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Teachers' pedagogical and relational identity negotiation in the Finnish CLIL[1] context

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Abstract

This study explores the professional identity of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) teachers in Finnish primary education. It aims at explaining how CLIL teachers negotiate their pedagogical and relational identity, and how *identity agency* is exercised in negotiating a more encompassing professional identity. Thematic analysis of thirteen interviews outlines the bi-directional process of identity negotiation between personal and professional resources, and social contexts at work. The results highlight a connection between professional identity and agency, and suggest that identity negotiation is a process of working and sharing with others, but also individually.

  Keywords: Content and Language Integrated Learning; Teacher identity; Identity agency; Pedagogical identity; Relational identity; Finnish education

Teachers' pedagogical and relational identity negotiation in the Finnish CLIL[3] context

Introduction

Despite the long history of education as an institutionalized means of sharing cultural knowledge and international research, contemporary research continues to highlight the considerable flux that takes place within and around education (Weiner & Torres, 2016). In the midst of this flux, however, education continues to be enacted at a local level in institutional communities divided into classrooms in which teachers and pupils – ideally – enter into a pedagogic contract to teach and learn. It is this relational heart of education that has led to the descriptions of teachers as mediators of the curriculum (Alexander, 2001). At the same time, notions of teaching as a lifelong career are being replaced by temporary trials (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). It is perhaps this recognition of the central role of the teacher at the cutting edge of education and the importance of teachers in the midst of change (Vähäsantanen, 2015) that has focused research on the professional identity of teachers (Day & Gu, 2010; Korhonen & Törmä, 2016; Körkkö, Kyrö-Ämmälä, & Turunen 2016; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). Whilst some attention has been given to second/foreign language teacher identity with studies addressing language teachers' institutional contexts, teacher education, early years of practice, classroom practice experience, and non-native speaking teachers (e.g. Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Tsui, 2007), the professional identity of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) teachers has received little attention (e.g. Moate, 2013).

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[3] Content and Language Integrated Learning

From a contemporary perspective, professional identity is deemed multiple, discontinuous and social in nature, immersed in various social worlds where interdependence and discourse cause shifts across time and contexts (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Lemke (2008) argues that as a notion identity links the personal domain of lived, moment-by-moment experience with cultural and social systems of beliefs, values and meaning-making practices. The professional identity of a teacher, however, "integrates the intellectual, the emotional, and the physical aspects of a teacher's life with the subjectivities of 'teacher'" (Alsup, 2008, p. 36), that is, the different positions a teacher can take up within a particular context. These positions are influenced by teachers' intricately connected personal and professional biographies, as well as their social contexts at work (Bukor, 2015; Flores & Day, 2006). For teachers to renegotiate their positions amid collective discourses and practices at work, thus crafting their professional identity, they exercise agency in developing and learning (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Wells, 2007). In this paper, we refer to the form of agency used for identity negotiation as *identity agency* (Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, & Hökkä, 2015; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016), using it as a lens to better understand teachers' professional identity. The aim of this study is to investigate how CLIL teachers in Finnish primary education craft their professional identity. We first examine *identity agency* as exercised at the level of classroom and collegial relationships, i.e. the ways in which pedagogical and relational identities are negotiated. Second, we examine how CLIL teachers' negotiation between the pedagogical and relational sides gives rise to a broader sense of professional identity.

Background on CLIL Teaching

Teacher identity denotes a departing point for decision-making and actions that affect the work environment, which in turn affects the teacher. Very often, a struggle between

personal and contextual components yields opportunities for negotiating one's

professional identity (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Within the Finnish

educational context, however, teachers have a high level of autonomy, trusted as

professionals with no inspection or accountability regimes. This system purportedly

promotes professional commitment and innovation, public engagement and inspiration,

responsibility and sustainability (Sahlberg, 2011). It might, therefore, be anticipated that

when teachers in Finland choose to take on the challenge of teaching subjects through a

foreign language, they can more easily, more positively, respond to this challenge and

the professional context might give rise to the potential of synergistic and transactional

spaces for developing teacher identity. As a methodology, Content and Language

Integrated Learning (CLIL) recognises the dual aims of language and subject learning

by using a foreign language (FL) to mediate the teaching and learning of curricular

subjects. This approach became popular in Finland in the early 1990s, providing

teachers with a more flexible and dynamic methodology (Coyle, 2007) for exercising

autonomy and directing teaching efforts without being explicitly tethered to strict

guidelines. Although Finnish educational authorities have not supported CLIL with top-

down policy efforts as in other EU countries (Dalton-Puffer & Nikula, 2014), Finnish

teachers' grassroots innovations have continued over the last two decades despite

struggles along the way (Lehti, Järvinen, & Suomela-Salmi, 2006; Moate, 2011a). The

latest curriculum reform explicitly recognizes the importance of language innovation

and integration in education and maintains that 'every teacher is a language teacher'

(FNBE, 2014) creating a CLIL-friendly environment.

Previous research on Finnish CLIL teachers has focused on the fundamental role

of language for teachers' individual and collective integrity (Moate, 2011b, 2014),

teacher beliefs (Bovellan, 2014) and different forms of agency CLIL teachers draw on

(Pappa, Moate, Ruohotie-Lyhty, & Eteläpelto, 2017). International research suggests that the challenges CLIL teachers face can open new paths to teacher action (Nikula, Dalton-Puffer, & Llinares, 2013), despite the lack of explicated theoretical and pedagogical understanding (Cammarata & Tedick, 2012; Nikula, 2016). In order to better understand how in-service CLIL teachers exercise professional agency in forming their identities, this study investigates the negotiation of teachers' identity on pedagogical and relational levels within the context of CLIL in Finnish elementary education. The following section elaborates on the theoretical framework for this study.

