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Language Teacher Identity
Outside the State-School Context

Abstract

The importance of understanding language teacher identity is well-established in the existent literature. It has been shown to impact upon many aspects of teachers' lives both inside and outside the classroom, such as wellbeing (Day & Kington, 2008) and self-efficacy (Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink, & Hofman, 2012). The nature of language teacher identity is broadly categorised from a socio-cultural perspective, as dynamic rather than static, as negotiated in social interaction and (potentially) a source of struggle (Barkhuizen, 2017) or friction (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). As this struggle with identity comes to the fore during periods of transition, when identity is seen to be challenged, the focus of research has largely been trained on pre-service or early-service teachers (Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018). The research in this paper addresses a teaching population who have thus far escaped the research gaze, but aspects of whose identity could be problematic and possible sites of struggle. Drawing upon a narrative approach, in case-study form, I examine how two established teachers (with four years or more service) who have been trained to work in the state-school context and who, for a variety of reasons are now working outside it, construct their language teacher identities. The findings point to the importance of the teachers' own experiences as learners in their identity formation, and how emotion accompanies and acts as a driver of identity change as they seek stability and status on an uncertain professional path.

Keywords: Language teacher identity, identity struggle, established teachers, state-school context, private context

There is a growing recognition of the need to understand language teacher identity, as how teachers perceive themselves and their teaching has been linked to an array of factors which impact significantly on their lives both inside and outside the classroom. These factors range widely, from issues such as teacher wellbeing (Day & Kington, 2008) to long-term engagement and motivation (Hiver & Dornyei, 2015).

Identity is generally categorised as dynamic, negotiated and, when challenged, open to shifts, which may be potentially painful (Clarke, 2008; Sheridan, 2013). It is the pre-service and induction phase of teachers' careers that has been the focus of much existing identity research (Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018). More experienced teachers, understood as teachers of four years' service or more, as this is the period in which teachers are seen to process their professional practices (see, for example, Huberman, 1989), have to some extent escaped such intense research scrutiny. Yet, it is clear that they also experience identity shifts and what Barkhuzien (2017) labels as "struggle." Identity may be challenged by a redrawing in working practices or priorities, often at the level of curriculum reform (e.g., Ketelaar, Beijaard, Boshuizen, & Den Brok, 2012), or by a change in context, either through moving to another area or field of teaching (Tao & Goa, 2018) or through teaching in another country or culture (Leigh, 2019; Takeda, 2017).

Through narrative inquiry, the case study presented in this paper hopes to shed light on the identity construction of teachers who have escaped research attention thus far. They are experienced teachers (working for more than the four years of the early years phase), employed outside the context for which they were trained, that is, working in the private rather than the public sector.

The teacher training the two participants in this study have undergone focused on the primary and high school context (reflected in course curriculum and content and teaching practice). However, they have worked mostly in the private sector, having set up their own businesses, offering private tuition to a variety of age-ranges. This study seeks to understand what implications, if any, this change from public to private sector has had for their language teacher identity—given that these teachers have entered a context for which they were not specifically trained, and may not have expected to work in, through circumstance rather than choice. The private sector carries a number of specific challenges for language teachers, yet despite the extensive number of teachers who are engaged in private language education, little research has focused on their psychology (Mercer, 2020). The main question I therefore attempt to address in this paper is how trained state school teachers construct their teaching identities when teaching in a non-state context and what implications this has, if any, for teacher training and development.

Literature Review

Understanding of Identity

The understanding of identity that underpins the present study is rooted in a socio-cultural framework, similar to the conceptualizations offered by authors such as Beijaard et al. (2004), Sachs (2005), Rodgers and Scott (2008), and Barkhuizen (2017), who categorize identity formation as a complex inter-play of individual and society. I consider the identity of my participants as intricately constructed and reshaped through the people and experiences they have encountered along their professional paths. I draw upon notions of both personal and professional (language teacher) identity, understanding that the two are deeply entwined.

Identity should be understood as a shifting rather than fixed entity that it is continually negotiated, with some authors pointing to the never-ending na-ture of identity development (Barkhuizen, 2017; Cooper & Olson, 1996; Gee, 2000). Also critical is that identity formation is neither a passive nor neutral process. Beijaard et al. (2004) highlight the role played by agency in driving the construction and reconstruction processes of identity development, while Zembylas (2003) reminds us that identity is felt, with emotion accompanying the construction of our identity through mediation and interaction with others, our perceptions of them and in turn theirs of us (Johnson, 2003).

