

Teacher, Learner and Student-Teacher Identity in TESOL

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Abstract

In order to position the notion of identity as more central to theory and practice in TESOL, a survey is presented of how the notion of identity contributes to our understanding of the nature of the teacher self, second language learning and teacher learning in language teaching. Available theory and research is reviewed to illustrate the sources of teacher and learner identity and the multifaceted ways in which aspects of identity shape their approaches to learning and the impact identity can have on beliefs, attitudes, motivation and classroom practices as well as their use of English. Suggestions are given as to how a focus on identity can be included in teacher education courses for language teachers.

Keywords

Teacher identity, learner identity, student-teacher identity, investment and agency, identity in TESOL, teacher learning

Introduction

The nature of identity and how it informs our understanding of language teaching and learning has attracted a resurgence of interest in applied linguistics in the last 20 years, particularly since scholars such as Norton (2000, 2013), Block (2007) and others positioned it as a central issue in understanding the nature of the intercultural encounters that characterize many contexts for second language learning and use. Drawing on theory from sociology and philosophy such as Bakhtin, Bourdieu and Foucault, and employing a range of quantitative and qualitative research methods, identity research now addresses issues that are central to a wide range of language-based disciplines including applied linguistics, and has been characterized as follows:

Identity is:

- how we understand and express who we are;
- how we position ourselves in relation to others in different situations; and
- those aspects of oneself that we choose to express in an interaction.

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Identity is also:

- dynamic and shaped by the context of an interaction and the participants and activities that occur;
- expressed through language and the way language is used; and
- multifaceted and shaped by experience, beliefs and personal attributes.

This paper seeks to position a focus on identity as central to both theory and practice in TESOL teacher education. While a relatively neglected topic in TESOL until recent years, the nature of identity influences how teachers, learners and teacher-learners view themselves in relation to the social contexts in which they participate, and has an important impact on classroom practices. The discussion here will focus on three dimensions of identity in TESOL that are central to understanding the nature of teaching, learning and professional development in language teaching: *identity and the language teacher*; *identity and the language learner*; and *identity and the student teacher*.

Identity and the Language Teacher

The concept of identity is familiar to most people but is usually understood in relation to someone's individual or personal identity. *Personal identity* refers to unique and stable features of a person's inner life that are performed or realized in contact and interaction with others (Gee, 2001). This image of the inner self which a person presents to others reflects features such as personality, age, gender, values, beliefs, life experience, self-image, or occupation, and also depends on a person's role in an interaction (e.g. as parent, son or daughter, friend, partner, customer, or student).

Our personal identity (or rather *identities*) will vary according to the context of an interaction and is realized through a range of verbal, non-verbal and semiotic resources and particularly through language (Martel and Wang, 2015; Pennington and Richards, 2016). Bakhtin characterized an individual's use of different sociolects or speech genres according to the context as heteroglossia, each 'voice' reflecting a distinct image of self, such as parent, teacher, friend, customer (Lacasa et al., 2005), which Richards and Wilson (2019) refer to as transidentifying.

Teacher identity may reflect features of an individual's personal identity but is primarily identified with features that derive from the nature of teaching itself. It has been defined as 'the beliefs, values, and commitments an individual holds toward being a teacher (as distinct from another professional) and being a particular type of teacher (e.g. an urban teacher, a beginning teacher, a good teacher, an English teacher, etc.)' (Hsieh, 2010: 1). However, Sachs (2005: 15) emphasizes: 'Teacher identity is not something that is fixed nor is it imposed; rather it is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience'. This view of identity offers a much richer and more nuanced understanding of what it means to be a teacher than conventional understandings of teaching, since in TESOL identity-based issues have often been viewed merely in terms of a teacher role advocated in a particular teaching method, for example as facilitator, mentor, or monitor – something that a teacher should seek to realize based on the principles or philosophy of a method such as communicative language teaching, task-based instruction or in models of best practice.

Aspects of Teacher Identity

Just as teachers realize aspects of their personal identity in teaching, resulting in observable differences in the manner in which they conduct their lessons, other identity characteristics are more closely linked to the teacher's sense of his or herself as a teacher and the distinctive attributes that define them as a teacher. These include factors of commitment, self-esteem, agency and self-efficacy. These factors play a role in influencing how teachers respond to critical issues they encounter in teaching and in their development as teachers.

