symbolic interactionism’s stance related to identity as static at all, however. Instead, I interpret the word “internalized” to indicate identity’s deeply associative and felt nature, in contrast with the externality of role expectations. In such a conceptualization, identity can certainly quickly change; what changes, however, is how one sees and feels oneself, and not how one perceives others’, particular contexts’, or society’s expectations. With these reflections offered, I hope it is evident that I connect with our field’s general acceptance of identity as a fluid, ever-changing entity.

Advancing LTI and language teaching

As expressed above, it is my wish that LTI be mobilized to a greater extent to study the implementation of educational innovations in foreign/second language teaching. The traditional foreign language context in the United States, in particular, remains tremendously conservative in its pedagogical practices and could benefit from scholarship that explores ways in which proposed innovations have interfaced with teachers’ identities, with the goal of generating strategies for facilitating innovations’ success.

My desire to see American foreign language education move forward raises a series of important ethical questions, which I posed recently with my colleague Andie Wang (Martel & Wang, 2015): Should teacher candidates be expected to mechanistically take on the identity positions imposed on them by language teacher education? To a certain extent, is that not how “progress” is conceptualized in the field of language teacher education, and is that not thus what a language teacher educator would want, in order to push the field forward? And, significantly, where does teacher agency play into this picture? We recommended that moving forward, “researchers should document and also theorize ways in which the objectives of teacher education might be accomplished while at the same time preserving student-teachers’ agency” (p. 297). I, of course, still consider this an important goal and would add that it is worth discussing what we as language teacher educators consider adequate “progress” to be. For example, in a recent study I conducted on a Spanish student-teacher’s identity construction during her pre-service preparation program, the focal participant stated that she saw herself using the target language 80 percent of the time in her teaching, which differed slightly from the professional
recommendation of 90 percent (Martel, 2015). Although she did not fully meet the field’s expectation for 90 percent target language use, is 80 percent still not enough as to be effective? And furthermore, how might her experiences critique and stimulate a revision of the field’s position, reflecting the theory and practice loop mentioned above?

In addition to analyzing progress and successful innovation through an identity lens, researchers might also inquire into identity approaches to language teacher education. To be fair, many of the activities that currently take place in language teacher preparation and professional development programs have an identity slant, notably in the ubiquitous practice of reflective journaling. However, to what extent is identity explicitly mentioned and elicited in these practices? Are journal prompts fashioned in ways that ask (student) teachers to connect what they do (their practices) to how they conceive of themselves as teachers (their identities)?

With progress in mind, I hold that innovative practices are more likely to take hold if teacher candidates emerge from their preparation programs with strong identities as change agents. This would involve not only adequate rationalization of forward-thinking pedagogies by teacher educators, but also ample opportunities for practice of these pedagogies both before and during field experiences (Martel, 2015).

Finally, it behooves LTI researchers to develop methodological tools and analysis procedures for distinguishing study participants’ references to role and to (role) identity. These two constructs are of course highly interrelated, and both are implicated in studies about identity. However, it is important to know when participants are referring to external expectations that they are processing (role expectations) and when they are referring to meanings that they have actually internalized into their self-concepts ([role] identities). For example, researchers might include contrasting questions in their interviews such as “What is society telling you you need to be as a language teacher?” and “How do your views of yourself as a language teacher line up with society’s and/or others’ (e.g., teacher educators’, students’, etc.) expectations?”

**Directions for future research**

The broad strokes outlined in the previous section point to specific lines of research inquiry in LTI. In terms of the identity/innovation interface, researchers might investigate the experiences of teachers who attempt to implement forward-thinking curricular approaches such as content-based, task-based, and project-based instruction. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, they could ask participants how they see themselves in line with these approaches and then compare their responses with their perceptions of society’s and others’ expectations for them. From there, practical strategies for fostering innovation-oriented identity positions can be unpacked.

In terms of an identity approach to language teacher education, researchers might investigate the effectiveness of various reflective forms/genres and scaffolding
techniques for stimulating identity work. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they should endeavor to connect identity approach techniques used by language teacher educators with student language learning.

References


BOUNDARY DISPUTES IN SELF

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My “self” in SLA

The story of my own “self” development in SLA reflects many of the dilemmas and issues that researching in this field presents. My roots and heart remain those of an EFL teacher and this link to the classroom has been a defining feature of my professional self and work. As my own career has seen me move away from actual language teaching and into the domains of language teacher training and academic research, I find myself continually challenged by my perceptions of the dual responsibilities of researcher and practitioner. My personal take on this has been that I appreciate that both have distinct expectations placed on them in terms of their professional output and responsibilities, but I feel there should also be some connection between the two—ideally, in both directions. As will be seen, this need to connect my research and practice has defined the kinds of studies I conduct, the populations I work with, and my consideration of the implications of such work.

In this chapter, I will document my move across different types of self-constructs from language learner selves towards language teacher selves. On that journey I have had to engage with many types of boundary disputes—across domains, disciplines, terms, constructs, epistemologies, contexts, paradigms, and methods—and I will try to show the relevance of my own experiences of these disputes for the broader field and those who choose to research in this area.

What do I mean by self?

To understand how I have come to conceptualize language teacher selves, I will outline some of the self-constructs I have worked with over time and how each has added something to my understandings. My journey started in my language
classroom with my teaching. I was working with advanced tertiary-level EFL learners in Austria and I designed an experiential approach to strategy training. At the end of the course when getting feedback, I discovered that the main benefits of the class had not been linguistic but psychological. The learners reported feeling more empowered, more confident, more motivated, and more willing and able to take control of their own learning. However, what they described was more than just confidence; it involved a sense of agency too. I turned to a friend from psychology who guided me towards the construct of self-efficacy. This is a powerful belief of expectation about whether a person thinks they will be able to successfully do something or not. The construct is quite tightly defined in terms of domain, meaning it usually refers to very specific focused tasks and is primarily cognitive in character. Although there is relatively little research on the construct in SLA either in respect to learners or teachers (see Mills, 2011, for exceptions), the research in education and psychology on its significance was compelling.

Yet, despite its powerful research profile, it lacked the crucial component of affect, which I did not feel could be separated from cognition in the self. After some searching in the psychology literature, I encountered self-concept. This is defined according to domains, but these are usually conceptualized more broadly such as domain of foreign language learning or more specifically domain of EFL learning. It comprises a cognitive self-appraisal but also the affective evaluation of that, thus combining both cognitive and affective dimensions. Influenced strongly by my reading in psychology and surprised at the absence of work on self-concept in SLA, I found myself exploring this construct in relation to EFL learners for a number of years. An interesting consequence of my early immersion in psychology literature has been a keen eye on defining self terms. The predominant experimental paradigm in psychology typically involves quantitative studies. For such work and the usual correlation studies, you especially need tightly, clearly, and consistently defined terms, although the same should be true in qualitative work. In SLA as well as other disciplines, the field of self research has been hampered in part due to the plethora of self terms as well as the inconsistent, inaccurate, and unclear use of terms.

While working on my PhD, the department had a strong qualitative dimension and I came into contact with many who worked from a social constructivist perspective. The ensuing combination of my psychology reading set against the backdrop of more strongly socially situated perspectives lead to my own hybrid understandings and approaches to self work. In ways perhaps reminiscent of symbolic interactionist and social cognitive perspectives, I ascribe importance to human psychology, human agency, and our own interpretations of the meanings of contexts, cultures, and experiences. This approach recognizes the inherently socially situated nature of human psychology but does not see the human as being solely a passive victim of contextual influences. Instead, it sees individuals as constructing their own meaning out of contexts and social settings filtered through the lens of their own personal psychology; both of which are dynamic and open to change across time and place.
Given my academic socialization experiences, I chose to conduct my own exploratory work on self-concept in language learning within a qualitative paradigm employing a grounded theory approach. This enabled me to generate my own theoretical understandings of the construct without being constrained by the hierarchical models, which dominate psychology; instead leading to something more organic in structure (see three-dimensional network model in Mercer, 2011). My own view from my learners’ data revealed a sense of self that was more complex, involved more facets than just cognition and affect, where boundaries of domains were more fluid, where contexts were uniquely conceptualized and all of which were dynamic both across time and contexts. I then went back to the SLA literature to see how my findings resonated with work on identity in the field. Perhaps as a result of my own blend of perspectives, I had somewhat neglected the identity construct. In part, I had some reservations about use of the term, which some scholars seemed to utilize in a way that gave the impression of people being relatively passive and subject to the vagaries of contextual influences with little to no agency to construct their own sense of self. However, as with other self terms, I began to appreciate that identity was also used inconsistently and often without clear definitions. Another concern I had with the construct was in respect to its “mobility.” Identity is often strongly tied to specific contexts and roles, whereas in my research with my learners, I was more interested in their sense of self, which learners took with them across settings at different times. Although there was and remains much overlap in uses of identity as a construct and my own emergent understandings of self-concept, there also remained some differences. However, a crucial part of my development is that I began to feel that these constructs did not need to be viewed in competition with each other but rather that they all had something to tell us about the self and the only way to get a comprehensive picture of the self would be to combine insights from multiple self constructs and theoretical perspectives without having to claim any one is the “correct” view (see Mercer & Williams, 2014).

The next important stage in my journey was my reading about complexity theory. Having known nothing about it previously, I was pleasantly surprised to discover how it reflected and accounted for many of my findings and understandings about the self as a construct. Conceptualizing the self as a complex dynamic system (CDS) seemed to be phenomenologically closer to the holistic complexity I felt my learners’ data was conveying. Understanding the self as a CDS means acknowledging that the self is constantly in a state of flux but also sometimes dynamically stable (not static). It sees the self as composed of multiple interrelated components including cognitions, affect, motivation, as well as embodied behaviors. The sense of self emerges from their continual interaction leading to its emergent quality, whereby it is more than the sum of its individual parts. The self is also an open system, which means it is continually growing and emerging as a never-ending process—we are always becoming our selves (van Lier, 2004). The self as a CDS integrates context into the system as opposed to viewing contexts as being outside of the supposed internal self influencing from an external position. Finally, a
complex dynamic system is nonlinear in character. This means its developmental trajectory cannot easily be predicted and it is not subject to simple cause-and-effect processes. This helps understand the unique and highly individualized ways in which people’s sense of self can develop in ways that are sometimes hard to anticipate. Thus, I found that complexity theories help me to provide coherence to a range of psychological and social constructivist perspectives bringing them together in a frame that I can use to interpret and understand the self in more nuanced ways.

Moving towards language teacher selves
To date, the vast majority of my work has been looking into learners’ sense of self with respect to their language learning endeavors. A key reason for this has been the fact that I was still teaching EFL and so this reflected my interest in my own actual learners and my desire to connect my teaching and researching lives. However, my professional profile has changed in recent years and I find myself working increasingly with trainee teachers and so I have begun to look more at how these early stage teachers view themselves, in particular how their sense of self develops across time. In my only relatively recent engagement with language teacher self-related literature, it came as a surprise to find a relatively narrow range of self terms in use compared to those in general education, psychology, and even in respect to learners in SLA. The most dominant construct in respect to teachers has been the construct of teacher identity, although definitions of this term seem to vary according to how domains and relational roles are defined.

Continuing from my work on learners’ selves, I have been investigating trainee teachers’ sense of self from a complexity perspective. There are perhaps three key consequences of having taken this approach. Firstly, there has been the conscious decision to allow the participants to define domains in ways that are personally meaningful to them. This has been a vital development in my understanding of domains and domain boundaries as it helps to bring together different facets of the self as the individual perceives as relevant, as opposed to domains being delineated and defined by the researcher. The second consequence stems from our understanding that complex dynamic systems can be viewed as nested systems tied to different levels of contexts and different relevant time scales. In other words, we can think of a person as holding multiple selves, which differ across different time scales in terms of scope, size, and the relevance of various contexts (see also Lichtwarck-Aschoff, et al., 2008). There is the self of the moment that is more connected to, say, a particular interaction or immediate setting and is typically dynamic across time scales of seconds or minutes. Then there is the more aggregated sense of self that we reflect on and gain a more holistic view of ourselves evaluating our experiences and understandings of self-related processes over time. This is typically associated with societal, institutional, and personal background contexts and is more typically dynamic across time periods of months or years.
The third consequence has been a need for me to consider how to satisfactorily research the self as a CDS acknowledging its core characteristics but in an empirically feasible manner. I have taken two approaches to date. In the first one, I have chosen to investigate different selves on micro and macro timescales, sticking to more traditional conceptualizations of selves in cognitive and affective terms but defined in terms of the time scale on which they primarily function with an individually defined understanding of domain (Mercer, 2014a). The other approach has been to focus on a more holistic aggregated sense of self again with participant-defined domains. This macro sense of self is larger in scope and size, and functions across a more macro timescale and set of contexts. To make something so holistic and complex more researchable, I turned to social network analysis. Networks are a way of making complex dynamic systems manageable without oversimplifying and still retaining a holistic perspective. Networks are defined primarily in terms of relationships and connectivity and the structure of the network is vital to understanding its nature and how things, such as emotions, “flow” around the network. Viewing the self as a network led me to conceptualize the self as being comprised of relationships between the self and multiple things such as people, places, experiences (past, present, and future), ideas, concepts, etc (Mercer, 2014b). When we form a relationship to something, we involve other dimensions of our psychology and our various cultural contexts as their meaning for us is already embedded in the kinds of relationships we construct. This implies a sense of self that emerges from the sum of our relationships, rather than the sum of individual facets or components of the self. A benefit of this approach has been the practical pedagogical comprehensibility of such a conceptualization. Learners or trainee teachers appear to find it easier to imagine the self in terms of a multitude of relationships, which can affect their overall sense of self depending on their valence. In terms of change, it is also easier to work on developing a relationship by changing the way we think about it. So, for example, we cannot alter past experiences, but we can change how we think about them now and thus the kind of relationship we choose to form to them in the present.

Future topics and methods

So, where does that take me personally and the field of language teacher identity research specifically? One thing that I note is that complexity theories draw attention to interrelations of all kinds. This implies taking a more relational view of the self. For example, this could be in seeking to understand how the self is related to other facets of our situated psychology such as our belief systems, emotions, attributions, motivations, goals, resilience, flow experiences, etc. It raises relational questions about how we are embodied human beings and the ways in which our sense of self is intrinsically connected to our physical experiences of the real world. It also suggests a need to complexify our understandings of our relationships to the socially situated world. As it becomes ever more difficult to conceptualize contexts or cultures in any unified monolithic way given increasing global mobility,
multilingualism, multiculturalism, and the uniquely personally constructed meaning of contexts, this means research needs to avoid simplistic discussions of contexts and settings. In addition, research on extended and distributed cognition and also the mutually defining character of learner and teacher selves indicate that we may need to broaden our thinking about our sense of self as uniquely and exclusively individual and start considering the nature of how we may share and co-construct our collective and relational selves. Such thinking implies shifting the focus from the self as an individual to looking at the relationships of the self as the units of analysis.

Concrete suggestions for the future

At present, my work on teachers’ selves is at an exciting crossroads as I explore the two key dimensions of the self emerging from a complexity-informed perspective—relationships of the self and temporality. This collection itself is evidence of the upsurge of interest in teacher identity research. If as a field we continue to cross boundaries and dispute them in terms of disciplines, methods, theories, and conceptualizations, it promises a rich and fertile area for future research. However, to generate a comprehensive understanding of teacher selves, I would plead for theoretical and methodological plurality. So, while I naturally have my own preferred perspectives and approaches, this chapter should not be seen as a call or attempt at convincing others that they should necessarily share or follow my views. To conclude, here are some specific questions of particular interest to me in the future:

1. What relational selves and collective selves are constructed between teachers and learners?
2. How do teachers conceptualize boundaries of the self, rather than research-imposed conceptions?
3. How do teachers’ selves on micro timescales relate to their aggregated macro sense of self?
4. How is a teacher’s sense of self dynamic across different timescales of seconds, minutes, days, weeks, months, years etc?
5. How do we construct and reconstruct our past, present, and future selves, and how are these related to each other?
6. If we take a relational view of self, in what ways can network analysis be helpful as an analytical approach and what other analytical frames could we utilize?
7. How can new technologies, such as idiodynamic software (see MacIntyre, 2012), e-research or designs such as the experience sampling method, help us to understand the more micro-level dynamics of teachers’ selves?
8. What other methods can we explore to generate insights into teachers’ selves such as using multimedia, online tools, and mixed method designs?
9. How can we ensure that the implications of our work in investigating teacher selves remain relevant and useful for practitioners and not merely an academic endeavor?
References


16

UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE TEACHERS’ SENSE-MAKING IN ACTION THROUGH THE PRISM OF FUTURE SELF GUIDES

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Finding LTI at the heart of the language learning-teaching relationship

My research is located at a dynamic interface of additional language learning and teaching. At one end of this continuum, I have been intrigued by questions about what kinds of language learning opportunities need to exist in order for people with diverse needs, intentions, and backgrounds to learn, and the theoretical as well as empirical inquiry I have conducted with colleagues and doctoral researchers has led into research territories as wide-ranging as classroom climate, motivation, learner vision, group dynamics, willingness to communicate, intercultural communication, language ideologies, dialogic peer interaction, and teacher-led classroom discourse. On the other side of this learning-teaching dynamic, I have become concerned with how teachers make sense of and transform such language learning opportunities into realities for their students in classrooms around the world and how they can be supported in doing so through teacher education and continuing professional development. It is through probing into this interface and connecting the research concerns of two domains of applied linguistics—second language acquisition (SLA) and language teacher cognition—that my current interest in specific facets of language teacher identity (LTI) has emerged.

This chapter first describes how my evolving research trajectory has led me to foregrounding specific dimensions of LTI in my effort to piece together an empirically grounded theory of language teacher development. I will then offer a conceptualization of an aspect of LTI that has informed my own sense-making of language teachers’ lives in relation to the central questions of my research agenda. I then discuss the methodological directions, which I see as critical in illuminating the teacher’s role in supporting student learning while particularly highlighting the
intellectual and pedagogical gains of pursuing ethnographically and discourse-oriented approaches to researching those identity-relevant constructs that have traditionally occupied the cognitivist realm. Finally, I provide pointers for future inquiry within my domain of scholarship, which could build fruitful interdisciplinary bridges enabling continuing inquiry into the relationship between language teachers’ sense-making and their students’ learning.

**LTI and language teacher cognition**

When I identify one of my fields of expertise as *language teacher cognition*, I refer to a specific strand within a vast and growing body of scholarship concerned with the inner dimension of language teachers’ lives, in which cognition is conceptualized as language teachers’ “emergent sense-making in action” (Kubanyiova & Feryok, 2015, p. 436). The action that my research has primarily focused on is twofold: (a) the language teachers’ acts of investment in their professional development, which includes participation in individual as well as communal meaning making in various contexts of professional growth, such as teacher development programs, informal teacher groups, reflective journals and diaries, mentoring conversations, or peer observations, and (b) language teachers’ here-and-now moments of supporting students’ engagement in learning, and I have primarily focused on how such moments evolve within teacher-student interaction. The intellectual home of language teacher cognition has enabled me to ponder what shapes teachers’ participation in these educational events, although it has equally compelled me to challenge some of its well-established premises, the key among which is that it is not what teachers know and believe but who they see when they imagine themselves in the future that shapes their sense-making in ways that are consequential to both their own development and their students’ learning (Kubanyiova, 2012).

To theorize this insight from my empirical data, I have borrowed and adapted the concept of *possible selves*, introduced by Markus and Nurius (1986) as a heuristic that bridges human cognition, motivation, and action. I elaborate on my own evolving conceptualization of this identity-relevant construct in the next section, but here I wish to provide an example of how understanding language teachers’ images of their desired future selves was critical in my growing appreciation of the intricately complex ways in which teachers approach their work and the consequences this has for their development and their students’ learning.

The example concerns a small group of teachers who volunteered to participate in an informal teacher development program with the aim of helping language educators engage with principles and practices of creating motivating learning environments in their language classrooms (Kubanyiova, 2012). The initially puzzling analytical moment arose with my realization that despite these teachers’ genuine enthusiasm for the initiative, the personal meanings they attached to their participation differed significantly from the program’s anticipated pedagogical goals and this, in turn, had implications for how they engaged with it and what they treated as
development opportunities. Some participants were committed to the course because it created an invaluable space for their own L2 learning and use at a proficiency level and for communicative purposes that were rarely available in their classrooms; typically the only setting for these teachers’ L2 use. For others, the internationally run initiative served as a unique platform for gaining social prestige and validation in their local environments. And yet others sought or desired to maintain membership in my social network and participated out of duty towards me.

A deeper interrogation of data showed me that these personal meanings had a wider significance in the teachers’ lives and could be best understood through an overarching metaphor of their socially constructed, personally meaningful, and vivid images of who they would like to become, felt they ought to become, or feared they might become: i.e., their possible selves. These identity-relevant interpretative frameworks through which my research participants made sense of the teacher development initiative were also firmly imprinted in how they reasoned about their actions, how they oriented to language learning opportunities for their students, or in the degree of urgency and significance they attached to broader educational and socio-political events in their teaching worlds. The sense of coherence across each teacher’s multiple contexts of meaning-making led me to the key analytical insight: These images of future selves functioned as a prism which directed the course participants’ gaze towards those facets of their teaching lives, including the teacher development initiative, which nourished and energized those visions (and away from those that did not).

Possible selves as a provisional metaphor, not a conceptual straightjacket

Conceptually, the above example illustrates how my data were beginning to show that identity was not simply one of a range of cognitions that language teachers had with regards to their work (Borg, 2012). Rather, these identity-relevant images proved to be at the very core of the act of teachers’ sense-making, and gave it meaning, purpose, and direction. This finding, however, did not sit easily with the cognitivist inheritance of the concept of possible selves, despite the powerful resonances it offered me in the reading of my data. This is why throughout my inquiry and dissemination I have had to devote as much time to explaining what I do not mean by this conceptual metaphor as what I do borrow from it and indeed what I do and do not consider to be its data-based evidence; an issue to which I return in the next section.

Drawing on the parallel work in psychology, I have worked with three distinctive facets of possible language teacher selves: ideal language teacher selves, that is, language teachers’ images of who they desire to become; ought-to language teacher selves, referring to teachers’ visual representations of the language educator they feel they are expected to become in and by their particular settings; and feared language teacher selves, representing visions of who teachers could become if their desired or
ought-to images are not lived up to. This framework has served me well as a heuristic to appreciate teachers’ distinctive emotional experiences and the dynamic, situated, multifarious, and consequential nature of their images of future selves. At the same time, however, I have been acutely aware of intellectual and—as importantly—ethical traps of settling on “answers” found within the confines of established concepts. My theorizing, therefore, does not reflect an ambition to articulate a “final definition” but to map my sense-making in progress, which has so far involved in equal measure building on and breaking open established conceptual metaphors in my effort to come closer and see better.

This approach has drawn me into an ongoing interdisciplinary dialogue with a range of existing theoretical perspectives, which has facilitated a fuller account of the social without dismissing concerns with the individual as individualist. By placing the study of possible selves in action, I have been able to tap theoretically into the whole spectrum of teachers’ emotional experiences, which, although hinted at within the original construct of possible selves and some associated frameworks, such as self-discrepancy theory, have not been fully fleshed out within existing models. And finally, leaving the theoretical boundaries of possible selves open to new insights has allowed me to unearth and engage with clues in my data of possible selves’ inherently moral dimension; that is, of teachers’ visions of themselves as inextricably linked with their broader values concerning the roles and tasks of language educators and language education in general.

Despite the availability of conceptual alternatives, viewing teachers’ lives through the prism of future self guides has given me additional conceptual tools with which to appreciate teachers’ actions. For instance, the construct of images through which teachers interpret and reconstruct their experience (Golombek, 1998) is strikingly similar. The key distinctive theoretical contribution of language teachers’ possible selves, however, lies in foregrounding the central role that teachers’ future-oriented identity-relevant investment in those images plays in guiding their action. Similarly, the construct of imagined identity referring to as yet unrealized visions of self suggests significant overlaps. But while imagined identity is seen by some as antithetical to the so called practiced identity (cf. Xu, 2013), possible selves, as I have endeavored to demonstrate throughout this reflection, are embedded and embodied in practice; they constitute “inner landscapes of action” (Kubanyiova, 2015, p. 568).

Researching language teachers’ future self guides: The case for expanding the epistemological lens and methodological options

In the discussion so far, I have made a conceptual case for the value of the construct of possible selves while signalling the social epistemological orientation that has underpinned my approach to understanding and researching it. Because this perspective departs from the cognitivist lens predominantly associated with both language teacher cognition and possible selves research, I will explain the key
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distinction first before outlining what I see as profitable methodological options for extending future inquiry into language teachers’ sense-making in action.

In much of possible selves research, evidence of individuals’ future self guides is gathered through various elicitation instruments, such as questionnaires containing categorical possible self statements, or carefully developed interview guides asking participants to articulate and describe their visions of themselves in the future. These elicited accounts, collected on the assumption that the evidence of people’s visions—or, indeed, of their cognition—is hidden from the researcher’s sight, are typically treated as reports of individuals’ possible selves and often correlated with measures of reported practices or intentions to ascertain the role that possible selves play in guiding human behavior. The underlying epistemological premise behind this approach links much of possible selves inquiry to the so-called acquisition metaphor informed by the cognitivist view that treats possible selves as reified mental constructs, that is, static and discrete entities that reside fully formed in individuals’ heads, can be readily articulated and accessed through research elicitation, and are typically dissociated from actual practice.

I have benefitted greatly from theoretical insights produced as a result of this type of inquiry. However, in my quest to understand my research participants’ engagement with their own development as well as with that of their students, I have become attuned to the need to get closer to the actual practices and take a deeper and more interpretive look at their meanings. Informed by this socially oriented epistemological tradition represented by a participation metaphor, my inquiry has not focused on language teachers’ articulation of their vision statements—although these can, of course, contribute to the researcher’s interpretative act. Rather, I have sought conceptual explanations for those significant analytical moments (such as the one described earlier in this chapter), which have progressively emerged through probing my data records of individual and collective actions in situ. In other words, I have focused my analytical gaze not on eliciting teachers’ possible self statements, but rather on unearthing patterns of their participation in the practice of meaning-making across spatial and temporal settings. The question of how or whether the conceptual metaphor of possible selves might be of use to account for those practices arose as a result of this analytical process rather than preceded it.

This approach to collecting and analyzing data is broadly referred to as grounded theory ethnography; it is concerned with practices but, in contrast with ethnography, seeks a conceptual rendering of the phenomena embedded in them. Other methodological options include a range of discourse-analytic, narrative, and ethnographic approaches: all of these offer tools for moving the analysis beyond the face value of what participants say by paying close attention to what they do and strive to achieve across multiple contexts of meaning-making in their social worlds. I have become convinced that it is through expanding the epistemological lens of both language teacher cognition and possible selves research that productive inroads can be made into addressing the notoriously difficult relationship between
language teachers’ sense-making and their students’ learning experience. More generally, language teachers’ future self guides as an identity-relevant conceptual metaphor has enabled me to get closer to appreciating how language teachers’ emotional experience, moral visions, and dreams as well as fears for the future shape and are shaped by their being and acting in the world.

**Directions for future research**

I close this chapter by outlining different kinds of questions that would benefit from inquiry into how language teachers’ future-oriented moral, imaginative, and emotional dimensions of their lives are implicated in them and what consequences these investments might have for the quality of language learning experiences of students. Future research could explore:

1. Language teachers’ coming to terms and enacting in their practices some of the radically different realities of L2 learning, use, and proficiency in an age of globalization and, consequently, radically different understandings of the role of L2 teacher and of the practices of L2 teaching. In particular, future research could probe into teachers’ praxis in relation to the dynamic, socially embedded, and unpredictable nature of language and with regards to the shifting emphasis from monolingual native-speaker models of L2 proficiency as the goal of L2 education to the development of learners’ multilingual repertoires and intercultural competences.

2. Ways in which language teachers’ future self guides are implicated in their interactions with students generally and especially with those from linguistically, sociopolitically, and socioeconomically marginalized backgrounds as well as in contexts with low teacher morale, scarce resources, or in zones of conflict.

3. The role of language teacher education as well as of wider sociopolitical and educational structures in supporting the development of the kinds of images of future selves that will enable teachers to engage meaningfully with some of the challenges outlined previously. We will need data-based insights into relevant pedagogical as well as wider cultural practices that not only engage language teachers in reflection and articulation of productive images of future selves but, crucially, facilitate their emerging investment in the here-and-now acts of imagination.

**References**


Another way of being a language teacher

My interest in distance language teaching was sparked through a series of informal encounters in early 1983. For the previous five years I had worked as a lecturer in New Zealand, Thailand, and then China teaching English for university preparation (as it was called) and, alongside this, lecturing in linguistics and methodology for language teachers. These roles as language teacher, lecturer, and teacher educator had all taken place in traditional face-to-face settings. In March 1983 I returned to New Zealand to take up the position of lecturer in linguistics and second language teaching at a “dual mode” university, meaning that courses were taught in different modes for what were called internal and extramural (distance) students. I settled into my office and set to work, feeling very unsure as to how I was going to do the “other” half of my work, the distance part. Further along the corridor were the teachers of “modern languages”—French, German, Japanese, and soon Chinese—who also taught the same curriculum face-to-face and at a distance. As I got to know them I became intrigued by their commentaries on these two very different teaching worlds, and their views of what that entailed. They often spoke of how they encouraged students to work with the challenges and limitations of distance language learning environments—whether in lighthouses, on remote farms, at home with young children, or in the multitude of sites and life roles (and identities) through which they pursued their learning. By many popular accounts at the time they, the students and teachers, were doing the impossible: teaching and learning languages by distance, rather than in face-to-face settings. At that time, too, definitions of distance education framed learners as remote from the institution, seen as the seat of learning. Yet I was already aware that the teachers saw themselves as remote from the sites of learning and that much of their work (and the challenge...
in their work) was to bridge that distance—largely through feedback on assignments (often using audio cassettes), letters, phone calls, and the face-to-face contact courses that took place each semester. In this chapter I’ll trace something more of my search into this “other” way of being a language teacher, and the contribution of that inquiry to contemporary understandings of language teachers’ everyday lifeworlds and identities.

Inquiry into distance language teacher identity

An interest in questions of language teacher identity—and their significance—came relatively late to distance language teaching research and practice. The main reason for this as I see it was a prevailing concern with developments in technology rather than a focus on the key participants and their contributions to what actually transpired in distance language learning and teaching (White, 2014). I first began to engage with teacher identity research as I noticed that individuals found their expectations of life as a language teacher being both confronted and challenged when they began to work within distance language teaching environments. In some cases you could say that their identities were disrupted as they felt the loss of participant structures and boundaries provided by a physical classroom and scheduled classes. One highly experienced language teacher I recall said, referring to her students, “I need to see the whites of their eyes”, adding that she did not feel either comfortable or competent in this way of being the teacher—and this despite the fact that she had excelled in the distance language training and professional development opportunities available to her. I saw that an entirely new stance was required, which went far beyond questions of roles, skills, attributes, or expertise. Importantly, at this point, I began to notice that teachers’ reports of challenges to their ways of being were also imbued with emotion, and that those affective experiences in turn affected how and the degree to which they engaged with distance language teaching. I thus came to ask questions about not only the ways in which language teacher identities were challenged and changed in embarking on distance language teaching but also about the significance of emotions in those processes.

A second, related strand to this research came with increased attention to innovation in applied linguistics with distance language teaching emerging as a key site of innovation, intersecting with online language teaching. It was not long before the influence and potential of these new technology-mediated sites and practices were brought to bear on more traditional classroom language teaching (in the form of blended and distributed learning, virtual language centers, and so on). My work at that point was influenced by the ecological perspectives developed by Tudor (2001) into the dynamics and complexities of language classrooms. He argued that the effects of technology could not be predicted from the features of technology alone since that ignores the influence of the perceptions and goals (and identities) of those involved. I then explored the ways in which language teacher identities interact with and influence the course of innovation and trajectories of
change (White, 2007), providing evidence from multiple studies that attention to issues of teacher identity can deepen our understanding of innovation in distance language teaching (and beyond).

Both these areas of research have developed into my most recent focus on agency in distance language teacher identity research. Much of the early research into the work of distance language teachers painted a rather constrained view of what was possible for them to do and achieve. Some commentaries pointed to the marginal status of distance language teaching and others to the fact that the work of teachers was largely unheard and unseen within distance institutions, while it was arguably amongst the most complex and challenging work that took place. A recurrent theme in research into distance language teaching has been the commitment of teachers to the lives of their students and their voiced awareness of the significance of the actions they take in terms of the motivation of students and their individual trajectories as learners. Thus, identity is implicated in the agency of distance language teachers—the actions they choose to take, their notions of responsibility and answerability, and their awareness that their agency both mediates and is mediated by the sociocultural context (van Lier, 2008). I also see that understandings of distance language teacher identity are closely related to different dimensions of historical and momentary agency and that this is a promising avenue for further inquiry.

**Defining language teacher identity**

It was in the course of research I carried out with Alex Ding into teacher identity and self in e-language teaching (White & Ding, 2009) that I really clarified for myself conceptions of language teacher identity. There we were working with tertiary language teachers who were embarking on using new technologies in their language teaching—both individually and collectively—and in response to institutional requirements. We were aware that arguably the most crucial challenges for the teachers would not come from changes in roles, skills, and practices per se, but from the more profound challenges to their identities as language teachers. To begin we proposed that teacher identity is “multiple, dynamic, and conflictual, closely related to sociocultural contexts, and is constructed, enacted, and negotiated largely through discourse and interaction” (pp. 335–336). The study shed light on those dimensions in ways that were quite revealing. We followed 23 teachers across a period of nine months as they chose and then used new technologies in their language teaching. Through interviews (individual and group), online discussions, reflective journals, and blogs we explored how teachers worked with and negotiated the shifts required of them. In terms of the first dimension, the longitudinal nature of the inquiry allowed us to trace the ways in which and points at which language teacher identity was dynamic and often unstable. The complexity of those shifts, in moments and across time, was significant, and could not have been predicted: resistance to shifts emerged as equally interesting, entailing different
kinds of identity work. Thus, it was possible to identify the ways in which the language teacher identities were multiple and often conflictual, revealed perhaps most clearly in moments of contingent interaction, or when the unexpected happened when they had to make a choice of how to be and how to act.

In terms of the second dimension, it was also possible to trace how teacher identities were linked to settings and practices related to particular sociocultural contexts. As the tertiary teachers were drawn from three countries (the UK, NZ, and China) and also participated in a shared virtual teacher-learning environment this was evident on a broad scale. Individual teachers had also chosen different tools to work with so we were able to see across the course of the project how their identities were inextricably intertwined with particular tools, settings, and practices. However, for me the most interesting perspective came from looking at the more micro level of context, at small moments of interaction (with learners, colleagues, team leaders, managers, and so on). These moments identified by participants had assumed a particular salience for them and were the source of much reflection. Whether a chance, informal comment from a colleague, a question from a student, or a matter raised in the discussion list, these moments represented points at which a teacher had to do some identity work—again in choosing how to be and how to act. Importantly, key parts of this process included making sense of what had taken place, weighing up options together with the idea of responsibility to themselves as a teacher, a colleague, and so on, and in terms of the identity they wished to enact and maintain (which sometimes meant choosing not to act or not to respond). At this point I came to see van Lier’s perspective in a further light. He made the point that identities are ways of relating the self to the world through iterative cycles of perception, action, and interpretation, and that “when our lives change significantly … new identities (ways of linking the self to new worlds and words) need to be forged that bridge the gaps between the known and the new” (van Lier, 2007, p. 58). This perspective was equally significant when it related to small moments and these kinds of bridging the gap processes were closely linked to both the feeling of what took place (emotion) and teachers’ sense of agency. And referring to the third dimension, we could see identity as being constructed, negotiated, and enacted largely through discourse.

Alex was interested in how several colleagues worked together as a group over many months, and the ways in which their interactions shaped their personal worlds, and also the group identity. The study as a whole was replete with instances of the ways in which teacher identity was envisioned, shaped, maintained, challenged, and negotiated through and across a vast array of encounters, events, exchanges, moments, and relationships, with discourse as central to this. Two further interrelated points are worth noting here. It was evident that the ongoing shaping of teacher identity really required that individual teachers saw themselves as central participants in those processes, that it had to mean something for them, even though much of this work remained largely unconscious, invisible, and little understood—both to the teachers themselves and to others. And in researching
language teacher identity we were careful not to exclude the more problematic
dimensions of teacher identity and identity negotiations that emerged (revealed in
wariness, resistance, a utilitarian approach to others, for example), many of which
were enduring and unresolved at the end of the study.

The significance of sites, actors, and moments

Implicit in these reflections so far is my view that the ongoing shaping of distance
language teacher identity relates to four intertwined processes concerning agency,
emotion, discourse and narrative, and reflection involving critically adaptive
learning. So far I have said relatively little about what I’ve called reflection and
critically adaptive learning, yet it is a recurrent theme in research with distance
language teachers, and is closely related to identity formation in particular settings
(e.g., moderating online discussion lists, providing feedback on assessments,
working within multimodal distance environments, embarking on course design
processes). It focuses on exploring how teachers identify, appraise, reflect on and
work with the affordances of particular environments, and the work they have to
do as teachers at that point; for example, in examining the degree of compatibility
between their personal and professional identities and the possibilities of that
setting. Such settings obviously include interpersonal moments and may emerge as
significant sites for the negotiation of identity and its reshaping through experience.
A key research priority is to gain more fine-grained understanding of the sites and
processes through which teachers engage in reflection and critically adaptive
learning, and the ways this may shift and reshape their identities; the ways in which
identity shifts may be avoided, contested, withstood, or resisted—in moments and
across time—are also worthy of attention. I’ve already referred to sites of identity
formation, including informal workplace learning, moments of conflict or crisis,
and encounters with new settings. It would be valuable to explore further within
distance language teaching the sites teachers identify as significant in terms of their
identity formation, which would also enrich our view of the topographies of the
field. The contributions of significant others in the processes of identity formation
is a further avenue of inquiry. Here, I’m not thinking so much of labeled roles,
though they have their place (e.g., learners, colleagues, managers, course designers,
mentors) so much as the ways in which particular actors come together, the
relations between them (historically and momentarily) and their mutual effects.
Obviously this would entail questions of power and structure.

Further promising areas for future research in distance language teacher identity
include the contribution of emotion and agency to the ways in which teachers relate
their selves to their teaching worlds, and the ways in which identities may impact on
affective experiences and agency. Earlier I emphasized that teacher identity in distance
language teaching involves seeing oneself as a central participant in processes, as
someone who has a stake in what is taking place, or might take place, and who is
willing (and able) to work with the felt experience of distance language teaching in
all its diversity. Exploring this rather less tangible aspect of teacher identity would involve gaining situated reflections on moments of practice and affective experiences, of choices, decisions and actions, and of questions of responsibility, answerability, and awareness of potential outcomes. In my view this is a rather different way of thinking and talking about the work teachers do; it does not involve thinking about skills, actions, goals, professional development, and technology adoption. Rather it focuses on particular moments when teachers are confronted with questions of how to act, how to be as a teacher, how to work with complex emotions, how to mitigate what appear to be more negative circumstances, for example, together with how teachers encounter and understand themselves in those moments.