Identity formation can also potentially be a site of struggle. Tsui (2007) points to the multiple identities an individual maintains, echoed by Barkhuizen (2017) who describes the negotiation of sub-identities as perhaps harmonious but also "contested and resisted" (Barkhuizen, 2017, p. 4). Just as identity is renegotiated through time, it may also be renegotiated through space, context included (Gee, 2000), the influence of which on identity formation is nuanced by social, cultural, political, and historical factors (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). This understanding of identity underpinning the present study, as a constantly shifting and at times painful process, driven by agency and mediated by others, allows me to capture most fully the complexity of the participants' identity as they have negotiated their professional path.

The Importance of Identity

While definitions of identity vary, there is strong consensus in the literature on the importance of understanding language teacher identity. The impact of identity on teachers and their teaching is undeniable, with Leibowitz (2017) pointing to the role identity plays in how teachers perform their professional ac-

tivities in the classroom, claiming that it "[…] informs everything he or she does […]" (Leibowitz, 2017, p. 75). Identity has also been linked to teacher wellbeing (Day & Kington, 2008), which has in turn been linked to learner wellbeing and improved learning (Dresel & Hall, 2013; Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018); other studies point to identity as playing a vital role in teacher effectiveness (Alsup, 2006) self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and commitment (Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink, & Hofman, 2012), and also in long-term engagement and motivation (Hiver & Dornyei, 2015).

At every stage of the teacher's career, in learning and development, critical engagement with professional identity is vital (Beijaard & Meijer, 2017; Day & Kington, 2008; Olsen, 2008; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). While it has been argued that critical reflective practice be instilled at the pre-service stage (Korthagen, 2004), other studies have pointed to the need for in-service teachers to also engage in identity work, to question their beliefs about themselves, their learners and their practices, in order to direct their professional development and learning (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Korthagen, 2004). This may suggest that the participants in this study, a population as yet not systematically addressed in the literature, could also benefit from such identity work to support them on their professional path.

State-School Trained Teachers in the Private Sector

Identity transition in more experienced teachers has been addressed in the existent literature largely in terms of changes within context. Shifts in identity have been triggered by new demands placed on teachers in the form of working practices or priorities (e.g., implementing educational innovation in vocational education (Ketelaar et al., 2012). In language teaching specifically, the literature has dealt with English teachers moving between fields of language teaching, entering ESP, for example (Tao & Goa, 2018). Moving between contexts has also been addressed in terms of identity construction and shifts, yet largely from a cultural perspective, focusing on the identity (re)negotiation, for example, of foreign English language teachers in the Chinese educational context (Leigh, 2019) and in the Japanese education system (Takeda, 2017).

What has yet to be addressed in the literature is context from the perspective of trained state school teachers working in the private sector. As the participants in this study have entered a context for which they have not been specifically trained, or indeed expected to work in, it may be that they also experience the friction (Beijaard, 2019) that can occur when expectation meets professional reality. These challenges to identity may be intensified due to the specific demands of private sector teaching as outlined in the existent literature: the working conditions themselves, which for many verge on the

precarious (Mercer, Oberdorfer, & Saleem, 2016; Sun, 2010; Wickham, 2015; Wieczorek, 2016), or the nature of private sector teaching, in which teachers may find themselves responding to the needs of a profit-driven business (Skinner, Leavey, & Rothi, 2019). The perceptions of private language teaching may also be problematic, as this profession enjoys a lower status than others (Johnston, 1997), while in the classroom, teachers in this context may be less respected by students (Bowen, 2013).

As language teacher identity is linked to many aspects of a teaching professional's life, both inside and outside the classroom, throughout their career, it is vital that we begin the process of unravelling the language teacher identity of the teachers addressed in this study. If their identity is indeed a site of struggle as a result of working in the private context, understanding how they construct their language teaching identity, and identifying any specific needs they may have in regard to managing their identity, will hopefully allow us to establish how best to support them in their English teaching careers.