Identity Negotiation

The concept of professional identity has received a significant amount of interest and generated much debate around the meaning of the term (for a review of studies on teacher's professional identity, see Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Gee (2000) offers a basic definition of identity as context-bound, yet premised upon an individually held interpretive system, life-trajectories, active construction and negotiation. Day, Kington, Stobart and Sammons (2006, p. 613) elaborate that "identities are a shifting amalgam of personal biography, culture, social influence and institutional values which may change according to role and circumstance"; that is, identities are multifaceted and liable to change according to external influences (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). These definitions are reiterated in Akkerman and Meijer's (2011) comprehensive mapping of identity that highlights the recurrent multiplicity and unity, discontinuity and continuity, and social and individual nature of identity.

Teachers' professional identity is always negotiated in the individual and social space that is shared between the teachers' personal and professional lives. According to Day et al. (2006), Nias (1989) identified personal and professional elements as distinct in teachers' lives and identities, arguing the crucial role of the former in understanding

teachers within their working lives. It is not only through influences of external policy, and social or structural conditions that teachers define their professional identity (Lasky, 2005), but also "through their beliefs and values about the kind of teacher they hope to be in the inevitably changing political, social, institutional and personal circumstances" (Day et al., 2006, p. 610). Thus, teacher identities are contextualized and draw on material and immaterial affordances to be negotiated at classroom, collegial and professional level.

In this study, teacher identity is conceptualized as the dynamic shifting process of an ongoing conception of oneself (Vähäsantanen, 2015), comprising biographical and professional trajectories as well as interpersonal, physical and material resources. In other words, teachers might be aware of past and present experiences and roles, yet negotiate their sense of being as professionals according to the circumstances they find themselves in. This process is guided by the organizing principles that teachers use in making sense of themselves and contexts alike as well as (re)interpreting their values, beliefs and experiences to achieve (trans)formation in answer to personal, social and cognitive influences (Flores & Day, 2006). The outcomes of this process are manifested through the multiple aspects of teachers' being, acting, and understanding (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). In effect, teacher identity is both an intrinsically psychological phenomenon and a deeply social, real-word phenomenon; the self- and other-image of teachers are negotiated within discursive and institutional settings, affecting their communities and working conditions (Varghese et al., 2005).

In educational settings, professional agency is salient in the process of professional identity negotiation, change and continuity (Vähäsantanen, 2015). The particular sense of professional agency that is related to one's professional identity has been termed *identity agency* and entails renegotiating one's professional ideals,

maintaining one's own ethical standards and availing oneself of possibilities to use personal interests and competences at work (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). In other words, *identity agency* is the form of agency teachers employ to act in accord with who they believe they are at the moment (present), who they have been (past) and who they would like to become (future) (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Within the context of CLIL in Finnish elementary education, this study adopts this term of *identity agency*, but also argues for a more enriching relationship between teachers' personal and professional lives as well as a more dialogical relationship between teachers and their community (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

This study examines *identity agency* within two levels of CLIL teachers' professional identity negotiation which acknowledge two immediate contexts of teachers' working lives. First, *identity agency* is manifested at the level of the classroom. Pedagogical identity is the aspect of teachers' identity that concerns negotiating who one is as a pedagogue by acting upon one's professional ideals and by drawing on one's personality and experiences in doing so (Day et al., 2006). These act as resources that, coupled with a projective reconfigurations of possible actions, can help teachers understand the relationship between their identity and contextualized practices (Lemke, 2008; Mora, Trejo, & Roux, 2016). *Identity agency*, then, constitutes professional decision-making and actions at classroom level, while employing affordances or constrains therein, and their beliefs (e.g. moral, social) as sources for satisfaction, commitment, motivation and self-efficacy at work (Körkkö, Kyrö-Ämmälä, & Turunen, 2016; Lasky, 2005).

Second, *identity agency* is manifested at the level of collegial relationships. Relational identity is the aspect of teachers' identity created between individual action and social relationships at work. While independent and autonomous in decision-

making and action, individuals are also controlled by others or their social context (Kayi-Aydar, 2015). The impact of colleagues and the school environment constitute parts of the formative contexts in which teachers come to confront their professional identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Within those contexts, the internal, interpretive system of the individual teacher is socially informed by discourse and collaboration with affinity groups as well as the shared traditions, norms and rules (Gee, 2000). In mutual interaction with the professional interpersonal context, teachers not only engage in wide-ranging activities that enhance their responsibility-taking and membership in the community, but they also dialogically construct meanings, communal repertoires and tools that simultaneously trigger school and identity development (ten Dam & Blom, 2006). It is through this interactional agency that teachers' relational identity is negotiated.

In conclusion, teacher identity is individually, socially and culturally negotiated. It is not only what we think of ourselves, but also what others think of us and the way identity is experienced on a daily basis that guide identity negotiation (Tsui, 2007). To better understand how teachers' professional identities are negotiated, it is pertinent that we look at how they exercise agency in constructing self-stories and interpreting everyday experiences within the professional community (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016). In the following section, the research task and questions are outlined.

Research Questions

In this study, teachers' professional identity is conceived as a negotiated process among individual, social, physical and material contexts. *Identity agency* is the form of professional agency teachers use in guiding the bi-directional process of identity negotiation between personal resources and social contexts at work. In order to

highlight CLIL teachers' *identity agency* within Finnish educational culture, this study examines how in-service CLIL teachers in Finnish primary schools exercise their agency in renegotiating and constructing their teacher identities. More specifically, the matter is addressed in light of the following research questions:

(1) How is CLIL teacher *identity agency* exercised at the classroom level?

(2) How is CLIL teacher *identity agency* exercised within the collegial community?

(3) How do CLIL teachers negotiate their professional identity between its pedagogical and relational sides?