Directions for future research

I see two broad avenues for future inquiry into distance language teacher identity, together with suggested research questions, methodologies, and tools. The first relates to mentoring, since this is often suggested as a useful practice for teachers new to distance language teaching—yet we know relatively little about how mentoring engages and shapes the identities of participants (mentors and mentees). Possible questions would be:

1. How do teachers negotiate their identities through (and throughout) mentoring sessions?
2. What discursive practices characterize such identity negotiations?
3. How do participants view, and engage with, each other’s identities?

One useful tool would be to explore participants’ interpretations of episodes in mentoring sessions, and how that may (or may not) relate to their ongoing identity negotiations within and beyond the sessions: stimulated recall in relation to particular episodes in mentoring sessions could be used.

In terms of researching agency and emotion in relation to language teacher identity, I think we need to develop more situated perspectives on how agency, emotion, and identity are interrelated at particular moments in specific settings. Thus, I suggest we draw on some of the rich data sets available in virtual environments to explore in a fine-grained fashion interrelated aspects of teacher identity, agency and emotion, and their emergent nature. Questions to guide such an inquiry could include:

1. How do teachers work with emotion and agency in the construction and negotiation of their identities as teachers?
2. How do emergent issues of affect and agency relate to teachers’ identities within particular moments and settings?

To conclude, I suggest that these lines of inquiry be carried out through in-depth analyses of what may be small moments (and discourses), possibly hidden within
the everyday, through which we could come to see more completely the workings of distance language teachers’ everyday lifeworlds and identities.

References


SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITY AND STUDY ABROAD

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Introduction

My interest in language teacher identity stems from my educational background and life experience, both professional and personal. I received my PhD from the University of Toronto (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) with a specialization in applied linguistics and cross-cultural communication. I have teaching and research experience in Canada, the US, Egypt, Oman, Mainland China, Hong Kong, and the UK, and have taught a range of courses in TESOL teacher education programs. At Saint Mary’s University in Halifax, Canada, I was a member of the Faculty of Education and the Director of the TESL Center.

Since 1995, I have been a professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, where I teach undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the English Department and supervise research in applied linguistics/intercultural communication. Nearly all of my students are second language (L2) speakers, and many plan to enter the teaching profession or are already English language teachers. I have supervised several PhD studies that have tracked the L2 identities and professional identity development of student-teachers who participated in immersion programs in an English-speaking country.

My own research centers on language, identity, and intercultural communication, especially in relation to study and residence abroad (e.g., Jackson, 2008, 2010). With the support of competitive research grants, I have been investigating the language and (inter)cultural learning, and “whole person” development of university students who participate in international educational sojourns, including pre-service EFL teachers. Drawing on my findings, I have designed interventions to enhance education abroad learning, including blended and fully online intercultural transition courses (Jackson, 2014). L2 identity issues are a core element in all of my intercultural communication/transition courses.
L2 teacher identity and immersion programs

In many parts of the world, pre-service language teacher education programs are now providing opportunities for L2 speakers to participate in a short-term language immersion program, and some even require it. In Hong Kong, undergraduate English education majors and postgraduate diploma (English education) students spend a month or more in an English-speaking country with the expectation that they will enhance their L2 proficiency and cultural understanding, and become more aware of their values and beliefs about language teaching and learning. After observing ESL teachers at work in classrooms in the host country, the student-teachers are typically prompted to draw comparisons with English language teaching and learning in their home environment. Through this process, it is anticipated that they will become more aware of the challenges, benefits, and limitations of various teaching approaches, methodologies, and strategies. The quantity of reflective elements that are built into these immersion programs varies, ranging from little or no guided reflection to regular debriefings, with differing sojourn outcomes.

The student-teachers who participate in these study abroad programs often have had little or no intercultural contact prior to the sojourn, and their use of their L2 may have largely been confined to formal classroom situations in their home country. For these reasons, many programs arrange homestays with the hope that the participants will be more fully immersed in the host language and culture. Administrators often assume that this housing arrangement will provide more exposure to informal, social discourse and help the sojourners become more familiar and comfortable with the use of their L2 in “real world” social situations. Intercultural interactions and exposure to the host language in daily life can impact their sense of self and perceptions of their positioning in the world. Accordingly, study abroad researchers who track the developmental trajectories of participants in short-term immersion programs or longer-term international exchange programs (e.g., a semester, an academic year) are increasingly paying attention to identity-related issues (e.g., Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodcott, & Brown, 2013; Jackson, 2008, 2010). Naturally, researchers are influenced by changes in the ways that identity and identity (re)construction are conceptualized.

Instead of viewing identity as singular and fixed, most contemporary identity researchers recognize the dynamic, fluid, multiple, and sometimes incongruous nature of this construct. From a poststructuralist perspective, language and sociocultural identities are thought to be co-constructed, negotiated, and modified through language-mediated interactions (Block, 2007; Norton, 2000). Accordingly, the meanings that language teachers attribute to certain aspects of their identity (e.g., age, ethnicity, gender, language, nationality, social class) may alter in some ways after international, intercultural experience. For example, if L2 speakers have been fully immersed in the host environment and actively engaged in critical reflection, they may develop a broadening of their sense of self and feel more intimately connected to their L2. Alternatively, if their preferred identities have
not been respected or accepted by host nationals, the sojourners may become more
nationalistic and feel more distant from the host language. In some study abroad
contexts, postcolonial theories have helped us to understand the resistance and
appropriation of L2 identities, including the positioning of pre-service teachers
who are L2 speakers of English (Morgan, 2004).

Moving away from an emphasis on the native speaker model in L2 teaching,
more researchers are paying attention to the language and teacher identity
development of pre-service and in-service teachers who are L2 speakers of the
language that they are teaching or will teach. Detailed case studies of bilingual or
multilingual L2 teachers or teachers-in-training (e.g., Menard-Warwick, 2008) are
drawing attention to the complex internal and external elements that can impact
identity (re)construction both in the home environment and abroad.

My conception of L2 teacher identity

Identity is a difficult concept for teacher educators and study abroad researchers to
pin down. In the simplest terms, it can refer to a L2 teacher’s self-concept or sense
of self. To complicate matters, through linguistic and extralinguistic performance,
pre-service and in-service teachers may assert different aspects of themselves in
diverse social and cultural contexts and circumstances, whether in their home
environment or abroad.

In line with poststructuralist notions, I view identity as multifaceted, dynamic,
relational, and sometimes contradictory. In some situations, one’s preferred self-
identities may also be contested. For example, L2 speakers who are taking part in
the immersion component of a teacher education program may wish to be viewed
as fluent speakers of the host language but instead are constantly reminded of their
L2 status and “outsider” positioning both in terms of their language proficiency
and knowledge of the host culture. Not surprisingly, this may curtail the
development of their professional identity as L2 teachers.

A central aim of L2 teacher education programs is to nurture a sense of belonging
and attachment to the teaching profession. A professional teacher identity
encompasses beliefs, attitudes, and understanding about one’s roles as a teacher and
is characterized by the use of specialized jargon, communication styles, and world
views. My orientation towards L2 teacher identity development is grounded in my
training as an applied linguist as well as my personal and professional experience,
including my study abroad research that has centered on the multifarious
connections between language, culture, identity, and power relations. For many
years, I taught in TESOL teacher education programs in North America and
during that time I became convinced of the need to embed elements into my
courses to stimulate deeper reflection on self-identities and long-held ideas and
beliefs about language learning and teaching. I realized that the way teachers
perceive themselves influences how they think and act in the classroom. My study
abroad research has reinforced my belief in the importance of critical reflection.
As I have been working in a L2 context for much of my career, I tend to think more specifically about the professional identity formation of student-teachers who are L2 speakers of the language that they will teach. My interest encompasses elements of their identities that are associated with their L2 knowledge and use, including their L2 attitudes, self-efficacy, personal histories as L2 learners, and evolving beliefs about language learning and teaching, especially while studying abroad.

Several of my PhD students have explored or are in the process of exploring the identity reconstruction of pre-service Chinese ESL teachers both in their home environment and in an English-speaking country during the immersion phase of their teacher education program. My own ethnographic studies and narrativized accounts of English majors who sojourned in England prior to becoming ESL teachers have also raised my awareness of the complex connection between language, culture, and power, and the potential impact of host receptivity on the students’ self-identities and degree of investment in language and culture learning (e.g., Jackson, 2008, 2010).

My teaching and research experiences, and those of my students, have strengthened my conviction that it is essential to include a focus on identity in both pre-service and in-service teacher education programs, including the study abroad component. In my view, it is essential to incorporate tasks and activities that require the participants to critically reflect on their language learning history and intercultural/language attitudes, and how they influence their beliefs about L2 teaching and learning. It is not enough to examine language teaching methodologies and second language acquisition theories; my own findings and those of other researchers point to the need to pay much more attention to the identity development of L2 teachers.

**Future developments in L2 teacher identity research in study abroad contexts**

The number of language teachers who are L2 speakers greatly outnumbers those who are L1 speakers so I expect that L2 identity and the cultivation of L2 teacher identities will increasingly be viewed as essential elements in pre-service teacher education programs. In line with current understandings of the benefits of critical reflection, I believe that more student-teachers will be prompted to consider their orientation towards the language they will teach. I expect more researchers to investigate the impact of various reflection-oriented activities on the L2 awareness and identities of participants in language teacher education programs. Further, as more pre-service programs are including an immersion component, more applied linguists will likely track the L2 identity development and professionalization of language teachers in study abroad contexts. As current research findings are pointing to the complexity of L2 teacher identity construction, I expect that more studies will explore the immediate and long-term impact of education abroad on student-teachers’ perceptions of themselves, their beliefs about teaching and learning, and their roles and positioning in the classroom.
As L2 teacher identities are multidimensional, dynamic, and sometimes contradictory, there is a need for more research that draws on and integrates multiple types and sources of data, such as interviews, observations, diaries, questionnaire surveys, audio or digitally recorded interactions, etc. While large-scale studies can track the L2 identity development and professional identities of pre-service or in-service teachers, it is also imperative that more focused, smaller-scale projects investigate identity changes in individuals over time. For example, ethnographic investigations of L2 speakers who are participating in the immersion component of a teacher education program could shed light on the internal and external elements that shape professional L2 teacher identities. Richly detailed case studies and narrativized accounts of selected participants could illuminate the process of identity construction in L2 speakers before, during, and after participation in a teacher education program. Autobiographical narratives of both pre-service and in-service L2 teachers should also be encouraged, with deeper levels of metacognition and reflection promoted in teacher education programs and in-service workshops. Future researchers should also make more of an effort to gather the views of various stakeholders associated with the immersion program (e.g., teacher educators in both the home and host countries). Finally, more longitudinal, mixed-method studies are needed to track identity changes over a longer period (e.g., from the pre-service phase until several years after entering the teaching profession). In all of these studies, more attention should be devoted to theory-building in relation to cultural, intercultural, and L2 identities.

**Directions for future research**

In relation to L2 teacher identity development and study abroad, the following are some of the many topics that merit attention in future studies:

1. The perceptions of L2 student-teachers as future language professionals before, during, and after taking part in the immersion component of a teacher education program;
2. Historical, political, linguistic, and sociocultural elements that influence L2 teacher identity change in study abroad contexts;
3. The role of agency in the process of L2 teacher identity (re)construction on stays abroad;
4. The influence of the observation of language lessons in the host environment on L2 identities and beliefs about L2 learning and teaching;
5. The impact of guided, critical reflection on L2 teacher identity during the immersion phase of a language teacher education program;
6. The immediate and long-term impact of study abroad on the self-identities, imagined teacher identities, and professional development of pre-service and in-service teachers;
7. How L2 teachers construct and negotiate their identities in study abroad contexts;
8. The impact of homestays on the intercultural attitudes, L2 investment, and L2 teacher identities during the immersion component of teacher education programs;
9. The relationship between L2 sociopragmatic awareness, intercultural competence, and the self-identities of L2 teachers during study abroad;
10. How L2 proficiency and self-efficacy (e.g., perceptions of English competency) impact the language teacher identities of L2 speakers and their degree of engagement in the host environment;
11. How L2 speakers perceive their status as L2 teachers to be a limitation or an asset before, during, and after taking part in an immersion program for future language teachers;
12. The role that critical praxis (e.g., guided critical reflection) can play in helping L2 teachers deconstruct colonial notions of native speakerness while in the host country;
13. How L2 speakers can be encouraged to see themselves as belonging to imagined communities of L2 users (e.g., legitimate speakers of English as an international language or lingua franca rather than as “deficient” L2 learners) while participating in a study abroad program;
14. The longitudinal impact of an immersion program on L2 teacher identities (e.g., five years post-sojourn);
15. Non-Western perspectives of L2 teacher identity development on stays abroad;
16. The transnational identity formation of L2 language teachers through study abroad.

References

19

BECOMING A RESEARCHER

A journey of inquiry

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Who I am and what I do

I am Yueting Xu, associate professor at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS) and PhD candidate at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). I started my career as a university English teacher at GDUFS after graduating from the MA program at Sun Yat-sen University in 2005. Over the past ten years, I have conducted research mainly on teacher knowledge and identity. My current research project is on teacher assessment literacy. In this chapter, I would like to reflect on a funded research project on university English teachers’ research practice and identity construction as researchers in which I was engaged from 2011 to 2013. This study provided me with many chances to listen to other teachers’ stories of “becoming researchers,” including narratives of the role of institutional contexts in shaping their identity construction, their engagement with and in research, their research motivations and interests, and their anticipated future research careers. Although the project has been completed (Xu, 2014), the participants’ collective accounts echo in my ears from time to time, as becoming a researcher is a recurring theme woven into my professional life. Thus, the focus of this chapter is a reflection on the central position of researcher identity in teacher professional development.

The centrality of researcher identity to teacher professional development

Identity takes a central position in the field of language teacher professional development mainly because the ultimate goal of teacher education is to help teachers make sense of who they are and what they are doing. The argument I make here is that a researcher identity is central to teacher professional development.
One may wonder, if the fundamental responsibility for teachers is to teach, why they should bother about becoming researchers. In fact, becoming a researcher does not inhibit one from becoming a better teacher; rather, it provides teachers with an endless muse for exploring the possible ways for achieving teaching and learning effectiveness within their classrooms.

Teaching is inherently research work. Classroom life is a complex system that requires research work. To teach well, teachers need to set objectives, observe student performance, analyze their needs and proficiency levels, tailor teaching materials to fit them, design assessment activities to measure learning, interpret evidence generated from assessment, and use it to plan the next round of teaching. Such a small cycle of teaching requires a great deal of research expertise, and facilitating the learning of a cohort of students with diverse backgrounds and language proficiency levels presents a formidable research challenge. Thus, expert teaching performance relies on professional research-based judgment within specific situations rather than the application of rules.

When I started teaching ten years ago, I came to realize that simply knowing about my students was an immense research task, as I needed to collect evidence of who they were, what they (dis)liked, and what they needed to learn. Teaching consists of a series of research tasks that teachers need to get involved in, no matter whether they realize it or not. Regrettably, many teachers have misconceptions of research and, as a result, report that the main obstacle for not reading or doing research is time constraints (Xu, 2014). Such misconceptions, as I see it, stem from their lack of awareness of the nature of teaching as research. If they were aware that teaching is, in fact, research work, they would not separate research from their teaching, but rather see it as an integral part of teaching.

In addition, research focuses teaching less on daily routines and more on exploratory inquiry. Instead of imposing extra burdens, research leads teachers to enter the classroom with unresolved questions in mind. Such an inquiring approach will lessen repetition in teaching and make it a genuinely intellectual pursuit. In my early career, I was assigned to teach the same course to four sections. At the outset, I saw it as tedious repetition. After two weeks, I asked myself: Can I make this less boring? By reading literature on cooperative learning, I discovered an answer. I decided to conduct a small experiment by comparing group dynamics among the four classes. With this inquiry in mind, I keenly observed possible differences in group dynamics. Surprisingly, I found more differences than I had anticipated, such as the levels of student engagement and preferences with regard to assessment tasks. My experience showed that with a researcher’s mind-set, teaching can be an exploration of the complexity of learning and lead to endless inspiration.

Third, research empowers teachers with necessary competence and grants them a legitimate position in justifying their own theories and pedagogical practices. Teachers were once viewed as technicians, defined by particular behaviors, knowledge, and methods. Within this framework, they did not have much to contribute to educational research in the academy, but merely consumed the
theoretical knowledge produced by universities or research centers. By contrast, current conceptual mapping of “teacher-as-researcher” repositions them as generators of knowledge, as teachers can develop new insights based on findings from research-based teaching. The metaphor of “inquiry as stance” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 250) provides sufficient grounding to justify why teachers who are researchers can enable their own enhanced professionalism. Ownership of knowledge will enhance teachers’ self-efficacy and self-esteem, which not only has psychological benefits but emancipatory power as well.

**Identity as perceived roles, negotiated process, and pursuit of membership**

Prior definitions of identity share some keywords, such as multifaceted, relational, negotiated, constructed, enacted, transforming, and transitional. Language teacher identity (LTI), as I understand it, has three layers of meaning. First, it is a combination of a language teacher’s self-positioning of who he/she is and others’ collective conceptions of who he/she is. The two planes of identity, individual and collective, are woven together and inform each other. When a teacher is asked “who are you?” he/she may combine his/her general identity and social identities by saying, “I am a full-time teacher, part-time researcher, full-time mother, and occasional social worker.” Oftentimes, people’s positioning of their multifaceted identity may differ from others’ perceptions of their identity. For example, if students were asked who they think their English language teacher is, they may come up with a wide range of answers, such as “He is a funny person,” or a “helpful guide,” or “caring mentor.” These collective conceptions, although varied, are generated from their day-to-day observations of what the teacher does and says. The gap between one’s self-perceived identity and others’ perceptions may lead to the negotiation of identity work to be discussed below.

The second layer of meaning is that LTI is a continuous process of becoming, which is constantly negotiated with various resources available within certain social, cultural, historical, and political contexts. This definition suggests that LTI is not a fixed entity, but the moment-to-moment production of who the teacher is through enacted practice in specific contexts. The word “becoming” suggests a need for deliberate effort or action on the part of the teacher, during which teacher learning usually takes place. Individual language teachers may have different professional choices about who they want to be. For me, I have been dreaming of becoming a researcher since I was an MA student. The imagined identity of “researcher” attracted me like a magnet. Resources and conditions for my research engagement in my first three years of my career were limited, and I had to negotiate my imagined researcher identity. In addition to a 20-hour compulsory teaching per week, I had no mentors, research community, or even access to many electronic journals. I audited a number of doctoral seminars available at my university, submitted manuscripts to peer-refereed journals to get valuable comments from peer reviewers, and engaged myself in reading research by writing comments in the margins very much like conducting
a dialogue with the authors. These deliberate efforts were compromises made in moment-to-moment negotiations with the resources, conditions, and people within a specific context. In fact, the meaning of identity lies precisely in the dynamics of this negotiation process, during which I became what I wanted to be.

The third layer of meaning for LTI is the pursuit of membership in a community. Identity is inevitably relational, which suggests that individual teachers need to join the community to which they desire to belong. Being part of the community will generate a sense of belonging, which enhances participation and performance. However, becoming a full member of a community is not a straightforward matter, nor is it a guarantee of success (Liu & Xu, 2011). Before being formally accepted by members of the community, language teachers may need to empower themselves with necessary competencies by engaging in relevant activities. Such engagement might take a long time, and many may give up halfway due to a lack of intrinsic motivation (Xu, 2014). Oftentimes, engagement in these activities can only be counted as peripheral participation; to be included in or excluded from the community largely depends on critical incidents (Liu & Xu, 2011). In my own professional trajectory, publishing my first article in an international peer-reviewed journal is such a critical incident that turned me from a peripheral to a full participant in research. Although it is impossible for every teacher to publish in such journals, it is possible for them to disseminate their studies in other ways, such as at a faculty meeting, a local conference, or a webinar. The feedback from real or virtual communities is invaluable for teachers to develop a sense of belonging to the community, which will greatly facilitate their identity construction as researchers, as well as their professional development in its own right.

LTI research: Dark zones needing to be illuminated

Due to the central position of identity in teacher professional development, future developments for LTI research are full of possibilities. I propose the following four areas of research, which are dark zones that need to be illuminated. First, LTI research needs more theoretical framing based upon empirical studies. Currently, a mixture of theories have been utilized as the conceptual frameworks in LTI research, such as community of practice (Wenger, 1998), Bakhtinian theory, and Vygostkian sociocultural theory, to cite a few. Although these theories could, to a large extent, justify arguments generated from LTI research, they were not originally designed for it. What LTI research needs is an exclusive, data-driven conceptual mapping to capture those qualities of LTI that are generalizable across teachers and contexts. To that end, collaborative research across school levels, jurisdictions, regions, and countries is needed, as are methodological innovations concerning how to establish a common analytical framework upon which qualitative data can be retrieved, re-analyzed, and reinterpreted.

Second, LTI research needs to cast attention on the tensions and reconciliation among different identities or sub-identities of language teachers. Teachers may
simultaneously wear many different “hats,” and they may prioritize one identity over another in a specific setting. Therefore, comparisons could be made concerning: (a) how and why teachers prioritize their identities at different times of their professional life spans; (b) how and why teachers working in the same workplace community prioritize their identities differently against the backdrop of certain events (e.g., curricular reform); and (c) how and why teachers prioritize their identities differently when they are alone as individuals and when they are placed in a group activity as community members. Longitudinal and ethnographic studies would be particularly helpful for making such comparisons, which may generate insights concerning the relational and transforming nature of LTI.

Third, LTI research needs to place teacher identity work in relationships. Since teachers are situated in both workplace and personal communities, their identity constructions are, in part, responses to their relationships with others. To understand the generic process of LTI, we therefore cannot isolate it from networking. A holistic view of the identity network is critically important before zooming in on teachers’ identity development. Methodologically, we may need to rely on computer-assisted technology (e.g., data mining) to help us identify these relationships based on vast amounts of data from individuals.

Fourth, LTI research needs to pay careful attention to teachers’ day-to-day practice in a specific area, such as content-based instruction, grading, and lesson planning. The more specific teachers’ work that LTI research focuses on, the more likely that we will understand the intricacies and subtleties of their identity work. In this case, collective narrative accounts using narrative frames would be particularly helpful for examining the identity construction of a group of language teachers in a certain area. Although narrative frames have been used in a number of studies (see the review in Barkhuizen, 2014), narrative corpora could be one step forward to generalize themes from a large number of teacher identity narratives.

No matter which research topics we anticipate pursuing or what research methods we plan to use, we need to bear in mind that the ultimate goal of identity research is not to create “grander” theories to complicate teaching and confuse teachers; rather, it is intended to crystallize teaching and assist teachers in making sense of themselves and their professional lives. The genuine meaning of LTI research is emancipatory in that teachers are able to empower themselves with competencies and efficacy to take on their day-to-day responsibilities in a more effective way. In this sense, LTI research should connect with teachers. Researchers of LTI need to involve teachers not only as research participants but also as researcher partners. Such partnerships will produce win-win scenarios for all parties involved.

**Directions for future research**

Based on the discussions in the section above, I propose the following research topics and related methodologies for the reference of teachers and researchers.
1. Language teacher identity and emotion: Compared to teacher cognition, emotion is an underexplored area because it has typically been associated with words like “feminine,” “sensitive,” and “fragmented,” and thus is considered “untrustworthy.” However, emotions mediate teachers’ cognitions and actions in both their personal and professional lives, and they exert great influence on their identity work. Future research will explore the role of emotion in teachers’ identity work and situate emotion in the conceptual mapping of teacher identity. As emotion is inherently related to one’s personal stories, narrative inquiry would be the preferred approach.

2. CLIL (content language integrated learning) teachers’ identity construction: Along with the trend of CLIL, language teachers are increasingly involved in teaching the subject content in the target language (e.g., English). They face the new challenge of integrating language teaching with instruction of the subject content, and thus may need to develop new expertise in a certain subject area (e.g., medicine, computer science, business, and law). The formation of new competencies is essentially a process of identity construction. Ethnographic research would be particularly helpful for capturing the subtleties of identity formation of CLIL teachers.

3. LTI in social media: As social media permeates teachers’ personal and professional lives, how they project their own images and how these images are perceived in the social media merit more research attention. For instance, teachers’ posts and the relevant interactions with others on Twitter or Facebook could be analyzed through approaches to multiliteracy, such as systemic functional linguistics, intercultural rhetoric, and discourse analysis.

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Identity as a barrier to teacher research

I have been involved in English language teaching for 27 years, spending the first ten teaching in schools before moving into teacher training and academia. When I was a teacher I was never really (made) aware of teacher research—an approach to professional development that empowers teachers to engage in the systematic study of their own practices. However, I have spent a good part of the last 15 years contemplating what teacher research offers teachers and schools, and have as a result become a fervent promoter of the idea. My fervor, though, has always, I would like to think, been appropriately moderated by an awareness that for many language teachers around the world teacher research remains a challenging and not necessarily appealing professional development option. Through my research (e.g., Borg, 2013) I have tried to understand the limited take-up of teacher research and a wide range of factors have been identified, such as unproductive understandings of what “teacher research” is, limited knowledge and skills for doing teacher research, adverse contextual factors that limit teachers’ ability to study their work, and a lack of mentoring to support teacher research. One additional factor that has surfaced in my research but not as powerfully as other factors is the belief (among teachers and school leaders) that research is not something that teachers do. This can be construed as an identity-related barrier, one which can exert a significant influence on teachers: thus, even where teachers have sufficient knowledge, skills, and understandings, if teachers do not see teacher research as part of their identity they are unlikely to engage willingly in this professional development activity. Additionally, where school leaders do not validate teacher research as an appropriate teacher activity, it is much less likely to occur. In this chapter I would like to reflect on these attitudinal obstacles to
teacher research and work towards some suggestions for how they might be addressed and researched in language teaching settings.

**Identity and professional development**

Every teacher accepts unquestioningly the pedagogical dimension of being an educator—for example, no teacher would argue that marking students’ work is not part of their job. Teacher research (and in some cases professional development more generally), though, is often seen as an activity that lies outside the boundaries of teachers’ work. We can thus contrast narrow conceptions of teacher identity, which have an exclusive instructional focus with broader views of teacher identity where professional growth is also a fundamental element. Stenhouse (1975), in his seminal work on the teacher-as-researcher, conceptualized teacher identity of this kind as a form of “extended professionalism,” and it is now clear to me that teacher research often fails to take root because the activity it invokes—systematic self-study—is not recognized by teachers (and teacher educators and school leaders) as being central to their identity. Evidence from my own research supports this claim: in one study (Borg, 2013) 39.5 percent of 696 teachers who were not research-engaged explained this by saying, “My job is to teach, not to do research,” while in another (Borg & Liu, 2013) 28.9 percent of 138 teachers explained their lack of research engagement in the same way.

The limited uptake of teacher research in the field of language teaching can thus be conceptualized not simply as a technical or contextual problem but more deeply as one stemming from teachers’ restricted professional identity. Identities are socially, culturally, and politically constructed (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005) and I will comment here on two forces which explain how teachers come to be guided by identities that limit their professional growth: pre-service teacher education and school cultures.

Pre-service teacher education clearly has a powerful influence on teacher identity. One of its main objectives should be to develop in prospective teachers an extended sense of their professional role, one that includes not only teaching but also ongoing self-directed professional growth. But to what extent does this occur in pre-service language teaching contexts? In particular, upon entry to the profession, to what extent do teachers see themselves as “knowledge generators” (i.e., professionals who can grow through inquiry-based practice) rather than as merely “knowledge implementers” or “knowledge consumers”? My guess would be that in many contexts insufficient support is provided for pre-service teachers to develop the kinds of extended professional identity that underpins subsequent sustained engagement in teacher research. The way teachers position themselves in relation to research is an important element of such an identity and in this respect pre-service teacher education can be a barrier because it will often convey the message to prospective teachers that research is a complex, theoretical academic activity that university professors do.
Many pre-service language teacher education programs do, it must be acknowledged, include courses on topics such as “action research” and these have the potential to contribute to the formation of the kinds of professional identity that support teacher research. However, I suspect that in many cases such courses take the form of research methods classes which are taught by academics with no experience of teacher research themselves; and the manner in which such courses is assessed will often focus on technical issues related to research design and data collection without explicit attention to the implications action research has for teacher identity. So while the inclusion of courses on “action research” on pre-service programs is desirable, I doubt whether they often support the longer-term adoption by teachers of inquiry-based professional development strategies. This is even less likely when the “action research” course is the only time on the pre-service program where prospective teachers are encouraged to think of their role in terms that extend beyond instructional matters. What is needed, then, is pre-service teacher education that supports, in a consistent way across different courses, the development of extended forms of teacher identity that have professional inquiry as a core element.

Schools, too, exert a powerful influence on teacher identity. For example, where teacher-led professional development is not part of the school culture teachers will in time be socialised into a narrow way of defining their identity. And when teachers step outside the accepted boundaries of such an identity, they may face censure, as noted by Allison and Carey (2007), where one teacher (at a university language center) was quoted as saying they were explicitly discouraged by “high ranking members of the university” from “acting like professors and publishing research” (p. 70). School leadership will have a significant influence on the kinds of identity teachers develop; unsupportive leadership will limit the extent to which teachers are able to be teacher researchers, while, in contrast, positive leadership will allow teachers to sustain an extended professional identity in which teacher research is a key strategy for professional and organizational growth (Halsall, 1998). Borg (2015) lists various actions that school leaders can take to support teacher research and to build what Ebbutt (2002) calls an embedded research culture in schools.

Extending language teacher identity

The above analysis of teacher identity conceptualizes it in terms of the range of activities that are seen to be legitimate and central to being a teacher. A narrow view of teacher identity focuses exclusively on instructional matters such as planning and delivering lessons, managing the classroom, and assessing students. These are clearly core activities for teachers and define teacher identity so strongly that most lay persons would be able to identify them as “things teachers do.” However, if teacher research and similar teacher-led, school-based, and inquiry-driven strategies for professional learning are to be embraced by teachers and
schools a broader conceptualization of teacher identity is required, one in which professional development is a key component. Being a teacher, then, is not only about instruction but also about ongoing professional growth and it is vital that this be recognized by teacher educators, teachers, and schools if teacher research is ever to be more widely recognized as a legitimate and valuable activity in the field of language teaching.

Many challenges to this view of teacher identity do of course exist and two—pre-service teacher education and school cultures—were highlighted above. Additionally, though, there are two further considerations that are very relevant when it comes to promoting teacher research. The first is that teachers often do not see “research” as part of their identity because (as I alluded to earlier) they associate research with activities that are not feasibly achievable by teachers in the context of their normal professional lives. Research is thus associated with formal study (e.g., something teachers do when they complete a master’s degree) or with complex, large-scale and resource-intensive studies that full-time academics complete. Unproductive notions of teacher research are also often linked to teachers’ expectations about the kinds of outputs it should lead to. For example, teachers often feel they cannot be teacher researchers because of the assumed requirement that they write an academic paper at the end of their project. But, as I have argued many times elsewhere, there are several formal and informal, and oral and written strategies available to teachers for sharing their work and a formal written report is an option rather than a requirement. There is a clear link, then, between the development in teachers of an identity that is conducive to teacher research and the formation in teachers of productive understandings of what teacher research is.

A second important consideration is that while I would see a commitment to professional growth as a core element of teacher identity, I would not argue that teacher research is the only way of realizing such a commitment. I have no doubts about the transformative potential teacher research has for professional growth, but I do recognize from my experiences of language teaching around the world that professional development priorities vary enormously across different contexts. A core question, therefore, that needs to be asked before teacher research is adopted in any particular context is: Is it an appropriate professional development option for (all) teachers in that context? In many contexts the answer will be “no” because there are more immediate or basic professional development needs (e.g., improving teachers’ language proficiency or classroom management skills) and because the existing culture of professional development and school leadership is too far removed from that which is required for teacher research to become productively embedded in teachers’ work without substantial prior work at higher levels of the system. It is thus important to avoid the naïvety that can often accompany proposals for innovative approaches to teacher professional development; contextual appropriacy must be a vital consideration in such proposals.
Investigating teacher research as identity formation

As I noted earlier, I have explored teacher research from various perspectives in my own projects in order to understand how language teachers construe “research,” the kinds of research they do, and the factors which facilitate and hinder teacher research as a professional development strategy. Teacher identity has emerged, incidentally, as a factor in the work I have done, but there is clearly scope for studying it more specifically. Given the points I have made above, teacher research and its implications for teacher identity, research in this field can be investigated in pre-service and in-service contexts and from the perspectives of teacher educators, prospective teachers, school leaders, and practicing teachers.

Pre-service teacher education is a particularly interesting context in which to study language teacher identity formation. At the level of programs (i.e., all the courses prospective teachers are required to take), analyses of documents and pedagogical activities (including especially the kinds of assignments student-teachers complete) can provide insight into the extent to which identity development is a goal of pre-service teacher education; as noted earlier, the development of the kind of extended professionalism that underpins teacher research is more likely when a concern for teacher identity is embedded in a principled manner in pre-service programs rather than being the focus of isolated courses. So for example, an analysis of the kinds of assignments pre-service teachers are required to complete can provide insight into the kinds of student-teacher learning that is being fostered—subject matter knowledge, general and subject-specific pedagogical skills, personal development, cross-cutting generic skills, classroom research skills, deeper dispositions towards the profession—the latter will be key in preparing extended professionals. Analyses of the perspectives of teacher educators and student-teachers themselves on teacher identity development during pre-service teacher education will also reveal much both about the assumptions and philosophies that guide course design and pedagogy in pre-service contexts and about how student-teachers see their own identities (e.g., what they think the core and legitimate activities of teachers are). A longitudinal element to the study of student-teachers’ perspectives would also provide insight into the nature of any shifts that occur in the way they perceive their identity and into the factors and experiences during pre-service teacher education that trigger such shifts. While there will be scope for quantitative analyses of such issues, qualitative research is likely to be more insightful in unpacking how teacher identity is construed and constructed by all stakeholders in pre-service teacher education.

In in-service contexts, parallel analyses of the perspectives of school leaders and teachers would also be instructive. For example, what vision do school leaders have for the organizational culture they want to create? To what extent is such a culture supportive of teacher research? What elements in school cultures encourage teachers to develop the kind of extended professionalism I have discussed here and, conversely, which elements discourage teacher research? School leaders’ and teachers’ perspectives on such issues would be interesting to examine. I suspect that
in many schools where the cultures are not conducive to teacher research (or to professional development generally), we might find that teachers develop a “collective identity” that promotes conformity in whatever direction the school seems to value. Of course, the same concept of collective identity would also apply in more positive circumstances where school cultures promote teacher research and an extended teacher identity—here too it would be very interesting to study the processes through which teacher identity is created, sustained, and how it extends from individuals to groups. I have worked extensively on language teacher cognition; this notion of collective teacher identity suggests that extending teacher cognition research from individual teachers to groups of teachers has the potential to deepen our understandings of how teachers come to define their identity in shared ways. Langan-Fox, Code & Langfield-Smith (2000) analyze ways of studying what they call “team mental models,” while the work of Breen and colleagues (2001) examined not just individual but collective principles and practices in language teaching. Both of these studies support my view that examining teacher identity collectively can provide valuable understandings of how schools and peers influence the extent to which teacher identity grows to include or exclude teacher research as a legitimate and valuable activity.

Directions for future research

To conclude this reflective piece, following are some suggestions for research on teacher identity that have the potential to improve our understandings of the extent to which teacher research is a professional development strategy that language teachers want to and are able to engage in:

1. How “action research” courses are designed and taught and the impact they have on the development in teachers of extended professional identities;
2. Teachers’ beliefs about whether “research” is a valuable professional activity;
3. Teachers’ beliefs about their role and what it means to be a “professional”;
4. School leaders’ views about the characteristics of “professional” teachers;
5. Tensions between teachers’ commitment to an extended professional role and the pressure to assume a more restricted professionalism that they may encounter in schools;
6. How schools and peers define “collective teacher identities” and how these influence the extent to which teacher research takes place.

References


“THIS LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCE”

Teachers be(com)ing action researchers

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“Wise people from the east”

When I began teaching immigrants as a relatively new immigrant myself to Australia, I quickly realized I knew little about how people actually learn languages. The TESOL diploma course I then enrolled in at a Sydney college (now a university) in the early 1980s was one of the few available. It illuminated new theoretical ideas but also grounded itself in realities for teaching-learning a language oneself, being observed, creating classroom materials, and reflecting on teaching practice. Working then as a teacher in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), in what my contemporaries frequently now refer to as “a golden age,” I experienced numerous hands-on opportunities to discuss, create, and experiment with other teachers, and even to share with AMEP teachers and researchers nationally.

In the early 1990s I moved on to the Commonwealth Government’s newly established National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research for the AMEP as a fledgling researcher and teacher educator, a role involving visiting and presenting to adult immigrant language teachers across a large continent. A critical occasion, which has remained with me since, was at a center in Western Australia (five hours flight from Sydney) with a rather hostile audience, where one teacher voiced what was probably in the minds of all the others: “So what do you academics—you wise people from the east—know about what it’s like to work with our students.” Stopped in our tracks, as we pontificated about current learning theories, learner-centered curricula, and SLA research, my colleagues and I were sent scurrying back east to ponder how our research center could reach out to AMEP teachers inclusively, credibly, but more importantly, with relevance to their work. Among the components of the center’s research agenda (Brindley, 1990) practitioner action research (AR) and its dissemination became
one central tenet, and has since motivated my work with many teachers in Australia and elsewhere.

“My Twitter profile now says English Language Teacher and Researcher”

Language teacher researcher identity (LTRi) research has not been an explicit plank of my research with teachers (but then, when I began my involvement with teacher action research in the early 1990s, there was little language teacher identity research in the field at all). Writing this chapter has deepened my sense that much of my work has, nevertheless, been driven by the “be(com)ing” of teachers as researchers. A large part of my research with teacher researchers, drawing on my own early teaching experiences, has been in the form of collaborative partnerships to develop a mutual sense of community that can potentially extend beyond the group itself to the wider sector where they work; dialogue, reflection, and dissemination are central developmental tools. This approach reflects my belief in the socioconstructivist and dialectic nature of teacher learning, where teacher agency and identity are co-constructed through local lived experiences. During the time I have mentored teacher researchers, a large database of teachers’ reflective comments has emerged, some of which I draw on here.

Gee speaks of identity as “being recognized as a certain ‘kind of person,’ in a given context” (2000, p. 99); others have referred to the multifaceted nature of teacher identity, recognizing it as shifting, dynamic, and socioculturally constructed through contextualized discursive practices (e.g., Miller, 2009). Miller argues that teacher identity is enacted but also “inflected by what is legitimated by others in any social context” (p. 173). Teachers I have worked with frequently refer to their be(com)ing as researchers as a contextualized form of “finding recognition” (or being legitimated) that is personal, but also collegial, and institutional. Personal recognition (see this section’s heading) emerges as an internally constituted actualization of what was perhaps “an impossible dream that came true!”, or a previously only dimly imagined self: “So on a personal level … I believe I have found my passion—and it is teacher research.” Personal recognition is also a highly charged emotional experience, involving “soul searching” to be “more like the objective researcher,” but also being “proud to be researching” and “intensely interested”.