Narrative Inquiry

This case study employs narrative inquiry to explore the language teacher identity of the participants. The narrative inquiry method recognizes the centrality of the story in identity formation, reflecting the notion of identity as rooted in the "stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 4). While what we say about ourselves expresses our identity, the telling of the narrative offers the potential to reshape it (Beijaard et al., 2004), a process which takes place through stories over time (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). In our attempts to make meaning of the experiences we have lived, we interpret them as part of a continuum, rather than isolated events (Carr, 1986). Our stories are subject to constant reinterpretation, and imposing coherence on them can be a source of struggle (Day, 2006).

The use of narrative in this study is two-fold, taking what could be described as a holistic approach to the study of identity (Leigh, 2019). I have employed it both as methodological tool to gather data and an analytic tool to make sense of it. I approach the stories told by the participants about their professional trajectory as English language teachers not as a fixed reality, but, drawing upon the work of Ricoeur (1991), as presentations of the participants' self-understanding. In this way, their stories can be understood as not just descriptive but somehow selective (Crossley, 2000). These narratives serve as devices which allow me to explore how they have constructed their identity, through the recounting of the meaning-making experiences, figures and events on their professional path. Through careful analysis of these stories, I hope

to bring to light, as Bell (2002) suggests, the assumptions and insights that underlie them.

Given that the question under research is both highly complex and personal, I hope that presenting the data in a narrative case study form has allowed me to reflect the intricacies or "rich detail" of the participants' identity construction (Duff, 2014, p. 234), while capturing something of their voices as they have reflected upon it. While it is the participant's narrative I present, I have to some extent co-constructed it with them, as the researcher is inevitably cast in the co-constructor role with this approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). Drawing upon the work of Stake (2006), the use of two participants in the study has enabled me to consider both the individualities and commonalities of the participants' identity.

Methodological Design

Research Question

Through the narrative inquiry approach described above, the study attempts to answer the following research: how do state-school trained English language teachers construct their language teacher (professional) identities when teaching outside the state context?

Procedure

The sampling procedure was tailored to the population described above: trained state-school English language teachers working outside the state context. As this is a relatively specific teaching population, I looked first to former students who are part of my personal and professional circle on social media. The fact that I was in some way familiar with this group meant that I was able to locate potential participants, and also, importantly, understand the complexity and nuance of their experiences. From the potential participants, the two who were first approached (through private messages (Messenger)) on Facebook, agreed to participate. Initial messages asked the potential participants to confirm that they were suitable for the study (i.e., that they had been trained to work in the state context but had had largely been working outside of it). Follow-up messages briefly outlined the nature of the study, indicating that I was exploring English language teacher identity. Mindful of this relationship (as their former university professor), I was at pains to point out that they were under

no obligation whatsoever to take part in the research and that they were able to withdraw at any time. I felt, however, that knowing the participants, a positive rapport had been established, which would facilitate a more honest and open interaction during the interview process. I am mindful of the limitations of this sampling procedure, as I have had access only to those participants who were contactable via social media and only those who were willing to discuss their identity with me. However, it is this special relationship that has allowed me an insight into their personal experiences and ensured the inclusion of participants in the study who fit the profile of the population I wished to understand.

Ethical procedures were followed throughout the data generation. The participants were fully informed of the aims and method of the research, in writing and orally. They were assured of confidentiality (that they would be assigned pseudonyms and also any identifying information would be redacted). Prior to being interviewed, both participants were sent a consent form to sign to indicate their agreement. Before the interview began, I checked the participant's willingness to participate once more and asked if there were any questions we should address before beginning. I also reminded the participants that they did not have to answer any questions they were uncomfortable with during the course of the interview. It was emphasized to the participants that they were free to withdraw from the procedure at any point up until the point of publication and if they chose to do so, all data would be immediately destroyed.

Context and Participants

The participants, referred to by their pseudonyms, Andreja and Borut, are both English language teaching graduates. They studied at the same faculty at approximately the same time, although they graduated some years apart (there is a certain degree of flexibility in the Slovene system as to when a student can complete the obligations required for their study program). Both students were enrolled in the pre-Bologna era, when studies were four years, with the teacher training element taking place in the last two years of study. Unlike now, under the Bologna 3+2 system, all students enrolled at the English department graduated as teachers.

Andreja has worked as an English language teacher for 15 or 16 years and has been mostly self-employed during that period. She has set up her own business, providing private tuition to both young and adult learners, while she has also worked on contract with young learners in a private language school. She has spent a brief period (two months) in a state primary school, providing sick-leave cover.

