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Maintaining self while adapting: Chinese foreign language teachers' identity development in an intercultural context

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Maintaining Self While Adapting:

Chinese Foreign Language Teachers' Identity Development in an
Intercultural Context



Universiteit
Leiden
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ICLON, Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching

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Maintaining Self While Adapting:
Chinese Foreign Language Teachers' Identity Development in an
Intercultural Context

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1.1 Introduction

Teacher identity plays a crucial role in influencing how teachers teach, how they interact with students, and how they develop their professional skills. The globalization of education has led to a greater importance for teacher identity, particularly for professionals who work in intercultural settings abroad. The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the complex and shifting identities of Chinese Foreign Language (CFL) teachers. Through four interrelated studies, this research therefore aims to gain deeper insight into the construction and reconstruction of CFL teachers' identity in the context of a globalized educational environment. In addition, this dissertation aims to broaden the scope of language teaching research by incorporating a cross-cultural lens to gain a more in-depth understanding of the factors affecting teacher identity.

1.2 The Background of this dissertation

Because of the increasing interest in Chinese language globally, more and more CFL teachers are now teaching in intercultural contexts abroad (Wang & Du, 2016). Gong et al. (2022) assert that while working abroad, these teachers need to navigate not only the traditional roles of imparting knowledge but also serving as cultural mediators, fostering inclusivity, and adapting to the evolving demands of an intercultural environment. The intercultural settings highlight the complexities of teaching Chinese—a language deeply rooted in Confucian cultural traditions—to students in Western settings (Moloney & Xu, 2015). These settings often require CFL teachers to

bridge significant cultural and educational divides (Ye & Edwards, 2018). Adapting to a new educational system and culture might change CFL teachers' views on teaching and consequently reshape their teacher identity. Changing roles and identities require CFL teachers to relinquish the familiarity and comfort of a role they are familiar with and experience the uncertainty of an unknown role in a new context (Wang & Du, 2014). CFL teachers might feel frustrated during the change process. Research conducted in Australia, the US and the UK has demonstrated that converting Confucian teaching concepts to Western teaching beliefs presents a great challenge for many native-speaking CFL teachers (Moloney & Xu, 2015; Ye & Edwards, 2018; Liu et al., 2024). To overcome challenges and improve the quality of CFL education in intercultural settings, CFL teachers need to develop a refined teacher identity as it helps them navigate cultural differences, adapt teaching practices and build intercultural competence (Yang, 2019). In addition, a strong teacher identity enables CFL teachers to reconcile their own cultural and pedagogical values with those of the host country, fostering inclusive and effective learning environments (Gong & Gao, 2024). In this way, teacher identity serves as a foundation for success and fulfillment for CFL teachers in intercultural teaching.

Given the importance of teacher identity for CFL teachers in intercultural educational settings, it is necessary to examine the process through which CFL teachers construct their teacher identity. There is, however, a lack of research on CFL teachers and their practices, and very few studies have examined the (re)construction of CFL teachers'

identity in intercultural settings. In order to help international CFL teachers overcome the challenges in the intercultural environment and facilitate their successful transition, more research on CFL teacher identity is needed. Therefore, the present dissertation begins by exploring how CFL teachers perceive their identity in intercultural contexts. Following on from this line of inquiry, the second study investigates the construction and reconstruction process of teacher identity and identifies the factors that shape this process. Extending the insights from the first two studies, we explore, in the third study, how CFL teachers' teacher identity development is influenced by their interactions with students. Finally, a systematic literature review provides an overview of how international educators construct and reconstruct their teacher identity in intercultural settings.

1.3 Key concepts

This dissertation is based on a poststructuralist view of teacher identity as a dynamic, ambiguous, and socially constructed professional identity. In line with Foucault (1972), who argued that identity is not intrinsic and cannot be set in the manner of discourse, power, and cultural practices, the conceptual framework of research is based on four interconnected concepts: teacher identity, stages of teacher identity development, intercultural context, and teacher-student relationship. These four concepts are integrated to understand how CFL teachers make sense of, negotiate, and (re)construct their teacher identity in intercultural settings. The following is a detailed elaboration of each concept.

1.3.1 Teacher identity

Teacher identity has received significant attention in the field of education because it is closely linked to teachers' professional development (De Costa & Norton, 2017), effective teaching (Karimi & Mofidi, 2019), and well-being (Skinner et al., 2021). From a poststructuralist perspective, teacher identity is multidimensional, fluid and dynamic, and it is constructed by individual functions and sociocultural processes (Norton & Toohey, 2011; Yazan, 2018). Villegas et al., (2020) assert that teacher identity is “neither a given nor a product” but an evolving process, constantly contested and redefined as teachers engage with different contexts and people (e.g., colleagues, students, and communities). Given the complexity of teacher identity, scholars often conceptualize it as a multidimensional construct (Brenner et al., 2018; Canrinus et al., 2011).

To understand teacher identity, it can be helpful to break it down into domains or aspects that together show a comprehensive picture of a teacher's sense of self. Hanna et al. (2019) identify six domains of teacher identity, including (1) self-image (How individuals view themselves as teachers); (2) motivation (Motivations to be or to become a teacher); (3) self-efficacy (Teachers' beliefs in their capability to organize and perform their daily teaching activities effectively); (4) task perception (The objectives of teaching); (5) teaching commitment (Commitment and/or dedication to becoming/being a teacher); and (6) job satisfaction (How teachers feel about the work and work situation). Understanding teacher identity through these domains is helpful

because it acknowledges that identity is multidimensional; a change in one aspect (e.g. the improvement in self-efficacy after a successful lesson) can influence other aspects, such as commitment (Yang, 2019).

Another framework of teacher identity divides it into personal, professional, and sociocultural dimensions, highlighting the interplay between the individual and their working context (Tajeddin & Nazari, 2025). According to this framework, personal identity concentrates on internal and individual aspects of being a teacher, professional identity refers to teachers' pedagogical practices and their sense of professional legitimacy, and sociocultural identity explains how teachers manage their roles in the host culture (Pennington & Richards 2016). Each dimension provides critical insights into how teachers navigate their roles, manage conflicts, and adapt to changing environments. Working in an intercultural context means teachers need to engage with diverse educational environments and cultures, thus, it is necessary to develop a deeper understanding of how teachers navigate the complexities of cultural adaptation, professional roles, and social integration. Previous research conducted on the dimension of personal identity reveals that teachers' emotional responses and self-perception in intercultural teaching experiences are still in the process of construction (Guo & Sidhu, 2024; Trent, 2020). In the professional dimension, teachers have to change their pedagogical methods which results in moving from teacher-centered to student-centered teaching as a result of local pressure and therefore their teacher identity is also affected (Wen et al., 2024). From the sociocultural perspective, CFL teachers are often located in-between their home and host cultures, which results in hybrid

identities that incorporate different cultural discourses into their professional roles (Sun et al., 2022).

Overall, poststructuralist theory on identity, Hanna et al.(2019) six domains of teacher identity, and three dimensions of teacher identity (Tajeddin & Nazari, 2025) all reflect that teacher identity is developed in the process of negotiation between the individual and professional self and sociocultural environment; Thus, it is a relational and contextual construct (Varghese et al., 2005).

1.3.2 Stages of teacher identity development

As teacher identity is dynamic and constructed over time (Moradkhani & Ebadijalal, 2024), researchers claim that teacher identity development is a gradual and stage-based process (Gholami et al., 2021). Although teacher identity development differs per individual and continues throughout the duration of a teacher's career, longitudinal studies have observed common stages or transitions that teachers tend to experience as they grow into the profession. Gholami et al.'s (2021) study on student teachers' identity development in intercultural settings and Brunetti and Marston's (2018) study on the trajectory of teacher development identified three similar stages during the trajectory of teachers' identity development. Although they adopted different terms to describe these stages, a common path for teachers' identity development can be observed. In the initial phase, the position of the teacher toward the profession of teaching is passive, and teacher's sense of professional competence remains provisional (Gholami et al., 2021). With growing experience, teachers enter the

second stage, becoming more reflective and confident as they experiment with new teaching strategies. During this stage, teachers begin to stabilize their identity (Brunetti & Marston, 2018). In the last stage, teachers have increased agency, professional self-assurance, and the capacity to mentor others. As Brunetti and Marston (2018) state in their study, at this stage, teachers develop a refined and enhanced identity, exhibiting a great deal of agency, positive relationship with students, taking leadership roles, a balance between work and life, etc.

Nevertheless, teacher identity continues to evolve as educators continue to encounter new contexts and experiences, demonstrating the inherently open-ended nature of identity development (Reeves, 2018). Over time, teacher identity undergoes further reconstruction as teachers interact with diverse social, cultural, and institutional contexts (Friesen & Besley, 2013). These stages are particularly significant in intercultural settings, where teachers must constantly negotiate their identities in response to unfamiliar cultural and pedagogical environments.

1.3.3 Intercultural context

The development of teacher identity is complex within intercultural contexts. According to Liao et al. (2017), Chinese foreign language (CFL) teachers who work abroad not only go through identity development stages but also adjust to unfamiliar cultural and sociopolitical environments. This dual adjustment often makes the teachers act as cultural mediators who represent their home culture in the host country (Moloney & Xu, 2016). On the one hand, being a

cultural mediator empowers teachers to feel proud and have a purpose while teaching (Ye & Edwards, 2018). On the other hand, this mediating role brings challenges to teachers as they struggle to keep their original identity while also meeting the requirements of the new contexts (Wang & Du, 2016). Therefore, CFL teachers typically experience complex identity tensions in terms of cultural authenticity versus the necessity to change practices for them to be effective in the new teaching contexts.

Cultural adaptation is a process of intercultural identity development that involves the re-examination of previous teaching beliefs by CFL teachers. According to Yue (2017) teachers from Confucian-oriented Chinese educational systems, which are characterized by hierarchy and authority, may experience identity mismatches when they enter Western environments marked by student-centeredness. The cultural divide requires educators to maintain some aspects of their original identity while adopting new practices appropriate to the local environment (Moloney et al., 2015). As a result, intercultural contexts facilitate the development of an integrated identity among teachers who are situated between two different cultural traditions.

Intercultural teaching experiences are characterized by dynamic identity shifts across personal, professional, and sociocultural dimensions that are context-specific. Beginning with the belief that they are authoritative figures who will have their commands obeyed without question, many CFL teachers change their perspectives and become facilitators in the context of the host country's educational systems

(Yang, 2019). This transition emphasizes identity fluidity, which is driven by the processes of interaction in new cultural settings. Nevertheless, such shifts are not linear and are not without their complications; teachers can feel discomfort, isolation, or identity denial, particularly when teaching in the context of exclusionary environments (Lee & Jang, 2023; Zheng, 2017). Nevertheless, the effective steering of these challenges can lead to important growth on a personal and professional level. International teachers, therefore, enhance their intercultural competencies and embrace a more resilient and agentic identity that may even entail the creation of a hybrid identity that goes beyond the binary cultural frameworks (Bailey & Cooker, 2019). Therefore, intercultural contexts can be viewed as transformative spaces where teacher identity is reassembled and reconstructed through cultural adaptation and sociopolitical engagement.

1.3.4 Teacher-student relationship

From a post-structuralist perspective, teacher identity is defined as the way a teacher understands themselves as a teacher, which can be interpreted through and within their language and discursive practice (Varghese et al., 2005). Discursive practice in teaching refers to the interactions between teachers and their students (Reeves, 2018; Zembylas, 2003) and is demonstrated by the teacher-student relationship. Therefore, the teacher-student relationship, as the “outer side” of teaching (Korthagen and Evelein, 2016), serves as a critical lens for examining teacher identity as the “inner side” of teaching (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011).

Teacher-student relationships have been found to relate to teachers' identity tensions or problems (Pillen et al., 2013), especially among teachers who struggle to balance showing authority with developing rapport with students. Such tensions become particularly obvious in intercultural contexts due to different expectations between teachers and students (Wubbels, 2015). For example, Wang and Du (2016) state that CFL teachers who hold hierarchical, teacher-centered teaching beliefs, often experience identity dissonance when confronting Western expectations for informal, collaborative relationships. Ye and Edwards (2018) suggest that these initial mismatches can trigger identity crises, forcing teachers to reconsider pedagogical approaches and their roles.

Navigating these relational tensions in intercultural contexts might cause the reconstruction of international teachers' identity. Moloney and Xu (2016) reveal that CFL teachers who work abroad experienced conflicts in their classes as their established authoritative roles were challenged by students' expectation of more cooperative interactions. Teachers who successfully transform their roles, integrating authoritative and supportive aspects, can develop enhanced interpersonal skills and a more adaptive teacher identity (Jeongyeon & Young, 2020). Van Lankveld et al. (2017) further assert that students' increased engagement and positive feedback enhance teachers' self-efficacy, thus assisting them to develop and refine their teacher identity. Conversely, persistent relational tensions can undermine identity development, causing self-doubt or dissatisfaction. Therefore, building rapport with students can be a turning point in a teacher's identity

development in intercultural settings, moving from uncertainty to greater confidence and stability.

In building rapport with students, Moloney et al. (2015) propose a middle ground where teachers combine authoritative and interactive approaches to develop a hybrid, context-based teacher identity. Teachers constantly refine their teacher identity through ongoing negotiation and reflection prompted by daily classroom interactions, balancing strictness with friendliness, and authority with rapport. In summary, teacher–student relationships in intercultural settings are critical, serving as both catalysts for identity challenges and opportunities for professional development, thus influencing the teacher identity and identity development of teachers.

1.4 Outline of this Dissertation

This dissertation examines the development of teacher identity in intercultural settings, with special emphasis on native-speaker CFL teachers in the Netherlands. The dissertation aims to develop a deep understanding of international teachers' identity construction in intercultural contexts, using CFL teachers in the Netherlands as an example. To achieve our goal, we conducted four studies (see Table 1.1), each addressing a specific aspect of the phenomenon and collectively building a multidimensional picture of teacher identity construction. Below is a description of each study.

Chapter 2 lays the groundwork by exploring how CFL teachers perceive their identity in an intercultural context. Empirical data was collected through semi-structured interviews with twenty-one native

Chinese-speaking CFL teachers. Using Foucault's poststructuralist view of identity, this chapter emphasizes the dynamic and evolving nature of teacher identity, shaped by teachers' cultural and educational backgrounds as well as their teaching experiences in the Netherlands. The findings of this chapter highlight the need for tailored pedagogical strategies and collaborative teaching communities, which serve as the backdrop for deeper investigations in the subsequent chapters.

The evolving dynamic nature of teacher identity found in Chapter 2 underscores the importance of continuous reflection and adaptation in teacher identity development. Building on these insights, Chapter 3 takes a longitudinal perspective to examine how CFL teachers construct their identity over time in intercultural contexts. In this longitudinal study, reflective journals, narratives, and semi-structured interviews are the primary sources of data. Additionally, teachers' storylines were utilized to provide additional information regarding participants' identity development. Chapter 3 reveals that teacher identity construction is an ongoing, transformative process influenced by social practice and the need to navigate challenges and conflicts. In this Chapter, interpersonal interactions were found to be an important aspect that contributes to long-term professional growth and identity transformation.

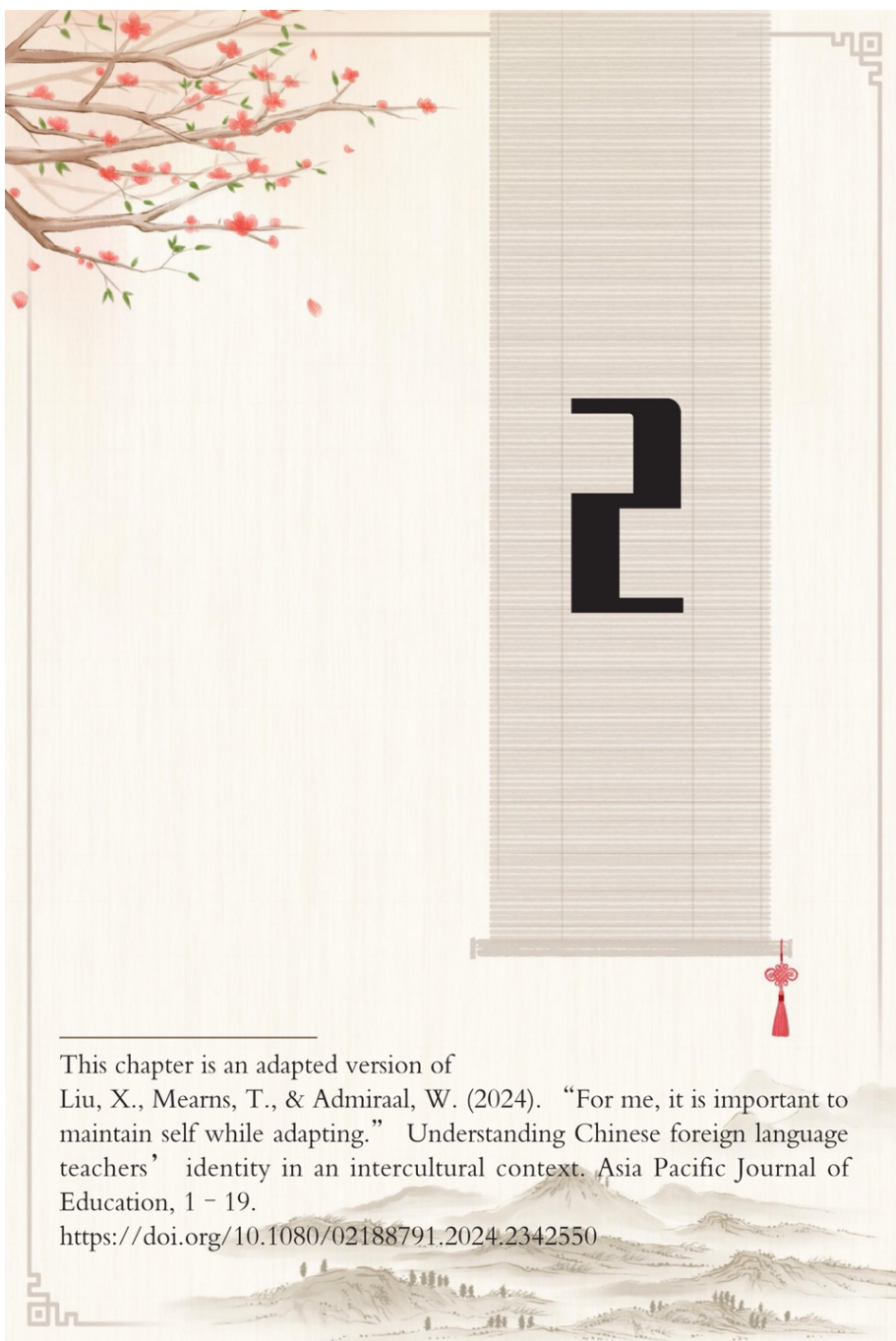
Building on these insights, Chapter 4 narrows the focus to the interpersonal dimension of teacher identity construction by examining the teacher-student relationship. This chapter uses the teacher-student relationship as a lens to analyze how interactions with students influence teacher identity in intercultural contexts. Fourteen native-

speaker CFL teachers participated in this study, along with one hundred and ninety-two students. Survey and interview methods were used as primary sources of data, and classroom observations were stimuli for interviews. This chapter explores the distinct identity profiles among teachers based on their interpersonal behaviors, which further illustrate the multidimensional nature of teacher identity development as described in Chapters 2 and 3.

To fully contextualize the insights from Chapters 2-4 and assess their broader relevance, it is critical to situate them within global discourses on international teacher identity. Building on the empirical and theoretical insights from Chapters 2-4, Chapter 5 synthesizes these findings through a systematic review of international literature, investigating the formation, negotiation, and transformation of intercultural teacher identity in diverse educational settings, thus contributing to a comprehensive understanding of how international teachers develop their teacher identity. This systematic review examined research on international teachers' teacher identity development in intercultural contexts based on 39 peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2024. By employing a three-dimensional framework (personal, professional, and sociocultural identity), this chapter identifies key themes in teacher identity development across intercultural contexts. It situates the findings of this study within the larger body of literature, emphasizing how the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Chinese language teachers align with or diverge from broader patterns of identity development among international teachers.

Table 1.1. Schematic overview of the dissertation

Chapter	Research Focus	Research Type	Measurement instruments	Participants	Time of data collection
2	CFL teachers' perceptions about their identity in an intercultural context	Qualitative	Interview	21 Chinese language teachers	April 2021-July 2021
3	How CLF teachers' identity be characterized by teacher-student relationship	Mixed methods	Questionnaire; Classroom observation; Interview	14 Chinese language teachers; 192 Dutch secondary school students	December 2021-July 2022
4	Stages of CFL teachers' identity development and factors that influence the development	Longitudinal; Qualitative	Reflective journal; Oral narrative; Interview; Storyline	3 Chinese language teachers	February 2022-January 2024
5	How do international teachers' identity development in intercultural settings	Systematic literature review	N/A	N/A	August 2024-March 2025



Abstract

This qualitative exploratory study addresses how Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) teachers perceive their identity in an intercultural context in the Netherlands. In this study with twenty-one native Chinese-speaking language teachers, empirical data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Foucault's poststructuralist view of identity is employed to conceptualize teachers' identity. The findings show teachers' perceptions of their identity are shaped by their cultural and educational background, as well as their teaching experiences in an intercultural context. CFL teachers' professional identity adapts during the process of interacting with students from another cultural background. Although CFL teachers sometimes struggle during this process of transformation, they generally show a willingness to adjust. The findings indicated that even if teachers' identity reconstruction is inevitable in the cross-cultural setting, most CFL teachers hold onto their primary Chinese identity. Implications for teacher professional development and teaching Chinese in intercultural settings are discussed, for instance, the need for pedagogical courses that fit the Dutch educational context and consider the Chinese language's specific features, and for the creation of a collaborative CFL teaching community.

2.1 Introduction

Teacher identity plays a crucial role in effective teaching and stands at the core of the teaching profession (Karimi & Mofidi, 2019; Trent, 2020). In the last twenty years, globalization in education has increased teachers' mobility, particularly in the field of foreign language teaching and learning (Wang et al., 2013). Teachers may be required to teach in a context that is far removed from their own home cultures. Hence, the development of the intercultural dimension of language teaching has imposed new demands on teachers. According to Zen et al. (2022), in order to effectively teach in an intercultural environment, teachers must possess particular international and professional competences that benefit their professional identity development in a new context. The change in their professional identity when teaching abroad is a dynamic process involving constant experimenting, reflecting, exploring, and responding to challenges (Borg, 2003). In order to help teachers gain the required competences, it is necessary to understand the identity formation of language teachers in intercultural settings. However, previous research on language teachers' identity is mainly based on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, which limits the application of the results to teachers of other languages, such as Chinese (Wang & Du, 2016).

A growing number of people worldwide show interest in learning about the Chinese language and culture, thus the demand for qualified Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) teachers is increasing. Adapting to a new educational system and culture might change CFL

teachers' views on teaching and consequently reshape their professional identity. Changing roles and identities requires CFL teachers to relinquish the familiarity and comfort of a role they are familiar with and experience the uncertainty of an unknown role in a new context (Wang & Du, 2014). CFL teachers might feel frustrated during the change process. Yet research on CFL teachers and their practices remains sparse, and only a limited number of studies have examined CFL teachers' identity (re)construction in intercultural settings. In order to help international CFL teachers overcome the challenges in the intercultural environment and facilitate their successful transition, more research on CFL teacher identity is needed.

Taking the above into consideration, this study explored CFL teachers' identity in the Netherlands. The Netherlands was one of the earliest countries in Europe to introduce Chinese as an elective course in secondary schools, where it has been offered as a centrally-assessed exam subject since 2007 (Zhou, 2010). A growing number of Dutch people show interest in learning about the Chinese language and culture. However, most studies on CFL teachers and their practices have been conducted in the US (Yue, 2017), Australia (Moloney & Xu, 2016), and the UK (Yang, 2019), which may indicate that we have little knowledge regarding CFL teaching in the Dutch context. Therefore, the four-year research project of which this study forms a part explores how native-speaker CFL teachers construct and transform their identity while teaching CFL in the Netherlands. The broader project aims to broaden the scope of language teaching research by incorporating a cross-cultural lens to gain a more in-depth understanding of the factors

affecting teacher identity. Drawing on qualitative interview data, the current study investigated how CFL teachers experience, perceive, and cope with the process of developing their identity in an intercultural context. The current study provides not only valuable insights for the professional development of CFL teachers but also for improving the quality of Chinese language education. Additionally, the results of the current study are likely to be relevant and applicable to CFL practices in other European countries, where teachers might face similar challenges to those in the Netherlands.

2.2 Literature review

2.2.1 Understanding teacher identity through a poststructuralist lens

In the current study, Foucault's poststructuralist view of identity is employed to conceptualize teachers' identity. Teacher identity is defined as a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of "how to be", "how to act" and "how to understand" their work and their place in society (Sachs, 2005). Yazan (2018) claimed that the poststructuralist theory of identity combines both individual functions and sociocultural processes. An integrated notion of identity rather than a dichotomy between individual functioning or socio-cultural processes provides an approach that refuses the singularity of each "component" of identity formation (Zembylas, 2005). Thus, adopting a poststructuralist lens allows us to explore the identity of language teachers comprehensively.

On the one hand, in poststructuralist theory, individual functions such as teachers' personal beliefs and value systems, cultural

background, experience of teaching and learning, and education experiences all play a vital role during identity construction (Li, 2022; Varghese et al., 2005). For example, De Costa and Norton (2017) argued teachers' sense of identity is based on their existing values and beliefs about how a teacher should behave properly in the classroom. Moreover, Reeves (2018) claimed these values are normally influenced by teachers' cultural backgrounds. In the case of language teachers who work in an international environment, students are usually from backgrounds that differ from their own in terms of language, nationality, and/or ethnicity. Hence, scholars have asserted that the national and/or ethnic cultural differences negotiated in language classrooms comprise a particular dimension of teachers' professional identity (Fichtner & Chapman, 2011).

On the other hand, cultural and political context is also emphasized by poststructuralist theorists investigating identity (Yazan, 2018). For instance, Weedon (1997) argued that, through a poststructuralist lens, even small events within a particular cultural and political context are significant in constructing teacher identity as they are subjected to discursive practices. In addition, De Costa and Norton (2017) claimed that identity is constantly becoming and transforming in a particular context. For language teachers who work in an overseas environment, this is especially true. According to poststructuralists, as teachers' working environment changes, their identity as teachers is constantly contested (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Given the purpose of this study, which was to provide significant attention to the way foreign language teachers construct their identity within a particular cultural

context, poststructuralist identity theory is appropriate for our investigation.

2.2.2 Chinese foreign language teachers' identity in an intercultural context

Working in an intercultural context, language teachers may experience linguistic and cultural mismatches with their students from different cultural backgrounds (Yue, 2017). This is the same for native-speaker CFL teachers. These mismatches provide a fertile ground for observing how international teacher identity shapes and reshapes in an intercultural context.

Previous studies have reported that Chinese educational culture strongly influences how Chinese teachers perceive themselves in an overseas context (Liao et al., 2017; Moloney et al., 2015). Conflicts can be seen in CFL classrooms because students and teachers from different cultures sometimes work from different scripts (Moloney, 2013). According to some studies, Chinese teachers tend to be authoritarian and teacher-centred (Moloney & Xu, 2016), whereas students from western contexts expect more autonomy and interaction (Leeman et al., 2020; Willemse et al., 2015). As a result, the construction of CFL teachers' professional identity might involve challenges, such as having difficulty in retaining students (Zhang & Li, 2010), lacking in-depth communication with students and colleagues (Wang & Du, 2016), and having low self-efficacy beliefs regarding designing intriguing class activities (Yang, 2019). These challenges reflect CFL teachers' dilemma of how to integrate their educational beliefs shaped by

traditional Chinese culture with the pedagogical principles commonly applied in the local context (Moloney, 2013; Yue, 2017).

Despite conflicts between Chinese teachers' conception of their roles and Western students' educational needs, a transition in Chinese teachers' beliefs has been noted by researchers (Moloney et al., 2015; Ye & Edwards, 2018). Ye and Edwards (2018) study suggested that overseas teaching experience changed CFL teachers' perceptions of the world, enhanced their national pride, and increased their appreciation of otherness. Moreover, results from an undefined study showed that CFL teachers appear to be in various stages of transition in three areas: personal convictions, teaching methodology, and expectations. According to Zhang et al. (2020), CFL teachers enter the profession because of their desire to share the Chinese language and culture with people in other countries. Even if CFL teachers' professional identity in an intercultural setting is transforming, their personal identity, which has a core of "being Chinese", does not change (Wang & Du, 2014).

2.2.3 The present study

Canrinus et al. (2011) argued that as a dynamic and multidimensional construct, teacher identity cannot simply be perceived directly. Rather, it must be explored from a broad perspective. Some scholars have broken teacher identity into various domains (Brenner et al., 2018). Each domain may function as a set of meanings that represent a part of what teacher identity might be, and therefore each domain has the potential to guide teacher behaviour. From a poststructuralist perspective, teacher identity is understood as a socially shared and

coherent set of meanings that define the particular professional role of teachers (Hanna et al., 2019). In other words, each meaning reflects a small part of what teacher identity is. The six domains of teacher identity (Self-image, Motivation, Commitment, Self-efficacy, Task perception, and Job satisfaction) in Hanna et al. (2019) study provide a useful basis for research into the development of teacher identity. These six domains have been proven to be important and relevant demarcations of teacher identity in previous studies (Carrillo & Flores, 2017; Van Lankveld et al., 2017). Therefore, through a poststructuralist lens, the current study explored CFL teacher identity through a multifaceted view by categorizing teacher identity into the following six domains from Hanna et al. (2019) literature review on teachers' identity: (1) self-image (The way in which individuals view themselves as teachers); (2) motivation (Motivations to be or to become a teacher); (3) self-efficacy (Teachers' belief in their capability to organize and perform their daily teaching activities effectively); (4) task perception (The objectives of foreign language teaching); (5) teaching commitment (Commitment and/or dedication to becoming/being a teacher); (6) job satisfaction (How teachers feel about the work and work situation). This approach to categorizing was used to establish a tool to analyse and interpret the empirical data presented in the current paper.

Therefore, by exploring the complexities of CFL teachers' identity in the cross-cultural setting, the present study aims to contribute insights into CFL teachers and enrich existing research on language teachers' identity. The primary research question is as follows:

How do native-speaker CFL teachers perceive their identity in the intercultural context of the Netherlands?

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 Context and participants

In the Netherlands, CFL teachers mainly work in secondary schools, Confucius institutes, and language schools. According to Nuffic (<https://www.nuffic.nl/en>), the Dutch organization for internationalization in education, in 2022, about 25 out of 648 secondary schools in the Netherlands were members of the national network for Chinese teaching. These schools either offer Chinese as an optional subject or as a part of the curriculum. Official figures regarding secondary schools offering Chinese programmes outside of the Nuffic network are not available. Confucius Institutes (CI) provide CFL teaching in three cities in the Netherlands. Courses in the CI are offered to broad target groups, including adults, university students, adolescents, and children. Teachers in the Confucius Institutes have undergone intense professional training to teach Chinese in international settings. Finally, language schools hold Chinese classes in weekends. These schools were born out of the Dutch-Chinese community's desire to provide a space for Chinese immigrant children or children of mixed parentage (Chinese-Dutch) to engage with the Chinese language and culture in the Netherlands. The Stichting Chinese Onderwijs in Nederland [Foundation for Chinese Education in the Netherlands] lists 39 Chinese language schools (www.chineesonderwijs.nl) (accessed January 2023). Some of the

larger Chinese language schools have up to 800 students on roll at one time.

CFL teachers in the Netherlands typically work in one or more of the above settings. The CFL teachers in the current study are native-Chinese speakers who either came to the Netherlands to work in the Confucius institutes or who lived in the Netherlands for several years before becoming a CFL teacher. To gain a better understanding of CFL teacher identity, both groups were included in the current study.

A purposeful sampling technique was adopted to recruit CFL teachers from Confucius institutes and secondary schools across the Netherlands. This method allows us to focus on our specific area of interest, gather in-depth data on this topic, and select a sample that accurately represents the native-speaker CFL teachers' characteristics. Some of these teachers also had a second teaching job in a language school. Access to CFL teachers was obtained via the first and second authors' professional network and advertising through the Nuffic network. Teachers' backgrounds were taken into consideration to ensure diversity in the representation of geographical areas, teaching experience, and ethnic backgrounds. The schools where the participants work are geographically diverse, covering nine cities in the Netherlands. All 21 participants are females (see Table 2.1), which reflects the "female-dominated language teaching profession", as stated by Moloney et al. (2015).

Table 2.1 Participant information (using pseudonyms)

Participants	Location	Years of CFL Teaching Experience			Students	Teaching context
		Netherlands	China	Other Countries		
Du	Northwest	2	2	2	Adults; Adolescents	Confucius institute
Zhu	Northwest	6	4	/	Adolescents	Confucius institute; Secondary school
Xia	Northwest	4	/	1	Adults; Adolescents	Confucius institute
Feng	North	2	/	/	Adults; Adolescents	Confucius institute
Gao	Middle	15	8	/	Adolescents	Secondary school; Language school
Jia	Middle	20	/	/	Adolescents	Secondary school; Language school
Han	Middle	5	/	/	Adolescents	Secondary school;
Zhuo	Northwest	2.5	/	/	Adolescents	Secondary school
Wu	South	8	3	/	Adults; Adolescents	Secondary school; Language school
Xu	Southeast	1 ¹	12	/	Adults; Adolescents	Confucius institute

¹ All of this teacher's teaching experiences in the Netherlands prior to data collection had been online because of COVID-19. This may have influenced her experience.