Methods

Participants

Thirteen primary school CLIL teachers participated in this study. Participants taught CLIL through English and were Finnish, save for one who was an international teacher working and residing in Finland. She was included in the study as she was not a native speaker, which fits the common definition of a CLIL teacher (Nikula, Dalton-Puffer, & Llinares, 2013). All participants were fluent in English and worked at five different schools. The teachers became familiar with CLIL during their studies and internship, or when changing work places. While one experienced teacher learned CLIL from her colleagues, the other teachers have had university-level courses. In particular, six of them specialized in English, four studied in a CLIL or bilingual programme, and two took courses in CLIL. Moreover, two participants had a doctoral degree. Participants' teaching experience varied from 1 to 30 years; seven teachers were at a later stage in their career (20-30 years), while two in the middle (13 and 16), and four at the beginning (1-6 years). One of the teachers had a long-standing background of 12 years in special education before she started teaching CLIL. Three teachers taught special

education classes parallel to CLIL ones. Additionally, three participants had experienced teaching abroad. Finally, although three teachers stated they followed the school's CLIL policy, all participants regarded CLIL teaching as a welcome challenge to their teaching.

Research Approach and Data Collection

The qualitative approach taken to examine teacher identity concerned participants' multiple meanings and lived experiences, while taking into account social contexts and relationships as understood by participants themselves (Labuschagne, 2003). Initially, background literature was drawn on to review aspects of professional identity in educational contexts, i.e. teachers' professional identity. These aspects were organized under the larger themes of biographical/idiosyncratic, contextual and sociocultural factors. The purpose of this organization was to gain as much information as possible about how the teachers perceived their work life and their degree of involvement as pedagogues and colleagues. For each aspect characterizing these themes, interview questions were formed in an open-ended manner, focusing on teachers' perceptions and experiences:

- Do you have any memorable experiences that have made you the teacher you are today?
- How would you describe the teacher's role in the CLIL classroom?
- Do you feel like being the same teacher when you teach through a different language?
- How do you see the meaning and role of the curriculum in your teaching?

The interviews were conducted from October to December 2015 with 13 CLIL teachers

working at 5 schools located in different cities around Finland. Participants were contacted via electronic correspondence informing them about the purpose of the study, and signed a confidentiality form prior to their interview.

Data Analysis

The 13 interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed. Transcript length ranged from 10 to 20 pages (average 14 pages), written in Times New Roman, font 12, with single-line spacing and a break between each speaking turn. Thematic Analysis was used to identify recurring patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), keeping in mind the concepts of pedagogical and relational identity, and their potential interrelation. Thus, an initial familiarization with the content of the interviews was followed by systematic coding and code description. The codes were then organized under the two sides of teachers' professional identity, i.e. pedagogical and relational identity, according to their internal relevance. Codes were later grouped into themes within their respective spaces. Based on latent content, a theme was understood as an implicit topic that characterizes recurring patterns reflecting textual data (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016). For example, the codes 'attitudes' (10/13), 'competences' (6/13), 'idiosyncrasies' (9/13), 'personal beliefs' (13/13) and 'personal motivations' (10/13) were initially grouped under *personal resources*. Along with the codes under *personal experiences*, they were later grouped under the *personal aspect* of pedagogical identity. To study *identity agency*, the themes were reviewed in relation to one another, and connections were drawn across themes between participants' pedagogical and relational identities.

The data analysis process was supported by peer debriefing, whereby the data and research process were reviewed by members familiar with the study and concepts explored (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The data set itself has not been altered with respect

to both recorded and transcribed versions. In the following section, the findings of the study are reported along with excerpts intended to highlight the presented sides of teachers' professional identity.

Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the study and includes three sections, organized according to the research questions. The first section outlines three ways in which *identity agency* is exercised in relation to the pedagogical side of professional identity. The second section outlines two key findings that were identified in participants' contributions concerning the relational side of their professional identity. The third section outlines the way in which *identity agency* is also needed in negotiating boundary-crossings between the pedagogical and relational sides of teachers' professional identity.

Pedagogical Identity Negotiation

This section concerns the aspect of identity CLIL teachers enact within classroom settings, and the experiences, resources and emotions they negotiate in enacting their pedagogical identity. The analysis for pedagogical identity negotiation highlights, first, how teachers invest themselves in their work; and, second, the ongoing negotiation between the present personal and professional resources, rather than their separation.

When teachers invest themselves in the profession, they draw on their personal experiences and resources. The former relates to their experiences as language learners at school, as adults who have to balance work and life, and as individuals in social relationships outside of school. The latter comprised participants' idiosyncrasies, competences and attitudes, beliefs and motivations, employed in managing everyday difficulties at work. For instance, a self-reliance concerning materials and a positive

view of learning and development as something anticipated could be associated with identifying one's strengths and being ambitious about students' language learning progress. Thus, *identity agency* was closely tied to attitudes and competences that concern teaching, learning and language. Moreover, it was exercised by matching one's personal motivations (10/13) to the nature of the profession, thus intrinsically driving participants to become and be the teachers they are. Such motivations were a long-standing interest in languages and bilingual education, an interest in having an additional challenge at work or simply a desire to change one's job. Participants' landscape was further enriched by their personal beliefs about various issues, some also linked to work. For instance, when asked about how CLIL links to her understanding of teaching and learning, Teacher 1 stated:

> I believe that the earlier you begin learning languages, the more easier it is, and then once you know a different language, you, some things you look at from different angle, because the language is different and then you might think different.

This excerpt highlights how beliefs, especially beliefs about language learning, can be interwoven into the profession and affect its enactment. Incentives and beliefs that were close at heart helped fuel and shape teacher identity in the way that they informed courses of action, and supported it by being close to one's personal understanding of the self. Personal resources served as a firm background to pedagogical identity and helped meaning-making and drawing on resources in participants' professional space.