Borut has been teaching for a shorter period, six to seven years, and has also through that period been mostly self-employed. He has also spent some

time in a state primary school (six months) also providing sick-leave cover. His teaching has consisted mostly of private tuition with primary-level learners and teaching adults on contract in a language school setting. Borut has combined teaching with a job entirely unrelated to education.

Table 1

Participants' Biographical Data

Participant	Gender	Age	No. of years teaching	Type of teaching
Andreja	Female	40	15–16	Self-employed: private tuition; young learners and adults
				State school sick-leave cover (two months)
Borut	Male	40	6–7	Self-employed: part-time private tution, combined with other job
				State school sick-leave cover (six months)

Research Instruments

The data for the case-study were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews (Cohen et al., 2000). This particular format was selected as it gives both an element of structure and flexibility, allowing the interviewer to respond to points of interest as and when they arise. At the same time, the data generated by this format ensures a certain degree of comparability, whilst allowing the participants to retain their uniqueness and individuality (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The interviews were based on an interview protocol, designed to capture the participants' trajectory in terms of their identity, based on questions establishing their professional paths from English learners to students and then in their transition to teachers. The questions probed their initial and ongoing motivations, critical events and figures, their relationships with learners and other teachers. Both of the interviews were conducted in English and lasted approximately one and a half hours. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. During transcription, any identifying information such as real names and places were removed or changed to protect the participants' identities. All the interviews were also transcribed for content, including anything, such as pauses or laughter, which contributed to the meaning of the data. The audio files were deleted immediately following transcription. The transcription generated a data corpus for these two teachers of 30,594 words.

Analysis

To analyze the data, a Grounded Theory approach as proposed by Charmaz (2006) was adopted. The data were first transcribed, and I familiarized myself with the data by listening to it first, reading over it in paper form and making provisional notes before any formal coding took place. The interviews were then coded using a bottom-up approach, with the aim of allowing the data to speak for themselves, keeping a focus on emergent themes. Throughout the coding procedure, I attempted to remain reflexive at all times in an effort to manage my own subjectivities, consulting with my colleague during my analysis. I used ATLAS.ti to code the data, keeping memos during the multiple waves of coding, until I felt that "code saturation" had been reached. The interviews were coded first separately, and then compared in order to detect what was common to both participants and what was unique to them. In this way, I was able to identify any commonality across the data sets in terms of the main themes, yet also establish in what ways, if any, those main themes differed in the participants' experiences.

Results

The results of the case study are presented in the form of individual narratives for each of the participants, while commonalities are reflected upon in the discussion section.

Andreja: Transcendent Stability

According to Andreja, she has always wanted to teach. She remembers that when playing with her sister in early childhood, she always adopted the role of teacher. She has also wanted to be connected to English and working with the language somehow. As a learner of English, Andreja felt she was extremely competent, and presented a challenge to her teacher, whom she feels was lacking proficiency in English. Andreja's high-school English teacher was a meaningful figure for her. Andreja was not only critical of her language proficiency but also of her classroom approach and methods:

Her knowledge of English wasn't good; she didn't prepare for lessons. Her lessons were boring; she was reading out the coursebook.

This resulted in a crisis for Andreja. She felt personally aggrieved—hurt—by the effect her teachers' approach had on her attitude to a language she loves. So, in her own teaching, Andreja strives to avoid the method and approaches to which she was subjected as a learner. For her, it is important to prioritize the needs of the students in terms of individualizing the approaches she adopts, requiring exhaustive preparation on her part:

> To me, the first thing is always, who am I teaching? That is the first, so what is my student like? That's the first thing. When I plan my lesson, what is my student like, where do their interests lie? What is their personality-wise like, where are their problem areas? How can I reach this student? But, that's the basis.

Tied to her focus on preparation, she feels strongly that one of her roles as the teacher is to ensure that her learners remain motivated and are always exposed to useful and relevant language. During her high-school experience, she encountered a teacher who pulled her back from her crisis, a role-model in which she roots her own language teacher identity:

> It's crazy, and that's also one part, that I've always sworn to myself, it was like something I said to myself back then: I want to be the teacher to make the kids feel the way that they made me feel.

In this class, the teacher approached the learners as equals and shared an open and relaxed relationship with them. This has in turn informed Andreja's own classroom practice. She too embraces the notion of equality, which underpins the relationship she has with her learners, which she claims is more effective than being a disciplinarian or aloof.