(continued)

Participants	Location	Years of CFL Teaching Experience	Students	Teaching context
		Netherlands	China	Other Countries
Lu	Northwest	7	2	/
Shen	North	2	/	2
He	North	2	/	2
Dong	Southeast	3	/	/
Su	Middle	25	/	/
Shen	South	12	/	/
Gu	South	7	/	/
Tan	South	15	/	/
Qin	South	9	/	/
Xie	Northwest	12	/	/
Wei	Middle	5	/	/
			Adolescents	Adolescents
			Adults; Adolescents	Confucius institute
			Adults	Confucius institute
			Adults	Confucius institute
			Adults; Adolescents	Confucius institute
			Adolescents	Secondary school
			Adults; Adolescents	Secondary school;
			Adults; Adolescents	Secondary school; Language school
			Adolescents	Secondary school
			Adolescents	Secondary school
			Adolescents	Secondary school
			Adolescents	Secondary school

The current study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of ICLON Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching in March 2021. All information has been stored and processed confidentially.

2.3.2 Procedure and instrument

Data was collected using individual semi-structured interviews. This qualitative approach was suitable for studying teachers' perceptions and opinions (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The interviews were conducted in Chinese by the first author between March and July 2021. As a former CFL teacher from China, living in the Netherlands, the first author has a similar professional, cultural, and linguistic background to the participants, and was relatable to them. Nonetheless, she attempted to be an "outsider" during the interview process to provide the participants with enough space to answer. Considering the inherent power dynamics within research, particularly in humanitarian settings, the interviewer repeatedly reminded the interviewees that they were the experts, that we were there to learn from them, and that there was no right or wrong answer as we sought to understand their perspectives and experiences in teaching CFL.

Due to COVID-19, the interviews were conducted online. The interview outline was based on poststructuralist theory, and had two main components: the personal aspects of identity and the context aspects of identity. The outline included questions to identify teachers' educational background and professional experience, as well as starting questions like "How do you describe yourself as a CFL

teacher?”, “Do you enjoy your role as a CFL teacher?” to explore participants’ perceptions of their identity. Spontaneous follow-up questions were asked to expand on some particular points that came up in the interviews. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. The interview recordings were transcribed ad verbatim for further analysis.

2.3.3 Data analysis

The inductive-deductive thematic method was employed to analyse the data. Analysis began with careful reading of the transcribed data to become familiar with the content. Then the transcribed texts were coded based on a concept-driven approach (Schreier, 2012), drawing upon the six domains of identity in Hanna et al. (2019) systematic review study. After categorizing the related texts into six domains, the next step was to further explore these six domains using an inductive method. The first author conducted the inductive thematic analysis, identifying themes under each domain, followed by an analytical summary of each domain. In order to enhance the trustworthiness of the current study, the second author (an expert in language teaching and intercultural teacher education) and another researcher checked the consistency of codings in four sample transcripts in translation. In addition, constant comparison (Mertens, 2019) was employed to assess participants’ responses to interview questions, categorize quotes into six domains according to the perspectives expressed, and examine differences within each domain. Throughout the process, the research

team met to discuss and resolve any discrepancies between the coding and the summaries.

2.4 Results

The purpose of the study was to explore how CFL teachers construct and transform their identity while teaching in an intercultural context, in line with poststructuralist theory (Norton & Toohey, 2011), which holds that teacher identity is fluid, dynamic, and changes over time. The findings suggested that in addition to teachers' individual functions, the intercultural context in which they work significantly influences all six domains of teachers' identity. The findings will be presented per domain on the basis of quotations from the interviews.

2.4.1 Self-image

With regard to their image of themselves and their role as a CFL teacher, participants mentioned that they are proud of being CFL teachers and believe they play a critical role in students' growth. The example quotes in Table 2.2 suggest that intercultural teaching experience influences teachers' perceptions of their roles. Some teachers' perceptions of their roles has changed after a few years of overseas working, which indicates that identity is fluid, dynamic, and changes over time. While some teachers maintain their previous opinions, and others have tried to integrate views from both sides (China and the Netherlands).

Table 2.2 *Overview of the domain ‘self-image’*

Domain & Definition	Sub-themes	Example quotes from the participants
Self-image: In what way do individuals view themselves as teachers.	Perceptions changed over time	“In the beginning, I thought I should be a good role model. I expected my students to obey the instructions, and all listen to me. Now, my ideas have changed. I started to understand that I am students’ cooperative partner and learning facilitator.” [Dong]
	Retaining previous perceptions	“Even though in the Netherlands, learners prefer more interactions in the class, I still believe an ideal teacher is someone who holds a dominant position in class. Giving the initiative back to students may cause chaos.” [Du]
	Integrating views from both sides (China and Netherlands)	“I need to adapt to the Dutch cultural and educational setting as soon as possible. In the meantime, as a CFL teacher whose main duty is to share the Chinese language and culture, I should keep my Chinese part. It is important to maintain self while adapting.” [Gao]

The change of some participants' perception of their roles can be seen in the current study, which indicates that identity is fluid and dynamic and changes over time. During the first two years of teaching, some teachers believed that they were the ones who represented authority in class, a characteristic they believed was influenced by Chinese authoritarian and teacher-centred teaching methodologies. After working in the Netherlands for several years, their description of themselves changed from a "good role model" to a "cooperative partner", from someone who "represents authority" to a "learning facilitator" and "guide". Even though participants pointed out that adapting to a new culture is not a straightforward process, their renewed understanding of themselves as CFL teachers demonstrated their readiness to make adjustments to facilitate Dutch students' learning.

Yet some teachers said that even though they are working in another country, they retained their previous perceptions regarding their role as teacher. According to these teachers, an ideal teacher would hold a dominant position in class. Additionally, some participants stated that they would not change their strict teaching style even though Dutch students sometimes complained. They believed that in order to facilitate the learning of a language, teachers should put pressure on their students by assigning them lots of assignments and tests.

Nine teachers reported that neither a teacher-centred view nor a learner-centred view of their roles is appropriate; these teachers held the similar opinion that they wanted to find an area in the middle. This "middle area" [Xu] suggests that these participants desired to retain

some aspects of their previous teaching beliefs while adapting them to the new context.

To illustrate this point further, data from the interviews suggests that some participants viewed themselves as a bridge and a “middle person” [Xu]: representatives of their own country (China) with a desire to cultivate a connection between China and other countries.

2.4.2 Motivation

Teachers expressed a broad range of reasons for becoming a CFL teacher in the Netherlands. While some mentioned mainly extrinsic motivators, some appeared to be more intrinsically motivated, either due to their love for language and teaching or because they believed they were making a valuable contribution. Still others were both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. Additionally, altruistic motivation and cross-cultural interest are another two important factors motivating participants to pursue a career as a CFL teacher. The sub-themes under the domain motivation are presented in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 *Overview of the domain 'motivation'*

Domain & Definition	Sub-themes	Example quotes from the participants
Motivation: Motivations to be or to become a teacher.	Extrinsic motivators	As an immigrant in a foreign country, sometimes I feel extremely lonely. I seldom have the chance to speak Chinese, and it seems like there is no link between me and my motherland. Teaching Chinese gives me the chance to use my mother tongue a lot. Isn't it great? [Jia]
	Intrinsic motivators	Chinese language and literature are charming. Being a CFL teacher offers me the chance to explore more about language, besides, I like to convey knowledge to more people, sharing makes knowledge more valuable. [Wei]
	Cross cultural interest	I am a person who likes to try new things. This job gives me a chance to communicate with people from other countries, and lets me know more about the world. I have met many interesting people, this is one of the reasons for me to continue to be a CFL teacher. [Shen]
	Altruistic motivators	I became a CFL teacher mainly because I am willing to make changes in my students' minds and lives. I know as adolescents, my students have to deal with many uncertainties. Being a teacher gives me the chance to motivate my students and prepare them for a better life. [Gao]

Not all the teachers expressed strong motivation. Three teachers seemed to lack defined reasons: they became CFL teachers only because they wanted to find a job that is related to their university major. Another two teachers started to teach because of the lack of other job opportunities.

Among the extrinsic motivators, the interview data suggests that one reason to become a CFL teacher in a foreign country is because this job gave them opportunities to use their mother tongue, which made them feel less homesick. Besides this, participants reported that the sincere relationship between teacher and student actively encouraged them to become a CFL teacher. One teacher described herself as a “bookish person” [Dong] who did not like to deal with complicated interpersonal relationships. She thought being a teacher was the right choice for her in this regard.

Some teachers started to teach because of their love for language and teaching itself. Their passion for Chinese language and culture inspired them to become CFL teachers. Additionally, their desire to spread the charm of the Chinese language led them to travel abroad and share their knowledge with a broader audience.

Experiencing and learning about foreign cultures and, to a lesser degree, communicating with people from other countries were the most frequently mentioned reasons for becoming a CFL teacher. Ren started to teach partly because of the opportunity to work where everything was new to her. Likewise, Shen clearly referred to communicating with more people as a strong reason for choosing to teach internationally. The quotes “willing to know more about the world”, “interact with

students from different cultural backgrounds”, and “enjoying working in the new educational system” demonstrate cross-cultural interest as one of the major motivations for participants to become a CFL teacher.

It is worth noting that most participants cited altruistic motivation as one of their main motivations for entering the language teaching profession. One altruistic motivator is bringing about change in people and society. Quotes such as “guiding uncertain adolescents”, “making changes in students’ minds”, and “preparing adolescents for a better life” illustrate the desire of CFL teachers to effect a positive change in society and especially among adolescents.

Another altruistic reason cited by participants was to contribute to the development of Chinese education. CFL was described by some participants as “a new subject lacking much attention”, which motivated them to make their own contributions to the field. Furthermore, participants expressed their willingness to “make the two sides [Chinese and Dutch] meet and understand each other better via language” [Tan].

2.4.3 Self-efficacy

With regard to the interviewees’ perception of their own capability as a CFL teacher in the Netherlands, the data suggests that unfamiliarity with the new cultural and educational context may decrease teachers’ confidence in their ability in terms of managing classes, explaining grammar, and improving students’ engagement. Those who had been teaching for a longer time observed that their self-efficacy had in some respects increased with experience, while in others it had not. In some

cases, the transition to the Dutch context had affected their self-efficacy even after years of teaching experience in China. Example quotes are shown in the Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 *Overview of the domain ‘self-efficacy’*

Domain & Definition	Sub-themes	Example quotes from the participants
Self-efficacy: Teachers' belief in their capability to organize and perform their daily teaching activities effectively.	Unfamiliarity with the new educational context	Yeah, we have books that give us advice on the engagement of students, but when the teaching context is different, things get more complicated. Without a textbook that fits the Dutch context, how to arouse students' curiosity in learning Chinese is a problem bothering me. [Dong]
	Proficiency in Dutch matters	I majored in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, and know lots of teaching skills and strategies. But when it comes to the real class, it is hard for me to discuss some grammar points or cultural themes deeply with my students because of my limited Dutch language proficiency. I seldom have in-depth communication with my students. How to teach them efficiently is a problem to me. [Feng]
	The value of teaching experience	I am confident about my ability to make my students follow the rules, either in China or in the Netherlands. Prior experience taught me to be an easygoing person after class, but be strict during class. Building prestige is important, I think I am capable of keeping my students under control. [Gao]

(continued)

Domain & Definition	Sub-themes	Example quotes from the participants
Self-efficacy: Teachers' belief in their capability to organize and perform their daily teaching activities effectively.	The impact of previous teaching beliefs	Most Chinese students are quiet and follow the teacher's instructions, I didn't need to make much effort to manage the discipline. In the Netherlands, I noticed that students prefer a friendlier atmosphere in class, which means I can't force them to do things in the Chinese way. Classroom management is a big headache for me. [Zhu]
	The value of intercultural teaching experience	I have been a CFL teacher in the Netherlands for many years, and have taught different kinds of students. Through trial and error, I have learned how to deal with disruptive behavior in class. It is not a hard task for me. [Shen]
	Familiarity with the Dutch educational context	Years of working in the Netherlands make me familiar with the Dutch educational system. My Dutch is pretty good, it helps me to gain the respect of my colleagues and students. I am confident about my ability in involving Dutch students in classroom activities and teaching them effectively. [Xie]

Teachers with less teaching experience (either in China or in the Netherlands) expressed their overall lack of confidence. “Every class is a challenge”, “new problem keeps occurring”, “I am incompetent at many things” all illustrate novice CFL teachers’ low efficacy beliefs regarding teaching in a new environment. In the interviews, these participants attribute their lack of confidence in teaching in the Netherlands to their unfamiliarity with the Dutch educational system.

Four participants expressed their lack of confidence in improving students’ engagement. For example, Dong, with three years of teaching experience in the Netherlands, reported having difficulty involving students in class activities despite the availability of many books providing guidance. As a result, low efficacy beliefs derived from the engagement of students led to some negative emotions such as stress and burnout. The decline in the number of students made some teachers doubt their ability as teachers.

The results reveal that Dutch language proficiency is another important factor influencing the self-efficacy of CFL teachers. Although some participants regarded themselves as competent in teaching strategies, they were unable to communicate effectively with their students due to their limited Dutch language proficiency. Consequently, teachers’ confidence regarding the efficiency of their classes was adversely affected.

In contrast to these examples from the less experienced teachers, participants with more overseas teaching experience expressed overall high self-efficacy beliefs in their abilities as a teacher. These teachers know what kind of mistakes their students will make in class, and can

be prepared in advance. In addition, experiences of successful teaching in either China or the Netherlands enhanced teachers' beliefs about their ability in classroom management.

When asked about their ability to cultivate students' interest in Chinese, participants with more extensive experience as teachers in the intercultural setting showed high self-confidence. These teachers knew how to adjust themselves to the Dutch environment, thus they were confident in motivating their students to come back to their class.

There is, however, evidence that long teaching experiences do not always lead to a high level of self-efficacy, particularly if the educational culture in the new context differs from the previous one. Some teachers mentioned that they came to the Netherlands following extensive teaching experience in China. In the first few years in the Dutch context, they nevertheless had doubts about their abilities in classroom management.

The findings further reveal that being familiar with the educational culture partially contributes to CFL teachers' high self-efficacy. As these teachers explained, "the situation is different between countries" [Shen]. They believed it to be necessary for them to become familiar with "the learning styles of Dutch students" [Xie] first, then they could gain more confidence in calming down students in class. Participants reported that they used to think being serious was critical for managing the class. In the process of adjusting to the Dutch context, they tried to build a more equal relationship with students and using some new and alternative instructional strategies. As one

participant put it, “When you establish rapport with learners, your self-efficacy beliefs improve accordingly” [Xie].

2.4.4 Task perception

When talking about the objectives of CFL teaching, some participants expressed a heavily linguistic orientation. They focused on helping students to pass the language proficiency test and improve their communicative competence. In order to reach this goal, some teachers believed they needed to push students to work harder, while other teachers thought letting students have fun is more important. Other participants tried to find a middle area. Some participants went beyond the focus on language, and prioritized objectives such as raising students’ cross-cultural awareness and critical thinking. A summary of the domain Task perception can be found in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5 *Overview of the domain task perception*

Domain & Definition	Sub-themes	Example quotes from the participants
Task perception: The objectives of foreign language teaching.	Helping students to pass language proficiency test	For me, the examination is a good way to test one's language level. Learning a language without reaching a specific goal is meaningless. As a Chinese teacher, I encourage my students to take the Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) by the end of their courses. It is proof of their language level. [He]
	Improving students' communicative competence	The ultimate goal of teaching Chinese is not how much new vocabulary the students have or how much grammar they know, it is whether the students are able to express themselves clearly and make native speakers understand them in real life, even with a limited vocabulary. [Qin]
	Pushing students to work harder	Sometimes the teacher needs to push students to work hard. Of course, a lot of homework is needed. If I just keep students happy and do a lot of activities during the class, they will learn nothing in the end. [Qin]
	Having fun is the top priority	I try my best to make my class as fun as possible, in order to retain students' interest in learning Chinese. I don't have any rigid standards, students learn happily in my class. They need to have interest first, it is the base for their further development. [Han]

(continued)

Domain & Definition	Sub-themes	Example quotes from the participants
Task perception: The objectives of foreign language teaching.	Integrating Chinese and Dutch approaches	It's not wise to push my students too hard, but learning Chinese requires effort and memorization. If I simply adapt to the generic interactive approach like in the European foreign language classes, my students may achieve nothing in the end. It is better to integrate my Chinese approach of teaching with the requirements of the Dutch context. [Xie]
	Raising students' cross-cultural awareness	Since students may not have an accurate idea of their own culture and identity, it is language teachers' job to stimulate their curiosity about the difference between their own language and languages of other countries, and guide them to explore more. I hope from my courses, students can have a clearer understanding of who they are as well as of their own culture. [Shen]
	Arousing students' critical thinking	As a Chinese teacher, of course, I want my students to like Chinese language and culture. But if the students in my class only accept and repeat what I am telling them, I don't think it's a successful class. It is necessary to inspire them to think by themselves and provide them chances to express their own ideas. [Tan]

According to teachers who focused more on the linguistic side of CFL teaching, the primary goal of language teaching should involve key factors like language accuracy. They thought teachers' duty was to help students have few pronunciation and grammatical mistakes. Some respondents stated that when teaching the Chinese class, their first concern is helping learners to pass the language proficiency test. It was further explained by these teachers that this test-originated method of teaching is a result of their previous learning experiences in China. Based on this finding, it is evident that teachers' educational backgrounds and pre-existing beliefs about teaching are important factors in determining how they perceive the teaching goals.

Five teachers referred to improving students' oral and written communicative competence as their educational goals. They hope after learning for a while, their students are able to express themselves clearly, even with a limited vocabulary. In order to reach this goal, some teachers believed much practice is needed in and after class. They emphasized the importance of pushing students to work hard and giving them lots of homework.

Other teachers had different ideas in this respect. After years of teaching, they found that "a strict Chinese teaching approach" did not work for Dutch students, who they noticed were quite autonomous. Those participants stated that their top priority is letting learners have fun and helping learners to cultivate and retain interest in learning Chinese.

Five teachers reported that there is a distinction between the Chinese context and the Dutch context in terms of teaching approaches.

Being a strict teacher and giving students lots of homework and tests are normal in China, while participants reported that after-school homework is forbidden in some schools in the Netherlands. In order to manage this context difference, some teachers tried to find a happy medium, “integrating the Chinese approach of teaching with the requirements of the Dutch context”. [Xie] The happy medium illustrates a significant change in the perception of the task of CFL teachers after working in an intercultural context for some time.

Apart from the linguistic side of CFL teaching, some teachers prioritized other objectives, such as raising students’ intercultural competence. “Developing a clearer understanding of their own culture” and “curiosity about other countries’ languages and cultures” [Shen] indicate that participants were willing to use language learning to enhance students’ cross-cultural understanding.

Moreover, some participants said they were influenced by Dutch educational culture, and think the goal of teaching is to teach students something that they could have for a lifetime. The quotes “exploring by themselves”, and “expressing their own ideas” demonstrate these teachers’ desire to help students develop a critical view of the world through language learning.

The teachers’ perceptions of appropriate CFL teaching materials emphasized the importance they attributed to materials being relevant to students’ real life and to their contribution to the development of students. Some participants reported that the commonly used CFL teaching materials are not related to students’ experience and do not include content that is interesting for them.

“Developing teaching materials relevant to Dutch students’ cultural backgrounds and daily life seems to be a matter of urgency”. [Zhuo]

2.4.5 Teaching commitment

Most participants regarded CFL teaching as their lifelong career and were highly committed to the teaching profession. They were willing to engage in professional development, spent time on preparing lessons and offered extra consulting in their free time, although they felt their efforts were not always appreciated by students. Not all teachers shared these high levels of commitment to CFL teaching, which might be influenced by contextual factors, like student numbers or schools’ support. Table 2.6 illustrates the subthemes under the domain teaching commitment.

Table 2.6 *Overview of the domain ‘teaching commitment’*

Domain & Definition	Sub-themes	Example quotes from the participants
Teaching Commitment: Commitment and/or dedication to becoming/being a teacher.	Engaging in professional development Spending time on preparing lessons	<p>I like my job, so I always care about my professional development. Although teacher training and communication in CFL teaching are not easily accessible in the Netherlands, I try to participate in these on a regular basis. Because I know if I want to stay in this profession, I need to keep refreshing my knowledge and learning from my peers. [Zhu]</p> <p>When I first started teaching Chinese as a foreign language, I always tried my best to be fully prepared. I didn’t only prepare the contents in the textbook but also searched for some related materials myself. Every semester, my lesson preparation notebook was full. [Gao]</p>

(continued)

Domain & Definition	Sub-themes	Example quotes from the participants
Teaching Commitment: Commitment and/or dedication to becoming/being a teacher.	Offering extra consulting in free time	In our Chinese way of being a teacher, I am willing to sacrifice my spare time to give students extra classes without being paid. I think students would be pleased about this. But in the Netherlands, I found that my efforts are not all appreciated by Dutch students, they are unhappy and even said that if I continue to teach longer than the regular class length, they will immediately write an email to report me. Of course, when hearing this, I am so disappointed. Now I am confused about how to do this job properly. [Du]
	Falling numbers of students	I am passionate about being a CFL teacher for sure, but I'm not sure how long I will still be in this job. Because Chinese language education is not as important as other foreign languages in Europe, actually, people's interest in learning Chinese is declining these two years. I may choose a different occupation in the future. [Wei]
	Lack of support from school	My school used to give me enough support, but in the past two years, it seems that my school doesn't have interest in facilitating the Chinese course any more. Lack of job security makes me lose interest in this job. [Gu]

Some teachers mentioned that teaching Chinese as a foreign language is not only a job to them, but a career about which they are passionate. For instance, Jia used “ardently love” to describe her feelings about CFL teaching, Tan (with 15 years of CFL teaching experience in the Netherlands) stated that “Regardless of salaries and outside barriers, I like being a CFL teacher too much to give up”.

Whilst not all participants are dedicated to their job as intensely as Jia and Tan, most teachers showed their willingness to stay in the teaching profession, although teacher training and support networks in CFL teaching are not easily accessible in the Netherlands. Five teachers stated that they are enthusiastic about participating in related training and conferences in order to improve themselves. These teachers’ concern for their professional development is indicative of their high level of commitment to their careers as CFL teachers.

Teachers discussed various practices that they were committed to, including spending much time and effort on preparing lessons, providing students with individual feedback, and spending free time searching for materials for students. “Every semester, my lesson preparation notebook is full”. [Gao]

In spite of the high levels of commitment expressed by teachers like Gao, some teachers felt that their efforts are not appreciated by their students. CFL teachers expressed their willingness to “sacrifice spare time to assist students to learn”, while they felt Dutch students showed a negative attitude towards “extra consulting” and “longer teaching hours”. This suggests that CFL teachers’ understanding of what makes a teacher does not align with the learning expectations of

students from another cultural background. The lack of appreciation from students affects the emotions of CFL teachers, thereby affecting their passion for teaching.

Not all teachers expressed such high levels of commitment to the teaching profession as displayed in the examples above. In some cases, changes in conditions, such as falling numbers of students, affected their commitment. Although participants were passionate about CFL teaching, they were considering changing their occupation due to decreasing interest in learning Chinese in the Netherlands.

Lack of support from the school is another contextual factor that influenced participants' teaching commitment. Some participants reported that their school no longer appeared to be interested in facilitating the Chinese course. They lost interest in their work due to the lack of job security. The findings suggest contextual factors play a vital role in influencing CFL teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

2.4.6 Job satisfaction

Some participants were satisfied with being a CFL teacher, in terms of a supportive working environment, support from peers, and low working pace. Other teachers expressed ambivalent feelings of satisfaction with their jobs due to the immature CFL teaching system, insufficient income, and the difficulty of getting the necessary qualifications. Table 2.7 shows some example quotes from participants.

Table 2.7 *Overview of the domain 'job satisfaction'*

Domain & Definition	Sub-themes	Example quotes from the participants
Job satisfaction: How teachers feel about the work and work situation.	Supportive working environment	When I first started to work here, I was not familiar with the Dutch educational system. The lectures and workshops provided by the school helped me a lot. In addition, our school has a meeting for teachers every week. In the meeting, teachers share teaching experiences with each other, like sharing useful teaching tools or discussing the problems encountered in their class. I learn a lot from that. [Shen]
	Support from peers	In my first teaching year, I didn't adjust to the teaching here and felt frustrated when I failed to manage a class. Having someone to learn from, and to ask for opinions helped me a lot. Now, as an experienced teacher, I am happy to share resources with other teachers. [Wei]
	Slow working pace	In China, I once worked 40 days without having a day off, working overtime was quite normal. However, here in the Netherlands, the leaders of my school almost never push me. I like the slower working pace, working here is a great idea for me. [Du]

(continued)

Domain & Definition	Sub-themes	Example quotes from the participants
Job satisfaction: How teachers feel about the work and work situation.	Immature CFL teaching system	Compared with English, French or Spanish, Chinese as a foreign language is a relatively new subject. This course doesn't have a mature teaching system or many teaching materials. [Zhuo]
	Difficulty of getting the necessary qualification	Now, if you want to be a CFL teacher in a Dutch school, you must have a teaching qualification, which is difficult to obtain, especially for foreigners. Therefore, some CFL teachers lost their job because they failed to get the necessary qualifications. [Xie]
	Limited number of students	In the Netherlands, the number of CFL teachers is limited; I am the only one in my school. Preparing and teaching lessons all on my own sometimes makes me feel distressed. [Qin]

Teachers emphasized the significance of the school's support and mentioned that this is directly related to their job satisfaction. The supportive working environment was the major reason for some participants to continue to teach, even if it took them several hours to commute to work every day. They emphasized that schools helped them a lot, especially during the first few years. The lectures and workshops provided by the school helped participants become familiar with the Dutch educational system. Additionally, some participants expressed their appreciation for the amount of autonomy their schools provided. For instance, Guo reported that she has the "freedom to choose, and have a say in what goes on in the classroom", which made her job "much easier".

Some participants believed cooperating with other language teachers helped them to work more efficiently, thus improving their job satisfaction. The first year of teaching was frustrating for some because of their unfamiliarity with the Dutch teaching system. Having colleagues to learn from and ask for opinions helped them a lot. This demonstrates the importance of peer support, particularly for teachers who are new to cross-cultural teaching.

In terms of working conditions, five teachers expressed their job satisfaction when they talked about the slower life and working pace in the Netherlands. They enjoyed being a CFL teacher in the Netherlands mainly because the intensity of working here is not as strong as that in China.

The interview data revealed that many secondary schools employ only one CFL teacher due to the limited number of students.

Teachers in these schools have no opportunity to share ideas and get support from a direct colleague, which makes them feel isolated and distressed. As a relatively new subject, the CFL course doesn't have a mature teaching system or many teaching materials. Working alone in a foreign country exacerbated teachers' negative emotions.

Teachers emphasized the difficulty of getting qualifications for being a teacher in the Netherlands, especially for people who are not Dutch. Therefore, some participants lost their job because they failed to get the necessary qualifications.

Some teachers showed a negative attitude towards the external incentives of this job. They complained that due to the limited number of students, it is hard to take CFL teaching as a full-time job. Only "six or eight classes every week" (Qin) is not enough for them to "get a sufficient income" (Xie). As a result, some CFL teachers have left or are planning to leave this profession.

2.5 Discussion and conclusion

The findings from the current study suggest that the intercultural context affects all six domains (self-image, motivation, self-efficacy, task perception, commitment, and job satisfaction) of teachers' identity, as identified by Hanna et al. (2019). Furthermore, teachers stressed the importance of shifting perceptions of their own roles and in their objectives in being a teacher. This process of transformation was not experienced as easy. It is sometimes full of challenges. In addition, for CFL teachers whose primary duty is to share the Chinese language and culture, teacher participants believed that it is vital to maintain their

sense of self as Chinese, even though their professional identity is in a continuous state of change.

2.5.1 Process of transforming as a teacher

A transformative process could be observed in CFL teachers' beliefs regarding their roles. At the early stages of participants' careers, they tended to perceive themselves as effective role models who enjoy a great deal of authority, which echoes the authoritarian and pastoral roles noted in previous studies of Chinese teachers (Moloney et al., 2015). Teachers with longer teaching experience in the Netherlands tended to regard themselves as learning facilitators. Having an equal relationship with students and preparing lessons according to students' needs and interests seemed evident to them. The transition from an authoritarian role to a facilitator role implies that teachers in the current study were making efforts to adjust their pre-existing beliefs. Besides, in contrast to previous studies suggesting that CFL teachers may lack cross-cultural awareness and believe the ultimate goal of CFL teaching is imparting knowledge and transmission of language and culture (Wang & Du, 2016), teachers in the present study revealed extended conceptions of the objectives of CFL teaching. Apart from the linguistic side of CFL teaching, teacher participants' discourse on the goals of CFL teaching emphasized cultivating students' cultural awareness, developing their critical reflection, and making changes in students' growth, which is perhaps influenced by Dutch schools' educational aims of fostering students' intercultural competence and improving their critical thinking (cf., Leeman et al., 2020; Willemse et al., 2015).

These findings imply teacher participants had acquired a sense of the “Dutch Chinese teacher” role. In other words, teachers’ extensive practice in a Dutch context and their interactions with Dutch students and colleagues seemed to improve their understanding of the Dutch school culture and educational systems. A deeper understanding of Dutch educational culture by CFL teachers further confirms what Leigh (2019) and Kayi-Aydar (2015) have discovered in their research. People not only make spaces, but spaces also make people, by constraining them as well as providing them with opportunities for constructing their identities. Our findings on the transformation of teachers’ self-image and task perception further support Yang’s (2019) study, which claimed that teachers’ perception of their roles could be shaped by their teaching experience in specific contexts rather than by their ethnic-cultural background. Cross-cultural teaching and living experiences in the Netherlands allow CFL teachers to compare different educational cultures in the Netherlands and China, encouraging them to reflect on their professional identity and other aspects of teaching.

2.5.2 Challenges in the process of transforming

Although most teachers in our study expressed their willingness to adapt to the new educational context, they did not all experience the transformative process as easy. Challenges were identified in several areas, such as handling disruptive behaviours in class, cultivating students’ interest in learning Chinese, the number of students who choose Chinese courses, and access to professional support.

The challenges derived from classroom management and students' involvement highlight that some teachers' beliefs and practices are restricted by their educational background and previous teaching experiences in the Chinese context, and might be exacerbated by teachers' lack of knowledge of pedagogy in the Dutch school context. That appeared to be why, similar to CFL teachers in some previous studies (Moloney & Xu, 2016), teachers in the present study were struggling to understand Western teaching beliefs and teaching approaches. In line with previous studies about CFL teachers (Liao et al., 2017), some challenges that the participants reported revealed that cultural differences may contribute to a certain ambivalence in teachers' perceptions of their identity. Cultural divergences were observed when the participant teachers reported a tendency to devote extra time to teaching after school time, but this was not appreciated by their Dutch students. These teachers explained that Chinese students usually embrace such opportunities.

Another challenge found to influence CFL teachers' identity reconstruction is the absence of an active professional support system, i.e., appropriate teaching resources and peer support. Inadequate teaching resources congruent with Dutch teaching contexts cause difficulties for teachers' adjustment and make it harder for the teachers to motivate students. Some previous studies have also noted the lack of appropriate teaching materials as an unsolved issue of overseas CFL teaching (Ye & Edwards, 2018). Furthermore, due to the status of Chinese as a subject with a limited number of students, the CFL teaching community is small, meaning that teachers sometimes need to

deal with instructions, classroom management, and communication on their own, without sharing ideas with peers. Different from Yang's (2019) study, which indicates that CFL teachers may lack enthusiasm for social networking, teachers in this study emphasized the importance of building connections and cooperating with other CFL teachers. Among some teachers in the current study, limited opportunities to exchange ideas with peers led to professional frustration and insecurity. Such struggles affirm the findings of previous studies about teachers who work abroad (Walters et al., 2009). Yet teacher participants showed their willingness to attend more teacher training and conferences. This suggests that, despite the difficulties teachers may face when working in a new educational context, they are making efforts to manage the tensions between the demands of the new context and their professional needs.

2.5.3 Keeping Chinese identity

The current study's findings indicate that even if identity transformation in an intercultural context is inevitable, teachers' primary Chinese identity does not change. Previous studies have noted teachers may hold a "core identity" when working in a cross-cultural setting (Wang & Du, 2014). This core identity seems to be anchored in their native Chinese identity rather than the "Western-oriented" one that connects to the environment they work in. CFL teachers emphasized that adapting to the new educational context should involve more integration rather than assimilation (cf., Bennett, 2004). Likewise, teachers in the current study wanted to find a middle way, valuing

teaching beliefs from both educational cultures, and learning from both sides. R. Moloney et al. (2015) have mentioned middle ground in their studies, which refers to the space in which East meets West. This middle ground provides a useful notion for the space in which transition occurs. In line with previous research (Casinader, 2014), our findings indicate that teachers need to develop and become aware of transcultural thinking modes that include and reflect diverse cultural perspectives in order to model an educational environment that embraces and values cultural diversity, rather than holding it up as a barrier. These findings further support the idea that language teachers intellectually engage with their cultural affiliations by embracing but not internalizing “the other” culture (Fichtner & Chapman, 2011). Furthermore, the current study found that an important motivation for teachers to participate in CFL teaching is their desire to share the Chinese language and culture with people in other countries. This motivator has also been noted in a recent study (Zhang et al., 2020) exploring pre-service CFL teachers’ job motivation. Participants’ wish to contribute to a better and deeper understanding of China around the world implies that among multiple forms of identities CFL teachers may develop in different contexts, these teachers maintain their sense of self as Chinese.

