



**Dorota Werbińska, *The Formation of Language Teacher Identity. A Phenomenographic-Narrative Study*
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Language teaching is a challenging occupation, not only because it requires a skilled language competence, but also because it needs constant interaction with other human beings and needs instant decision making, often under the pressure. It takes many years of experience, reflectivity as well as a proactive stance to develop full professionalism in teaching: from the very moment of making a decision to taking it up, through the training process, until reaching autonomy in the mature years. Affiliation to the profession appears to be a precondition to success at all stages of teacher development. The relatively recent book of Dorota Werbińska titled *The Formation of Language Teacher Identity. A Phenomenographic-Narrative Study* (2017) puts into scrutiny the initial steps of learning to become the foreign language educator. By qualitatively investigating numerous accounts of teachers-to-be, she manages to propose a synthetic framework for developing language teacher identity. This together with insightful narratives of the emergence of teacher knowledge constitute the greatest assets of the book.

This is a bulky volume, consisting of 526 pages organized into six chapters and complemented with an extensive reference list and eight appendices. Yet, the book has a very clear structure. The first chapter synthetically discusses various approaches to describing the concept of professional identity, such as existentialist, poststructuralist, narrative, and discursive as well as its conceptualizations among various researchers, for example, Wenger's (1998) notion of the communities of practice, Benson et al.'s (2013) facets of identity, or Pennington's (2015) frames of teacher identity, among others. The critical overview of these theories serves the author as a springboard for constructing her own model

of teacher identity in chapter 2. Her model, named 3 ALTIF model (i.e., 3A Language Teacher Identity Framework), is the basis for presenting the overview of current research on language teacher identity, both globally and locally, that is, in Poland as well as for investigating her own empirical data in chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 4 describes the research methodology, also characterizing the adopted perspective as a phenomenological and narrative study.

The professional identity model of a foreign language teacher proposed in chapter 2 describes the propensities a person deciding to become a language teacher should show. They are referred to as the 3 As in the framework, that is, affiliation, attachment, and autonomy. *Affiliation* to the teaching profession encompasses the sense of belonging to the profession and motives for its choice. *Attachment* to the teaching profession denotes preferences and beliefs about teaching. Teacher *autonomy* is characterized by such qualities as agency, reflectiveness, and resilience of the teacher, which allow him/her to make independent and informed decisions, regardless of the imposed roles in the education system. In addition to these components, the proposed teacher identity model has been enriched with two other concepts: *discontinuity* introduced by English (2013) and analogously the term *continuity* introduced by the author herself. These terms mean negative experiences encountered by people on their way of becoming a teacher, or conversely, expectations that the experience of becoming a teacher will run smoothly and without any disturbance respectively.

It is within this model that the extensive amount of qualitative data is analyzed in chapters 5 and 6. The narratives have been obtained from the pre-service teachers, mentors as well as the researcher herself by means of such elicitation tasks as written accounts, metaphors, diary entries, interviews, and field notes. The obtained amount of data seems to have been overwhelming, and yet the researcher managed to identify the recurring motives and topics, and finally organize them within broader categories of the 3 ALTIF model.

I have a high opinion of Werbińska's book. First of all, this is the first comprehensive study in Poland which deals with the professional identity of a foreign language teacher (and not, a much more widely studied identity of language learners). The overview of literature on the subject covers the most recent research carried out on language teacher identity after the year 2000 in various contexts globally (see chapter 3.2.). Secondly, the author should be appreciated for dealing with a huge amount of empirical data. The monograph primarily relies on qualitative research, conducted at several times and in several different groups. The empirical material consists of hundreds of recordings of interviews, narratives, observation sheets, and metaphors. Organizing them, identifying the main threads, and then interpreting them must have required a lot of effort and deep knowledge of the topic.

It is hard to find any drawbacks in this book, except for the fact that the huge amount of qualitative data may be overwhelming for a non-expert reader. Fortunately, Werbińska has managed to skillfully group and categorize the narratives under topical headings. Additionally, summative tables of key facts, methods, research strands, etc. help to orient the reader in this extensive text. My other criticism of the work could relate to the fact that the author proposed the 3 ALTIF model *a priori*, that is, before presenting empirical data, as if assuming in advance that she would find evidence for its verification. To my mind, the formulation of the model should rather result from the previously presented analysis of the collected data. It would be also advisable to present quantitative analyses of the data, for example, of frequency and types of collected metaphors, as it would allow to illustrate some general tendencies in a more objective way. I suspect, however, that the researcher developed the aforementioned model in the course of data analysis and intentionally presented it before revealing the research results so as to enable readers to follow the line of argument and interpret the data.

To conclude, the aforementioned monograph is of great importance, both for researchers and for teacher educators, especially in the era of an ongoing discussion on reforming teacher education and diminishing interest in the teaching occupation. Here I totally agree with the author's conclusions highlighted in the summary: first of all, motives for taking up teaching studies among pre-service trainees should be scrutinized. Additionally, candidates for the profession should be given more support through the mentoring system, both in the course of the study and in the first year of practicing the profession. All in all, it has to be publicized that developing professional teacher identity requires time and considerable investments of human and financial capital.



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