Externally, collegial and institutional recognition are powerful mediators of teacher researchers’ self-identity. They give considerable positive or negative valence to their image as researchers. Negative collegial evaluation erodes LTRi—it creates tension, but is contestable: “It was difficult to get any recognition from colleagues. The idea that there was research in progress … was comical. Never stopped me though!” Alternatively, positive evaluation accelerates teachers’ growing awareness of being viewed in a different light by colleagues: “I’m now seen as the ‘go-to’ person for advice about PD [professional development] and research. I’m so happy to have that role in my institution.” Recognition by teacher
colleagues beyond the institution is also highly significant in LTRi construction: “Presenting to colleagues around the world [who said] ‘You have motivated me—I think I will look into doing research.’ That you can’t buy!”

Similarly, the extent institutional structures recognize and utilize teacher research affects self-concept: “I feel that I was regarded in a different (positive) way by my students, colleagues, and management.” When managers incorporate teachers’ research outcomes into institutional curricula, LTRi is further consolidated: “The program is in the process of becoming part of the general curriculum, largely based on our research.” In contrast, lack of take-up at the institutional level can seriously discourage teachers from sustaining and expanding their LTRi over time and also reduces the sense that they are valued as teachers (see Christenson, et al., 2002): “I felt like David taking on Goliath.” My earlier practitioner work with the AMEP showed strong evidence that when “teachers’ voices” are heard and their research is recognized there is also a major impact on curriculum and professional development.

These are initial personal musings on LTRi in the trajectory of my own research; however, my discovery of an almost complete lack of research on LTRi construction offers much food for thought. In the following sections, I develop some of the themes.

“A bit of a roller coaster”

This quote from a teacher I worked with two years ago, reflecting recently on her experiences of LTRi construction, led me to ponder on the meaning of “roller coaster” and what images people invoke when they apply it to LTRi experiences. The first roller coasters were the “Russian mountains,” slides constructed on steep hills of ice around St Petersburg in the seventeenth century. In Scandinavian languages, the roller coaster is called a “mountain-and-valley railway.” A roller coaster’s movement occurs in a dramatically changeable manner because of tight turns, steep slopes, inversions, loops, and corkscrews built-in along a track that is not always a complete circuit. Blocks and accelerations characterize the progress of a roller coaster, which hurtles along at different speeds and causes riders to be exhilarated and terrified at the same time. Roller coaster riders are strapped into their seats; so they are restrained but also subject to unpredictable external propulsions. Roller coasters may not have enough kinetic energy to complete their circuit, so riders might find themselves rolling backwards (or valleying) and even coming to a complete stop in mid-track.

What has this description got to do with LTRi construction? The roller coaster image seems to vividly describe the unpredictable terrain and variegated processes of
identity construction of a language teacher researcher. Teachers who volunteer to do research, as in the case of teachers I work with, have sometimes described themselves as “jaded,” “bored,” or “stale.” They seek “improvement,” “a new way of doing things,” and “a new lens for viewing teaching.” In essence, they are looking for professional thrills and find research that is personally relevant and localized to be “stimulating,” “enlightening,” “rewarding,” “reinvigorating.” They are often in the process of being recognized by themselves and others as a particular kind of (courageous) person, attaining a new nomenclature that entails a recognizably different status: they convey a “thirst” for research and for being “noticed” for doing research. For most being a LTR is not, however, something that has ended—the track is still in the process of being traversed: “I’m ready for more research.” It is still for some “a daring journey” that could be very “scary” and “frustrating,” or even reach a dead end: “I haven’t really done any more AR as such.” Connections with others in “a daring journey” that can transform the classroom into “a playground” are keenly felt as central elements in LTRi construction: “a great learning curve with people who have the same interests,” which provides emotional support: “I am not alone!”, and is a “useful foil to ‘teachers as islands’ and practitioner isolation.”

Numerous comments of this nature since my early AMEP days of puzzling how to engage teachers meaningfully in research have persuaded me that LTRi is anything but fixed. Rather it is a process, a trajectory, a state of be(com)ing. I have used the term be(com)ing throughout this chapter, because it seems to serve the dual notion of developing, emerging, or evolving into a new identity (becoming), as well as occupying, populating, or inhabiting a particular personal and social place (being). Be(com)ing a language teacher researcher means dwelling in two interrelated spaces that are more often than not in a state of complex and unstable tension, between one’s role as teacher and role as researcher, which seems to further disrupt the notion of “sameness,” of cohering towards the state of being a particular persona, inherent in the word “identity.” Research on what these identity tensions might mean for teachers who become teacher researchers is still very much an unexplored (roller coaster) track.

“When you become a researcher you begin to question everything you do”

While there is a now a substantial amount of research on language teacher identity construction, there is little on what it means for a teacher researcher. A recent search by Yuan, Lee, and Burns (under review) found that “research on how school teachers construct their identities through AR … is almost non-existent.” Two recent exceptions are Banegas (2012), using a personal researcher journal to consider the (confl icted) internal and external relationships between his own LTRi and those of teacher-researchers he mentored in an Argentinian secondary school, and Xu (2013), using narrative frames to explore the LTRi construction of Chinese university EFL teachers.
To avoid the tendency of much previous LTRi research to dwell on the cognitive, primarily through written or verbal data (Beijard, et al., 2013), future LTRi research could broaden into socioconstructivist and ethnographically oriented paradigms. Adopting the sociohistorical lenses entailed in narrative and personal knowledge research—narrative frames (Barkhuizen, 2014), life history/life cycle, (auto)biography, and auto-ethnography—would enable rich understanding of the personal and localized nature of identity construction and illuminate historical, cultural (including ethnic), social (including gendered), political, material, and emotional dimensions that constitute recognition “as a certain ‘kind of person’” in contexts of identity enactment. Multimodal methods combining narrative and visual methods, such as drawings, photos, pictures, and collages (see the recent call by AILA http://www.aila.info/en/15-front-news/195-the-use-of-visual-methods-in-language-studies.html), would create innovative ways of examining LTRi, particularly if they allowed for exploration of meaning through interactive researcher-participant uses of technology. Research from the theoretical perspective of complexity theory also offers considerable promise. Complexity theory holds that systems are emergent—ranging over time scales—and therefore dynamic, open to change, subject to perturbation, negotiation and disequilibrium, and interact with other elements within the system. Complexity frameworks can potentially further illuminate the multiple, shifting, and discursive nature of LTRi construction.

Directions for future research

Research findings on LTRi construction show it to be a bumpy ride, but the scant empirical evidence to date means possibilities for new lines of study are wide open. Specific topics that could shape initial investigations and possible key questions (PKQs) for each topic follow:

1. Identity construction of pre-service teachers as researchers.
   PKQs: How do PSTs construct identities (a) as teachers, and (b) as researchers? What are the relationships between these roles?
2. Interactions of identity construction of in-service teachers (IST) and mentors working together.
   PKQs: What are the identity experiences over time of IST researchers? In what ways are ISTs facilitated by mentors in their identity construction as researchers? What identities are constructed by mentors of IST researchers?
3. Impact on identity construction of learner involvement in teacher research.
   PKQs: What identities are constructed by learners working as co-researchers with teacher researchers? What is the influence of learner involvement on teacher researcher identities?
4. Teacher researcher identity construction and the institution.
   PKQs: What role do teachers’ institutions play in their identity construction as researchers? What challenges exist for teachers in constructing researcher identities within their institutions?
5. Sustainability of teacher as researcher identity.

PKQs: What factors enable teachers to sustain their identities as researchers? What facilitates and what impedes sustainability? What identity trajectories do teacher researchers exhibit over time?

Several of these topics and questions might best be researched through mixed methods (e.g., survey + observation/interview); some could be investigated longitudinally using qualitative approaches such as autobiography, narrative research, life history, auto-ethnography, or even through collaborative action research/exploratory practice itself. Introspective and retrospective researcher journaling could accompany data collection, as could tools from new technology, such as e-groups, email, blogs, wikispaces, using synchronous or asynchronous facilities.

What seems very clear is that it is now time for me (and others) to take another rocky ride on a roller coaster, as we extend our horizons about LTRi construction.

References


TEACHER IDENTITY IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

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Introduction

I grew up in New Zealand and then left for PhD studies in Canada (Quebec), following which I have pursued a career in TESOL in the Asia Pacific Region for over 40 years (Indonesia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Hawaii, New Zealand). My experience during this period has been both as a university teacher and senior academic (teaching, researching, and publishing in areas that included applied linguistics, teaching methods, curriculum and materials design, and teacher education) as well as a writer of both academic books and classroom texts. My understanding and approach to the role of identity in teacher learning has developed during this time as a response to several issues: my own experiences as a language learner, learning French and Indonesian as an adult; my experience as a university teacher and author, in which I see my role as presenting knowledge and theory to teachers in a way that helps them develop their sense of professional identity; and my work with teachers who are both “native” and non-native English users, and for whom teacher development involves issues of identity.

My focus in this chapter is on the role of identity in the education and professional development of second language teachers. Teacher learning is seen to involve the adoption of a teacher identity, a process that involves an interaction between the teaching and learning processes of the teacher-education learning site and the individual teacher’s own desire to find meaning in being a teacher.

Language teacher identity in my work as a teacher educator

I like to think that my work as a teacher educator also reflects my experiences as a language learner. My first experience of learning a foreign language (French) was
in a strictly method-based course using the audiovisual method, where we as learners were totally subjected to the dictates of the method and assumed to bring no relevant knowledge or experience to the classroom. I found this offensive—as reflective of the “learner as idiot” syndrome. It began to raise concerns for me about the kind of identity methods define for both teachers and learners and how the learner’s role in the classroom is constrained by the underlying principles of the method or of the teacher’s belief system. The dominance and appeal of the novel methods of the 1980s led to the book *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (Richards & Rodgers, 2014), which sought to deconstruct the popular methods of the day and to identify assumptions they made about the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom and the identities attributed to them by the method.

A second focus of my professional work has been the curriculum of courses in second language teacher education at both the undergraduate and graduate level. My interest here has been prompted by an attempt to understand the kind of knowledge and skills that can best provide a source of teacher learning for language teachers and that can help them develop a secure identity as language teaching professionals. In writing books or articles for an audience of novice or experienced language teachers my focus is normally, “how will knowing this help them better understand or respond to issues they face as teachers?” In other words, in what way will it contribute to the development of their professional identity as language teachers? My most recent attempt to provide a professional knowledge base for teachers is my book *Key issues in language teaching* (Richards, 2015), which took some 800 pages to make its point!

As a teacher educator with a long involvement in programs for novice as well as experienced teachers, another interest has been on what it means to “become” a teacher, either through taking a graduate course or through classroom teaching experience. For the experienced teacher returning to graduate school to take an MA course as well as for the novice teacher starting out in teaching, issues of identity become central. For the experienced teacher, becoming a learner again raises the issue of what learning means in this context. For the academic, the issue becomes: What does teaching mean here? In the case of the experienced teacher in a graduate program, the teacher’s identity and its impact on his or her beliefs, thinking, and practice, have long been established. The role of teacher education is to provide the conceptual as well as procedural skills that can be used to examine one’s own beliefs and practices. In my work, that has led to a focus on critical reflection as a way of exploring issues of identity and other issues and to examine how identity is reflected in the core principles that provide the basis for a teacher’s practice. For novice teachers the challenge is to reposition themselves from their identity as student-teacher to that of classroom teacher. I see the practicum and internship as crucial in helping novice teachers manage this transition. This has been the focus of a number of articles and books, such as *Practice teaching: A reflective approach* (Richards & Farrell, 2011) and *Professional development for language teachers* (Richards & Farrell, 2005).
Most of my professional work has been with teachers for whom English is a second or foreign language. They typically vary in terms of their levels of proficiency from those with restricted English skills to teachers with advanced levels of proficiency. The identity-related issue here relates to how they view English in relation to their own identities as English language teachers. What does the “idea” of English mean to them, and who does English belong to? What does it mean to be a “native speaker” of English? This leads to a focus on the nature of English as an international language and an examination of the teachers’ views of their own as well as their learners’ English and of other Englishes. This has implications across a range of courses in the teacher education curriculum, including those on English grammar and phonology, curriculum and materials design, as well as assessment.

How I understand teacher identity

I understand teacher identity as something that is both individual as well as social in nature. On the one hand it reflects who the teacher is, the teacher’s view of self and how he or she is positioned in relation to other people. This is not a fixed or static orientation since it is also shaped by the social context, by those he or she interacts with and the activities he or she is taking part in. Thus, I think one can distinguish between the teacher’s personal sense of identity, a professional identity, and a social identity. These aspects of identity are reflected in answers to questions like these.

**How do I see myself as a teacher?**

At one level this can be understood as referring to the teacher’s “role” in the classroom, for example as a model, a facilitator, a manager, a motivator, and so on. Role here implies a set of relations and styles of interaction and communication with learners. Roles also make assumptions about power and control. How are roles negotiated with a new group of students? How do learners see my role in the classroom? An activity I have used with teachers when exploring the notion of role is to observe videos of lessons and to have the teachers try to characterize the teacher’s role in the lesson and to give examples of how it shapes the development and features of the lesson.

Another aspect to this question has to do with the teacher’s values. This means thinking about the following kinds of questions: What does teaching mean to me? What caused me to want to become a second language teacher? Do these reasons still exist for me now? What does it mean to be a teacher? Is the teacher I am the person I am?

**What are my core principles and where do these come from?**

Some years ago I observed three teachers who were pilot-testing a unit from a textbook project I was working on. Each teacher used the materials very differently, and when talking to them after the lesson I was struck by the extent to which each
lesson reflected different principles the teachers believed in. For example, for one
teacher the lesson strictly followed the map of the unit and he kept bringing the
lesson back to the material. The principle he believed in was “Follow the syllabus.”
For another teacher the unit was a springboard to make connections to the students’
lives. The principle she followed was “Personalize the material.” The third added a
game that he had devised, which he justified by referring to the principle “Make
learning fun.” The concept of “principles” led me to explore this further and resulted
in a TESOL Quarterly paper on what I called “teachers’ maxims” (Richards, 1996).

In working with teachers I continue to include a focus on identifying the core
principles teachers teach from, where these come from, whether they have changed
over time, and how they reflect the particular context in which they work (e.g.,
teaching young learners versus teaching adults). Much of this exploration takes
place through narratives or journal writing, and much of it relates to identity work.

Where am I in my professional development?

I think teachers have an “idea” of what excellence in teaching means and what
their imagined self as a mature fully developed teacher would look like. There are
a number of different components of development here that contribute to the
teacher’s sense of professional identity. Two in particular I would include here are:

Language proficiency. For teachers whose English is perhaps at the intermediate or
lower intermediate level (this would probably constitute 80 percent of the world’s
English language teachers), having an excellent level of ability in English,
particularly spoken English, is a visible marker of their professional identity as
English teachers. Consequently, language improvement is often cited as a priority
by teachers I work with. In my experience, teachers generally know what their
language strengths and weaknesses are and often compare their English with those
of other teachers they work with.

Content knowledge. When they begin their professional training, student-teachers
soon realize that there is a vast amount of knowledge related to the field, some of
which they will need to master; hence the demand for online courses and other
sources of easily accessible knowledge and information.

Future developments in identity in language teacher education

I am particularly interested in the notion of teacher identity as it relates to teacher
learning in the context of graduate and undergraduate programs for TESOL teachers.
Traditionally, a central issue in developing courses of this kind has been on the nature
of the content knowledge found in such courses and how best to deliver content. The
assumption is that well-selected and well-presented content will somehow “transform”
participants into the kind of teachers the program envisions. A focus on teacher
identity raises a different issue, that is, how teacher development can become part of
the process of renegotiation of teacher identity. From this perspective, teacher learning
is seen as influenced both by the identities teacher-learners bring to the classroom with them as well as by the discourses and activities that shape the practices of teacher education. Teacher learning becomes a process of negotiation as identities are clarified, challenged, and reimagined (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Central to understanding these processes of teacher learning are learning as situated social practice, induction to a community of practice, development of a new identity, acquiring a professional discourse, and developing a theory of pedagogy (Singh & Richards, 2006).

Teacher learning involves not only discovering more about the skills and knowledge of language teaching but also what it means to be a language teacher. Identity seems to play a special role in teaching, as compared with other professions. Nias (1989) suggested that self-image appears to be more important to teachers than to those in occupations where the person can easily be separated from the craft. Nias implies that there is an intricate relation between teacher identity and teacher knowledge. Teacher-learners construct their identity through the unfolding social interaction of a particular situated community, within the specific activities and relationships in context.

Classroom-based teacher learning and development is viewed as participation in a longitudinal experience during which the teacher-learner’s identity can be reshaped as both knowledge and experience are critically examined and theorized. Teacher identity and the community of practice in the course room are mutually constituted through participation. In this light, critical questions are: What sort of teaching and what kinds of learning experiences are needed to initiate the processes of teacher development? More fundamentally, what are these processes? And how do teacher-learners negotiate their identities during a teacher-education course in relation to its particular activities and relationships?

Research methodologies appropriate to questions of this kind include longitudinal studies of teachers’ participation in courses, classroom studies of the nature of the interactions and discourse that constitute classroom practice, learner accounts of their learning through case studies, diary studies, and narratives. For example Martha Pennington and I undertook a year-long study of five novice teachers who had completed an undergraduate TESOL degree, during their first year of teaching, in order to explore how the identities that had developed during their initial teacher education experience were impacted by the realities they faced when working as full-time teachers in Hong Kong classrooms. The teachers were regularly observed and took part in a series of interviews and conversations throughout their first year of teaching. In another study, I followed five teachers throughout a certificate teacher training course and monitored their developing understandings of themselves as teachers and how this shaped their teaching practices.

**Directions for future research**

The field of teacher learning in language teaching is relatively new and many core issues including that of teacher identity have been relatively under-researched until recently. The nature of identity as a construct lends itself to a variety of qualitative
research approaches including observation, interviews, diary studies, narratives, biographies, and analysis of critical incidents—procedures that can provide insights into the nature of teacher identity and how teacher identity is shaped by individual and social factors (Danielewicz, 2001; Pennington, 2015). I look forward to further research on the following issues:

1. How teacher identity relates to other core dimensions of teacher knowledge and understanding.
2. How teachers’ identities are influenced by the content and practices of TESOL teacher education courses.
3. How issues related to teacher identity can best be addressed in teacher education courses.
4. How different teaching contexts create different identity issues for teachers.
5. How identity issues can be resolved by teachers.
6. The challenges faced by TESOL teachers who are not “native speakers” or fluent speakers of English and how their proficiency in English influences their developing identities as English teachers.
7. How learners from different cultures of learning participate in the classroom practices of the TESOL course and the nature of the identities they bring to the TESOL course room.
8. How teachers’ identities in teacher-education courses are influenced by new modes of online teacher education.

References

Beliefs and identity shifts

As a teacher educator, I have been researching and writing extensively on teachers’ and learners’ beliefs about language learning and, more recently, on how they relate to other constructs such as identities and emotions. Thinking about beliefs and identities started early on in my research trajectory.

After majoring in English Teaching Education in Brazil back in the mid 80s, I had this belief that I had to sound “native” (whatever that meant) and had to have an “American” or “British” accent (at that time, other varieties of English did not even exist in my belief system). It was thanks to an American visitor that I began changing this belief and, to some extent, my identity as a language user and teacher. I confessed my frustration to this American visitor: “I don’t have an American or a British accent,” to which he wisely replied: “What’s wrong with a Brazilian accent?” Ten years later this reflective exchange became the trigger to explore the role of this belief in my identity in a very personal paper (Barcelos, 2003). Writing about it helped me come to grips with my belief, and thus, opened a different world for me with possible identities as an English user, rather than a handicapped non-native speaker searching for the “native accent.” Of course, this change did not happen overnight. It was a process. Reading seminal articles in applied linguistics on non-native speakers (such as Cook, 1999) and also pursuing a PhD in the USA opened my mind and helped me re-signify this belief at that time, and thus, experience some shifts in my own identity as a language user, teacher, and researcher.

After telling this episode to illustrate the relationship between beliefs and identity, in the remainder of this chapter, I examine the place of identity in language teaching, as related to my teaching and research experiences. I define
language identity and explore some topics for language teacher identity in the field, and conclude with suggestions for further studies.

On becoming a language teacher educator: Beliefs, dilemmas, and identities

Coming back to Brazil after having completed my PhD, I started working as a teacher educator responsible for a language teaching practicum and supervising student-teachers majoring in English Teaching at a federal university. I started seeing how the beliefs of some of my students had shaped their fragile identities as English teachers, engendered by the socioeconomic context and the status of English and English language teaching in Brazil. I started seeing how identities are related to our experiences in the world. In this organic relationship between individuals and the environment, in which we both shape and are shaped by others’ evaluations of our behaviors, we form ideas about our identities based on what others think of us and how they treat us. Thus, language teacher identity is formed in this ongoing process grounded in our interpretations and reinterpretations of all our experiences, and especially our past, present, and future learning and teaching experiences.

As a language teacher educator, I was (and still am) constantly trying to understand my students’ beliefs as well as my own and to know the source of those beliefs and how they shape their self-images as future teachers. In my first years as a language teacher educator I became aware of this new identity of mine. Teaching student-teachers, I began to face dilemmas between my own beliefs and theirs. This became the topic for yet another self-study paper in which I looked deeply into my own beliefs and identity now as a language teacher educator (Barcelos, 2001). That paper was “an autobiographical attempt to come to terms with my own identity as a language teacher and to become more aware of my beliefs about my role as a teacher” (p. 78). In that study, I looked into how my students’ different beliefs affected my self-perception as a teacher, as well as my emotions and frustrations related to some of their comments. As pointed out by Barcelos (2015) and by the studies outlined in Kalaja, Barcelos, Aro, and Ruohotie-Lyhty (2015, Chapters 8 and 9), teachers’ beliefs are related to their emotions. In addition, teachers’ positions in different contexts may influence their identities. In other words, being a novice or expert teacher in a school or university may trigger certain beliefs and emotions, which will certainly influence the kind of identities we construct in interaction with students, colleagues, parents, and supervisors.

In short, language teacher identity is central in teacher education and teacher learning. It is embedded in teachers’ contexts; their practices in the classroom and their relationships with students, colleagues, principals, supervisors, and parents. In a macro context, our identities are also tied to social class, to the political context and to the sorts of ideologies and beliefs about English language teaching in different parts of the world. Language teacher identities are also constructed by how teachers relate to what they read, what sense they make of research and
methodology articles, and how they identify with them, or not. In addition, some of their beliefs, acquired earlier and more related to their emotions, are central to their identities. The more central a belief and more connected to their emotions, the more influential it is to their identities. I began to see the interrelationship of these three concepts to which I now turn.

**Identities as emotioning and believing**

Writing about my own trajectory, dilemmas, beliefs, and identities as a language teacher educator (Barcelos, 2001) helped me see how beliefs, emotions, and identities are related. Writing about beliefs in my PhD helped me see how they are intrinsically related to questions of who I am in this world and what I believe about it. We are what we believe and our beliefs make us who we are. We are attached to some of our beliefs and tend to resist abandoning them for fear of losing our identities.

Becoming a teacher means developing a new identity for oneself. It is one of the main issues in language teacher education: How does one help learners to become language teachers? More specifically in my own context in Brazil, how can we help some English learners who are not highly proficient to see themselves as teaching that language? For the longest time, language teacher education studies have tried to understand what makes language teachers language teachers. In other words, what is it that language teachers do that identifies them as language teachers? In that sense, how are their beliefs about language, learning, and teaching re-signified (or not) in a language teaching education program? More importantly, what roles do emotions and beliefs play in the construction of language teacher identities?

It was only in 2009, while on sabbatical in Canada, drawing on insights from the emotional turn in applied linguistics, that I started to delve deeper and try to understand how identities are related to emotions and beliefs. As suggested earlier, language teacher identity is related to beliefs and emotions. They are overlapping co-constructed concepts. Language teacher identity is a complex and ongoing process. It is formed by beliefs (or tacit theories, lay observations), emotions, and experiences (personal, work related, cultural, professional, among others). It is constantly being shaped and reshaped by our interactions with others (and our interpretations of these interactions and experiences). In this sense, identities are dynamic and multiple, as are beliefs and emotions; they are a tool we use to make sense of ourselves as teachers. Language teacher identity is multiple, fragmented, and dynamic; identities are constructed from emotional aspects of teachers’ lives (Day & Kington, 2008) and from interactions between personal, social, and cultural experiences, and the institutional environment.

Emotions are inextricably tied to teachers’ identities and have an essential role in understanding teacher thinking, reasoning, learning, and change. Teachers’ identities are influenced by how they feel about themselves and their students. Emotions are significant aspects of identity formation and vice versa. Like identities, emotions are also performative, that is, the ways in which teachers understand,
experience, perform, and talk about emotions are highly related to their sense of identity (Zembylas, 2005). In short, identities and emotions are closely related. We are shaped by our emotions and beliefs, and these in turn shape the kinds of identities we construct for ourselves.

**Future developments in teacher identity**

So far, I have been exploring language teaching identity in relation to my own trajectory, first as a student and newly graduated teacher, and then as language teacher educator. As a researcher on beliefs and emotions, I would like to see more studies that relate language teacher identities, beliefs, and emotions. Applied linguistics is blooming with studies on emotions, positive emotions, and positive psychology. In that sense, it would be important to investigate how these emotions contribute (or not) to language teachers’ identities and any resilience they may show in difficult contexts. It would also be interesting to see studies that investigate both teachers’ and students’ identities and how they relate to each other.

In terms of research methodology, I have used mostly written narratives and interviews. Most studies on language teacher identity are qualitative, interpretive studies that use in-depth interviews, diaries, visual narratives, and focus groups, to name a few. Written narratives have been the most widely employed method so far. More recently, visual narratives have been used by a group of researchers (Kalaja, et al., 2015). Both written and visual narratives allow for teachers to tell their own stories and understand themselves, giving us a glimpse into how experiences, emotions, and beliefs have shaped their identities. Diaries are a very useful tool, though hard to collect, at least in my context, since teachers have such a heavy load of work that they usually do not have time to write them.

One type of study not used very much in applied linguistics, which I believe could be more utilized, are auto-ethnographies. Most studies have focused on student-teachers’ and on students’ identities. However, we need to walk our talk. If we want student-teachers to reflect on their identities, beliefs, and emotions, we—teacher educators—also need to investigate our own identities, emotions, and beliefs. Thus, I believe this field would benefit from investigations focusing on teacher educators’ identities, emotions, and beliefs and at the same time taking into account culture, social context, and ideologies.

So far, I have talked about methodology in terms of the kinds of instruments we can use. But it is important to talk about teaching as well. I believe teacher narratives can be used by teacher educators to understand their student-teachers’ identities. I have been working with teacher narratives for quite some time in my language classes. I believe writing can serve as catharsis and as a trigger for reflection for both students and student-teachers to become aware of their own beliefs and emotions and their self-images as learners and teachers. Thus, in my English and language teaching practicum classes, I always start by asking students to write their language learning/teaching histories and sometimes analyze their own or each other’s
histories. I believe it is important to involve students in the analysis of their own language learning histories. More recently, I have also started asking them to do collages and visual narratives (following the suggestions of Kalaja, et al., 2015) of how they see themselves as language learners or teachers and the kinds of emotions they feel when speaking or teaching the language they are learning. These are great tools to help them uncover their beliefs and emotions and understand their own identities better.

**Directions for future research**

Even though some researchers may see the field of identity as saturated and claim that it has been researched for so many years, I believe this is such a foundational concept in our field that I only see room for more growth and more discoveries that will help us unveil even more about this complex concept. Thus, I suggest the following topics for future studies:

1. Auto-ethnographies of language teacher educators about their own identities and the issues that emerge in their identities as they teach and as they research student-teachers’ identities;
2. Identities of teachers of languages other than English (there are not many studies available that focus on Portuguese as a mother tongue and as a foreign language, for instance, nor about Spanish teachers in Brazil, just to cite a few examples);
3. More longitudinal studies of the kind reported in Kalaja, et al. (2015) in which student-teachers are followed during their first and later years of language teaching education;
4. How beliefs, emotions, and identities are related in in-service and pre-service teachers’ practices;
5. Brazilian teacher identities in different contexts where English is taught (regular schools, private language institutes, and universities);
6. How the literature in TESOL and in applied linguistics have helped shape (or not) teachers’ and teacher educators’ identities, emotions, and beliefs.

**References**


Grappling with the inevitable tensions in language teaching

Language teachers inevitably grapple with tensions in their teaching. This has been a fundamental theme interwoven in my thinking and activity as a language teacher educator and as a researcher of language teacher cognition and development. When I embarked on the research adventure known as a dissertation some time ago, I focused on how teachers managed their tensions; the conflicts they experienced regularly in their teaching and interactions with students, in terms of their personal practical knowledge (Golombek, 1998). And as my thinking and activity as both a teacher educator and researcher has been deepened through my engagement with Vygotskian sociocultural theory, I have adopted the more explanatory constructs of dissonance and contradiction to signify the kinds of tensions teachers experience within themselves, as well as between themselves and students, and other actors and goals located in the teaching environment. My contemporary work thus continues this focus on grappling with tensions by exploring how teachers’ emotional and cognitive dissonance in response to classroom activity points to contradictions in feeling, thinking, and doing that can be mediated to promote teacher development (Golombek & Doran, 2014).

As an experienced teacher educator, I have grappled with my own emotional and cognitive dissonance. I have used that dissonance to identify contradictions between the intentions behind and the consequences of the concept(s) of teacher identity embedded within my beginning teachers’ engagement in professional development activities. In this chapter I weave together my personal and professional story by describing how dissonance and contradiction served a pivotal role in my own development, and more importantly in how I work to support the development of language teacher identity. Because addressing contradictions can
uncover the identities that we claim and those that others position us as, I now concentrate on providing opportunities for beginning teachers to design instructional practices that support their ideal concepts of teacher identity. In both my practices as a language teacher educator and researcher, grappling with identity is an inevitable, yet demanding, element of developing as a language teacher.

**Grappling with my false promises of developing teacher identity**

I have spent the majority of my professional life with beginning language teachers—with American and international students in the MATESL program at the Pennsylvania State University for 11 years, and with American undergraduates in a TESL Certificate Program I co-designed at the University of Florida for the last seven. In my experience, beginning teachers typically have ideal conceptions of their teacher identity, both who they think they are and who they want to be, and struggle to enact their identities concretely in their classroom practices for several reasons. A main reason is that they, unsurprisingly, have not developed the requisite subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and instructional techniques, nor engaged with that knowledge and the techniques in a range of sustained, goal-oriented teaching opportunities necessary to align a particular identity with instructional practices. Another reason is that the identities advocated and supported in language teacher education programs are often not the identities expected in the institutions where beginning teachers experience their first teaching in the practicum.

When I first began integrating teacher identity into my practices as a language teacher educator and researcher, I was drawn to poststructuralist concepts of identity. This was influenced by my work in the MATESL program at Penn State with American students, many who had taught abroad as a result of their native-speaker privilege, and with international students, many with university degrees in English education but considered “deficient” speakers of English. My conception of teacher identity at that time was influenced by a desire to combat the dirty lie that is an insidious pillar of the language teaching profession throughout the world—if you speak a language, you can teach it. I thus adopted a poststructuralist construct of teacher identity in my practice for political aims—I included reading of and reflective activities in response to theories and research challenging the privileged position of the native speaker and offering alternative, more validating, and community-building identities. I also positioned teacher/teaching expertise as crucial in developing teacher identity for American and international students alike.

Over time I grasped, as a result of Vygotskian sociocultural theory transforming my understanding of and work with beginning teachers, how ineffectual it was merely to introduce alternative identities and have teachers re-story experiences. From a personal standpoint, it felt as if I were doing something unethical by making a false promise of teacher development through a new identity but not intentionally creating the instructional opportunities and resources to enact it. My experience
was that though teachers might articulate alternative, supposedly empowering identities, this change in conceptual understanding did not mean a change in instructional practice. From a professional standpoint, my teaching activity resulted in the kind of empty verbalism that Vygotsky (1986, p. 150) warned against, a superficial mimicry of concepts rather than transformed thinking through which a teacher, for example, could develop instructional practice congruent with that new identity. I also felt the reverberation of one of my participant’s comments (Golombek & Jordan, 2005)—roughly paraphrased as “so what if I have an identity of multicompetence if the world doesn’t see me that way.” Vygotsky’s ideas were playing out in my professional life in a way that I could not yet explicitly articulate, and my feeling and thinking about teacher identity was wandering that twisting path of development Vygotsky (1987) described. My own emotional and cognitive dissonance about how I was conceptualizing language teacher identity in my teacher education practices interrupted my activities as a researcher of teacher identity for some time.

At the same time, my work with experienced teachers at Penn State and the University of Florida, and in workshops throughout the United States, Colombia, Mexico, and Chile highlighted how experienced teachers also face contradictions when enacting teacher identity. A main reason in many cases is that larger sociocultural, historical influences powerfully control who teachers can and cannot be. Because teachers will inevitably face challenges to their identities, contradictions between their ideal concept and the concrete realities that shape and embody their everyday teaching worlds, teacher educators need to maximize opportunities for beginning teachers to anticipate these inevitable tensions and design instructional activities for located teaching contexts that address both claimed and positioned identities appropriate for those contexts.

Grappling with language teacher identity through identity-in-activity

My own emotional-cognitive dissonance about the empty verbalism underlying my practices as a teacher educator targeted at developing language teacher identity helped me pinpoint the contradiction in my thinking and activity—I was not creating opportunities for teachers to develop teaching practices congruent with their identities. Grappling with that underlying contradiction by fully embracing the interface between teacher identity and classroom practice facilitated my own development as a teacher educator and researcher through an alternative construct of teacher identity—identity-in-activity (Cross, 2005)—that resonated with me intellectually, professionally, personally, and emotionally. My conception of language teacher identity is now grounded in a Vygotskian sociocultural theoretical perspective. I find Cross’s characterization of teacher identity as identity-in-activity to be invaluable because of how it unites the many dichotomies so central to a sociocultural theoretical perspective, for example, the personal and social, the ideal...
(in the mind) and the concrete (in activity), and the diachronic and synchronic. The construct of identity-in-activity allows for analysis of a teacher’s microgenetic activity as the teacher, or (1) subject in a classroom, or activity system, in cultural historical activity theory (Engeström, 1987), which involves (2) a community of students, administrators, other teachers, parents, and others; (3) certain rules in the classroom; (4) meditational means, or tools or artifacts that are used and that mediate thinking and activity; (5) division of labor, different statuses of community members resulting in different opportunities and constraints, and (6) shared object of teacher and students motivated by a need. Each of these features of an activity system is shaped by personal, sociocultural, historical, and institutional factors. What Cross’s construct allows for is a two-part but interconnected analysis of a teacher’s ideal identity and how it plays out in the class, and how that teacher is positioned by others. Simply put, a microgenetic analysis of a teacher in a classroom involves what the teacher and students do in the classroom and why they do it; in addition, a macroanalysis involves how teacher identity in a specific context has been discursively constructed by larger sociocultural, institutional, and historical forces. And this is where contradictions between a teacher’s ideal and concrete identity, as well as claimed identity and positioned identity, can be exploited for teacher development.

My adoption of the concept of identity-in-activity, my development as a language teacher educator and researcher, has been deeply shaped by the mentoring of one teacher in particular, Patrick, as he engaged in systematic self-inquiry concerning his teaching of grammar to advanced English as a second language students (Golombek & Klager, 2015). Patrick’s emotional and cognitive dissonance concerning what he and his students were doing in his grammar class was a catalyst for his self-inquiry, through which he identified the contradiction he faced between the identity he claimed—facilitator of communication—and the identity he felt his students positioned him as—the “grammar inquisitor.” By exploring how grammar can be addressed in genre-based approaches to teaching through the image of “synergy,” Patrick was able to address his frustration and develop an identity and instructional approach that harmonized both his and his students’ objectives. This is not meant to suggest that identifying contradictions between claimed and positioned identities will inevitably lead to resolution of the contradiction and happy endings. Rather, it speaks to the complexity of developing teacher identity within the learning-to-teach experience and against the sociocultural, historical, economic influences and interests within educational institutions. Teacher identity as expressed through identity-in-activity has provided a tangible construct through which my teachers and I can navigate the complexity of teacher identity and focus on praxis.

Imagining the future of research on language teacher identity

What future developments I see for language teacher identity research are rooted in the interface between teacher identity and classroom practice that I have highlighted, investigating the role of contradictions between identity and activity,
and how teacher educator mediation can facilitate the aligning of teacher identity and activity. Though my instructional and research context tends to be with beginning teachers, I expect my suggestions can be modified for experienced teachers as well, and encourage readers to consider them in terms of their own teaching environments.

We know that the development of language teacher identity involves an array of factors such as developing basic instructional skills and pedagogical tools; subject matter expertise and the pedagogical content knowledge to teach that subject matter; and self-understanding of what the teacher values and aspires to be. If we accept the premise that the development of teacher identity is a sustained process of learning to teach with real students in actual teaching, then examining the development of teacher identity within longitudinal studies, especially within language teacher education programs, is necessary in the progression of this research. Most research, Kanno and Stuart (2011) being a notable exception, takes place within the most logistically feasible research context: a one-semester course. This longitudinal avenue of research also means looking at the kind of systematic, cohesive teaching activities in which beginning teachers are engaged over however long the teacher education program may be. Being able to chart the identity-in-activity of a teacher from day one to graduation has the potential to enable teacher educators to gain insights into beginning teachers as individuals, and determine short- and long-term objectives for each teacher, that is, to provide the responsive mediation that individual teachers need. More importantly, research needs to examine language teacher educator mediation of and with beginning teachers in these activities to enable teachers to identify and expand their conceptual identities, design curriculum and teaching practices congruent with those identities, as well as develop the subject matter knowledge to enable teachers to design that curriculum and teaching practices. Special attention should be given to narrative activities given the role that narratives play in facilitating teacher self-inquiry, expression of identity, emotion and cognition about teaching, and making sense of identities—claimed, positioned, ideal, concrete, and imagined.

This chapter has proposed that one way to push teacher/teaching development of expertise is for teacher educators to cultivate beginning teachers’ abilities to identify their ideal and claimed identity concepts, as well as positioned identities; then, teacher educators can engage teachers in collaborative or self-inquiry as a resource to address contradictions that emerge between identities by building their teaching practices that support a claimed identity. There is much to explore here, especially in terms of the role of teacher self-inquiry alone or in collaboration, in terms of how the external-social is also implicated in shaping teacher identity and whether and how teachers conform to and resist how they are positioned. Using narrative methods was shown to be a useful approach in the teacher Patrick’s case (Golombek & Klager, 2015). How teachers can use narrative inquiry-based approaches to professional development to enhance their teacher identities and teaching activity represents a broad area of future research. The use of identity-in-activity in developing language teacher identity
and using identity as a resource in enriching an educational environment suggests much to explore as well given the power of identities assigned by larger sociocultural, political, and economic discourses to shape what teachers do within a particular instructional context. Activity theory can be used as both an analytical tool for understanding a particular context (e.g., Cross, 2005) and for transforming the material conditions, or activity, of that context. How researchers along with teachers could use identity-in-activity and activity theory, for example, to change the conditions of a particular context to enhance teacher satisfaction and student learning, is a compelling yet daunting area of research.