2.5.4 Limitations and directions for future research

This study adopted a qualitative method, and the sample that was investigated was relatively small. Furthermore, as the current study chose a cross-sectional design, the processes of identity development

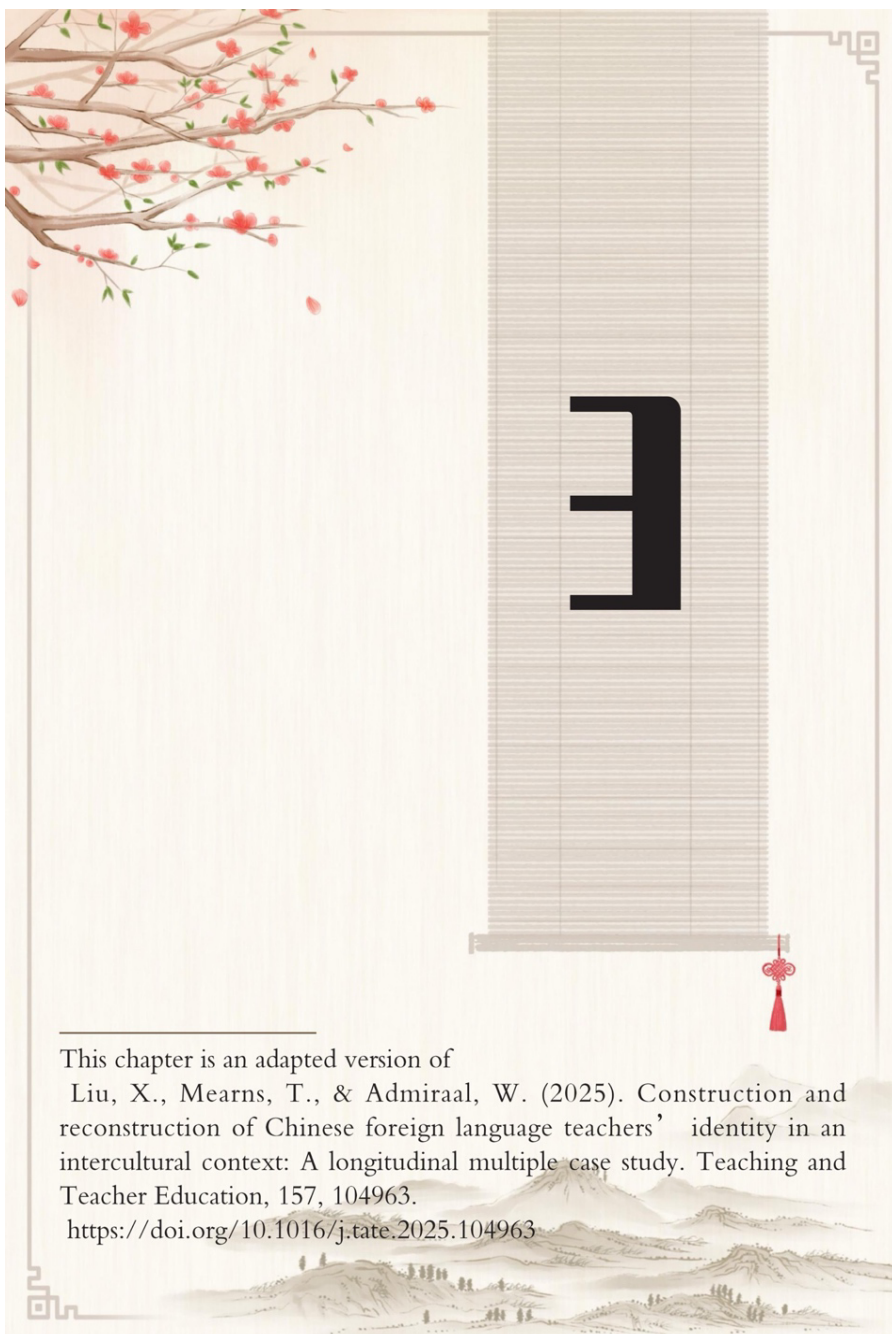
have not been studied. Longitudinal designs might be needed to investigate what kinds of stages CFL teachers go through when teaching in an intercultural context and how their professional identity is reconstructed over time. Furthermore, the current research only included data from teacher interviews, without observations of what happens in class and how teachers' identity shapes their teaching practice. Future studies could collect data through classroom observation or employ video scenario studies and learner perspectives to understand the interplay between CFL teachers' professional identity and teaching practice.

2.5.5 Implications for practice

The existing CFL training programme typically addresses pedagogical and professional issues regarding the intercultural context on a general level, which may not be appropriate for beginning teachers who are not originally from the Netherlands. Based on our findings, it seems that more targeted training programmes could be provided for CFL teachers, for example, introducing the Dutch educational system and Dutch educational goals through in-service teacher training courses. Besides, teacher education institutes can also consider setting up pedagogical courses that, in addition to the interactive and cooperative approach used in Europe's modern foreign languages classrooms, also take into consideration the specific features of the Chinese language. Moreover, the findings reveal CFL teachers in the Netherlands find it difficult to access teaching resources; open resources and professional sharing

platforms could be developed in order to assist teachers in their teaching practice.

Another implication for schools and teacher education institutes is the recommendation to build an encouraging and collaborative CFL teacher community. Due to the limited number of students, most teachers are the only CFL teacher in their school. Teachers showed willingness to participate in reflective conversations with other CFL teachers on their teaching practice, to share teaching experiences, to observe peers' teaching, and to provide positive and constructive feedback. A concrete practical step to increase support for teachers could therefore be to set up a buddy system with novice and experienced teachers. Teachers with more extensive overseas teaching experience could be cognizant of the trans- formative process of their identity in an intercultural context, and might help novice teachers to build their professional identity from the very first steps.



Abstract

This longitudinal study explores how teachers construct their teacher identity in intercultural contexts. In this study with three Chinese language teachers, reflective journals, oral narratives, and interviews were primary sources of data. Additionally, teachers' storylines were utilized to provide additional information regarding participants' identity development. The findings reveal that the construction of teacher identity involves an ongoing process that transforms through social practice. Through dealing with challenges and conflicts arising from the teaching and socialization process, teachers reassemble their teacher identity and develop professionally. The experience of teaching overseas enables CFL teachers to develop a more agentic identity.

3.1 Introduction

Developing a teacher identity is a crucial component of learning to become a teacher (Friesen & Besley, 2013), as it contributes to a teacher's educational philosophy (Mockler, 2011), decision-making (Beijaard & Meijer, 2017), well-being (Skinner, Leavey, & Rothi, 2021), and effectiveness (Bukor, 2015). In today's rapidly globalizing world, education is increasingly taking on an intercultural dimension (Bense, 2016). This is especially the case in language education, where 'native speaker' language teachers are employed in a context that is far removed from their own home culture (Liu et al., 2024). These teachers find themselves navigating not only the traditional roles of imparting knowledge but also serving as cultural mediators, fostering inclusivity, and adapting to the evolving demands of an intercultural environment (Gong, Lai, & Gao, 2022). A cross-cultural context was selected because it offers a unique opportunity to understand how teacher identity is constructed and reconstructed in response to diverse cultural expectations and educational paradigms. The cross-cultural context highlights the complexities of teaching Chinese—a language deeply rooted in Confucian cultural traditions—to students in Western settings. These settings often require CFL teachers to bridge significant cultural and educational divides (Moloney & Xu, 2015; Ye & Edwards, 2018). By examining this phenomenon, the study offers insights into the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive strategies that CFL teachers employ to adapt and thrive in their roles (Liu et al., 2023). Most previous studies of how language teachers working overseas construct

and reconstruct their teacher identity over time, as they engage with the complexities of working in an intercultural context, have focused on the identity development of English foreign language teachers. This limits the application of research findings to teachers of other languages, such as Chinese, where different cultural factors are likely to be at play.

Over the last two decades, native-speaker Chinese foreign language (CFL) teachers have increasingly been employed in cross-cultural settings outside of China (Wang & Du, 2016). When CFL teachers work in an intercultural context and face students from different cultural backgrounds, they have to adapt emotionally, behaviorally, and cognitively, as well as renegotiate and reconstruct their teacher identities (Liu et al., 2023). Research conducted in Australia, the US, and the UK has demonstrated that converting Confucian teaching concepts to Western teaching beliefs presents a great challenge for many native-speaking CFL teachers (Moloney & Xu, 2015; Ye & Edwards, 2018; Liu et al., 2024). To overcome challenges and improve the quality of CFL education in intercultural settings, CFL teachers need to develop a refined teacher identity as it helps them navigate cultural differences, adapt teaching practices (and build intercultural competence (Liu et al., 2024). In addition, a strong teacher identity enables CFL teachers to reconcile their own cultural and pedagogical values with those of the host country, fostering inclusive and effective learning environments (Gong & Gao, 2024). In this way, teacher identity serves as a foundation for success and fulfillment for CFL teachers in cross-cultural teaching. Therefore, how these sojourning CFL teachers construct their teacher identity in a

culturally shifting educational setting is a topic that deserves further academic scrutiny.

Taking the above into consideration, the current study aims to take native-speaker CFL teachers in the Netherlands as examples to explore international teachers' identity construction in the process of their adaptation to the local educational culture. The study is of both theoretical and practical significance. By providing insight into intercultural adaptation within the specific educational context, we aim to contribute to the growing body of knowledge regarding the complexity of identity development of international teachers in cross-cultural settings. Furthermore, the findings of this study may be of assistance to both policymakers and educational institutes in bringing about more adaptive policies and pedagogical practices, and designing more inclusive and effective teaching environments that correspond to the needs and characteristics of these international teachers.

3.2 Literature review

3.2.1 Stages of teacher identity construction

Teacher identity is defined as teachers' perceptions and beliefs about themselves as teachers (Mockler, 2011; Yanzan, 2018), and involves others' expectations and positioning (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2004). It is not stable or fixed and is "neither a given nor a product" (Villegas et al., 2020). Instead, it is a dynamic process that develops over time (Harun, 2019) and that is (re)produced through language (Karimi & Mofidi, 2019). According to Rodgers and Scott (2008), contemporary conceptions of teacher identity share the

assumption that identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time. On the basis of these assertions, one can conclude that teacher identity construction is an ongoing and dynamic process that entails making sense and (re) interpreting one's own values and experiences (Barkhuizen, 2016; Liu et al., 2023). In this study, teacher identity is defined as a process of narrative construction, co-construction and negotiation with the self and with the contexts and people with which the self-interacts (Moradkhani & Eba-dijalal, 2024).

The development of teacher identity is examined in several studies. Despite using different terms to describe the phases in the teacher identity development process, all of these studies indicated that teacher identity development is an ongoing process that is shaped by social practice (Villagas et al., 2020). The identity construction begins with “seeking out teacher identity” (Brunetti & Marston, 2018), or, in other words, a “pseudo-identity” (Gholami et al., 2021) to a “refined and enhanced identity” (Brunetti & Marston, 2018), or “moral identity” (Gholami et al., 2021). Over time, teacher identity undergoes further reconstruction as teachers interact with diverse social, cultural, and institutional contexts (Friesen & Besley, 2013). These stages are particularly significant in intercultural settings, where teachers must constantly negotiate their identities in response to unfamiliar cultural and pedagogical environments. However, much of the literature has focused on general identity development, with limited attention to the specific trajectories of language teachers, particularly those teaching Chinese in cross-cultural contexts. The increasing mobility of teachers around the world (Rosenfeld et al., 2022) offers a unique opportunity

for examining the ways in which CFL teachers develop their identities in intercultural contexts.

3.2.2 Factors influencing teacher identity construction

The construction and reconstruction of teacher identity is a complex and dynamic process that has garnered significant attention within the field of education (Barkhuizen, 2017; Beijaard, 2019). Teacher identity construction has no start or end point; therefore, the process of becoming and being a teacher is constantly shifting and is mediated and transformed through social practice and the active process of developing teaching competences (Liu et al., 2023). This process is influenced by various factors, including personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, pedagogical beliefs, social interactions, and the contextual demands of the teaching environment (Yazan & Lindahl, 2020; Liu et al., 2024).

In the context of foreign language teaching, this process takes on a unique dimension due to the intercultural nature of the discipline (Gong, Lai, & Gao, 2022). Scholars asserted that teaching in a new context – whether it is a new type or level of course, a new school or district, or a new country – and with new student groups always requires adjustments and offers opportunities for identity construction and reconstruction (Jeongyeon & Young, 2020).

Social interaction is a crucial element in the formation of teacher identity since it is through others that we become ourselves (Dimitrieska, 2024). Day et al. (2013) claim that teacher identity is not only constructed from personal experiences, technical and emotional

aspects of teaching “but also as the result of an interaction between the personal experiences of teachers and the social, cultural, and institutional environment in which they function on a daily basis” (p. 603). As De Costa and Norton (2017) affirm the identity of a teacher is continuously being informed, formed, and reformed as individuals evolve over time and interact with others.

Teacher identity construction is a process of constantly “becoming”. Even a small event in a particular setting would exert some influence on its dynamic of change. Trent (2020) holds that teacher identity is formed at the intersection of teachers’ past experiences of learning, individual aspirations, and social expectations, with the aforementioned factors being in either a harmonious or contradictory relationship with each other. In addition to the role teachers’ past experiences play in their identity development as teachers, the practice of teaching has proven to contribute to teacher identity development (Reeves, 2018; Taylor, 2017). Nguyen (2016) assumes that teacher identity is constructed from the interaction of multiple shifting and conflicting personal, professional, historical, and cultural factors. Hence, identity is not an inborn feature of teachers, but an ongoing process of interpreting experiences connecting personal and contextual features, which yields a multifaceted understanding of self (Ruohotie, 2013; Tao & Gao, 2018).

3.2.3 Focus of the present study

In the context of teaching in an intercultural context, the construction and reconstruction of teacher identity represent a critical area of inquiry.

As international teachers navigate the intricate interplay of language and culture, their evolving identities shape not only their teaching practices but also the intercultural competence of their students. This longitudinal study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge by shedding light on the multifaceted dimensions of international teachers' identity construction within an intercultural context. Through a careful examination of teachers' experiences, beliefs, and practices over time, we seek to provide valuable insights into the dynamic nature of teacher identity in foreign language education. Therefore, the current study aims to explore the dynamics of identity development of CFL teachers in an intercultural context, leading to the following research questions.

1. How do CFL teachers develop their professional identity in an intercultural context?
2. What factors influence CFL teachers' identity development in an intercultural context?

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Context and participants

This research study took place in the Netherlands, where Chinese is taught in secondary schools, language schools, and Confucius Institutes. Participants in the current study are from Confucius Institutes (CI). Courses in the CI are offered to broad target groups, including adults, university students, adolescents, and children. The youngest students are seven years old. Teachers in the Confucius Institutes undergo intense professional training in China, prior to travelling abroad, to teach Chinese in international settings. Confucius Institutes provide

CFL teaching in three cities in the Netherlands. In most cases, CI teachers work in the Netherlands for at least two years.

A purposeful sampling technique was adopted to recruit CFL teachers from Confucius institutes in the Netherlands. This method allows us to focus on our specific area of interest, gather in-depth data on this topic, and select a sample that accurately represents the identity construction of native-speaker CFL teachers. Access to CFL teachers was obtained via the first authors' professional network. Our goal was to investigate teachers who had just moved and begun their teaching career in another country. When we began to collect data, there were five teachers who fit our research purpose. We obtained the consent of three teachers to participate in our study. The data gathered from these participants was comprehensive, and thematic saturation was achieved during the analysis process, which indicates that the data was sufficient to answer the research questions effectively.

Three female CFL teachers (Zhang, Lian, and Tang) participated in the study over a period of two years. At the beginning of data collection, all three teachers were starting their teaching period in the Netherlands. A brief description of the participants can be seen in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 *A brief description of the participants (with pseudonyms)*

Zhang	<p>In addition to being an associate professor at a Chinese university, Zhang has ten years of teaching experience. Although her major was not linguistics or second language teaching, she has a great love of languages that set her on the path to becoming a CFL teacher. It is enjoyable for her to stand in front of a class and share her language and culture with people from different countries. As a newcomer to the Netherlands, she found it difficult to adjust to the new lifestyle and educational system, but she also viewed it as an opportunity to become familiar with the new culture, interact with interesting people, and broaden her horizons. Meanwhile, the international teaching experience enhanced her abilities as a CFL teacher and allowed her to develop a deeper understanding of intercultural communication and become a more professional individual.</p> <p>Zhang decided to extend her contract in the Netherlands for one more year at the end of our data collection. She stated that having taken root in the last two years, now is the time to grow upward and contribute to CFL teaching in the Netherlands.</p>
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Table 3.1 *A brief description of the participants (with pseudonyms)*

(continued)

Lian

We found Lian to be a very passionate and confident CFL teacher, as she told us “I enjoy teaching Chinese as a second language, and always feel excited when interacting with students in the class.” Because of her passion for cross-cultural communication and language instruction, she pursued a master's degree in CFL teaching after majoring in commercial English at a university in the UK. Her interest in CFL teaching was sparked during her practicum in Britain. She has always been curious and passionate about teaching CFL, and she looked forward to beginning a new chapter in the Netherlands. In addition to being interested in teaching students, Lian is keen to develop her teaching style. During her time in the Netherlands, she transformed from a beginning teacher to an independent educator.

Following the data collection period, Lian decided to remain in the Netherlands for one more year, given that she enjoyed the working atmosphere and had already adapted to the working pace there. She was uncertain about her future, as she believed that teaching CFL overseas is an unstable occupation. She needed to find a more stable employment situation.

Table 3.1 *A brief description of the participants (with pseudonyms)*

(continued)

Tang

Tang described herself as a novice teacher who has a lot of things to learn and improve on. Her initial motivations for pursuing a career in CFL teaching were that it seemed like an interesting field, and that she was proud of the language and culture she grew up in. It was by chance that she began her teaching career in the Netherlands. Having taught CFL in Korea, she observed that Dutch students were more active than Korean students. Tang appeared quite confident in her ability to teach CFL to children, although she believed this was not an easy task. Inspired by her previous English teacher, she aspired to become a mature and wise teacher, who is also entertaining. Despite her passion, she was uncertain about the future of her career since CFL teachers do not have a formal career path.

Despite her desire to stay in the Netherlands for a longer period of time, the institute did not extend her contract. She was disappointed since she enjoyed the working environment in the Netherlands. However, she was aware of the instability of this profession and the fact that a CFL teacher is constantly on the move. She reported that it will not affect her passion and love for teaching.

The current study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of ICLON, Leiden University in March 2021. All participants in this study provided informed consent prior to their involvement. This process included providing detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point without any repercussions. All information has been stored and processed confidentially.

3.3.2 Data collection

Data were collected over two years (from February 2022 to January 2024), and consisted of written and oral narratives, interviews, and participants' monthly reflective journals (24 journal entries per participant). These data helped us to gather meaningful experiences and challenges that CFL teachers encountered upon entering and during their stay in an intercultural context. In addition, a storyline instrument was used to capture participants' perceptions of their identity development.

Data collection was divided into three phases (see Fig. 1).

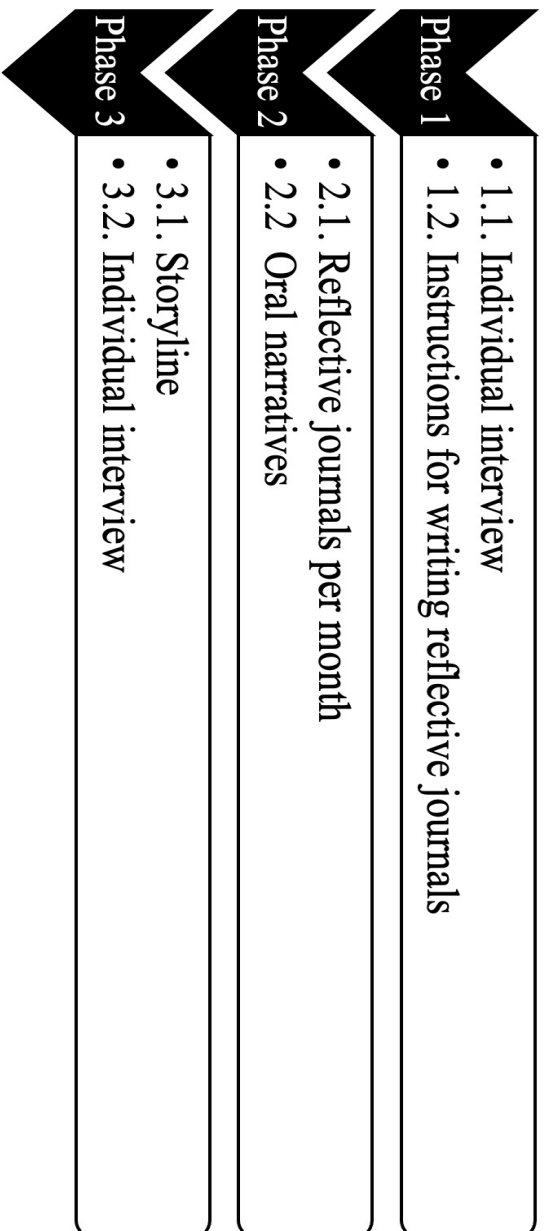


Fig. 3.1. *Data collection process*

This first phase was conducted in February 2022, one month after the participants began teaching in the Netherlands. An individual semi-structured interview (see Appendix A) was conducted by the first author, to obtain information about the participants' background, previous teaching experiences, expectations for the new teaching practice in the Netherlands, and feelings regarding the first two months of teaching. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 min. All interviews were conducted face to face, were audio-recorded with participants' consent, and were subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

In Phase 2, after the first individual interview, the participants wrote reflective journals every month until the end of their second year of teaching in the Netherlands (from February 2022 to January 2024). A structured format (see Appendix B) and instructions for writing reflective journals were provided to the participants during the first interview. The journals varied in length, ranging from 3 to 10 pages on average. The journal entries focused on participants' reflections on their teaching experiences, challenges they faced, their reflection on professional development, adaption to the new education context, as well as their outlook for the coming months. Additionally, we invited participants to share their oral narratives in further individual meetings with the first author, every month. Oral narratives served as a supplement to the journals. Oral narratives provided participants with the opportunity to share details not included in journals, such as the key moments that shaped their teacher identity. Oral narratives allow for a more dynamic and interactive way of storytelling, capturing emotions

and nuances that written words may not fully convey. They enable participants to express their thoughts spontaneously, often leading to deeper insights and reflections. By combining oral narratives with written journals, a more comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and identities can be achieved.

The third phase was at the end of the participants' two-year teaching period, in January 2024. Participants' written and oral narratives were collected for the last time. In addition, participants were asked to draw the storylines of their two-year teaching experience. Storylines served as stimuli for the final individual interview. Firstly, they were shown the line represented in Fig. 3.2. The X-axis represents time, and the Y-axis represents the teacher's self-efficacy regarding their role as a teacher. Based on their own perspectives, they developed a line showing the process of their identity development. Then they labelled their key experiences and events on that line.

Y-axis - Participant's self-efficacy regarding their role as a teacher

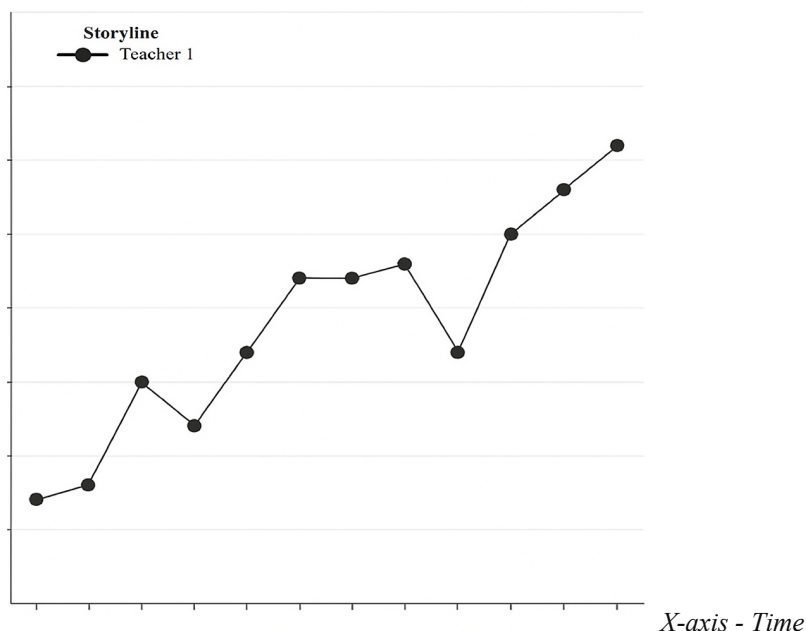


Fig. 3.2. *Example of identity development storyline, as produced by Zhang*

These key experiences were the starting point for semi-structured interviews in which the participants were asked to elaborate on these experiences: what happened, how they coped with such experiences, and how the experiences affected their identity development. The purpose of the interviews was to gain a detailed understanding of the key experiences in the storylines of participants.

3.3.3 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was employed in the data analysis process because we intended to understand how participants' mindful experience in intercultural settings had influenced their teacher identity. This type of data analysis aims to identify common themes and conceptual manifestations among the stories collected (Clarke & Braun, 2016). Thematic analysis is used not only to identify key themes within the data, but also to understand how those themes relate to one another (Clarke & Braun, 2016).

The data was analyzed using the following steps. Initially, the first author conducted multiple readings of the transcripts and narratives of participants without taking notes or highlighting anything, as the goal was to immerse herself in the participants' experiences. As a second step, line-by-line coding was performed in ATLAS.ti software, generating initial codes related to participants' experiences of teacher identity construction. For example, the excerpt, "there were many things in my daily life made me feel overwhelmed." was coded as "the influence from daily life". The excerpt, "students challenge my authority in class, something that hardly happened when I taught in China." was coded as "the influence from the students". In the third step, codes were iteratively reviewed and grouped into broader themes through the discussion among authors, such as "broader context factor", "other people", etc. To ensure reliability, coding consistency was reviewed through intercoder agreement sessions. In the fourth step, to determine the final themes, the authors triangulated their opinions and

engaged in a detailed discussion. Temporal patterns within the categories were identified, leading to the emergence of three distinct stages of teacher identity development: “survival stage”, “exploratory stage”, “proficient stage”, and three influential factors, “context”, “secondary characters”, “incidents”. The coding process is illustrated in Fig. 3.3.

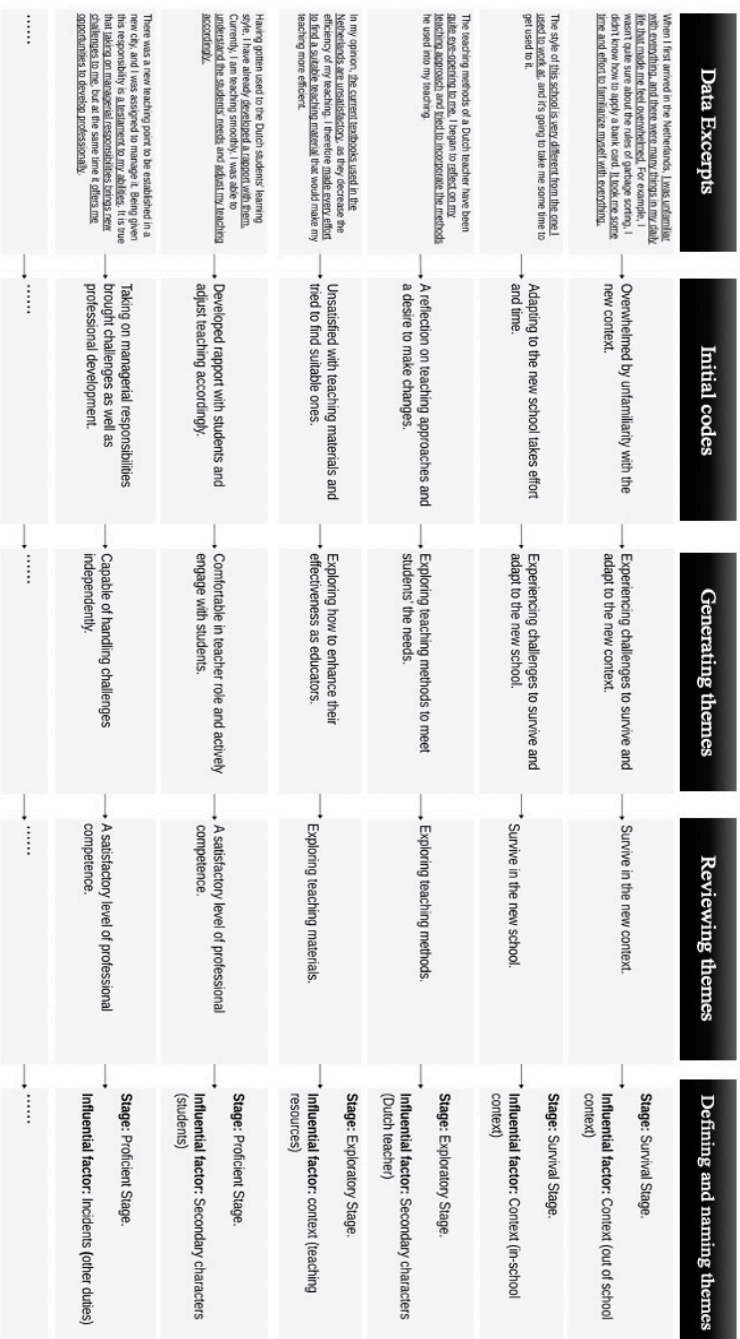


Fig. 3.3. Coding process

3.4 Results

Through the qualitative analysis of the oral narratives and reflective journals, participants constructed their identity in three stages, referred to here as the ‘survival’ stage, the ‘exploratory’ stage, and the ‘proficient’ stage. During the survival stage, teachers are experiencing challenges in adapting to a new teaching environment and trying to gain acceptance from students, peers, and leaders. By dealing with everyday issues, they attempt to attain a certain level of comfort and security. During this stage, teacher identity is still fluid and fragile, as teachers are just beginning to understand their role within the new environment. At the exploratory stage, teachers are open to new ideas and eager to improve their skills. Moreover, teachers reach a relatively high level of competence in their work and continue to develop professionally. During this stage, teacher identity starts to stabilize as teachers gain confidence. At the proficient stage, the processes are curvilinear. Having reached a satisfactory level of professional competence, teachers may either seek to enrich their teaching and enjoy a high level of job satisfaction, or experience stagnation and seek professional alternatives. Teacher identity at this stage is largely established and solidified.

Throughout all three stages, three clusters of factors have been found to have a significant impact on participants’ identity construction in the intercultural context, as illustrated in Fig. 4. Context refers to the environment and circumstances in which teaching takes place. Secondary characters are those who establish a direct dialogue with the

participants, therefore acting as a link between the subject (participants) and the object (the overseas teaching). Incidents refer to important events that occurred before or during the participants' teaching experience in the Netherlands. Fig. 4 illustrates how these three factors affect participants' identity development during their teaching in the intercultural setting.

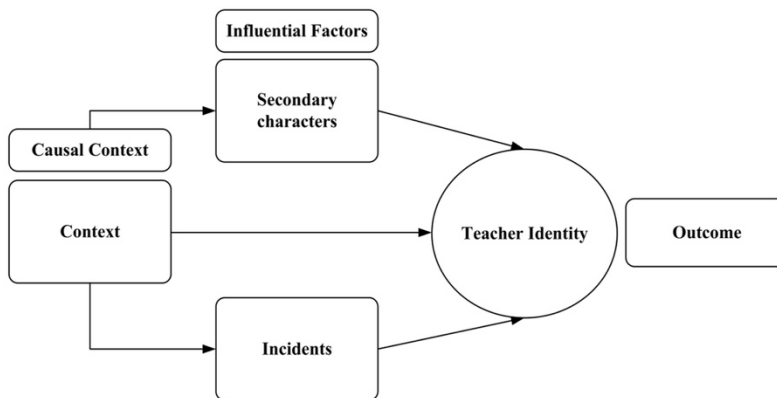


Fig. 3.4. *The outline of participants' identity construction*

Below, the findings are organized according to the three stages. For each stage, an overview is provided, illustrating the characteristics of teacher identity construction at the stage. After that, the participants' identity construction will be presented in the form of a narrative, based on their reflections. Then, there is a summary for each stage to show how the three influential factors (context, secondary characters, incidents) influence participants' identity construction.

3.4.1 Survival stage

The reflective journals showed that the “survival stage” began as soon as the three participants arrived in the Netherlands and prepared to start their teaching journey. Data suggested that teachers in this stage were primarily reactive, dealing with problems as they arose and struggled to find their footing. The key focus was adaptation. They were trying to adapt to new teaching environments, unfamiliar school policies, language barriers, and the varying attitudes of students and colleagues. Teachers often experience feelings of vulnerability, uncertainty, and stress. Their main goal was survival – trying to find their place and role. Table 3.2 demonstrates the experiences of participants at the survival stage.

Table 3.2 *Examples of participants' experiences in the survival stage*

		Zhang	Lian	Tang
Context	Out-of-school	Struggled to adapt to daily life.	Previous overseas experience helped with the transition.	Struggled to adapt to daily life.
	In-school	Easy to adjust to work pace.	Struggled with role transition from student to teacher.	Struggled with stricter management compared to previous school.
	Teaching resources	/	Lack of open resources and platforms to exchange resources.	/
	Teacher training	/	Lack of targeted training for CFL teaching.	Lack of targeted training for CFL teaching.
	Secondary characters			
	Students	Challenged by students' questioning of authority and critical perspectives.	Teacher's low Dutch proficiency hindered students' understanding.	Difficulty maintaining engagement with Dutch students.
	Colleagues	Friendly and cooperative colleagues, exchanged of teaching ideas.	Despite limited interaction, open to communication.	Communicating and exchanging ideas with colleagues was helpful.
	Principal	/	Provided responsibility and allowed freedom in managing aspects of the program.	/
	Previous teacher	/	/	Inspired by previous English teacher's active and friendly approach.

(continued)

	Zhang	Lian	Tang
Incidents	Teaching-related	Confusion over teaching grammar points, impacting confidence Success and failure in teaching changed her expectations.	Observed Dutch teacher's class refresh ideas on teaching. Finding suitable teaching material led to a deeper understanding. Positive feedback from students increase commitment.
	Internship	/	Struggled to teach a new type of course, lacking confidence. Previous negative experience teaching in Poland decrease confidence.
	Other duties	Assisted students for Chinese competition.	Organized events which enhanced capabilities, despite challenges.
	Extra-curricular	Immersive communication with students in comparison to normal classes.	/

3.4.1.1 The identity construction of Zhang during the survival stage

Zhang encountered many challenges in adapting to the new teaching environment. The challenges were primarily related to two aspects. According to Zhang, the first obstacle was adjusting to daily life in the Netherlands, such as seeking out the appropriate apartment, sorting rubbish, paying in the supermarket, and so on. These difficulties caused her to lose focus on teaching at the beginning, which negatively affected her ability to adapt quickly to her new position as an international teacher.