In further negotiating their pedagogical identity, participants' drew on existing professional experiences, resources and considerations. Experiences and understandings teachers gain throughout their careers act as affordances to *identity agency*. Teacher 8, for example, says:

> Actually, I kinda think that my special education background gives a good starting point for the CLIL teaching, because they both kinda require clarity, so that you have to give instructions that are very specific and easy to understand, so then… I've been actually been surprised to find how much common ground there is in special education and in the CLIL education.

It is not only the ability to evaluate and draw on past experiences to manage within present conditions, but also the connection teachers make across various professional contexts and their corresponding principles that factor strongly in the meaning-making process of identity negotiation against a temporal and physical background. Professional training, as mentioned by some participants (7/13), can heighten this process by providing access to different perspectives, inviting questions, and validating current experiences. However, what could be the most potent element in meaning-making would be interactions with students or encounter with children (10/13), as they prompted reflection, inspiration and learning, and have affected how participants thought about teaching and students. Such interactions become 'pieces to [their] puzzle' (Teacher 7) and contribute to a 'gradual grow[th] altogether' (Teacher 8). Continuously cultivating positive relationships with pupils creates an important space for *identity agency*. Such professional experiences are negotiated through beliefs about the profession in general and CLIL in particular. As Teacher 12 characteristically says:

> CLIL is a ideal way of teaching, because it's- it really makes teaching much more active, both for the learner and for the teacher. So, um, in that way, it sort of reinforces what you're doing there.

Participants' ways of understanding themselves as teachers were reflected in views of CLIL and its role within education. The extent to which they agreed with the aims and outcomes of CLIL, and the way the methodology resonated with their actions (e.g. being an active teacher) suggest that internalization and identification with elements

inherent in the profession are essential strategies to identity negotiation. Within this negotiation, agency is exercised in judging which of these elements are relative or appropriate to teachers' beliefs and perceptions of foreign-language mediated teaching and learning.

Pedagogical identity negotiation is, then, intricately linked to views of themselves as teachers, which itself is strongly connected to the presence of first and foreign languages. This entails validating a personal perspective on thoughts and perceptions about CLIL teaching and teacher expression.

> That sometimes I'm comparing that what I could give to these kids if I would be working in Finnish. But now, I'm working in English, I have to concentrate on this basic, basic words, and that repetition. And it's, uh, kind of, you've got the colour, but you don't have the shades (Teacher 10)

CLIL teachers can be aware of the discrepancy between teaching in their first and foreign language, what methodological choices they have to make and how language affects the presentation of the teacher self in the CLIL classroom. Using the colour to gradually provide pupils with the shades goes beyond a mere comparison of the 'teacher in Finnish' and 'teacher through the foreign language' dichotomy, touching upon overarching pedagogical convictions, teaching style and hopes for students' learning that may affect action concerning instruction and pedagogy in CLIL in tandem with students' reactions and interaction. These are mediated by the language which, perceived as either a tool or a positive challenge coupled with student interest, may fuel positive views of oneself as a CLIL teacher and reinforce a sense of purpose in the classroom- and CLIL-related actions teachers take. Teachers need to understand the language part of CLIL as part of their teacher identity by internalizing the goals, tasks and principles and owning the methodology (Nikula et al., 2016). Yet, language use and internalization in CLIL is not devoid of emotion. While many teachers expressed a

sense of efficacy (9/13), there were a few who experienced instances of self-doubt (4/13):

> Well, of course, I've had my doubts about whether I want to be a teacher. And one reason has been that I don't believe in the system so much. I think there are many things that restrict learning. (Teacher 13)

> I suppose, all the teachers ask that, quite many- At some time, at some points that 'Am I good enough?' (Teacher 4)

Feeling competent and good as a teacher might help teachers in their day-to-day school life, such as the feeling of being in control or on top of the curriculum, but second thoughts about themselves fitting the job or being good enough as teachers could be demoralizing. Such considerations, among others, could be resolved with support from the immediate relational environment at work.

Relational Identity Negotiation

This section concerns the aspect of identity CLIL teachers enact within social relationships developed at school in the immediate collegial environment. Relational identity regards the synergistic negotiation of individually-initiated as well as collectively-driven actions.

With colleagues, CLIL teachers' identity negotiation could be seen in their social involvement and willingness to partake in collegiality. The actions of sharing (8/13) and participation (8/13) comprised participants' involvement. Speaking about everyday challenges in the classroom, Teacher 11 says:

> Well, discussing with colleagues. I think that's the best way [laughs] to deal with them. To share, cause I've noticed that most CLIL teachers are struggling with same problems, so.

Sharing seemed to be participants' individual way of bonding with colleagues over tensions they encountered in their shared, immediate professional environment. While originating in individual teachers' preoccupations, the actions they took within their community could have a wider impact. Teacher 10 elaborates:

> Now we've got this one big project in our school where we're writing out a lot better, like, a lot more clearly what we mean by CLIL and the aims for each class, so, so we are trying to help that. […] Before we've had a very vague, eh, text in curricula and it's, like- it's been very much up to the teacher, how they sort of, what they do, and how they do things, like, in the CLIL. […] The English they are doing here. The English teacher obviously does work, you know, there, but we are trying to open that. So hopefully that will help every CLIL teacher in our school.

Such actions aimed at offering help on a larger scale and becoming a member of a smaller or larger community. Participants' relational identity was validated by using professional membership to address matters that affected themselves, colleagues and their pedagogical tasks. At the same time, it entailed jointly making sense of those tasks, acknowledging other colleagues' role in completing them, and determining one's own role in ameliorating current state of affairs in CLIL education at school level.