Commitment: this refers to the teacher's personal engagement with teaching, the extent to which he or she has a sense of vocation, identifies with and supports the school's goals and practices and is willing to invest personal resources of time and energy in order to achieve excellence in teaching. This is powerfully expressed by teacher-researcher Hsieh (2010: 3):

I am a teacher. But, I am not simply a teacher. I am an English, social studies and math teacher, a teacher of teachers, a student of teachers, who believes in and is committed to a just society, equity of outcomes, ongoing dialogue with students, professionalism and professional competency, inquiry-based communities, high expectations, and thoughtful practice.

An Australian-Brazilian English teacher at an Australian university cites how her commitment to self-improvement in conversations with colleagues is an important part of her teacher identity:

Actually, there is a bit of competition between the teachers about status, for example, the EAP teachers have a slightly higher status than the upper-intermediate teachers, etc., even though that shouldn't be the way. As you know, I'm currently doing a PhD, and sometimes I can't help myself from saying 'in my research' in general staff room conversation, even though I know this isn't going to make anyone like me more! I guess it marks my status as a teacher who wants to improve themselves rather than one who is just getting by. (Richards and Wilson, 2019: 185)

Self-esteem refers to attitudes towards oneself and the extent to which an individual believes themselves to be successful, competent and of value to others. Positive self-esteem contributes to a teacher's social competence, enabling a teacher to communicate effectively with students and colleagues and to play a part in resolving conflicts and critical incidents in teaching. It can provide emotional support and job satisfaction, providing a teacher with feelings of confidence and strong coping skills. Self-esteem also relates to the value, status and importance a teacher attributes to language teaching as a profession.

Whenever I have a conversation with someone, the peak of my pride and honour is when I introduce myself as a teacher. Unfortunately many people take teachers for granted and don't value teaching as a profession. So I try to be a positive representative of my profession. (Hamed, institute teacher in Iran, author interview)

Agency refers to the extent to which teachers can actively contribute to and manage change in their own teaching and professional development. Rather than being the recipient of decisions and changes initiated by others, teacher agency is seen in the ability of

the teacher to take ownership of their own learning and environment, and to set goals, develop curriculum, initiate change and make decisions that affect the teacher's work and its conditions. Hsieh (2010: 6) comments: 'Identity construction always involves some sort of agency, either through accepting and enacting an authoritative identity or in actively authoring an alternate or hybrid identity'.

I like to try out new things in my teaching. To do so, I do take charge of my own learning and try to learn a new language using my own tips and techniques. This is a very good way to experience what my learners go through in their journey of language learning. Besides, by using this strategy, I get a lot of ideas of what works best for me as a basis for my future plans. (Hamed, institute teacher in Iran, author interview)

Self-efficacy refers to the teacher's view of his or her own effectiveness – that is the ability to perform well as a teacher of English, to achieve their goals and potential, to maintain their commitment to teaching in spite of difficulties they may encounter and to provide support for students' learning (Bandura, 2006). Self-efficacy has been linked to teaching experience and the extent of the teacher's professional knowledge as well as to the teacher's command of English (Eslami and Fatahi, 2008). Teacher self-efficacy is linked to positive experiences of teaching, such as observation of students' progress and positive feedback from students and others, which contributes to the teacher's sense of their identity as a competent and successful teacher, which in turn contributes to their sense of agency as well their commitment to teaching.

I believe that to be effective I have to inspire my students with the idea that their success in learning English will prepare them well for the future. This will also require more independent learning to achieve their goal. So, putting the students in the right path is the key for my effectiveness and success as a teacher. (Hamed, institute teacher in Iran, author interview)

Exploration of the issues above through case studies, peer observation and group-based reflective activities can provide opportunities for teachers to better understand their identity as teachers as well as the values and beliefs they draw on in teaching (Richards, 2017).