Andreja perceives herself as a competent teacher, whose approach to teaching, founded on the beliefs and values shaped by her learning experience and expressed in the methods and approaches she employs, can be employed both in the state and private context. During the period she spent teaching in a state primary school, she was able to resist the challenges to "her way" in the form of parental expectations, and the demands of the curriculum and paperwork. When her method was questioned by a fellow teacher during her state-school experience, who said that she did not train to be a teacher to "clown around" (her characterisation of Andreja's methods), she rejects the criticism. Andreja says the way you teach depends on your personality and she is prepared to try any method to achieve results. She looks to the positive affirmations she has received of her teaching throughout her career:

> I do believe that what I'm doing, I'm doing right […] and I've had so many feedbacks in the past years that I absolutely don't […] it may sound a bit self-assured but I really don't doubt it […].

Andreja is largely critical of her teaching colleagues. She looks past her local community of teachers, aligning herself to the Finnish system of teacher education, which is more demanding to enter and complete, she feels. Other teachers often appear to her as unmotivated, stuck in their teaching ways, sometimes lacking proficiency in English.

Andreja has encountered few, if any, problems with her teaching. Teaching is something that she feels has always come easily to her. She is proud of her ability to find ways to tackle any issues that arise and her self-reliance in drawing upon the extensive bank of material resources she has created. Her perception of herself as a teacher is that of a natural. Her competence as a teacher rests on the fact that she can make a "connection with kids," which is "a gift she was given." Teaching nourishes her; her classes are her "soulfood" and teaching her "superpower." Learners open up to her and share their problems in English. She feels rewarded by the work she has done with socially-disadvantaged groups, which sustains her.

As Andreja looks to the future, she considers that a state school position might be preferable for the job security it provides. Andreja also views this not only as an opportunity for her teaching methods to reach the widest possible audience in terms of learners, but there is also the added motivation that in the state-school context, she would be able to encourage her teaching colleagues to adopt her methods in their classrooms:

> […] but I still have this maybe sort of idealistic idea that I could show other teachers that it is doable.

Borut: Painful Change

Borut perceived himself as a lazy learner. During high school, he was taught English by a teacher who was marked by a deep personal trauma. She shouted at students and trained them simply for exam knowledge. He feels that by the time he reached university, he was far behind his peers in language competence.

He ties becoming a teacher with academic performance. As a student, he was unsure of his career path, feeling that he was pushed somehow into studying; he believed at first that he would be unable to teach, as he was unable to meet the academic demands of the study program. With the help of a fellow

student, however, he began to improve, although he was still unsure he would ever teach, and it was only after the completion of his studies that he saw himself as becoming a teacher. This experience, though, gave him a sense of teaching purpose:

> […] I didn't have […] there's lots of kids that don't know how to study or so, I think this is my way of sort of giving some things back.

Helping learners to study will be part of keeping them engaged, which he believes to be the core, or "shell" of teaching.

During a period when he was unable to find employment, Borut missed teaching, and felt "bitter" that he had wasted time and energy on training to be a teacher. Borut is currently teaching English to business people. He perceives himself to be an effective teacher in the private context. He sees his learners as making progress and his boss, who is taking an English class with him, tells him he is a good teacher. Otherwise, Borut engages little with the wider community of teachers, having little contact with those employed at the same language school, or those employed in state schools.

Although he feels that his studies were helpful, he has had to educate himself for the teaching he is doing now. It is through experience that he has learned how to manage the specific demands of teaching adults:

> […] you have to do things yourself, so this would be an interesting part you know as well if you think about the studies. It's very different to teach adults. You have to know what you're doing because people expect more of you.

He is extremely conscious of his learners' needs, identifying the ways in which they differ to the children he was trained to teach. He recognizes how their earlier learning experiences affect them, with school often having made them extremely self-conscious. He is motivated by his feeling of helping them:

> And they're very afraid to speak English in front of others, their colleagues or boss and you know making these things easier for them […] sort of […] it's okay, it's a bit of rewarding.

Borut has had to adjust his approach to teaching adults, especially when working in business settings. He has learned to accept that business people will use their phones during class, and that they will resist homework. He tries to make as few unnecessary demands on his learners as possible, remaining as unobtrusive as he can. He perceives that English for many of them plays a minimal role in their lives, or is even a burden. When asked what his learners think of him as a teacher, he claims that he is sure they hardly think of him at all.