To further this involvement, *identity agency* was exercised within a shared sense of collegiality, whereby teachers used others as resources and proactively responded to an invitation for collective activity. Whereas involvement stems from the individual and aims at the collective, collegiality stems from the wider social and professional environment of the school that facilitates or validates legitimate membership, collegial connectedness and professional support:

> Or it used to be that every teacher had their own material and they, like, jealously guarded it as if they were on their own island, keeping their own material. […] And because the CLIL teachers were relatively new and maybe also more outgoing, open-minded… I'm fine with sharing material. I really don't care. And they were

also of that mind, so we would share much more. We would also that would help

share the burden of teaching. (Teacher 12)

The possibility of working with others to share the workload and materials not only provides a support system, but also supports the quality of practice. Rather than work in isolation, teachers can work cooperatively, although it is the culture shared by colleagues that will determine under which conditions and to what extent cooperation can take place. The importance of collegiality and its function as resource for teachers' professional identity lies in its potential for creating a self-regulated, productive work community, where one can express thoughts and emotions or seek advice and find help. By doing so, issues under discussion can yield new insights or understandings, and enrich professional learning by means of collective educational practices. It should be noted, however, that this would be more successful with support from the principal, as they hold the primary executive and administrative authority in schools. When asked about the professional and social relationships with their principal, almost all teachers (12/13) voiced their opinions, most of them describing it in positive terms, such as 'supportive' (Teacher 7) and 'positively influencing' (Teacher 5). This might echo the trust invested in teachers in the Finnish society and the contemporary importance attributed to educational leadership (e.g. Nevalainen & Kimonen, 2013).

Despite this valuable web of social relationships at school, teachers act on a comparatively independent level of action that runs parallel to those relationships. Relational identity on this level entails reflective autonomy in light of certain, profession-related considerations. While feeling autonomous at work (9/13), participants engaged in consciously thinking (10/13) about their work and its meaning as well as their performance and the means they have to do it. As Teacher 6 says, 'in Finland it's really […] free I think to do […] what we like', while keeping in mind the

national curriculum. Pondering one's work, coupled with autonomy, becomes a tool for 'evaluating' (Teacher 6) and keeping one 'active and creative' (Teacher 12). *Identity agency*, then, would be making use of a thoughtful awareness within a flexible space of autonomous action to determine their actions and the meaningful impact these could have on their professional identity. Nonetheless, the boundaries of this space become blurred in contact with that shared amongst colleagues, which has the potential to reinforce or constrain *identity agency*. A sense of identity can encounter demands and expectations that originate in institutional, interpersonal and temporal settings. For instance:

> Well, the curriculum. [laughs] Too many things in the curriculum and we have to do too many things. We are expected to do a lot, which I think restricts deep learning. And some of the things we do- I do in school, I feel this doesn't make any sense. Why are we doing this? (Teacher 13)

The curriculum was felt to be important in grounding the professional self, as it is the official document which stipulates language policy and directs teachers' work. While it was deemed the foundations on which they could build their teaching and a strong presence in the school books, reference to CLIL practices were vague and not represented in the course material. As a consequence, teachers became material designers and could negotiate what aspects of the curriculum they would teach through the foreign language. Not strictly adhering to the book was perceived positively by participants, although that required investing more time in lesson planning and coping with a general insufficiency of time in their work. Concerning the interpersonal setting, a parental and leadership interest in CLIL was welcomed, yet did not help address considerations and challenges which remained part of teachers' responsibilities.

Identity Agency across Contexts

The previous sections outline how professional identity is negotiated within different contexts through different relationships. We understand this ongoing negotiation as *identity agency*, which is the agency an individual exerts to be and become themselves. This section concerns the agency CLIL teachers exert between the classroom and collegial level in negotiating a more encompassing professional identity. It attempts to explain how teachers use their pedagogical identity in the classroom, as well as their relational identity and corresponding resources to negotiate considerations that affect action on both individual and collective levels.

In the light of pedagogical identity, participants' personal and professional biographies could be seen as resources conducive to identity formation. Personal experiences, changes in their personal life, and available opportunities guided participants' actions in their careers:

> I came to this school where they had CLIL and I was a class teacher. And since I had studied English and was qualified as an English teacher as well as a class teacher, I was employed. […] Just happened in a way, yeah. I didn't, kind of, go for CLIL. I just wanted to change jobs, so. (Teacher 3)

Identity agency can take place through adaptation to or seeking change in new work circumstances as a result of changes or experiences in personal life circumstances. At the same time, participants' individual characteristics, beliefs and perceptions accompanying such biographies contribute to a meaningful exchange between the personal and professional aspects of teachers' lives:

> Like I said, I think I'm, as a personality I'm quite flexible, but it gets harder every year, when you get older , so I- usually I don't start, I… criticizing. Uh, usually I try to sleep over changes first and then... but this year when I have had so many changes, I got really angry with all these changes and I felt that it was honest to, to,

kind of, let the school head know about how I feel and how this affects my, my work. (Teacher 3)

Identity agency is also using one's interpretation of events to inform work-related actions through which a sense of self in the profession may be reinforced or questioned. Identity formation requires an acknowledgment of one's traits and beliefs as well as past and present experiences. Consequently, *identity agency* will not only reflect those, but also help understand current situations and direct possible future courses of action.

However, as teachers are not lone agents, but members of a work community, their pedagogical identity interacts with their relational identity. Through this interaction, pedagogical identity is afforded a collegial atmosphere which, if supportive and collaborative, can encourage one's autonomous action, and guide that action. For example, sharing expertise and instructional material can affect methodological choices, help face instructional challenges and meet teacher responsibilities in CLIL. In other words, participants try to determine their professional identity within social settings that have an immediate impact on their teaching. Moreover, participation in the work community can generate a sense of belonging and purpose:

> Of course, this CLIL group we have. There I'm part of the group and there I can always say what I think and why and I think I can say and I'm heard if my colleagues. And they ask me if they need to know or if they want to know and I think we have a good relationships in our CLIL group, that group of teachers. But that group doesn't include all these CLIL teachers. It's only, like, three or four of us. […] But, hopefully, with the new curricula, we will have new working groups inside this school and these CLIL class teachers will be one group. (Teacher 10)

Participation and the possibilities for change may affect teachers' perceptions about the profession as well as address curricular demands and lack of clarity. On a classroom level, *identity agency* becomes not only pursuing autonomous and reflective action, but

also availing oneself of opportunities for participation and belonging in a community of practice. In turn, the collective can have an impact on the professional and external factors attempting to shape identity. As such, it becomes tethered to the relational, and entails membership and engagement with the community and its practices.

