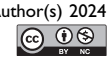
Article

RELC

RELC Journal
2025, Vol. 56(1) 34–49



DOI: 10.1177/00336882241291608
journals.sagepub.com/home/rel
Sage

Pedagogizing Identity in Professional Development: The Case of Two Native English-Speaking Teachers in Hong Kong

Özgehan Uştuk
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

Guangwei Hu
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

Abstract

Despite the emerging attempts to integrate identity work into teacher education programs, how identity can be incorporated into professional development of in-service teachers is still an open question. This study reports on a professional development program on productive teacher questioning that was offered to secondary school English teachers in Hong Kong. The program aimed to pedagogize identity work for the native English-speaking teacher participants while they were engaging in the target pedagogic knowledge-base through identity-oriented activities. Using a comparative case study design, we drew on data collected with narrative frames, stimulated recalls, and semi-structured interviews. Our thematic analysis revealed that the teachers juxtaposed their enacted and narrated identities by negotiating multiple externally defined roles, that they identified professional tensions while reflecting on the academic cultures as transnational teachers, and that their identity work unveiled the emotion labor of becoming a native speaker teacher in Hong Kong. The findings highlight the interface of identity work and teacher learning and call for an identity focus in in-service teacher learning as well as the betterment of the native English-speaking teacher policy in Hong Kong.

Keywords

Teacher questioning, identity work, in-service language teacher, native English-speaking teachers

Corresponding author:
Guangwei Hu, Department of English and Communication, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong.
Email: guangwei.hu@polyu.edu.hk

Introduction

Language teaching is identity work that is deeply rooted in sociopolitical discourses. These discourses influence teachers' identities layered by linguistic background, ideology, culture, gender, faith and nationality. Such intersectionality of teacher identity and its influence on teaching practice (Kanno and Stuart, 2011) make it vital for teacher educators to incorporate identity work as an explicit focus of language teacher education (LTE). Thus, the identity turn and ensuing efforts to pedagogize identity in teacher education (Lingard, 2009) have influenced teacher educators' practices.

Despite burgeoning research on pedagogizing identity in initial and postgraduate LTE, identity work during in-service professional development (PD) is still underexplored, largely due to the difficulty in working with in-service teachers for an extended period. In-service teachers *do* identity work on a day-to-day basis as they encounter new challenges, experience policy shifts and navigate tensions. However, PD, which typically centers on the transmission of trending instructional methods, policy concepts or technological innovations in commonly one-off events, expects language teachers to *adopt* externally created professional knowledge. These programs often fail to help teachers create a reflexive nexus of teacher learning relating new professional knowledge to their identities (Noonan, 2019).

This paper examines the identity work of two in-service English teachers in Hong Kong secondary schools during a PD program on teacher questioning. The program aimed to help teachers reflect on their professional roles, which are externally defined by wider authoritative discourses including the prevailing language education policy. Working with the two teachers, who were employed under the Native-Speaking English Teachers (NET) scheme, provided a valuable opportunity to explore an underresearched area, that is, how transnational native-speaking English teachers construct their identity, and shape their practices accordingly, in an EFL context.[1] To this end, the study set out to answer the following research questions:

1) How did the identity-oriented PD program on teacher questioning influence the NETs' identity work?
2) How did the NETs respond to identity-oriented activities in teacher learning?

Previous Work

Pedagogizing Language Teacher Identity: Concept, Research and Practice

Identity is essential for teacher educators to understand and advance teaching practice. Clarke (2009), addressing the question of whether teacher educators 'really need to be concerned with issues of identity in a practical profession like teaching' (186), answers that identity work is indispensable for teachers to enact agency. Highlighting the importance of understanding wider practices of power and how identity work is connected to them, Clarke argues that only with an agency exercised through identity work can teachers maximize their potential for development. In this regard, Kayi-Aydar (2015) drew on narrative data and showed that language teachers' identity interacted with and influenced their agency in the social context when they (re)constructed and (re)negotiated identity positions. Language teachers' identity work, through its mediation of agency, can

modify and refine classroom practices (Tao and Gao, 2017) or transform them (Martel and Yazan, 2021).

Teachers' identity work is deeply connected with their emotions. Yazan (2018) identifies emotions as a contextual factor in his conceptualization of language teacher identity (LTI) that can give teachers deeper insight into their identity work and contribute to the understanding of their practices. Authoritative discourses surrounding language teachers' practices can cause much stress leading to emotional tensions (Derakhshan et al., 2024). Thus, emotion labor, resulting from implicit feeling rules that drive institutional, cultural and societal expectations of teachers (Benesch, 2017), provides another conceptual lens, along with that of agency, for analyzing and making sense of identity-oriented teacher learning.

Teacher identities are fluid and constantly constructed within wider discourses. Put differently, the way teachers engage continuously in identity work is influenced by relations of power that permeate social, political, ideological and cultural institutional structures and practices, teachers' navigation of these power relations, and negotiation of their aspirations to address the contextual demands (Yazan, 2018). For language teachers, the nexus of identity work becomes even more complex because their linguistic practices, which are also mediated by power relations (De Costa and Uştuk, 2024), are also involved. Therefore, pedagogizing identity in LTE is critical for teachers to make sense of their agency (or lack of it) and practices.