Directions for future research

If we embrace the assumption that language teachers will inevitably grapple with their identity at various points during their professional lives, a research agenda emerges that focuses on the longitudinal aspects of contradictions that emerge for teachers, mediation of those contradictions, and development of language teacher identity by addressing those contradictions.

1. How does sustained, cohesive participation in teaching experiences of varied types over the span of a language teacher education program promote the development of beginning teacher identity-in-activity, claimed and imagined identities, and teaching practices that are congruent with those identities (teaching expertise)?

2. How can teacher engagement in systematic self- and/or collaborative-inquiry practices foster the development of teacher identity and teaching practices that are congruent with identities?

3. How can teachers’ identification of how their students shape their identities-in-activity promote language teacher development?

4. How can language teacher education prepare beginning teachers to identify and address the inevitable contradictions that will emerge once a teacher enters a specific teaching context, especially in terms of broader language-in-education policy or curriculum development discourses? How can we assess the consequences of this professional development focus on teachers and teaching (e.g., teacher satisfaction and student learning)?

5. How can beginning teacher agency be cultivated by developing their abilities to identify and address their identity-in-activity?

6. How can systematic identification of teacher identity-in-activity in a specific local setting change the material conditions of that setting to enhance the teaching and learning experience of teachers and students alike?

Although we as teachers, teacher educators, and researchers may instinctually dread having to grapple with tensions, dissonance, and/or contradictions concerning teacher identity, the potential to develop professionally lies within that process of
grappling. Understanding that grappling through theory, specifically Vygotskian sociocultural theory, has helped me to deal with the complex, seemingly intangible, aspects of language teacher identity. I have been able to unify my feeling, thinking, and doing of teacher identity in my practices as a language teacher educator by understanding identity as being mental and material, individual and social, and diachronic and synchronic, as *identity-in-activity*. This unity concerning identity as a language teacher educator has likewise shaped my thinking and doing as a researcher of teacher identity. It is through those tensions—the inevitable dissonance and contradictions—that I expect to continue to grow as a teacher educator and researcher.

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SITUATING AFFECT, ETHICS, AND POLICY IN LTI RESEARCH

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Introduction

April 28, 1997. I remember it distinctly as if it was just yesterday. A newly minted English teacher in Singapore, I joined Hwa Chong Junior College and began my career working with high school students. Indeed, I felt blessed being placed in a good school with a first-rate physical infrastructure. More importantly, however, I had supportive colleagues and was situated within a national education system that sponsored 100 hours of professional development for every teacher each year. With Mervyn Blake, an avuncular Briton as my mentor teacher, I found myself comfortably apprenticed into the vocation. Two years later, I returned Mervyn’s favor by mentoring new colleagues, first as the level head and then as the acting department chair. It wasn’t until 2003, however, that my formal role as a teacher educator began. Having earned a Master of Education at Harvard, I worked with pre-service primary and secondary teachers at the National Institute of Education (Singapore). I did this full time while completing my Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics at the same institution. Following a brief disruption to pursue my PhD in second language acquisition (SLA) at Madison, Wisconsin, I returned to teacher education in 2010, when I joined the faculty at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California. In the Department of Linguistics and Languages at Michigan State University, I continue to work with a range of students who include undergraduate pre-service K-12 teachers from the College of Education and future tertiary TESOL and foreign language instructors pursuing their graduate degrees in TESOL and second language studies. My 18-year career trajectory in education has convinced me that language teacher identities are constantly evolving and are developed through pedagogical practice. Such a development, as I will elaborate in this chapter, is also decidedly an affective and ethical enterprise that is shaped by educational policies.
I am often hard-pressed when asked to describe what I do for a living. Over the years, I have come to describe myself as an educational linguist who works in three areas: SLA, TESOL, and education. My engagement with these overlapping fields, as exemplified by my graduate education (an MA in Applied Linguistics, an M.Ed., and a PhD in SLA) and my service to various professional organizations (American Association for Applied Linguistics, American Educational Research Association, and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), have convinced me that teacher identity development does not take place solely within the individual teacher; rather, it occurs in relation to the larger social context within which the teacher is embedded. Even mainstream SLA, which traditionally has focused on the cognitive processes of language acquisition, has begun to recognize the limitations of investigating individual differences such as age, aptitude, and anxiety in isolation of the social milieu of learners. Given the importance of the social contexts of learning, language teacher identity researchers interested in examining constructs, such as teacher anxiety, would need to study it in relation to broader social processes. Encouragingly, there is a growing trend in SLA to examine the language acquisition dynamics surrounding learners. That language learning is seen as a multifaceted phenomenon is instantiated in The Douglas Fir Group (2016), who underscore that language development is shaped by myriad factors that exist on multiple (micro, meso, and macro) scales.

Building on the Group’s transdisciplinary and scalar approach to language learning but applying it to examine teacher identity development, my work with Bonny Norton (De Costa & Norton, forthcoming) adopts an ecological approach to investigating teacher identity. Specifically, we recognize the need to account for the semiotic, cognitive, and social factors that underpin how teachers develop their professional identities. In embracing such an inclusive and comprehensive stance towards studying teacher identity, we not only build on the growing body of work on teacher identity but also attempt to bridge the second and foreign language pedagogy and SLA divide that has emerged in applied linguistics (Ellis & Shintani, 2013); while the former strand often focuses on language teaching processes, the primary focus of SLA has been the study of language acquisition processes.

In my own pedagogical practice as a teacher educator, however, I have attempted to narrow this divide between pedagogy and acquisition by continually reminding my novice teachers that learning and teaching are inextricably linked.

To ensure that they reflect on the links between learning and teaching, I have my students across all levels—undergraduate through doctoral—articulate what they understand by language, language learning, and language teaching. In particular, I inform them of the need to be consistent in how they view all three constructs. Put simply, all three elements need to be aligned with one another. The example I often give my students is that if they see language as a set of semiotic resources, in all rationality language learning and language teaching should then
entail the development of semiotic resources. After having them reflect on what constitutes language, language learning, and language teaching, I lead them through the following cyclical process.

Step 1: articulate a philosophy on teaching;
Step 2: design lesson plans that enact their teaching philosophy;
Step 3: refine their lesson plans so that these plans and their actual execution of these plans are aligned with their teaching philosophy; and
Step 4: revisit and revise their philosophy after more teaching has taken place.

The above cycle is executed in the hope that my students eventually develop a coherent set of teaching practices because to me, having a sound philosophy and pedagogy are integral to language teacher identity development.

My view of language teacher identity

As noted, a teaching philosophy that is anchored in sound pedagogy and enacted through classroom practice constitutes the bedrock of a language teacher’s identity. In other words, a teacher’s identity is not merely something that exists in the mind or explained elegantly on a piece of paper in the form of a well-crafted teaching philosophy statement. Rather, teacher identity needs to be performed and manifested through good instruction. Thus, we shouldn’t just have to read about a teacher’s identity; instead, we should be able to see it come alive through instruction as the teacher interacts with her students in either a physical or virtual classroom. In particular, how such a practiced identity is borne out in the classroom is shaped by and constituted in three things: affect, ethics, and policy.

Given the interpersonal nature of teaching, teacher identities inevitably bear an affective dimension. Put differently, affect plays a key role in shaping a teacher’s identity because she needs to be sensitive to the needs of her students and ought to create a classroom environment that is emotionally safe for them. Because greater attention is generally given to classroom management and the intellectual development of students, the emotional aspect of learning and teaching is often overlooked. To ensure that they develop an awareness of the importance of affect in language learning and teaching, I have my student-teachers explore the lived sociolinguistic realities of their students by having them (the teachers) become novice ethnographers. Specifically, they are tasked with finding out about the language learning histories of their students. Doing this not only makes them aware of any emotional issues that their students might encounter in learning a language, but also informs them about how they can harness the resources that disengaged, anxious or traumatized students may bring to the classroom. At the same time, I also acknowledge that teachers themselves may be the subject of a gamut of emotions, which may range from frustration to jubilation. In light of this classroom reality, I make a conscious effort to teach them how to manage their emotions in the face of adversity.
A crucial and related facet of teacher identity is teacher reflexivity, or what Hawkins and Norton (2009) describe as *critical praxis*. Underlying such praxis, I would add, is the need for teachers to carry out their teaching in an ethical manner so that all students are made to feel empowered in the classroom. To help my novice teachers build democratic classrooms, I have them brainstorm and research ways to enact culturally relevant sustaining pedagogy that builds on their students’ resources. This may involve having their students talk and write about topics with which they are familiar so that these topics can subsequently become the medium through which their language skills are developed.

Increasingly, however, teachers find themselves having to negotiate policies that are seemingly out of their control. These policies can originate from the state or their own institution, resulting in contexts where tough and often unpopular pedagogical decisions may need to be made. Thus, a crucial part of teacher identity development involves being educated about how to interpret these policies and being able to negotiate the policies in ways that enhance the learning experiences of students (Menken & García, 2010). In my own teaching practice, I demonstrate to my novice teachers how to interpret policies and more importantly work around seemingly punitive policies so that they can become agentive language policymakers themselves in their respective classrooms. Furthermore, they receive first-hand experience with language policy negotiation through the service learning components of my courses.

**Reimagining LTI research**

On a programmatic level, I see teacher identity expanding its presence in applied linguistics, TESOL, and education programs. While I don’t anticipate an entire course to be dedicated to teacher identity, I foresee that teacher identity will become an increasingly popular topic of discussion and object of study in undergraduate and graduate courses. For example, the topic of teacher identity can be woven into these courses by having case studies discussed in class. Alternatively, post-practicum debrief sessions with pre-service teachers could be centered on how a teacher’s philosophy is aligned or conflicts with her actual classroom instruction, which could be video recorded and analyzed in a constructive manner. These critiques, which are placed in the portfolios of individual teachers, could then be examined over the duration of the degree course in order to illustrate how their professional identity develops over time.

Given the affective turn in teacher identity research (Benesch, 2012), I also predict that more teacher identity researchers will examine how teacher emotions influence their professional development. Further examination of the affective dimensions of teacher development is timely in light of mounting challenges encountered by teachers as they navigate technological developments and neoliberal-oriented policy changes. For example, researchers may study the impact on teachers’ emotions as they respond to escalating demands to upgrade their
digital literacy and technological skills. Alternatively, the scope of research may also include the impact of mandated standardized testing and calls for greater accountability on teacher affect.

On a more positive note, and in line with the notion of the expanding need for teachers to engage with policy, more research on how teachers exercise their agency may become the subject of investigation. One way to effectively examine the intersection of teacher identity and policy is to carry out an ethnography of a language policy that is implemented at the micro (e.g., classroom interactional), meso (e.g., school), and macro (e.g., societal) level. To this end, the scalar approach to teaching and learning advanced by Suresh Canagarajah and me (De Costa & Canagarajah, 2016) affords a useful and theoretical lens for tracing teacher identity development over time and space. This approach is also consistent with the ecological perspective of The Douglas Fir Group (2016) discussed earlier.

In view of the growing commitment to ensure that social justice within education is preserved, I foresee more research being conducted on how ethical dispositions are cultivated among pre-service and in-service teachers. This research would include studying teacher efforts to reduce educational disparities within the classroom and investigating attempts to enhance teacher reflexivity. Greater scrutiny will also probably be paid to the ways in which such research is conducted in light of recent calls to promote humanizing (Paris & Winn, 2013) and ethical (De Costa, 2016) research. Thus, on a methodological level, more attention needs to be directed to protecting student and teacher participants involved in researching teacher identities so that no harm comes to either party. Going beyond anonymizing teacher identities when reporting research findings, future LTI research would also need to examine how researchers give back to their teacher collaborators. In addition, investigative efforts would also focus on the researchers themselves, who are inevitably implicated in the research process, and the ways in which their own identities may change while collaborating with their teacher participants.

**Directions for future research**

Moving forward, LTI researchers may want to explore:

1. Identity in relation to working with undocumented students and how teachers exercise an ethics of care when working with this distinct group of learners;
2. Identity in relation to working with study abroad students whom they accompany and how teachers address issues that may arise during these overseas assignments;
3. Different identities that teachers may adopt when teaching hybrid courses and examine if and how their identities change in accordance with the physical and virtual educational setting;
4. How teacher identity evolves when a teacher who receives pedagogical training in her second language but ends up teaching a language that is neither her L1 nor L2;
5. Teacher identity across several social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) as they use various Web 2.0 tools simultaneously in their instruction;
6. Auto-ethnography in conjunction with other methodological tools (e.g., classroom observations, teacher evaluations) to study teacher identity.

References

Becoming a teacher educator: A personal perspective

In this chapter, I look at the issue of language teacher identity through the lens of second language teacher education. When we were invited to contribute to the collection, Gary Barkhuizen exhorted us to write the chapter from the perspective of our own personal experiences and perspectives, and also reassuringly added that “you do not have to be an expert in LTI research.” Accordingly, I have sought to produce a reflective piece, rather than to skate through the burgeoning literature on language teacher identity and teacher education.

I fell into language teacher education in much the same way as many teachers fall into language teaching—by accident. In the 1970s, after finishing postgraduate degrees in ELT and curriculum design, and working in one of the top private language institutions in Britain, I took a position as a junior lecturer and an EAP curriculum developer/materials writer at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. When I decided to return to Australia to embark on a PhD, I sent off a flurry of job applications from Bangkok to Australian tertiary institutions. Only one replied, offering me an interview. Against the odds, I got the position as the founding head of a to-be-established graduate diploma in the teaching of ESL to adults. Audaciously, I accepted the offer, even though I was so far out of my depths, that I could barely see the shoreline. I had less than ten years’ experience as a classroom teacher, although the experience was extremely varied. In short, I felt a fraud, if for no other reason than the majority of my students had much more experience than I. I view identity as the construction of a sense of self (selves) through interaction, so it is based in no small part on my interpretation of how others see me—which is not the same as how they actually see me. My professional identity was shaped through my experiences as a language learner, teacher, teacher educator, researcher,
and author. Through my work, I was initiated into numerous communities of practice, each of which added layers of complexity to this professional identity. As a teacher educator, my identity has been shaped by working in a wide range of contexts and cultures, my twenty years as an online teacher educator, and the in-service teaching I do working with non-native English-speaking teachers in association with my ELT textbooks.

The place of language teacher identity in language teacher education

As a teacher educator, one of my major roles is to enhance the self-awareness of my teachers-in-preparation as professionals. There are several dimensions to professionalism that are relevant to language teacher identity. The first is an aspiration to maintain standards of practice, the second to contribute to the knowledge base of the field, and the third to advocate for the profession.

Performance-based standards of practice are fundamental to the notion of professionalism, which is not to say that they are immutable and unchanging. This is the case for any profession. In language teaching, the development and promotion of standards of practice is generally carried out by professional associations, such as TESOL International, and in many educational jurisdictions such standards are a prerequisite for certification.

The notion that teachers could, and even should, contribute to the knowledge base of the field is more problematic. Not infrequently, teachers taking master’s degrees query the requirement to do courses in research methods. They complain that they are practitioners, and reject the notion of teacher-as-researcher. My response is that even if they are not interested in doing research themselves, they have a responsibility to read and critique the research of others in an informed way. Advocacy, I would argue, is another characteristic of professional practice although, again, comparatively few teachers see this as an aspect of their identity. Again, as a teacher educator, I have a responsibility to make teachers aware of the need to advocate for the profession.

The issues of self-direction and autonomy have always been prominent in my work, initially as a teacher, and subsequently as a teacher educator. If we are to advocate learner autonomy as a desirable goal on the grounds that we cannot do the language learning and communicating for our learners, then it would be inconsistent not to see teacher autonomy as a characteristic of language teacher identity. This is a view I have written about extensively in books and articles.

The issue of language teacher identity is particularly salient for the teacher who is not a native speaker of the second or foreign language being taught. Language teachers have a unique relationship to their subject because it is both the medium and the content of instruction. Identifying oneself, or being identified by others, as a less than competent user of the language they are teaching, can pose professional challenges that are somewhat different from those faced by, say, a teacher of
mathematics, who is teaching the subject in a language other than her first. In terms of teacher education, there is a shift in focus away from a deficit model of instruction to the notion of the resourceful teacher: in other words, focusing on and building upon what novice teachers do know about, and can do in the language rather than on what they lack (Freeman, Katz, Le Dréan, Burns, & Hauck, 2013).

Conceptualizing language teacher identity

Although I was not aware of the label at the time, the concept of identity underpinned my struggle to master the Thai language when I lived and worked in Bangkok in the 1970s. In order to get beyond a survival level in the language, it was important for me to identify with the target culture. I quickly realized, however, that my identity as a member of the Thai-speaking community was contingent upon the mutual recognition and acceptance by the Thai community, a recognition and acceptance that was not readily given. It was through interaction that my identity was formed.

This experience illustrates several key aspects of identity. The first is that linguistically the construct identity is arrived at through a process of nominalization: a process (to identify with) is turned into a thing (identity). Secondly, the individuals and groups we identify with can be conceptualized in cultural or subcultural terms. Identity and culture are mutually co-constructed through interaction, as I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. Thirdly, our ability to identify with a culture or subculture will be constrained, if not determined, by the other members of the cultural groups to which we aspire. It also needs to be recognized that we have multiple identities and belong simultaneously to multiple cultural groups. These are constantly evolving and morphing, and are frequently in conflict.

Metaphors for language teachers, and the roles they entail, are also closely related to identity. For example, the teacher as technologist, that is the transmitter of knowledge versus the creator of opportunities for learning, entail very different identities for both teachers and learners. Although roles and identities overlap, they also differ in that we can, metaphorically, “step out of role.” Identities are more complex and, in some ways, more insidious. We can, and do, switch roles, from “technologist” to “creator,” from “instructor” to “parent,” to “friend,” depending on the pedagogical demands at any given time. Our identity as a language teacher is more stable, and therefore more difficult to change. In fact, we may only become aware of our identity when it is challenged. However, language teacher identity will often reveal itself, if not to us then to an astute observer, through what we say and do. In her work on teaching style, Anne Katz (1995) identifies different teacher identities based on their self-reports in interviews and what they reveal through their classroom interactions and discourse. She presents case studies of four of these, and captures their professional personas in the following metaphors: the choreographer, the earth mother, the entertainer, and the “professor.”

As a teacher educator, I try to facilitate the process of identity formation and development with both pre-service novice teachers, as well as practicing teachers.
undertaking graduate degrees through a range of reflective activities such as getting them to name a metaphor that captures their teaching style, and then having them articulate the teaching principles underlying the metaphor. Other procedures include critical incident analysis, keeping and analyzing reflective journals, peer observation, and feedback on teaching. For novice teachers who are often looking for recipes for classroom survival, I stress the importance of evolving their own personal learning styles and practices, and to articulate these in the belief that identity develops and is revealed through professional discourse.

**Future developments**

In this section, I will outline some of the trends that I foresee in language education that will have an impact on language teacher identity, and will consequently carry implications for language teacher education. Actually these developments are already in place and have been for some time. They overlap, are interrelated, and are largely driven by globalization, an increasingly interconnected world, and the emergence of English as a global language. David Crystal locates the genesis of this emergence in the middle of the last century, although it could be argued that the seeds were well and truly sown a century before that. From my perspective as a teacher, teacher educator, researcher, and author of academic books as well as English language textbooks, the impact has been profound. English as a lingua franca has not only become an important tool for communication between speakers of other languages, these speakers have wrested ownership of English from its “traditional owners” and transformed it in the process. This, in turn, is in the process of transforming pedagogy, for example in the challenge to traditional bilingual education to plurilingual models and translanguaging practices. These trends have major implications for language teacher identity. (For an alternative perspective on the global sweep of English, see Kubota, forthcoming.)

The other major factor that is in the process of transforming education in general, and language education in particular, is technology, which is ubiquitous, and whose impact has not yet been fully comprehended. In the innovation jargon, as a teacher educator, I was an early adopter of technology. In the 1990s, as Senior Academic Advisor to GlobalEnglish (now Pearson Business English Solutions) I worked with teachers, curriculum developers, and materials developers who found that they could not simply transfer face-to-face classroom skills to online learning but had to transform their practices and redefine their identities. Managing the learning process (for example, giving feedback or disciplining inappropriate behavior) simply cannot be carried out in the same way as the management of face-to-face classrooms. In the 1990s, I also established the first fully online masters program in TESOL for Anaheim University, and 20 years later I still teach on the program. As with language teaching, online teacher education could not be done simply by transferring skills from the classroom. While face-to-face instruction has certain advantages over virtual classrooms, the reverse is also true. The potential of
non-linearity, the ability of students (both language students and teachers-in-preparation) to access information and develop skills autonomously, the ability to connect with other students globally, sophisticated learning management systems for teachers, and blended learning are just a few of the features of online learning that are changing education in fundamental ways. As a result, teachers and teacher educators have little choice but to redefine roles and identities.

Other developments that have implications for language teacher identity include an explosion in the teaching of English and other languages to younger learners, the re-conceptualization of language learning in terms of the development of twenty-first-century competencies, and new pedagogical approaches including language learning beyond the classroom, translanguaging, and a re-conceptualized approach to content-based instruction, are also going to transform language teacher identity and challenge our work as language teacher educators.

**Directions for future research**

Although theoretical and empirical studies of identity in language teaching have been around for some time now, interest in the area has been growing rapidly in recent years. The impact and implications of this work for language teacher education is also beginning to find its way into the literature (Nunan & Choi, 2010; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Based on the terrain covered in this brief chapter, and drawing on my own particular interests, a range of substantive areas and issues suggest themselves. The following questions are, I think, particularly worth pursuing.

How do trends in pedagogy and practice affect language teachers’ identity, and what are the implications for language teacher education? These days, to coin a cliche, the only constant is constant change. This is certainly true of education, which, in the last twenty years has been dramatically shifted on its axis with the internet revolution, which has challenged my own identity as a teacher and forced me to re-evaluate what it means to be a teacher.

In terms of non-native-speaking teachers, how do self- and other-perceptions of their language proficiency affect their professional identity? Given the fact that up to 80 percent of non-native-speaking teachers of second and foreign languages have, at best, an intermediate level of proficiency in the language they teach, the effect this has on their professional identity is highly pertinent.

To what extent does acceptance into a community of practice legitimate a teacher’s sense of professionalism? The concept of communities of practice is gaining traction in education, and is a natural fit for the theme of this volume. Studies exploring the nexus between membership of communities of practice and language teacher identity would usefully augment existing studies into communities of practice in general education.

In terms of research methodology, my own bias is towards naturalistic investigations including qualitative case studies, auto-ethnographies, narrative inquiry, critical incident analysis, life history interviews, diary studies, and the like.
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My professional identity and socialization as a Canadian applied linguist

I began my career as an English language educator and teacher educator in Canada and then continued my teaching in Korea, Japan, Hawaii, China, and California before taking up my current academic position in Canada more than twenty years ago. In addition, I conducted research on English language education in Hungary in the late 1980s and early 1990s. I subsequently had responsibilities for the education and supervision of teachers of languages other than English as well, such as French, Mandarin, Spanish, Japanese, German, and Korean, and curriculum for teaching those languages within our province. For most of my career, however, I have been involved in graduate education and research related to the teaching, learning, and use of heritage, second/foreign, and indigenous languages both inside and outside classrooms. Much of this research and teaching over the past two decades has concerned different aspects of second language (L2) education, socialization, and learning in multilingual contexts (Duff, 2012a) and, increasingly, in transnational contexts as well. One dimension of this research is teachers’ and students’ social, cultural, and linguistic identities.

Whereas much early research examining identity in second language (L2) learning and education focused on learners’ individual or group identities (e.g., Norton, 1997; see review in Duff, 2012b), Yuko Uchida and I were among the first wave of applied linguists to examine L2 teachers’ identities (Duff & Uchida, 1997) in our article titled “The negotiation of teachers’ sociocultural identities and practices in postsecondary EFL classrooms.” A few other articles and short essays about teacher identity appeared concurrently, particularly connected with race and, as in our article, teachers’ status as native versus non-native speakers of English.
Language teacher identities and socialization

My previous research on teacher identity

How do teachers’ identities affect their beliefs and classroom practices, and vice versa? In our own (independent) experiences as English teachers in Japan in different decades (and, in my case, in various other Asia-Pacific contexts as well), Yuko Uchida and I observed how teachers of different racialized, ethnic, gendered, national, and linguistic backgrounds, and with different kinds of expertise and experience (e.g., as Japanese-English bilingual teachers of English, and/or as self-described grammar specialists, monolingual expatriates, feminists, environmentalists, entertainers, or counselors), were being positioned in distinct ways by their institution, colleagues, students, and society. Their own agentive choices and convictions also differentiated them. Similar to my experience in the 1980s, the young white foreign teachers enjoyed many privileges as English teachers in Japan unavailable to their Japanese colleagues, and were expected to teach differently from their Japanese counterparts as well. The expatriate teachers were expected to teach conversation and (American) “culture” in a lighthearted, informal manner, using games, pop culture, and current events discussions. Some of these practices were resisted by one of the teachers because they did not align with her identity as a serious expatriate teacher concerned about contributing to cultural imperialism. Grammar, in that institution, was to be taught by the (highly proficient) Japanese teachers in a somewhat more traditional manner—an approach that sometimes met with opposition from “fun-seeking” students who had previously been in the American teachers’ classes and expected more of the same.

We observed in this multiple case study of four teachers the close connections between (a) teachers’ personal biographies, (b) institutional and curricular factors and interactions, and (c) circulating ideologies surrounding English language education and English teachers’ identities and roles. However, teachers’ biographies and experiences were not in themselves sufficient to cultivate strong social or professional identities. Rather, the teachers’ identification with aspects of their selves and histories, and the ways in which their identities were interpreted, ascribed, or assumed by others, were also key. We were especially interested in teachers’ explicit and implicit teaching (or socialization) of cultural knowledge and how their instructional practices and dispositions were related to their identities and subjectivities as English language teachers in Japan from either American or Japanese backgrounds. We also emphasized that teachers’ sociocultural identities (as we described them) were not static but were also situationally co-constructed or produced by students and colleagues: teachers and their teaching materials (e.g., textbooks) were socializing students into particular identities, stances, and behaviors;
and similarly, students played their own role in socializing teachers, both when happy with the status quo and when seeking change.

Teacher identity issues have been relevant in other studies I have conducted and supervised in Canada, Hungary, and China. For instance, the identities and expertise of *content specialists* vs. *ESL specialists* in public schools and universities in Canada are often central to discussions and disputes regarding teachers’ abilities or responsibilities for scaffolding learning for English language learners in mainstream content courses. Many teachers’ reluctance to engage with such issues stems from their identities (and expertise) as content teachers vs. language teachers. These professional identities may be deeply ingrained and fiercely protected—a source of legitimacy and pride in some cases; but in others a source of uncertainty, arrogance, or even disdain with respect to the linguistic challenges of students and these teachers’ roles in supporting them.

In the two-year study that Duff (2002) is based on, the well-intentioned high school social studies content specialists were keen to find ways of better accommodating the changing population of students in their classes. They enacted their own identities, interactionally, as open-minded, anti-racist, anti-homophobic, empathetic, playful, well-informed social studies specialists and citizens. But it was clear (and not surprising to those of us who have taught ESL) that ESL instruction was not held in as high esteem in the school by teachers, students, or parents as content instruction was. Issues of perceived and sometimes inequitable privilege, based on class, academic subject specialization, ethnicity, seniority, gender, and other more personal aspects of teachers’ biographies and identities (some of which were “off the record”) were often discussed in the study by participants and were interpreted by them to affect their in-class behaviors and views of teaching, and their treatment by others in the school.

Teachers’ identity also emerged in my study examining the implementation of (at the time) innovative English-medium instruction in new immersion programs in Hungary with students who sometimes viewed their own English and their preferred classroom discourse practices as superior to those of their highly trained Hungarian teachers who were content specialists (e.g., historians) now teaching their subject matter in English to students who often had had a much stronger foundation in English (Duff, 1995). The challenges for *non-native speakers* of English teaching in such demanding, advanced English-medium programs (and similarly for, e.g., Anglophone teachers in French immersion programs or non-Chinese teachers of Chinese in Canadian schools) cannot be overstated, particularly when their L2 proficiency is problematized by others (or themselves) in their institutional contexts.

**Defining and describing teacher identity in my work**

But what do I mean by teacher identity in this work? In Duff (2012b), I described how identity has been theorized in recent decades in relation to second language *learners*. In the aforementioned Duff and Uchida (1997) article, we discussed how...
Language teacher identities and socialization

The socialization, formation, and expression of professional and (other) social identities and practices is, as noted above, multidirectional. Teacher educators may attempt to socialize new teachers into particular roles and identities. Learners,

Teacher identity had been theorized (at least up to that time). Language teacher identity, in my view—teachers’ subjectivities and sense of who they are in relation to their educational practices, their histories, and the social dimensions of their lives that are most important to them—arises out of the intersections within and across two particular sets of factors: (1) personal biography, including attributes and alignments connected with such constructs as gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, language proficiency, professional experience and expertise, age, physical stature, personality, and so on; and (2) local socio-educational contexts (curriculum, programs, policies, circulating ideologies about what constitutes good or preferred language teachers, teaching practices, and qualifications). Of course, not all of the constructs listed under (1) will be equally salient or relevant in a particular teaching context or interaction, and none of these occur in isolation either. But one’s sense of self and of one’s role as a teacher results from these dynamic and historically conditioned factors operating at both macro- and micro-social levels. They continue to play out anew in each discursive context (one of which contexts is interactions with researchers), thereby gaining a cumulative trajectory of sorts. However, teacher identity can change in a new context or community in which the teacher does not feel as validated or well-prepared, with the introduction, for example, of students with different profiles and needs than in the past, or a new curriculum, new content, new colleagues or administration, different policies and ideologies, or different expectations about what constitutes expertise and expected behavior as a language teacher (and user). A person’s identity, as many others in this volume and elsewhere have also written, is not singular, stable, or fixed, but is negotiated and socially produced in particular social contexts, and naturally changes over time as well.

In addition to perceptions and enactments of a teacher’s identity at a given point in time, teachers may also imagine or envision themselves gaining experiences and expertise that will position them differently (possibly more favorably) in the future. Role models teachers identify strongly with may play a role in their development as well. Such desires or visions of themselves as highly skilled or inspiring teachers in the future may also affect their current status and activities in various ways as they work toward such goals. Some teachers may, however, find that their projected identities as expert language teachers are challenged in new situations, such as if they immigrate to a country in which the language they teach is widely spoken or they engage in graduate education with other “language experts,” and their qualifications (language proficiency, teaching approaches, knowledge) are found wanting. Such scenarios can be devastating to teachers’ core sense of themselves as qualified professionals and indeed in great conflict with their earlier sense of legitimacy and authority.
parents, colleagues, and administrators may also attempt to socialize teachers into specific practices and dispositions according to their own values, biases, and perceived needs. Teachers themselves have their own aspirations and visions of who they are—or might become—as teachers and as members of their various communities. They also view themselves in relation to others in their learning cohorts and may be affected positively or negatively by such comparisons. For many novice teachers, this complex process of engaging in professional socialization and negotiating these identities and practices can be challenging albeit constructive. For some, however, as mentioned in the previous section, their confidence and self-esteem may plummet as mismatches or tensions arise between their attributes and abilities and those expected of them, and they may leave the teaching profession as a result. Attrition is particularly acute (based on my observations and roles in educational programs in Canada, Hungary, and elsewhere) in L2 immersion contexts in which under-resourced or ill-prepared teachers feel inadequate or overburdened by the need to produce materials, curriculum, and instruction in their L2 under the scrutiny of others who may be critical of their abilities.

As more research examines professional socialization and its relationship to the development and enactment of teachers’ social, cultural, and linguistic identities, expertise, and dispositions and practices, we will know how to better support teachers during their crucial formative pre-service and in-service years. Such research will contribute to a deeper understanding of teachers’ biographies and subjectivities in relation to their subject matter, and in relation to their students, their social and educational contexts, and their career trajectories. Research should also examine how the teachers, in turn, can support the development of their students’ and colleagues’ identities, dispositions, and academic possibilities through both explicit and implicit socialization.

**Directions for future research**

As a scholar whose work investigates processes of socialization and development in both L2 teachers and learners, I am interested in how teachers’ identities, in addition to their (meta-)linguistic proficiency and instructional practices and ideologies, evolve with experience. Longitudinal, ethnographic case studies can be ideal for such research, situated in the educational institutions in which identities are taken up, resisted, enacted, and developed. Discourse analysis of interactions taking place within teachers’ staff meetings, lessons, parent-teacher meetings, and other such routine events can also reveal how teachers position themselves or how they are positioned by others. In addition, first-person narratives and life histories can complement such observations and provide compelling introspective accounts of teachers’ experiences over time. Finally, following teacher candidates from their entry into professional training through their early years of induction into teaching reveals how, and to what effect, personal and professional aspects of teachers’ lives (and identities) interact. Research questions might include the following:
1. What biographical and educational factors (e.g., past experience), in their view, have contributed most to the identities of teachers in a particular context? And which aspects of their identities do they feel are most significant in their work as educators?

2. How and why have their identities reportedly changed over time and how might such changes be seen in their actual teaching practices?

3. More specifically, how are teachers’ identities produced or displayed through classroom discourse? In staff meetings? In parent-teacher consultations? In interviews with researchers?

4. How are aspects of teacher candidates’ professional identities cultivated (or socialized) in their pre-service coursework and practice teaching interactions?

References


ACKNOWLEDGING THE GENERATIONAL AND AFFECTIVE ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITY

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Looking back and looking forward

From the moment my Indonesian teacher first stepped into my classroom I was in awe of her. I was growing up in a monolingual, monocultural English-speaking family in the northern part of Sydney, Australia, and until I met her, I never knew the magic of being able to make meaning in another language. She taught me intriguing new ways to look at the world. I had a good grasp on my English by junior high school, and now I was learning to know others’ ways through other languages: on one level, the ways of the peoples of Indonesia, but on another, I reflect now, the ways of thinking, doing and being of the growing diversity of people in my district in the 1970s. With her guidance, I learned to ask questions about language per se. I often look back to the time I spent in class with my first language teacher, to the generation of teachers before me, and I look forward too, to reflect on my own development as a language teacher and language teacher educator and the generations who have come after me. Looking back and looking forward, systematically, I believe, can be a productive exercise.

After graduating from high school, I became an Indonesian and German teacher in the 1980s and taught in secondary and primary programs. I moved into language teacher education in the 1990s. At two different points in those years I studied intensive short-term immersion programs in Japanese and Tetum. My vision for language teaching, first as a language teacher, and now as a language teacher educator, has become embedded in the notion of teaching “culture-in-language,” first introduced to me by my Indonesian teacher in the 1970s, and now underpinning my work with the preparation of new language teachers. My teacher had taught me about a different society, its people and their language and cultures. My language teacher—who was at the time a language teacher developing her own
“beginning teacher” identity appears to have built her curriculum on the link between language and culture, and she shared this fascination to engage and motivate us in her classroom.

I recall that my teacher utilized dramatic techniques, music, and song to teach Indonesian—my teacher sang beautifully in French, German, and Indonesian. She placed a strong emphasis on communication skills, and we performed role-play dialogues in costume. Within the boundaries of the textbook I worked through the exercises and activities. But our teacher managed to expand the textbook material. She led us on wider pathways, and told us stories that clearly fascinated her about the other language and culture. In turn I was fascinated by these stories too. “Living the language” was how my teacher offered her language program to us, allowing us to explore “other” and “self” on the journey together.

Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005, p. 22) note that “the teacher’s whole identity … [is] at play in the classroom.” If “other” and “self” combine to form “identity,” perhaps in the very act of teaching the language my language teacher must logically have been exploring her identity. My teacher’s own identity was affecting the way she taught us the language, and the “culture-in-language” knowledge she explored made an impact on the landscape of “wonderments and puzzlements” of her language teacher education (Kleinsasser, 2013, p. 86).

These reflections on parts of my own career and identity development as I crossed the boundary between language teacher and language teacher educator, the notions I either gleaned or learned explicitly from the generation above me, and about the various languages I know now, are the building blocks that have made me so passionate about language teaching and learning today. This language teacher—me—became like her teacher, and then became a language teacher educator. Perhaps my students have become a little like me in turn. But I know that underpinning my identity as a language teacher and language teacher educator is the same human being, driven by the same beliefs, attitudes, emotions, and passions. I realize that being able to trace my own and others’ identity development through acknowledging the generational and affective aspects is critical for me to advance the field with my continuing research. Below, I track my thoughts about language teacher identity, positing my own definition from this “generational” and “affective” stance, and offering my ideas for how research on language teacher identity might develop if such questions are posed.

**Finding the language teacher inside me**

After considering that I taught two languages other than English in the first decade of my teaching career, and moved into language teacher education over the next 20 years, I view my somewhat eclectic set of research areas (I have published on bilingual education, intercultural language education, study abroad education, and language teacher professional learning), to be based, first and foremost, on the importance of understanding language teacher identity. My work refers to (a) the
notion that the professional decision-making of a language teacher is based on personal narrative (Harbon & Moloney, 2013), (b) the idea that the personal, affective aspect of language use in a study abroad situation impacts how language teachers dare to use the language they know (Harbon, 2007), and (c) language teachers implementing bilingual programs according to their own narrative (Fielding & Harbon, 2013), to name a few. In all my scholarly commentaries, I embark from the assumption that a language teacher’s personal and professional identity development impacts every decision they make.

What other than language teacher identity can be considered to be at the heart of a language teacher’s expertise, the essence of their professional work, the basis of “the sociocultural and sociopolitical landscape of the classroom” (Varghese, et al., 2005) and the focus for researchers exploring problems in foreign and second language classrooms? Like the trends in thinking noted by Varghese, et al. (2005, pp. 22–23), I too view a language teacher’s identity, and a language teacher educator’s identity, as dynamic not fixed, as related to context and settings, and embedded in the language and predominant educational/societal/political discourse. This holistic view of the language teacher (and in my view language teacher educator) understands language teacher and language teacher educator identities from a humanistic standpoint.

Korthagen (2004, p. 81) discusses a “humanistic-based approach (HBTE)” in the framing of a teacher’s professional identity. It is the teachers (and I claim language teacher educators too)—the professionals, the experts, the decision-makers ultimately operationalizing the micro-planning for their intended curriculum delivery plans, all the while considering the needs and characteristics of the learners—who bring the human element into language teaching and learning.

Reviewing these notions embedded in the current scholarly theorizing about language teacher identity, I can thus reflect on the considerable emphasis on “identity” and related notions of personal narrative and reflection on self in much of the language learning and teaching research I have so far published.

The “accomplished” language teacher and beyond

Language teacher organizations have variously consulted widely within their membership to define “accomplished” teaching of language and cultures. One frame, designed and published in Australia, was the Professional standards for accomplished teaching of languages and cultures (hereafter Professional Standards) (Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers’ Associations [AFMLTA], 2005). Ten years ago I joined with language education scholars across Australia to help conceptualize and scope the nature of language teachers work that became a basis for the Professional Standards (Liddicoat, et al., 2005). We problematized and reflected on the meaning of “accomplished” languages and cultures teaching. The project resulted in a document that outlines seven dimensions of a language teacher’s work.
Ten years later I consider now with hindsight, that in the *Professional Standards* document (AFMLTA, 2005), identity is under-emphasized. The *Professional Standards* suggest that because a language teacher is aware of “the role of language and culture in human interaction and identity” (p. 4), they might therefore “use this knowledge to enhance their teaching.” The nature of a language teacher’s identity is, I believe, far more complex in its nature than that comment suggests. Identity development is likely to be embedded in language teachers’ pedagogical decision-making and surely flavored by the nuances and characteristics of the language itself.