Within these circumstances, participants' *identity agency* seemed to take place in negotiating their role in light of considerations and responsibilities. Although their role might have been partly ascribed to them from a wider educational and institutional culture, it was the importance it held for them and their own beliefs about what a teacher should be and do in the CLIL classroom that helped them position themselves at work.

> Sometimes, eh, we haven't tested all the children that come to the CLIL classes, and sometimes we've had a couple of children where I've been thinking that this is not right for that. And then, that situation is strange. And it's challenging, because you can't lower the whole level of the whole- You can't wipe the CLIL out, because of one or two children, and then you just have to manage in the situation, even if you can see that their understanding is very low and their capability of absorbing new words and all that is very low. (Teacher 9)

> […] because we don't choose children for CLIL classes in our school, it's a lottery, this class, which class is going to be a CLIL? […] with children with the special needs, how do I, how do I integrate them so that they would feel as, as good as somebody else? (Teacher 2)

> We are not choosing any of those children. They are children with all different kind of abilities and they just, that they come- […] And I was saying to that, that that I think was so important to realize, that we are giving language to everybody. (Teacher 5)

This stance entailed exercising one's judgment regarding what is appropriate, which at times might be contrary to what they believe. Their positioning helped resolve ethical considerations about entitlement to CLIL education irrespective of the special needs or

level of English, while maintaining the positive stance of motivators and CLIL proponents in the face of instructional challenges. Thus, they became teachers compliant to school policies or acted in accordance with their own beliefs. Their individual understanding of themselves as teachers might or might not reflect the various roles attributed to teachers by the institutions of teacher education and school. Therefore, there is an internal organization of the individual with aspects related to the profession that is utilized in shaping who they want to be within the profession. *Identity agency* is manifested when this internal organization is used to achieve a preferred state of being as teachers, when encountering success or compromising in response to external pressure. Since identity formation is a reciprocal process between individual and contextual resources, *identity agency* is expected to be exercised in using any external pressure to review or change participants' particular internal organization. At the same time, participants' relational agency may be an independent aspect of teacher's working life, but it can also serve as a supportive or structuring resource for pedagogical identity for CLIL teachers in Finland.

Discussion

This study examined how CLIL teachers in Finnish primary education exercise *identity agency* in negotiating their professional identity. In particular, it examined how CLIL teachers negotiated their pedagogical and relational identity, and how *identity agency* was enacted between these two sides of their professional identity. At the level of the classroom, participants negotiated their professional identity by drawing on personal and professional experiences and resources. *Identity agency* in relation to the pedagogical side was using self-awareness and past experiences to interpret current situations and direct future actions at work. Meanwhile, language was used as a mediational means to negotiate professional and relational aspects of participants'

pedagogical identity. At the level of collegial relationships, participants negotiated their

relational identity by being involved and active members in a shared collegiality. Thus,

identity agency acquired a relational nature that enhanced individual and collective

action. Finally, *identity agency* was exercised in the reciprocal way teachers drew on

their pedagogical and relational sides to their professional identity (see Figure 1). In the

participants' particular work environment that might be perceived more as resourcing

rather than constricting, it is not tension as such that ignites teacher identity formation,

but the ability to draw on possibilities and using opportunities for one's benefit.
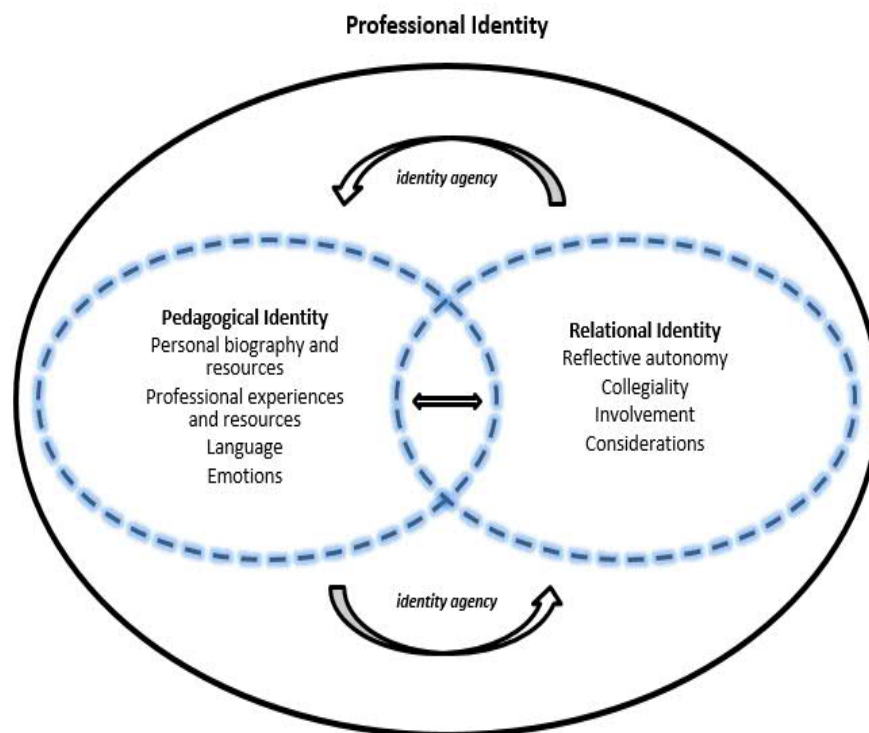

Figure 1 *Identity agency* as reciprocal negotiation between CLIL teachers' pedagogical
and relational identity.