The second challenge was increasing students' enthusiasm for the course and allowing them to engage actively in her class. Zhang illustrated her role as an artist, actress, and scaffolder in her metaphor. As she stated:

The teacher is like an actor or actress who stands on stage, attracts their audience, and is willing to receive positive feedback from them. In this new setting, however, it appears as though I am failing to do so.

Zhang described herself as a teacher with high intercultural competence who is well suited to deal with cross-cultural differences. Sometimes the inefficiency of her teaching and interactions with Dutch students led to a decrease in her self-efficacy as a teacher. Zhang was aware that she was not as well prepared as she had believed.

Despite the challenges associated with adapting to a new environment, Zhang was enthusiastic about teaching abroad. In her statement, Zhang asserted that, as a teacher without a degree in foreign language teaching, she lacked linguistic and pedagogical knowledge. In this two-year teaching period, she was willing to enhance both theoretical and practical skills in foreign language teaching.

3.4.1.2 The identity construction of Lian during the survival stage

Lian was willing to gain cross-cultural experience in different countries and felt confident that she could adapt to the new environment. During the survival stage, most of her challenges were associated with the transition from one role to another. Lian was beginning her first professional career after graduating from her master's program, and in her reflections, she expressed concern about changing from “*a student*” to “*an independent teacher*”. In her words:

During my practicum, I was only required to complete the tasks that the principal assigned to me. I am now taking on more responsibilities with regard to organizing and designing, and I am responsible for making all decisions on my own. Adapting to my new role, especially in a new context, is really a challenge, I need some time to adjust.

Lian described herself as an ambitious teacher who aspires to contribute significantly to the field of CFL education. However, her

exploration of teaching was limited because of a lack of sufficient teaching materials and targeted teacher training. Due to the burden and time involved in preparing lessons on her own without adequate resources, she had little time to reflect on her teaching or make improvements. As she stated:

Many schools' resources are not open to the public. If every school provided open resources and cooperated, it would be much easier for teachers, especially novice teachers. I hope there will be a platform for exchanging teaching materials between schools and among countries.

Although exploring the teaching all on her own was an extremely difficult task, Lian stated that, by searching for appropriate teaching materials and trying to find a better teaching method, she gained a better understanding of CFL teaching for children.

3.4.1.3 The identity construction of Tang during the survival stage

Tang was excited about beginning a new career and life in a foreign country. According to her, at this point, her main challenges included adjusting to the working style at the new school and teaching the course she was assigned.

Tang took some time to adjust to her new job at a new school. In comparison to her previous school, she stated that the new school had stricter management practices. At this school, new teachers'

lessons were observed by experienced teachers, which Tang felt added a great deal of pressure. Additionally, besides teaching, Tang also took on the responsibility of organizing events on her own, which she had never done before. Tang was confident in her ability to teach, but when it came to organizing activities, she admitted she had much to learn.

It was Tang's goal to become a teacher with broader skills. She was willing to teach a variety of courses, but she was not allowed to do so. Although Tang did not wish to teach children, she had no say over the types of courses she would teach. As she put it:

It is always necessary to maintain tension in CFL classes with children because they are emotional. After the class, I am usually exhausted. Teaching children is so hard and tiring, I am still struggling to find a better way to teach them.

Tang was a teacher who was passionate about CFL teaching and enjoyed living and teaching in an intercultural context. According to Tang, it took her three months to adjust to the new environment. She stated in her reflection that she did not experience much cultural shock at the beginning and was able to adapt to the new context without much difficulty.

3.4.1.4 Summary

The Survival Stage of teacher identity development, as manifested by these three teachers, was marked by intense adjustment challenges as they strove to navigate a new and often unfamiliar environment.

Overall, the survival stage is characterized by teachers navigating uncertainties and trying to find a balance between personal adaptation and professional competence. It sets the foundation for their evolving identities as educators within an intercultural context. The characteristics of three influential factors at the survival stage are illustrated in the Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3 *The characteristics of three factors during survival stage*

Factors	Similarities	Differences	Interpretation
Context	All participants struggled with adjusting to unfamiliar environments, including cultural expectations and resource constraints, which impacted their identity construction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zhang: Struggled significantly with daily life adjustments outside school. - Lian: Previous overseas teaching experience facilitated smoother adaptation. - Tang: Found stricter school management and resource limitations challenging. 	Participants faced a vulnerable phase where adapting to new environments, both in-school and out-of-school, was central to their survival. Lian's prior exposure to similar intercultural settings gave her an advantage, highlighting the role of experience in easing transitions.
Secondary characters	Interaction with students was pivotal for shaping identity, with cultural learning differences influencing competence development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zhang: Faced challenges with students questioning her authority. - Lian: Benefited from highly motivated students, which helped stabilize her teaching identity. - Tang: Struggled to engage Dutch students, testing her adaptability and resilience. 	Students were a major influence on how participants viewed themselves as teachers. Zhang's authority issues and Tang's engagement struggles highlight the cultural gaps in expectations, while Lian's positive experiences demonstrate the stabilizing effect of motivated students.
	Collaboration with colleagues was helpful but varied in accessibility and degree of support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zhang: Received helpful guidance and suggestions from colleagues. - Lian: Found limited opportunities for idea exchange due to a lack of colleagues teaching the same subject. - Tang: Maintained a collaborative attitude but had fewer interactions with peers. 	Support from colleagues played an important role in building teacher identity. While Zhang benefited from guidance, Lian's limited peer exchange reflected the isolating nature of teaching specific subjects in intercultural contexts. Tang's collaboration hints at perseverance despite challenges.

(continued)

Factors	Similarities	Differences	Interpretation
Incidents	Teaching successes and failures significantly influenced self-efficacy and confidence.	<p>- Zhang: Experienced decreased confidence due to grammar teaching challenges.</p> <p>- Lian: Success in finding suitable teaching materials boosted her confidence.</p> <p>- Tang: Positive teaching experiences in a Dutch school enhanced her optimism; event organizing developed her skills.</p>	Incidents acted as catalysts for identity construction. Zhang's struggles illustrate the fragile confidence in the survival stage, while Lian and Tang's positive experiences show how success in teaching or events can lead to increased competence and professional growth.

3.4.2 Exploratory stage: second and third semester

The exploratory stage started at the beginning of the second semester and lasted for one year. Teachers in this stage moved beyond basic adaptation and started to experiment with different teaching methods. They had overcome the initial hurdles of survival and began to explore how to enhance their effectiveness as educators. There was an increased focus on improving pedagogical skills and adjusting teaching methods to meet the needs of culturally diverse students. Teachers also started to critically reflect on school policies, curriculum settings, and other administrative tasks, questioning what works and what does not. Teachers were more engaged in interactions with students, colleagues, and the broader community. They sought out ways to understand cultural differences and adjusted their methods accordingly. Table 3.4 shows an overview of the three influential factors at the exploratory stage.

Table 3.4 *Examples of participants' experiences at the exploratory stage*

		Zhang	Lian	Tang
Context	Out-of-school	Teaching in the Netherlands felt rewarding, enjoyed communication style.	Adapted to the context and like the overall environment in the Netherlands.	Adapted to the context and like the overall environment in the Netherlands.
			Learning Dutch language was beneficial for adapting to the context as well as teaching.	
	In-school	Disagreed with some school decisions and curriculum settings	Workload from both teaching and administration caused pressure.	Workload from both teaching and administration caused pressure.
		More involvement in administration, more understanding of institute.	Took one semester to adapt to everything in the new school.	Took one semester to adapt to everything in the new school.
	Teaching resources	Insufficient open resources hindered the work of teachers.	Found suitable materials by herself after dissatisfaction with textbooks.	Dissatisfaction with textbooks but managed to find some online resources.
Secondary characters	Teacher training	/	Lack of training led to self-exploration of effective teaching methods.	Lack of training led to self-exploration of effective teaching methods.
	Students	Students' engagement and feedback influenced teacher's commitment.	The connection to the new context because of students' positive feedback.	Students' engagement and feedback influenced teacher's commitment.
		More efficient classes due to familiarity with Dutch students' learning style.	More efficient classes due to familiarity with Dutch students' learning style.	More efficient classes due to familiarity with Dutch students' learning style.
	Colleagues	Communicating and learning from colleagues.	Preferring to complete work on her own, not willing to reflect on teaching with colleagues.	Communicating and learning from colleagues.

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Secondary characters	Zhang				Tang
	Dutch language teacher	Inspired by the Dutch teacher's teaching methods. Planning to apply Dutch teacher's methods to her class.	Lian	Inspired by the Dutch teacher's teaching methods. Planning to apply Dutch teacher's methods to her class.	
Incidents	Family member	Having her daughter study in a Dutch school helps her understand Dutch culture deeper.	/	/	
	Teaching-related	Self-efficacy is negatively impacted by experiences in teaching at a Dutch secondary school.		Self-efficacy is positively impacted by experiences in teaching at a Dutch primary school.	Her confidence as a teacher has increased with the progress of her students.
	Attending Dutch language course	Realized the big difference in Dutch way of teaching.		Inefficient at managing her time at work Realized the big difference in Dutch way of teaching.	/
	Other duties	Being able to think from the perspective of a language learner. /		Implementing Dutch teacher's way of teaching in her class. Stress caused by administrative tasks.	Benefited from administrative tasks.

3.4.2.1 The identity construction of Zhang during the exploratory stage

In Zhang's reflection, it was evident that she gained a greater sense of confidence as an international teacher at this point in her career. Her curiosity regarding cultural differences and intercultural communication kept her interested in staying in the Netherlands for a longer period of time.

Zhang made significant changes in her teaching based on her observations in the Dutch language course. It appeared that her experience with the Dutch language course had led her to rethink the role of the teacher in the classroom, as well as how she could make the classroom more efficient. In her words:

Students must complete many assignments and study some content on their own before class, the teacher only explains some main points and answers students' questions during class. I find this method of teaching to be very different from my own approach.

She was also able to think from the perspective of a language learner, thus having a comprehensive understanding of the obstacles students face in their studies. With greater exposure to Dutch culture and educational settings, Zhang gained a better understanding of the people and culture in the new context by comparing the differences between China and the Netherlands.

Nevertheless, the exploratory phase was not without its challenges. Despite Zhang's best efforts, she was unable to engage

students in class and improve their interest in learning in a Dutch secondary school. Giving students more freedom and taking less responsibility was something she knew she needed to do; however, it was difficult to completely change her mindset. Sometimes she returned to her previous teaching approach unconsciously. As Zhang put it:

While understanding the theory is one thing, changing the existing teaching method and stepping outside one's comfort zone is another.

In addition, aside from teaching, Zhang was overwhelmed by additional responsibilities, such as administration and conducting academic research. Although she was willing to spend more time reflecting on her teaching practice and making improvements, she was too busy to initiate the changes she desired.

3.4.2.2 The identity construction of Lian during the exploratory stage

Lian's reflection reveals that, at the exploratory stage, she was already comfortable with her teaching context and had fewer concerns about transitioning to her new role as an independent international teacher. At this stage, Lian's primary concern was her professional development. In her opinion, there was a lack of proper training, leading to teachers exploring matters on their own. In her words:

The current teacher training is primarily focused on pedagogical skills. I am interested in attending more

training that can help me to develop as a good teacher and help to advance my professional development.

In Lian's opinion, she had developed her own teaching method, particularly regarding the way she taught children. Lian described herself as a teacher who reflected a lot on her practice and was willing to continually make progress. As she stated:

My experience teaching in a Dutch primary school provided me with the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the learning characteristics of Dutch students, as well as to adjust my teaching methods to teach more efficiently. I am pleased that my lessons are well received by my students.

In addition, having attended classes in the Dutch language and attempting to integrate the Dutch method of teaching languages in her classes helped her to refine her teaching abilities.

In the exploratory stage, there were changes visible in Lian. At the beginning of the two-year teaching program, Lian expressed her ambition to make a substantial difference and to create her own teaching system related to CFL teaching for children. After learning more about the overall state of CFL education in the Netherlands, she was less ambitious than she had been before. As she put it:

Now, I realize the constraints of the broader environment, and the limited ability and energy I have. I

do not believe I am capable of making the significant changes I once believed I could make. At this point, I am focusing on finishing my current job to a good standard and making the contributions I can in this field.

3.4.2.3 The identity construction of Tang during the exploratory stage

At the exploratory stage, Tang indicated that she had already gotten used to the working environment and enjoyed working in the Netherlands. Her familiarity with the Dutch working style enabled her to work more smoothly with her colleagues. Since she joined the new school, she had been responsible for organizing some events and handling some administrative duties. She stated that these things had trained her ability and motivated her to improve. Tang described herself at this stage as Tang “version 2.0”.

Even though Tang had been teaching Chinese language to children in a new school for several months, she still felt frustrated as she did not know how to interact with them appropriately. As she put it:

My students can sometimes drive me crazy. It is definitely my preference to teach teenagers or adults if I have the choice.

However, Tang had undergone some changes at this point. Although she complained about the difficulties associated with teaching children and expressed her unwillingness to do so, she tried

her best to prepare for class and aid her students in their learning. Additionally, Tang gained the trust of her students and was able to establish a positive relationship with them. In her reflection, Tang stated:

When you are unable to change the current state, the only thing you can do is adjust your attitude and try your best to complete your task.

In describing her plans for the future, Tang described herself as a teacher who enjoyed the present and did not think and reflect too much. It should be noted, however, that she expressed a willingness to extend her contract and teach in the Netherlands for an extended period in the future.

3.4.2.4 Summary

The Exploratory Stage marks a transition from basic adaptation to active engagement, where teachers start to refine their teaching methods and assume more responsibility within the school. This stage represents a period of experimentation and reflection, where teachers start to assert their professional autonomy while continuing to learn and adapt. The characteristics of the three influential factors is illustrated in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 *The characteristics of the three influential factors during exploratory stage*

Three factors	Similarities	Differences	Interpretation
Context	All participants transitioned from basic adaptation to deeper engagement, taking on more responsibilities in school activities.	Zhang critically questioned school decisions, signaling reflective growth. Tang efficiently utilized teaching resources, demonstrating growing independence. Lian smoothly adapted to the system, showing confidence in her role.	This stage reflects a shift from survival to active participation. Teachers start to shape their professional identities by reflecting on their environments and asserting autonomy. Zhang's critical awareness indicates a step toward defining her role, while Tang and Lian's resourcefulness highlights growing competence.
Secondary characters	Students remained a central influence on teacher identity, as their engagement directly affected the teachers' confidence and teaching strategies.	Zhang struggled with low student motivation, which reduced her professional commitment. Lian and Tang benefited from positive student engagement, which reinforced their confidence and strategies.	Student engagement serves as a mirror for teachers' self-efficacy. Zhang's struggles underscore the challenge of teaching disengaged students, showing how external feedback can shape internal confidence. Lian and Tang's positive experiences highlight how supportive student interactions can empower teachers and inspire strategy development.
Incidents	Key incidents like attending Dutch language courses or working in new contexts provided transformative learning opportunities, broadening perspectives and inspiring growth.	Zhang's experience with Dutch educational freedom challenged her existing beliefs. Lian adapted smoothly to new methods, reflecting confidence. Tang used administrative challenges to develop broader competencies despite initial overwhelm.	This stage emphasizes the transformative power of reflection and adaptation. Zhang's experience highlights the impact of exposure to new educational paradigms, while Lian's smooth integration shows the role of confidence in adopting innovative practices. Tang's ability to grow through challenges demonstrates resilience and the potential for non-teaching tasks to support holistic identity development.

3.4.3 Proficient stage

The proficient stage started at the beginning of the last semester. Teachers had established their own teaching styles and approaches. They were capable of handling challenges independently and effectively used their accumulated experiences to refine their practices. Teachers were more comfortable in their roles and actively engaged with students, colleagues, and other stakeholders. They could adapt quickly to new challenges, understood students' needs more deeply, and cultivated a personal philosophy of teaching. The focus was on contribution and professional mastery. Teachers in this stage contributed to curriculum development, mentored other teachers, and played an active role in school-wide activities. Table 3.6 shows an overview of the three influential factors at the exploratory stage.

Table 3.6 *Examples of participants' experiences at the proficient stage*

Context	Zhang		Lian		Tang	
	Out-of-school	Enjoyed cultural exchange. Learning about cultural differences and their impact on teaching. Satisfied with current workload.	Adapted to Dutch context, but challenges and tasks kept coming.	Adapted to Dutch context, but challenges and tasks kept coming.	Adapted to Dutch context, but challenges and tasks kept coming.	Adapted to Dutch context, but challenges and tasks kept coming.
Secondary characters	In-school	Teaching new course led to new challenges. Challenges from using online platform.	Established her own teaching style. Teaching new course led to new challenges. Struggled with resource availability.	Unsatisfied with current workload. Negative attitude towards some activities in school. Struggled with resource availability.	Unsatisfied with current workload. Negative attitude towards some activities in school. Struggled with resource availability.	Unsatisfied with current workload. Negative attitude towards some activities in school. Struggled with resource availability.
	Teaching resources	Some trainings too vague and not targeted. Reflected on training and adjusted teaching beliefs.	Some trainings too vague and not targeted.	Some trainings too vague and not targeted.	Some trainings too vague and not targeted.	Some trainings too vague and not targeted.
	Teacher training	Some trainings too vague and not targeted. Reflected on training and adjusted teaching beliefs.	Some trainings too vague and not targeted.	Some trainings too vague and not targeted.	Some trainings too vague and not targeted.	Some trainings too vague and not targeted.
	CFL working conditions	Some trainings too vague and not targeted. Reflected on training and adjusted teaching beliefs.	Some trainings too vague and not targeted.	Some trainings too vague and not targeted.	Some trainings too vague and not targeted.	Some trainings too vague and not targeted.
Secondary characters	Students	Building rapport with students, teaching went smoothly.	Satisfied with students' outcomes. Students' positive feedback was encouraging.	Building rapport with students, teaching went smoothly. Students' positive feedback was encouraging.	Building rapport with students, teaching went smoothly. Students' positive feedback was encouraging.	Building rapport with students, teaching went smoothly. Students' positive feedback was encouraging.

(continued)

	Zhang	Lian	Tang
Secondary characters	Colleagues were professional, learned a lot from them.	Little communication with colleagues.	Decreased reliance on colleagues.
Teacher educator	Gained new insight into intercultural language teaching from a teacher educator.	/	/
Parents	/	Tough parents, difficult to communicate.	/
Incidents			
Teaching-related	Struggled with new course initially but adapted.	Struggled with new course initially but was able to teach it effectively.	The new course brought challenges, but less nervous at beginning compared with last semester.
Other duties	/	Taking on managerial responsibilities brings new challenges as well as opportunities for growth.	/
Renewal of contract	Extend the contract, willing to make contributions to overseas CFL teaching.	Extend the contract, ready for new challenges.	Fail to extend the contract, Disappointed but had to accept it. This two-year experience in the Netherlands was unforgettable.

3.4.3.1 The identity construction of Zhang during the proficient stage

After two years of international teaching in the Netherlands, Zhang described herself as a more professional and confident teacher. In her opinion, the process of identity transformation was valuable. Zhang showed a liking for the Dutch context in several aspects, which led her to worry less about adaptation and focus more on improving her teaching. The comfortable and safe environment ensures that she is in a secure environment for the further refinement of her professional identity.

In this stage, Zhang thought that she had succeeded in becoming a professional teacher. She changed her mind, however, after teaching a new course she had never taught before. As she put it:

The first lesson was a complete mess, I even doubted my ability to teach. I was a little surprised as I thought at this point, I would be capable of teaching any course.

According to her, this was an opportunity for her to enhance her professional knowledge. Furthermore, she realized that a teacher should always strive to be a lifelong learner. She would therefore continue to reflect and improve as a teacher. This example demonstrated that although Zhang thought her identity had already transformed in a new setting, new challenges would continue to arise. While dealing with challenges, her teacher identity will be constantly reconstructed.

Considering two years of teaching in the Netherlands only the beginning, she decided to teach in the Netherlands for at least one more year. In her opinion, she had completed the transformation process, and now was the appropriate time for her to make additional contributions to overseas CFL education. Based on her teaching experience and reflections from teacher training, she wished to explore a new approach to teaching Chinese as a foreign language, integrating characteristics of the Chinese language and culture. Her objective was not only to make progress on the practical level but also to contribute on the theoretical level. In her words:

Having taken the root in the past two years, now it is the time for upward growth.

3.4.3.2 The identity construction of Lian during the proficient stage

Lian's contract was extended, and she decided to work in the Netherlands for one more year. In her statement, she expressed her enjoyment of the working environment and believed that she had already adapted to the pace of work in the Netherlands. It was evident that Lian was more confident about herself as a teacher at this point in her career. She demonstrated a high level of self-efficacy in several aspects, including her competence in teaching, and her ability to deal with administrative issues. According to Lian's reflection, after almost two years of CFL teaching in an intercultural context, she became more prepared and organized, and developed a systematic way of teaching.

She would indeed face challenges when teaching new courses, but she believed that she had already transitioned into a professional and independent teacher, and that she could overcome challenges in a short amount of time. In addition, Lian was proud of being assigned the responsibility of managing a teaching site in a new city by her school. As a result of managing this site, she believed that her management and communication skills had significantly improved. As Lian put it:

I am now not only a teacher who is good at teaching but also able to take responsibility for the development of the school.

Lian appeared uncertain when discussing the future. She admitted that she developed a lot from this two-year overseas teaching experience and became a more professional teacher. She realized, however, that teaching CFL overseas is an unstable occupation. In the end, she knew that she would have to find a more stable position. Consequently, she was considering whether to continue in this profession or pursue a PhD.

3.4.3.3 The identity construction of Tang during the proficient stage

Tang indicated that her experience as a CFL teacher in the Netherlands for two years was unforgettable. During this period, she learned and improved a great deal. Two years of teaching changed her profoundly, giving her a new perspective on this career, and on herself. Despite Tang's desire to stay in the Netherlands longer, the institute did not

extend her contract. It was disappointing for her since she enjoyed working in the Netherlands.

She expressed that being unable to continue teaching in the Netherlands would not affect her passion and love of teaching. Besides, as a CFL teacher, she remained confident in her abilities. Tang pointed out that it is difficult for CFL teachers to remain in a location for a long period of time and that they are always on the move. As she put it:

Many of my former classmates and colleagues have left this profession because their career paths and professional development are unclear. But it is difficult for me to give up this job since I am passionate about it. As long as I am capable, I will continue to teach CFL until one day I become tired of it.

In the past, Tang described herself as a teacher who enjoys the present moment and does not give much thought to the future or her career goals. Tang realized, however, that she still did not possess adequate knowledge regarding language teaching theory after two years of overseas teaching. She was willing to participate in more teacher training courses in the future for the purpose of furthering her professional development. Due to Tang's awareness of her shortcomings, she began to reflect more on her practice as a teacher and consider ways of growing professionally.

3.4.3.4 Summary

The Proficient Stage represents the point at which teachers become comfortable and confident in their roles, having successfully navigated the challenges of adaptation and experimentation in earlier stages. Overall, the Proficient Stage is marked by a blend of autonomy, confidence, and continued professional development, where teachers not only excel in their immediate teaching practices but also refine their broader teaching philosophy and approach. Table 3.7 presents the similarities and differences among participants across context, secondary characters, and incidents during the Proficient Stage.

Table 3.7 *The characteristics of factors during the proficient stage*

Three factors	Similarities	Differences	Interpretation
Context	All participants became confident and comfortable in their roles, transitioning from adaptation to active contributors in the school setting.	Lian developed her teaching style from scratch, reflecting a personalized approach. Zhang faced challenges with online platforms but adapted, showing her ability to integrate technology.	Confidence and competence merge in this stage, as teachers feel less like outsiders and more like skilled contributors. Their growing understanding of resources and strategies drives their development.
Secondary characters	Participants increasingly relied less on colleagues, signaling growing self-reliance.	Zhang continued seeking guidance from a teacher educator, emphasizing the ongoing importance of mentorship for professional growth. Lian exhibited significant independence.	The role of secondary characters evolves in this stage. Teachers balance independence with collaboration and mentorship, reflecting a blend of autonomy and the need for external support in specific areas.
Incidents	All participants showed resilience and adaptability when facing new teaching challenges, using them to refine their teaching methods.	Zhang initially struggled with a new course but improved over time. Lian leveraged past teaching experiences to build confidence and autonomy. Tang excelled in solving challenges related to teaching Chinese characters.	Resilience and adaptability define this stage. Teachers not only refine their skills through challenges but also use these experiences to strengthen their teaching philosophy and teacher identity.

3.4.4 Impact of the factors at different stages

The progression from the survival to the proficient stage demonstrates a clear trajectory of growth in teacher identity, where initial struggles evolve into opportunities for learning and ultimately result in professional confidence and independence. The importance of adapting to the context and interacting with students and colleagues highlights the intertwined nature of internal identity development and external environmental factors. Across all stages, incidents served as turning points, helping teachers reflect on their abilities and adjust their practices. Over time, teachers gained the ability to leverage these incidents for refinement and growth rather than merely reacting to them. Table 3.8 shows the similarities and differences of the factors across the three stages.

Table 3.8 *Impact of the factors at different stages*

	Similarities Across	Differences Across Stages	Interpretation
Context	Context consistently shaped identity through adaptation to a new school environment and managing cultural differences.	<p>Survival Stage: Teachers focused on emotional and psychological adjustments to adapt to in-school and out-of-school contexts.</p> <p>Exploratory Stage: Teachers began questioning school policies and engaging more deeply.</p> <p>Proficient Stage: Context became a backdrop for refining methods and achieving autonomy.</p>	<p>Teachers transitioned from reactive adaptation (in survival stage) to critical engagement (in exploratory stage) and finally to proactive independence (in proficient stage).</p> <p>These changes reflect a gradual move from managing external pressures to focusing on internal professional growth and mastery.</p>
Secondary Characters	<p>Students: Students consistently impacted teacher identity construction through their engagement levels and cultural perspectives.</p>	<p>Survival Stage: Teachers struggled with authority and adjusting to behavior.</p> <p>Exploratory Stage: Teachers experimented with methods to engage students.</p> <p>Proficient Stage: Students' feedback affirmed competence and refined teaching methods.</p>	<p>The role of students evolved from a source of challenge (survival) to partners in improvement (exploratory) and ultimately to validators of competence (proficient).</p> <p>The increasing focus on refining methods in response to student feedback highlights the importance of student-teacher dynamics in shaping teaching identity.</p>

(continued)

	Similarities Across	Differences Across Stages	Interpretation
Secondary Characters	<p>Colleagues:</p> <p>Colleagues provided varying levels of support across stages, contributing to teacher identity construction.</p>	<p>Survival Stage: Colleagues acted as guides, helping with acclimation.</p> <p>Exploratory Stage: Teachers collaborated and learned from colleagues.</p> <p>Proficient Stage: Teachers relied less on colleagues due to increased confidence but still valued professional advice.</p>	<p>In the survival stage, reliance on colleagues reflects the need for support and guidance.</p> <p>By the exploratory stage, collaboration with colleagues indicates growing confidence and a willingness to exchange ideas.</p> <p>In the proficient stage, reduced reliance on colleagues shows a shift to autonomy, but professional advice remains valuable for fine-</p>
Incidents	<p>Incidents, both challenges and successes, shaped teachers' self-efficacy and teaching beliefs at all stages.</p>	<p>Survival Stage: Incidents led to fluctuating confidence and self-doubt.</p> <p>Exploratory Stage: Incidents became opportunities for learning and perspective shifts.</p> <p>Proficient Stage: Incidents were used to refine skills and enhance professional growth.</p>	<p>Incidents played a pivotal role in professional identity construction at each stage. In survival, challenges often undermined confidence, while in exploratory, they became opportunities for growth and learning. By proficient, incidents were used as reference points for skill refinement and confidence building.</p>
Summary	<p>Participants across all stages shared struggles with adaptation, challenges with students, and reliance on colleagues to some degree.</p>	<p>Differences emerged in how participants' experiences, resilience, and circumstances influenced their progression from survival to exploration and confidence.</p>	<p>The gradual shift from adaptation to mastery illustrates the evolution of teacher identity.</p> <p>Teachers progressed from reactive adjustment (survival) to exploring and experimenting (exploratory) and finally to self-assured professionals (proficient), reflecting a maturation process shaped by internal and external influences.</p>

3.5 Discussion and conclusion

This study delves into the dynamic process of identity construction among teachers in an intercultural setting, specifically within the context of Chinese teachers' experience of teaching in the Netherlands. The construction of teacher identity involves an ongoing process that transforms through social practice (Liu et al., 2023; Dimitrieska, 2024). As a result of this period of teaching overseas, CFL teachers acquired a more agentic identity than they had when they began teaching. The findings reveal that agentic identities were determined because of the experiences through teaching in an intercultural environment, as well as interactions with members of the teachers' community and with students from different cultures.

In addition, our study fills the gap in the literature by focusing specifically on Chinese language teachers in cross-cultural settings, a population often overlooked in identity research. By analyzing teacher identity development through context, secondary characters, and incidents across three distinct stages, we provide a granular understanding of how these factors interact to shape identity over time. This approach goes beyond general teacher identity frameworks, offering a model tailored to the unique challenges faced by Chinese language teachers.

3.5.1 Identity construction as a never-ending process

The findings suggest that the construction of teacher identity is a continuous process requiring participants to engage in social practices in a new context. We found that the three participants, who all have a

different educational backgrounds and teaching experience, went through three comparable patterns of identity development, despite the variations in their stories. The stories align with Rosenfeld et al.'s (2022) study, which revealed that the experience of entering a new context is similar to that of a new teacher entering the teaching profession. Even though some participants were experienced teachers, they had to deal with challenges and conflicts arising from the teaching and socialization process in the intercultural context. Identity reconstructions are inherent in this process. Hence, the constant reconstruction of identity among participants reaffirmed the construction of teacher identity as shifting, unstable, and a never-ending process (Brunetti & Marston, 2018; Gholami et al., 2021). Besides, it is context-dependent and framed by social, political, and cultural discourses (Deniz, 2015; Yazan & Lindahl, 2020).

Despite participants in the present study having passed the struggling stages and reaching a relatively high level of self-efficacy, challenges continued to arise during the Proficient stage. Through overcoming challenges and seeking ways to improve themselves, teachers believed they could continue to reassemble their teacher identity and continue to develop professionally.

3.5.2 Refinement of teacher identity through overseas teaching

The new context and different workplace expectations teachers encountered abroad often clashed with their perception of their identity and forced them to negotiate between their professional identity and their new reality, so they could integrate into schools and deliver their

work (Liu et al., 2024). Our findings indicated that the process of reconstructing teacher identity began with some challenges posed by the new teaching context and their new role as international teachers. Conflicts raised by unfamiliarity with the teaching context, misinterpretation of the context's teaching goal, and concerns about interaction with students from other cultural backgrounds led participants to refine their identity as teachers. Even though participants in the current study had experienced previous challenges and conflicts, they were able to develop their competence in several aspects as they completed their teaching tasks, learned to think from the learner's perspective, interacted with others in the intercultural setting, and discussed teaching practices with peers. In this way, they developed a more refined teacher identity at the end of their teaching period in the Netherlands.

According to Zen et al., (2022), individuals take on a new identity when they join a community of practice where learning occurs through collaborative interactions. Our research provides evidence that teachers were able to reconstruct their teacher identity through interaction with and support from school leaders and cooperating teachers in the new context. The findings highlight the importance of the teaching environment for teachers' success in overseas placements, as well as for their experiences to enhance their evolving professional identity by offering pedagogical value and/or personal growth opportunities.

In this research, we further found that teachers reconstructed their teacher identity through the interaction with their students, especially when these students are from another cultural background

than their own. Having the opportunity to interact with foreign students in an intercultural setting enabled language teachers to reflect on the way they teach, thus prompting deep self-reflection. Through exploring and questioning their professional and personal identities, teachers gained a more nuanced and multifaceted sense of self.

3.5.3 Chinese language teachers' identity construction in intercultural settings

Unlike teachers in more familiar language contexts, Chinese language teachers often face additional challenges, such as low prioritization of Chinese language courses in foreign educational systems, language barriers that hinder communication and resource acquisition, and divergent cultural expectations regarding teaching methods, such as the more hierarchical teacher-student relationship in Chinese culture versus the egalitarian relationships in Western schools. These challenges influence how CFL teachers perceive themselves and their role in the classroom, requiring them to reconcile traditional Chinese teaching values with local educational norms.

In addition, Chinese language teachers often experience transformative growth through critical incidents, such as administrative challenges, exposure to different teaching philosophies (e.g., Dutch educational freedom), or resource constraints. These experiences push them to adapt their teaching styles, develop new strategies, and blend Chinese and foreign pedagogical methods, creating a hybrid professional identity.

The stage-specific analysis further highlights the gradual evolution of CFL teachers' teacher identity, emphasizing their journey from survival to proficiency. This uniqueness underscores the complexities and richness of identity construction in the group of CFL teachers, providing valuable insights for researchers and practitioners alike.

3.5.4 Limitations and future directions

The current study has some limitations that need to be addressed in future studies. Firstly, the participants in this study were selected by purposive sampling, and the chosen teachers may not represent the broader population of CFL teachers in the Netherlands or elsewhere. A second concern was the fact that we did not have access to the participants to do a member check when the findings were complete, and we do not know how they would have regarded their own identities as represented in this paper's findings. As such, the findings of this study are "an interpretation" and not "the interpretation" (Gholami, 2021). The current study also suggests that more research attention could be paid to exploring specific strategies that effectively support teachers' identity reconstruction and examining the long-term impacts of intercultural teaching experiences on professional development. This would provide deeper insights into fostering resilient and adaptable teaching professionals in an increasingly globalized world.