A gap exists: the *Professional Standards* frame with its cursory mention of “identity” simply does not suffice to capture language teacher or language teacher educator identities. I contend that the generational (or even trans-generational element)—alluded to in Korthagen’s (2004) review of Kelchtermans and Vandenberghhe’s 1994 work relating to events and significant “others” who influence us—should be part of the description of language teaching in the *Professional Standards* frame. To include the “generational” aspect, the claim would be: I am a product of those who taught me, impacted by those who teach alongside me, and because I will teach others about the many reasons for learning at least one additional language, the cycle continues, inter- and trans-generationally.

In building my language teacher education curriculum for pre-service language teachers over the past almost 20 years I have introduced to pre-service teachers how language teaching methods have changed, and how the teachers who taught us were a product of how they constructed their programs, a product of the language taught/learned itself, a product of teaching materials available, and a product of current scholarly thinking about suitable pedagogy. There have been many changes across the generations, particularly through the twentieth and now into the twenty-first century. A language teacher’s identity, as deconstructed in my own language teacher education curriculum program, starts from reflection across the generations as the embarkation point. In addition, my pre-service teachers meet the term “identity” explicitly included in school language learning syllabus documentation, which they then operationalize in their own classrooms with their learners.

**Acknowledging the generational aspect of language teacher identity**

The notion of apprenticeship of observation—we teach what we have observed teachers doing—has been critiqued in recent years (Borg, 2004). Yet teachers need to learn (hone and refine) their craft of teaching within a context, understanding multiple contexts, acknowledging the specific language and its nuances, as well as their own personal and professional narratives. The “affective” aspects of language teaching—the emotional aspects, the beliefs and attitudes at play in the background to any language teaching and learning—are evident because of the human element, and need to be acknowledged. In the preparation of new language teachers, it is common that solutions are found by “looking back” to what has worked in the
past. Within the language teacher community there may even be a sense of awe and reverence to our own language teachers, as we saw them struggle to advocate for the teaching of foreign languages in contexts that were not always supportive, and sometimes even confrontational. Current generations of language teachers may look back with a fond recollection of their own language teachers’ struggles to examine their strategies and their style, to examine what worked. We look back and we look forward, because to do so is a human trait. Thus, investigating the “affective” within the generational aspect of language teacher identity development—examining language teacher identity trans-generationally—makes a lot of sense.

The scholarly literature describes how the various generations are so different. In the second decade of the twenty-first century we now track the learning styles and preferences of the generations who are present in our classrooms: the Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, Millennials, and their own priorities for learning (Wilson & Gerber, 2008). Beginning language teachers, more accomplished language teachers and language teacher educators could all benefit from acknowledging the generational and affective aspects of language teaching. Further research could identify more explicit aspects of generational practices among language teachers: investigations into what the generations see as importantly explored in the language and culture aspects of “self” and “other,” and even how each generation has taught the cultural nuances of the language itself. Moreover, a generational consideration could develop the definition of “accomplished” language teaching further. With a colleague (Harbon & Moloney, 2013) I have been able to guide language teachers to investigate, reflect, and write their personal and professional narratives. The process of guided writing itself aims to assist the writers themselves, then the readers, to acknowledge personal and professional life and work narratives in helping to create who they are now and why they teach the way they do. In a second layer, those narratives have become points of departure for both pre-service and in-service language teachers to start their own identity exploration.

Varghese, et al. (2005) warn that issues may arise should we rely on single theories of language teacher identity in isolation. The proposed step here is that adding a trans-generational stance, acknowledging the “affective” factors, to the professional framing of language teacher identity and language teacher educator identity will bring a richness not explicitly factored in before. It should not represent the sole vantage point from which to view identity, but it will enhance other theories that underpin the frame.

**Directions for future research**

There is much investigation still needed within the boundaries of what is considered to be language teacher identity research. This chapter has argued that *generational* and *affective* aspects need to be considered, and qualitative research methods will arguably be the most suitable to undertake this investigation.
Particularly important and informative will be studies such as trans-generational research, which examines the inter- and trans-generational nature of language teacher development and language teacher educator development, and asks (a) Do you believe you have assumed all or part of the identity of the teacher who taught you your additional language(s), and how does that embody itself? and (b) In what circumstances (in and outside the classroom) do you assume this identity and when do you depart from it?

Narrative inquiry is one suitable methodology through which language teacher identity research has teased out the impact of one generation of language teachers on the next, exploring how teachers’ bilingual/bicultural identities impact their pedagogies and allowing the affective to emerge, and human emotive reactions, beliefs, and attitudes to be acknowledged. Encouraging more than reflection, for example, stimulated recall of classroom practices or collaborating with peers/mentors, could also allow language teachers to self-reflect and make meaning.

My reflective practice, and my language teacher identity research has allowed me to look back on the past and forward to the future: in essence I cannot help but see things trans-generationally. Social media has allowed me to keep in touch with the language teacher who put my life on such a different path. Messages from former students still arrive in my inbox, acknowledging my role as a teacher who set their lives on new paths. My teacher, myself, and the many generations of students and language teachers who have come after us, find it easy to link with the generations who have come before and after us. What can enrich deeper understandings of language teacher identity are the stories emerging from the process of reflecting on the past and planning for the future. The passion underpinning a language teacher’s identity can be explored trans-generationally and affectively. Understanding the fine-detailed steps in that strategy, however, is something that will only emerge with further research.

References


"WHO I AM IS HOW I TEACH"

Reflecting on language teacher professional role identity

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**Introduction**

I have been associated with teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) for the past 40 years in two main roles: first as an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher, and later as a language teacher educator. I have lived and worked in Ireland, South Korea, Singapore, and now Canada and presented in many different countries for many years. Recently, I have had to slow down a bit, however, because I had to have eye surgery that literally left me face down for ten days and nights as well as two months of total inactivity; and because of this there was not much for me to do except reflect on the different professional roles as EFL teacher and language teacher educator I have experienced over these 40-something years. As my research area is on reflective practice in the field of TESOL, I have been especially interested in attempting to answer one question in particular: Who am I as a teacher educator?

This is an easy question to ask but very difficult to answer because it involves reflecting on my professional identity. I then realized that it is difficult to separate the personal from the professional because this is what makes us human in the classroom and in fact, makes all the difference as we interact with our students. In other words, I believe “who I am is how I teach”; the person (teacher) cannot be separated from the craft (teaching). Thus, when reflecting on “who I am as a language teacher educator” I have to look deep inside myself at the personal and what has shaped my roles over the years. Thus, this chapter affords me the opportunity to not only as Palmer (1998, p. 2) put it, “attend to the inner teacher to cultivate a sense of identity and integrity” but also to reflect on language teacher identity in our profession. Then I was asked to contribute to this book on language teacher identity and I realize what great timing since I can not only talk about
researching language teacher identity through reflective practice but also reflect on my own identity as a language teacher educator.

**Reflecting on professional role identity**

*Identity* is such a loaded term because its meaning has changed greatly over the years as we have moved from a focus on the individual to include the society in which the individual lives (sociocultural identity). Unfortunately for me “identity politics” has taken on a life (and possibly a subculture) of its own far removed from its impact on a language teacher’s everyday life, which is what I am interested in. Therefore in the field of TESOL we should ask ourselves whose needs we are really attending to when we talk about *identity*: our own academic need to fuel some political agendas or the real needs of language teachers who must navigate classrooms in the real world?

For me the core of identity is manifested in how people enact roles in different settings. So as a teacher I am looking at how I see myself in my professional role and how others see me in that role, or my professional role identity. As such, within my area of research—reflective practice—I not only continuously reflect on my role as a teacher and teacher educator, but over the years I have also encouraged others to also reflect on their role as teachers. This reflective practice involves not only reflecting on where I am now but also where I have come from as a teacher and teacher educator. I have worked on research in reflective practice for the past 38 years and have discovered that it (systematic reflection) has allowed me to reflect on my professional role identity so that I can gauge its impact in terms of student learning.

For teachers, professional self-image is also usually balanced with a variety of roles they feel that they have to play. Within TESOL, Burns and Richards (2009) have noted that identity “reflects how individuals see themselves and how they enact their roles within different settings” (p. 5). This includes all the functional roles a teacher uses while performing his or her duties, what they feel and believe about teaching and being a teacher, and how these are shaped by a teacher’s evolving (and ever-changing) *philosophy, principles, theory, practice, and beyond practice* (for more on these see Farrell, 2015). For the purposes of this chapter, then, my definition of *teacher role identity* is the different roles and activities that language teachers play or are asked to play while they carry out their duties.

Professional role identity also includes the concept of “self” (or the “who” as in “who I am is how I teach”) as an essential consideration of a teacher’s self-image, but many teachers’ conceptualizations of their self-image and the various roles they play are usually held at the tacit level of awareness. As such, reflection and reflective practice is a key component associated with unlocking this tacit understanding of the self so that teachers can become more aware of who they are professionally (Farrell, 2015). Indeed, as Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) have pointed out, for teachers “it is impossible to speak about the ‘self’ when there is no reflection” (p. 114). It is important for second language teachers to be able to bring these professional role identities to the level of awareness so that they can reflect on their usefulness.
“Who I am is how I teach”

I now return to try to answer the question that I have reflected on recently as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter: “Who am I as a teacher educator?” I would call myself a reflective-professional language educator who attempts to practice what I preach and writes a lot not only to inform the field but to fulfill my own mode of reflection: writing. I believe that I “must see what I say” and I write to provide others (mostly language teachers rather than academics) with ideas they too can reflect on. In order to be a reflective-professional language teacher educator I believe the following four ideas (I have more but these are at the core) about my role identity (see the Tree of Life below):

1. Knowing myself is as crucial as knowing about my research and my students.
2. Taking a constructivist approach to my research, teaching and learning, I believe that all teachers (pre-service and in-service) will make sense of the ideas that I present in their own way.
3. As such, I always try to guide teachers (pre-service and in-service) away from the familiar and to question the unfamiliar.
4. Thus, I encourage independent and critical reflection by all teachers.

In the introduction to this chapter I mentioned that it is difficult to separate the person from the professional when we want to reflect on who we are as teachers and teacher educators. Consequently, in order to reflect on who we are as teachers we will need to get to know ourselves better so that we can better align our philosophy, principles, and theory with our practices and beyond practices as teachers and teacher educators. As Palmer (1998, p. 3) has remarked: “The work required to ‘know thyself’ is neither selfish nor narcissistic. Whatever self-knowledge we attain as teachers will serve our students and our scholarship well.” Such self-study is in fact itself a methodology and a natural outgrowth of reflective practice studies. Reflective practice strategies can assist language teachers not only access and articulate their professional role identity but then to nurture its ongoing development. One reflective tool that I use all the time to reflect on my professional role identity is called the Tree of Life.

The Tree of Life comes from reflective practice research and can be used as a methodological reflective tool for teachers interested in accessing their identity (Farrell, 2015). It is a self-reflective tool that I use briefly here but when used in its totality can document a teacher’s personal and professional journey from early years to current years. The Tree of Life is divided into three main parts: “roots,” “trunk,” “limbs.”

The roots are an account of a teacher’s early influences, and as such provide the foundations of what has shaped a teacher’s early years such as our family values, our heritage, ethnicity, religion, and our socioeconomic backgrounds that have shaped us in any way. My professional role identity as a teacher and teacher educator
would have been influenced by my upbringing in a small town in Ireland and probably was typical for my generation. I was raised in a homogeneous socioeconomic class group (middle), of Caucasian race and with religion (Catholic) imposed by family.

At the trunk of the tree we move away from our early experiences at home to begin capturing significant experiences from early school years all the way up to our high school years, and we also focus on any experiences that may have led to developing our perspectives on teaching and teachers such as a teacher you admired or did not admire. For example, without going into much detail, I decided that I would never teach (as a language teacher and as a language teacher educator) the way many of my grade school teachers went about teaching me. For the most part, I was educated in teacher-led classes, but especially while learning foreign languages and English language. University life in Ireland in the 1970s did not change my views much and after doing my degree I went into teaching and as a result decided I would never educate teachers the way I was educated and, more specifically, I would never supervise teachers on a practicum the way I was supervised, since I see my role differently (see Farrell, 2007, for more on this).

The next level of reflection on the Tree of Life is the limbs. The limbs represent all our experiences beyond schooling and include all our most recent experiences and influences. For example, each limb can represent an adult experience and/or action that has influenced or shaped our teaching selves. I have outlined some of my “current limbs” about when I reflected on my professional role identity as a language teacher educator; however, this current limb has also been greatly shaped over the years by the roots and trunk of my experiences. In such a manner, language teachers can use the Tree of Life to map their life history influences and then write their teacher stories.

**Reflective practice**

Language teachers (and language teacher educators) will be able to “see” the development of their professional role identity as they reflect on their Tree of Life; they can then decide whether these roles have been predetermined by others or individually constructed by the teachers themselves. Reflecting on language teacher professional role identity through the Tree of Life can reveal important historical factors, power differentials, and/or cultural values in teachers’ lives that may have impacted their role enactments and how they teach in a particular manner either in opposition to how they were taught (as in my case) or in exactly the same manner as they were taught. By engaging in reflective practice, then, ESL teachers can not only become more aware of their identity roles, but also how they have been shaped over time and by whom, and how they need to be nurtured during a teacher’s career. Ultimately, it will be up to each individual teacher to decide if these professional roles configure with his or her conception of what it means to be a language teaching professional.
Professional role identity develops and evolves over a language teacher’s career. Because it is central to a teacher’s philosophy, principles, theory, and practice and beyond practice, it is very important that the TESOL profession moves beyond mere anecdotal TESOL teacher role identity descriptors. In fact, there are no language teacher professional role identity benchmarks, standards, or task descriptors in the literature (however see Farrell, 2013, for a taxonomy of ESL teacher roles). There are probably several reasons for this: language teachers do not readily reflect on their professional roles and, from a research perspective, these professional roles are not easily isolated or even measured. That said, researching professional role identity really means reflecting on how we “see” ourselves as language teachers and how others “see” us as language teachers. I believe the research methodologies of reflective practice can facilitate both TESOL researchers in their quest for developing benchmarks, standards, and task roles and in providing pre-service teachers with more guidance as they prepare for the real world of teaching. Reflective practice can also facilitate novice teachers in articulating their professional identity roles so that they can decide for themselves if these roles are appropriate.

Directions for future research

Language teachers can articulate these professional roles through their biographies with the use of the *Tree of Life* as outlined in this chapter and share them with other teachers as they begin to construct and reconstruct their teaching worlds. When language teachers tell their personal stories with the use of the *Tree of Life* as outlined above, they can make better sense of seemingly random experiences because they hold the inside knowledge, especially personal intuitive knowledge, expertise, and experience that is based on their accumulated years as language educators teaching in schools and classrooms. For language teacher educators and administrators, these self-reflection stories can provide a rich source of teacher-generated information that can be accumulated into a corpus of case studies that can be fed back into language teacher education programs so that pre-service teachers can be better prepared for the real world of teaching. In telling part of my own story through the *Tree of Life* in this chapter and by reflecting on some critical incidences in my career, I have become more aware of my professional role identity and what has influenced its development. Such reflections are important so that we not only become aware of our professional role identity but also to nurture and celebrate who we are as teachers and teacher educators.

References

An “accidental” language teacher (educator)

I became an English language teacher by accident and then I was “drafted” to be a language teacher educator by circumstances. Having said this, I do not negate the passion and commitment I have for developing language teachers with sound principles and capacities for pedagogical innovation, critical reflection, and ethical practices. I admit the limitations I have for being a language teacher as well as a language teacher educator as I had not been prepared for the increasingly challenging roles teachers are expected to play these days when I started.

I graduated from a mainland Chinese university as a major in English language in the mid-1990s and immediately entered the promising import and export business. Had the country not experienced some slumps in economic development, I would not have ended up teaching English in a vocational college in 2000. Then I decided to undertake an MA course in English language teaching at the University of Warwick so that I could be better prepared for the task of teaching English. Inspired by the lecturers there, I moved on to do a PhD in Applied Linguistics at the University of Hong Kong and completed a doctoral dissertation project on mainland Chinese undergraduates’ strategic language learning efforts in an English medium university in Hong Kong. The doctoral project led to quite a few important publications in the field of language learning strategy research, and I graduated at a time when the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED) was looking for doctoral degree holders who could publish. Though I only had one accepted manuscript in a leading teacher education journal (plus others on language learning strategy and learner autonomy), I was offered the post of assistant professor and became a language teacher educator at HKIED.
Becoming a language teacher (educator)

As I had not been in the field of language teaching for long and wasn’t properly prepared before I started language teaching, I chose to explore contextual processes and mediation in the process of language teaching and being a language teacher as part of my expertise development and professional work.

My circumstances were unlike many of my colleagues at HKIED, most of whom had spent years teaching in primary and secondary schools before they were recruited by the institute to educate prospective teachers. Their frontline teaching experiences provided them with authority and expertise for preparing pre-service teachers with practical techniques and pedagogical know-how applicable in real language classrooms. Far more important, most of my colleagues were also local Chinese in Hong Kong and were familiar with students that pre-service teachers were likely to teach and the school conditions that they were likely to work in. Unfortunately, being a non-local, inexperienced language teacher, I felt totally inadequate in terms of preparation for the task. However, both the department and I knew these limitations and worked together to maximize the positive impact I could have.

With some understanding of who I was and where I stood in the profession of language teacher educators, the department assigned me to teach foundational and pedagogical courses such as vocabulary studies and an introduction to sociolinguistics. Though lecturers were expected to link the content of these courses to pre-service teachers’ professional development needs, the courses tended to be less directly related to classroom pedagogy in areas such as grammar or classroom discourses. These foundational courses are usually large courses taught by a team of teachers with mixed pedagogical experiences. I was fully able to benefit from collaborating with colleagues who had rich teaching experiences and learnt to deliver these courses in ways meaningful to pre-service teachers’ professional development. In some sense, I was carefully inducted and gradually socialized into the community of language teachers. Despite having been a non-language teacher educator I was provided a safe and secure passage towards being a language teacher educator.

In addition, fully aware of my own weakness, I decided to become a legitimate language teacher educator by exploring significant issues related to language teacher education. Over the years, I had learnt that teachers were facing increasingly complex professional challenges brought about by shifting educational policies and changing sociocultural conditions. For instance, recent educational reforms have decentralized the control of educational practices on the one hand, and on the other hand have also reinforced an accountability system that imposes externally developed performance standards on teachers and makes teachers feel both deskilled and threatened (e.g., Troman, 2000). Apart from the scrutiny of teachers’ professional conduct, according to these externally developed performance standards, teachers are questioned by the public as educational...
Questioning the identity turn in language teacher (educator) research

191

decentralization has been accompanied by the commercialization of education, which dramatically increases individuals' investment in education and transforms the public into educational consumers (e.g., Codd, 2005; Gao, 2008). The increased investment in education has made it legitimate for parents and students to critically censure teachers' teaching. Together with the rising consumerism, there have also been cultural shifts that profoundly mediate teachers' professional relationships with students and other stakeholders such as parents, adding to professional vulnerability in many contexts (e.g., Gordon, 2005). Consequently, language teachers not only need to be prepared in terms of pedagogical knowledge and practice but also learn to negotiate with these contextual complexities in practice. Relevant research will enable me to help them become better prepared for these challenges.

Deconstructing language teacher (educator) identity

I define language teacher identity or in my own case, language teacher educator identity, on three levels. First, my professional identity is foundational upon the aspirations I have about my professional self and the efforts I undertook to assert or project a particular professional self that I am totally at ease with. Second, my professional identity is closely associated with the roles that I am expected to fulfi l in professional communities that I belong to. Such expectations are often based upon the kind of recognition of who I was and expectation of who I should be. Third, my professional identity is profoundly mediated or even sometimes constrained by the imposition of duties and expectations that are in line with cultural traditions and dominant societal discourses, including those emanating from government policies, educational curricula documents, and so on.

As mentioned earlier, I am committed to pursuing recognition as a language teacher educator who is able to have a positive impact on pre-service language teachers’ professional growth and is passionate about the work I do. Such identity aspirations motivated me to learn from my colleagues who are experienced language teachers and teacher educators, so that my teaching could be seen by pre-service teachers as useful in practice. At the very start of being a language teacher educator, I shadowed my colleagues and learnt how to give effective feedback on pre-service teachers’ teaching and engage with them in meaningful post-teaching reflections. In addition, I began to add to my research repertoire a line of research on language teacher's professional development exploring critical issues in pre-service teachers’ professional development, such as their perceptions of “pupils” and pedagogical beliefs. All these research endeavors gave me in-depth understanding of language teachers' professional realities and development needs.

Professional communities, including the Department of English (at HKIED), had an accurate assessment of who I was and what I should do to become what I
needed to become. Based on such appropriate recognition of my strengths and weaknesses, the communities placed me in positions where I could benefit from interacting with experienced language teachers in terms of my own professional growth as a language teacher educator. I was also given space for developing relevant lines of research to inform my pedagogical practices. For instance, I was able to conduct quite a few funded research and teaching development projects on language teachers’ professional development (both in-service and pre-service teachers). These projects helped me claim some expertise as a researcher in language teacher education so that I can fully assert myself as a language teacher educator. The valuable experience I gained in my first job helped me move on to join the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong.

Likewise, I have always been aware of the expectations that the public and society have from me as a teacher and a language teacher (and also a language teacher educator). As a teacher, I am expected to be selfless and altruistic, totally committed to teaching. I am expected to be morally upright so that I can serve as a role model and mentor for my students or those who are juniors (Gao, 2008). In mainland China, teachers are often portrayed as “soul engineers” responsible for cultivating moral qualities among students, or as “silkworms” and “candles,” who diligently spin silk thread till death and who selflessly burn themselves to light others. As an English language teacher, I am expected to be perfect in my command of language though this always puts me under pressure as I inevitably make mistakes in language use as a non-native speaker of the language. Educational reforms also oblige teachers to assume multiple roles such as curriculum developers, researchers, and social workers in addition to the traditional role of teaching. As a language teacher educator, I am expected by my pre-service teachers to be able to provide answers to all their professional questions and provide quick fixes to their professional problems.

Since the three aspects of my professional identities come from different sources and are related to different agents, it is natural that they may not always be in harmony with each other. For this reason, what I am often emerges from the struggles that the three professional identities have with each other.

Problematizing language teacher (educator) identity research

Language teacher identity in the process of becoming and being language teachers has become a highly popular construct for researchers to explore. The relevant research generates important implications for language teacher education. Given the increasingly challenging nature of language teaching, research on language teachers’ identity struggles is expected to have significant therapeutic functions as it helps pre-service and in-service language teachers appreciate deep processes underlying their professional dilemmas and quandaries. For this reason, I believe more and more research will have to address language teachers’ professional vulnerability.
Previous research has confirmed that successful implementation of any education reform measure depends on various key stakeholders’ participation, especially teachers. Unfortunately, these studies have also revealed that teachers are often victimized by the very reforms whose successful implementation was dependent on them. The reforms in which teachers are expected to play a key role more likely make them feel “deskilled” and insecure as they subject teachers to a regime of accountability in their professional lives (e.g., Codd, 2005; Gao, 2008; Kelchtermans, 2005). This contradiction inherent in educational reforms has unfortunately undermined teachers’ professional conduct and lives, making them ever more vulnerable professionally and undermining their professional development as well. Previous research has identified a variety of sources that contribute to teachers’ professional vulnerability. Teachers’ professional competence is now increasingly scrutinized by the rising importance of externally developed performance standards that constitute the core of the tightened accountability regime (e.g., Codd, 2005). In the case of language teachers, whether a language teacher displays a perfect or native-like command of the target language is often seen as critical for being acknowledged as a “proper” language teacher. As mentioned earlier, their professional conduct is also questioned by the public as marketization of education has transformed parents and students into consumers of education and made it more legitimate than ever for them to critically censure teachers’ teaching (e.g., Codd, 2005; Gao, 2008). Teachers’ professional authority is also challenged due to an ongoing stream of sociocultural shifts related to the rising consumer culture, making it difficult for them to initiate and maintain a workable relationship with students in undertaking regular classroom activities (e.g., Gao, 2008; Kelchtermans, 2005). Similar challenges are also applicable to language teacher educators who are often under the yoke of rising pressure to produce high-impact research in the tertiary education contexts.

To address the aforementioned issue, researchers are often attracted to use ethnographic case studies and narrative methods to document the experiences of language teachers and language teacher educators for in-depth analysis. Such methodological choices in language teacher identity research will continue and will help researchers gain increasingly deep understandings of the complexities that language teachers and language teacher educators have to cope with in their professional practices. However, they are also likely to produce therapeutic yet fragmentary accounts of teachers’ identity struggles. They may have largely left the structural causes and processes underlying such struggles unaddressed.

**Directions for future research**

Subsequent to my observations about current language teacher identity research, I propose the following conceptual framework for future research on language teacher and language teacher educator identity (Figure 30.1).
FIGURE 30.1 A broadened framework for language teacher (educator) identity research

- **Time**
- **Macro-Context:** Sociocultural discourses, ideology, and so on. Economic and political conditions, cultural traditions.
- **Institutional setting:** Immediate environment of professional practices, e.g., personnel evaluation, institutional policies, hierarchical structure, workload allocations etc.
- **Situated activity:** Interactions with social agents (e.g., experienced colleagues), artifacts (e.g., departmental policies), and so on.
- **Self:** Agency/power (will, capacity, desires, aspirations, and visions).
- **Achieved professional identities**
- **Pursuit and assertion of professional identities**

Mediation/interaction: constraints and enablement
As can be seen in the figure, language teachers’ (or teacher educators’) identity pursuits start from their professional aspirations and visions through exercise of professional expertise and skills. Such exercise of “will” and “capacity” interacts with a variety of key individuals (“social agents”) including experienced colleagues and artifacts, such as departmental policies, which are closely associated with the relevant policies and practices including personnel evaluation, workload allocation, and educational curriculum at the institutional level. These policies and practices may enable individual language teachers (teacher educators) to acquire the needed expertise to become legitimate members of the academic community, but they can also constrain them from asserting and pursuing particular professional identities. For instance, in a research-intensive university, language teachers and language teacher educators may find that institutional expectations of research undermine their commitment to teaching excellence. The identity struggles happening in particular institutional settings may also be related to the macro contextual, structural conditions that underlie the distribution of power and valuable resources. Research on language teacher (educator) identity needs to engage with these “big” questions when examining individuals’ narrative accounts. Otherwise, such research can be only therapeutic and is likely to fail to empower language teachers (teacher educators) with critical capacities in their pursuit of professional identities and excellence.

References

“ENGLISH IS A WAY OF TRAVELLING, FINNISH THE STATION FROM WHICH YOU SET OUT”

Reflections on the identities of L2 teachers in the context of Finland

Paula Kalaja
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ, FINLAND

From a learner of English as a foreign language (EFL) to a specialist in L2 learning and teaching

When I was young, I never dreamed of becoming a teacher of English. After some twists and turns in my life and career, and having graduated with another two degrees in applied linguistics and completed a teaching practicum at Georgetown University, Washington DC, I returned to Finland and was eventually appointed Professor of English in the Department of Languages at the University of Jyväskylä. However, I have little experience of teaching English (i.e., grammar and vocabulary, or language skills); I have much more experience of teaching about English as an academic discipline, including courses on linguistics and applied linguistics. In fact, I now do research on issues related to the learning and teaching of English, and have been giving courses on related topics over the past two decades, targeted at future teachers of English.

Teachers of English are highly qualified and appreciated as professionals in Finland (unlike in some other countries). They are in great demand, as English is viewed as a necessity these days, and it is almost taken for granted that all Finns have learnt to speak the language. English has become an integral aspect of their lives, including spare-time activities, school, work, and travel. English is the most popular language studied in schools: well over 90 percent of school children start studying it as the first foreign language from Grade 3 or from the age of nine onwards. Unfortunately, this is taking place at the expense of studying other foreign languages. The status of English has been changing in the country to the extent that it is becoming a lingua franca (ELF), especially with the ever-increasing numbers of foreigners who find themselves in the country for a host of reasons such as travel, work, study, and politics.
Development of the identities of future teachers of English in Finland

Teacher education is mainly the responsibility of three parties at the University of Jyväskylä: the Department of Languages, the Department of Teacher Education, and the Teacher Training School (with Grades 1–12). The first caters basically for language studies, the second for pedagogical studies, and the third for hands-on practice in teaching (or practicum). In this process, content knowledge will turn into pedagogical knowledge and finally into principles and practices applied in classrooms. The pedagogical studies are part of a joint five-year MA degree program.

When applying to study English with us, applicants can choose between two areas of specialization, and, if accepted, graduate from the program either as language learning and teaching specialists (referred to as teacher trainees) or as language specialists. Their studies with us comprise courses in communication in English as well as the following content areas: (a) linguistics, (b) discourse studies, (c) language, culture, and society, (d) language learning and teaching, and (e) research. The teacher trainees study as a rule another two subjects as their minor subjects. Pedagogical studies is one of them, and these studies start as early as Year 1 (in contrast to other universities in the country), and after their completion, the teacher trainees will qualify as subject teachers of English within the Finnish educational system.

A longitudinal project, From Novice to Expert, based in the Department of Languages at the University of Jyväskylä, has followed a group of students of English (N = some 120 students) in their studies from Year 1 to Year 5, by which time they had already graduated or were about to graduate from the MA degree program. The project focused on the development of their beliefs, agency, and identities over time (see Chapters 6 and 7 in Kalaja, Barcelos, Aro, and Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2015). While studying on the MA degree program, the identities of the students of English seem to evolve in three respects: as advanced learners of the language, as future specialists of language learning and teaching, and finally as novice teachers of English (see further details below).

Firstly, their identities will evolve from being learners of EFL to users of English as an L2, the language taking over some functions of their L1, including expressing emotions and thinking, or of ELF, and eventually to multilinguals who can resort to a variety of linguistic resources, depending on the situation. However, some students still hedge about this: “I am lucky to be almost bilingual,” says a male student with Finnish as his L1, English as L2, but having also studied at least Swedish! Furthermore, they tend to study English initially for its own sake, out of love for the language, having been good at the subject in school, or because they have become interested in aspects of the English-speaking world (e.g., music, literature, movies). It is only later that they realize the instrumental value of knowing English, providing them even with a different view of the world—compared with their L1. Thirdly, the identities of the students evolve over time
FIGURE 31.1 An English class to be given shortly after graduation—as envisioned by a teacher trainee: inductive grammar teaching (“päättely”), speaking the language (“suullistaminen”), a relaxed atmosphere (“rento ilmapiiri”), authenticity (“autenttisuus”), the joy of learning (“oppimisen ilo”).

from language majors or minors to professionals or specialists in language learning and teaching. Consider the following comment (translated from Finnish) from a teacher trainee in Year 5 of her studies:

(English is) a tool. It is a tool quite literally, as I will graduate as a teacher of English, and English is what I will be teaching, teaching about, and using as the medium of instruction. It is also a tool for communication. I often realize
that I am thinking in English, and in everyday conversations I often end up using an English word when the Finnish equivalent does not come to my mind, or is not quite so much “to the point” in that situation.

As mentioned, the pedagogical studies start from Year 1, and Year 3, 4, or 5 (the year is up to the students) is crucial for providing them with hands-on practice in teaching English at the Teacher Training School or across various levels of education. At this point, most of the students envision their teaching of English in terms of a specific discourse, *Future foreign language teaching*. This discourse is based on their previous experiences of using English in out-of-school contexts (travel, hobbies or spare-time activities, the media, and the internet) and studying on the MA degree program. The discourse is quite different from another discourse, *Past foreign language teaching*, based on their previous experiences of learning English in school contexts. Both discourses were identified in the multimodal data collected for the longitudinal project and its follow-up study.

Accordingly, when envisioning entering the profession of teaching, the students would emphasize the *social* nature of learning English in contrast to their past experiences as learners of the language. Their teaching would focus on real language use or (oral) communication and aspects of culture(s). The students would make use of authentic texts rather than standard textbooks, and they would apply modern IT in their classes. They would act as *guides* in class and their students would be expected to act as active participants, willing to look for learning opportunities and interact in pairs and small groups, for example. By Year 4 or 5 the teacher trainees will begin to draw on some, if not all, of the principles and practices of the second discourse (but a few will still be hesitant about the applicability of these in their future classes).

Consider a metaphorical visualization by a teacher trainee in Year 5 (Figure 31.1). It highlights some of the principles and practices in a future English class.

**Development of the identities of novice teachers of English in Finland**

The graduates start as a rule with temporary jobs and teach pupils in a variety of grades and schools. The development of the identities of the newly qualified teachers (N=11) has been followed in a longitudinal project, *Young foreign language teachers in the beginning of their careers*, based in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Jyväskylä (see Nyman, 2009; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2011) with further data collected from some of the participants after three or four more years in the profession.

The teachers of English (and other foreign languages) struggle with their identities during the first few years in the profession. While trying to figure out how they themselves would go about teaching and putting their newly adopted ideals into practice, they vacillate between two career paths: do they wish to view themselves as *language teachers* or as *language educators*, or opt for a compromise of one sort (Table 31.1)?
TABLE 31.1 Identity struggles of novice teachers of English (and other foreign languages), based on Nyman (2009), Ruohotie-Lyhty (2011), and Chapters 8 and 9 in Kalaja, et al. (2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Language teacher?</th>
<th>Language educator?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher?</td>
<td>Little sense of agency; the school environment viewed as constraint; distant from pupils.</td>
<td>Great sense of agency, ability to reflect; the school environment viewed as enabler; close to pupils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching: content?</td>
<td>Narrow focus: relaying subject matter; i.e., language as system, including grammar and vocabulary.</td>
<td>Wide focus: ensuring overall growth of pupils, including multiculturalism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils?</td>
<td>Objects (of teaching and assessment by a teacher); learners of English.</td>
<td>Subjects (e.g., as seizors of learning opportunities and assessors of progress of their own and that of others), taking responsibility for their learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School community?</td>
<td>Little, if any, cooperation with colleagues and participation in school activities.</td>
<td>Active cooperation with colleagues and participation in school activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The choice of a career path has consequences for what they will view as important in their jobs: their relationship—and involvement—with pupils and colleagues, their main aims in teaching, and the principles and practices applied in their classes. In addition, the teachers of English have been found to experience two types of tension (outlined in Chapters 8 and 9 in Kalaja, et al., 2015) in the early years of their careers, with both having an impact on their identities. The first is related to the school environment: does it allow the novice teachers to apply the principles and practices envisioned by them upon graduation in their classes, or not? To put it another way, do they view themselves as independent actors, feeling free, or even encouraged, to be innovative in their ways of teaching English (e.g., by taking in-service workshops or courses); or as dependent, feeling pressured to fall back on more traditional ways of teaching (e.g., in response to constraints imposed by their colleagues or pupils in class, norms in the school community, or high-stakes examinations)? This is related to how agentive, or capable of acting, the teachers view themselves to be in their school environment and in putting their ideals into practice, or alternatively being socialized into the well-established canon of the past. The second type of tension is evident in the narrative accounts of their first nine or ten years in the profession, having established their careers by that time.
"English is a way of travelling, Finnish the station from which you set out"  

The stories were found to be of two types: stories of *identity change* and those of *identity continuity*. The teachers will construct themselves either as professionals who are sensitive and willing to adapt to the needs of their pupils (after a critical incident of one type or another with them), or as professionals who resist changes to the principles or practices applied in their classes.

**Future developments in research on the identities of L2 teachers in Finland**

In the two projects reviewed, student and teacher identities have been (mostly) viewed as discursive phenomena (e.g., Potter & Wetherell, 1987). In other words, students and teachers come to construct their identities on specific occasions of talking (i.e., in interviews) or writing (e.g., in essays and sentence completion tasks), or in multimodal data (including drawings), and their identities can be characterized as a struggle or being dynamic across time and space. Furthermore, the development of student and teacher identities has been viewed in relation to their sense of agency and beliefs (for a review, see Chapter 2 in Kalaja, et al., 2015), as these are expected to influence how the teachers will go about teaching English. Future research is needed on student and teacher identities in relation to the *emotions* involved in the learning and teaching of English. This is a conclusion from both the projects.

In their research design the two projects have been longitudinal. The participants have been observed over exceptionally long periods of time. In contrast to some previous studies, the developments observed so far in the teacher identities are not necessarily thought to be something that only novice teachers go through: they may become critical even at later stages in their careers. Nevertheless, further research is needed to trace later developments in their identities over careers that may last another 30 years. Furthermore, recent developments in Finland and its educational system (revision of curricula; innovations in IT; students with multilingual and multicultural backgrounds; introduction of the principles of inclusion) call for further contextualized research on the identities of L2 teachers in the country.

**Directions for future research**

In more general terms, some assumptions underlying current research on L2 teacher identities could be reconsidered or challenged, when doing research in the years to come. More specifically:

1. Teachers have been assumed to go through a fixed set of stages in the course of their careers, and so novice teachers have been compared with experienced teachers, instead of following a group or illustrative cases over extensive periods of time.
2. Developments in teacher identities have been viewed as if caused only by major changes, such as organizational reforms or curricular revisions, and not as something taking place in response to daily routines in a school environment, or possibly interacting with, for example, the teachers’ sense of agency, regulation of emotions, or beliefs.

3. Teacher identities have been observed over relatively short periods of time, such as a course, a semester, or year (with a pre- and post-design), and therefore (not surprisingly) with little evidence of developments in their identities.

To conclude, this chapter has presented part of my story as a student of English philology, feeling very frustrated with my studies, turning gradually into a specialist in L2 learning and teaching, being passionate about pursuing research in the field, and always concerned with the quality of teacher education and the developing identities of the teachers I work with.

References


An accidental teacher

Like many colleagues in the English Language Teaching (ELT) field, I was an accidental teacher, coming to the profession and the identity it offered through unplanned opportunities. A couple of years after completing a combined honors BA in social anthropology and ethnomusicology, the Master of Norman Bethune College at York University offered me the chance to teach English at the Sichuan Foreign Language Institute (SFLI) in Chongqing, China, provided that I complete a one-year TESOL certificate at a local community college. I took up the offer, completed the certificate, and then spent a rewarding and often challenging year (1987–1988) of unlearning some aspects of my training and discovering others more locally appropriate. After my year at SFLI, it seemed like the perfect career path—an income far more reliable than a musician’s and the opportunity for a lifetime of extended living and travel abroad.

A quick master’s degree in TESOL seemed like a sensible move in terms of job prospects, so I applied to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) in 1990 while supporting myself teaching adult ESL in various adult community-based programs. It was a very exciting time to be at OISE with a strong core of graduate students interested in exploring how critical theories (poststructuralism, postmodernism, critical pedagogies, and literacies) might be adopted or deployed in ELT and applied linguistics. Roger Simon’s course on Language, Power, and Possibility was especially thought-provoking, with intense debates that lingered on in the local pub long after class. Jim Cummins and Monica Heller were also key faculty that inspired many of us to reexamine the knowledge base of our field and explore issues of power and identity and of language as a social practice deeply implicated in the life chances of students and communities. I was highly motivated, intellectually and
pedagogically, by the possibilities that a critical ELT might offer. I soon decided to continue my studies and pursue a doctorate at OISE, and I started to explore my own teaching at the local Chinese community center through the critical, social lens that my professors and colleagues had opened up for me. In this space and perspective, my understanding of language teacher identity (LTI) developed.