Sources of Language Teacher Identity

An important process in teacher education is the opportunity for teachers and student teachers to reflect on how they understand their professional identities and the sources of their identities, if and how they think their identities have changed over time, and how their identity influences their approach to teaching, professional development, and interaction with their colleagues. Narratives, journal writing and accounts of critical incidents teachers have experienced can all be used to explore aspects of language teacher identity.

Past experience: a teacher's professional identity is multidimensional and reflects different influences and experiences. One source of the teacher's identity is his or her past experience as a learner, their experience of formal schooling and of teachers they have observed and lessons they have participated in. Many teachers report that they teach

the way they were taught. We all have memories of ourselves as students and of teachers who may have inspired us. Negative experiences may remind us of the kind of teaching we seek to avoid; however, positive experiences may shape our image of the nature of teaching and of the kind of teacher we aspire to be. As one teacher comments:

People learn through modeling behaviors. If we see another teacher, especially one we respect, doing something successful in their classroom, it's easy for us to be on board and want to replicate that success in our own classrooms. That's why videos of best practices from other teachers' classrooms are so powerful. (Juliani, n.d.)

Teacher education: another source of teacher identity is professional education. During their professional training the teacher will have acquired a core set of knowledge, principles, beliefs and practices that will inform the teacher's understanding of language teaching and of his or her identity and role as a language teacher. The teacher's knowledge base may be solidified and maintained throughout a teacher's career, or modified and sometimes replaced by subsequent experiences and professional development opportunities. Hsieh (2010: 4) comments: 'Over time, an individual's identity becomes concretized through repeated practice, response and negotiation. . . .consistent patterns of practice and an individual's understanding of herself in relation to these practices constitutes her identity'. Academic coursework is one source of change in teacher identity over time. In the following comment a teacher reflects on the long-term impact of her university studies in the area of grammar:

As the years went by, I have learned not just to appreciate the sound and broad-ranging knowledge base that studying such subjects has given me, but I am also aware that such knowledge has contributed significantly to developing my confidence as a teacher – an unexpected and valuable outcome. (Silvana Richardson, in Richards, 2015: 115)

Language proficiency: for TESOL teachers, English is both the means of teaching as well as the object of learning and language proficiency has traditionally been viewed as a core element of the teacher's sense of his or her professional identity. Hence, NNEST teachers (non-native English-speaking teachers) have often been encouraged to work towards an advanced or even native-like level of proficiency in English in order to strengthen their identity and image as competent language-teaching professionals, as is seen in this comment from an NNEST teacher:

To be admired by my students, I believe I must demonstrate an excellent native-like accent when speaking. (Cambodian teacher Theara Chea, in Richards, 2015: 610)

However, teachers and students may have different perceptions of the relationship between the teacher's English and his or her professional identity, as seen in Croatian students' comments on their teacher's pronunciation:

Some of the professors here speak a very snobbish English, like, I mean, terribly posh. . . . and a lot of other people I meet. So obviously they'd internalize some sort of model of their stays in England, which carries a slightly old-fashioned sense of prestige. (Vodopija-Krstanovic, 2011: 216)

In addition, recognition of the role of English as an international language as well as criticism of the philosophy of ‘native-speakerism’ has led many teachers to question the importance of a native-speaker target for NNEST teachers and the need for them to position their identities as *multicompetence language users* (Zacharias, 2010) rather than second language learners (see below), an important reconceptualization of the nature of language teacher identity that has yet to be recognized in some areas of the English teaching industry (Marr and English, 2019).

Teacher Identity and Classroom Practice. The examples in the previous section suggest the complex and subtle ways in which teacher identity contributes to teachers’ classroom practices. For example it may influence:

- how teachers understand good teaching and the qualities of a good teacher;
- the role the teacher assumes in the classroom (e.g. guide, mentor, or manager);
- how the teacher sees her purpose in teaching (e.g. to empower, encourage or develop autonomous learners);
- the extent to which they see themselves as members of a community of practice;
- the kind of interaction the teacher seeks with colleagues and other professionals;
- how the teacher uses English;
- the extent to which the teacher seeks to initiate and take responsibility for change;
- whether the teacher seeks to be recognized as an expert;
- the extent to which the teacher engages in leadership or mentoring;
- how the teacher positions himself or herself in relation to colleagues (e.g. as equal, as superior, as novice etc.);
- the extent to which the teacher engages in professional development activities; and
- the extent to which they value their work and see themselves as agents of change.