At the same time, he also recognizes the new role he has to fulfill, that of being a service-provider and the learner a customer. Being self-employed means he has to engage with accountants and worry about finances. As Borut reflects on his experiences, he feels that teaching adults is more demanding than children, but more manageable for him.

Borut spent some time in a primary school, providing sick-leave cover. Drafted in just after the holiday period, Borut found that he could not keep up with the pace of preparation, nor manage the discipline issues he faced with a learner who undermined his authority and who controlled the class through "manipulative behavior." He was stressed, which led to losing his cool and shouting at the pupils, which reminded him of his high-school teacher. Feeling underprepared, he allowed the children to watch cartoons. He was expected to assess the learners, yet he felt out of his depth and could not admit this to his colleagues. Asking for help was out of the question, as he "should know" how to set exams. He could not prepare adequately for class, as he had a young son at home. He is still troubled by this period of teaching. It still "gnaws" at him.

This episode, he says, made him realize he is not cut out to teach in a state school. He says he is too old, too weighed down by domestic demands. He cannot engage with the learners in state school in the meaningful ways he does with his adult learners. Yet, as he looks to the future, he recognizes the pain of expectation from the early years of his career when he hoped to teach in a state school but was employed in his other job instead:

> […] then I really kind of got a bit bitter I think because it took me a long time to maybe find myself after high school, which was hell, and the first years here were hell. I spent so much time and energy and then sort of to be doing something that I could have done without those things.

As Borut considers his future, he sees that although to a certain degree he feels that he has established himself in the private school context, finding a number of clients and figuring out how to meet their demands, there is still a sense of unfinished business in the public sector. He acknowledges that his future most likely lies outside the state context, yet somehow he is unable, or unwilling, to say for certain that his future lies where he is now. The thread running through his narrative of uncertainty and painful change is very much present. Despite the bruising episode from primary school, and his statement that he has somehow missed his chance of a state school position, the idea that he will not return there is difficult for him to accept:

> I will probably not teach in school, and this is something that I've been struggling for, for a year now.

Discussion

This study hoped to shed light on the ways in which English language teachers trained to work in the state context and working outside it construct their language teacher identities. Despite the stark contrast in the individuality of the data sets, there are also common themes which emerge for both. The discussion addresses the three main themes from across the data: the role of past language learning experience and teacher selves, the need for status and the role of emotion in identity formation.

Teacher Selves

What features strongly in both of the narratives is that the participants make sense of themselves professionally through conceptions of teaching and teachers shaped by their own experience as learners. Both participants seem to have, during their learner years, built a strong core of beliefs through which they measure their teaching. Drawing upon possible selves theory (Hamman Gosselin, Romano, & Bunuan, 2010; Kubanyiova, 2009), these can be understood as "ought to" beliefs, while key figures from the participants' learning experiences provide a model of both the "ideal teacher self" and the "feared teacher self." In Andreja's case, she perceives herself as close to the "ideal teacher self." She sees herself as able to teach exactly as she would like to, according to her concept of an ideal teacher, in any context she would choose to work in. In contrast, Borut's enactment of his "feared self" in his public sector experience has led him not to question his beliefs about teaching per se but to instead shift context where he can enact his preferred teaching identity.

One way to perhaps understand this finding is to consider the teaching selves of the participants in this study, shaped in part by their own language learning experience, as offering a sense of stability to our participants in their identity construction. This reflects the findings of Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons (2006), who suggest that teachers are pushed into "finding ways" to establish and maintain stability in their professional lives.

It could be argued that Andreja and Borut have encountered particular instability on their professional trajectory. They have worked in both the state and private context, managing their own expectations and the expectations of others at the institutions at which they have been employed. They have settled in the private sector, a context for which they have not been specifically trained and in which they have experienced a degree of financial insecurity due to being self-employed, yet they both also acknowledge that they may return to the public sector. While their path may be categorized as unstable, what has

remained stable is Andreja and Borut's core teaching values, as expressed by their teacher selves. As with other teaching professionals, when they teach close to their preferred teaching selves, as they perceive they do in the private sector (and Andreja in the public sector also), this fosters a sense of efficacy, which in turn leads to a more stable, and stronger, language teacher identity (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011).