We find Clarke's work useful for our analysis in that he conceptualizes teacher identity as being intimately related to dominant social, cultural and political discourses and 'discursively constructed' (2008: 24) through an 'ongoing process of discussion, explanation, negotiation, argumentation and justification that partly comprises teachers' lives and practices' (Clarke, 2009: 187). As Clarke points out, individuals may start with their *I* positions when they give an account of themselves, but they depend on sociocultural and sociopolitical discourses that determine what resources are available to them while negotiating identities. In examining teachers' discursive negotiation, we drew on the conceptions of both *identity-in-discourse* (i.e. the discursive constitution of identity and agency) and *identity-in-practice* (i.e. the manifestation of LTI in classroom practices) (Varghese et al., 2005). In an attempt to integrate the two conceptions, Kanno and Stuart (2011) put forward the notion of *identities-in-practice* to stress that identity and practice are mutually constitutive and that identity work, when discursively constructed (i.e. narrated identity), expresses the reflexive relationship between the self and practice of a teacher (i.e. enacted identity). Relatedly, Kanno and Stuart (2011) examined two novice English-language teachers' identity formation while reflecting on their learning-in-practice experience. Drawing on interviews, stimulated recalls and classroom observations collected over one academic year, they demonstrated how the teachers' emerging identities guided their pedagogical practices regarding classroom management and assessment.

Teacher educators pedagogized identity through various lenses and reported their practice in postgraduate courses (e.g. Flores and Aneja, 2017; Martel and Yazan, 2021; Yazan, 2019) or undergraduate courses for pre-service teachers with limited (if any) teaching experience (e.g. Lindahl et al., 2021; Uştuk, 2022; Uştuk and Yazan, 2024a, 2024b). With respect to pedagogical practice, diverse modalities were utilized for pedagogizing identity, including:

(a) visual methods such as language portraits, through which teachers express their experiences and portray their linguistic repertoires on a body silhouette (Lindahl et al., 2021), and photo-elicitation, in which teachers reflect on their linguistic and professional background through visual aids (Weng and Troyan, 2023);
(b) textual methods such as narrative frames, through which teachers create their narratives scaffolded by prompting verbal cues (Barkhuizen, 2014), and critical autoethnographies, by which teachers narrate their experiences focusing on critical issues (Sánchez-Martín, 2022; Yazan, 2019); and
(c) somatic methods such as drama, where teachers engage in professional positionings through situated performances and role-play (Uştuk, 2022).

Regardless of modality, teacher educators endeavored to incorporate identity work in formal LTE contexts, allowing teachers to construct professional discourses. For instance, Aneja (2016) found that the analysis of narrative portraits helped participant-teachers negotiate subjectivities, create relationships between their ethnolinguistic profiles and practices, and raise awareness of (non-)native speaker ideologies. Similarly, Yazan (2019) and Sanchez-Martin (2022) utilized critical autoethnographies in LTE settings to investigate the participant-teachers' use of discourses when they constructed their identities in light of their historical background. In a non-formal education context, Coffey (2015) designed and conducted an identity-oriented workshop for a group of 26 teacher candidates. Utilizing language portraits and autobiographies, the focus of the workshop on linguistic identity encouraged the teacher candidates to acknowledge their own plurilingual background as an instructional resource and elicited 'a broader reflexivity' (500). To summarize, identity-oriented LTE can help teachers gain a broader and more situated understanding of professional discourses and their influences on classroom practices.

Language Teachers' Identity Work in Hong Kong and the NET Scheme

Hong Kong has a history of serving as a bridge between cultures. This status comes with its challenges when educational practices are not attuned to diverse cultural backgrounds or philosophical stances. For instance, Trent discussed the challenges unique to Hong Kong, where 'the interactive influence of Chinese Confucian-heritage culture and Western ideas' (2010: 907) had a fundamental impact on language teachers' identity work, that is, continuous identity negotiation and construction in the process of learning to teach languages (Uştuk & Yazan, 2024b; Yazan, 2018). Trent demonstrated how Hong Kong-based educators' different cultural backgrounds and philosophical stances shaped their discursive conceptions of *good teacher* (2010) and their understanding of traditional/old-fashioned and modern/inspiring pedagogies (2012, 2013). His studies provided vivid examples of how Hong Kong-based educators negotiated their identities and ideologies through discourse.

One government initiative that contributes to Hong Kong's multicultural educational backgrounds is the NET scheme. This scheme has been administered by Hong Kong's Education Bureau with a view to increasing the exposure of students to English and 'enhanc[ing] the learning and teaching of English with linguistically and culturally authentic materials and resources' at local schools (Education Bureau, 2024). The NET scheme provides schools with subsidiaries to recruit native-speaking English teachers.