This study highlights a connection between professional identity and agency and

suggests that any space for identity negotiation should be accompanied by action.

Through agency between the pedagogical and collegial spheres of action, a sense of professional identity can be negotiated, thus potentially reinforcing, altering or compromising professional identity. Rather than separate, these spheres should be seen as parts of a much larger interlinked space, wherein teachers attempt to negotiate their professional identity by acting alone and in collaboration with others. Thus, identity is constructed or negotiated in a process of working and sharing with others, but also individually. Such processes seem to require, first, using one's sense of self and experiences in both the personal and the professional context as resources; and second, being aware of one's professional environment and participating in changing it. It should be noted, however, that a certain degree of autonomy or availability of opportunities should be present for the above to be effective.

It is currently understood that there is a connection between teachers' knowledge of the self and interpretation of their work as well as teachers' personal experiences and performance of professional roles (e.g. Day et al., 2006). This study highlights how language teachers' personal biographies are a dominant influence in teacher identity negotiation involving conscious/rational and intuitive/tacit thought processes in exploring personal and professional experiences (Bukor, 2015). Beliefs, competences and personal motivations seem to link with teaching interests, pedagogical convictions and instructional choices. Moreover, teachers' hopes and views of themselves as teachers helped resolve ethical considerations about eligibility of participation in CLIL classes and cope better with the additional practical challenges of CLIL. Participants' personal resources in conjunction with their personal and professional experiences inform who they want to be as teachers and the extent to which that could be achieved. Consequently, there is a complex and interactive background to teachers' decision-making and actions, which we have identified as part of teachers' *identity agency*.

To date, teachers' pedagogical identity has been understood as a negotiation of their professional identity in the light of past and possible future professional trajectories, individual personality and contextualized practices (Day et al., 2006; Mora, Trejo, & Roux, 2016). This study adds to this understanding by suggesting that teachers as individuals draw on themselves as the main resource in identity negotiation. On the basis of what they hold to be pedagogically valid and fruitful for their students as well as through their own interests and understanding of themselves as CLIL teachers, participants made decisions about pedagogy and instruction. Their decisions and actions, but also the preceding meaning-making processes and succeeding outcomes, become the tools for teachers' interpretation of their place and role in the profession. A realization of their identity through its performance within teaching contexts can give rise to a sense of agency and empowerment that to implement ideas, set and achieve goals, and potentially transform contextual circumstances (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Moreover, expectations or interests deriving from the individual teacher herself are not strong and rigid. As such, they do not question teachers' professional and moral integrity (Kelchtermans, 1996), nor do they clearly define teacher action. On the contrary, they provide the space for them to enact their role as they deem it more relevant to their own convictions and particular educational settings. Nonetheless, these expectations and interests should be re-evaluated whenever new circumstances demand that teachers change their practices and as teachers progress in their career.

As teachers belong to a work community, teachers' pedagogical identity is also negotiated in relation to the identity developed within this community. The collective actions and strong influence of collegial relationships described by the participants raise questions concerning teachers' role and *identity agency* within the teachers' community. Similarly to Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate (2016), this study highlights identity

negotiation alongside membership and participation within a particular community. There is a mutually constitutive relationship between teachers and the community's socio-cultural matrix mediated by situated actions and discourses, and appropriation of norms and values (Wells, 2007). While there is disparateness and variation concerning the emphasis on sociocultural and individual factors (Smith & Sparkes, 2008), identity development is enriched through increasing participation in communities of practice, wherein teachers actively craft their identities and potentially transform community practices, thus possibly contributing to the identity construction of others (Moate, 2013; Wells, 2007). Akkerman and Meijer (2011) argue that teacher identity is "*an ongoing process of negotiating and interrelating multiple I-positions in such a way that a more or less coherent and consistent sense of self is maintained throughout various participations and self-investments in one's (working) life*" (p. 315, italics in the original). This is teachers' performative personal project undertaken alongside the social one, central to which are the process of becoming, interactional meaning-making, creating integrity, and finding a balance between personal and external expectations (Korhonen & Törmä, 2016; Taylor & Littleton, 2006).

One novel aspect of this study is the temporal frames through which *identity agency* is exercised by teachers. Teachers' personal and the professional resources are connected by means of ongoing reconsiderations along two parallel temporal frames. Teachers' experiences afford the long-term, career-based continuum, linking past and present. However, a continuation of the present towards the future occurs contemporaneously and constitutes a separate continuum co-constructed with the pupils and the existing professional affordances, such as language. In light of the latter temporal frame, the nature of students' reaction to teacher instruction may feed the reflective process and might strengthen a sense of autonomy and efficacy at work,

which might in turn affect the way teaching and CLIL are perceived and determine future courses of action in instructional settings. On the basis of professional self-understanding, teachers can make more conscious choices and relate them to further professional development (Korthagen, 2004). The two continuums of CLIL teachers' pedagogical identity are framed themselves by collegial relationships. Therefore, teachers' overall professional identity has to be considered as a temporal, situational and interpersonal construct.

Another novel aspect is the role of relational identity in that it is enacted at classroom level within an autonomous professional context. The participants of this study seemed to enjoy autonomy and to reflect on events taking place in their work, which are encouraged in Finnish educational settings from schooling to teacher education and teaching (Körkkö, Kyrö-Ämmälä, & Turunen, 2016). It is worth noting, however, that this autonomy can be supported by and partly mirrored in collective practices. CLIL teachers in Finland are professionally interdependent, at once relying on their professional competence and acting collaboratively with others (Nevalainen & Kimonen, 2013). In this context, therefore, relational identity can act as a strong resource for teachers' pedagogical identity. While having the possibility to influence one's circumstances at work is important for exercising one's professional agency (Eteläpelto et al., 2015), having that possibility on a collective level could have further impact on workplace conditions and sustain individual action (Kelchtermans, 1996). Participation in daily routines and structures as well as the embrace of the community's knowledge and beliefs give rise to a shared sense of culture and belonging (Korhonen & Törmä, 2016; Lasky, 2005). This participation, in turn, might help feelings of self-doubt and vulnerability subside. While not having the immediacy of the classroom or the continuity of a career, collegiality is a 'living' professional bond in constant need of

maintenance and cultivation. It is, thus, important that communities are supported as spaces for deliberating, collaborating, mutual support, and distributing expertise (Shulman & Shulman, 2004).