Although both of the participants, as described above, perceive themselves as achieving a degree of professional efficacy in the private sector, both refer to returning to state school, at least for the financial security it would bring, despite reporting challenges from their state school experience, with Borut's "praxis shock" (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) and Andreja's discomfort with colleagues. What may have been beneficial to both in the past, and what may still prove beneficial, they should decide to return, is engaging in some form of identity work.

Other researchers, such as Beijaard (2019) and Alsup (2006), have called for identity work to be incorporated at the pre-service stage. Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, and Fry (2004) suggest identity-challenging activities during teacher training in order to mitigate "praxis shock," while the use of autobiographical stories (Le Fevre, 2011) or metaphors (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011) may lead to pre-service teachers reflecting more profoundly on their identities. Freese (2006) suggests that such practices may reveal inconsistencies between students' beliefs and practice, allowing them to find counter-examples to beliefs, which is crucial in identity development. At this stage in their careers, Andreja and Borut could benefit from identity work which would be useful in helping them develop an understanding of the cognitive aspect of their identity, that is, the beliefs they have formed about themselves as teachers and their teaching, allowing them hopefully to maintain professional efficacy without compromising their core teaching values (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Korthagen, 2004).

The Role of Status

Besides this apparent need for stability, the data may also point to a need for status among members of this teaching population. This may be particularly reflected in Andreja's narrative, in her perception of her teaching as problem-free, and the anchoring of her identity in rather esoteric or perhaps spiritual concepts, for example, referring to her teaching as abilities or a "gift," contrasting with the generally negative descriptions of her teaching peers in the state sector. However, there are echoes of the need for status elsewhere in both participants' narratives. While, as Mercer points out, the reasons for engaging in private sector teaching are "often more pragmatic than an intrinsic calling to education" (Mercer, 2020, p. 4), Andreja and Borut frame employment in

the public sector as the pragmatic choice, as something they would only leave their private sector work for—in which they enjoy a relative degree of freedom and meaningful relationships with the learners—to guarantee a regular income and a degree of job security. This is hardly surprising, as Borut's financial concerns reflect the worrying levels of precarity reported by language teachers employed in the private sector (Walsh, 2019). His inability to commit fully to the private sector illustrates precisely something Walsh refers to when he describes private sector teachers employed in circumstances "in which the ability to plan a coherent future is compromised" (Walsh, 2019, p. 1).

In order to understand this finding, we can look to social comparison theory, which draws upon the work of Festinger (1954). Both participants, to varying degrees, seem to be engaging in downward social comparison in order to bolster their language teacher identity. This response may well have been triggered by both participants entering this sector through circumstance rather than choice and as a result, feeling the need to justify their professional path. This downward social comparison may also be triggered by the negative perceptions of the context in which they are employed, which the participants here may have absorbed, offering a strategy with which to counter the lower perceptions of EFL private teaching (Fiske, 2011) and its business-oriented nature (Skinner et al., 2019). Engaging in such comparisons may be beneficial in terms of ensuring job satisfaction and affective commitment (Brown, Ferris, Heller, & Keeping, 2007), which may in turn help to enhance their language teacher identity.

While the perceptions of this sector as a whole can only be challenged through systemic and fundamental change, one step which could be taken is the incorporating, or even acknowledging, of private sector teaching during teacher training. This could perhaps not simply take the form of training pre-service teachers in the specific skills and approaches they need for the type of teaching they are engaged in but also perhaps include training in the business aspect of this work. At present, in some institutions in Slovenia, where the case study was carried out, the focus is placed almost entirely on the public context. Perhaps recognizing private sector teaching at the pre-service stage would go at least some small way towards bolstering its legitimacy as a career and rendering the need for such social comparison strategies redundant.

The Role of Emotion in Teacher Identity

Another significant theme in the narratives is the role of emotion in the participant's identity construction. While emotion connects the data sets, the role it plays varies. In Andreja's data, we see emotion as a quality (Hamman et al., 2010) reflected in her striving to make an emotional connection with her learners. In Borut's narrative, we witness emotion as a response (Hamman et al.,

2010), accompanying challenges to his identity, but also motivating a change in teaching context. The emotion expressed in both these narratives, while different in nature, seems triggered largely by the striving for self-efficacy, in how the participants teach best and in which context they teach best.