MS Wong et al. (2018), drawing on survey data and case-study analyses, found the scheme effective in improving language education at schools. However, they also highlighted the extent of NETs' adaptation to the local educational system and cultural differences as factors that have hindered the impact of the scheme. Interestingly, Wong et al.'s findings were consistent with Trent's (2012) study on NETs who experienced challenges regarding their self-positionings as teaching professionals. NETs relied on external support for establishing pedagogical legitimacy against other local stakeholders who constantly problematized their instructional practices. As a result, they constructed discourses of antagonism to the educational system and institutional practices. As a professional group tasked with 'advis[ing] colleagues on the current use of English and how it is shaped by culture' (Education Bureau, 2024), NETs in Hong Kong schools require a closer investigation to understand how they negotiate their identities in classrooms, institutions and the city.

Teacher Questioning in Hong Kong and Identity-Oriented PD

Questions asked by teachers are vital to creating an engaging classroom discourse. Teacher questioning in Hong Kong has been seen as a problematic practice because language teachers there tend to adopt a transmissive pedagogy that relies heavily on questions demanding lower-order cognitive engagement rather than higher-order critical thinking (R Wong, 2010) and to promote a teacher-centered classroom discourse inhibiting students' active participation (Lo and Macaro, 2012).

In our PD work, we focused on teacher questioning because previous research indicated that local academic cultures are important factors determining the quality of teacher questions in terms of their cognitive complexity (Hu and Duan, 2019) or interactional orientation (Teo, 2016). In this regard, NETs as transnational educators have crossed multiple geographical, cultural and linguistic borders to work as secondary school teachers in Hong Kong. Researching them could reveal the discursive construction of transnational teacher identity in relation to diverse cultural and academic backgrounds. With that in mind, we aimed to examine how NETs' identity work and practices might be influenced during an identity-oriented PD program. In accordance with our conceptual framework and previous work on the pedagogizing of teacher identities, we utilized:

(a) activities helping teachers reflect on and organize their experiences so that they would narrate them – accordingly, we upcycled stimulated recall protocols as pedagogy for teacher learning and employed narrative frames to support teachers' narrative reflections and discursive construction of identities in relation to questioning practice in the classroom; and
(b) one-to-one mentoring to help teachers reflect critically on their questioning practices in light of their identity work.

With these activities and mentoring, we pedagogized identity and examined how the explicitly facilitated identity work influenced their professional learning. The stimulated recalls and narrative frames were not only data collection instruments for us but also reflective activities intended to get the teachers to construct professional discourses for identity formation. Through these activities, we made identity work more noticeable for the teachers so that they could draw connections between the content of the PD (i.e. teacher questioning) and their identity work.

Methods and Materials

We employed a comparative case study design, which is a multi-scalar framework that examines how structures are culturally produced. Such a design helps researchers compare multiple similarly-framed cases (e.g. teachers or schools) first horizontally based on their local practices and then vertically, examining the interaction of these local practices with policies and discourses (Bartlett and Vavrus, 2017). This approach worked well epistemologically with our intention of unveiling how two NETs made sense of their teacher questioning practices (horizontally) and how their practices were related to their identities, school policies and educational policies in Hong Kong (vertically). Furthermore, comparing the two cases would allow us to examine how our PD program supported (or failed to support) the teachers in building connections between the new professional knowledge (i.e. teacher questioning), their identity work and wider authoritative discourses.

Participants

The NETs who participated in this study were from a larger study involving a PD program on teacher questioning, which was conducted at secondary schools in Hong Kong during the 2022–2023 academic year. There were three NETs who participated in the program. All three were invited to participate, and two of them accepted the invitation.

Case 1: Nigel. Nigel (pseudonym), from the US, was a graduate student in a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)-related MA program at a local university. Under the NET scheme, he had been working for 13 years, five of which were at his current school. He was a monolingual White teacher. As an active member of his school's English panel, he had helped developing materials for the English classes and worked with his colleagues in several school-based PD sessions in which he shared his expertise. As an educator, he was invested in learning more about critical thinking in the classroom and how teacher questioning could promote higher-order cognitive processes in the classroom.

Case 2: Allen. Allen (pseudonym) was from a former colonial country[2] and fluent in both English and his mother tongue. He had been teaching English for 15 years in Hong Kong, including four years at his current school. His role as an English teacher at his school was unique because there were many multilingual students who shared the same ethnic background as his. He was invested in creating a safe space for his students from non-Chinese and Chinese backgrounds where they were able to learn from each other while developing their English proficiency. Thus, he organized out-of-class activities for his students. He was keen on teacher questioning because he wanted to learn more about how his use of questions could motivate his students to become more engaged in the classroom.

The PD Program

The PD program included school-based work and one-to-one mentoring. During the Spring semester of 2023, we offered the five-hour program to the NETs from different

secondary schools in Hong Kong. The program was conducted with each NET individually and included a pre-observation conference, two lesson observations, a seminar, two narrative frame installments and a stimulated recall session. Figure 1 presents the program timeline.

Steps 2, 4 and 6 lasted approximately one hour each, whereas the narrative frames were take-home assignments. During the two-hour seminar, we introduced the theoretical foundations of productive teacher questioning in the English classroom, focusing on the cognitive demand of teacher questions (i.e. lower-order and higher-order questions) and interactional orientations (i.e. authoritative and dialogic classroom discourse). We also introduced different questioning approaches whereby teachers could make strategic and dynamic use of questions of different cognitive demands and interactional orientations to create learning-rich teacher–student interactions in the classroom. We did not count the semi-structured interviews in program hours since the primary objective of them was qualitative data collection.