Much of what we do in teacher development hence involves helping teachers explore aspects of their ‘hidden selves’ and helping them become more aware of how central identity is to their work as teachers.

Identity and the Language Learner

While the nature and impact of teacher identity has been a strong focus in recent theory and research, language learner identity has also been explored from a number of different perspectives (De Costa, 2016; Norton, 2000). The identity characteristics of language learners draw both on a learner’s personal identity and on features derived from the nature of second language learning itself. By analogy with the definition of teacher identity (Hsieh, 2010), it can be described as the beliefs, values and commitments an individual holds toward being a language learner (as distinct from another type of learner) as well as how her status as a language learner is viewed by other people. As with other views of identity, learner identity is a reflection of the nature of interactions as well as their social context and is an interactional achievement reflecting issues related to intent, power and self-image.

Identity issues for second language learners include:

- how learner identity affects the learner's use of English;
- how features of learner identity can facilitate or inhibit language learning;
- how learner identity influences attitudes towards the target-language culture;
- how learner identity influences attitudes towards different varieties of English;
- how the learner's use of English can mark different aspects of learner identity;
- how the role of the 'imagined self' can influence language learning; and
- how learner identity is affected by the context of L2 interaction.

Sociocultural approaches to second language learning recognize identity as playing a central factor in language learning, one that has not been reflected in cognitive approaches to second language acquisition, where identity has been either marginalized or ignored. Potential English teachers need a much broader understanding of how second language learning is influenced by a range of identity issues.

The sociocultural context and learner identity: identity issues for language learners are closely linked to the sociocultural context of learning. For example, a Finnish teenager from a well-off middle-class family who watches movies and TV in English and uses English in chatrooms and to speak to English-speaking friends in his or her peer group is likely to experience different identity issues compared to a recently arrived Cambodian immigrant who is resettling into an English-speaking country and where her limited English ability and restricted contact with English speakers do not make it easy for her to achieve the same social status she had in her home country as a medical practitioner. Commenting on a similar type of contrast, Norton and Pavlenko (2019: 706) note that 'the imagined identity of each learner was inextricably linked to the levels of capital (social, economic, and cultural) available to them and the ideologies with which their participants' learning experiences were associated'.

The idea of English: an issue that confronts learners of English is how the goals the learner sets for the use of English reflect his or her identity. One of the ways in which this issue plays out is in relation to the kind of English the learner seeks to master. Traditionally in language teaching it has been the assumption that learners wish (or should aspire) to learn to speak with native-speaker fluency and accuracy and that English is largely associated with the way it is spoken in English-dominant countries such as the UK or the US. This meant an emphasis on native-speaker pronunciation in teaching. However, the extent to which this is a priority will depend on the learner.

Studies conducted among students in Poland prove that students majoring in English tend to aim at native-like pronunciation. In contrast, students with a similar proficiency level not planning to use English as their main professional interest seem less likely to make this choice. Interestingly, even in the English-majoring group, it is the fluency, ease of communication and confidence in speech that are mentioned as more important than a native-like accent. (Waniek-Klimczak, 2011: 118)

The role of English as an international language and as a lingua franca in today's world however supports a different view of native-speaker-like accuracy as a target in the use

of English, recognizing that for many people intelligibility is a priority as well as the use of English in a way that reflects national, cultural and linguistic identity.

Re-imagining learner identity through English: learners' investment in learning English may reflect an aspirational identity as a member of an imaginary community, as described in the research of Norton, Pavlenko and others. For example a learner in China may sustain her efforts to learn English by re-imagining herself as a successful student in a university abroad; a teenager in Columbia may see his or her mastery of American English pronunciation as facilitating participation in an English-user's chatroom that requires familiarity with current trends in pop music, fashions and the media; the proliferation of private language institutes in Iran offers learners participation in imagined communities of internationally minded and western-oriented global citizens rather than accepting the restrictive identity imposed on them by the government; learning English may offer opportunities for empowerment and provide 'gender equity' for Iranian women (Haghighi and Norton, 2017); digital practices in the ESL classroom may enable learners to imagine identities as business person, journalist, media journalist, or traveller (Hafner, 2014). 'The central point', Norton argues, 'is that an imagined community presupposes an imagined identity – one which offers an enhanced range of possibilities for the future' (Norton and Pavlenko, 2019: 713).