**LTI as reflexive and transformative practice**

The Chinese community center became both a source of employment and an action research site for my doctoral thesis, hence a meeting place of OISE theories and classroom practicalities. The center fascinated me for the context it set for language instruction. Students came from all over Toronto, drawn by a shared ethnolinguistic identity and close friendships, but also by a wide range of settlement and counseling services provided. The surrounding neighborhood was also significant in that almost every professional and consumer service was available in the students’ L1, yet students continued to come to class as interested in learning about their new home—its history and politics, neighborhoods and meeting places—as they were in learning standardized lexico-grammar or generalized survival skills and functions.

The community center seemed an ideal site to investigate and apply the theoretical notion of language as a social practice. The community-based model I conceptualized viewed second/additional language teaching as integral to individual and collective identity negotiation. Following poststructural theory, I considered the notion of community as both the condition and outcome of classroom pedagogy (Morgan, 2002), a perspective I tried to encourage through thematic, content-based units (i.e., current events, family life, citizenship issues, employment, housing) around which specific language instruction was integrated and often recycled, given the mixed streaming and continuous intake of students. Again, drawing from my OISE studies, my orientation to this content was always critical, looking for ways to raise students’ awareness of the role language plays in shaping personal and social worlds, imagined and real. In what I inelegantly described as a community-based ESL pedagogy, critical practice had two interdependent dimensions, one reflexive the other transformative, the former—inward looking at the epistemologies, discourses, and ideologies that define and limit critical practice in ELT, the latter—outward looking and oriented towards change, specifically through the development of language skills that potentially challenge social power relations and inequalities beyond the classroom.

Around this time, I was most fortunate to meet like-minded colleagues with whom research in language teacher identity became a primary focus and who have become close friends over the years. Bill Johnston was our unofficial leader and organizer, his inspiring book on values in language teacher education (2003) foregrounding ethical relationships and responsibilities previously under-examined in the field. In various conference colloquia with Bill, Manka Varghese, Kim Johnson, Kyp Téllez, and sometimes Carla Chamberlin-Quinlisk, the conceptual
diversity we individually brought to the subject seemed to be a collective strength, one that culminated in a co-authored article, titled *Language teacher identity: Three perspectives and beyond* (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). In short, we all viewed language teacher identity as a crucial component of the knowledge base of ELT and LTE, yet we did not consider any single theoretical approach—i.e., social psychology, sociocultural, or poststructural theories—as necessarily superior for the conceptual and pedagogical tasks at hand. Each one would contain insights and blind spots relative to the specific setting in which language teacher identity was being researched and/or deployed.

My contribution to the group article arose out of my work at the Chinese community center and my doctoral studies at OISE. In ways parallel to the notion of critical practice for community-based ELT, I viewed language teacher identity work as having both reflexive and transformative elements, a perspective I continue to have and explore in LTE. Following Foucault, we are subjects-in-discourse, historically positioned and shaped by power relations and a professional knowledge base that conditions the possibilities we imagine and act upon. Critical awareness (i.e., reflexivity) of the situated limits that power/knowledge imposes enables new possibilities, the transformative dimension in which identity itself can become a strategic resource, an idea that I explored in an article titled *Teacher identity as pedagogy* (Morgan, 2004). Roger Simon’s (1995) work was key, a dynamic and contingent perspective on teacher identity inspired by Butler’s notion of performativity. In the article, I adopted Simon’s concept of an *image-text*—students’ affective construction of a teacher’s identity—as a strategic resource to redeploy in ways that challenge unexamined stereotypes and their consequences. Perhaps most important, Simon described this strategic, transformative identity work as a “political project” (p. 92), which aligned closely with my own community-based interests in language as a social practice, one that reflexively and necessarily transgressed strong lingua-centric biases in the knowledge base of LTE.

**LTI as a site of agency and pedagogy**

The strategic reworking of my “image-text” (Morgan, 2004) was directed towards gender relations and norms, offering alternative perspectives in the intercultural setting of my ESL class. As I describe in the article, over several months I intentionally focused on aspects of my life that disrupted traditional, patriarchal relations in family life. I would refer to my wife’s central role in managing family finances and proudly note her higher income. I would also casually mention my sharing of child-rearing duties, house cleaning, and cooking, often asking for Chinese food recipes and cooking advice from students. Over time, comments from the class seemed to indicate a new image-text of “Brian” was being circulated, one that suggested and validated alternative gender relations in family life.

This strategic re-presentation of my own identity, and the gender options it might suggest or validate, was the central focus of the notion of teacher identity as
pedagogy (Morgan, 2004). It is based on my belief or assumption that language teacher identity is a key source of agency for social change. Still, it is a form of agency with situated conditions and constraints. The performative display of an alternative or transgressive image-text is always dialogic and negotiated, suggesting possibilities rather than certainties. In my case, a prior co-constructed image-text of numerous privileges (e.g., a middle-class, white, male “native speaker” of English) and locally relevant experiences (a doctoral student who had taught in China) made the positive reception of my intervention and agency more likely, at least for some.

Reflecting on two other dimensions of this agency (identity as pedagogy), it’s important to consider, first, that it takes place in a second/additional language-learning context of ongoing lessons, many of which were form-focused, reflecting the preferences of students (Morgan, 2002). Language teacher identity, in this respect, is something always interwoven within these lessons, inter-textually rather than contextually or peripherally. This is also a key perspective in the 2004 article, and one that is inspired by Cummins’ (2001) work on the complex negotiation of interpersonal relations between teachers and students (i.e., collaborative versus coercive relations of power). Second, evidence of causally direct outcomes from this agency (i.e., teacher identity as pedagogy) is not easily discernable. In LTE, for example, we don’t learn or negotiate identity in the same immediate way that we might learn a new aspect of lexico-grammar and the pedagogical options for presenting it. In the same setting, and for the same participants, perception and evidence of identity change will vary over time, based on prior experiences and the active meaning making of participants; a process that might be viewed through ecological or eco-semiotic metaphors (Morgan & Martin, 2014).

Future developments: Focusing on transformative possibilities

In the further development of teacher agency, a balance of reflexive and transformative perspectives is crucial for LTI work. My own reading of the current literature is that the reflexive dimension and its focus on the “inner world” of the teacher—her or his subjectivity, beliefs/values, epistemologies, emotions—has been overemphasized, in part, through research methods (i.e., auto-ethnography, narrative inquiry) whose potential blind spots include a tendency to individualize data, transposing macro social factors into emotional epiphenomena; a potentially conservative orientation that conceals the larger, structural sources of power and exaggerates the agentic capacity of individuals to mediate or transgress them. Matthew Clarke and I (Morgan & Clarke, 2011) described this development as also furthering a “confessional obligation” in identity work (see Foucault’s notion of pastoral power), where teacher/researcher expectations, often thinly disguised, channel participant experiences towards preferred and normalized forms of display and accountability.

The relative paucity of transformative work may, in large part, reflect the (inter) disciplinary interests of LTI researchers, some of who examine the subject
area through theoretical perspectives marginally related to pedagogy. Through my current work as an instructor in the certificate in the Discipline of Teaching English as an International Language (D-TEIL) at Glendon College, York University (Martin & Morgan, 2015), I continue to research the conditions that foster a transformative potential in LTE. In my D-TEIL course, English as a World Language, I integrate an Issues Analysis Project (IAP) that asks students to identify an ideological and/or curricular gap or bias in the field and to design a “blueprint for action” (i.e., a policy statement, advocacy initiative, curricular innovation, lesson plans, pre-/in-service workshop) that seeks in part to address the problem. Originally conceived by my colleague Nick Elson at York, the IAP seeks to build awareness and field-internal capacities in the kinds of powerful texts and genres through which status and voice are advanced in ELT communities of practice (Morgan, 2010). By making the IAP a group project, collaboration, negotiation, and compromise—essential for transformative work in institutional settings—also become part of the skill set involved. Again, to reiterate the ecological perspective on learning noted above, transformative “outcomes” and identity effects related to the IAP can arise much later in time and across varied sites and experiences. On several occasions, I’ve had former D-TEIL students contact me about their IAP and how they have integrated aspects of it in their current academic and professional work.

**Directions for future research**

One of the unique aspects of the D-TEIL program is that it is not specifically or narrowly conceived as a pre-service LTE certificate program. As designed by my colleague Ian Martin, D-TEIL is intended to be an additional component of a strong liberal arts education within an officially bilingual (French-English) college (Martin & Morgan, 2015). Some students may decide to go on and become English language teachers, but for many it is an opportunity for enriched experiential learning and the broadening of imagined horizons, an identity-forming dimension enhanced via a final three-week practicum at the Varona Higher Pedagogical University in Havana, Cuba.

In respect to the idea of language as a social practice and my work on community-based adult ESL, I’ve come to see the liberal arts orientation of D-TEIL as offering critical perspectives and insights that, especially in LTE, may have been inadvertently neglected along the path towards greater professionalization and disciplinary self-respect. Increased professionalization and specialization always carries the risk of preparing teachers who know more and more about less and less. Potentially lost are the kinds of experiences I first had at the Chinese community center early in my career, where the ESL teacher’s role always went beyond lingua-centric concerns and proficiencies, requiring her or him to engage with a wide variety of intercultural questions and problems posed regarding the immigrant and refugee-receiving nation.
Regarding language teacher identity negotiation, I would like to see more research on integrating a liberal arts and critical, social practice dimension in LTE settings. This research would focus on the reflexive and transformative effects on LTI that arise from curricular reorientations that integrate more citizenship-related content and issues. My own local wish list would include required courses/units on the history of indigenous and white settler relations in Canada, perhaps starting with the recently released (December 2015) final report of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), from which a content and language integrated learning (CLIL) unit could be developed as an IAP, for example, and hopefully taught in a community-based adult ESL program as part of a practicum. Through triangulated research data, including interviews with student-teachers (some participating ESL/EAL students, as well), observations of the CLIL unit taught, and discourse analyses of lesson materials and related readings, research would explore the strengths and limitations of the lesson along the reflexive and transformative goals/ideals outlined in this chapter: Which elements of the lesson raise critical language awareness of how lexico-grammatical choices shape our understanding of the content involved? What aspects of the lesson take ESL/EAL students seriously as active meaning makers and as citizens with unique experiences and important insights to contribute (i.e., overcoming deficit orientations tied to L2 language proficiencies) (Morgan, 2002)?

Considering, again, LTI negotiation, research would examine how the content of the TRC influenced and/or challenged prior beliefs held by the student-teacher regarding the historical and contemporary treatment of Canada’s First Nations and how this content influenced decision making for the lesson plan. Additional data collection (i.e., a post-lesson reflection paper or action research component) would provide an opportunity for the student-teacher and teacher educator, in dialogue, to discuss future lesson plans that expand the transformative possibilities of the TRC theme and unit. This final dialogic point raises an additional research element to consider—specifically, the identity of the teacher educator (i.e., values and experiences) in shaping curricular orientations (Martin & Morgan, 2015): To what extent does the teacher educator encourage or allow for perspectives on the nation-state—and on language teaching and learning—that facilitate critique or, conversely, reinforce the status quo? Such research perspectives are crucial for LTI as critical social practice.

References


Introduction

Language teachers have certain ideological or political inclinations, ranging from neutral, conservative, liberal, to radical. Although my ideological position during the early years of my teaching career—teaching English as a foreign language in public schools in Japan—was neutral, I gradually integrated socially relevant and critical perspectives into my teaching, perhaps because I had always been supportive of social justice while I was growing up. During my doctoral work in Toronto, Canada, in the early 1990s, I was introduced to critical pedagogy and critical applied linguistics through coursework and informal discussions with peers. Since then, I have taken critical perspectives in teaching Japanese as a foreign language and language teacher education in North America. However, a classroom incident, which happened a few years ago, provided me with an opportunity to critically reflect on the ways in which critical pedagogy had been implemented in my classroom (Kubota, 2014). This enabled me to further critically reflect on my teacher identity as a critical pedagogue especially with regard to my ideological positioning vis-à-vis my students’ and the ways in which I had engaged students in what I regard to be critical perspectives. Drawing on this experience, I will discuss issues of identity relating to language teachers and language teacher educators who support critical approaches to pedagogy.

Critical language teacher identity: A classroom incident

A few years ago, I experienced a classroom incident in Japan during which several young Japanese male teacher candidates voiced their historical revisionist view in front of a couple of Chinese-Canadian female peers during a class discussion following...
an extracurricular peace seminar, which I encouraged my students to attend. They argued that the 1937 Nanking Massacre, which was committed by the Japanese Imperial Army against Chinese civilians, had not actually happened (see Kubota, 2014, for more details). This caused a great deal of emotional distress for the Chinese-Canadian peers. I was unable to handle the situation effectively, since I had not expected such an outrageous view expressed in a teacher preparation class. As a teacher educator advocating critical approaches to language teaching, I regarded this view as ethically unacceptable. I commented that the massacre is an established historical fact. I also encouraged the students to draw a parallel between their denial view and a denial of the atomic bombings or other injustices. But this instructional attempt did not lead to a deeper understanding. Although I valued the importance of affirming multiple perspectives in the classroom, I also agreed with Nieto (1995) who rejects absolute relativism, which, for instance, would accept the view that the Holocaust never happened as a legitimate topic for discussion. However, critical reflection of this incident enabled me to self-critique my perspective that had previously informed my teacher identity. It also allowed me to give increased consideration to world views that contain different ideological stances as well as affective consequences caused by critical teaching. More specifically, I realized that as a critical teacher I might have imposed my own belief on students by exposing them to a liberal stance underlying the peace seminar and failed to invite them to express their own views freely and to collaboratively unpack their views as well as others. I neglected to try to understand their feelings and points of views; neither did I try to engage the students in genuine dialogue to unpack their beliefs as well as mine.

This classroom incident further led to another opportunity for me to think about my critical identity as a teacher scholar—a role both as a classroom instructor and as an intellectual. My reflection on the incident compelled me to write a manuscript for a peer-reviewed journal. Drawing on literature on teaching about controversial issues, I wanted to problematize critical pedagogy’s potential problem of indoctrination and alienation of students who have different perspectives and explore what could have been done differently in my pedagogical practice. I was quite disappointed to read some of the anonymous reviewers’ defensive comments on my problematization and their outright rejection of the manuscript, which was eventually published by another journal. I knew intuitively and learned later that the reviewers were sympathetic to critical pedagogy, which indicated that my perspective was perhaps interpreted as a threat to critical teacher identity.

These experiences demonstrate my struggle with the fear of potentially imposing my ideas on my students and consequently alienating them because they hold different views. They also demonstrate the struggle to negotiate identities within a peer group of critical scholar teachers. Although the contradiction between critical pedagogy’s purported aim of emancipation and its perpetuation of gender, racial, class, and linguistic inequality in the production of scholarly knowledge has already been critiqued in the field of education (e.g., Ellsworth, 1989), this contradiction and my own experience indicate that teachers’ struggles in implementing critical
pedagogy may impact their professional identity. In critical pedagogy, teacher identity is often located in a site where teachers and students struggle to negotiate their ideological difference. A similar struggle may be experienced between teacher scholars and their peers who share critical perspectives. In what follows, I further explore the nature of critical teacher identity.

Critical teacher identity as a site of ideological struggle

A critical teacher identity can be characterized by a firm commitment to social justice, which influences pedagogical orientation. Critical teacher identity is informed by philosophical underpinnings of critical approaches to language pedagogy, which range from Freirean critical pedagogy to a poststructuralist orientation. Freirean critical pedagogy aims for emancipation through raising learners’ critical consciousness about the reality of oppression and domination, whereas a poststructuralist approach, as seen in queer theory for instance, envisions transformation through problematizing taken-for-granted knowledge underlying social discourses, structures, and practices (Pennycook, 2001). In either case, critical approaches ideologically endorse a transformative vision, inviting learners to problematize unequal relations of power and to pursue social justice. Accordingly, teachers and teacher educators who endorse such orientations tend to have an identity with a distinct ethical commitment, which guides their pedagogical practices.

This tendency corresponds to a privilege approach to teaching about controversial issues in the classroom, where a teacher strongly believes that a certain view or ideological position is preferred and should be adopted by the students (Hess, 2004). In critical pedagogy, a preferred ideological position is consistent with anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-homophobia, anti-linguicism, anti-war, anti-poverty, and anti-far-right politics. However, this approach can backfire as in my classroom incident. Even if students appear to accept the views embedded in teacher-selected materials, activities, or topics for class discussions, they may be silenced by unequal relations of power between the teacher and themselves.

One way to avoid this limitation of the privilege approach is to use poststructuralist inquiry to unpack knowledge and power. In this approach, teachers and students explore together questions such as: How is a particular statement or view interpreted differently depending on the context? What assumptions underlie the statement? Who decides the legitimacy of the statement? Who benefits from the interpretation? Whose interests are represented? The assumption here is that all knowledge, including that the Nanking Massacre did not happen, is partial and thus worth scrutinizing. In adopting this approach, however, a critical teacher may still adhere to their critical teacher identity and slip back into the privilege approach. Furthermore, some may still argue that not all ideas deserve knowledge deconstruction—racist, sexist, or homophobic statements should not be tolerated under any circumstances. However, given the current rise of far-right political discourse in many parts of the world, such an assertion may be too naïve.
Engaging pedagogically in contentious issues, such as the one I experienced, is highly contextual and complex, offering no one simple solution. Although critical language teachers as a group may have an identity of being politically radical and ethically committed to social justice, critical scrutiny of the potential problem of indoctrination and alienation suggests that critical self-reflexivity or hyper self-reflexivity (Kapoor, 2004) may create a new identity space that allows increased vigilance, empathy, and non-defensiveness, which could generate a greater amount of dialogue across difference.

In sum, critical language teacher identity may initially be shaped by discourse in teacher education, publications, professional development, political activities, and so on. Yet, this identity is obviously not always fixed, just like other identities. It is located in a site of ideological struggle and sometimes contested by ideological difference held by students, colleagues, and others. Teachers may resist the dissonance or negotiate the difference, which impacts the shaping and reshaping of their identity.

**Future development in critical language teacher identity**

The classroom incident described above enabled me to reflect critically on my own beliefs about what knowledge is legitimate, what content should be presented to students, and how it should be discussed. This reflection impacted my identity as a critical language teacher and teacher educator in that I came to value greater self-reflexivity, tolerance of difference, and the affective dimension of learning. However, one personal example is not sufficient for making general proposals for future research. Thus, the following ideas should be understood as the humble opinion of a teacher scholar whose research interest is in critical applied linguistics.

First, research could uncover what actually constitutes critical language teachers’ individual and collective identities. The characteristics of collective identity, which I attempted to describe earlier in this chapter, are based on my own assumptions. Diversity must exist in the ways in which individuals define their critical language teacher identity and the ways in which they have developed their teacher identity. Simultaneously, individual identities may share some elements that constitute a collective identity of critical language teachers.

Second, one could investigate how individual teachers negotiate their identity when they experience an ideological conflict with students, peers, or others. Some may employ critical self-reflexivity, leading to a significant identity shift, whereas others may approach the challenge differently, confirming or readjusting their identity.

Third, related to the second point and perhaps most importantly, research could reveal how critical language teacher identity might interact with diverse student identities, including their ideological beliefs, and how it influences teaching in the classroom. Longitudinal investigations could reveal the dynamic nature of identity as well as the complexity of how instructional content, classroom interaction, and teacher identities are intertwined.
These issues are most appropriately investigated through qualitative research methodologies, such as ethnography, auto-ethnography, and case studies, as well as the analysis of various data obtained through interviews, observations, and documents (e.g., journal entries, learner feedback).

**Directions for future research**

Language teacher identity is under-researched in critical language pedagogy. It is worth investigating how critical language teachers develop, alter, or rearrange their identities, especially when they are confronted by ideological conflicts or other ethical challenges in the classroom or elsewhere. This is because critical language teaching is characterized by a transformative purpose, and thus, not only is the transformation expected to happen in learners’ consciousness and social practices, but it is also likely to take place in teachers’ awareness and pedagogical practices. As such, future research on teacher identity in the field of critical pedagogy can explore the complex interplay between teacher identity and student identity and whether this interaction works to further enhance criticality or creates an ideological struggle to be conceptually and pedagogically overcome. Examining critical language teachers’ identity shifts will illuminate the fluid nature of their understanding and implementation of criticality, freeing critical pedagogy from its dogmatic tendency and advancing theoretical and practical explorations of critical language teaching.

**References**


34

WHO WE ARE

Teacher identity, race, empire, and nativeness

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Who am I? Personal biography and English teacher identity

Language teacher identity as a theoretical construct cannot be disentangled from its presence in my personal biography, from the powerful role that it plays in guiding my practice within teacher preparation programs, from its analytical value throughout my research, or from the position it occupies in shaping language teaching, which is not only a profession but, particularly in the case of English, an industry. So I ask myself: Who am I? I am a researcher of ideologies of race and empire in English language teaching. I am a teacher educator, preparing master’s level students to teach English and doctoral level students to work as researchers, teacher educators, teachers, policymakers, and administrators. My work looks specifically at English and my concern is therefore primarily with English teacher identity, as opposed to identities of teachers of other languages.

I wonder again, who am I? My personal, professional, and political biographies are, of course, intertwined. I grew up primarily in Australia and Nouvelle-Calédonie/New Caledonia (a former French colony in the South Pacific Ocean), and my heritage is Sri Lankan. I moved to Canada for my higher education, and my undergraduate degree, in English and French, is from the University of Toronto. I have lived in the United States throughout my graduate schooling and my tenure line and now hold dual Australian and US citizenship. I am somewhat recently tenured at the University of Washington, in Seattle, in graduate programs that prepare ESOL teachers and doctoral students. My racial identity, accent, language identity, and national identity therefore seem at least superficially to be discordant (although, of course, such boundary-driven thinking might be considered simplistic in today’s globalized reality).

Another question to ponder: Who am I in relation to English? Four generations ago, on both sides of my family, my ancestors made the decision to relinquish their
heritage languages, Tamil and Singhalese, and to embrace English monolingualism. English was positioned as a language of power, and acquiring it at the expense of our heritage language was a fairly commonsensical move designed to provide better futures for ensuing generations, a goal it certainly realized. Important decisions around linguistic identity and language maintenance play a role in shaping what we come to understand as language speaker identity, which itself necessarily shapes understandings and images of legitimate English teacher identity.

**Language teacher identity and English language teaching**

“Who we are is just as important as who we teach,” said TESOL’s National Geographic Teacher of the Year, Anne Marie Foerster Luu, at the association’s 2013 international convention. It was a sobering thought for me. As she spoke her words, I was thinking about the English Language Teaching (ELT) profession in terms of a large, complex, and not-terribly-transparent industry, and I was pondering the tremendous importance of questions around who its professionals are, how we are perceived, and what we look like when we enter English classrooms. In particular, the history of English language spread over the past few centuries has led to conceptions of race, nativeness, and national identity that all arrange elaborate layers of meaning over the English language and consequently over understandings of English teacher identity, shaping the formation of the profession. For me, the most significant challenge posed by this layering is its invisibility, the appearance of neutrality that is able to frequently accompany the English language, the possibility for conceptualizing the English language as separate from English teacher identity. The question of who we are is therefore one that needs to be understood as central to the pedagogical practice of teachers, but furthermore needs to be engaged with as a central construct of the profession on all levels of policy, administration, and research.

Let me narrate what I mean, as Kathleen Casey (1993) suggests, by telling it with my life. Throughout my childhood, the question “Do you speak English?” always evoked (and to a certain extent still triggers) a straightening of my spine, a sudden sense of needing to convey authority, dignity, and legitimacy to my interlocutor—whether this be a new teacher, a physician, a potential playmate, a stranger who approached me to ask for directions: “Do you speak English?” As a child in ethnically homogenous Canberra, Australia, in the 1970s and 1980s, coming into contact with few people of color, I staked a claim in English with the assertion: “English is my native language.”

Today I wonder what meanings and identities my child-self was associating with English nativeness, and the degree to which my South-Asian-appearing racial identity mediated my interlocuters’ questions about my linguistic identity, the presumption that because I was coded as ‘not-white’ I was therefore less likely to speak English. At that time, my instinct was to invest in this notion of nativeness because I understood it to offer me, among other qualities, belonging.
Echoes of that same sense of illegitimacy surfaced more frequently later as I grew gradually into a teacher-self. In a class of Chinese students in the mid-1990s, I once asked:

“Have you ever been to the United States before?”
“No, I have never been to the United States before.”
“How about you, James?”
“Yes, I have ever been to the United States before.”

In the debate that followed, several of the members of my class related having been taught in Chinese classrooms the construction: “I have ever been to the United States.”

My negotiations around correctness, accentedness, and varieties were mitigated by my concerns about appearing to be an illegitimate speaker. My students had indicated that they did not necessarily make distinctions such as native from non-native speech, British accent from Singaporean, and I wondered how they categorized me, aware that their reading of my racial identity was the root of my concerns. I was new to this business of teaching, and I wondered whether they were questioning my competence to teach them English. I had not yet been exposed to critiques of native-speaker supremacy, nor had it occurred to me to problematize it on my own, and I recognize now that I was embracing nativeness as my key to legitimacy.

Over these decades, my biography has led me to an understanding of the crucial importance of teacher identity, and particularly English teacher identity, in the formation of the profession, and has led me to distinguish teacher identity as the central pivot around which the TESOL profession in its current form circulates.

Shifting conceptions of language teacher identity

Current conceptions of English teaching have thus far underestimated the centrality of the construct of language teacher identity within the larger project of language teaching. In particular, the embeddedness of the teaching of English within formations of race and empire is sustained in often-invisible ways by constructions of language teacher identity. For instance, distinctions between native and non-native teachers for hiring purposes, and an unevenness across racial lines in the ways the distinction is applied, play an important role in maintaining white and native-speaker privilege within (and, to a degree, beyond) the profession. As an example, Kumaravadivelu (2016) recently drew our attention to Doan’s 2014 report of salary discrepancies in Ho Chi Minh City, with British teachers being paid US$10,000 a month on average; Australian teachers being paid US$5,000, and Filipino teachers receiving only US$2,000 for performing the same work. Examining how ideologies of race and empire make their way into understandings of what it means to be an English teacher can shed light on how racial inequalities are sustained within our profession but also beyond the profession, on the material consequences of these imbalances, and on how they contribute to a broader, global
set of racialized inequalities. In using the term *race*, I make reference not to any biological difference but rather to subjectively and socially constructed understandings of racial identity and identification that perpetuate systems of categorization and sustain boundaries, such as boundaries between “minority” and “white,” which with the assistance of empire run parallel to the boundaries between “native” and “non-native.” I use the term *empire* as a collective term to describe the varied and complicated processes by which some states end up acquiring and maintaining power and control over others, including colonialism, coloniality, globalization, and neoliberalism, especially as these relate to multilingualism. These two constructs, race and empire, are for me inseparable. Because the historical processes of colonialism were so dependent on racial divisions, and because the spread of the English language across the globe was connected for many centuries to the international political power of people who are constructed as white, to speak of empire is to speak, whether explicitly or not, of race because it is empire that produced and sustains formations of race, and it is notions of race that construct relations of empire. Furthermore, meanings of English—often constructed in media, textbooks, and other discourses as associated with wealth, power, cosmopolitanism, modernity, coolness, and whiteness—cannot be separated from representations of English speakers, most powerfully re-inscribed by images of English teachers (Motha, 2014).

What do I mean when I engage with the concept of *teacher identity*? When I first started thinking explicitly about teacher identities, I conceptualized the construct’s relevance on a fairly individual level (Motha, 2006a; 2006b; 2006c), although nonetheless thinking superficially about the historical significance of the layers of race, empire, nativeness on an individual level. For instance, one example might be questions about how an individual teacher’s racial identity reflected and perhaps even reproduced historical patterns of language spread, such as the consequences of a teacher who identifies as white articulating stereotypes about a student coded as a racial minority. Another might be the embeddedness of a teacher’s gender identity within historical gendered labor relations, for instance a history of teaching as a female-dominated profession leading to the widespread infantilizing of teachers, which becomes framed in the contemporary context as “accountability” (see Vandrick, this volume). My discussion in this chapter’s opening of how my linguistic identity and specifically heritage language loss shapes my teaching positionality is yet another example of the power of an individual teacher’s identity in shaping her practice. This notion of language teacher identity as a point of reflection for individual teachers is widespread within the profession, with teacher candidates fairly routinely being asked to reflect on the implications of their own identities for their practice.

However, more recently, I’ve become concerned with the power of teacher identity not only in the lives of individual teachers or groups of teachers but as a construct that underpins the profession, that actually creates the logic for the profession. The construction of the language “English,” and the constructions of
English “learners” and English “speakers” are dependent on racial, national, and colonial formations. It therefore becomes impossible to construct English or English learners without simultaneously constructing English teachers in ways that serve as a juxtaposition, as a crucial foil, as a goal, as an imagined endpoint. Teachers’ bodies become important in this endeavor. The ELT profession with all of its racialized and colonized ideologies becomes embodied in its teachers. We are dependent on the formation of English teachers’ racial, colonial (meaning the colonial status of national identity), and linguistic identities to not only shape but to create the logic for the profession and consequently to provide a rationale for the profession’s existence. This is the same logic that creates the commonsense notion that individuals from certain identity groups are more competent to provide English teaching or English teacher training services than others. One vivid example is Jacqueline Widin’s (2010) description of policies and marketing efforts constructed collaboratively by aid agencies, universities in English-dominant nations, teachers, students, and government officials to enhance Australia’s interests and reputation as a provider of English teaching services and teacher training in Laos and Japan, without regard for the resultant global inequality in the marketplace. This type of re-inscription of unearned privilege through deployment of teacher identities warrants critique, not only as a practice that solidifies an industry power imbalance but one that sustains a flawed theoretical logic.

Future developments in language teacher identity research

One pressing need I perceive as we move forward is for us to recognize that concerns about language teacher identity have consequences beyond social justice, equity, and ethical labor practices for only non-native speakers and teachers of color. Much needed in English teacher identity research is work that engages with language teacher identity as a construct with conceptual power beyond the individual lives of teachers, one that extends to the theoretical foundation of the profession, one that acknowledges the essential role played by race and empire within the theoretical terrain of the profession. One avenue towards accomplishing this goal is to turn our energies away from strategies that pursue what Hardt and Negri (2000) term *deterritorialization*, that is, strategies that seek to detach English from place, with the result of an English that belongs anywhere, can be owned by anyone, can be used to express any culture, an English detached from its territory. Rather, I suggest that we strive instead for Chakrabarty’s (2000) notion of *provincialization*. Chakrabarty notes that European colonization has already occurred and cannot be undone, and in fact that this notion of decolonization is less than helpful because to imagine a reversal of colonization would be absurd. He writes instead about the project of decentering the intellectual footprint left by Europe across the globe, which he calls provincialization. While Chakrabarty didn’t write specifically about English, the English language, too, has been territorialized by its centuries of history and it, too, carries particular epistemologies and especially
identities. Provincializing English, to me, offers a way of moving forward with a critique of the field’s ability to obscure issues of race and empire. To provincialize English would imply a critical scrutiny of the mechanisms that allow some teacher identities to remain privileged and legitimate, and of how these identities are changed with changes in linguistic identity.

I see teacher education holding great promise as a fruitful point of intervention into this reconceptualization. I call upon TESOL professionals to use the construct of English teacher identity to provincialize teacher education as an entry point to the provincialization of the English teaching profession. I am committed to the belief teacher education cannot be considered to be carried out ethically unless it prepares ESOL teachers with an explicit understanding of the ways in which teachers’ racial, colonial, and linguistic identities shape the logic for the profession, underpin the profession.

Directions for future research

Future directions that I envision lean less towards a list of topics and more towards an expanded definition of the field to acknowledge its embeddedness in ideologies of race and empire. The possibilities for research topics and methodologies are endless (Varghese, Motha, Trent, Park, & Reeves, 2016). Some include:

1. An increased focus on the social constructedness of geography and place in order to understand the role that these concepts play in constructing race, empire, and English. An example might be narrative analyses of data relating to biography that explores implicit connections between location and linguistic identity;
2. Analyses of the connections between the profession and broader social spaces. One example is critical text analyses of images, texts, job ads, promotional materials, teaching materials, curricula, and policy documents to investigate how the profession comes to be represented as belonging to particular lands, people, or racial identities;
3. Ethnographic work exploring language teachers’ understandings of how their own or their students’ language identities are produced in relation to such identity categories as race and nation;
4. Classroom-based research exploring teachers’ negotiations of the connections between their own identities and the global terrain of English language teaching.

These suggestions are all pertinent to researchers, but the analyses could be equally useful within teacher education contexts, with teacher candidates analyzing materials such as their own autobiographies, videotapes of their own teaching, ethnographic data with their own students, marketing materials of their institutions’ intensive English programs, media discourses they find themselves embedded within, and institutional policies, in order to support their understanding of consequences of formation of the profession for their own teaching.
References


REFLECTING ON MY FLIGHT PATH

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How the story began

I was born in a suburb of Tokyo, Japan, and educated in the Japanese education system. Like many Japanese learners of English in my generation, I began to learn the language at school from the seventh grade, assuming that English was the language that everyone needed to learn in order to complete our compulsory education; i.e., to graduate from lower secondary school. I believe that this is quite common for most learners of English in Japan. The language however has been a crucial element of my life since then.

My desire to communicate with people from different cultures motivated me to go on to university where I was able to receive training to become a teacher of English. In order to fulfill my desire to be a good English teacher who tells others the benefits of teaching the language, I made my best effort to be “perfect.” I decided to pursue my MA in TESOL in the United States and then my PhD before returning to Japan to teach English and train teachers at a university.

It has been nearly 25 years since I began working at a university. During the years, my role has shifted from English language teacher, to teacher trainer, and then to administrator. In addition, my involvement in various professional organizations has added valuable experience in order to develop myself as an ELT professional. Currently, I am the director of a center that offers a campus-wide English language program at a private university in Tokyo, as well as teaching English and training pre-service teachers.

What do I call myself? A language teacher?

In my 25 years at my university, which originally hired me as an English teacher in the Department of Foreign Languages, my position has changed over the years for...
several reasons. Academically, I have been promoted from assistant professor to associate professor, and then to full professor. In my career I have also been given some administrative responsibilities including, assistant to the dean of student affairs, student activity coordinator, departmental academic coordinator, and the director of international programs. However, my current position as the Director of the Center of English as a Lingua Franca is the first administrative position I have ever held which has something to do with my area of expertise. In this capacity I was able to remove the native/non-native speaker distinction from our hiring practices for English teachers for the first time in 25 years. This achievement has much to do with my beliefs about ELT, which will be discussed later.

When I joined the university my hope was to teach our students English to enable them to communicate with people overseas, something that I had enjoyed very much. However, the courses I taught changed as I was promoted to higher academic ranks. The number of courses I taught gradually decreased because of increased administrative responsibilities. Moreover, there is an unfortunate tendency in many Japanese universities for language classes to be assigned to junior faculty members in order for senior faculty to teach upper-level classes or seminars in linguistics or education, which are more content-oriented. Therefore, I began to wonder if I could continue to call myself a language teacher.

Recently, I had a chance to teach a freshman English course at our center as I needed to replace my colleague who became unable to teach the course because of illness. As it was the first time in many years that I taught freshman English, the students as well as some of my colleagues seemed to have regarded me as a temporary backup. When I entered the classroom on Day 1, I heard a student asking her academic advisor who I was. The advisor who is from her department responded by saying, “Prof. Oda seems to know language teaching because he is the director of English program, but he is not necessarily a language teacher, he may not have ‘genba’ [the real place] experience.”

Classroom teachers easily identify themselves as language teachers. It is the general perception of students, as well as that of the university community. However, those who do not teach language classes may feel awkward calling themselves language teachers. I remember that I became somewhat hesitant to call myself a language teacher at that time since I was not exactly teaching “language” classes.

What, then, constitutes language teaching and who are language teachers? It is apparent that those classroom practitioners who directly face their students every day can call themselves language teachers. In other words, they are working in classrooms where teaching activities take place. Considering my current situation, however, I have not been assigned to teach language classes for some years because I have been heavily involved in training English teachers by teaching them courses in applied linguistics and education, and in many cases using English as a medium of instruction so that I can give the students more opportunities to use English.

Recently, I was happy to come across some students who were taught English by the teachers I trained. These students were not necessarily enrolled in my
English classes, yet I realized that I had made some indirect contribution to the
students through my former students. Therefore, I have come to the conclusion
that I can call myself a language teacher.

Defining language teacher identity: Reshaping stories

In recent years, reflection has become a keyword in foreign language teaching.
Farrell (2015), citing Schön’s (1983) framework, distinguishes between reflection-
in-action and reflection-on-action. The former refers to an immediate response to
what happened, while the latter refers to later responses to the action. While
Farrell’s discussion is mostly about the actions that take place in classrooms, it could
also apply to teachers’ experiences outside the classroom. Looking back at my
experience, therefore, my identity as language teacher strongly corresponds with
my reflection-on-action on the various experiences related to language outside the
classroom, both before and after I became a language teacher. My belief about
what kind of English that I want my students to achieve is an example. It has been
formulated by my cumulative experience both inside and outside of the classroom,
and both as a learner and a teacher.

For many years I have been telling my students of English that they need to
imagine possible contexts in which they will use English in the future. As many
students are likely to remain in Japan where English is learned as a foreign language,
I have been rather skeptical about setting the attainment of so-called “native-like”
proficiency as the target of English classes, even though it has long been considered
as the goal of ELT in the era of communicative language teaching (CLT), since at
least the late 1980s (see Widdowson, 1994).

As a pre-service student-teacher, we were always told that native-speaker
competence is what students should achieve in English class, and those who can
determine if an expression is appropriate to the situation or not are so-called native
speakers. A few years later, I had an unforgettable experience in a postgraduate
seminar for PhD students. I had always tried my best to participate actively in class
discussions, and in one particular session I responded to a professor who asked the
students if they had any questions, by raising my hand. I asked him a very simple
question, in one sentence, to clarify something covered in the previous lecture, to
which I received a surprising response: “Can someone who is a native speaker
rephrase what he is trying to say?” Now I understand that he simply did not feel
like answering the question. At that time, however, I was not able to accept what
he was saying. It was my fourth semester of PhD coursework. The professor was a
specialist in applied linguistics, and above all, my question was a very simple one.
Therefore, the professor as well as my classmates should not have had difficulty in
understanding me. Unfortunately, similar exchanges took place at various other
times during the program.

After I came back to Japan and began teaching English, the situation was not
very different. One time when a group of my colleagues were setting an exam, one
of them, a native English speaker in his late 20s who had just begun to teach for the first time, pointed out that a reading passage I had prepared was “unnatural.” The group was divided, but the verdict was that I had to revise the passage and have it checked by him, “because only native speakers can tell whether an expression is appropriate or inappropriate.” I protested against the decision, but I had to follow the majority in the end.