Data Collection

Data came from two narrative frame installments, stimulated recall sessions and semi-structured interviews. The participants' responses to the narrative frames allowed us to collect coherent stories, and the stimulated recalls helped us examine specific examples of the NETs' questioning practices in the observed lessons. While creating the narrative frames (see Figure 2 for a sample), we drew on sample prompts and structure suggested by Barkhuizen (2014).

We designed the stimulated recall sessions to help teachers make explicit connections between their actual questions and identity work. Accordingly, the protocols included transcriptions of teacher–student interactions from the lesson observations, and the teacher educator (the first author) worked with the teachers to review the interactions and their use of questions. He used these sessions to exemplify dimensions of teacher questioning (i.e. cognitive demand and interactional orientation) and questioning approaches.

Data Analysis

We employed thematic analysis to identify and examine themes emerging in our data. This analytical method aligned with our intention to explore how the identity-oriented

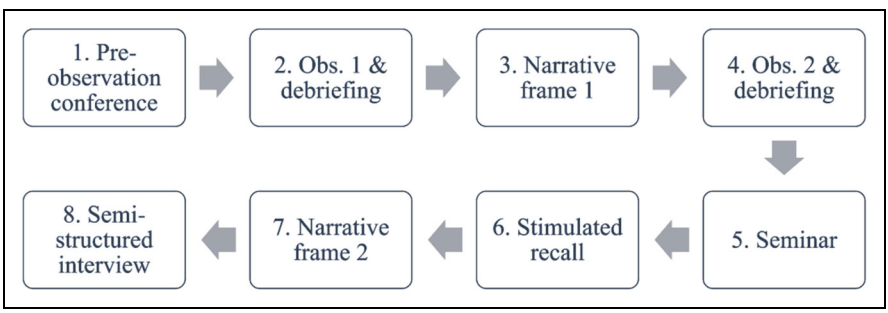


Figure 1. Program Timeline.

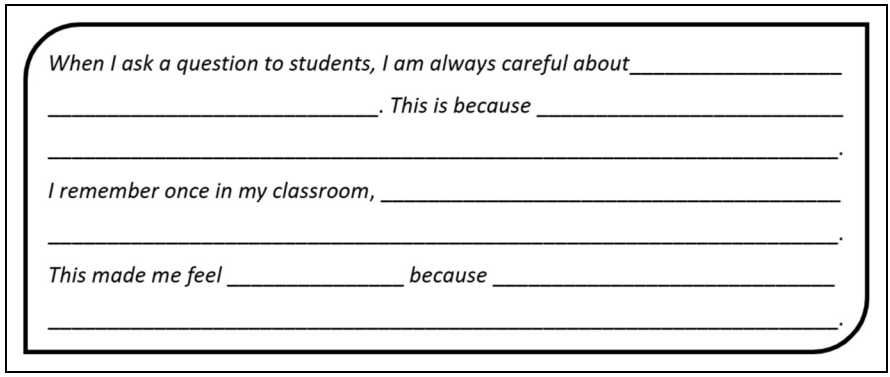


Figure 2. Narrative Frame Snippet.

Table 1. Sample Coding.

Sample Excerpt	Initial Code	Reworked Code Group	Theme
[M]ostly, [students] give a correct answer, but they just can't elaborate on it. So I try not to intimidate [students]. Basically, I would move on to the next thing. (Nigel)	Face saving	Teacher roles (aspired)	*Juxtaposition of teacher identities by negotiating roles*
[M]aybe I get someone else help him and then they both get it right and get that rewarding feeling. […] That's what I'll probably do. (Allen)	Collegial learning		
[E]nrich the school's English language learning environment. (Nigel)	English-rich environment	Teacher roles (externally defined)	
[P]rovide language support and pastoral care to non-Chinese students. (Allen)	Safe learning		

PD program on teacher questioning impinged on the NETs' identity work and professional learning. Table 1 demonstrates how the different phases of the thematic analysis worked out.

Following Braun and Clarke's (2022) procedure, we started by familiarizing ourselves with the data through transcription. We then passed through the data source to come up with initial codes. Subsequently, we reviewed and grouped the codes in search of salient themes. After reviewing the identified themes to ensure that they captured the coded extracts well, we named and defined the themes in view of our research questions. The inductive approach to theme identification allowed us, as both teacher educators and program developers, to keep our subjectivity at arm's length and stay close to the data (Braun and Clarke, 2022). Finally, we member-checked the coded data excerpts and the generated themes with our participants and received their confirmation.

Findings

Comparing the participants' identity work during the PD program led us to three themes:

- *Juxtaposition of teacher identities by negotiating externally defined roles*: the program helped the NETs frame their professional roles that were central to productive teacher questioning they aspired to, and gave them opportunities to juxtapose their aspired identities or defined roles.
- *Tensions arising from pedagogical culture*: the program allowed the NETs to reflect on their school culture and its impact on their questioning practice.
- *Emotion labor of being an NET*: the tensions that emerged in their identity work during the program unveiled the intensive emotion labor of becoming an NET in Hong Kong.

In what follows, we present these themes as they played out for each participant separately.