3.5.5 Conclusion

The study contributes to a new understanding of international teachers' identity development in an intercultural context. Furthermore, the

findings highlight the development of teacher identity as an ongoing, dynamic, and unstable process, and illustrate how teaching overseas presents a unique opportunity for teachers to refine their identities and facilitate their professional development. In light of this, foreign language teachers, including both novices and experienced teachers, are recommended to have the opportunity to “learn in an intercultural and international environment” (Sercu, 2006, Fackler, et al., 2021). Through experiential learning activities such as exchange programs, they will acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to become effective intercultural teachers.



4

This chapter is an adapted version of
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Abstract

The present study explores international teachers' identity in an intercultural context as manifested through their interpersonal behaviors. In this study with fourteen native-speaker Chinese language teachers and one hundred and ninety-two students, survey and interview methods were used as primary sources of data, and classroom observations were stimuli for interviews. The findings reveal that overseas teaching experiences strengthen teachers' professional identity, although they also bring teachers tensions. The study demonstrates that the teacher-student relationship is a useful lens to explore and interpret teacher identity in an intercultural context. The findings not only highlight how pre-existing beliefs and working context influence teachers' identity development but also illuminate the distinctions of identity among teachers with different interpersonal profiles.

4.1 Introduction

Teacher identity has received significant attention in the education field as it is considered a critical component for the success of the teaching and learning process (Karimi & Mofidi, 2019). Investigating teacher professional identity can contribute to supporting teachers' professional development (De Costa & Norton, 2017; Walkington, 2005) and therefore to the effectiveness of teaching (Sun, 2012). However, teacher identity is not easy to theorize or measure. Varghese et al., 2005 examined teacher identity literature and concluded that many aspects of teacher identity connect to the teacher-student relationship. Similarly, Pillen, Den Brok, and Beijgaard (2013) stated that many of teachers' identity-related tensions pertain to classroom management and developing a good relationship with students.

Previous research has found that interpersonal relationships between teachers and students are understood differently across countries because of their different educational cultures (Wubbels, 2015t, where this study is situated, Chinese is offered as an elective foreign language in secondary school. Most Chinese foreign language (CFL) teachers in the Netherlands are native speakers of Chinese who were raised and educated in China. Wang and Du (2016) already showed that CFL teachers' views of teacher-student relationships differed significantly from the expectations of Western countries' students. In Mockler, 2011 model of teacher professional identity, personal experience, external political environment, and professional context are three dimensions that significantly influence the process of

teacher identity formation. They argued that these three dimensions work in a dynamic, shifting manner. Thus, when a teacher's working circumstances and context change, their professional identity changes accordingly. To accommodate the differences in education between countries, Kaya and Dikilitas (2019) claimed that international teachers must reconstruct their previous values and teacher identity in order to meet the demands of the new educational environment. In the current study, the term "international teacher" refers to teachers who teach in a context that is removed from their own home culture and instruct students with a different cultural background from their own. The adaptation and reconstruction of identity might take time and effort, especially if teachers are new in a context. Taking into account Pillen et al.'s (2013) assertion concerning the connection between student-teacher relationships and teacher identity, it follows that the intercultural context might have consequences for CFL teachers' identity.

The aim of the current study is, therefore, to develop a deeper understanding of international teachers' identity in a cross-cultural setting as manifested through their interpersonal behavior in relation to learners. Using the teacher-student relationship as a lens to explore and interpret teacher identity provides a new perspective to investigate teacher identity. Moreover, some of the insights from this study may prove beneficial for supporting those who are just starting as teachers in an intercultural context.

4.2 Literature review

4.2.1 Understanding teacher identity through the teacher-student relationship

From a post-structuralist perspective, teacher identity is defined as the way a teacher understands themselves as a teacher, which can be interpreted through and within their language and discursive practice (Varghese et al., 2005). Discursive practice in teaching refers to the interactions between teachers and their students (Reeves, 2018; Zembylas, 2003), and is demonstrated by the teacher-student relationship. As the “outer side” of teaching (Korthagen & Evelein, 2016), the teacher-student relationship is easier to measure than the “inner side” of teaching – teacher identity. Teacher identity as a fluid and ever-shifting construct (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Reeves, 2009;) may therefore be understood clearly by exploring it through the lens of the teacher-student relationship.

The relevance of teacher-student relationships to teacher identity has also been highlighted by research. Varghese et al., 2005 examined the themes addressed in the literature on teacher identity and concluded that many themes relate to the teacher-student relationship, namely: interaction with students, bonding with students, keeping distance from students, etc. The findings of Van Lankveld et al. (2017) revealed that teacher identity is optimally developed when a teacher feels a sense of appreciation for their work, especially when this sense is acknowledged by their students. They observed that the sense of fulfilling students’ expectations confirms their identity as a teacher. In

addition, 60% of the teachers in Pillen et al., (2013) study have experienced one or more identity tensions or problems related to the teacher-student relationship. These identity tensions include, for example, how much emotional distance to maintain, treating pupils as whole persons or only learners, and the balance between showing care and being tough. Reeves (2018) claimed that teachers who fail to build a positive relationship with their students are more likely to have lower self-efficacy regarding their identity as teachers. The results of Reeves' (2018) study showed that the professional development of these teachers can be observed as being slow and difficult.

4.2.2 Teacher identity in an intercultural context

In poststructuralist theory, identity also yields a multifaceted understanding of self, made up of a combination of both personal and contextual factors (Nguyen, 2016; Tao & Gao, 2018). Personal factors of identity include teachers' previous learning experience, teaching experience, pre-existing teaching beliefs, values, and cultural and ethnic background (Li, 2022). Furthermore, contextual factors such as the social, cultural, and political setting are critical in the development of their teacher identity (Kelchtermans, 2018; Varghese et al., 2005).

The personal factors of teacher identity are related to a particular national or regional culture (Alsup, J., 2006). The teaching beliefs and values of teachers are formed in the country in which they were raised and educated. Scholars argue that these pre-existing beliefs derived from teachers' cultural and educational backgrounds greatly influence teachers' identity development (Varghese et al., 2005).

Similar identity characteristics may be shared by teachers with similar cultural backgrounds (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Furthermore, Wang and Du's (2016) study found that teacher identity differed between native Chinese teachers and native Danish teachers due to their different educational and professional experiences. These differences were also reflected in teachers' beliefs regarding their roles and relationships with students.

Contextual factors also play a vital role in teacher identity. In recent decades, globalization in education has increased teachers' mobility (Rosenfeld et al., 2022), which means teacher identity can be significantly affected as the teaching context of the teachers changes (Kabilan, 2013). On the one hand, teaching in an intercultural context can be beneficial for teachers' professional identity development, because it can enhance teachers' skills in the teaching profession (Serbes, 2017) and broaden their horizons on values and pedagogy (Ospina & Medina, 2020). There is evidence from previous studies that teachers with more extended teaching experience in cross-cultural settings normally have high confidence levels in their international, professional competence (Zen et al., 2022), and their role as teachers (Edwards & Burns, 2016). On the other hand, time and effort are needed for teacher identity construction in the new educational system. Cultural mismatches can occur in the classroom when teachers have different cultural backgrounds from the students they teach, and they have little in common with their students (Zhou & Li, 2015). Several studies have shown that when teachers' teaching beliefs or expectations do not align with the new context's requirements, teachers' identity

development can be adversely affected (Kaya & Dikilitas, 2019; Walters et al., 2009). In addition, poststructuralists such as Zembylas (2003) claim that teachers are vulnerable social subjects who produce and are produced by the culture of their own country and, as teachers are subjected to discursive practices, even small events within a particular cultural and political context can have significant meaning in constructing their identity.

4.2.3 Understanding CFL teachers' identity development in an intercultural context

Edwards and Burns (2016) asserted that language teacher identity is not and cannot be racially, culturally, or linguistically neutral. This is the same for CFL teachers. The teaching context for CFL teachers is normally situated in cross-cultural settings, involving students from different cultural backgrounds. The cultural and linguistic mismatch between native-speaker CFL teachers and their students from another country provides us a fertile ground for observing how international teacher identity shapes and reshapes in an intercultural context.

For native Chinese CFL teachers working in Western contexts, the teacher-centered, master-disciple relationships CFL teachers tend to have with their students (Elstein, 2009) may contrast with the student-centered inquiry more common in some Western classrooms (Chan & Rao, 2009). Furthermore, teachers' collectivism-oriented teaching beliefs (Wei et al., 2015) might be misaligned with the more individualistic focus in Western countries (Leeman et al., 2020), and the hierarchical relationship Chinese teachers tend to establish with

their students can be contrary to Western students' expectations of teacher-student relationships with a greater degree of communication and dialogue (Hu & Smith, 2011). Facing the mismatch between CFL teachers' previous teaching beliefs and students' expectations, some CFL teachers show a willingness to reconstruct their identity and adjust themselves to the local educational context (Wang & Du, 2016). Conversely, some teachers have been known to burn out because of the identity tensions raised by cultural distinctions, to the extent that they consider leaving the teaching profession (Ye & Edwards, 2018; Yue, 2017).

The current study was situated in the Netherlands, where the Chinese language in secondary education and private language schools is often taught by native Chinese teachers. Based on the research explored above, differences between Chinese teachers' beliefs about their role as a teacher and the expectations from the Dutch educational context might affect CFL teachers' identity construction. Aiming to develop a deeper understanding of CFL teachers' identity in an intercultural context, the research question guiding the study is:

How can Chinese foreign language (CFL) teacher identity be characterized based on their teacher-student relationship, in an intercultural context?

4.3 Methodology

4.3.1 Context and participants

In the Netherlands, many CFL teachers are native-Chinese speakers who lived in the Netherlands for several years before becoming

teachers. CFL teachers in this context mainly work in secondary schools, language schools, or a combination of both.

Some secondary schools offer Chinese as an elective, while in others it is a compulsory part of the curriculum. According to Nuffic (<https://www.nuffic.nl/en>), the Dutch organization for internationalization in education, in 2023, about 25 out of 648 secondary schools in the Netherlands were members of the national network for Chinese teaching. Official figures regarding secondary schools offering Chinese programs outside of the Nuffic network are not available.

Chinese language schools usually hold classes in weekends. They are community-run schools operating outside the mainstream education system. The Stichting Chinees Onderwijs in Nederland [Foundation for Chinese Education in the Netherlands] lists 39 Chinese language schools (www.chineesonderwijs.nl; accessed January 2023). Some of the larger Chinese language schools have up to 800 students on roll at one time. Their main target students are Chinese immigrant children and children of mixed parentage (Chinese and Dutch) in the Netherlands.

Purposeful sampling was adopted to recruit CFL teachers from various secondary schools and language schools across the Netherlands as participants in the study. Schools and teachers were approached via the National Network for Chinese Teaching. To ensure the representativeness of the current state of Chinese language teachers, participants' school type (secondary school and/or language school), Chinese provision as a curriculum subject, geographical area, and

teachers' ethnic and educational background were taken into consideration. The schools where the participants worked are geographically diverse, covering ten cities in the Netherlands. Fourteen native-Chinese CFL teachers participated in the present study (See Table 4.1). Teachers' CFL teaching experience in the Netherlands ranged from 1 to 20 years. Thirteen participants are female, which reflects the "female-dominated language teaching profession", as stated by Moloney & Xu (2015).

Table 4.1 *Participant information (using pseudonyms)*

Teacher Participant s	Locatio n of School	Years of teaching experience in the Nrtherlands	Students	Teaching context
Wu	South	15	Adolescents	Secondary school
Su	Middle	10	Adolescents	Secondary school
Xie	Northwe st	13	Adolescents	Secondary school
Zhu	Northwe st	7	Adolescents; Adults	Language school
Deng	South	3	Adolescents	Language school
Shi	South	10	Children; Adolescents	Secondary school; Language school
Tan	South	16	Adolescents	Secondary school

(continued)

Teacher Participant s	Locatio n of School	Years of teaching experience in the Nrtherlands	CFL	Students	Teaching context
Zheng	West	10		Adolescents	Language school
Yin	Middle	16		Adolescents	Language school
Gao	Middle	16		Adolescents	Secondary school; Language school
Mei	Middle	1		Adolescents	Language school
Hu	West	20		Adolescents	Secondary school; Language school
Xiao	West	9		Adolescents	Language school
Di	Middle	9		Adolescents	Secondary school; Language school

4.3.2 Procedure and instruments

In a cross-sectional design, interviews were used as the primary source of data, as this qualitative approach was suitable for studying teachers' perceptions and opinions (Creswell & Poth, 2016). A survey was

adopted to map participants' interpersonal behavior; Classroom observations were undertaken to provide stimuli for the interviews.

The survey: To ensure the reliability of participants' interpersonal relationship image, each participant was asked to give a suggestion for one particular class that was representative of the classes they taught. Then, the 24-item version of the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI) (Levy & Wubbels, 2005) was distributed to the students in the class the participant suggested. Participants were asked to facilitate time during the lesson for students to complete the questionnaire. Of the 202 students approached, 192 (95%) returned a completed questionnaire. The number of surveys requested and returned in each participant's class is presented in Appendix C. The survey was completed in Dutch and each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = totally disagree, and 5 = totally agree). Students' scores on the QTI are a valid and reliable means of mapping their teachers' interpersonal behavior, based on *the Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior* (Wubbels et al., 2006). This model was chosen as it has been shown to be a reliable measure of student-teacher relationships in over 20 countries (Wubbels et al., 2012).

In the model, interpersonal teaching behavior is mapped on two independent dimensions, the influence dimension (y-axis) and the proximity dimension (x-axis). The influence dimension characterizes interpersonal teacher behavior based on the extremes of dominance and submission, and the proximity based on cooperation versus opposition. Usually, the two dimensions are visualized in a diagram with eight sectors (see Figure 4.1). Each sector is labeled with a specific term

describing interpersonal teacher behavior: leadership, helpful/friendly, understanding, students' freedom/responsibility, uncertain, dissatisfied, admonishing, and strict.

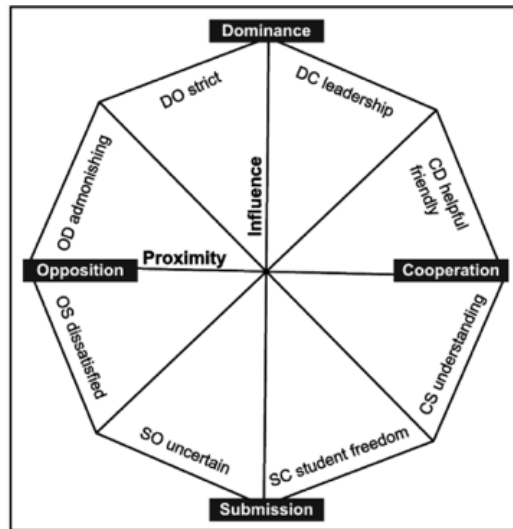


Fig.4.1. *Model for Interpersonal teacher behavior*

Classroom observation: Non-participatory observation of each participant's teaching practice was employed in order to observe teachers' actual interactions with their students. A prepared classroom observation checklist (see Appendix A) was developed in advance, containing the eight sectors of the Model of Interpersonal Teacher Behavior (see Figure 1), and typical behaviors from each sector. Observations were conducted by the first author, with permission of the school and teacher-participant, using the checklist to make field notes. The field notes from observations were used as stimuli during interviews with participants and not handled as data in their own right.

Each teacher's classroom teaching process was observed twice in four months.

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were employed to explore the characteristics of teacher identity. The interview questions were developed based on the following three aspects:

- (1) What do participants think about their role as CFL teachers?
- (2) Based on the survey data and observation data, teachers were interviewed about their interactions with their students. In addition, participants explained why they interacted with students in some ways under certain circumstances.
- (3) Teachers described the satisfying and dissatisfying aspects of their relationships with students and how these relationships have changed over time.

An interview guide was used as an outline (see Appendix B), with the addition of follow-up questions as necessary. The face-to-face interviews were conducted from May 2022 to July 2022, each interview lasting between forty and ninety minutes. Since all the teacher participants in this study are Chinese native speakers, Chinese was chosen as the language of the interview in order to facilitate communication. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

4.3.3 Data analysis

Data analysis was divided into two phases. In the first phase, SPSS 26 was employed to analyze the survey data. An interpersonal profile graphic was drawn for each participant to present their interpersonal profile, based on the mean for each subscale. In the current study, the

teacher interpersonal behavior typology: directive, authoritative, tolerant/authoritative, tolerant, uncertain/tolerant, uncertain/aggressive, repressive, and drudging (Wubbels et al., 2006) was adopted to describe CFL teachers' interpersonal profiles. Participants were categorized under one of the eight existing profiles based on their interpersonal profile graphic.

In the next phase, inductive content analysis was adopted to analyze the interview data (Schreier, 2014). The transcripts of teachers' responses to interviews were uploaded to ATLAS.ti 22 and were read by the first author for the first round to highlight the keywords and annotation of possible themes, e.g., cultivate interest, show authority, cultural differences, enough respect, familiar with Dutch culture, being quiet and focused, balance strictness and giving freedom. After several reviews of all transcripts, annotations with similar concepts were combined, and 12 categories were finally identified, e.g., adapting to the Dutch culture, keeping the Chinese traditions, showing authority, the balance between being strict and being friendly, showing love and care for students, etc. Then, these 12 categories were summarized into four main themes: embracing the "other" culture, teaching beliefs, tensions, and repositioning. Throughout the process of coding, the research team met to discuss and resolve any discrepancies between coding and the categories.

4.4 Results

Four types of interpersonal profiles were distinguished among the fourteen CFL teachers: directive, authoritative, tolerant/authoritative, and tolerant. The class mean score and diagram of each participant are presented in Appendix C. Table 4.2 shows examples of interpersonal diagrams for each of these four typologies.

Table 4.2 *Examples of interpersonal diagrams*

	Surveys requested; returned	Leadership (DC)	Helpful/Friendly (CD)	Understanding (CS)	Student responsibility/freedom (SC)	Uncertain (SO)	Dissatisfied (OS)	Administering (OD)	Strict (DO)	Profile
Directive CFL teacher	Hu 18; 18	0.745	0.694	0.644	0.481	0.153	0.282	0.320	0.560	
Authoritative CFL teacher	Tan 17; 17	0.733	0.725	0.669	0.522	0.162	0.164	0.390	0.600	
Tolerant/Authoritative CFL teacher	Xie 10; 10	0.764	0.750	0.764	0.625	0.111	0.097	0.111	0.431	
Tolerant CFL teacher	Deng 10; 10	0.708	0.694	0.625	0.931	0.333	0.319	0.278	0.264	

The Directive teacher is the least cooperative and the Tolerant/Authoritative teacher is the most. The Directive teachers have relatively low scores on being friendly and understanding and a high score on strictness. The Tolerant teacher is about as cooperative as the Authoritative teacher though far less dominant. The main points of the Tolerant CFL teachers are best noted by their low score on strictness and a high score on student freedom. The Tolerant type is seen as far more submissive than the other three types.

Through the qualitative analysis of the interview data, four main themes have been distinguished in the participants' accounts of their identity. The concept of *embracing the "other" culture* involves teachers adapting to their interpretation of the culture of the new educational context. *Teaching beliefs* imply that teachers keep some of their pre-existing teaching beliefs, which are sometimes intertwined with their perception of Chinese educational culture, while reconstructing their identity. *Tensions* refer to feelings of doubt and frustration during the process of developing a professional identity. *Repositioning* brings the ideas for transforming and revising one's identity as a teacher.

Below, the findings are organized according to the four identified typologies. For each, a brief account will be given of the characteristics according to the original model, followed by an overview of the identity characteristics displayed by the teachers who fell under that type according to learners' survey responses (in the overview, similar characteristics among participants are underlined), and a more detailed example in the form of a narrative of one participant,

based on the interview data. The narratives are from the individual teachers who we considered to be the most representative of each type as measured with the QTI. The narratives of the remaining participants can be found in the supplementary materials.

4.4.1 Directive CFL teachers' identity

Two participants in the present study could be categorized under the Directive type. Wubbels and Levy (2005) described the Directive type of teacher as effective, dominant, demanding, and strict. This type of teacher is regarded by their students as having much influence on what happens in the classroom. The learning environment of the Directive teacher's class is well-structured and task-oriented. An overview of the identity characteristics of Directive teachers is shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Experiences of Directive Teachers

	Embracing the “other” culture	Teaching beliefs	Tensions	Repositioning
<i>Yin</i> 16 years of CFL teaching	<u>Importance of adjusting to the overseas teaching environment.</u> <u>Less hierarchical, more freedom for students.</u> <u>Explicitly encouraging and inspiring students.</u>	<u>Students should remain quiet and follow instructions.</u> <u>Keeping the Chinese aspect of her identity intact.</u>	<u>Viewed as too strict in spite of adapting.</u> <u>No tensions in current teaching.</u>	<u>Adjusted to the Dutch educational culture as time passed.</u> <u>Considering things from a different perspective.</u>
Language school	<u>Adapting to requirements takes time.</u> <u>Engaging students by incorporating their interests.</u>	<u>Dedicated to teaching CFL.</u> <u>Enjoying being around students</u>		<u>Less strict, more consideration of students’ needs.</u> <u>Stronger sense of teacher identity.</u>
<i>Hu</i> 20 years of CFL teaching	<u>Importance of adjusting to the overseas teaching environment.</u> <u>Less hierarchical, more freedom for students.</u> <u>Explicitly encouraging and inspiring students.</u>	<u>Students should remain quiet and follow instructions.</u> <u>Keeping the Chinese aspect of her identity intact.</u>	<u>“Teacher-centered” style got negative feedback from students.</u> <u>No tensions in current teaching.</u>	<u>Adjusted to the Dutch educational culture as time passed.</u> <u>Considering things from a different perspective.</u>
Secondary school; Language school	<u>Demonstrating understanding of students’ cultural backgrounds.</u>	<u>Assigning lots of homework to students.</u>	<u>Adjusting teaching style to meet students’ expectation needs time and effort.</u>	<u>The necessity to draw the right line for students.</u> <u>Seeing room for improvement.</u>

Note. Underlined phrases indicate similar characteristics among participants.

Narrative – Hu

Hu (pseudonym), a woman in her early forties, had twenty years of CFL teaching experience. She earned a bachelor's degree in physical education in China, then attended many training programs in both China and the Netherlands to become a CFL teacher. At the time of data collection, she taught CFL in a secondary school during the week and in a language school on the weekends.

4.4.1.1 Embracing the “other” culture in identity construction

The interview data suggest that Hu stressed the importance of adjusting to the local educational culture. With several years of teaching experience in the Netherlands, she gained confidence in building positive relationships with her Dutch students. She showed confidence in her ability to communicate effectively with students, keep things in check in the classroom, and cultivate students' interest in learning Chinese.

In the interview, Hu said she believed she has been able to foster a friendly atmosphere in Chinese courses, and she showed understanding of her students. As Hu stated:

"My students and I are from different cultural backgrounds. Of course, I cannot use my previous teaching beliefs to judge my students. I am a considerate teacher because I know how to think from Dutch students' perspective."

Hu mentioned in the interview that what she had learned from her international experience in the Netherlands was the importance of

encouraging students. She further explained that because Chinese people normally expressed feelings implicitly, many CFL teachers did not give students enough verbal complements. After years of teaching in the Netherlands and observing Dutch colleagues' courses, she felt that she had gained an understanding of how Dutch teachers support their students in a direct and explicit manner.

4.4.1.2 Teaching beliefs in identity construction

The interview transcripts showed that, although Hu realized the strict approach to teaching that she used in China might not fit the Dutch context, she expressed a desire to keep some of the Chinese teaching traditions. She reported that she issued lots of homework to students to force them to practice more. Also, tests were common in her class. Her Chinese teaching beliefs can be seen in the way she talked about the importance of having her students be quiet and follow her instructions during the class. Hu's insistence on what she believed were aspects of a typically Chinese way of teaching showed that she kept the Chinese part of her while reconstructing her identity in another country.

4.4.1.3 Tensions in identity construction

Hu talked in the interview about the tensions she had in her first two years of teaching in the Netherlands. When she began teaching, her "teacher-centered" teaching style led to many students quitting Chinese classes because they found her classes boring. Hu reported that she worked hard to contribute to students' learning, so she was disappointed when she heard students and parents complain about her teaching approach. Hu's professional identity construction was

hindered because of the negative feedback from students. She admitted that time and effort were needed to adjust her teaching style to meet the expectations of Dutch students. The interview suggests that Hu was currently satisfied with her teacher-student relationships and her role as an international teacher. She made no reference to tensions in her current teaching.

4.4.1.4 Repositioning in identity construction

After teaching in the Netherlands for a while, Hu noticed that Dutch students might pursue an equal relationship with the teacher at the expense of the level of respect shown to teachers. Hence, Hu thought it was necessary to draw the right lines for students:

“Respect is mutual. If my students want me to communicate with them equally, they must show their respect to me first. At least in my Chinese course.”

Hu was surprised that her students described her as a strict teacher. With regard to the strict aspect of teaching, she felt that she had made adjustments. When hearing students’ perspectives, Hu commented:

“Well, it seems like my students think there is still space for me to improve.”

4.4.2 Authoritative CFL teachers’ identity construction

Four participants could be categorized under the Authoritative type according to the students’ responses. Levy and Wubbels (2005) described the Authoritative type of teacher as being friendly and cooperative with students and having an influence on what happens in

the classroom, without being very dominant. The Authoritative atmosphere is well-structured, pleasant, and task-oriented. Table 4.4 shows the experiences of the Authoritative teacher.

Table 4.4 *Experiences of Authoritative Teachers*

	Embracing the “other” culture	Teaching beliefs	Tensions	Repositioning
Tan 16 years of CFL teaching Secondary school	<u>Importance of cultural awareness.</u> <u>Adjusting teaching and expectations to meet the needs of students.</u> <u>Broader view of subject content.</u> <u>Attempting to meet high standards despite challenges.</u> <u>International work experience in the Netherlands strengthens teacher identity.</u>	<u>The “parent” role:</u> <u>showing empathy and sensitivity; taking lots of responsibilities both in and out of classroom.</u> <u>Chinese class ceremonies, such as greet the teacher and standing ovation.</u> <u>Crossing the boundary:</u> <u>concern for students’ private lives.</u>	<u>Inadequate support:</u> <u>Lack of Dutch-specific CFL teacher training programs.</u> <u>Adapting to requirements needs time and effort.</u> <u>Low Dutch proficiency hinders communication with students.</u> <u>Unsure of her identity as a teacher.</u>	<u>Transformation:</u> <u>“subject expert”/“knowledge imparter” to “having knowledge and understanding of teenagers’ development”.</u> <u>Gaining awareness of individualized teaching.</u> <u>Comparing previous experiences with the new context’s needs.</u>
Gao 16 years of CFL teaching Secondary school; Language school	<u>Importance of cultural awareness.</u> <u>Improved Dutch will facilitate communication with students.</u> <u>Adjusting teaching and expectations to meet the needs of students.</u>	<u>Students might benefit from Chinese etiquette culture.</u> <u>The Chinese teaching tradition exposes students to Chinese culture.</u> <u>Ensure strict discipline in the classroom to prevent students from crossing the line.</u>	<u>Inadequate support:</u> <u>Lack of Dutch-specific CFL teaching materials.</u> <u>Lack of Dutch-specific CFL teacher training programs.</u> <u>Inadequate pedagogical knowledge in the Dutch context.</u> <u>Difficulties in building positive relationships with adolescents.</u>	<u>Change of task perception:</u> <u>“Improving proficiency in Chinese” to “teaching students something useful”.</u> <u>Teaching students like adults instead of children.</u> <u>High self-efficacy:</u> <u>Extensive teaching experience (in China and Netherlands).</u>

(continued)

	Embracing the “other” culture	Teaching beliefs	Tensions	Repositioning
Su 10 years of CFL teaching Secondary school	<p>High level of intercultural competence.</p> <p><u>Thinking from a Dutch perspective contributes to communication.</u></p> <p><u>Deep understanding of Dutch culture.</u></p> <p>Learning from Dutch colleagues:</p> <p>Insight into student engagement.</p>	<p>Chinese class ceremonies, such as <u>greet the teacher and standing ovation.</u></p> <p>Bringing students a <u>fresh perspective as a foreign teacher.</u></p> <p><u>Demonstrating Chinese identity:</u></p> <p>Wearing chi-pao.</p>	<p>Adapting to requirements needs time and effort.</p> <p>Balance between being strict and friendly is a concern.</p> <p>Stress and less teacher-student connections during COVID.</p> <p>Hurt by students’ criticism of China.</p>	<p>Reshaping professional image.</p> <p>Recognized value as a teacher when observing students’ accomplishments.</p> <p>Incorporating Chinese into the curriculum promotes greater responsibility.</p> <p>From flexible teacher to dedicated teacher.</p>
Zheng 10 years of CFL teaching Language school	<p>Importance of cultural awareness.</p> <p><u>Adjusting teaching and expectations to meet the needs of students.</u></p> <p>Traditional Chinese educational spirit does not fit Dutch context.</p> <p>Rebuilding relationships with students.</p>	<p>The “parent” role:</p> <p><u>showing empathy and sensitivity;</u> <u>taking lots of responsibilities both in and out of classroom.</u></p> <p><u>Using Chinese heuristics assists students in expressing their ideas.</u></p> <p>Assisting Chinese immigrant students with their identity development.</p>	<p><u>Inadequate pedagogical knowledge in the Dutch context.</u></p> <p>Limited class time:</p> <p>unable to facilitate student autonomy.</p> <p>Less tension-ridden:</p> <p>Teaching experience; effective teacher training.</p>	<p>Transformation:</p> <p>“subject expert”/“knowledge imparter” to “<u>having knowledge and understanding of teenagers’ development</u>”.</p> <p><u>Reshaping professional image.</u></p> <p><u>Treating students like adults instead of children.</u></p> <p>Accepting the imperfect self and try to keep improving.</p> <p>Taking responsibility as a team leader.</p>

Note. Underlined phrases indicate similar characteristics among participants.

Narrative – Tan

Tan (pseudonym) is a woman with 17 years of CFL teaching experience, all in the Netherlands. After working in the biochemical industry for 13 years, she found her passion in teaching and decided to change careers. She started to teach part-time before completing a master's degree in teaching Chinese at a Dutch university. After that, she became a full-time CFL teacher.

4.4.2.1 Embracing the “other” culture in identity construction

Tan illustrated in her interview that the standard of good teachers in the Netherlands was quite high. She said that teachers were not only supposed to be experts in a specific subject; in order to build positive relationships with the students, but were also required to have knowledge regarding education, educational psychology, juvenile psychology, and European education law. Tan reported that as an international teacher, responding to high standards was not easy, but it was essential for her to improve herself and meet the requirements of the teaching context. Tan commented in the interview that she had learned and improved a lot through the process of adapting. The international teaching experience in the Netherlands strengthened her professional identity as a teacher.

4.4.2.2 Teaching beliefs in identity construction

As well as the difficulty of adjusting, Tan reported in the interview that she believed that she still held the Chinese teaching beliefs she had established before. Her description of her role as students' “parent” in

school showed her empathy and sensitivity and also showed that she took on lots of responsibilities both in and out of the classroom. She stated that she might sometimes cross boundaries by caring about students' private lives too much.

4.4.2.3 Tensions in identity construction

Tan indicated in her interview that adjusting to a new educational context was not easy. She believed that three to five years were needed to adapt to the new context. She reported that developing innovative activities to interact with students took time and effort because of the lack of pedagogical knowledge in the Dutch context. Tan thought the existing CFL teacher training program in the Netherlands lacked courses regarding interacting with students efficiently in class and building positive relationships with the students. Thus, she needed to figure things out herself. Moreover, in the interview, Tan emphasized the need to raise her Dutch language proficiency further, as she felt that deeper communication with students was inhibited by her limited Dutch. She stated that there had been a time when she struggled with improving students' engagement and questioned her identity as a teacher.

4.4.2.4 Repositioning in identity construction

The interview data showed that previously, Tan had positioned herself as a "subject expert" and "knowledge imparter" who focused on delivering knowledge to students and improving their performance. After years of overseas teaching, she noticed that only being an expert in subject knowledge was not enough. Now, Tan described herself as

“having knowledge and understanding of teenagers’ development”. In addition, she described her new awareness of students’ individuality and of the need to teach them accordingly. Tan reported that this new thought came out of comparing her previous experiences and practice to what she perceived and experienced in the new educational context regarding Dutch education, schools, and teachers. Her focus on students’ development and awareness of treating them individually is indicative of her new teacher identity constructed in the international context.

4.4.3. Tolerant/Authoritative CFL teachers’ identity construction

Levy and Wubbels (2005) described Tolerant/Authoritative teachers as student-centered, enjoyable, ignoring minor disruptions, and having close relationships with students. The learning environment in this type of teacher’s class is pleasant, and students work to reach their own and the teacher’s instructional goals with little or no complaint. Six participants could be categorized in the tolerant/authoritative type (See Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 *Experiences of Tolerant/Authoritative Teachers*

	Embracing the “other” culture	Teaching beliefs	Tensions	Repositioning
<i>Xie</i> 13 years of CFL teaching Secondary school; Language school	Meeting the needs of Dutch students: <u>adjust teaching and expectations.</u> Giving students positive feedback to <u>motivate them to strive for greater</u> <u>success.</u> Incorporating Dutch teachers’ interactive teaching methods.	Aiming for higher achievement by <u>exerting pressure on students.</u> The “parent” role: <u>showing empathy and sensitivity;</u> <u>taking lots of responsibilities both in</u> <u>and out classroom.</u> Less tolerant of disruptive behaviors than Dutch colleagues.	Differentiated instruction is required in mixed- ability classes. Decline in the number of students casts doubt on teaching abilities. Stress and less teacher-student connection during COVID. Conflicting with Dutch colleagues due to differences in teaching beliefs and goals.	<u>Exploring better ways to engage</u> <u>students reshaped previous</u> <u>teaching beliefs.</u> Realizing value in teaching profession. Improving students’ performance without losing their interest is a challenge.
<i>Wu</i> 15 years of CFL teaching Secondary school	Students are considered young adults <u>with their own opinions.</u> <u>Explicitly encouraging and inspiring</u> <u>students.</u> Expectation of students: open-mindedness; intercultural competence.	Aiming for higher achievement by <u>exerting pressure on students.</u> Aware of benefits of learning another language in a global society. Respecting students’ opinions and striving to remain objective.	Differentiated instruction is required in mixed- ability classes. The lack of Dutch-specific teaching materials.	<u>Learning a great deal from</u> <u>overseas experience.</u> Reshaping previous teaching beliefs, becoming a <u>facilitator</u> rather than an instructor. Adjusting feelings and lower expectation to avoid burnout.