Motivation to communicate: acquiring a new language requires the learner to accommodate a new set of assumptions about the nature of interpersonal communication both in the classroom and beyond. This may mean taking on new ways of interacting that may reflect different norms for interpersonal communication, particularly in the pragmatic domain such as difference in degrees of taciturnity (the keeping of one's thoughts and emotions to oneself as well as issues of control, reserve, reticence, self-restraint and communicativeness). Hence the learner's view of the good language learner may differ from the teacher's, leading the learner to resist some classroom behaviours that they feel do not reflect their identity as a Japanese, Chinese, or other cultural group (LoCastro, 2012).

Investment in learning: differences in how learners view priorities in learning may also reflect different levels of investment in or commitment to learning. Norton comments:

[A] learner may be a highly motivated language learner, but may nevertheless have little investment in the language practices of a given classroom or community. The classroom, for example, may be racist, sexist, elitist or homophobic. Alternatively, the language practices of the classroom may not be consistent with learner expectations of good teaching, with equally dire results for language learning. In sum, a learner can be highly motivated to learn a language, but not necessarily invested in a given set of language practices. (Norton and Pavlenko, 2019: 3)

In the following example the learner is not willing to invest further in learning since she does not feel it will add to her 'capital':

Michelle is a Korean who has lived and worked as a chef in Australia and New Zealand for over 20 years. Her contacts are mainly with other Koreans and with restaurant employees, most of whom are from South Asia. Her English is heavily marked as an L2 speaker, and although

reasonably fluent is often hardly comprehensible. However she has no interest in improving her English since it serves her adequately and she feels it reflects her ‘Koreanness’. (author data)

The following example however reflects a learner whose goals prompted specific aspects of investment in learning:

Jihwan is also from South Korea and moved to New Zealand 10 years ago with very limited English. However, he expressed that he wanted his use of English to reflect his educational background and his potential as an employee and worked very hard on his English from the date of his arrival. Today his English is flawless and shows no trace of his first language. (author data)

Using agency to highlight different identity features: rather than accept an identity assumed by others in an interaction, the learner may choose to make particular identity features salient, as in the following example where a German student refers to his multilingual identity in comparison to the questioner’s monolingual ability:

A visiting student house-guest from Germany was asked by a neighbour if he eventually hoped to exchange his German accent for a New Zealand one. He jokingly replied that he wouldn’t know which one to choose – since he noted that there were several including one that sounded like Cockney English to him. It’s similar in Germany, he added, and even more difficult for him since he speaks five languages and they sometimes influence each other. Then he asked, ‘How many languages do you speak?’ ‘Uhhm just one’, the neighbour replied. (author data)

This example also illustrates how a learner positions himself as a linguistically sophisticated multilingual rather than accepting the assumed status of his language ability as a second language learner.

Imagining new identities in virtual spaces: the internet has created new possibilities for learners to create identities that are not influenced by their physical selves and their status as second language learners and consequently where they can ‘reimagine their identities as foreign born immigrants in a global community of diaspora youth interacting in an online chat space’ (Lam, 2006: 177). Lam reports comments from two Hong Kong Chinese students in a US school who describe how participating in an English-language chatroom provided opportunities both to improve their English as well as to re-imagine their identities as multilingual learners of English of Chinese descent. The chatroom hence allows for the possibility of a new identity – a virtual identity that is not constrained by issues that arise in classroom-based communication, such as the need to preserve face and the consequent unwillingness to communicate (MacIntyre, 2007) that can inhibit active participation in face-to-face interaction. Consequently, chatroom communication among students may be more fluent, less hesitant, and generate a greater quantity of talk than elsewhere and hence provide greater learning opportunities than the classroom.