Nigel

Juxtaposition of Teacher Identities by Negotiating Roles. Throughout the program, Nigel made his identity positions explicit. He talked about his externally defined role regarding classroom discourse, more specifically, teacher questioning. For example, he highlighted his role as a language-use promoter:

Excerpt 1.

> So, I am circling back to my role here, which is basically to get students to use the language. That's the main thing. When I pose a question, I basically try to get them to say something. They don't have that chance at home or many other subjects. (Interview)

Nigel's school had not yet adopted the English-medium instruction policy fully. In Excerpt 1, he defined his role as a teacher employed under the NET scheme in relation to this situation. According to him, his main role was to 'get students to use the language'. In his first narrative frame installment, he similarly underscored that his role as an NET included 'enrich[ing] the school's English language learning environment'.

Tensions Arising from Pedagogical Culture. Nigel reflected explicitly on the impact of pedagogical culture in Hong Kong on how he enacted himself as an NET in his teaching context, juxtaposing his actual and idealized practices. Specifically, he shared how the grammar-based and exam-oriented culture prevalent in Hong Kong schools contradicted his aspired identity.

Excerpt 2.

> I think I have shied away from asking critical thinking questions because a lot of my job is now to get students to use those grammar rules that the local colleagues are lecturing on. [Students] may not get much opportunity to have an English learning environment. (Interview)

Similarly, in his second narrative frame (Excerpt 3),[3] he shared how the widespread practice of teaching to the test in Hong Kong schools, valued and championed by his principal, exerted a great deal of pressure on him to comply and changed his classroom practice, to his annoyance. However, he did not abandon his pedagogical aspirations completely and was still considering 'smuggling' some of the useful academic skills into his instruction.

Excerpt 3.

[…] *When I think about my own teaching, I recognize Hong Kong's influence on my practice. For example,* teaching to the test. *To illustrate, I remember once in my classroom*, during a principal observation lesson, I taught a series of games to get the students to interact with each other in English, however the principal suggested that I do more exam-style speaking practices instead. *In response*, I started to centre my lessons and materials around the exam format. I think this is a practice that I picked up while working in Hong Kong. *This makes me feel* annoyed *because* it doesn't really seem to help students and certainly doesn't help them to develop academic skills that are required to be successful in university. I am not sure what to do about this, but one possibility might be for me to use the exam format as a framework to help students practice and incorporate university skills such as research into my lessons.

Nigel's reflection on a classroom activity during the stimulated recall gave further evidence of the tensions of his preferred practice with the prevalent pedagogical culture and his actual teaching activities. He asked students to work in groups and discuss follow-up questions about a previous reading. Reflecting on his classroom talk in Excerpt 4, he realized that the questions that he prepared were dominated by lower-order ones focusing on factual knowledge and literal understanding rather than critical thinking and reading between or beyond the lines. Questions that promoted the latter would not work because that was not what the students were used to.

Excerpt 4.

Even with this small group, that sort of questioning would not work in a context where students are not familiar with feeding off each other. Whereas in a Western context, I would get one student to say an idea, and I might ask why they say so. Then somebody else might go. This didn't work here. It's quite often when I ask such questions, I end up having one-on-one interactions with a particular student and everybody else tunes out. (Stimulated recall)

Nigel was caught between what he thought everyone did in the Hong Kong context and what he was familiar with in the Western context. Although he was reluctant to give up the Western ways of teaching and interacting with students, his experiences in Hong Kong made him see that the old familiar practices would not work with his Hong Kong students, who were simply unfamiliar with dialogic teaching, where students would 'feed off each other' and build upon each other's authentic ideas and thinking. Nigel's strategy for dealing with the tensions experienced was to 'shy away' from the old familiar ways of doing things in response to the dominant pedagogical and cultural discourses in Hong Kong.

Emotion Labor for Being an NET. Nigel would like to promote an environment of English not only because of his duty as an NET but also due to his teaching philosophy and

aspired identity. This goal was also consistent with his roles and responsibilities as an NET, that is, 'to provide an authentic environment for children to learn English' and 'to develop children's interest in learning English and establish the foundation for life-long learning' (Education Bureau, 2024). However, in actual practice, he was compelled to prepare his charges for high-stakes standardized exams. To ensure their exam success, he had to give up dialogic classroom discourse for monologic teaching, which was 'frustrating' and emotionally taxing for him. The following excerpt captures the metaphorical description of his impasse, likening an NET teacher to a dentist.

Excerpt 5.

> The students aren't used to that kind of learning. So, like … as I'm sure you've seen, I asked a question, silence, nothing, and then I asked it again, still nothing. I am just like other NET teachers. We call it pulling teeth. So, in class you're like pulling teeth from the students, trying to get something from them. I am more of a dentist than a teacher in this role. (Stimulated recall)

In Excerpt 5, Nigel reflected on a particular classroom interaction and described his emotional labor by highlighting his feeling of strandedness due to a lack of alignment between the Education Bureau's expectations of him as a NET (i.e. his NET role), his classroom practices and his aspired identity. In the program, Nigel was introduced to strategies for productive teacher questioning, and one strategy that he was keen on learning more about was alternating the cognitive demands of teacher questions. That is, a teacher can use a lower-order question to scaffold students' thinking when their initial higher-order question fails to elicit a response. In his second narrative frame (Excerpt 6) following the introduction of the questioning strategy, he shared a relevant classroom experience.