Note. Underlined phrases indicate similar characteristics among participants.

(continued)

	Embracing the "other" culture	Teaching beliefs	Tensions	Repositioning
Shi 10 years of CFL teaching Secondary school Language school	Considering characteristics of <u>Dutch students who think independently and critically.</u> <u>Meeting the needs of Dutch students.</u> <u>adjust teaching and expectations.</u>	The "parent" role: <u>showing empathy and sensitivity, taking lots of responsibilities both in and out classroom.</u> Teaching requires effective classroom management. Does not overly enforce learning outcomes. Besides imparting knowledge, teach students something useful.	Building positive relationships with <u>students takes time and effort.</u> Lacking a diploma in education lowered self-efficacy as a teacher. More confident about relationships with students after overcoming challenges.	<u>Learning a great deal from overseas teaching experience.</u> <u>Realizing value in teaching profession.</u>
Zhu 7 years of CFL teaching Language school	Dutch educational culture places <u>high value on regulations in the classroom.</u> Easy transition. Does not want students growing up in rigid learning environments. Excessive pressure on students might suppress their learning enthusiasm.	The "parent" role: <u>showing empathy and sensitivity, taking lots of responsibilities both in and out classroom.</u> <u>Providing a warm and loving learning environment.</u> Having students develop the rules increases their likelihood of adhering to them.	Low self-efficacy in classroom <u>management.</u> <u>Building positive relationships with students takes time and effort.</u> Despite efforts, did not succeed in being a strict teacher.	<u>Learning a great deal from overseas teaching experience.</u> <u>Realizing value in teaching profession.</u> Sticking to standard rules and managing classrooms efficiently are important. Had learned to remain calm under adverse conditions.

Note. Underlined phrases indicate similar characteristics among participants.

(continued)

	Embracing the "other" culture	Teaching beliefs	Tensions	Repositioning
Di 9 years of CFL teaching	<u>Adapting approach to students' learning styles and characteristics.</u> <u>Dutch educational culture places high value on regulations in the classroom.</u>	<u>Providing a warm and loving learning environment.</u> Arousing adolescents' interest in Chinese culture and language.	<u>Low self-efficacy in classroom management.</u> <u>Decline in the number of students casts doubt on teaching abilities.</u>	<u>Learning a great deal from overseas teaching experience.</u> Unwise to fully stick to theories or pedagogical methods.
Secondary school; Language school	Improved Dutch will facilitate communication with students. Dutch colleagues' advice: put on a serious look.	Seeing students as the window into a country. No wish to play the "policeman" with a serious face.	CFL teaching experience has been full of challenges.	Drawing the appropriate line is necessary for effective behavior management. Sees room for improvement.
Xiao 9 years of CFL teaching	<u>Adapting approach to students' learning styles and characteristics.</u> <u>Students are considered young adults with their own opinions.</u>	<u>Providing a warm and loving learning environment.</u> Assisting Chinese immigrant students with their identity development.	<u>Low self-efficacy in classroom management.</u> <u>Building positive relationships with students takes time and effort.</u>	<u>Learning a great deal from overseas teaching experience.</u> <u>Realizing value in teaching profession.</u>
Language school	Treating students as individuals. Giving students more autonomy.	Dutch language proficiency is not important.	Colleagues' complaint: noise and chaos in her class.	Reshaped into a more considerate educator. A mentor for students aside from teaching.

Note. Underlined phrases indicate similar characteristics among participants.

Narrative – Xie

It has been over 20 years since Xie began teaching CFL in the Netherlands. Her background is in Chinese literature, and she began her teaching career in a language school. Then, she returned to China where she obtained a master's degree in CFL teaching before returning to the Netherlands. At the time of data collection, she worked in a secondary school on weekdays and a language school on weekends.

4.4.3.1 Embracing the “other” culture in identity construction

Xie expressed in the interview that in order to be a successful teacher in the Netherlands, it was not necessary to possess a broad knowledge of Chinese, but rather it was imperative that teachers became familiar with the Dutch culture, as well as the ways in which students thought and expressed themselves. Having been educated in China, she emphasized the importance of putting aside previous teaching beliefs and adapting to the Dutch educational culture. The interview data suggested that in the past, she was an extremely strict teacher who held her students to high standards. She discovered that Dutch students generally possessed a strong sense of personality and did not wish to be completely guided by their teachers. It took her three years to adjust her teaching style. She observed other teachers' classrooms and attempted to incorporate their interactive teaching methods into her own.

According to Xie's interview transcript, one of the lessons she learned from the Dutch context was the importance of providing students with positive feedback. As a result of teachers' encouragement,

students became aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and were motivated to strive for greater success.

4.4.3.2 Teaching beliefs in identity construction

Xie reported in the interview that she was less tolerant of the disruptive behaviors of students than her Dutch colleagues. She believed her attitude might be influenced by her Chinese educational background. According to Xie, not everyone is capable of self-discipline, so teachers must exert pressure to motivate students to pursue higher levels of achievement. It was for this reason that she tested her students periodically in order to assess their learning progress. The comment below illustrates her opinion:

It is not just for fun that students enroll in Chinese courses. In my role as a teacher, I sometimes demonstrate authority in order to ensure that my instructions are taken seriously by my students. Afterwards, they complete their tasks in a timely manner and to high quality."

In addition to keeping in touch with students in the classroom, Xie told us in the interview that she also maintained contact with them outside of the classroom. For instance, she established a WhatsApp group for students to share aspects of their daily lives or holidays, as well as practice their Chinese. She felt this would strengthen their relationship.

4.4.3.3 Tensions in identity construction

The interview data suggest that Xie preferred to teach students in higher grades since she could communicate more effectively with them. At her school, students of different ability levels were placed in the same Chinese class. For her, it was difficult to determine the teaching pace, manage the class, and design a teaching plan that was suitable for all students. Xie's conflicts with her Dutch colleagues were also a source of tension. Due to differences in teaching beliefs and objectives, they sometimes could not reach an agreement on teaching plans.

Xie reported in the interview that some changes could be observed in CFL teaching in the past two years. One was that two years of online lessons had adversely affected teachers' well-being, since it was hard for teachers to establish real connections with their students. Some teachers in Xie's school failed to adjust themselves to this change. Xie stated that although the school offered psychological classes to assist teachers in adapting to the current teaching environment, teachers ultimately needed to overcome the obstacles by themselves.

Secondly, Xie reported that the number of students learning Chinese had declined because they needed to put more effort into their main subjects like mathematics, literature, etc. Students decided to quit elective courses like the Chinese language as graduation was more important to them. She knew it was not her fault, but she could not help but doubt her abilities as a teacher.

In addition, Xie observed that schools preferred to hire more Dutch Chinese teachers, whom they thought were more familiar with

Dutch educational settings and knew better about Dutch students than native-speaker Chinese teachers. This meant fewer job opportunities for native-speaker CFL teachers.

4.4.3.4 Repositioning in identity construction

According to Xie, Dutch teachers excelled at implementing innovative teaching methods and creating an active learning environment for students. However, since the Chinese language as a subject requires a great deal of memorization and practice, she believed that it might not be a good idea to simply duplicate their teaching methods. It was during the process of discovering the best method of interacting with students that Xie was transforming her previous beliefs about teaching.

Xie stated in her interview that sometimes she was dissatisfied with her students' learning outcomes; she still expected her students to have higher language levels:

“Thinking about students’ learning outcomes, I should be stricter and give them more homework. However, I am afraid it may affect their interest in learning. How to keep the balance is still a headache for me.”

4.4.4 Tolerant CFL teachers’ identity construction

Two participants in the current study could be categorized under the Tolerant type. According to Levy and Wubbels (2005), Tolerant teachers give students more freedom in class than the above three types. Students appreciate the Tolerant teacher’s personal involvement and their ability to match the subject matter with their learning styles.

Although the learning environment is pleasant and supportive, the Tolerant teacher often works at their own pace; the class atmosphere may sometimes become a little confusing as a result. Table 4.6 shows the experiences of the Tolerant teachers.

Table 4.6 Experiences of Tolerant Teachers

	<i>Embracing the "other" culture</i>	<i>Teaching beliefs</i>	<i>Tensions</i>	<i>Repositioning</i>
<i>Dong</i> 3 years of CFL teaching Language school	<p><u>Knowing Dutch education system well due to extensive learning experience.</u></p> <p>Dutch educational culture emphasizes individualized education.</p> <p><u>Utilizing differentiated instruction in class.</u></p> <p>Empowering students to learn independently.</p> <p>Stimulating students' curiosity and critical thinking.</p>	<p>No hierarchy in class. Preferring informal relationships with students.</p> <p>An "unconventional" Chinese teacher who adapts content to students' interests.</p> <p>Love and empathy are essential for a good teacher.</p> <p>Creating an energetic and creative learning environment.</p> <p>Designing various innovative activities to engage students.</p>	<p>Lacking a diploma in education lowered self-efficacy as a teacher.</p> <p>Low self-efficacy in managing a larger class with more students from another culture.</p> <p>Describe himself as a "layman" in teaching profession.</p> <p>Colleagues disagree with his way of building teacher-student relationships.</p>	<p><u>Improving greatly through extensive self-reflection.</u></p> <p>Seeing his value in this profession.</p> <p><u>Considering becoming full-time CFL teacher.</u></p>
<i>Mei</i> 1 year of CFL teaching Language school	<p>Easy transition due to extensive overseas learning experience.</p> <p>Dutch educational culture emphasizes individualized education.</p> <p><u>Utilizing differentiated instruction in class.</u></p> <p>Mutual respect is important.</p> <p>Explicitly encouraging and inspiring students.</p>	<p>No hierarchy in class. Preferring informal relationships with students.</p> <p>An "unconventional" Chinese teacher who adapts content to students' interests.</p> <p>Dreaming of becoming a teacher despite not having background in education.</p> <p>Maintaining contact with students both in and out of the classroom.</p>	<p>Low self-efficacy in managing a larger class with more students from another culture.</p> <p>Lacking a diploma in education lowered self-efficacy as a teacher.</p> <p>Lack of knowledge of Chinese culture limits her role as role model.</p> <p>Students take the initiative and chaos ensues because of her soft character.</p>	<p><u>Improve greatly through reflection.</u></p> <p>Seeing her value in this profession.</p> <p><u>Considering becoming full-time CFL teacher.</u></p> <p>Facilitator rather than instructor.</p>

Note. Underlined phrases indicate similar characteristics among participants.

Narrative – Deng

Deng (pseudonym) has been teaching CFL for three years, since he returned to the Netherlands following five years of working for the Chinese government. Before that, he had spent six years in the Netherlands while working to obtain his doctorate in political science. In addition to teaching CFL at a language school, he also works as an administrator in an international school.

4.4.4.1 Embracing the “other” culture in identity construction

The interview data showed that several years of learning experience in the Netherlands gave him confidence in his familiarity with the Dutch educational setting. According to Deng, the Dutch teaching context emphasized letting students be the center of the class. He reported that he did not mind whether he had the authority in the classroom; his ultimate teaching goal was to allow students to be masters of themselves in learning. That’s why Deng said he seldom became angry or warned his students even if there was misbehavior in his class.

Deng explained in the interview that he wanted to respond to the call of his school to stimulate students’ curiosity and critical thinking through language teaching. His teaching goal was not limited to helping students grasp the target language but also to help them develop a sense of agency.

4.4.4.2 Teaching beliefs in identity construction

According to Deng’s interview, love and empathy are essential qualities for a good teacher, as the teacher plays a vital role in students’ process

of growing up. Hence, teachers need to be considerate and show students much respect and understanding: *“If there is no love, education is meaningless.”* The interview data suggest that he was confident about his relationship with students in this aspect. In addition, he believed a teacher should be someone who was always energetic and creative. He reported that he had designed various innovative activities to improve students’ engagement.

“From what I have heard, many students give up on the Chinese course halfway, owing to the lack of enjoyment in learning Chinese. We, as CFL teachers, need to reflect on ourselves.”

In the interview, Deng expressed his disagreement with strict ways of teaching and setting high standards for students, which he described as a *“traditional Chinese teaching approach”*. He preferred not to have the principle of hierarchy in his class.

4.4.4.3 Tensions in identity construction

Deng has been teaching in his language school for three years, but the interview data showed that he still described himself as a *“layman”* in the teaching profession. Lacking a diploma in education lowered his self-efficacy as a teacher. Besides, he reported that he only had experience teaching small size classes (with fewer than ten students), which meant that he was not confident that he could manage a larger class, especially if students had a cultural background different to his own. Furthermore, Deng felt his Chinese co-workers and school leaders did not understand his approach to building relationships with students.

Now, he was wondering whether to insist on his way or move to another school.

4.4.4.4 Repositioning in identity construction

Deng renewed his teacher identity during the process of teaching and reflecting, for example on his intercultural competence as an international teacher, his language teaching skills, his knowledge of the Chinese language and culture, pedagogical methods, and his relationships with students. As Deng put it:

“There is a gap between theory and practice. Only by interacting with Dutch students can you know the real situation in the Dutch context. As a teacher not majoring in language teaching, I improved greatly by reflecting on my teaching practice.”

Although Deng works as a part-time CFL teacher now, he reported that teaching was something he was passionate about and wanted to pursue. Getting appreciation from students and seeing students’ improvement made him feel the value of being a teacher. Thus, he reported that he had decided to stay in teaching and was thinking about becoming a full-time CFL teacher.

4.5 Discussion

In the present study, we set out to explore CFL teachers’ identity development through the lens of interpersonal teacher behavior. To this end, we examined the characteristics of teacher identity construction under specific interpersonal profiles. The findings revealed that the new teaching environment provided teachers a space to reposition their roles

as teachers, and enhanced their professional identity, although participants needed to cope with challenges and tensions while working in a cross-cultural setting. The identity construction process across all fourteen teachers involved embracing the “other” culture and retaining some of their original beliefs. However, the findings indicate that the pathways of identity construction were unique for each teacher, depending upon their interpersonal profiles and prior personal experiences. This suggests that teachers from the same cultural background may develop different teacher identities in a certain context due to their previous personal experiences, and their beliefs about teaching.

4.5.1 Challenges and opportunities brought by intercultural context

It is revealed in the findings that teachers face tensions when working in cross-cultural settings. The tensions come from mismatches between teachers’ original teaching beliefs and the requirements of the new teaching context. In line with previous research (Kaya & Dikilitas, 2019), if teachers’ goals for their teaching and their ideals are detached from their actual classroom behaviors, teachers may feel doubtful and frustrated. These emotions may hinder their identity construction. Furthermore, in line with previous studies that have noted the lack of appropriate teaching materials as an unsolved issue of overseas CFL teaching (Ye & Edwards, 2018), the findings of this study reveal that the lack of teaching materials suitable for the needs of learners in the Netherlands can make it difficult for teachers to interact with students efficiently, thus influencing their professional identity development. In

addition, our study further indicates that the teacher education available may not adequately address the needs of non-Dutch trainee teachers in terms of gaining an understanding of the intercultural environment. The existing CFL training program typically addresses pedagogical and professional issues at a general level about the intercultural context, which may not be appropriate for beginning teachers not originally from the Netherlands. As a result of the lack of proper training and professional support, teachers must overcome many challenges on their own, hence hindering the reconstruction of their identity in a new environment.

Apart from the tensions brought by the intercultural context, the current study reveals that international work experience in the Netherlands provides teachers with opportunities to promote their professional identity. It seems that challenges arising from intercultural teaching contexts cause international teachers to experience a degree of identity dissonance: a mismatch between CFL teachers' previous beliefs about teacher-student relationships and the reality that confronts them in the cross-cultural setting. In previous studies, identity dissonance has been regarded as "powerful and generative" in that it induces teachers to examine their long-held beliefs about teaching and classrooms, and it contributes to the development of professional identity (Alsop, 2006; Galman, 2009). As a means of overcoming identity dissonance, participants in the current study adopt three main strategies also mentioned in previous studies (Galman, 2009; Meijer et al., 2011; Walkington, 2005): reflection (participants Deng and Mei), discourse (participants Su, Xie, Di and Shi), and transformative

processes (most participants). The process of examining and exploring their previous teaching beliefs in these three ways assists these teachers in developing and refining their professional identity.

4.5.2 Influence of contextual factors and personal factors

The findings revealed that most CFL teachers successfully established positive relationships with their students. The participants of our study can be categorized into four interpersonal typologies on the basis of learners' responses to the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI). Wubbels et al. (2006) claimed that these four types lead to positive teacher-student relationships, which in turn contribute to positive student outcomes, student motivation and teacher self-efficacy. This seems to contradict the findings of Wang and Du's study (2016), which stated that CFL teachers normally experience identity tensions related to teacher-student relationships due to different cultural values. A possible explanation for this contrast might be that most participants in this study have been working in the Netherlands for several years. Even those teachers who only have short teaching experiences in a cross-cultural context reported extensive learning experiences in Western education systems. Furthermore, experience in interacting with Dutch students and, in some cases, attending a Dutch teacher education made them familiar with Dutch educational settings, thus helping them to adjust to meet the requirements of the teaching context. This finding is consistent with other previous research, which has suggested that teaching context is one of the significant determiners in the entangled processes of teacher identity formation (Edwards & Burns, 2016), and

that teachers normally adjust the framing and enactment of teaching identities they envision for themselves to fit a certain teaching context (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011).

Aside from contextual factors, personal factors such as cultural background and educational experience also play a critical role in shaping the identity of CFL teachers. The findings revealed that most participants shared similar characteristics in their identity, which seemed to reflect Confucian heritage culture (Ho & Ho, 2008), as mentioned in prior studies. Firstly, in line with previous studies (Yue, 2017), most CFL teachers in the current study displayed a strong focus on organization, discipline, and achieving learning outcomes in their classes. The findings indicated that CFL teachers tended to believe their duty was to impart knowledge to their students, and students were expected to receive information from their teachers. Besides, most participants showed sensitivity and empathy to students, taking lots of responsibility for student learning, caring for students beyond the classroom, and keeping a few Chinese class ceremonies in their classes. These similar identity characteristics further showed the significance of cultural background in teachers' identity development.

4.5.3 The balance in repositioning

As in previous studies focusing on the importance of identity reconstruction in another educational context (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011), the current research further highlighted the necessity for teachers to establish a balance between keeping their previous beliefs and embracing the new culture. The findings revealed that some

participants failed to achieve a balance in the repositioning process. Participants with less experience teaching interculturally faced the dilemma of not being Chinese enough for the Chinese and not Dutch enough for the Dutch. These teachers encountered conflicts with their Dutch colleagues as well as Chinese colleagues, which resulted in identity tensions. The tension regarding the difficulty of finding a balance was also mentioned by teachers with extensive international experience during their first two years in the Netherlands.

In addition, the findings showed different participants have different interpretations of what Dutch educational culture is, due to their personal experiences. This indicates that contextually appropriate and effective balance in the repositioning process is not a one-size-fits-all affair. The decisions about what kind of identity to assume will depend on the particular teaching context as well as the teachers' personal background.

4.5.4 Limitations and future directions

As in all qualitative studies, the findings of this study need to be cautiously interpreted and generalized, given the low number of participants. Levy and Wubbels' (2005) teacher-student relationship model is still in development. The dimensions and the eight sectors (leadership, friendly, understanding, etc.) have been labelled differently in recent research (e.g., Sun et al., 2019). In order to better align with the revised dimensions and sectors, the descriptions of each typology used in the current study may also need to be revised. Besides, as this study chose a cross-sectional design, the processes of identity

development have not been studied. Longitudinal designs might be needed to investigate what kinds of stages CFL teachers go through when teaching in an intercultural context and how their professional identity is reconstructed over time.

4.5.5 Conclusion

The study contributes to a new understanding of international teachers' identity development in an intercultural context. The study demonstrates that the teacher-student relationship is a useful lens to explore and interpret teachers' identity. The findings not only highlight how different cultures influence teachers' identity in a cross-cultural setting, but importantly as well, they specifically illuminate the distinctions of identity among CFL teachers with different interpersonal profiles. Some of these insights may prove beneficial for aiding those who are just starting as teachers in an intercultural context. In particular, both novice and experienced teachers may take note of the identity characteristics demonstrated by the participants with different interpersonal profiles, and also, whether or not such identity development makes sense for their own personal practice(s) and contexts.

Based on the experiences of participants in this study, providers of teacher education for CFL in the Dutch setting might consider designing teacher training and interventions geared specifically towards supporting international teachers in adjusting to the intercultural context. These trainings can include curricula regarding Dutch educational culture and pedagogical skills, to assist teachers in

reconstructing their identity at the very early stage. Additionally, it is important for international teachers to engage in reflective practices, in which they consider how and/or to what extent their own identities and cultures shape their relationships with their students. Schools and the Nuffic network for Chinese teachers could support this, for example by facilitating intervention meetings to help teachers reflect on their practice and receive constructive feedback from their peers.



5

This chapter is under review in an adapted form as:
Liu, X., Mearns, T., & Admiraal, W. Navigating Cross-Cultural
Landscapes: A Systematic Literature Review of Teacher Identity
development in Intercultural Contexts Abroad.

Abstract

This systematic review examined research on international teachers' teacher identity development in intercultural contexts based on 38 peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2024. The study aimed to investigate how international teachers develop their teacher identity and the processes that underpin this development. Three dimensions of teacher identity, namely personal identity, professional identity, and sociocultural identity were adopted as the framework to explore how international teachers navigate the complexities of cultural adaptation, professional roles, and social integration in intercultural settings. The findings reveal that teacher identity development in intercultural settings is a complex, multidimensional process shaped by personal, professional, and sociocultural factors. Moreover, the findings highlight the dynamic interplay among these dimensions and underscore the importance of continuous adaptation, reflection, and support. The findings show the challenges and opportunities faced by international teachers as they develop their teacher identity, which is both authentic to their personal beliefs and responsive to the intercultural dynamics of their host environments. By addressing the challenges identified in this review and implementing evidence-based interventions, educational institutions can better support international teachers in their transformative journeys.

5.1 Introduction

The expanding globalization of education has created more opportunities for teachers to work internationally (Bense, 2016). In the meantime, working abroad brings numerous challenges to international teachers' professional growth and identity development (Poole, 2020). International teachers - those who work in intercultural settings abroad - find their personal and professional selves are often tested, challenged, and transformed in culturally diverse environments (Liu et al., 2024). These teachers are not merely imports of pedagogical methods or instructional strategies from their home countries; rather, they are situated in new educational systems that require them to be reflective, adaptable, and negotiative of their roles (Yip et al., 2019). Teacher identity in such cultural environments is a complex and changing construct that is shaped by interactions of personal beliefs (Ennsen-Kananen & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2023), cultural norms, institutional rules, and professional experiences (Skerritt, 2019).

Scholars claim that teacher identity plays a crucial role in assisting teachers to understand their roles better (Li, 2022), build rapport with students (Liu et al., 2023), and enhance their job satisfaction (Hanna et al., 2019). Identity is not fixed; it is dynamic and can change through the process of self-reflection, interaction with others, and adaptation to changing contexts (Sahling & Carvalho, 2021). The process of identity construction for teachers who teach abroad is complicated due to the challenge of integrating their home culture with the culture of the host country (Leigh, 2019). The conflict between the

two sets of cultural expectations can be both beneficial and harmful for teachers as they try to reconcile their cultural values with the requirements of their new teaching context (Lee & Jang, 2023). Therefore, it is crucial to understand how international teachers experience this process of identity development since it has implications for teachers' teaching efficacy (Poole, 2020), integration (Guo & Sidhu, 2024), job satisfaction, and career advancement (Zheng, 2017).

However, the literature on identity development of international teachers is lacking. This literature review seeks to fill this gap by discussing current research on identity development of teachers working in an intercultural context abroad. The present study aims to offer a deep understanding of how international teachers develop their teacher identity, the characteristics of this process, and the implications for teacher education and support in intercultural educational settings abroad. In the end, the current review seeks to offer valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers who are interested in supporting international teachers as they work in the diverse contexts of teaching abroad.

5.2 Theoretical framework

In the current study, teacher identity refers to the self-image and the professional position that teachers develop as the result of their life experiences, teaching experiences, and the educational environments they teach in (Beijaard et al., 2004). It is a dynamic construct that can be developed and changed over time, and it influences how teachers

perceive themselves, how they interact with their students, and how they relate to their colleagues and school environment (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Tajeddin and Nazari (2025) argued that the process of becoming a teacher is not a linear one; teachers normally experience changes in their teacher identity when the working context changes, especially when teaching abroad.

Scholars claim that various factors exert influence on international teachers' identity development, such as personal experiences, professional recognition, and cultural adaption (Guo et al., 2021; Wen et al., 2024). These factors refer to three dimensions of teacher identity – personal identity, professional identity, and sociocultural identity. Pennington and Richards (2016), Tajeddin and Nazari (2025) incorporated the three dimensions to explore teacher identity - a multifaceted construct. In their research, *personal identity* refers to teachers' personal beliefs and their emotional responses to cultural challenges. *Professional identity* means teachers' professional expectations and competencies, and also their adaptation to institutional expectations. *Sociocultural identity* refers to social roles shaped by cultural contexts and their interaction with the local community. Pennington and Richards (2016) argue that the three dimensions of teacher identity are not isolated; they interact synergistically, creating a fluid identity that evolves as teachers navigate diverse environments. In intercultural settings, where teachers straddle conflicting cultural norms and institutional expectations, this interconnectedness becomes particularly salient (Leigh, 2019).

The frameworks of teacher identity collectively argue that, to have a more comprehensive understanding of teacher identity development, it is important and necessary to investigate the personal, professional, and sociocultural dimensions of teacher identity. Each dimension provides critical insights into how teachers navigate their roles, manage conflicts, and adapt to changing environments. Considering that the personal, professional, and sociocultural dimensions are intricately related, an in-depth exploration of how they interact in the context of intercultural teaching abroad is essential. As teachers engage with diverse educational environments and cultures, it is necessary to develop a deeper understanding of how they navigate the complexities of cultural adaptation, professional roles, and social integration. Therefore, the following research question is posed to review the scientific knowledge base of international teachers' identity development in intercultural settings:

How do international teachers develop their teacher identity in intercultural educational settings abroad?

5.3 Methodology

The present study is a systematic literature review. The principles of the PRISMA statement (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) (Moher et al., 2009) were used as a guideline to conduct and report this review work. The eligibility criteria, information sources, search strategy, selection process, data collection, data items, and synthesis process are described in the following subsections.

5.3.1 Search

Utilising PRISMA (Moher et al., 2009) principles, this study began with an extensive search of the literature using electronic searches and the snowballing method. The federated search service provided by the [removed for blind review] library was used for the electronic search. It is a comprehensive database, whose sources include, amongst others, Web of Science, Taylor and Francis, Elsevier/ScienceDirect and EBSCOhost. Since the latest review study regarding international teacher mobility and migration was published in 2016 and reviewed articles from 2000 to 2015 (see Bense, 2016), we sought peer-reviewed articles published after 2015 to provide an up-to-date synopsis of the current knowledge base on teacher identity in an intercultural context. The last search was carried out at the end of 2024.

The following sets of keywords were used: (1) keywords relating to teacher identity: “teacher identity”, “professional identity of teachers:”, and “teacher professional identity”; (2) keywords relating to the intercultural context: “intercultural”, “international”, “cross-cultural”, “multicultural”; (3) keywords relating to the international teacher: “foreign teacher*”, “expat”, “teaching abroad”, “teaching overseas”, “teaching overseas”, “teacher mobility”. The first set of keywords and the other two sets were combined using the Boolean operator “AND”, and the second and third strains were combined using the Boolean operator “OR”. The aim was to incorporate articles reporting on teacher identity development in intercultural settings while striking a balance between very broad terms that would find many

articles related to the topic and very narrow terms that would only identify articles that exactly matched with the specific words of the research question. To limit the search to in-service teachers, the Boolean operator “NOT” was used with a list of keywords related to pre-service teachers, including “pre-service teacher*”, “student teacher*”, “preservice teacher*”, “student-teacher*”. The search for these terms was applied to titles, abstracts, author keywords and Keywords Plus. To enhance transparency and trustworthiness, the authors kept records of the search procedure, including the search string, the language of the search terms, the number of hits, and the date of the search.

5.3.2 Selection

The search on 20 August 2024 rendered 536 articles that were related to teacher identity development in intercultural settings. The title and abstract of each identified study were firstly screened for eligibility. The studies without full text were excluded, and 338 studies remained for further analysis. The search and selection processes were carried out primarily by the first author, the second and third author providing quality control.

Studies were included if they met the following criteria, which were established by the three authors together:

- a) concerned empirical research;
- b) concerned teacher identity development (an ongoing process of teachers interpreting and re-interpreting who they are and who they want to be as teachers);

c) concerned teachers' mobility (teachers move to and teach in abroad).

The articles were firstly read by the first author based on the above-mentioned inclusion criteria. The first author then made the first decision on whether the articles should be included. In the next step, the second and the third author screened all the articles to double-check the first author's decisions. In the screening phase, the first author had doubts about whether to include a subset of six articles regarding teacher assistants. The second and third authors judged this subset on whether they should be included in the full review. The authors discussed the article selection, and consensus was reached. Applying these inclusion criteria reduced our database to 38 studies. The search and selection procedure are illustrated in Fig.5.1.

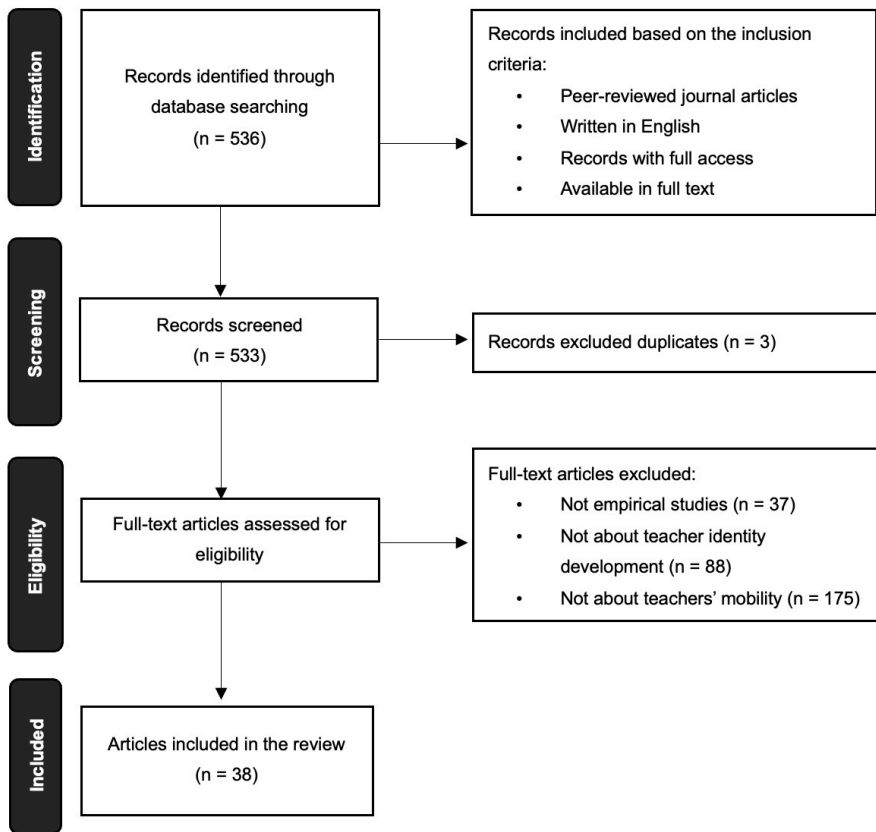


Figure. 5.1. *Search and selection process*

5.3.3 Data analysis

Basic information on the reviewed studies, such as country setting, type of education as identified in the article, and research methodology, can be seen in Appendix A. A deductive – inductive thematic synthesis approach, which combines both theory-driven deductive methods with data-driven inductive methods, was adopted to analyze the selected studies. This approach enabled researchers to perform a structured evaluation of current literature through both predefined themes

connected to teacher identity development (deductive) and flexible exploration of international teachers' experiences (inductive). In the deductive phase, the existing theoretical frameworks of teacher identity, which include three dimensions (personal identity, professional identity, and sociocultural identity), served as an organized framework for initial analysis. The inductive phase that followed aimed to deepen the analysis, enriching and expanding the original theoretical dimensions. The steps of the analysis process are described below.

In the first phase, all 38 studies were reviewed to extract key information that answered the research question. Quotes and information related to teacher identity development, intercultural adaptation, and challenges faced by international teachers were extracted. Then, in the second phase, a deductive coding framework was first applied to categorize data under the pre-defined dimensions of teacher identity (personal, professional, sociocultural). For example, quotes regarding exploring self-image, and decreasing in confidence were categorized under personal identity; patterns about institutional policies, and changes in pedagogical methods were put in professional identity; information about racial discrimination, and cross-cultural repositioning in new contexts were categorized under sociocultural identity. Thirdly, within each deductively derived dimension, open coding was applied to identify emergent patterns across the literature. In the fourth phase, codes were clustered into cohesive sub-dimensions (e.g., "racial discrimination" under sub-dimensions "racial challenges") and mapped their relationships to the framework with three dimensions. The sub-themes were developed through an iterative process during

discussions among the authors to guarantee consistency and to elaborate on the discovered results. Table 5.1 illustrates how the sub-dimensions were related to the three dimensions of teacher identity.