Each of these incidents may appear to be insignificant and distant from each other. Nevertheless, I would like to stress that these and other incidents constitute stories that “re-shape our experiences so that we can make meaning from them” (Barkhuizen, 2013, p. 4). Only when we look back at these incidents sometime later do we realize that they were integral parts of my story. Therefore, language teacher identity, in my view, is a teacher’s perception and understanding of what resources he or she has accumulated through past experiences inside and outside of the classroom in order to respond by taking action in teaching at the present time and in the future.

Sharing my story with others

From my experience as a learner, I have never seen any two teachers who are identical in their teaching styles. It is natural that teachers have different beliefs about language teaching. Their beliefs are based on their experiences as a learner and are gradually reshaped as they progress through training and teaching experience. They are continuously revised as they gain further experience.

Rather than trying to match ourselves to what is prescribed as a good teacher, I believe that it is more important for teachers to constantly reflect and become aware of what makes them unique. In other words, teachers need to know what is special that they can offer their students. These special items are often closely related to the teachers’ experiences, which may not necessarily be limited to language teaching and learning. Perhaps what distinguishes good teachers from those who are not is whether or not they are aware of how much they can use their past experiences as resources for their further developments as teachers. In addition, it would be better if they know how to accumulate useful resources from experience.

The role of applied linguistics in language teaching is to help teachers solve a variety of everyday problems with the help of their research findings. Those of us who are primarily engaged in research should assist those who are teaching in classrooms by designing research relevant to the teachers. First of all, it is important for researchers to provide teachers with the means to reflect closely on their experiences. One possible way is to have them tell their own stories about their teaching as well as about various key events before they became teachers. The data could be collected through a range of methods including but not limited to interviews or journal writing.

Going back to my personal beliefs concerning the goal that learners of English should aim at achieving, I would like to stress that they were not formulated as a
result of any single incident. One’s beliefs about language learning and teaching are constantly reformulated by influences in various external conditions. Regarding the two incidents described in the previous section, one took place when I was in training, while the other happened after I had become a teacher. However, both incidents later contributed significantly to the reformulation of my beliefs as a teacher.

External conditions surrounding the two incidents involving myself at the time also influenced the reformulation process (see Oda, 2014). When the first incident in the classroom took place, I was a student who was facing a professor and thus I was in a weaker position to begin with. What the professor did, along with the reactions of my classmates, led me to believe initially that native speakers (of English) had ultimate authority, and thus I had to rely on them in order to figure out what was right and wrong in English, which I was going to teach a few years later. When the second incident happened, I at least had courage to argue against the decision. While I was still disadvantaged because I was not a native speaker of English, I knew that I already had much more experience as a teacher than the young native English-speaking instructor. In other words, my experience changed my beliefs as a language teacher.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that a longitudinal study dealing with beliefs about language teaching and learning is important. Realistically, we cannot go back to the past and interview someone. Nevertheless, it is still possible for us to ask language teachers to reflect on their experience as a learner, a teacher-trainee, and a teacher, which would construct a story. The stories would not only help the teachers themselves, who can use them as resources to improve their teaching, but also other teachers who share similar experiences to use as an additional resource for their own further developments as teachers.

Directions for future research

One major role of researchers is to help them identify what distinguishes one teacher from another. As I have said above, it is not always easy for teachers, particularly those engaged in classroom teaching full time, to systematically reflect on their experiences, which are integral to their beliefs about language teaching. It is therefore important for those who are engaged in research to take this role actively and to help their colleagues.

Of course, one cannot reflect on everything at the same time. Perhaps it is more practical for teachers to focus on specific aspects of their teaching, each of which could potentially become good topics for teacher identity research. First, teachers might reflect on how their views on particular aspects of language teaching/learning have changed. The aspects here include but are not limited to their attitudes towards native speakers, different varieties of the target language, and/or the use of the first language in their classrooms. Alternatively, they could critically reexamine their attitudes towards the prevailing discourses of language teaching; for example, the validity for dividing language proficiency into four skills (reading,
writing, listening, and speaking). It is also possible for teachers to trace their history of language teaching diachronically, and to identify any people or events that influenced the formation of their language teacher identity.

The researchers eventually need to help teachers to fly and navigate on their own. In other words, rather than following a map provided by researchers, teachers should be equipped with their own GPS and constantly adjust their direction according to their own reflections on their experiences; i.e., reconfirming where they are, actively learning from the experiences of others as well as from research findings. At the same time, researchers could help teachers update their GPS programs by producing reflective studies on language teaching and teachers, and then make them accessible to teachers.

References
The place of feminism in language teacher identity research

I recently attended a reading from the latest edition of the classic (originally published in 1980) feminist book, *This bridge called my back*. As I heard some of the contributors speak about their experiences and read from the book, I was deeply moved, and was reminded of what an absolutely essential force feminism has been in the world, as well as in my own life, my academic career, and my research. I think back to my college days when I took some of the first women’s studies classes, and joined a consciousness-raising group; I rejoice in all the victories that feminism has won since then, but I mourn all the sexism and discrimination still in the world. Along with many other academic women and men, I have worked for understanding and for the advancement of gender equality through my teaching, service, and research. Some believe that “feminism” is a radical term, and a form of advocacy, thus having no place in research. I disagree. It may be radical, but we need radical, open-minded thinking to address sexism and discrimination based on sex, gender, and sexual identity. Feminist research does not mean a predetermined set of beliefs, or only one kind of interpretation of research and findings; it means that researchers are aware of the larger historical, sociological, psychological, and educational contexts of issues that affect women’s lives and careers, and investigate how these manifest themselves in language teaching settings. Of course researchers should do everything they can to act, write, and teach with fairness and scrupulous honesty. However, I cannot deny, and am happy to acknowledge, that there is a strong element of urgency and personal investment in feminist research. If we who have the privilege of being scholars/researchers do not advocate for our fields, our teachers, and our students through our research into important identity issues, who will?
Gender identities of university level language teachers

My areas of research focus on identities (mainly gender, social class, sexual identity) of language teachers and language learners, especially but not only in my main teaching area, second language writing (SLW) at the university level. Particularly in an area that involves such an exchange of ideas and expression as writing, it seems clear to me that it is important for researchers to explore identities of both learners and teachers. Often educators and learners are brought into closer-than-usual proximity and communication through class discussions, journals written and commented on, exchanges of drafts, and individual conferencing. Research into which identities each participant brings to these types of interchanges is one way in which language teacher research has a place in my field of research. Another has to do with how, and how much, educator identities affect their teaching.

I have benefitted from the feminist research done by feminist theorists in various fields (e.g., Judith Butler, Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Dale Spender); by researchers in the broader field of education (e.g., Patti Lather, Carmen Luke); and by scholars in L1 (first language) writing (e.g., Theresa Enos, Elizabeth Flynn, Susan Jarratt, Gesa Kirsch, Lynn Worsham). Feminist scholars in applied linguistics, TESOL and SLW, including those working on identity issues, can draw on this wide web of interdisciplinary work. Some scholars who have written about gender in our field(s), generally from a somewhat feminist point of view, even if the word feminist is not used, include, to name a few, Sarah Benesch, Adrian Blackledge, Angela Creese, Graham Crookes, Ryuko Kubota, Juliet Langman, Julia Menard-Warwick, Brian Morgan, Suhanthie Motha, Bonny Norton, and Aneta Pavlenko. Note that feminist research on gender is not limited to work on women; see, for example, the work of Roslyn Appleby on masculinities.

My own work has been somewhat interdisciplinary, drawing on research from composition theory, women’s studies, postcolonial theory, literary theory, critical theory, critical pedagogy, and more. One of my biggest “aha!” moments regarding my research was when reading Jane Sunderland’s 1994 pioneering edited book, Exploring gender. I was thrilled and inspired to realize that ELT scholars could write about this topic; maybe I could do so as well! I did indeed go on to write, publish, and speak about gender, feminism, and feminist pedagogy in ELT. Although my main publications on gender have been on students and classrooms, I have also written and spoken (often, in true feminist fashion, in coauthored publications) on gender identities of educators at the university level and on how these identities affect faculty (teacher/researcher) women’s duties and statuses (e.g., Lin, et al., 2004; Vandrick, Hafernik, & Messerschmitt, 1994, both of which publications posit connections between the low status of women faculty and the also low status of the field of ESL in academe). My 2001 article focused on teacher identity and social class, with a gender emphasis.
Concepts, aspects, and intersections of gender identities

There are two major aspects of language teachers’ identities. First are their identities as language teachers. Which language do they teach? Which level of students—elementary, adult, or college? Do they consider themselves primarily language teachers, or is this work an addendum to their teaching of literature or linguistics, and/or to their identities as scholars or administrators?

Even more important is the second aspect of language teacher identity: teachers’ identities as individuals, their identities regarding gender, race, class, sexual identity, ethnicity, country of origin, location of their teaching sites, ability/disability, age, religion, and native/non-native speaker status. This second aspect involves looking at teachers as whole and complex individuals, persons whose lives and multiple identities influence their teaching, consciously or unconsciously, to a greater or lesser degree.

One’s gender identity is one of the major identities that comes to the fore and affects one’s teaching, one’s relationship with students, colleagues and administrators, and one’s sense of self in the academic world. However, it is important to remind ourselves that gender, like all identities, does not operate in a vacuum, but intersects and interacts with a person’s other identities. For example, a woman may suffer some inequalities and injustices because of her gender, but these may be at least partially mitigated by her whiteness and/or her middle- or upper-middle-class status. Conversely, a man might have male privilege, but because of his race or social class status or his sexual identity, that male privilege is greatly diluted (e.g., for many African-American men in the United States).

I have been partly guided in my conception of language teacher identity by the work of researchers such as Karen E. Johnson, Brian Morgan, Manka Varghese, Bill Johnston, and Kimberly A. Johnson, with their sociocultural explorations of teacher identity. Karen Johnson (2006) points out that “[t]hose who have explored how L2 teachers negotiate their identities cite a combination of biographical and contextual factors that keep those identities in a continual state of flux” (p. 247). Morgan (2004) also states that many language teacher identity researchers look “at the concept of identity itself, not as a fixed and coherent set of traits, but as something complex, often contradictory, and subject to change across time and place” (p. 172). These ideas of identities as complex and in constant flux comport well with feminist theories regarding gender identities. Varghese, et al. (2005) emphasize the importance of theorizing language teacher identity; they draw on Tajfel’s social identity theory, Lave and Wenger’s theory of situated learning, and Simon’s concept of the image-text. These multiple theoretical approaches allow, as Varghese, et al. state, “a richer and more useful understanding of the processes and contexts of teacher identity” (p. 21). Feminist theories and approaches are similarly multiple and richly diverse.

Soon, with the work of Kubota, Pennycook, and others, “sociocultural” approaches edged into “sociopolitical” approaches, often tracking what was
happening in academic research in other disciplines. Morgan (2004) writes of “the transformative potential of a teacher’s identity” (p. 172); I, along with most feminist theorists and researchers, believe in the transformative power of feminist lenses, theories, and practices, in researching teacher identity as in other aspects of life and academe.

**Future developments for feminist research on language teacher identity**

I hope for much more research, including feminist research, on language teacher identities in TESOL and applied linguistics. In particular, since I am most familiar with language teaching at the university level, I hope that there will be more in-depth looks at various aspects of identities of tertiary level educators. I believe that our discipline(s) are increasingly open to such research, as evidenced by a fair number of publications and conference sessions related to language teacher/educator identity in recent years.

Some of this research can and should be done using various qualitative research methods such as surveys, interviews, and observations. I believe an especially effective method is narrative research, and in particular personal narratives of educators themselves. There are in fact an increasing number of personal narratives/auto-ethnographies of teachers/scholars in our field being published. The most successful of these are personal not only for the sake of being personal, but for the purpose of exploring information, ideas, and perspectives that contribute to our disciplinary knowledge. Successful narratives are contextualized in theory and prior research. These personal narratives take various forms. In some cases, researchers include information about themselves to show their positionality on a topic they are investigating. In other cases, they choose to focus on a certain aspect of their identities that is the theme of an edited book or a special issue of a journal. For example, there have been edited collections of scholars'/teachers' personal narratives about race, non-native speaker status, graduate students' experiences, and scholars' experiences with writing and publication. Some publications are freestanding auto-ethnographies. My own 2009 book, *Interrogating privilege*, explores educator identity issues through my personal narratives about my own, my colleagues', and my students' lives and work, with a strong feminist perspective. Andrea Simon-Maeda’s (2011) account of her life as a female educator and scholar living in Japan her whole adult life, with a Japanese husband and a son, is another book heavily influenced by feminist viewpoints.

Topics that would be fruitful focuses of feminist research include the role of gender in individuals’ choices to be language teachers/educators; the role of gender in the types of jobs women teachers apply for and are given; women’s comfort in the field; their level of confidence to branch out and do new projects; and their confidence (or not) to present themselves as experts in their fields. Another broad area of research that I believe needs to be forwarded is differences in female and
male language educators’ relationships with students. Women faculty often wonder if students will respect them and accept them as experts in their fields. Or they wonder if they are expected by their students to be nurturing and maternal, and may be regarded negatively (in evaluations, for example) if they are not. Further, women faculty may be more concerned than men faculty about how they dress, how they present themselves, and how they speak to and with students, knowing that these factors have serious consequences in the ways women are regarded, evaluated, tenured (or not), and promoted (or not). For example, there have been cases of women faculty being asked to dress, arrange their hair, and make up their faces in a more traditionally feminine style. Female language teachers and scholars know well that they, like other working women, are walking a tightrope: if they are “too feminine,” they may be regarded as weak, but if they are “too masculine,” they may be regarded as not behaving appropriately. Women know, too, the power of language to reflect gender expectations; the man who is labeled “forceful” or “straightforward” is contrasted to the woman who is “pushy” or “abrasive.” Clearly, gender issues related to language teacher identity cannot be completely separated out from such issues in the wider society; applied linguistics researchers can examine the specific ways in which those issues affect language teachers in various settings.

Directions for future research

Expanding on some of the broad subject areas suggested above, I offer below a few examples of more specific topics related to gender and language teacher identity that I believe could and should be researched, drawing on feminist theory and research as context.

1. Are women more likely than men to experience the “impostor syndrome?”
2. To what degree does gender identity affect the way students regard a language teacher? Respect her? “Obey” her? Evaluate her on official teaching evaluations?
3. Are female language teachers expected (by students and even by administrators) to be more nurturing, more maternal, than male teachers? If so, what happens when they are found wanting in this area?
4. How do gender and age interact in the way students perceive their language teachers? Are older female instructors less respected than older male instructors? Are younger female instructors less respected than younger male instructors?
5. How do the gender and social class identities of language teachers, female and male, interact? For example, are female and male teachers of working class backgrounds similarly or differently perceived by students, fellow faculty, and administrators?
6. Are female instructors judged more on their appearances and dress than are male instructors?
7. Are female or male instructors who are lesbian or gay or transgender judged negatively by students for not fulfilling traditional gender role expectations?
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IDENTITY DILEMMAS AND RESEARCH AGENDAS

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Why focus on identity dilemmas?
Understanding language teachers’ identity-related dilemmas and their manifold significance for teaching and learning can help equip language education for exciting social changes as well as daunting global challenges. This chapter makes a case for a more concerted focus on identity-dilemma research by showing how it can illuminate two pressing concerns: the teaching/learning implications of changing social diversity discourses, in this case, those pertaining to sexual diversity; and the effects of war, conflict, and displacement on language learning and teaching.

Unpacking acts of identity—identity aspirations, anxieties, conflicts, conundrums, inequities, negotiations—in spoken interactions and written texts has proved immensely fruitful throughout my varied career. I first taught English as a Second Language (ESL) to international students, immigrants, and refugees in colleges and workplaces in the United States; then “academic literacy” in Australia, with particular expertise in postgraduate research writing (theses and dissertations); then “university teaching” (also in Australia, and also across many different disciplines), where my specialties included designing and running development programs for academics on supervising (mentoring) postgraduate research students and on writing about their teaching for career-related purposes.

Across these disparate arenas, students and colleagues alike have found it extremely useful to recognize that many of the challenges and conundrums they encounter in the course of learning, teaching, writing, and just interacting can be understood as involving identity work, and analyzed as such. Examining identity dilemmas often reveals clashing discourses at play, as I have found in my research too, which spans language education’s sexual identity studies (“queer applied linguistics”); peace-conflict studies; and critical narrative studies (including narrative and performance writing in/as research).
Identity dilemmas and research agendas

In this chapter I explain why I think identity researchers working in these and other areas ought to mobilize a sustained, critical focus on teachers’ identity dilemmas, and I recommend some conceptual and methodological approaches to achieve this.

**Identity dilemmas yield useful knowledge**

When conducting what was to become the first book-length investigation of sexual identities in language education (Nelson, 2009), I was not surprised to find that for many of the teachers who identified as lesbian or gay, coming out conundrums were rife; the teachers struggled with questions of self-disclosure—whether, how, why, why not. But I was surprised to find that some of the teachers who identified as straight also experienced various dilemmas about how to represent their sexual identities in class.

One such teacher was “Tina,” who in an interview relayed the following experience from her time teaching English in Ecuador (she hailed from the United States):

In class a student said I saw you with your boyfriend! … I said Well how do you know he’s my boyfriend? … You saw me with Maria … and you didn’t assume she was my girlfriend. And [the student] was completely at a loss for words. And I said Maybe Maria’s my girlfriend … You didn’t know I was a lesbian? … [My tone] was really serious … I said, I don’t talk about my personal life in class and I don’t ask you about yours, but since you asked … OK, open your books to page whatever … So from then on … every couple days a student would go You’re not really a lesbian are you? I’m like Yeah … Is that a problem? And– and they were really at a loss for words […] [My supervisor] thought that that was detrimental … That it’s not really questioning their assumptions if it turns out that their assumptions were right in the first place. But my argument is as a straight woman how can I question their assumption … that everyone’s straight.

(Nelson, 2009, p. 116, italics added)

Though Tina’s identity-related dilemma raises many interesting issues, here I mention just two implications: learners need to develop identity savvy, or “identity literacy,” in the new language (including “sociosexual literacy”); and language teachers need to be skilled at teaching this (“identity pedagogy”). It is not enough to rely on teacher-as-text approaches and identity impostorship, as Tina tried to do. What is needed is the know-how to teach “the processes of identity negotiation, which would draw attention to the linguistic nuances, ambiguities, and consequences of how identities are communicated in various situations and settings” (p. 119). In my book, I show how a “discourse inquiry” approach to unpacking language and (in this case, sexual) identity proved more effective with learners than the “counselling” or “controversies” approaches that were more commonly used.
Another area that can throw up significant identity dilemmas is language teaching in conflict and post-conflict zones, as evident in a recent study that I co-authored (Nelson & Appleby, 2015). Our study quotes a website posting by a language teacher (nationality unnamed) who went to post-war Croatia to teach English:

Rather than finding myself in a perilous situation, I found myself in a favorable one. The country had been plunged into economic and political depression and its people were faced with only one way out: to invest in themselves. For many, this meant learning or improving their English, the language of commerce and tourism. As I began my career here [in Zagreb], I could not help but think of myself as some kind of *linguistic mercenary*, here to cream off the spoils of war.

*(Anonymous, n.d., paragraph 1, italics added; as quoted in Nelson & Appleby, 2015, p. 318)*

This teacher felt caught up in an identity (“linguistic mercenary”) that was not necessarily, or certainly not wholly, desired, and that was linked to larger political and economic forces/discourses. The identity conflicts of this and other teachers (and learners) in post-war situations, alongside much other material, led my co-author and I to propose that more informed, critical discussions are needed about the TESOL field’s multiple (and often lucrative) connections to military, security, and surveillance forces around the world.

Thus far, language education’s peace-conflict studies have paid scant attention to teachers’ identities (and vice versa, identity studies rarely consider peace and conflict issues). This is unfortunate, because research that sheds light on how identity conflicts and world conflicts are interlinked has the potential to make a socially significant impact.

Although the argumentation is necessarily truncated here, I hope these two teacher quotes help to illustrate my main point: that important insights can emerge when careful consideration is given to language teachers’ identity dilemmas and their broader implications.

**Identities as performative, normative, and dilemmic**

I am using “language teacher identity” in the widest possible way, that is, to encompass: (a) what it means to become a “language teacher” as a professional identity (I have not researched this but others have); (b) what an identity as a “language teacher” means, signifies, or resembles, to oneself or to others (e.g., “linguistic mercenary”); and also (c) what else a language teacher identifies as, or is identified as by others (e.g., “[pretend] lesbian”).

As to what I mean by “identity,” I follow a number of theorists and researchers in conceptualizing identity to be (among other things) *performative and normative*—and also what I am here calling *dilemmic*. To elaborate, I am interested in language...
teacher identity as a performative enactment, produced via repeated discursive/semiotic acts (Butler, 1990). I am interested in language teacher identity as a situated practice: how broader sociopolitical, economic, and material realities and local/global discourses influence which identities are considered viable or valued within a given locality, scenario, or interaction, and which are not. I am interested in language teacher identity as normative: the subtle and blatant processes whereby certain identities are made to seem natural or normal while others are not, and certain speech acts and behaviors are understood to fit with certain identities while others do not. Thus, I am interested in the regulated but also the regulatory function of identities: how identifying as a member of a certain group or community signifies who one is and how one is expected to conduct oneself (Bourdieu, 1991).

I am interested too in how each of us inhabits and inherits many different identities; and how speaking from the vantage point of this identity or that can be fraught, can mean generalizing ourselves, distancing ourselves from our other identities, and thus, from ourselves. I am interested in the work of identity and its serious consequences, but also its playfulness, creativity, wiliness. Thus, I am interested in the push-pull of identity, its inherently contradictory, paradoxical nature. Identifying as this or that, being identified as this or that—what is allowed, what disallowed, at the same time? What everyday identity dilemmas result from these tensions?

These would include, among other things, the kinds of problems that arise in managing identities that are devalued, even demonized; the decision-making that goes into whether and when to “pass,” that is, to refrain from disclosing a hidden identity, and how these decisions affect the person, their interlocutors, and their loved ones (Goffman, 1963); the constant choices that passing requires—the constant scanning of possibilities, the extreme situation consciousness that disallows spontaneous social participation; and the misunderstandings that can arise when identities are misread, misinterpreted (see Nelson, in press).

Ultimately, I am interested in what identity theories mean for language teaching and learning: how acts of identity are routinely performed and normed during language use; how participants’ conceptions and experiences of identity shape teaching practice, and learning experiences and outcomes; and how dilemmas of identity can be framed and unpacked for language learning purposes (Nelson, 2009), and for teacher development purposes too.

If identity dilemmas drove research agendas

Next I consider what the research agendas of language education might look like if they were driven or led by the identity dilemmas, quandaries, and conundrums that are being grappled with day in and day out by language teachers (and learners)—rather than these dilemmas being stumbled upon in the course of doing identity research, which seems to be what largely occurs now. With identity dilemmas conceived of as the main object of inquiry, as the locus of complexity, what research topics, questions, and methods would be needed, and what new knowledge might be gained?
It seems to me that such a project would call for at least four strands or foci of research. One focus would be to identify and map out the types of identity dilemmas that language teachers are experiencing, in the classroom and in other professional arenas (workplace and peer discourses, policies, teacher education and other professional development programs; conferences; online blogs; research publications, and the like) across different localities and geo-regions. For this focus, many different research methods could, of course, be used, but careful scholarship to mine existing research and consolidate identity-dilemma findings would surely be useful here. As far as I am aware, this has not yet been done.

A second focus would be to critically examine why and how identity dilemmas emerge, how participants are conceptualizing and managing these, and what effects the dilemmas are having on teaching, teachers, learning, and learners. A third focus would be to critically assess how identity dilemmas are put to productive use, successfully fostering learning, and conversely, how they are handled in ways that end up hindering learning. Here, I would recommend methods I used for Nelson (2009), since these yielded a rich array of teacher identity dilemmas and connected these to identity theories, classroom practice, and, crucially, learner responses.

As to data collection, focus groups allowed me to elicit teachers’ diverse experiences and views of the topic at hand (and running one at an international TESOL convention allowed me to hear from an international cohort of teachers). Class observations (over two-week periods) allowed me to see how teachers’ identity dilemmas were playing out in actual classroom discourse. Teacher and learner interviews in which I used a technique called “stimulated recall” allowed me to elicit multiple interpretations of the same class interaction (and the identity work therein). As to data analysis, conducting intersubjective positioning analysis on the triangulated data proved illuminating, as did analyzing the connections between teachers’ identity conceptions, their teaching practices, and their students’ perspectives.

And finally, another research focus would be to investigate effective ways of facilitating research-informed learning about identity dilemmas, in the context of teacher education/development programs. This knowledge is important because adeptly analyzing identity puzzles and paradoxes should help teachers-in-training help their own students. For this sort of research, arts-based methods may prove useful, such as what I have elsewhere called “crafted narratives of classroom life,” which could involve expressively recounting and reflecting on identity dilemmas, and “performed ethnographies,” in which research data is written in play form, allowing identity dilemmas to be dramatized as intersubjective exchanges.

Directions for future research

I conclude by outlining a few specific directions for future investigations of language teachers’ identity dilemmas in one of my research areas: sexual identity/queer studies (for more ideas about future queer research, see Nelson, in press).
1. What identity dilemmas arise (in classroom or professional arenas) for language teachers whose own sexual identifications are vastly under-represented in existing research (e.g., transgender teachers, bisexual teachers, teachers who are fluidly identified or who choose not to align with any fixed sexual “identity,” and teachers whose sexual subjectivities do not readily translate into the “LGBT” terminology now prevalent in the “West”)?

2. What sexual-identity dilemmas arise for language teachers whose geographic localities, cultural affiliations, or language backgrounds/aspirations remain under-represented in existing queer research?

3. What identity dilemmas arise for language teachers (of any sexual identity) when attempting to do any of the following in class: engage multisexual learner cohorts, teach sociosexual literacy, teach LGBT content, foster queer inquiry or queer thinking, and/or address/analyze heteronormative discourses?

4. When teachers’ own sexual identities become part of the pedagogy, how and why does this occur, what identity dilemmas result, and with what effects on student learning?

Similar questions could of course be posed for identity research in peace-conflict studies, critical narrative studies, and many other arenas. Researchers could investigate such matters as how teachers refute, creatively subvert, and reframe undesired identities ascribed to them; how teachers’ identities are perceived by learners and with what effects on learning; and how identity dilemmas are configured in/as class content.

I hope this short chapter will tempt language education/acquisition researchers to consider making identity’s dilemmic dimensions a greater research focus—a problematizing move that I think holds much promise for such a vital yet complex subject as language teachers’ identities.

References


Being a second language writing specialist

As a language teacher and researcher, I identify myself first and foremost as a second language writing specialist situated in the disciplinary contexts of applied linguistics, rhetoric and composition, and TESOL. When I was starting out, the field was still in its formative stage, and one of my first tasks was to carve out an identity position for myself and for the field. Because I was aware that the scholarship on second language writing drew from and contributed to both language studies and writing studies, I tried to establish myself as an expert in both communities. Over the years, I have been reminded again and again that the idea of having an identity that transcends disciplinary boundaries is unfathomable to some people; I also noticed that people tended to define others in terms of the differences from themselves. Early in my career, I was sometimes typecast as a writing person by language specialists and as a language person by writing specialists. For this reason, it was important for me to establish myself as an expert in both language and writing fields not just through my teaching but also through research and other professional activities.

Constructing a disciplinary identity is not only about defining myself but also about constructing the field(s) around me. Another important task for me, then, was to contribute to the development of the identity of the field itself. Although research on second language writing dates back to the 1960s, the term “second language writing” had only been coined circa 1990, and the Journal of Second Language Writing had just started in 1992. While second language writing instruction had long been taking place in US higher education, it was conceived mostly as a highly specialized subfield of TESOL rather than a concern for all language and writing teachers. To establish a disciplinary identity that could be recognized by both language and writing specialists, I took it upon myself to write a history of
Second language writing teacher identity (e.g., Matsuda, 2003b), and to help construct the disciplinary infrastructure for second language writing by, for example, founding the Symposium on Second Language Writing.

The place of language teacher identity in second language writing

Because of the transdisciplinary nature of our work—drawing on insights from multiple disciplines and working in institutional structures and with colleagues informed by different disciplinary perspectives—teacher identity plays an important role in second language writing. Being a second language writing teacher is a balancing act between being a language teacher and writing teacher. These multiple identity positions, which emerge through teachers’ reflections and actions, are shaped by their beliefs about writing instruction, which in turn is influenced by their own learning experience and disciplinary alignment (Racelis & Matsuda, 2015).

To me, a second language writing teacher is someone who engages with both language issues and writing issues. The level of knowledge and the emphasis on language or writing issues varies depending on the curricular goals and the needs of the students, but some level of knowledge in both is needed. A teacher who uses writing only to facilitate language development may be teaching language but not writing; a teacher who teaches writing but does not actively facilitate the development of language proficiency may be teaching writing but not language. A second language writing teacher is someone who recognizes how language and literacy resources develop, how language and meaning interact, and how language affects the writer’s identity; in the writer’s self-conception, in its textual manifestation, and in the reader’s perception.

My professional identity plays an important role in my teaching not only in terms of how I teach but also how I present myself and the materials for teaching and learning. To my students, I introduce myself as a specialist in second language writing; someone who is engaged actively in research and other professional activities related to writing and the teaching of writing. This is an important distinguishing trait because people who teach second language writing are not always specialists in what they do but they develop varying levels of expertise and commitment as they gain more experience in the classroom. In many institutional contexts—including US higher education—second language writing courses are staffed by people whose professional preparation and interest may be in creative writing, literary studies, theoretical linguistics, or various other areas of applied linguistics or English language teaching. I believe having a label for this identity position is important in legitimizing the work that we do, even though no label can accurately and completely capture the complexity of our identities.

Another important aspect of a teacher’s identity is her or his own experience as a language user and learner. Literacy is a social phenomenon, and as such, the presence of other literate individuals plays an important role in facilitating its development.
development. In my own classroom, I try to be part of the larger ecology of literate practices. I often share stories of my own language and literacy development with my students—both successes I have enjoyed and challenges I have faced—by telling stories and by sharing my own literacy narrative (e.g., Matsuda, 2003a). I also share my own writing as well as comments I received from editors, reviewers, and other readers. I have even shared texts I produced when I was an undergraduate student as well as rejection letters I have received. The point of sharing is not just to provide examples for students to follow but to provide a rich and realistic picture of literate practices.

My definition of language teacher identity

I consider identity to be multifaceted and dynamic. It is derived from and constrained by the historical and material reality (e.g., physical appearance, actions, life history, group affiliations, social influences), which in turn influences the psychological reality—the sense of self. The sense of self is manifested in language and actions as well as the choice of clothing and other artifacts. The representation of self influences the ways in which others perceive the person. All of these facets of identity are constantly in flux.

More specifically, I define language teacher identity as the teacher’s evolving sense of professional self that is situated in the material (historical and physical self), psychological (self-image), and social (perceptions of others) realities. It is deeply influenced by the teacher’s own belief about language teaching, which is in turn shaped by her or his own experience as a language learner and user, prior teaching experience, and disciplinary alignment. In the context of second language writing, this identity is complicated by another layer—i.e., literacy—that develops alongside language. Teacher’s identity is also multifaceted. In addition to the identity position in the classroom, the teacher has to contend with their own identity as a language teaching professional, language user, reader, writer, language and literacy learner, and person.

In my case, my own experience as a second language writer plays an important role in shaping my understanding of how various language resources and strategies develop. My own experience also provides useful resources for my own teaching. I am aware that my experience is not applicable to all students, but it does provide a point of reference as I continue to expand my knowledge by observing various writers and by reading about other writers’ experiences. I am also continuing to learn new languages such as Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, and Thai. Although it has been a slow process, it reminds me of what it is like to be a language learner at various levels of proficiency. Professionally, I constructed my own PhD curriculum by completing requirements for both rhetoric/composition and applied linguistics/TESOL, and I identify myself as a bona fide member of both writing studies and language studies, and I continue to engage with a wide range of topics in both fields. As much as possible, I also attend conferences in both fields and contribute to scholarly conversations in both.
Defining the scope of second language writing teacher identity is tricky. On the one hand, it is not realistic to expect all writing teachers or language teachers to become second language writing specialists with a high degree of expertise in facilitating the development of language and literacy. On the other hand, virtually all writing teachers are second language writing teachers because most, if not all, at one point or another in their career come into contact with writers who are writing in languages they are actively developing. For that reason, I encourage all writing teachers to embrace their identity as a second language writing teacher and develop some level of awareness and knowledge of language development, use, and negotiation. The situation may be different for those who identify themselves primarily as language teachers; although it is not possible to write without language, it is possible to teach a language without also teaching writing. In today’s highly multilingual and multiliterate society, however, it is becoming increasingly important to integrate productive literacy not just as a way of facilitating language development but also of facilitating writing development.

On the research front, a second language writing researcher is someone who is concerned with the development of language and writing and not just someone who studies language using written data or who discusses language issues without fully understanding a wide range of issues that arise in the development and use of writing among the multilingual population. Those researchers may still be able to contribute to the collective efforts of second language writing researchers, and it is not realistic to expect every single study to examine all aspects of second language writing at all times. What is important for second language writing researchers, however, is to situate the vision of their work in the larger, shared understanding of issues that are important to the intellectual network of second language writing specialists.

Second language writing teacher identity research

The identity position for second language writing teachers at all levels has traditionally been caught in the disciplinary divide between language studies and writing studies. Language teachers who teach writing have traditionally seen themselves as language teachers, and writing teachers who work with second language writers often consider themselves as either writing teachers or language teachers. Yet, with the recognition of second language writing as a symbiotic field of inquiry (Matsuda, 2003b), and with the growth of the disciplinary infrastructure, including the Journal of Second Language Writing and the Symposium on Second Language Writing as well as subgroups within various professional organizations, more and more teachers have come to identify themselves as second language writing teachers or specialists.

The discussion of second language writing teacher identity thus far has tended to focus on the disciplinary level, and the attempts to understand the identity of second language writing teachers at the level of the individual have been few and far between. Some of the notable exceptions include narratives of how various teachers...
and researchers came into the field and became second language writing specialists (Blanton & Kroll, 2002; Kroll, 2001). More recently, Lee (2013) examined the complex and multifaceted development of identity in the professional development processes of second language writing teachers in Hong Kong. Racelis and Matsuda (2013) documented the evolution of a second language writing teacher’s identity that paralleled the evolution of the field in general. In another study, Racelis and Matsuda (2015) explored second language writing teachers’ identities as writing teachers, language teachers, and second language writing teachers that emerged as they talked about their teaching experiences. Yang, Kiser, and Matsuda (in press) describe how two teachers negotiated their identity traits as they moved from mainstream sections to second language sections of US college writing courses. As those teachers reflected on how they constructed their identities differently, they came to recognize their identity as the net worth of their symbolic capital portfolio.

Understanding second language writing teacher identity is important not just because it gives insights into the process of professional development but also because it provides a better understanding of how second language writing teachers and researchers negotiate their identity and relationships with their colleagues as they inevitably navigate through the complex web of institutional contexts and disciplinary influences. It would also be important to understand how second language writing teachers incorporate their own experience as language learners, language users, and writers as resources in fostering the development of productive literacy.

Directions for future research

Since second language writing teacher identity research is relatively scarce, there are many possible research directions. Future research into second language writing teacher identities might look more closely at how individual teachers construct and negotiate their identities in relation to their students, colleagues, administrators, and programs. It would also be useful to consider how second language writing teacher identity is constructed by students and other teachers as well as through institutional discourse. From the perspective of teacher education, it is also important to continue the effort to document the evolution of second language writing teacher identity through various pre-service and in-service professional development opportunities.

Methodologically, narrative inquiry and auto-ethnography provide viable tools for in-depth, self-reflective inquiry into second language writing teacher identity. It can also be explored through interview-based qualitative studies and discourse analysis of reflective journals and other texts produced by teachers. To understand how second language writing teacher identity is constructed and negotiated through interactions with students, other teachers and the institutional context, institutional case studies and ethnographic studies are particularly useful. Studying the evolution of identity would call for a longitudinal design. Once various issues and tendencies are identified, the distribution of particular issues in identity construction, negotiation, and development can be studied through survey studies,
the findings of which may lead to further questions that can be explored in detail through additional qualitative studies.

References


Being a second language writing teacher

I began teaching academic writing after obtaining my MPhil in applied linguistics from the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Trained in second language writing, I served as a writing coach in a Writing-Across-the-Curriculum (WAC) Program at CUHK. I helped undergraduate students from various departments, such as journalism, psychology, nursing, and history, to improve their writing, using a process approach to writing. After working in the WAC Program for two years, I went to Purdue University to pursue a doctoral degree, specializing in second language writing. On graduation, I obtained a tenure-track faculty position at a research-intensive university in Singapore. Since then, I have been designing, conducting, and teaching research on second language writing. My doctoral training at Purdue and current scholarly pursuits have enabled me to keep abreast of and apply some of the latest good ideas in writing instruction and assessment. For example, at my university in Singapore, I have compared the effects of computer versus pen-and-paper as the writing medium on the writing process and output of 366 freshmen in an academic writing course. I collected both quantitative and qualitative data to understand the impacts of these two modes of composition on the students’ higher-order thinking processes, higher-level revisions, writing quality, and attitudes toward writing in general. My study informs writing teachers in the implementation of writing tasks for their students. In general, I aim to bring about improvements in both writing instruction and learning in a practical and practicable manner.

In what follows, first, I define the concept of writing teacher identity and explain why it matters in the field of second language writing. Then, I describe and discuss future developments for teacher identity in second language writing. Lastly,
I suggest promising research topics and useful methodologies for conducting teacher identity research in second language writing.

The relevance of language teacher identity in second language writing

A course designed for writing teachers can create a strong impact on advancing their understanding of their own teacher learning, and it is conducive to the development of writing teacher identity in many ways. Through a doctoral course in second language writing, I came to question certain existing practices of writing instruction. My inquiry was carried out in an Asian context specifically, and it can be as seen as an example of “problematization of conventional approaches” (Lee, 2013, p. 152). I questioned why many writing teachers ask their students to compose in-class assessments using traditional pen-and-paper, but do not encourage or sometimes even allow the alternative of using word processing software on computers. Another question is why many writing teachers ask their students to provide peer reviews of each others’ work in a setting where the authors’ identities are revealed to the reviewers. Sometimes the information is not disclosed by design, but it is obtained “naturally,” e.g., inferred from handwriting or because the feedback is conducted face-to-face. There is a problem with being able to identify the person whose work one is reviewing, as some students may not be willing to criticize others’ essays. They want to preserve the peers’ face and maintain harmony. Peer review software is available that can enable students to give written feedback to each other without knowing whose work they are commenting on.

In answering the above questions, I embarked on two writing research projects. These projects investigated mundane details in practices of classroom teaching, but they contributed to new and important knowledge construction, in technologically fronted implementation—spanning the areas of teaching, learning, and assessment—that is feasible in present-day classrooms. An important finding is that students’ motivation in an academic writing course can be strongly influenced by nuances in the instructional strategies adopted by their teachers. Writing teachers should “take on the role of inquirers,” constantly questioning the status quo and reflecting critically on existing classroom practices (Lee, 2013, p. 153).