Hence, in any one class, ‘learning English’ may mean different things to different learners, and the way they view their identity as English users has an important impact on their engagement with English both inside and beyond the classroom. How identity issues shape the processes of second language learning can be a focus for both pre-service and

in-service teachers. This can make use of learner narratives (in which learners construct stories about their lives as language learners and the beliefs and attitudes that guide their learning) as well as learner journals (in which learners write about their experiences in learning and using English).

Identity and the Student Teacher

As teacher educators we also need to understand the role identity plays in the experiences of student teachers. The process of becoming a language teacher involves development of a language teacher identity – one that is shaped by experience, course work, readings, and conversations with other student teachers and instructors, as well as from teaching experiences provided through microteaching, the practicum, and observation of experienced teachers. From these sources the student teacher acquires specialized knowledge and discourse, beliefs about good teaching and student–teacher relationships, a sense of the kind of teacher they aspire to be, and an awareness of the role that factors such as language proficiency, communication skills, attitudes, self-awareness, and motivation play in forming their understanding of the ‘ideal’ language teacher. Danielewicz (2001: 133) hence described teacher development as a ‘transformative re-imagining of the self’.

Challenges and Opportunities in Teacher Identity Development

This developing view of teacher identity may be supported or challenged by the experience of teacher learning in the teacher education programme. For example, Teng (2017: 123) cites comments from a student teacher on how she was unable to realize her aspirational identity:

I think my English proficiency is not good enough. I really want to do my best in every lesson. However, I often got irritated because I was not able to achieve my goals or meet the standard that I set before class. I always practiced my English lessons before the commencement of the class because I did not want to lose face before my students.

While teachers such as these commence their careers as novices, international participants in post-graduate programmes in English-speaking countries are often experienced language teachers who may find that their knowledge and experience now has to be put on hold as they assume the status of an NNEST student teacher. Zacharias (2010: 5) describes this eloquently in her account of her initial experiences participating in a graduate TESOL programme in the US:

Even though I spoke English fluently, I struggled to ‘reconstruct’ myself within the local US culture and academic settings. The ‘stable’ selves I experienced in Indonesia became fragmented and disintegrated once I was in the United States. My stay in the local community was disturbing in the sense that I suddenly found myself lost. My two languages, Indonesian and Javanese, were suddenly insufficient in representing the complexity of my feelings, worries, and joys about living in a country where I need to represent myself in English, my third language. At times, although I appeared fluent in English, I was not sure if my ‘core’ self felt and thought in English.

Reframing the ‘non-native-speaker’ teacher identity: the expansion of English language teaching worldwide has meant an increase in the number of NNEST teachers studying in graduate programmes in Australia, the UK and other English-dominant countries. Research by Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999: 138) found that NNEST teachers ‘did not feel particularly disadvantaged in their work as EFL teachers because of their non-nativeness’; however, when they began their studies in the US they experienced challenges to their identities as speakers of English as well as competent teachers of English. For an NNEST student teacher a high level of proficiency in English is normally a requirement of school policy and if the teacher perceives her English level to be inadequate she may have doubts about her professional identity as a language teacher and whether she really is a legitimate member of the language-teaching community of practice.

Zacharias (2017: 47) describes the experience of Indonesian English teachers in a US TESOL graduate programme:

Suddenly, they needed to justify and make sense of what it took to be a teacher of English. They became more sensitive of their nonnative status. Instead of introducing themselves as teachers of English, Fatur and Nesiani felt more comfortable introducing themselves as learners of English, an identity that allowed for imperfection in their English.

The reaction of the teachers above is often the result of framing the NNEST teacher’s professional identity in terms of language proficiency, rather than in terms of their professional knowledge and experience. A challenge for a student teacher in this context is either to accept this deficit view of NNEST teachers, or to reject it and transform their identities as language-teaching professionals. As the NNEST teacher becomes more confident in his or her professional identity self-efficacy can increase and override concerns about the teacher’s proficiency in English.

In Zacharias’s study the teachers gradually reasserted their teacher professional identities in different ways. For example:

- by avoiding the use of words like ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ and referring to their bilingual and multilingual abilities;
- by viewing themselves as multilingual users of English rather than learners of English;
- by accepting their non-native pronunciation and seeing it as a marker of a variety of world English;
- by repositioning themselves as generators of knowledge rather than consumers of knowledge; and
- by becoming more assertive in class rather than letting native-speakers dominate.