Excerpt 6.

> I was asking a question, but the room was silent with no students able to answer it. So, I rephrased my question using simpler phrases and vocabulary, and only then a student was able to understand it and offer up an answer. *This made me feel* reassured *because* it helped me to realize that the problem wasn't that the students couldn't think of an answer, but it was that they just didn't have the vocabulary to understand the initial question.

Nigel implemented the questioning strategy with a positive outcome, leading to a feeling of reassurance and an awareness of the need to pinpoint the causes of student silence and act accordingly. This incident demonstrated that it was possible to resolve some of the tensions between his identity, roles and the prevailing classroom culture through mediating resources, instead of building up an antagonistic discourse. It also confirmed teaching as a process laden with emotions, be they positive or negative. Nigel needed reassurance about his practice. In this regard, PD could facilitate reflexivity and strengthen the nexus between teaching practice and teacher learning. Encouragingly, Nigel was able to leverage the program activities to make his roles/tensions/emotions explicit to himself and create a reflexive relationship between them and his professional identity.

Allen

Juxtaposition of Teacher Identities by Negotiating Roles. Allen's niche as an NET teacher was his multicultural and multilingual background and the unique relationship with the non-Chinese student community at his school. As an NET sharing the same linguacultural background as his students, he positioned himself as a guide who would make sure that those students learn in a safe environment, as evident in Excerpt 7.

Excerpt 7.

> When a [minority] student gives the wrong answer, my first thought is normally not to embarrass the student, because if I embarrass those ones, they will be very reluctant in the future. So, my first thought, normally, if they are giving a wrong answer, normally, I say it's a good point, but let's go back to the question again. (Stimulated recall)

For Allen, it was essential that his students do not feel embarrassed for giving a wrong answer because that would discourage and disengage them in the future. Therefore, he deemed it important to delay judgment and avoid giving direct corrective feedback. Likewise, he explained in his first narrative frame that his role as a teacher was 'to create an English-rich environment while 'provid[ing] language support and pastoral care' (Narrative frame 1). Allen was aware of his externally defined roles and responsibilities as an NET, but his positioning in the school led him to attend more to the affective aspects of language education.

Tensions Arising from Pedagogical Culture. In the interview (Excerpt 8), Allen compared his questioning practice with local (Chinese) and non-local students. He realized that his questions for local students contributed to a teacher-centered and authoritative discourse, though he aspired to promote dialogic teaching and tried to do so in his non-Chinese classes.

Excerpt 8.

> Basically, the system over here doesn't encourage you to ask questions. For example, in the non-Chinese classes, I take a little bit of liberty, and then I ask questions, and I let them discuss among ourselves. But in the local classes, if you ask them questions, you normally don't get answers, or they are short answers. If you ask them to copy something, that's the safe thing to do. (Interview)

Allen's reflections on his questioning practices in classrooms with predominantly local/Chinese students versus non-local students identified a tension between his aspired role of guiding the students and his actual practice of asking factual questions to be pedagogically safe.

Excerpt 9.

When I think about my own teaching, I recognize Hong Kong's influence on my practice. For example, Hong Kong's multicultural and multilingual environment has shaped my approach to language instruction. I have learned to embrace and celebrate the diverse linguistic backgrounds of my students. *To illustrate*, currently in my class, I have students from four different countries. So, I have chosen materials that are related to their countries and backgrounds to catch their interest. I think this practice that I picked up in Hong Kong also affects my language in the class.

In Excerpt 9, Allen recognized the influence of the culturally and linguistically diverse background of his students and Hong Kong itself. He observed that his students' linguacultural diversity changed not only his choice of learning materials but also his 'language instruction' and 'language in the class', demonstrating how he connected his previous understanding of differentiated instruction with teacher questioning. Mindful of the complex ethnolinguistic backgrounds of his students, he was 'always careful about religion and culture-related discussions because some students from certain backgrounds might feel uncomfortable' (Narrative frame 2). Furthermore, the cultural backgrounds of his immigrant students created professional tensions related to his role of providing not only linguistic support but also 'pastoral care' (Narrative frame 1).

Emotion Labor for Being an NET. Allen's *ethos* as a multilingual NET was to motivate his immigrant students, who, he thought, were not as engaged as he wanted them to be. His feeling rule predisposed him to take on the responsibility for generating intrinsic interest in students from immigrant backgrounds so that they would not see school only as an obligation. This responsibility resulted in emotion labor, as manifested in Excerpt 10.

Excerpt 10.

> For me, it is frightening that the students I'm trying to teach come to school because they just have to come to school, for the sake of coming to school. (Interview)

His use of the word *frightening* communicated the emotional undertone of his work as a teacher and his focus on student motivation and engagement as a situated need.