Writing teacher identity can be constructed through reading and writing (Lee, 2013). Reading and writing good quality journal papers on the topic of second language writing are most certainly important vehicles for me to establish my own writing teacher identity. Through reading reputable journals, for example, I learned innovative and effective writing pedagogies, such as operationalizing the concepts of coherence and cohesion in writing, and applying a knowledge-transformation approach to writing. Besides reading, perhaps more importantly, I put what I learned into practice by writing papers that examine L2 writing topics. Recently, my editor for a manuscript that I submitted to English for Specific Purposes recommended that I revise it and resubmit it for further review. Submitting a
manuscript for publication, as well as obtaining feedback from established scholars in the field of L2 writing during the process, is an important part of a writing teacher’s professional development. It helped me learn and refine the professional language that is effective for disseminating my ideas to the L2 writing community.

Good writing teachers actively seek out fresh ideas and inject them into their classroom teaching. Teaching academic writing (e.g., writing of research papers and theses) to university students is a challenging task, and introducing innovations can be nontrivial. Nevertheless, as a writing teacher, I strive to identify and add effective innovative elements in all of my writing courses, motivated often by curiosity to find out how the new methods can be made to work in my own contexts and the promise of satisfaction when they do work in helping me and my students. Next semester will be my first time teaching a course on *Academic writing for postgraduate students*. To facilitate the teaching and learning of thesis writing, a corpus linguist and I will develop a corpus database of MA dissertations and PhD theses selected locally and internationally. We are interested in knowing to what extent such an online academic corpus will inform the teaching and learning of rhetorical moves in various key sections of a thesis for students of diverse cultural and academic backgrounds.

**Definition of language teacher identity**

My identity as a second language writing teacher has evolved over time because of changes in internal and external factors. Internal factors refer to my emotional state (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). After my graduation with a master’s degree, I worked as a general writing teacher in Hong Kong. The work was interesting and included giving writing workshops and one-on-one consultations to students. On the other hand, I knew that I would not stay long term since I had applied to study for a PhD. It was in some sense a transitional period before my PhD studies and I was not under much job pressure. As for external factors, such as work environment and job circumstances (Flores & Day, 2006), they were favorable. The work environment was familiar, since I taught at the same university where I had studied previously. It was also friendly, since my colleagues in both the academic and administrative departments knew and treated me well.

After I finished my PhD, I was offered a tenure-track position at a research-intensive university in Singapore. My teacher identity began to evolve from a general writing teacher to a second language writing specialist. My identity was heavily influenced by the training I received at Purdue. I was fortunate to be influenced by some world-class second language writing experts. I was particularly impressed with their serious attitude towards research and commitment to teaching. Besides, I had opportunities to present papers in premier conferences such as the *Symposium on Second Language Writing* and the *American Association of Applied Linguistics* (AAAL) conference. I came to know some senior colleagues in my community, who are highly accomplished in both research and education, and I learned much from them. My academic employment requires me to demonstrate...
that my research grants and outputs, the courses that I teach, and my service to local schools and professional communities are linked to my area of specialization. Compared to my previous experience as a general English teacher, my faculty work environment is significantly more demanding and competitive. We are expected to win competitive research grants and publish papers in reputable journals or edited volumes with prestigious publishers. The job is stressful and entails elements in all of research, teaching, and service, although it is also rewarding on the whole.

As I transitioned from a carefree emotional state in an uncomplicated environment to a more stressful state in a more competitive environment with more diverse duties, my second language writing teacher identity has likewise become more multifaceted and multidimensional. It is multifaceted as I have multiple teacher identities, specifically subject matter expert as well as pedagogical expert (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). As a subject matter expert, I am familiar with current theoretical models of writing that have underlined much recent research in the instruction of first language or second/foreign language writing. As a pedagogical expert, I have acquired skills to communicate these theories, as well as their practical applications, to both undergraduate and postgraduate students, and to motivate these students to internalize what they had learned to become better writers or writing teachers themselves.

Besides multifaceted, my writing teacher identity is multidimensional; it includes situated identity, professional identity, and personal identity (Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, & Gu, 2007). The situated identity is being shaped by my local context and is continually influenced by local conditions. For example, because Singapore places high value on education, universities in Singapore generally receive adequate funding for teaching and research innovations. This environment has enriched my situated identity, which shapes me both as a teacher-mentor through the writing courses I am responsible for, and a specialist in second language writing research through the research program that I am able to develop through Ministry of Education funding. Professional identity is to me in large part about being a good writing teacher. In this respect, I have improved on, and gained confidence in, my teaching over the years, thanks in part to experienced colleagues who observed my lessons and gave me constructive feedback. Personal identity is about life outside university, especially the social role. In this context, I conduct free workshops—e.g., “Helping students develop coherence in writing” and “Writing a research proposal”—to English language teachers at local primary and secondary schools on a regular basis. Because of the multifaceted nature of teacher identity, we need to consider the purpose and institutional context when we define the multiple identities of teachers (Cheung, 2014; Lee, 2013).

Future developments for teacher identity research in second language writing

To date, I can only identify two published studies that have yielded empirical data on the construction of teacher identity in the field of second language writing. Drawing
on interviews and classroom research project data, Lee (2013) examined how four Hong Kong EFL teachers of English became aware of their identity as writing teachers after taking an MA elective course on writing teacher education. The findings showed that the course had empowered the participants to be better writing teachers through reading journal papers and actively engaging in writing themselves. Also, the participants moved beyond their comfort zone to question the traditional way of teaching writing and as a result developed innovative writing pedagogy in their work. In a Western context, using semi-structured interviews, Racelis and Matsuda (2014) reported a study with seven composition teachers who were enrolled in graduate programs at a large public university in the United States. Racelis and Matsuda (2014, p. 213) found that the composition teachers had multiple identities—general writing teacher, language teacher, and L2 writing teacher—that were influenced by contextual factors and personal factors. The composition teachers had to negotiate their multiple identities depending on how they positioned themselves when they communicated rhetorical goals to their discourse communities.

Based on the two existing studies mentioned above, I see a need for future research to go beyond the use of interviews in collecting data on writing teacher identity. It would be interesting to see how various other sources of information, such as teacher discourse (e.g., journals/diaries), classroom observations, and surveys, might supplement interviews in unfolding the discursive nature of writing teacher identity construction. Regarding the interview data itself, I also see a need for future research to adopt a longitudinal approach in order to study the construction, negotiation, and evolution of complex writing teacher identities over time, under potentially changing internal (e.g., teacher emotion) and external (e.g., institutional contexts, job circumstances, and life experiences) factors. As a case study, it might be interesting for future research to examine how tenure-track faculty members at different types of institutions (e.g., teaching college vs. research-intensive university) might negotiate the demands and opportunities of their respective environments to mature and reach a balance of identity between research specialist and teacher-mentor for their students or less experienced colleagues.

**Directions for future research**

1. Document and analyze in-depth personal experiences of multiple identities for tenure-track faculty members teaching second language writing at a tertiary institution of education. Focusing on a balance of internal and external factors that influence the identities, conduct a longitudinal study from, say, the first year of employment until they receive tenure.

2. Drawing on heterogeneous sources of data such as classroom observations, teacher discourse (e.g., e-portfolios, diaries, journals), and self-reported questionnaires, identify how novice vs. expert school teachers negotiate and construct multifaceted and multidimensional identities of themselves as writing teachers.
3. Conduct quantitative research using a statistically significant sample of teachers of general backgrounds, e.g., beyond EFL teachers and L1 teachers, to support, complement, or refute predominantly qualitative evidence in existing related studies.

References


My language teacher identity

My own language teacher identity (LTI) has three different but interconnected strands. As a teacher, I have worked at levels from beginner to degree level, in several different countries, both in the developed world, with hi-tech classrooms, and in the developing world on aid projects, working in situations where teachers did not even have books, let alone other luxuries, such as photocopiers, that we take for granted. My teacher training and trainer-training experience has also taken me to many different countries, both well-resourced situations and extremely under-resourced situations. I have taught a variety of courses from initial teacher training, to short professional development courses to graduate courses. I have also worked as a mentor, guiding newly qualified Chinese university teachers into their first teaching roles, and in Madagascar guiding newly qualified graduates into in-service teacher training roles. I have written two books on teacher education, one for beginning teachers (Hadfield & Hadfield, 2008) and one for new teacher educators (Hadfield, 1995). As a materials writer, I have written several resource books for teachers, both for well-resourced situations and specifically for developing countries and under-resourced situations. In the rest of this chapter I will attempt to connect these different experiences to consider the relationship between materials and both learner and teacher identity.

The place of language teacher identity in my field of expertise: Materials and teacher identity

In thinking about teacher identity, I would like to connect my experience as a materials writer with my experience as a trainer and observer of emergent or
developing teacher identity. My preference for textbook writing has been in the area of teacher resource books and this is an area where materials writing overlaps with teacher education: the twin concerns of the resource book writer are to provide engaging and useful activities for the learner and to provide an element of professional development for the teacher, both explicitly, through a methodological introduction or sections on how to use the book, and implicitly, through providing materials that offer something new, inviting the teacher to take a direction he/she has not tried before—a step into the unknown.

An issue I would like to consider in this regard is the effect of materials on teacher identity. Can materials play a role in changing or affecting teacher identity? From my own experience, I believe they can. One of my seminal experiences as a beginning teacher in Bordeaux was attending a two-day workshop on drama techniques given by Alan Maley. I think that experiencing these activities and then incorporating them into my teaching had a profound effect on my identity as a teacher, adding dimensions of willingness to experiment, play with ideas, and excitement over creative possibilities. On the other hand, I have always been wary of orthodoxies and methodologies—however exciting and innovative these may seem. Though introduced to methodologies such as the Silent Way, Total Physical Response (TPR), and Suggestopedia in my initial teacher training at London University, through workshops in the same way as I experienced drama techniques, I distrusted these, as they seemed to promise not an extension to one’s teaching personality but a transformation into something narrower: “I am a Silent Way Teacher,” “I teach through the Suggestopedia Method.” I have become interested in the difference between the ways materials can affect teacher identity—as an extension and valuable addition or as a subsuming into an orthodoxy.

Another question that intrigues me in the relation between materials writing and teacher identity is the type of material that can affect and develop identity. My writing interests have centered around games, creative writing, group dynamics, and more recently motivation (Hadfi eld & Dörnyei, 2013). Research into my own materials writing principles, through an auto-ethnographical inquiry, has led me to identify, in addition to what I have called “framing principles,” i.e., those principles that you can consciously articulate as guidelines to your writing, more unconscious principles which determine your writing (and presumably your preferred teaching style). I have called these core energies. In my own writing I have three main concerns: affect, creativity, and play.

Research shows that these are instrumental in building L2 identity: I may prefer writing affective, creative, and playful activities, but I also believe that these provide more student engagement and work at a deeper level than other activities, and this belief is supported by several studies. Tan Bee Tin (2007), for example, finds that creative activities enable learners to “become themselves” and “push past their current language abilities.” Murugiah (2013, p. 8), citing Craik and Lockhart (1972), in turn, states that “as learners manipulate the language in interesting and demanding ways, attempting to express uniquely personal meanings (as they do in
creative writing), they necessarily engage with the language at a deeper level of processing than with expository text.”

My question is therefore: If learner materials that are built on affect, creativity, and play are instrumental in building L2 identity, could similar materials be instrumental in building LTI? And if so, how? I would like to suggest that such materials could be influential in these ways:

1. Using materials that develop L2 identity with classes could have a knock-on effect on LTI. If a class responds in a positive, engaged, affective, and creative way, this can have a positive impact on LTI.
2. Using materials on a teacher-training course that encourage creativity, affect, and play could help build LTI.
3. Further, encouraging trainees to create their own materials with an affective, creative, or playful slant could positively impact on emergent LTI.

A concern of mine in writing my resource book materials has been that they should empower the teacher. My materials are anonymous in terms of their presence in the classroom because they are photocopyable or provide templates for teachers to copy, so that it looks as if the teacher has provided material him/herself as a “gift” to the class. Rather than, “Look at x 2 on p. 54,” the teacher can bring materials into the class as a personal choice. I am convinced that this ability to select additional materials or to create them is a fundamental factor in developing teacher identity.

Stemming from my experience working in developing countries I am interested in what teacher identity means for teachers working in these situations, where they might have no materials at all.

What LTI means to me

There have been several influences on my concept of language teacher identity. I am most drawn to the concept of identity not as stable and fixed but as multiple, shifting and, in Bonny Norton’s words, a site of struggle (Norton, 2013). My concept of these multiple selves is influenced by Dörnyei’s theory and his and my work on motivating learning. Drawing on work by Markus and Nurius and Higgins in mainstream psychology, these selves are defined as the actual self, your present self, the ideal self (the self you would like to be), the feared self (the self you are afraid of becoming), and the ought-to self (the self you feel you should be, based on social pressures and beliefs of significant people in your environment). Note that the ought-to self can be in harmony or in conflict with the actual and ideal self. These selves have been applied to language learning in Dörnyei’s work (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009), but could equally apply to language teacher identity, although I do not think that the feared self contributes to teacher identity—rather eats away at it. Dörnyei is primarily interested in the future possible ideal self as a motivator, but Taylor (2013) expands the description of the actual self to include both the private self, one’s
personal self-concept, and public selves, how you present yourself to others, which may vary according to the social context. The teacher self would seem to be one example of such a public self, though I would subdivide this public self into two: how you present yourself and hope to be seen by others, and how your presentation is received by others. These may be one and the same thing, or they may be contradictory. This, taken together with Dörnyei’s classification would suggest four categories of teacher self: the private, the public, the ideal, and the ought-to self.

However, I also believe these teacher selves are in constant negotiation with external factors in the environment. Wenger (1998) defines three such factors or influences: engagement, meaning interaction with the immediate teaching community (e.g., colleagues and the institutional environment and its policies), alignment (interaction with the wider professional community), and imagination—the teacher’s individuality expressed through forms of innovation and creativity.

Drawing on my own experience, I would add to the communities defined in the engagement category—the students in the classroom—as in my experience engagement with the classroom community is the factor with one of the strongest influences on identity, both in presentation of self and in reception of identity. The interaction between those is crucial: it can take one negative experience with a class of unresponsive students to eat away at a teacher’s self-concept while a positive and affirming class can significantly enhance and transform teacher identity. I would also add materials to the imagination category, either teacher-created or teacher-added, as an important factor influencing teacher identity. Materials can either be a barrier to expression of teacher identity—if a teacher is compelled to teach from a textbook he/she is not in sympathy with, or feels it does not meet the class’s needs—or, alternatively, a factor enhancing identity—if they bring an element of creativity and enjoyment to the class.

To sum up, my concept of teacher identity is a construction made up of multiple selves existing in the present as private and public selves and in the future as ought-to and ideal selves, which may coexist harmoniously or be in conflict. This identity is mediated by, dependent on, and can be modified or transformed by interactions with significant others: the immediate teaching community in the workplace, the wider professional body, and, in my opinion, above all the students in the classroom. It is similarly dependent on the materials used by the teacher, either teacher-created or teacher-added, and the degree of creativity and innovation that they bring to the lesson.

Future developments and topics for research

In this section I will attempt to bring my interests in teacher identity as related to my field of expertise together with my definition of LTI as multiple and dependent on societal influences. I think fruitful lines of inquiry could be an inquiry into the multiple and possibly contradictory nature of teacher selves, an inquiry into how the experience of group dynamics of different (positive and negative) classes affects
teacher identity, an inquiry into how the personal creation or addition of materials affects teacher identity and how or whether the type of material that is added or created is significant, and finally, an inquiry into teacher identity in under-resourced situations, where teachers may have no materials.

I see data collection as principally involving narrative inquiry and reflective logs, though questionnaires could also be used. The logs and narratives could either be analyzed by the researcher or by teachers themselves through auto-ethnographic analysis. It seems to me that qualitative analysis through thematic coding and grounded theory would be the most appropriate research method, though if a significant number of logs or narratives were analyzed, a quantitative approach could also be taken, analyzing percentages of respondents who showed preoccupations with particular issues or themes. This could also be the approach with the responses to questionnaires. An interesting variant on these two approaches might be to use metaphor analysis, either if metaphors and images arose spontaneously in the writing of the narratives, or by constructing questions that invited the respondents to use metaphor and imagery to describe their sense of identity and the factors affecting it.

Directions for future research

I see three possible groups of research questions: investigating multiple teacher selves, the role of group dynamics and societal influences, and the role of materials in developing teacher identity. Possible research questions are:

1. Is the private teacher self different from the public self and how?
2. What is the public teacher self that the teacher wants to present? Does this differ from the public self as received by the students?
3. In relation to the public self, it would be interesting to investigate public self teacher identity on social media. What are typical themes and presentations of the teacher self on social media?
4. What is the ought-to teacher self? What are its origins? (i.e., What societal influences created it?) Does it differ from the actual self and the ideal self and how? Does this create conflict or is it helpful? If it creates conflict, how is that conflict resolved?
5. On initial teacher training courses, a very powerful ought-to self is constantly provided by the trainer’s feedback. What is the nature of this ought-to self? How does this ought-to self relate to the trainees’ actual and ideal selves? How do trainees react to it: does it become internalized and equate to the ideal self, or is there resistance and rebellion?
6. What are teachers’ ideal selves? Do they take steps to actualize these and if so how?
7. What are the teacher's experiences of positive and negative groups in the classroom? How does either experience impact on their sense of their identity as a teacher?
8. What are the major influences on a teacher’s sense of identity: the institution (colleagues, management), the wider professional body or the students in the classroom?

9. Does the type of material that teachers are required to teach have an impact on their sense of identity in the classroom? How? Is this positive or negative?

10. How does creating or adding material to supplement or replace the textbook affect a teacher’s sense of identity as a teacher? What type of material makes teachers feel empowered, having a distinct and positive teaching identity?

11. Does teaching in an under-resourced situation, for example in a developing country where there is little or no material available, affect a teacher’s sense of identity?

References


The initial conditions

I started learning English in Brazil in the early sixties when I was fourteen. My family was poor; consequently, I had no chance to travel abroad. At that time, technology meant basically a textbook, and my contact with English was rare. Radio and TV broadcast only local shows. Foreign newspapers and magazines would arrive in Brazil with long delays. They were not easily found in public libraries and were very expensive to buy. I used to listen to Nat King Cole, The Platters, Elvis Presley, but I cannot understand why I did not realize at that time that music could have helped me to learn pronunciation, my constant challenge. I enjoyed the sounds but did not pay attention to the lyrics.

When I became an English teacher, I was lucky enough to teach with a tape recorder and even luckier to have access to the tape scripts, because my young students had better ears than I did, and they could identify sounds and repeat dialogues with words I could not understand without the help of the written support.

I learned a lot from my teaching experiences in different private and public schools, from junior high and high school to university. At the university, I had the chance to collaborate in teacher education programs, as well as to do research and reflect on second language acquisition and teacher development.

At the end of last century, an article by Larsen-Freeman (1997) and the chance of interacting with colleagues from the physics department inspired me to follow the complexity track and understand language, second language acquisition, as well as identity and teacher development as a complex system. In this chapter, I will discuss teacher identity in the light of chaos and complexity.
The emergence of a teacher

Being an English teacher in Brazil is a big challenge. First of all, we must deal with political identity conflicts as we teach a language associated with the idea of imperialism. Moita Lopes (1982) was perhaps the first to position himself on the political aspect of the teaching of English in Brazil. In one article, with the catchy title, “Yes, we have bananas” or Paraná is not Chicago: A study of alienation and the teaching of English as a foreign language in Brazil [my translation, here and in other places in the chapter], he presents the results of a survey of 100 respondents. He concludes that Brazilian English teachers and their students despise their culture and display a colonized behavior. He highlights that students seem to have an a priori admiration for foreign cultures and that teachers are the main transmitters of the colonizing culture. Since then, many other studies have followed suit, and this kind of research intensified after the arrival of critical applied linguistics and critical literacies. Being “acculturate” is a common identity attributed to Brazilians who teach English, especially for those who belong to the upper-middle and upper classes.

Social class identity influences both teacher formation and student motivation. Many teachers come from the lower classes and have no opportunity to be a proficient speaker, either because they have studied in poor schools or because they have had no chance to live abroad. A feeling of not belonging to the English speakers’ community undermines their teaching identities. These teachers usually have underpaid jobs at public schools, and some say their students do not see any reason to learn English. A widely spread prejudice—Why learn English if they don’t even know Portuguese?—reinforces the idea that there is no reason for poor students to learn the language. In fact, some people deny the right of those who do not speak the standard Portuguese to learn English.

Learning languages seems to be a gift for the middle and upper classes, as they can afford to enroll their children in private language schools or send them abroad to improve their second language acquisition. Proof of this prejudice against the poor can be found in some lyrics from popular songs in Brazil over the decades. In my PhD thesis (Paiva, 1991), I came across many songs that criticized Brazilian people, mainly the poor, in their attempts to speak English. I will only mention two examples. In the thirties, in a decade highly influenced by the arrival of sound films, one samba song by Assis Valente, called Goodbye boy, would say, “Goodbye, goodbye boy, get rid of this English mania / it doesn’t suit you, dark dude, who has never been to school.” In the eighties, a samba song by João Nogueira and Nei Lopes denounces the invasion of English in Brazil and, among other criticisms, it says that “there are people who one day / will be completely dumb. / They cannot speak English / and have forgotten Portuguese.” On the other hand, Caetano Veloso in 1968, representing middle-class sentiments, sings, “You must learn English / You must learn what I know / And what I don’t know anymore … Baby, baby, I love you.” Although much has changed, English teachers still face some hostility from those who see them as agents of cultural imperialism.
Brazilian teachers’ identities emerge out of this context of denial and acceptance, cultural resistance and globalization. Teachers must cope with their several identities: Brazilian identity, cultural identity, social class identity, political identity, bilingual identity, and so on. Most teachers also undergo conflict between their identities of being everlasting learners and teachers of the same language. Finally, we face the conflict between the identities of a second language speaker competing with the identity of a Portuguese speaker. Many times, even fluent English speakers feel they are speaking a language they do not own. Those multiple identities are fractals of our whole identity, as will be explained in the next section.

**Language teaching identity as a fractal system**

First and foremost, we must understand the concept of “fractal,” a term coined by Mandelbrot (1977) to deal with irregular and fragmented forms in nature (e.g., clouds, trees, coastlines) that could not be described by traditional geometry due to their different levels of complexity. He calls these shapes “fractals” (from Latin *fractus*) and explains that they have similar form in all scales. According to Mandelbrot *fractal* would mean not only “fragmented” but also “irregular.”

I understand identity as a fractal system, and I had this insight when I was supervising Resende’s (2009) PhD dissertation on the identity of second language learners. During our discussions, she always talked about fragmented identity, as discussed by Hall (1992), and I suggested that she use the concept of fractal instead. I preferred fractal identity because the concept of fractal implies that the part is in the whole and the whole is in the part. She beautifully developed this idea, as we can see in Sade (2009) (Sade and Resende are the same person). She understands that “the participation of the individual in different discursive practices contributes to the social formation of identity that is not only constituted, but also fractalized through the discourse.” She explains:

> As in a fractal, there are infinite possibilities of identity fractalization, as it is also infinite the number of possible discourses we may have access to throughout our life span. However, this internal subdivision of the self is limited by the external factors such as one’s embodiment and sociohistorical location (first property of fractals). It means that the human embodiment keeps the identity of, let’s say, a bird, from emerging.

*(p. 523)*

Going back to teacher identity, we can say that it is a fractal system because it is a complex interactive system; it changes, self-organizes, and adapts to the environment. Teacher identity systems evolve historically, and each experience feeds back into the system and influences its trajectory.

This concept is complex because it is made up of different identities: gender, social class, religious, political, member of a community of Portuguese speakers,
member of an imagined community of English speakers, mother/father/son/daughter, and many others. All of these identities are interconnected and teaching patterns emerge as a result of their interaction. They interact and change in a constant co-evolution; if the environment changes, identities also change, and when identities change, the environment is affected by its new behaviors, and so on.

My own identity changed greatly throughout my teaching career. Teaching in a highly prestigious public university forced me to study and enrich my professional identity. It has also reinforced my identity as a researcher and as a teacher educator. My researcher identity gave me the opportunity to attend conferences abroad and to learn with my peers worldwide. My professional identity changed my social identity, and I ascended the social ladder. But the experience of being a poor girl still guides my teaching experiences. It is also a fractal of my SELF.

A new identity also emerged, the identity of a materials writer, and this identity is in constant dialog with my other identities; the poor girl I was, the middle-class woman I am, the teacher I used to be, the teacher I am, the political activist, the grandmother of a boy and a girl (potential users of our books), the linguist, the applied linguist, the humanist, the teacher educator, and the everlasting learner of English. All of these identities are fractals of the person I am, and whenever I act either as a grandmother or as a teacher educator, the other identities are also there underlying my actions.

**Language teachers or critical educators: Is it possible to be both?**

Language teacher and critical educator are inseparable identities, and I consider that a balance between them is one of the challenges nowadays in Brazil. Will the critical educator identity erase the language teacher identity?

Critical literacy has been a strong trend since its introduction in the *National Curriculum Orientations for Brazilian Secondary Schools: Foreign Languages (Orientações Curriculares para o Ensino Médio: Línguas Estrangeiras-OCEM-LE)* written by Menezes de Souza and Monte Mór (2006) and published by the Ministry of Education (MEC).

Being a teacher engaged in critical literacy means giving prominence to the educator identity, as this new teacher is expected to deal with social and political issues and develop students’ social conscience. Some of the topics teachers should deal with in the language classrooms, as suggested by Menezes de Souza and Monte Mór (2006), include: “Citizenship, diversity, equality, social justice, dependence/interdependence, conflicts, values, regional/national difference” (p. 112). Although the document also mentions some oral and written communicative abilities and linguistic aspects, the emphasis lies on the development of critical literacy.

Menezes de Souza and Monte Mór coordinate a national project in Brazil, entitled New Literacies, Multiliteracies, and Foreign Languages (Novos letramentos, multiletramentos e línguas estrangeiras). This project consists of a network of several teacher educators in 22 public universities. The participants are investing in teacher
education in their own universities and some of them also coordinate projects of continuing education for in-service teachers. Their undergraduate and graduate students are also involved in their projects, and many theses and dissertations have been written throughout the country. The results show that the group is reinforcing their own critical educator identities and contributing to the education of teachers with a strong critical educator identity.

This highly productive group has been presenting papers in several national and international conferences as well as publishing in journals and books. Their work usually describes examples of classes with multimodal texts, including videos. It seems that some adopters of this new trend have chosen to privilege the discussion of political and ideological aspects in their classes and spend much of the time discussing the chosen topics in Portuguese; consequently, English is left out, erasing their language teacher identity.

A counter example is Mattos (2015) who reports on her case studies with three public school teachers implementing collaborative action research in their English classrooms under her supervision. Although some activities are done in Portuguese, we can see a true concern for language teaching. The participants seem to have achieved a balance between the two identities: language teachers and critical educators.

Language teacher identity research, at least in Brazil, will most likely address this identity conflict. Will teachers with strong affiliation to the teaching of language change their identities? Will teachers with strong affiliation to critical literacy education suffocate their language teacher identities and abandon the emphasis on language aspects towards ideological and political activism?

**Directions for future research**

If we believe, and I do, in identity as a fractal system, we understand that it is a complex and interactive system that changes and adapts to the changing contexts. My suggestions for future research include investigating if:

1. English teachers in non-English speaking countries are viewed as acculturated and the main transmitters of the colonizing culture;
2. Teachers whose mother tongue is not English share the feeling of not belonging to the English-speaking community;
3. The adopters of critical literacy have changed their language teacher identities;
4. The political and economic context are affecting teachers’ identities.

As far as methodology is concerned, I believe surveys can be adequate if we want to deal with large populations. But the apple of my eye is action research. It can be an empowering experience for both the researcher and the participants. By helping teachers change their teaching practices, the researcher is also helping them change their own identities.
Narrative research, by means of autobiographies or interviews, can also help teachers reflect on their own selves, that is, the identities others think they should have, including educational public policies and academic research, and the identities they want to live by.

Research on teacher identity must keep track of changes in environments and how they influence the emergence of new identities. On the other hand, research can also identify if identity changes have contributed to changes in the environment.

References


42

THE INTIMATE ALTERITY OF IDENTITY

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The intrigue of identity

Identity, as a concept, has long fascinated me. This is no doubt to some degree due to an itinerant childhood during which I attended nine different schools in the UK, US, and Canada. This process required ongoing adaptation on my part—including, but not limited to, adopting different accents and vocabularies—in the process raising questions as to who “I” was and how this “I” was related to the others against whom I repeatedly reworked and redefined “myself.” This interest was carried over into questioning what it meant to be a teacher, and how my teaching self related to other parts of who I was, when, after undergraduate studies in politics and philosophy, I entered teaching. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that my doctoral studies a decade later focused on the evolving identities of new English language teachers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) where, for a number of years, I led the development of a new Bachelor of Education degree designed to prepare female Emirati school leavers to become teachers of English to young learners. One of the key arguments of this research was that teacher identities—including, but not limited to, language teacher identities—are never just pedagogical but are political insofar as they are constructed through liminal processes of inclusion and exclusion whereby the self is defined through an “antagonistic” process of constructing contrasts in relation to some excluded other(s) (see Clarke, 2008). Much of my subsequent research has sustained this engagement with questions relating to the concept of identity, particularly its ethical and political dimensions, within the broader field of education policy and politics. Alongside this ongoing engagement with identity, my itinerant lifestyle has also been sustained; after leaving the UAE, I worked at universities in Hong Kong and Australia, before recently returning full circle to take up my current position in England.
The indispensability and impossibility of identity

Despite having completed my doctoral study on the discursive construction of language teacher identities over a decade ago, and my research having moved away from applied linguistics, I remain intrigued by identity’s complexities and contradictions. I find myself repeatedly returning to the questions of language and discourse, power and politics, desire and affect, embodied in identity. I am fascinated by its paradoxical nature, as something that is at once individual and social, symbolic and material, familiar but alien, impossible yet also indispensable—by what Derrida (1998) describes as the “disorder of identity.” In this sense, the notion of identity seems to capture the fractured nature of human existence, tracing both its restless yearning and the impossibility of its satisfaction, itself reflecting the ungraspable and complexity of existence, caught in the void between ungraspable depth of material space and the unfathomable ephemerality of time.

My recent work has moved away from an explicit focus on language teachers and language teaching contexts to focus on the broad field of education policy. Much of it has involved critical analyses of education policy discourses in the context of neoliberal schooling in Western contexts, including Australia, the UK, and the US. This work includes critical analyses of the way neoliberal education policy, and the discourses it embodies, positions teachers and refashions their identities. A recurring theme in much of my recent work has been the alienating potential of identity, as mediated through symbolic (dis)identifications with policy as text and discourse. Such alienation is manifested in the sense of disempowerment and deep anxiety many teachers, including language teachers, experience in relation to neoliberal demands for audit and accountability; but it also raises questions about whether and how teachers can retain a sense of identification with values and ideals that may be at odds with the source of their alienation, as well as questions about whether and how teachers may be complicit in the perpetuation of policies with which they disidentify.

This work has necessitated an ongoing theoretical engagement with language and identity, as well as with politics and ethics—something reflected also in language teacher identity research. As Brian Morgan and I wrote in a chapter surveying the place of identity in research in second language teaching and learning (Morgan & Clarke, 2011, p. 825), “perhaps the most significant development in language teacher identity research is the turn towards values, morals, and ethics.” This in turn raises questions of agency and determinism in relation to identity—questions which, in turn, return us to language and discourse.

In thinking through the problematic of identity and its relation to language and discourse, I have found psychoanalytic theory an invaluable resource, particularly its Lacanian incarnation. Lacan’s work is particularly significant for language teacher identity given the prominent place of language (part of the “symbolic” register). For Lacan, identity is a site of conflict, fragmentation and alienation, rather than harmony, completeness or self-sufficiency, something that echoes the struggle many
language teachers experience in relation to identity formation. Characteristic of such struggles is often a desire to reach a state where we will finally recognize ourselves, and be recognized by others, as who we want to be or think we truly are—a goal that remains illusive. Lacanian psychoanalysis explains this tendency in terms of the role of “mirroring” in identity formation, including imaginary identifications with the specular image of the (m)other and symbolic identifications with the demands and desires of the other embodied in law, language, and discourse. In each case, the source of our identities lies outside us, meaning we are never quite “at one” with ourselves; yet we have to be “someone” and so we spend our lives trying to recuperate this “loss” of a unified self through unconscious repetition, following the restless, interminable, and unstauchable flow of desire that is perhaps the essence of our being. Identity remains at once indispensable and impossible.

The intimate alterity of identity

From the perspective of language teacher identity, I see this restlessness reflected in the continual quest for the perfect method, the perfect lesson or the ideal language learner with total fluency or complete accuracy. Of course, such quests for perfection never reach their goal; and even when they do this merely triggers a subsequent search for an even better method or lesson. In psychoanalytic terms, this is because we cannot cope with the surplus enjoyment that would result from the full satisfaction of our desires; hence rationalizing obstacles that conveniently keep such full satisfaction at bay is one of the characteristic ways in which individuals and groups sustain desire through the construction of fantasies. Such fantasies may assume beatific (utopian) or horrific (disaster oriented) versions and typically involve the identification of a scapegoat (“refugees,” “migrants,” “the unemployed,” “the bankers,” “lazy students”), whose presence and activities are deemed to represent an obstacle to the realization of an idealized, harmonious utopian world, and the fully realized identities that would blossom as a result were it not for the troublesome other, or to herald a descent into some disaster scenario as a result of this other. Either way, such fantasizing sustains desire and as such—since desire is always desire of the other, whether this be the desire for that which the other deems desirable, or the desire to attain the other’s approval—preserves the other’s alterity within the intimacy of our identities. On the one hand, as social beings, we all seek the sense of belonging, uniqueness, and oneness that identity promises to deliver; on the other hand, we can only achieve this sense by identifying with something external to ourselves, something other, which undermines any secure sense of self-sufficiency.

Hence, my reading of identity, including language teacher identity, is as an ongoing and never-finalized process of construction and appropriation, characterized by intimate alterity. This conception seeks to capture something of the multiple paradoxes that come into focus in the notion of identity. These paradoxes are hardly surprising given that the signifier—that basic element of the
languages we use to construct our identities—is defined in terms of what it is not and is hence characterized by a simultaneous flickering between absence and presence (Eagleton, 1996). Language, in this sense, is never something we can fully grasp as ours. As poststructuralism argues, all language originates in the other, in that it precedes and exceeds our individual existence, for how else could it function as a shared resource that serves our common, yet also disparate, purposes? In this sense, language does not have to be foreign or second to be othering and may be alienating even when it feels most familiar and comfortable—as Derrida (1998, p. 25) observes, “I have only one language and it is not mine. … My language, the only one I hear myself speak and agree to speak, is the language of the other.” Indeed, our most familiar “tongue” is the language of the other in another sense, insofar as our everyday expression emerges from the other of our unconscious; for unless we are reading from a prepared speech or set of detailed notes, when we speak we literally do not know what we are saying (Verhaeghe, 1995). Whether we view language as originating in the other of history and society or as emerging from our unconscious, in each and all of these different senses, even when we appropriate language, using it to shape our identities, an element of alterity subsists within our most intimate selves. In other words, our identities are “extimate,” simultaneously interior and exterior, just like the two continuous sides of the möbius strip, formed by twisting and fastening the ends of a strip of paper.

The implications of identity: Researching the void in a time of crisis

Notorious for his impenetrable language and enigmatic pronouncements, Lacan famously claimed that the unconscious is structured like a language. One of the ways of understanding this is to view the unconscious as a kernel of the real—as a sort of lack or void, around which the symbolic system of language circulates without ever being able to fully coincide with it. Recognizing this lack in the symbolic other opens possibilities for creative agency on the part of the subject by allowing its desire to assume the space opened by the other’s lack. Another way of reading the unconscious is, not so much as a repository, but as an ongoing process in which elements from the symbolic that are surplus in some way to our processing capacities are repressed, only to reemerge at some later point in our lives with potentially disruptive effects. We can also think of the unconscious at a collective, group level, as in Raymond Williams’ notion of “structures of feeling” or Frederic Jameson’s conception of the “political unconscious.” These readings of the unconscious—and they are by no means exhaustive—suggest various possibilities for research.

The notion of a political unconscious, for instance, has particular relevance at the current time. As I write, unprecedented numbers of refugees and migrants continue to arrive here in Europe from Africa and the Middle East as a result of the various crises and disasters unfolding in these regions. Meanwhile, the response on
the part of Europe, as evidenced by mainstream media and political commentary, is an uneasy mixture of racially based fear and economic suspicion, with talk of the inevitable and irresistible forces of globalization, so readily wheeled out to justify neoliberal economic policies, conveniently forgotten. The European political unconscious seems intent on disavowal of the role played by past and present colonial activities, including discriminatory protectionist economic policies, in, for example, agriculture, as well as more overtly imperialist military misadventures, in fomenting and sustaining these crises. This comes on top of decades in which education and other areas of public life have been reconfigured as private commodities rather than public goods, governed by logics of competition rather than collaboration.

For education and language education research, these events raise significant issues. Amongst these are questions regarding whether, and to what degree, educators’ individual and collective identities are co-opted into complicity with, and hence implicated in, the erosion of compassion and the delegitimation of dissent embodied in policy and practice in the neoliberal era? To what degree does the reframing of language teaching and education more broadly in terms of logics of individualism and competition, standards and accountability, now constitute our identities and what psychic spaces might exist for meaningful resistance? How do the individual and collective dimensions of the “political unconscious” come together in the identification of “problems” that serve as the recurrent foci for policy conception, formulation and enactment, such as research into closing various performance “gaps”? How might these recurrent themes obscure or erase the visibility of other issues, such as how various achievement gaps reflect and sustain the very policies and practices that produce them, preventing these other issues from becoming the focus of policy or research? And how do teachers manage tensions between their own values and ideals and the exhortations and demands of policy texts and discourses that they are required to enact and with which they are expected to identify? This last question is something I am currently exploring with my co-author, Alex Moore (see Moore & Clarke, 2016), in relation to teachers’ attachment to notions of professionalism. Specifically, we are exploring how teacher professionalism has been infused with neoliberal discourses of performativity so as to emphasize logics of competition and accountability as a result of recent education policy, in ways that alienate many teachers’ professional identities, which remain attached to older, more collegial versions of professionalism.

Directions for future research

The issues identified above are clearly equally relevant for language teacher identity, given that language education is often on the “front line” in the (re)education of refugees and migrants and has not escaped the terrors of neoliberal performativity that have been visited on the education sector more broadly. But in addition, recognition of the role of psychoanalytic notions—such as the unconscious, desire,
and the imaginary, symbolic and real registers of the psyche—raises intriguing questions for language teacher identity research, which include, amongst other things, thinking about how symbolic identification operates across multiple languages and how this might be experienced similarly and/or differently among teachers and learners. It raises questions about how desire and affect, in conflict or concert with rational cognition and consciousness, play out in the formation of language teacher identities. How might psychoanalytic notions, such as desire and the unconscious, be taken up in language teacher identity research? What is the role of desire in the formation of language teacher identities? How does the psychoanalytic notion of identity as extimate—an intimate alterity that is neither interior nor exterior yet both simultaneously—challenge, question, and complicate the atomistic, psychology-derived notion of the individual that has been an abiding characteristic of applied linguistics, including conceptions of language teacher identity?

References