Table 5.1 *Three dimensions of teacher identity in the reviewed studies*

Reference (author(s), year)	Personal Identity	Professional Identity	Sociocultural Identity
Ballantyne (2024)	Self-dialogue transitional identity	Role enactment in Australian classrooms	Cultural historical mediation of identity
Bailey and Cooker (2019)	Identity negotiation	"Third cultural teacher" identity	Hybridity in international schools
Chesnut (2020)	Gendered self-perception; Emotional frustration	Acceptable professional femininity;	Gendered scrutiny in figured worlds
Emser-Kananen & Ruohotie-Lyhy (2023)	Being "foreign"; Identity renegotiation	Legitimacy as a migrant teacher	Being a cultural broker
Frimyar (2018)	Stress due to language barrier	Institutional-identity in Kazakh schools Discrepancy between local and foreign salaries	Affinity-identity Cultural negotiation
Guo et al. (2021)	Ethical self-examination	Market influences on teacher identity	Cultural essentialism in China
Gong et al. (2022)	Identity renegotiation; Global citizen	Chinese language teacher identity; School staff member identity	Multicultural identity; Cultural transmitter identity;
Guo and Sidhu (2024)	Identity unbecoming/becoming Cross-cultural experiences	Multilingual teacher identity development	Cultural capital in global contexts
Gras (2024)	Ethnic background influence Emotional frustration	Legitimacy of teachers of color	Structural racism
Huang and Varghese (2015)	Composite identity construction	NNEST legitimacy in U.S. schools	Linguistic marginalization

(continued)

Reference (author(s), year)	Personal Identity	Professional Identity	Sociocultural Identity
Jeongyeon and Young (2020)	Emotional alignment with students	Negotiating teacher authority	Cross-cultural classroom interactions
Leigh (2019)	Motivations; Cultural struggles	Authenticity as foreign teachers	Cross-cultural positioning in China
Lee & Jang (2023)	Emotional labor, Identity denial	Legitimacy as a teacher; Agency in work	Racial discrimination; Belonging strategies
Liu et al. (2023)	Embracing “other” culture; Identity tensions	Teacher-student relationship dynamics	Cross-cultural repositioning in Dutch schools
Lee and Jang (2023)	Identity denial Emotional labor	Devaluation and delegitimization of teachers’ professionalism	Isolation and racial discrimination
Liu et al. (2024)	Different thoughts on self-image Change in self-efficacy	Pedagogical shifts in Dutch schools	Cultural adaptation in the Netherlands
Mutlu & Ortactepe, (2016)	Shift in self-image; Confidence as a native-speaker	Institutional recognition; Shift of pedagogical practices	Cultural adaptation
McAllum (2017)	Emotional displacement;	Development of international academic identity	Linguistic/cultural adaptation
Miller (2021)	Identity renegotiation; Emotional labor	Community of Practice (CoP) phases; Pedagogical shifts	Cross-cultural repositioning
Minagawa & Nesbitt (2022)	Inadequate in English brought emotional labor	Linguistic identity; Rapport with students	Non-native English status; Cultural context

(continued)

Reference (author(s), year)	Personal Identity	Professional Identity	Sociocultural Identity
Ozmatan et al. (2023)	Refugee identity; Motivation factors;	Teacher identity; Professional roots	Systemic barriers; Cultural displacement
Poole (2020)	Preservation of ethnic identity	Resistance to institutional rituals	Cultural capital in Chinese schools
Rosenfeld et al. (2022)	Personal identity development abroad	Agency in school integration ("stepping up" vs. "pushing back")	Cultural identity as teachers return home
Skerritt (2019)	Identity crises; Negative emotions	Autonomy vs. accountability; Institutional pressures	Cultural negotiation in England
Sahling and Carvalho (2021)	Reflective practice; Identity negotiation	Adapting to new educational contexts	Cross-cultural value systems
Sun et al. (2022)	Self-positioning as cultural ambassadors	Institutional positioning as "assistants"	Cross-cultural teaching in the New Zealand
Uzun (2017)	Biographical influences on pedagogical beliefs	Socialization of Fulbright assistants	Dialogic cultural adaptation
Wernicke (2017)	Parental responsibility	Negotiating authenticity as FSL teacher	Native speaker ideologies
Weinmann and Arber (2017)	Native speaker or Non-native speaker teachers	Language teacher visibility; Professional communication	Multilingual trajectories
Weng (2024)	Growth mindset; Relational agency	Online teaching strategies; Mentorship	Role as a transnational scholar

(continued)

Reference (author(s), year)	Personal Identity	Professional Identity	Sociocultural Identity
Walker and Bunnell (2024)	Emotional transition (de-skilled to re-skilled)	MYP program adaptation; Collaborative training	International school community belonging
Wen et al. (2024)	Emotional confidence development	Online teaching adaptation in foreign contexts	Cross-cultural student-teacher dynamics
Yip et al. (2019)	Identity confusion; Stress from adaptation	Cross-cultural teaching challenges	Singaporean vs. Chinese pedagogical norms
Yip and Saito (2024)	Identity renegotiation	Skill recognition; Institutional belonging	Cultural Adaptation
Zheng (2017)	Ethnic identity; Identity renegotiation	Translingual pedagogy	Identity-as-pedagogy in multilingual classrooms
Zacharias (2019)	Identity renegotiation	Native-speakerism in transnational contexts	Resistance to linguistic essentialism
Zang et al. (2024)	Emotion labor; Internalized conflict	Hierarchical mentoring in residencies	Confucian ideologies in teacher training
Zhu and Alsup (2024)	Emotional challenges under COVID-19	Teaching philosophy adaptation	Anti-Asian sentiment; Cultural caution

5.4 Results

This systematic literature review investigates how international teachers develop their teacher identity in intercultural settings abroad, focusing on three dimensions: personal identity, professional identity, and sociocultural identity. Based on Pennington and Richards (2016), Tajeddin and Nazari's (2025) frameworks on teacher identity, in this review study, personal identity is an identity drawing on teachers' personal beliefs and their emotional responses to cultural challenges; *Professional identity* refers to teachers' professional expectations and competencies, as well as their adaptation to institutional expectation; *Sociocultural identity* refers to teachers' social roles shaped by cultural contexts, and their interaction with the local community. The findings reveal the interconnections among these dimensions and demonstrate that identity development is a dynamic, ongoing, and context-dependent process. Under each dimension, adaptation, transformation, and negotiation can be observed in the identity development process as teachers navigate their changing roles in new environments.

5.4.1 *Personal Identity: negotiating the self in a new context*

Personal identity plays a crucial role in shaping how international teachers navigate their roles in new contexts. Several sub-themes emerge in the development of personal identity, including identity renegotiation, self-efficacy, and emotional labor. Table 5.2 presents the definition of sub-themes in this dimension as well as the examples belonging to sub-themes.

Table 5.2 *Sub-dimensions of personal identity*

Sub-dimensions	Definition	Examples from reviewed studies
Identity (re)negotiation	The process of reconciling past and present experiences to redefine self-image in intercultural settings.	<p>Guo & Sidhu (2024): Multilingual teachers transitioned from "unbecoming" to "becoming," integrating cross-cultural experiences into identity reconstruction.</p> <p>Ozmantar et al. (2023): Refugee teachers balanced suppressed identities with emerging professional roles.</p> <p>Liu et al. (2024): Teachers shifted from seeing themselves as language instructors to cultural ambassadors.</p>
Self-efficacy and confidence growth	Teachers' belief in their ability to navigate challenges and succeed in new contexts.	<p>Wernicke (2017): Teachers initially struggled with language barriers but grew confidence through training.</p> <p>Weng (2024): Teachers reframed challenges as opportunities, enhancing self-efficacy.</p> <p>Walker & Bunnell (2024): Teachers transitioned from "de-skilled" to "reborn" via experimentation.</p>
Emotional labor	The emotional effort required to manage cultural dissonance and systemic exclusion.	<p>Zheng (2017) & McAllum (2017): Teachers faced frustration and isolation due to being "othered."</p> <p>Jeongyeon & Young (2020): Teachers transformed exclusion into resilience through adaptation.</p> <p>Ballantyne (2024): Reflective "self-dialogue" helped Chinese volunteers in Australia redefine their roles.</p>

5.4.1.1 Identity (re)negotiation

In intercultural settings abroad, teachers negotiated their teacher identity by integrating their past experiences with present experiences. Guo and Sidhu (2024) illustrate a transformative “unbecoming-to-becoming” trajectory, where multilingual teachers integrated past experiences into identity reconstruction. Similarly, non-native English speaker teachers in the US constructed “composite teacher identity” (Huang & Varghese, 2015), blending linguistic expertise with institutional roles to counter native-speaker biases. For refugee teachers in Ozmantar et al. (2023), identity development involved balancing suppressed refugee identity with emerging professional roles, navigating barriers like discriminatory work conditions.

Furthermore, Liu et al. (2024) report that many teachers reflected on their self-image and motivation, acknowledging the fluidity of their teacher identity as they adapt to unfamiliar environments. Initially, many teachers saw themselves solely as language instructors. However, as they integrated into their new roles, their self-image often transformed into that of a cultural ambassador or mediator. This transformation was gradual and shaped by teachers’ increasing awareness of the cultural differences between their home and host countries. Similarly, Yip and Saito (2024), Ennser-Kananen and Ruohotie-Lyhty (2023) show that teachers often shifted from seeing themselves as mere language instructors to cultural brokers, with their identity evolving as they negotiated between different educational

and cultural expectations. Over time, this change led to the integration of diverse cultural perspectives into their teaching practice.

5.4.1.2 Self-efficacy and confidence growth

Wernicke (2017) and Guo and Sidhu (2024) show that self-efficacy plays a central role in personal identity development. Initially, many teachers experienced low self-efficacy as they were confronted with unfamiliar teaching contexts, particularly when dealing with language barriers or cultural differences. Similarly, Sahling and Carvalho (2021) indicate that international teachers who are not adaptable and do not acknowledge differing institutional cultures and wider cultural environments are normally low in self-efficacy as a teacher and thus couldn't recognize or realized their value in the new context.

Several of the studies illustrate that, however, over time, teachers' self-efficacy strengthens as they become more comfortable in their roles. Weng (2024) reports that this transformation happened because some teachers reframed challenges as developmental opportunities. For example, teachers in Minagawa and Nesbitt (2022) participated in training and developed self-knowledge and awareness, thus they gained respect and trust from their students and became more confident. Walker and Bunnell (2024) argue that native English teachers moved from feeling "de-skilled" to "reborn" through iterative pedagogical experimentation. Moreover, Miller's (2021) study of international academics also highlights how Communities of Practice (CoPs) fostered self-efficacy through phased development – from

initial nervousness to identity shifts – as teachers internalized new pedagogies.

5.4.1.3 Emotional labor

Teachers often engage in significant emotional labor, especially when navigating difficult intercultural challenges. For instance, Zheng (2017) and McAllum (2017) discuss how teachers initially experienced frustration and isolation, particularly when faced with the feeling of being “othered” in the host country. Lee and Jang (2023) also discuss the feeling of being “othered”, as the “teachers of color” (page 172) in Korea faced systemic “identity denial”, where their legitimacy was questioned despite qualifications.

Conversely, studies like Jeongyeon and Young (2020) reveal that with increased exposure and adaptation to the new environment, emotional labor became part of the teachers’ learning process. The emotional toll of exclusion or misperceptions gradually transformed into resilience as teachers found strategies to cope with these challenges. Participants in Weng’s study (2024) leveraged institutional resources (e.g., mentors) to navigate online teaching challenges, while Chinese volunteers in Australia transformed their self-perception through reflective “self-dialogue” (Ballantyne, 2024). Emotional engagement with students – such as adopting roles as “mentors” or “friends” – enabled identity shifts, as seen in Jeongyeon and Young’s (2020) study of Korean foreign language teachers who blended compassion with authority. In these examples, emotional labor becomes an opportunity for personal growth as international teachers refine their emotional

responses and develop coping mechanisms that allow them to continue adapting to new cultural and institutional demands.

5.4.2 Professional Identity: adapting and reconstructing teaching roles

Professional identity refers to teachers' professional expectations and competencies, as well as their adaptation to institutional expectations. This dimension can be broken down into several subdimensions: shifts of pedagogical practices, institutional recognition and legitimacy, and community integration. Table 5.3 presents the definition of sub-themes in this dimension as well as the examples belonging to sub-themes.

Table 5.3 *Sub-dimensions of professional identity*

Sub-dimensions	Definition	Examples from reviewed studies
Shifts of pedagogical practices	The adaptation of teaching methods to align with host country norms, blending previous knowledge with local strategies.	Wen et al. (2024): Western teachers in China transitioned from "class teachers" to "learning partners," adopting student-centered online approaches. Liu et al. (2024): CFL teachers in the Netherlands shifted from exam-focused instruction to fostering cross-cultural awareness. Mulu & Ortatepe (2016): Non-native Turkish teachers prioritized student engagement over grammar drills despite lacking formal training.
Institutional recognition and legitimacy	The struggle to gain professional validation within institutional structures, often hindered by systemic barriers.	Skerritt (2019): Irish teachers in England faced identity crises due to rigid accountability mechanisms prioritizing standardized testing. Zang et al. (2024): Hierarchical mentoring structures diminished teachers' authority in teaching. Lee & Jang (2023): NETs in Korea were confined to "assistant" roles, limiting curricular influence.
Community integration	The process of increasing belonging through engagement with professional communities and local culture.	Rosenfeld et al. (2022): Teachers transitioned from feeling isolated to integrated through community participation. Weinmann & Arber (2017): Teachers overcame exclusion by building relationships with local colleagues. Liu et al. (2023): Intercultural competence enhanced pedagogical effectiveness through cross-cultural peer communication.

5.4.2.1 Shifts of pedagogical practices

Uzum (2017) and Poole (2020) explore how teaching practices develop for international teachers in their new teaching contexts. When first started their teaching abroad, teachers might use their previous knowledge and pedagogical practices in teaching, but over time, they gradually realized the need to change the approaches to the local ones. This change might involve the use of more student-centered approaches (Wen et al., 2024), the use of different methods of instruction to suit the local learners' learning style (Liu et al., 2024), and the adaptation of the classroom management systems (Mutlu & Ortaçtepe, 2016).

In Wen et al.'s (2024) research, western teachers in China adapted to online environments by transitioning from “class teachers” to “learning partners”, focusing on student-centered approaches. Similarly, in Liu et al. study (2024), CFL teachers in the Netherlands shifted from focusing on examination to fostering cross-cultural awareness, which showed a change in the pedagogical approach. Mutlu & Ortaçtepe (2016) observed non-native Turkish teachers who defined their methods to enhance student engagement as opposed to grammar drills, despite lacking formal training. These articles indicate that as teachers continue to gain intercultural experience, they begin to integrate local pedagogical strategies with their teaching methods, therefore, develop a professional identity that reflects both their home and host country's educational culture.

5.4.2.2 Institutional recognition and legitimacy

A prominent pattern across the reviewed studies was that systemic barriers tended to challenge professional legitimacy. Irish teachers in England (Skerritt, 2019) clashed with the inspectorate's rigid accountability mechanisms, which prioritized standardized testing over their autonomy-focused ethos. This dissonance triggered identity crises as teachers struggled to reconcile their values with institutional demands. Conversely, Yip and Saito (2024) find that immigrant teachers in Australia thrived when their prior qualifications were recognized, enabling them to innovate pedagogically while fostering a sense of belonging. Rosenfeld et al. (2022) also pointed out that recognition in intercultural settings was not a given but rather happened when teachers navigated institutional practices and demonstrated their effectiveness in the new context.

While the recognition of teachers' qualifications and practices can mitigate systemic barriers, institutional hierarchies often exacerbate inequities by restricting authority. Teachers in Zang et al. (2024) study had less authority and legitimacy in the classroom because of hierarchical mentoring arrangements in institutions. Similarly, native-speaker English teachers in Korea (Lee & Jang, 2023) were limited to "assistant" roles, limiting their influence over curricula. These examples highlight how institutional hierarchies perpetuate inequities and require structural reforms.

5.4.2.3 Community integration

Rosenfeld et al. (2022) argue that teachers' feeling of integration into the community is vital for their professional identity development.

According to Weinmann and Arber (2017), teachers in their studies felt excluded or isolated in the beginning, especially if they are seen as outsiders due to their ethnicity or nationality in schools. However, as teachers participated in community events, built relationships with local colleagues, and engaged with the local culture, their sense of belonging strengthened.

Wen et al. (2024) report that teachers achieved professional confidence by integrating with the local community to deal with changes in cross-cultural settings. Liu et al. (2023) further state that intercultural competence was related to pedagogical effectiveness, and teachers who participated in cross-cultural conversations with peers in communities developed more extensive instructional toolkits. Similarly, Guo et al. (2021) point out that by integrating into the community, teachers felt more supported and less isolated, which benefited their professional development. The above examples highlight the need for inclusive Communities of Practices that embrace varied expertise.

5.4.3 Sociocultural Identity: belonging and exclusion in intercultural contexts

Sociocultural identity refers to how international teachers perceive and engage with the cultural and social dynamics of their new environments. This dimension is characterized by cultural negotiation, role adoption, community integration, and exclusion. Table 5.4 presents the definition of sub-themes in this dimension as well as the examples belonging to sub-themes.

Table 5.4 *Sub-dimensions of socio-cultural identity*

Sub-dimensions	Definition	Examples from reviewed studies
Cultural negotiation and adaptation	The process of mediating between home and host culture values to refine roles and enhance belonging.	Ennsér-Kananen & Ruohotie-Lyhy (2023): Migrant teachers in Finland blended Finnish pedagogies with their cultural expertise. Sun et al. (2022): CFL teachers in New Zealand acted as “cultural bridges”, using Mandarin festivals to bridge cultural divides. Lee & Jang (2023): Teachers integrated local practices into daily teaching, enhancing acceptance.
Exclusion and racial/social challenges	Systemic discrimination (racial, linguistic, gendered) that marginalizes teachers and challenges their legitimacy.	Lee & Jang (2023): Black educators in Korea faced “identity denial” due to racial stereotypes. Gras (2024): Teachers of color in ELT encountered hiring biases favoring Whiteness. Chesnut (2020): Foreign women in Korea reclaimed agency through hybrid dress codes to resist gendered scrutiny.
Negotiating belonging	Strategic balancing of assimilation and resistance to assert cultural identity.	Poole (2020): An Africaner teacher in China resisted institutional rituals to preserve cultural identity. Yip et al. (2019): Teachers adopted “cultural ambassador” roles to critique essentialist norms. Leigh (2019): Foreign teachers in China framed themselves as “authentic teachers” to legitimize their presence.

5.4.3.1 *Cultural negotiation and adaptation*

Bailey and Cooker's (2019), and Guo and Sidhu (2024) argue that teachers frequently acted as cultural mediators, negotiating between home and host values. For instance, a migrant teacher in Finland (Ennser-Kananen & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2023) renegotiated their roles by blending host country pedagogies with their cultural expertise. Similarly, CFL teachers in New Zealand (Sun et al., 2022) positioned themselves as "cultural bridges", using Mandarin festivals to foster cross-cultural understanding while adhering to local curricula. These examples illustrate how cultural brokerage serves as a survival way in new educational settings.

As cultural mediation enables teachers to navigate cultural differences, it also facilitates more nuanced identity negotiations that integrate institutional demands and cultural expectations. Fimyar's (2018) study of international teachers in Kazakhstan highlights *affinity identities*, where teachers are aligned with institutional ideologies while retaining personal values. For example, one teacher embraced the school's modest citizen goal while subtly infusing lessons with an international perspective, illustrating how cultural negotiation can fulfill teachers' pursuit of international education. Lee & Jang (2023) further highlight that teachers' sense of belonging and acceptance within the host culture grows as they integrated local cultural practices into their daily lives and teaching. This process of cultural negotiation helped teachers redefine their roles, not only as teachers but as active participants in the local cultural landscape.

5.4.3.2 Exclusion and racial/social challenges

Despite the positive aspects of cultural negotiation, teachers are also face challenges in terms of exclusion, particularly racial and ethnic discrimination. In the study by Lee & Jang (2023), black educators in Korea were misperceived as “illegitimate”, with their authority questioned because of ethnic stereotypes. Similarly, teachers of color in English language teaching contended with hiring practices structured by racism, where whiteness was a proxy for competence (Gras, 2024). Linguistic hierarchies further marginalize non-native speakers; NNESTs in the US (Huang & Varghese, 2015) had to highlight their pedagogical strengths and avoid letting their identity be defined by their linguistic status.

Gendered discrimination added further to these challenges. Foreign women in South Korea (Chesnut, 2020) were subject to scrutiny of their dress and bodies, which undermined their professional identity. Teachers, however, reclaimed agency by adopting hybrid clothing that blended Western professionalism with Korean modesty, illustrating how resistance can be both subtle and transformative. These experiences of exclusion slowly changed teachers’ perceptions of their sociocultural identity. Teachers in Lee and Jang (2023) study coped with exclusion by being resilient and seeking support from other communities and networks within and outside of work. Zheng (2017) discusses how these challenges triggered identity transformation so that teachers became more self-aware of their function as both teachers and cultural representatives.

5.4.3.3 Negotiating belonging and resistance

Zacharias (2019) and Zhu and Alsup (2024) suggest that initially, teachers might feel insecure about their ability to bridge cultural divides. However, over time, as they gained experience and understanding of both their home and host cultures, the teachers found ways to strengthen their belonging. Belonging is negotiated through strategic assimilation and resistance. An Afrikaner teacher in China (Poole, 2020) preserved his cultural identity by staring at the floor during flag-raising ceremonies, a passive act of resistance that asserted his autonomy. Conversely, CFL teachers in the Netherlands (Liu et al., 2023) blended Confucian discipline with Dutch equality, fostering classrooms that respected both traditions. As summarized by Gong et al. (2022), the balance in keeping home culture and embracing host culture enhanced teachers' sense of professional purpose and helped them build rapport and strengthen their presence within the host country.

Building on this interplay of strategic adaptation and cultural preservation, teachers in Yip et al. (2019) study adopted the role of cultural ambassador, through which teacher further negotiated their sociocultural identity. Leigh's (2019) study of foreign teachers in China further reveals how educators navigated belonging through "authentic teacher" roles. By framing themselves as cultural ambassadors, they legitimized their presence while critiquing essentialist expectations (e.g., the "native speaker" ideal). This duality - embracing and resisting cultural norms - highlights belonging as a dynamic, contested process.

5.4.4 Interconnections Among the Dimensions

By illuminating how personal, professional, and sociocultural identity dimensions interact synergistically and antagonistically, the study advances a holistic understanding of teacher identity as a relational ecosystem shaped by power, agency, and context. Figure 5.2 shows the interconnections among the three dimensions during the identity development process in intercultural settings.

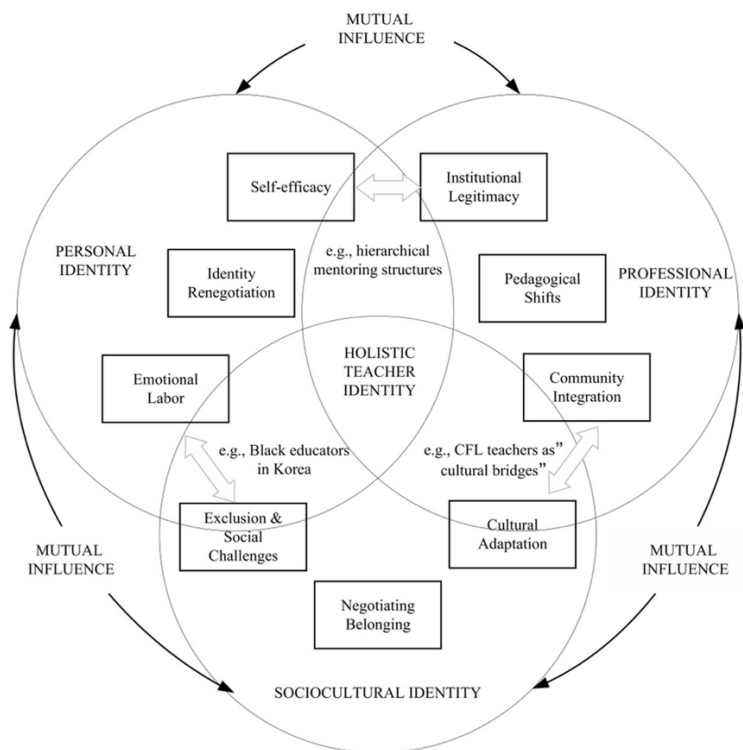


Figure. 5.2. *International teachers' identity development in intercultural settings*

The framework shown in the figure presents teachers' identity as a complex construct with different dimensions and their interactions being the components of the construct. Each dimension includes several related themes that define teachers' way of steering through the processes of their identity development in intercultural settings. The personal dimension includes aspects like teachers' identity renegotiation, self-efficacy and confidence growth, and emotional labor, which are critical for teachers to develop and perform effectively. The professional dimension is based on shifts of pedagogical practice, institutional legitimacy, and community integration. The socio-cultural dimension focuses on cultural adaptation, exclusion and racial/social challenges, and negotiating belonging. The Venn figure's overlapping areas show that identity is not encased but rather constructed through the processes of negotiation within the interactions between these dimensions. For instance, a teacher's emotional labor (personal) affects their willingness to try new pedagogies (professional), and systemic inequities like racial challenges (sociocultural) restrict their institutional legitimacy (professional).

The interplay between the personal and professional dimensions is shown in cases where teachers' self-efficacy and emotional labor foster pedagogical innovation. For example, the teacher in Weng (2024), used her relational agency (personal) to seek mentorship and overcome challenges of online teaching (professional), which helped her overcome her initial anxiety to become an expert. However, negative examples include institutional legitimacy, such as hierarchical mentoring structures (Zang et al., 2024) that can reduce self-efficacy

(personal) of new teachers who are called “assistants”. This mutual influence model shows that personal development and professional advancement are interdependent but also contingent on environmental factors. Likewise, refugee teachers (Ozmantar et al., 2023) who had suppressed their personalities (personal) had to find their professional identities for the first time, showing how individual paths become professional routes in turn.

The sociocultural dimension engages with both the personal and professional identity dimensions and often functions as a mediator of power and belonging. For instance, Black educators in Korea (Lee & Jang, 2023) experienced racialized exclusion (sociocultural) that affected their professional credibility (professional) and led to identity issues (personal). Moreover, there were teachers who, similar to CFL instructors in New Zealand who positioned themselves as ‘cultural bridges’ (Sun et al., 2022), by virtue of their ability to navigate cultural hierarchies, achieved dual legitimacy of their professionalism by incorporating the norms of the host country as well as their heritage (professional-sociocultural). The central gap of the framework, where all three dimensions meet, is holistic teacher identity – a dynamic state in which educators, including ‘third culture teachers’ (Bailey and Cooker, 2019) move beyond the binary and create unique identities for themselves. This center confirms that teacher identity development occurs when systemic barriers are eliminated, and inclusive communities of practice are supported. In the end, the framework rejects simplistic conceptions of teacher identity, which means that

teacher identity is a sociopolitical process of negotiation, resistance, and transformation.

5.5 Discussion

This systematic review reveals the specific and nonlinear pathways that lead international teachers to construct their teacher identity in the context of intercultural settings abroad. The review contributes to the literature on teacher identity examining the teacher identity construction process through the interplay between personal, professional, and sociocultural dimensions. The findings indicate that teacher identity development is an ongoing, complex, and multifaceted process of adaptation, transformation, and negotiation. The outcome of the study reveals that personal, professional, and sociocultural identities are integrated and interdependent, and that they coalesce to define the overall identity of teacher. Each dimension contributes to the overall development of teacher identity while interacting with the other dimensions.

5.5.1 Identity as a fluid, collective endeavor

The review reveals that teacher identity is not fixed but rather something that is formed and negotiated through interactions with students, colleagues, and institutional systems. This aligns with Wenger's (1999) theory of identity formation within Community of Practice (CoP), where belonging and legitimacy are negotiated through participation and reification. For instance, teachers who engaged in CoP in Miller's (2021) study demonstrated greater resilience and adaptability, suggesting that collaborative professional networks are

critical for fostering identity development. However, the findings also reveal limitations of CoP in hierarchical contexts, such as the Native English teachers in Lee and Jang's study (2024), whose agency is constrained by their assistant status and lack of local language proficiency. This tension highlights the need for inclusive CoPs that embrace equality and partnership.

The concept of hybrid identity emerged as a central theme in the current review, particularly among "third culture teachers" (Bailey & Cooker, 2019) and refugee educators (Ozmantar et al., 2023). These teachers moved between cultural and pedagogical practices in liminal spaces, problematizing the binary of native and foreigner as expert and novice. For example, CFL teachers in Liu et al.'s study (2024) in the Netherlands combined the best of Chinese exam-focused teaching with Dutch student-centered approaches, which shows how hybrid approaches can enhance pedagogy and foster intercultural communication.

5.5.2 The role of agency in navigating structural barriers

Agency was identified as an important component to identity development and teachers' adjustment in the new educational context. Teachers exercised agency through strategies such as relational resource-seeking (Weng, 2024), pedagogical experimentation (Walker & Bunnell, 2024), and everyday resistance (Poole, 2020). These acts are in concordance with Priestley et al.'s (2015) definition of agency as a "situated achievement", where people make use of available resources to claim their authority. For instance, teachers in Rosenfeld et al.'s

study (2022) counteracted difficulties in transition in another country by striving to move beyond local school's expectations, thus advancing their professional goals.

Nevertheless, agency is limited by structural factors, including race (Gras, 2024), language (Zacharias, 2019), and employment status (Guo et al., 2019). Such factors include discrimination against non-Western countries' qualifications (Sun et al., 2022) that sustains oppressive practices and limits teachers to support roles. These findings suggest that immediate action is needed on the institutional level, such as implementing anti-racist hiring policies and more favorable visa regulations to address the structural barriers.

5.5.3 Emotional labor: from resilience to systemic exploitation

The current study reveals that the process of teaching in intercultural contexts is emotionally demanding, as it echoes Benesch's (2017) concept of emotional labor. International teachers experienced dislocation (McAllum, 2017), identity denial (Lee & Jang, 2023), and gendered scrutiny (Chesnut, 2020), yet these challenges provide opportunities for their professional development. Tools like reflective journals (Sahling & Carvalho, 2021) and mentorship (Weng, 2024) helped teachers cope with the alienation and regain their confidence. This is similar to the critical reflection found in Mansfield et al. (2014) study of teacher learning, which suggests that teacher education programs should include reflective practices to address emotional well-being.

In addition, emotional labor should be viewed as a structural issue. Institutions, not teachers, need to take the responsibility to solve the problem of dissonance. For instance, the Walker & Bunnell study (2024) shows that the programs provided by institutions help teachers transform themselves from overwhelmed to reskilled, demonstrating how systemic support can transform emotional labor from an individual burden to a collective asset.

5.5.4 Limitations and future research

While the present review provides some valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. One notable limitation of this review is that many studies relied on small-scale qualitative designs, which, while rich in depth, limits generalizability. Additionally, many of the reviewed studies focus on identity construction in Australia, the U.S., or Europe, which may limit the generalizability of its conclusions. Future research could explore the experiences of international teachers in other regions (e.g., Africa, Latin America), as well as examine the long-term impacts of identity development on teachers' professional trajectories and personal well-being. Also, comparative studies between teachers' experiences in different cultural settings could provide deeper insights into the specific challenges and adaptations. In light of the findings regarding the role of reflective professional learning and the responsibility of institutions to support international teachers, future research might investigate effective support mechanisms and professional development opportunities that address the unique challenges of intercultural teaching.

5.5.5 Concluding remarks

In the present review, international teacher identity is viewed as a sociopolitical process – as a negotiation of power, culture, and belonging. In this regard, the findings of the study show that there is a need to change the paradigm in global education, which defines teachers not as cultural ambassadors or transient workers but as agentic professionals with hybrid identities who can enrich the pedagogical landscape. For institutions, this means that equitable policies, inclusive communities, and sustained support are not just aspirational goals, but ethical imperatives in fostering globally just educational systems.

The findings of this study contribute to the theoretical understanding of teacher identity as a fluid and context-dependent construct. The review further supports dynamic models by describing how internal factors interact with cultural, institutional, and community influences to make teachers become cultural ambassadors, in line with sociocultural theories of learning. Furthermore, integrating emotional labor into theoretical frameworks is important, as it is not only a challenge but also a way to develop, thus increasing the level of teachers' involvement in intercultural processes. Therefore, teachers' ability to cope with emotional challenges, such as exclusion or marginalization, is crucial to teacher identity development, and thus, the emotional dimensions could also be incorporated into theories of professional development in intercultural settings.

In addition, the findings of this review have practical and policy implications for educational institutions and policymakers to support

international teachers. Institutions can offer supportive environments by recognizing international qualifications and offering transition courses to help teachers who are experiencing deskilling and exclusion, thus enhancing their belonging. Besides, bias training, diverse hiring panels, and accountability measures can be used to address structural racism. Institutions could also establish communities of practice that appreciate diverse pedagogies and support collaborative experimentation. Recommendations include pre-deployment training for teachers to learn strategies for dealing with cultural and institutional challenges, and pairing novice teachers with mentors who have similar intercultural experiences to reduce isolation and increase the self-efficacy of international teachers. Maybe ongoing professional development could focus on cultural negotiation skills, collaborative practices, and peer learning, while institutional support could recognize teachers' contributions through mentoring, peer networks, and recognition platforms. These measures may help teachers to overcome challenges such as marginalization and enhance retention by creating positive, inclusive, and dynamic educational environments.



General Discussion

6.1 Introduction

To develop a comprehensive understanding of Chinese foreign language (CFL) teachers' identity development in intercultural contexts, the current dissertation progresses systematically across four studies, each addressing a specific aspect of the phenomenon and collectively building a multidimensional picture of CFL teacher identity development. Four studies were performed, addressing: (1) CFL teachers' perceptions on their teacher identity in an intercultural context (Chapter 2); (2) a longitudinal exploration of CFL teachers' identity construction and reconstruction in an intercultural context (Chapter 3); (3) teacher-student relationship as a lens to investigate CFL teacher identity development in an intercultural context (Chapter 4); and (4) a broader systematic review of international teachers' teacher identity development in intercultural settings abroad (Chapter 5).