What is clear from the data is that Borut has carried a pronounced emotional burden on his career path, brought about by employment uncertainty, unemployment, and the identity challenges of moving context. This becomes potentially problematic when considering his teacher agency. Emotion offers the potential for self-transformation in identity construction (Zembylas, 2003). Yet, when professional legitimacy is called into question—as in the ways described above—the emotional consequences can profoundly negatively affect agency (Golombek & Johnson, 2005). If Borut is any way illustrative of other teachers who have shared similar experiences, we may find that they also are "paralysed" and unable to pursue career possibilities or avenues that would otherwise be open to them.

The link between emotion, identity, and agency has already been clearly established by authors such as Day (2012) and Reis (2015), while elsewhere in the literature, calls are being made for teachers to be supported in understanding their "affective selves" (Goh, 2015). Verity (2000) points out the need for the affective aspects of teacher identity to be reflected upon and professionals trained in what Wu, Liang, and Cseplyi refer to as "affective management" (2020, p. 13). While it may remain as yet unclear how to best support them in doing so, the data in this study suggests that it would also be beneficial for the participants to understand the affective element of their identity in order to effectively manage their professional paths.

Conclusion

The study sought to shed light on the identity construction of an until now overlooked language teacher population, namely, that of trained state-school teachers working in the private sector. Although this was a small-scale study carried out in Slovenia, its findings may be of relevance for other teachers following a similar career path elsewhere. It draws attention to the specific challenges of working in the private sector, a sector which the participants in the study entered through circumstance rather than choice and were not specifically trained for, and the subsequent problems and challenges this poses for their identity construction.

The participants in this case study tread an uncertain path in a sector which is often underappreciated in comparison to its public counterpart. This has

triggered a need for both stability and a quest to bolster their sense of status when constructing their identity. The case study has also drawn attention to the heavy emotional toll identity challenges exacted on one of the participants, which negatively affected agency and directly impacted on their teaching career.

However, it is hoped that acknowledging private sector teaching during the pre-service stage and implementing some of the suggestions made regarding identity work could be constructive in supporting these teachers in their professional trajectories.

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Kirsten Hempkin

Die Identität der Sprachlehrer außerhalb des staatlichen Schulwesens

Z u s a m m e n f a s s u n g

Die Bedeutung des Verständnisses von Identität der Sprachlehrer ist in der vorhandenen Literatur gut belegt. Es wurde nachgewiesen, dass diese sich auf mehrere Aspekte des beruflichen und außerberuflichen Lebens der Lehrkräfte auswirkt, z.B. auf das Wohlbefinden (Day & Kington, 2008) und die Selbstwirksamkeit (Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitink, & Hofman, 2012). Die Identität der Sprachlehrer wird aus soziokultureller Sicht eher als dynamisch und nicht als statisch betrachtet, als im Rahmen sozialer Interaktion ausgearbeitet, und stellt (potenziell) eine Quelle des Ringens (Barkhuizen, 2017) bzw. des Streitens (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004) dar. Da das Ringen mit der Identität in Zeiten des Übergangs, wenn die Identität in Frage gestellt wird, in den Vordergrund rückt, hat sich die Forschung hauptsächlich auf angehende Lehrkräfte konzentriert (Mercer & Kostoulas, 2018). Der Artikel befasst sich mit einer Lehrergruppe, die bisher noch nicht erforscht worden ist, deren Identität jedoch problematisch und ein möglicher Gegenstand des Ringens sein könnte. Auf der Grundlage eines narrativen Ansatzes wird in Form einer Fallstudie untersucht, wie zwei erfahrene Lehrkräfte (mit vier bzw. mehreren Jahren Berufserfahrung), welche für den Dienst im staatlichen Schulwesen ausgebildet wurden und nun aus verschiedenen Gründen außerhalb dieses Umfelds arbeiten, ihre Identität als Sprachlehrer aufbauen. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, wie wichtig die eigenen Erfahrungen der Lehrer als Lerner für ihre Identitätsentwicklung

sind bzw. wie Emotionen ihren Identitätswandel begleiten und vorantreiben, während sie auf einem unsicheren beruflichen Weg nach Stabilität und Status suchen.

Schlüsselwörter: Identität der Sprachlehrer, Ringen um Identität, erfahrene Lehrkräfte, staatliches Schulwesen, privates Schulwesen