His emotion labor also came through in his responses to the narrative frames. He confided that he sometimes felt 'really frustrated because some classes may consist of students with different learning habits due to their background' (Narrative frame 2). He explained that this diversity could also be frustrating because the students were expected to reach certain standards by the school but the linguacultural diversity of his students meant that some of them could not achieve the expected standards (Narrative frame 1). He believed that possible solutions to the problem may lie in the use of 'differentiated materials' (Narrative frame 2) as well as learning to differentiate his classroom discourse in a way that would help him navigate his school's linguacultural diversity.

Discussion and Conclusion

To address our first research question, we examined an identity-oriented PD program for in-service NETs in Hong Kong. Our study demonstrated that the NETs benefitted from the pedagogizing of identity work because it allowed them to create professional discourses of their own about a particular teaching practice (i.e. questioning) and draw connections between their individual discourses and macro discourses (i.e. school practices, policy frameworks or pedagogical culture). This reflexive process helped them interrelate their roles and actual practices. With respect to our second research question, we observed that the teachers responded to the identity-oriented activities by negotiating their professional roles, tensions and emotions regarding their teacher questioning practice.

Our findings demonstrated the NETs' growing awareness of their classroom language (Coffey, 2015). Analyzing their identity work vertically in relation to the macro discourses, including the teacher roles assigned by school principals (for Nigel), school culture (for Allen) and government policy (i.e. the NET scheme), revealed that the NETs drew on ideological discourses (Aneja, 2016) and built their own professional discourses in response to the macro ones (Sanchez-Martin, 2022; Yazan, 2019). On the other hand, the identity-oriented PD program helped them negotiate their teacher roles according to their aspired and defined roles while learning about teacher questioning. Therefore, our PD approach was not digressive but helped the NETs create reflexive relationships between their identity work and the professional knowledge-base, a central concern of most in-service PD activities (Noonan, 2019). We argue that such reflexive relationships enabled the NETs to discover their agency, as in Nigel's case when he attempted to infuse his practice into the exam format without letting the standardized examination hijack his teaching. In a similar vein, Allen's agency was at work when he tried to find ways to build a classroom where the learning materials and the classroom discourse were culturally sensitive, in alignment with the teacher identities he aspired to, but not necessarily the roles that the NET scheme projected upon him.

Our findings were in line with Trent's (2012) finding that NETs in Hong Kong may resort to antagonization in their professional discourses, especially when their academic background and the local culture diverge. This antagonism may result in self-marginalization (e.g. *We*, *NETs*, *are rather dentists*) and may jeopardize the positive results that NETs could bring to their schools (and, in a wider context, to Hong Kong). Both Nigel and Allen built antagonistic discourse (e.g. Allen's criticality about the 'system' in Hong Kong or Nigel's discourse on 'the Western context' against the Hong Kong context and his self-positioning as a 'dentist' rather than a teacher) when they experienced a tension between their aspired or externally defined roles and actual practice. However, they also exercised agency later in the program (instead of resorting to antagonism) to resolve their tensions (e.g. Allen's striving for culturally sensitive differentiated language or Nigel's utilization of lower- and higher-order questions strategically). We argue that it is the identity-oriented activities of the PD program that helped the teachers examine classroom language in light of their professional identities.

Our study revealed that being an NET involved emotion labor. This emotion labor could manifest itself as negative emotions, such as frustration or fear arising from the incongruence of expectations from personal beliefs, policy stipulations and time-honored pedagogical culture. It could also involve positive emotions; for example, reassurance. Our findings support Derakhshan et al.'s (2024) contention that when roles outlined by policy discourse are not directly related to teachers' identity work, the policy can impose emotion labor on them. Even though the current study drew on data collected from only two NETs, there was clear evidence that NETs in Hong Kong can experience hindering emotions that are structurally related to macro-level policy discourses and meso-level institutional practices, pointing to the ecological embeddedness of teacher emotions (Benesch, 2017). Therefore, we echo Wong et al.'s (2018) report and call for identity-oriented PD programs that can support NETs' acculturation and integration into the Hong Kong context.

Our study has provided some new empirical support for the importance of pedagogizing identity in the professional learning of in-service NETs in Hong Kong. It is essential for the Education Bureau of Hong Kong SAR to work with teacher educators to develop PD initiatives for NETs that pedagogize teacher identity and facilitate their negotiation of

complex and intersecting professional identities. As Noonan (2019) points out, greater personalization of PD with identity-oriented programs is critical to ensuring teachers' continued growth and development.

Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by Hong Kong Research Grants Council's General Research Fund (grant No.: 15603521).

ORCID iDs

Özgehan Uştuk https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7486-1386
Guangwei Hu https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2297-4784

Notes

1. Acknowledging the complexity of defining native/non-nativeness, we use the term 'native-speaking English teacher' as defined in the NET scheme without inferring the linguistic or ethnic identities of native English-speaking teachers.
2. We redacted the information about his country of origin to keep him nontraceable.
3. The prompts in Excerpt 3 were italicized to differentiate them from the NETs' input.

References

Aneja GA (2016) (Non)native speakered: Rethinking (non)nativeness and teacher identity in TESOL teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly* 50(3): 572–596.

Barkhuizen G (2014) Revisiting narrative frames: An instrument for investigating language teaching and learning. System 47: 12–27. DOI: 10.1016/j.system.2014.09.014.