Despite its potential, however, we should also bear in mind that teachers' relational identity may also act as a constraint to pedagogical identity. For instance, working for shared goals, even though one might not agree with them, or trying to be a teacher colleagues respect, admire or accept through actions that might not resonate with one's own professional convictions and values, might limit one's repertoires to routines and peer-approved strategies. The effect of relational identity as a constraint to professional *identity agency* might be further enhanced by working in isolation, as it divests the personal project of being a CLIL teacher of communal interpersonal and intellectual resources and potential. Although relational identity as a constraint seemed not to be the case for the CLIL teachers in Finland, it is worth pondering the implications in different CLIL teaching contexts.

Last but not least, this study highlights how the foreign language plays a mediating role for teachers' pedagogical identity. Not only does it affect instructional choices, practice and perceptions, but it also colours teacher-student relationships. Its immediate presence in the classroom renders it a lens through which CLIL teachers understand, interpret and internalize CLIL as a methodology and themselves as its users. As such, foreign-language-mediated teaching settings can be an affordance for research to examine the impact of language on shaping CLIL teachers' professional identity. For instance, the tensions that arise between what teachers want to achieve or become through the use of a foreign language as a medium of instruction, and what roles are projected on them or are expected of them to play as content and language teachers create opportunities for negotiation and adaptation of identity (Cammarata &

Tedick, 2012). Such settings could also shed more light on how in-service teachers' professional identity and professional resources (Tsui, 2007) in CLIL could affect their level of commitment and personal investment in CLIL teaching.

Limitations

There are three limitations to this study. The first concerns the fact that this is a study within a particular context. The trust and respect toward the teaching profession in Finland affords teachers the possibility to follow their pedagogical beliefs and to be the teachers they want to be to a large extent. In addition, the lack of a top-down approach to CLIL, allows teachers to experiment with instructional diversity. Those factors may account for the absence of strongly perceived tensions, which could have established a direct link to current literature addressing identity formation as a struggle (Day et al., 2006; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013). The second concerns gender. All participants being women, one might suggest that male voices could have added to the findings. While that may be true, the diversity among the participants and an assumed common interest in being a teacher with their male counterparts support rather than devalue the present findings in light of gender. Future research could include a wider spectrum of teachers from different levels of education, gender and countries. The third concerns the method. Interviews were deemed the best way to gain insight into participants' understanding of their professional identity, but future research could also include observations to examine how this understanding is enacted in the immediate work environment.

Practical Implications

The present study suggests that there are different contexts in which teachers negotiate their identity. Rather than separate, however, these contexts may interact according to how teachers position themselves therein. This positioning is achieved by exercising

agency on both an individual and relational level. Given the breadth of literature on teacher students' identity (e.g. Flores & Day, 2006; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016), teacher education constitutes a major source of influence. Teacher education should be a place where theory and practice come together, but also one that acknowledges personal experiences and pre-existing beliefs (e.g. Körkkö, Kyrö-Ämmälä, & Turunen, 2016). Teacher students should be encouraged to ponder their own expectations and aspirations, being aided by pedagogical theories. During teaching practice, teacher educators could further enrich teacher students' experience by helping them be more aware of how their idiosyncrasies, pedagogical convictions and practical knowledge inform their actions and how those very actions can strengthen or weaken their teacher identity. Moreover, mentors should allow for teachers to practice innovative instructional methods and enact their role as they currently understand it, while letting them make mistakes and providing constructive advice. Positive first teaching experiences and collaboration with members of the university and work community may significantly impact teachers' relational agency and future resilience in the face of adversity (e.g. Banegas, 2012; Korthagen, 2004).

   With regard to in-service teachers, attention should be paid both to the synergy within contexts and the transaction between contexts for teacher identity formation and negotiation. It is important that teachers are able to work according to what they uphold as pedagogically valid and in a manner that does not strongly contradict externally imposed expectations. The tensions created should the case be otherwise, without any form of support, might be a chance for change or compromise for some, but a reason to withdraw altogether for others. Rather than suggesting no challenges be present, we would like to suggest presenting opportunities for change in the form of thought-provoking discussions or space for collective action. *Identity agency* will be drawn on to

reconceive oneself in the light of new information, such as new educational theories or the importance of certain academic skills, as well as their membership in the school community. Finally, as the personal aspect of teachers' lives interplays with the professional, workshops by school counsellors or merely insightful collegial discussions could help teachers re-evaluate beliefs and bring to the fore competences that affect their perceptions about the profession, and vice versa. In some cases, they might help teachers maintain a balance between life and work circumstances, abate defeatist attitudes and self-doubt, and strengthen a sense of autonomy and agency.

The study highlights a connection between teacher identity and agency in a context complementary to teacher education, suggesting that teachers utilize their agency in forming their identity within synergistic developmental contexts. It would be interesting for future research to compare the rather collaborative and supportive teaching culture of Finland to one where teachers feel less valued or recognized, and where CLIL instruction follows detailed guidelines, so as to highlight perceived resources or challenges in *identity agency*. Moreover, it could explore the sociocultural side of professional identity that goes beyond the school community, so as to see how teachers relate and act within the wider professional setting comprising social, organizational, political and financial considerations. Last but not least, academic discourse on *identity agency* could be enriched by the inclusion of emotions, in order to examine how prominent negative and positive affective states interfere with or facilitate identity negotiation.

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