Once I attended a class . . . in that class it was all Americans but I was challenged to participate in the class because I need to show them that even though I am not a native speaker I could participate in the class . . . because many native speakers look us down . . . they thought of me because he is not native speaker so he couldn’t participate in the class . . . that judgment is wrong. (cited by Zacharias, 2017: 14)

The student teacher's imagined future self: an important component of agency, autonomy and motivation in language learning is the 'imagined future self'. Norton (2000: 4) described this as 'how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future'. Dörnyei's (2009) concept of the 'ideal self' develops this concept further as a component of motivation in second language learning. In teacher education, both pre-service as well as in-service student teachers may differ in the extent to which they look forward to their imagined future professional selves as language teachers or as language-teaching professionals: how they view their future self constitutes an important part of their identity as teacher-learners. It represents an ideal, aspirational or imagined professional identity which the teacher sets as a long-term goal, as we see in these comments from novice teachers:

I still need to do more to be as good as a qualified teacher. I wish I could create a fun-filled and pleasant classroom where my students can enjoy learning English. (Teng, 2017: 125)

I think I have a sense of joy from being a teacher. I really hope I can do more as their teacher. I want to help them improve their test results, and I also want to be their friend. I want to take care of them and support them. (Teng, 2017: 129)

Experiencing the reality of the school and classroom context however may present barriers to the realization of an imagined identity, due to school policies, class size and unsuitable teaching materials (Pennington and Richards, 2016).

During a teacher education course a student teacher's ideal self reflects how they view teaching as a profession, their view of their own future potential as a language teacher, and their level of commitment to achieving excellence as a language teacher once they commence their teaching. It can provide a motivation for their participation in the teacher education course and influence the extent of their active participation in the course and the degree to which they engage in critical reflection, goal setting and independent thinking, as well as how they manage their own learning, both within and outside of the course. This is well illustrated in a longitudinal study of a positively motivated student teacher in Poland (Werbinska, 2017) who among other things was optimistic and enthusiastic about entering the teaching profession, had a positive view of her self-efficacy as a teacher, had plans for what she hoped to achieve in the future as an English language teacher and who took charge of her own learning during the course, drawing on her personal principles in managing her teaching practice.

Managing emotions that can facilitate or hinder the development of teacher identity: for novice teachers the teaching practicum is often an emotionally charged experience and how emotions are managed can play a role in shaping a teacher identity. Teng, in a study of pre-service English teachers in China, found that the emotions they experienced during their teaching practicum had a strong influence on their developing teacher identity. Teng reports:

Emotions have acted as filters for informing teachers' professional and personal identities, and identity has helped direct the course of teachers' emotional decisions, reflections, and reactions. For example, pre-service teachers in China were often found to be in a more subservient role,

and the lack of trust and support from the school mentors led them to frustration and irritation, which impeded the development of teacher identity. (2017: 118–119)

Teng found that negative emotional experiences resulting from classroom management issues sometimes led student teachers to question their ability or potential as a teacher. Constraints on their agency due to administrative practices of the school also acted to constrain or limit their sense of agency and hence their ability to realize their aspirational identity. However, negative experiences were sometimes counterbalanced by positive experiences (such as positive feedback from their students), thus supporting a more positive teacher identity.

Conclusions

This survey has sought to remind us of the powerful role identity plays in the experiences of teachers, learners and student teachers in TESOL and how it is in turn shaped by these experiences. Many of the professional activities we make use of in both pre-service and in-service teacher education are appropriate places in which a focus on identity can be included, such as critical incident analysis, peer observation, journal writing, group problem solving, narratives, case studies, peer coaching and participation in online forums (Richards, 2017). Identity is another dimension of the inner life of teachers and learners, one which is shaped by individual and social factors but also by the meanings and values English has for them. Acknowledging the role and power of identity in the contexts in which we work adds another dimension to what we understand about the nature of language teaching, learning and teacher learning.

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