Bartlett L and Vavrus F (2017) *Rethinking Case Study Research: A Comparative Approach*. New York: Routledge.

Benesch S (2017) *Emotions and English Language Teaching: Exploring Teachers' Emotion Labor*. New York: Routledge.

Braun V and Clarke V (2022) *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage.

Clarke M (2008) *Language Teacher Identities: Co-Constructing Discourse and Community*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Clarke M (2009) The ethico-politics of teacher identity. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 41(2): 185–200.

Coffey S (2015) Reframing teachers' language knowledge through metaphor analysis of language portraits. *The Modern Language Journal* 99(3): 500–514.

De Costa PI and Uştuk Ö (eds) (2024) *A Sociopolitical Agenda for TESOL Teacher Education*. London: Bloomsbury.

Derakhshan A, Molana K and Nazari M (2024) 'I wonder who I am when my assessment ideas are not respected': A case-study inquiry into the role of institutional policies in English language teachers' assessment identity. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*. Epub ahead of print 14 March 2024. DOI: 10.1080/02188791.2024.2328237

Education Bureau (2024) The NET scheme in Hong Kong: Roles and responsibilities of the school stakeholders. Available at: https://nets.edb.hkedcity.net/page.php?p=223

Flores N and Aneja G (2017) 'Why needs hiding?' Translingual (re)orientations in TESOL teacher education. *Research in the Teaching of English* 51(4): 441–463.

Hu G and Duan Y (2019) Questioning and responding in the classroom: A cross-disciplinary study of the effects of instructional mediums in academic subjects at a Chinese university. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 22: 303–321.

Kanno Y and Stuart C (2011) Learning to become a second language teacher: Identities-in-practice. *The Modern Language Journal* 95(2): 236–252.

Kayi-Aydar H (2015) Teacher agency, positioning, and English language learners: Voices of preservice classroom teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 45: 94–103.

Lindahl K, Fallas-Escobar C and Henderson KI (2021) Linguistically responsive instruction for Latinx teacher candidates: surfacing language ideological dilemmas. *TESOL Quarterly* 55(4): 1190–1220.

Lingard B (2009) Pedagogizing teacher professional identities. In: Gerwirtz S, Mahony P, Hextall I, et al. (eds) *Changing Teacher Professionalism: International Trends, Challenges and Ways Forward*. New York: Routledge, 81–93.

Lo YY and Macaro E (2012) The medium of instruction and classroom interaction: Evidence from Hong Kong secondary schools. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 15(1): 29–52.

Martel J and Yazan B (2021) Enacting an identity approach in language teacher education. In: Bigelow M and Paesani K (eds) *Diversity and Transformation in Language Teacher Education*. CARLA: University of Minnesota, 35–62.

Noonan J (2019) An affinity for learning: Teacher identity and powerful professional development. *Journal of Teacher Education* 70(5): 526–537.

Sánchez-Martín C (2022) Teachers' transnational identities as activity: Constructing mobility systems at the intersections of gender and language difference. *TESOL Quarterly* 56(2): 552–581.

Tao J and Gao X (2017) Teacher agency and identity commitment in curricular reform. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 63: 346–355.

Teo P (2016) Exploring the dialogic space in teaching: A study of teacher talk in the pre-university classroom in Singapore. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 56: 47–60.

Trent J (2010) From rigid dichotomy to measured contingency: Hong Kong preservice teachers' discursive construction of identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26(4): 906–913.

Trent J (2012) The discursive positioning of teachers: Native-speaking English teachers and educational discourse in Hong Kong. *TESOL Quarterly* 46(1): 104–126.

Trent J (2013) From learner to teacher: practice, language, and identity in a teaching practicum. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 41(4): 426–440.

Uştuk Ö (2022) Drama-in-teacher-education: A 'metaxical' approach for juxtaposing EFL teacher identity and tensions. *Language Teaching Research* Epub ahead of print 24 August 2022. DOI: 10.1177/13621688221118644

Uştuk Ö and Yazan B (2024a) Pedagogizing identity through perezhivanie: A longitudinal study of identity-oriented practicum in Türkiye. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 146: 104643.

Uştuk Ö and Yazan B (2024b) Tensions in an identity-oriented language teaching practicum: A dialogic approach. *TESOL Quarterly* 58(1): 363–393.

Varghese M, Morgan B, Johnston B, et al. (2005) Theorizing language teacher identity: Three perspectives and beyond. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* 4(1): 21–44.

Weng Z and Troyan FJ (2023) Developing language teacher identity through photo-elicitation in TESOL teacher education. *TESOL Journal* 14(3): e714.

Wong MS, Ho C, Storey P, et al. (2018) *Evaluation of the enhanced Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme in secondary schools in Hong Kong 2016*–2017. Available at: https://nets.edb.hkedcity.net/page.php?p=225

Wong R (2010) Classifying teacher questions in EFL classrooms: Question types and their proper use. *TESOL in Context* 20(1): 37–57.

Yazan B (2018) A conceptual framework to understand language teacher identities. *Journal of Second Language Teacher Education* 1(1): 21–48.

Yazan B (2019) Identities and ideologies in a language teacher candidate's autoethnography: Making meaning of storied experience. *TESOL Journal* 10(4): e500.