The section below will first summarize the main findings of our four studies. Then, those main findings will be discussed in depth from theoretical and practical perspectives. Following that, the limitations of the studies and indicate directions for future studies will be addressed. Finally, implications for practice will be explored.

6.2 Summary of the main findings

Chapter 2 lays the foundational groundwork by exploring how CFL teachers perceive their identity in an intercultural context. The research question guiding this study is: How do native-speaker CFL teachers perceive their identity in the intercultural context of the Netherlands? In this qualitative exploratory study with twenty-one native Chinese-

speaking language teachers, empirical data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The findings show teachers' perceptions of their identity are shaped by their cultural and educational background, as well as their teaching experiences in the intercultural context, and that their teacher identity adapts during the process of interacting with students from another cultural background. Although CFL teachers sometimes struggled during this process of transformation, they generally showed a willingness to adjust. The findings indicated that even if teachers' identity reconstruction is inevitable in the cross-cultural setting, most CFL teachers hold onto their primary Chinese identity. As this study chose a cross-sectional design, the identity development processes were not studied. This limitation highlighted the need for longitudinal designs to investigate the transformative processes of teacher identity development among CFL teachers.

Based on these insights, **Chapter 3** takes a longitudinal approach to examine how CFL teachers construct their identity over time in intercultural contexts. The research questions guiding the study are: 1) How do CFL teachers develop their professional identity in an intercultural context? 2) What factors influence CFL teachers' identity development in an intercultural context? In this study with three Chinese language teachers, reflective journals, oral narratives, and interviews were primary sources of data. Additionally, teachers' storylines were utilized to provide additional information regarding participants' identity development. The findings reveal that the construction of teacher identity involves an ongoing process of transformation through social practice. Through dealing with

challenges and conflicts arising from the teaching and socialization process in the intercultural context, teachers reassemble their teacher identity and develop professionally. As a result of a period of teaching overseas, CFL teachers acquired a more agentic identity than they had when they began teaching. The findings reveal that agentic identities were determined because of the experiences through teaching in an intercultural environment, as well as interactions with members of the teachers' community and with students from different cultures. In light of this, foreign language teachers, including both novices and experienced teachers, are recommended to make use of opportunities to learn in an intercultural and international environment. Through experiential learning activities such as exchange programs, they will acquire valuable knowledge, skills, and attitudes for their development as effective intercultural teachers.

Interpersonal interactions were shown as an important component during the long-term professional growth and identity transformation in both Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. Thus, building on these insights, **Chapter 4** narrows the focus to the interpersonal dimension of teacher identity development by examining the teacher-student relationship. The research question addressed in this study was: How can Chinese foreign language (CFL) teacher identity be characterized based on their teacher-student relationship, in an intercultural context? In this study with fourteen native-speaker Chinese language teachers and one hundred and ninety-two students, survey and interview methods were used as primary sources of data, and classroom observations were stimuli for interviews. The findings reveal that

overseas teaching experiences strengthen teachers' professional identity, although they also bring teachers tension. The study demonstrates that the teacher-student relationship is a useful lens to explore and interpret teacher identity in an intercultural context. The identity construction process across all fourteen teachers involved embracing the "other" culture and retaining some of their original beliefs. However, the pathways of identity construction were unique for each teacher, depending on their interpersonal profiles and prior personal experiences. This suggests that teachers from the same cultural background may develop different teacher identities in a certain context due to their previous personal experiences and their beliefs about teaching.

Chapter 5 reports on a systematic literature review investigating the formation, negotiation, and transformation of teacher identity in diverse educational settings, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of how international teachers develop their teacher identity, and the underlying processes that this development. The review addressed the following research question: How do international teachers develop their teacher identity in intercultural settings abroad? The principles of the PRISMA statement (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis) (Moher et al., 2009) were used as a guideline to conduct and report this systematic review, which included 38 peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2024. By employing a three-dimensional framework (personal, professional, and sociocultural identity), this chapter identifies key themes in teacher identity development across diverse

contexts. The findings reveal that teacher identity development in intercultural settings is a complex, multidimensional process shaped by personal, professional, and sociocultural factors. Moreover, the findings highlight the dynamic interplay among these dimensions and underscore the importance of continuous adaptation, reflection, and support. They also shed light on the challenges and opportunities faced by international teachers as they develop their teacher identity, which is both authentic to their personal beliefs and responsive to the intercultural dynamics of their host environments. By addressing the challenges identified in this review and implementing evidence-based interventions, educational institutions can better support international teachers in their transformative journeys. Thus, Chapter 5 situates the findings of this dissertation within the larger body of literature, highlighting how the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Chinese language teachers align with or diverge from broader patterns of identity construction among international teachers.

Together, these chapters form a cohesive exploration of international teachers' teacher identity development in intercultural contexts, with special focus on CFL teachers in the Netherlands. The dissertation progresses from foundational perceptions (Chapter 2), through specific relational and contextual influences (Chapters 3 and 4), to a synthesized understanding situated within the broader literature (Chapter 5). This structure highlights both the unique aspects of Chinese teachers' experiences and their relevance to the global discourse on teacher identity development.

6.3 Discussion of the main findings

6.3.1 Influence of intercultural contexts on teacher identity development

In this dissertation, the four studies all indicate the influence intercultural settings have on teacher identity development, in the form of both challenges and opportunities. International teachers generally faced considerable identity dissonance, which posed a problem of congruence between their previous teaching beliefs and the requirements of new educational systems. This dissonance often caused emotional and professional stress, which led teachers to feel uncertain, lonely, and frustrated. Teachers sometimes need to overcome such tensions on their own, hence hindering the reconstruction of their teacher identity in new educational environments (Chapter 3).

However, apart from the tensions brought by intercultural contexts, international work experience also offers many chances for teachers' growth and promotes their teacher identity. International teachers, at first, experience discomfort and then move to a higher level of self-efficacy and professional flexibility. Some of them start to consider intercultural challenges as opportunities rather than threats and, therefore, are able to increase their self-efficacy and empowerment. For instance, in the case of CFL teachers in Chapter 3, they changed from the initial feeling of being outsiders to becoming cultural brokers or ambassadors. This shift was helped particularly by reflective practices, mentorship, and support from the community, which shows the

importance of social interaction and institutional encouragement for identity reconstruction (Chapters 4 and 5).

In addition, the teachers in this dissertation developed a higher level of intercultural competence that enabled them to work efficiently in culturally diverse environments. In the process of adapting to the host countries' cultural norms, international teachers are able to integrate new pedagogical strategies into their teaching while also incorporating some of their home culture practices (Chapters 2 and 5). This dual identity enables teachers to not only work across the cultural divide in their classrooms but also to feel more satisfied with their professional lives and themselves. In line with Pennington and Richards (2016), the studies concluded that effectively working in intercultural environments enhances teachers' professional identity and pedagogical practices.

6.3.2 Personal, professional, and sociocultural dimensions of teacher identity

The construction of teacher identity in intercultural settings involves a negotiation of personal experiences, professional recognition, and sociocultural positioning. As discussed in Chapter 2, the domains of self-image, motivation, and self-efficacy revealed how personal identity was reconstructed as a result of professional practice. For instance, teachers in Chapter 4, who integrated "Chinese discipline" with Dutch autonomy, developed a liminal self-image that crosses cultural boundaries. This aligns with Tajeddin & Nazari's (2025) multidimensional framework and also the findings from Chapter 5,

which reveal that personal, professional, and sociocultural identities are integrated and interdependent, and that they coalesce to define the overall identity of a teacher.

Regarding the professional dimension of teacher identity, CFL teachers in Chapter 3 embraced pedagogical globalization, blending exam-focused rigor with interactive methods in an effort to find a middle ground. This middle ground is comparable to Poole's (2020) findings on international teachers' "third space" pedagogies (Chapter 5), although in this case, with a unique emphasis on the Chinese language's structural complexity. The Chinese language's structural complexity lies in its use of characters instead of an alphabet, tonal variations that change the meaning of words, and the intricate grammar rules that differ significantly from those in European languages. This complexity requires teachers to develop innovative pedagogical strategies to effectively convey these concepts to learners. By incorporating both traditional and interactive methods, CFL teachers in Chapter 2, Chapter 3, and Chapter 4 aimed to address these challenges while maintaining high academic standards. In terms of sociocultural identity, teachers struggled with exclusionary narratives (e.g., being labeled "outsiders"), but were able to use them as a tool to assert their legitimacy. For example, a CFL teacher in Chapter 4 reframed marginality as expertise, positioning himself as a cultural mediator—a strategy echoing Galman's (2009) concept of "identity dissonance as generative".

The interplay of these dimensions underscores the context-dependent nature of teacher identity. The international teachers in

Chapter 5 emphasized sociocultural integration (e.g., learning the language of the host country), while the CFL teachers emphasized pedagogical integration, adapting methods without sacrificing cultural heritage. Taking into account this divergence, it is evident that subject matter plays an important role in identity negotiation: teaching a less popular language, such as Chinese, in intercultural settings necessitates a different approach from teaching a more widely valued language such as English.

6.3.3 Similarities and differences between CFL teachers and their international peers

During the process of developing their teacher identity abroad, both CFL teachers and other international teachers encountered some core challenges, including identity dissonance, insufficient resources and support, emotional labor, and a need for resilience. The identity dissonance occurred when teachers' previous teaching beliefs and values (e.g., Chinese hierarchical instruction) were mismatched with the host country's norms (e.g., Dutch egalitarian classrooms). Another similarity between the participants in the studies of this dissertation and other international teachers (Chapter 5) is the lack of teaching sources and inadequate institutional support. The nature of this challenge, however, differs. For example, it is evident in Chapter 2 that CFL teachers experience difficulties related to teaching materials suitable for the Dutch context, while Chapter 5 reveals that international teachers experience difficulties related to misaligned curricula. In addition, emotional labor and the need for resilience strategies are also burdens

shared by CFL teachers and other international teachers. Despite not referring to the racialized or gendered exclusion experienced by other international teachers (Chapter 5), CFL teachers still experienced emotional labor as a result of stereotypes regarding “rigidity” (Chapter 2). For example, despite some CFL teachers having high intercultural competence and extensive experience teaching international students, students from the host country judged them as too strict and difficult to understand.

These challenges, however, did not defeat the teachers: both CFL teachers from our studies and international teachers in the reviewed studies reframed challenges as professional development opportunities (Weng, 2024). Akkerman and Meijer (2011) have shown that a transformation process is necessary in order to overcome identity dissonance. This process can be observed in both CFL teachers from our empirical studies (transitioning from “authoritative role models” to “facilitators”) and international teachers from the review study (shifting from “knowledge imparters” to “cultural mediators”). Teachers developed and refined their teacher identity during this process of transformation. Both CFL teachers and other international teachers’ efforts to negotiate intercultural contexts emphasize the importance of agency in constrained environments. In sum, the above parallels between CFL teachers and other international teachers underscore the universality of identity negotiation and adaptive resilience in intercultural teaching contexts.

Not all experiences, however, appeared to be universal. CFL teachers in our studies confronted some unique challenges. These

challenges tied to the Chinese language's geopolitical marginality in Western curricula, which brought the burden for CFL teachers to legitimize their subject (Chapter 4). Compared with other international teachers of dominant languages (e.g., English) or STEM fields, whose disciplines are institutionally prioritized, CFL teachers in the Netherlands appeared to face more pressure. For example, some CFL teachers (Chapter 2) had to leave the teaching profession because of a sharp decrease in the number of students. Additionally, the systemic neglect of less commonly taught languages leaves CFL teachers reliant on self-directed experimentation (Chapter 3), unlike other international teachers who often access structured training (e.g., TESOL certifications).

Furthermore, CFL teachers also emphasized their role as cultural ambassadors, balancing language instruction with the sharing of Chinese culture. For example, apart from seeing themselves as foreign language teachers, some CFL teachers also described their role as the representatives of Chinese culture (Chapter 2 and Chapter 4). In contrast, other international teachers of dominant languages focused more on pedagogical adaptation than cultural representation (Chapter 5). This duality may stem from the Chinese language's symbolic ties to Chinese identity, amplifying CFL teachers' role as cultural mediators. The above distinctions highlight how language status and cultural differences can intensify identity reconstruction for CFL teachers compared to their international peers.

6.4 Limitations

The dissertation collectively provides some valuable insights into teacher identity development in intercultural contexts; however, there are some limitations to these conclusions due to methodological issues. Firstly, two of the four studies in this research (Chapters 2 and 4) were cross-sectional research, which gave only a picture of identity at one time. Due to the lack of longitudinal data, these studies could not fully present the shifting characteristics of teacher identity over time.

The size of the samples also affects the generalizability. In fact, all the empirical chapters concentrated on native-speaker Chinese CFL teachers in the Netherlands, and the small, culturally homogeneous samples made the findings not applicable in other international settings. Therefore, some problems specific to other intercultural situations, like racial discrimination of teachers of color in different countries, have not been addressed. Hence, the conclusion of the findings across a wider intercultural teaching context must consider these important sampling restrictions.

6.5 Recommendations for future research

Future research could conduct longitudinal studies to monitor the changes and dynamic process of international teachers' teacher identity development. Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 clearly show the importance of tracking the teacher identity development over time. This approach is particularly relevant because identity development is understood as nonlinear and ongoing; it is only by studying teachers over time that we can understand fully the 'unbecoming-to-becoming' (Chapter 5)

processes that have been observed qualitatively in this dissertation. It is possible to gain a better understanding of the identity development process if researchers investigate international teachers from the time that they first enter the intercultural context and follow their identity changes over several years of overseas teaching. While a two-year longitudinal study was carried out in Chapter 3, studies spanning a period of several years could indicate whether initial identity tensions (e.g. feeling ‘de-skilled’, excluded) are resolved as teachers gain experience. It could also identify stages or patterns of identity reconstruction, for instance, do teachers generally experience an initial decline in professional self-efficacy, also known as a ‘culture shock,’ followed by an increase in self-efficacy? Longitudinal research could show whether there are any common trends or different paths international teachers go through, contributing to the theoretical knowledge of intercultural identity development. Moreover, as called for in Chapter 5, it would be worthwhile to examine the long-term effects of intercultural teaching on the teacher identity of international teachers once they have returned home. For example, researchers may explore whether the identity transformation persists, and how intercultural teaching experiences affect teachers’ teaching beliefs, pedagogical practices, and careers in the long run.

In addition, the three empirical studies in this dissertation focus specifically on CFL teachers, thus offering depth insights in one cultural case. Future research could extend the study to include a wider range of participants and environments to examine the process of identity development for international teachers. For example, Chapter

3 indicates that comparative research involving teachers of different nationalities, subject specialization, ethnicity, and host countries would help to explore the universality and specificity of teacher identity development in intercultural settings. One example would be research that focuses on the CFL teachers in Western contexts and CFL teachers in Southeast Asian contexts, to compare the differences and similarities of the teachers and how they develop their identity in different cultural contexts. Moreover, Chapter 5 proposes research that investigates Western teachers in Asian or Middle Eastern contexts, teachers of other foreign languages (e.g., English, French) in various countries, or non-language subject teachers in intercultural contexts. For instance, it is necessary to explore the intercultural experiences of teachers from particular backgrounds, who may face particular identity tensions, such as levels of societal prejudice. Future research could examine the identity development of teachers of color in different contexts, since Chapter 5 indicates that teachers of color may be facing issues related to their racialized identities (e.g., legitimacy based upon race) that are not addressed in CFL teacher-specific studies. Besides, the racialized experiences of CFL teachers are also worth investigating. In this way future research can determine which intercultural identity issues are cross-cultural and which are specific to particular cultural combinations, thus offering a more complex, globally applicable understanding.

In regard to methodology, multi-method and multi-perspective approaches could add strength to the empirical findings. Besides interviews and reflective journals, the data could be complemented by classroom observations, student feedback, and administrative

perspectives. As mentioned in Chapter 4, one approach could involve observing teachers' actions in the classroom, or using video-stimulated recall, to examine how teachers' teacher identity is realized (or not realized) in teaching practice. Including students' opinions on what an international teacher does and how they interact with students would help to expand the knowledge about teacher identity as a relational construct. In addition, Chapter 3 suggests that the use of tools like oral narratives or critical incident logs can capture identity transformations that occur in real-time and may not emerge in retrospective interviews. New approaches like social network analysis could be employed to chart the process of teachers' feeling of being part of the school's community or the broader community over time. In sum, the above-mentioned approaches for future research could provide a more holistic picture of international teachers' identity development.

Another potential direction is to explore targeted interventions and support systems that assist the identity development of international teachers when teaching abroad. Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 indicate the benefits of teachers developing a more agentic identity by overcoming challenges in the new teaching contexts, thus, future research could aim to foster such agency intentionally. Research could also build and evaluate support programs, such as mentorship pairs, reflective workshops, or online communities for international teachers, and analyze the influence of these programs on teachers' identity reconstruction. For example, a longitudinal intervention study could assign new intercultural teachers to trained mentors or local experienced teachers, and then compare their identity development

with a control group without such support. Additionally, four studies in this dissertation all reveal the importance of critical reflection during international teachers' negotiation in the host countries. Therefore, researchers could experiment with structured reflection interventions, such as guided journal clubs or narrative inquiry groups, to determine whether reflective actions are helpful during teachers' adaptation in the new contexts. Hence, the future research directions we propose may fill the theoretical and empirical gaps left by the present dissertation, therefore offering a better map of what can be done to help teachers who are teaching in today's diverse teaching environment.

6.6 Implications for practice

In addition to implications for future research, this dissertation also provides practical implications for teacher education, for receiving institutions, and for international teachers themselves, in order to strengthen teachers' teaching practice and identity development in intercultural settings abroad.

6.6.1 Suggestions for teacher education

Teacher education programs in home country as well as host country could try to assist international teachers in the development of teacher identity. Firstly, in addition to providing general pedagogical training, pre-service and in-service teacher education could address cultural and educational issues that international teachers are likely to encounter while working abroad. For example, Chapter 3 reveals that adjusting to the Dutch educational system is difficult for CFL teachers in the Netherlands, and therefore programs focusing on the host country's

educational culture, the host country's curriculum, and the students' characteristics are required. Such programs may help teachers to be prepared for and deal with possible challenges. Furthermore, workshops focusing on development of intercultural competence would also be helpful. Chapter 4 shows the necessity for teachers to know how to interact with students from another cultural background, adjust to the new context, and solve conflicts in culturally diverse classrooms. In addition, all four studies in this dissertation show the importance of reflective practice in the process of identity development. Therefore, in-service teacher education programs could organize regular reflective meetings or group discussions where international teachers can discuss and share their international experience, and reflect on their teaching practice. Such reflective meetings may assist international teachers to overcome identity dissonance easier and gain professional development.

6.6.2 Suggestions for institutions

Educational institutions and policymakers could also help international teachers in their identity development process. Institutions that employ international teachers are advised to provide clear and well-organised programs for teachers to help them adapt to the new teaching context. Other useful support includes the offer of formal mentoring programs. As mentioned in Chapter 3, pairing novice international teachers up to experienced colleagues in a mentoring role could provide not only technical but also emotional support. Besides mentorship, institutions could also establish professional learning communities for international teachers. Chapter 2, Chapter 3, and Chapter 4 all show that many CFL

teachers in the Netherlands were the only Chinese teacher in the school. Providing access to professional networks (such as regular intercultural teacher meetups or collaborative projects) would assist in the formation of a supportive community of practice. Perhaps, educational administrators could consider offering some material support as well: as Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 both mention, access to shared resources would have been useful for the CFL teachers who had no materials relevant to the local context.

In terms of policy, institutions may address structural factors that hinder international teachers' teacher identity development. Chapter 5 indicates that offering equal positions and appraisals for international teachers and helping to solve their work permit issues will increase the professional security of the teachers, thus promoting their identity development. Institutions can also take an inclusive stance of valuing international teachers' cultural and ethnic diversity and creating inclusive teaching environments through culturally sensitive curriculum, cultural celebrations, and support services (e.g., counseling, professional dialogue groups). The above recommendations may allow institutions to transform adapting process into a more positive experience for international teachers.

6.6.3 Suggestions for international teachers

In terms of pedagogy, the studies in this dissertation indicate some concrete measures teachers working in intercultural settings could take to refine their teacher identity and effectiveness as teachers. One way is to demonstrate professionalism that integrates their home and host

cultures in order to create a harmonious intercultural classroom. Chapter 2 showed this approach improved not only the engagement of students in class, but also teachers' sense of purpose and belonging. Furthermore, international teachers may also take action to strengthen their teacher identity, for example by showing willingness and curiosity to better understand their students' culture, working on building positive relationships with their students, and providing students with a more diverse learning experience. They might also reflect on and analyze their pedagogical methods in intercultural classrooms, and identify their growth points during intercultural teaching, with an eye to continuous professional development.

The above recommendations could assist international teachers not only in overcoming the challenges of intercultural teaching but also in leveraging the opportunities it presents to develop a richer, more resilient teacher identity. The implementation of such recommendations may significantly improve teachers' intercultural teaching experiences and, therefore, their job satisfaction and performance.

6.7 Conclusions

The four studies included in this dissertation have explored international teachers' teacher identity development in intercultural settings, and what this means more generally for global education. The findings contribute to the growing body of research on teacher identity by highlighting the unique challenges and opportunities brought about by intercultural contexts. The findings indicate the importance of

intercultural competence and adaptability in teachers' development as professionals. Furthermore, international teachers are required to have flexible and culturally sensitive teaching strategies in order to meet the challenges of intercultural teaching. In addition, teacher identity development should be viewed not just as an individual journey but as a process shaped by the school environment and broader education policies. As education systems all over the world are becoming more interconnected and diverse, educational policies and professional development practices could promote inclusive pedagogy and equitable educational environments to support teachers' teacher identity development. Therefore, in conclusion, this dissertation calls for a global education system that not only embraces cultural diversity, but also makes best use of it to improve international teaching and learning. Through maintaining self while adapting, international teachers can develop as well-rounded professionals for today's global education contexts.



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Appendix A (Chapter 3)

Observation checklist

Observation Time: Institute: Participant:
Teaching experience: Age of students: Number of
students:

Sectors of the model	Typical Behaviors	Interaction between teacher and students
<i>Dominance- Cooperation</i> Leadership	Noticing what is happening, leading, organizing, giving orders, setting tasks, holding attention, and structuring the classroom.	
<i>Cooperation- Dominance</i> Helpful/friendly	Assisting, showing interest, behaving in a friendly or considerate manner, and inspiring confidence and trust.	
<i>Cooperation- Submission</i> Understanding	Listening to students with interest, empathizing, showing confidence, and understanding, accepting apologies, looking for ways to settle differences, and being patient and open.	
<i>Submission- Cooperation</i> Student responsibility/freedom	Giving opportunity for independent work, waiting for the class to let off steam, giving freedom and responsibility, and approving of something.	

<i>Submission- Opposition</i>	Keeping a low profile, apologizing, waiting to see how the wind blows, and admitting one is wrong.
Uncertain	
<i>Opposition- Submission</i>	Waiting for silence, considering pros and cons, keeping quiet, showing dissatisfaction, looking glum, and questioning and criticizing.
Dissatisfied	
<i>Opposition- Dominance</i>	Getting angry, taking students to task, expressing irritation and anger, forbidding, and correcting and punishing.
Admonishing	
<i>Dominance- Opposition</i>	Keeping a tight reign, checking, judging, keeping the class silent, and having exact norms and rules.
Strict	

Appendix B (Chapter 3)

Interview Protocol

Part 1: Questions about identity

In the first part, we would like to go into detail about you as a teacher and how you see yourself as a teacher.

Example questions:

- Firstly, could you please introduce yourself briefly, such as your educational background, teaching experience?
- Can you describe yourself as a teacher in a few sentences?
- What are three important teacher characteristics you have?
- What do you think a teacher should do or should bring to the classroom?

Part 2: The actions I observed in the class

Now we are going to talk about your interactions with your students.

Because the interaction between teacher and students plays a vital role in the effectiveness of CFL teaching and is an essential part of you as a teacher, we would like to hear more about your opinions.

Starting questions:

- How you perceive the way you interact with your students?
- I will show them the teacher interpersonal behavior model and explain the eight sectors to them briefly. Then I will ask them do they have the typical behaviors in each sector and ask them to give me some examples.

2.1. How teachers see an ideal teacher:

Example questions:

- How would you like to have your interaction with your students?
- Do you think now you have this kind of relationship or not? If you already have, please give me some examples about your interactions with students. If not, please tell me how do you plan to turn into that relationship and what can help you with that?

2.2. How teachers see themselves:

Example questions:

- I noticed that in the middle of the class, you suddenly stopped speaking and gave students an eye warning. I heard students call it “alarm.” Could you please tell me what was going on at that moment?
- I saw that you asked students to correct each other’s dictation and give them chances to figure things out by themselves in the class. Could you please tell me more about it?
- After finishing marking each other’s dictation, some students told you they got full marks. You asked them to give the paper to you and wanted to check again by yourself. Could you please tell me more about the choice you made at that point?
- Some students in your class were very active, and kept asking you various of questions. Sometimes they interrupt your speech. How did you experience that?
- You stood on the stage and keep distance with student while giving the class. Can you say anything about where you were positioned in the classroom and what was behind that choice?

- It is usual for teenage students to rebel against their teachers, so classroom management might be a vital issue. When do you think you have interfere with the students' behaviors in the classroom? Why?

Part 3: General questions




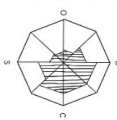
In this part, we are interested in knowing whether you are satisfied with your relationship with your students and how it has changed over time.

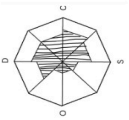


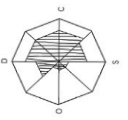

Example questions:

- What do you like/dislike your relationship with your students?
- Have your interactions with your students changed over years of teaching? How and why?

Appendix C (Chapter 3)

Interpersonal profile of each participant

	Surveys requested; returned	Leadership (DC)	Helpful/ Friendly (CD)	Understanding (CS)	Student responsibility/freedom (SC)	Uncertain (SO)	Dissatisfied (OS)	Admonishing (OD)	Strict (DO)	Profile	
Directive CFL teacher	Yin	15; 15	0.850	0.628	0.589	0.422	0.139	0.278	0.422	0.544	
	Hu	18; 18	0.745	0.694	0.644	0.481	0.153	0.282	0.320	0.560	
Authoritative CFL teacher	Tan	17; 17	0.733	0.725	0.669	0.522	0.162	0.164	0.390	0.600	
	Gao	18; 18	0.741	0.764	0.755	0.556	0.199	0.176	0.199	0.532	

Tolerant/ Authoritative CFL teacher	Su	17; 17	0.662	0.659	0.743	0.662	0.250	0.176	0.167	0.534	
	Zheng	19; 16	0.734	0.818	0.813	0.526	0.224	0.198	0.141	0.568	
	Xie	10; 10	0.764	0.750	0.764	0.625	0.111	0.097	0.111	0.431	
	Wu	21; 19	0.746	0.763	0.741	0.640	0.149	0.132	0.096	0.469	
	Shi	10; 10	0.787	0.870	0.861	0.704	0.130	0.176	0.315	0.306	

Tolerant CFL teacher	Zhu	13; 10	0.800	0.817	0.833	0.683	0.133	0.142	0.150	0.338	
	Di	11; 11	0.780	0.826	0.871	0.667	0.091	0.197	0.030	0.379	
	Xiao	13; 11	0.818	0.962	0.955	0.765	0.220	0.129	0.015	0.341	
	Den	10; 10	0.708	0.694	0.625	0.931	0.333	0.319	0.278	0.264	
	Mei	10; 10	0.625	0.750	0.808	0.717	0.300	0.242	0.200	0.383	

Appendix D (Chapter 4)

Protocol of first interview

Time of Interview: Date: Place:

Interviewer: Interviewee:

1. Personal information

- I would like to learn more about you and your cultural, linguistic, educational, and family background.
- How has your background influenced your teaching beliefs and conduct?
- In what contexts have you taught so far?

2. First impression

- How did you first decided to teach in the Netherlands?
- What was your first impression of CFL teaching in the Netherlands when you began teaching here? Could you please tell me the story behind this?
- Are there any particular and critical issues that occurred to you in the past few months, such as the most enjoyable moment or the most challenging moment?

3. Future perspective

- As a teacher in a new educational environment, what expectations do you have for this two-year experience?
- In the future, what type of teacher do you hope to become?

4. Necessary introduction of the reflective journals

Appendix E (Chapter 4)

Protocol of reflective journal

Select one group of students

Part 1 General reflection

Example questions¹:

- How did you feel about your teaching last week?
- What did you most like about teaching last week?
- What did you most dislike about teaching last week?

Part 2 Reflection on class teaching

Example questions:

- Most enjoyable moment last week?
- Highlights and assignments that worked well.
- Most challenging moment last week?
- Errors that need to be adjusted, and stuff that simply failed and needs to be reworked or cut out completely.
- Is the relationship that you have with your students helping/hindering their ability to learn?

¹ Note: Example questions under each part are there to help you think. These questions might be relevant to your experience during this teaching period or not. You can always add issues and feelings you want to share or things you think are most impressive under each category.

- Was your attitude towards your class this week effective for student learning?
- How similar or how different is it to other groups that you have taught last month?

Part 3 Reflection on professional development

Example questions:

- What have you gained from this teaching experience and how is it related to your other aspects of teaching?
- What have you changed your mind about, after this period of teaching?
- In what aspects can you still improve your teaching?
- What's stopping you from improving in these aspects?
- In what ways can you support your colleagues in their student's learning?
- What opportunities are there to improve yourself as a CFL teacher?
- Do your actions as a CFL teacher show that you take pride in your work?

Part 4 Reflection on adaption to the new education context

Example questions:

- How are you adapting to the new teaching context?
- Does the new context have influence on your teaching?

Part 5 Remaining questions

Example questions:

- Has this period of teaching raised any questions for you?
Something that you don't know about before or something you don't understand before.
- Things that you want to find out or solve in the coming months or future teaching.
- Your outlook for the coming months.

Appendix F (Chapter 5)

Basic information on the reviewed studies

Reference (author(s), year)	Subjects	Country setting	Type of education as identified in the article	Methodology	Participants
Bailey and Cooker (2019)	Ranged in discipline: Outdoor Education; Music; English; etc.	South-East Asia; East Asia; Middle East	International school	Interviews	20 participants British; American; etc.
Ballantyne (2024)	Chinese	Australia	Local schools	Interviews	15 participants Chinese
Chesnut (2020)	English	Korea	Higher education; Elementary school	Interviews; participant journals; observations	3 participants African American; Asian-Canadian;
Enns-Kananen & Ruohotie-Lyhty (2023)	English	Finland	A local school; Private institution	Story telling; Audio recordings	1 participant East Asian
Fimyar (2018)	The article did not mention this	Kazakhstan	International school	Interviews	11 participants
Guo et al. (2021)	English	China	University	Interviews	4 participants British; American; Canadian
Gong et al. (2022)	Chinese	Hong Kong	International school	Interviews	16 participants Chinese (Mainland China); Singaporean; ...
Guo and Sidhu (2024)	English	China, United States; India; Canada	Elementary school; Adult learner	Duethnography	2 participants Chinese; Indian

(continued)

Reference (author(s), year)	Subjects	Country setting	Type of education as identified in the article	Methodology	Participants
Gras (2024)	English	China, Japan Taiwan, Korea	K-12 level	Narrative inquiry study Semi-structured interviews Discussion forum posts	4 participants English teachers of color
Huang and Varghese (2015)	English	United States	K-12 school	Classroom observation Interviews	4 participants Hong Konger, Russian, Polish; American-born Chinese
Jeongyeon and Young (2020)	Korean	United States	University	Interviews	5 participants Korean
Leigh (2019)	English	China	Kindergarten; First grade of primary school	Interviews; Group interviews	8 participants Lithuanian; Ukrainian; American; Colombian; English
Lee and Jang (2023)	English	Korea	Elementary school; International school	Case study	3 participants African American; Asian
Lin et al. (2023)	Chinese	Netherlands	Secondary school Language school	Interviews; Survey Classroom observation	14 participants Chinese
Lee & Jang (2023)	English	Korea	Primary school; Middle school; High school	Narratives from semi-structured interviews; Classroom observation	6 participants Native English language teachers

(continued)

Reference (author(s), year)	Subjects	Country setting	Type of education as identified in the article	Methodology	Participants
Liu et al. (2024)	Chinese language	Netherlands	Confucius institute Secondary school Language school	Semi-structured interview	21 participants Chinese
Mutlu & Otaçtepe, (2016)	Turkish	United States	University	A personal data questionnaire; Ongoing controlled journals; interviews.	5 participants Turkish
McAllum (2017)	The article did not mention this	France	University	Autoethnographic approach	1 participant New Zealander
Miller (2021)	Ranged in discipline: Nursing, Education, Optometry, etc.	New Zealand	University	Individual interviews; Focus group interviews; Reflection journals	10 participants English; German; Chinese; Eastern European; Indian; Canadian; New Zealander
Minagawa & Nesbitt (2022)	Japanese	New Zealand Australia	University	Online questionnaire Follow-up interviews'	51 participants Japanese
Ozmantar et al. (2023)	The article did not mention this	Turkey	Primary school Secondary school	Interviews	15 participants Syria
Poole (2020)	physics	China	International school	Interviews Follow-up interactions	1 participant South African
Rosenfeld et al. (2022)	Hebrew Language; Music	North America; Latin America; Europe	K-12 school	Interviews	16 participants Israeli

(continued)

Reference (author(s), year)	Subjects	Country setting	Type of education as identified in the article	Methodology	Participants
Skerrett (2019)	Ranged in discipline: History, Geography, French, Art Science	England	Primary school Secondary school	Interviews	6 participants Irish
Sahlting and Carvalho (2021)	English	Mexico	International schools	Autoethnography Journal	1 participant British
Sun et al. (2022)	Chinese	New Zealand	Primary school	Individual semi-structured interviews,	7 participants Chinese
Uzun (2017)	Uzbek	United States	University	Interviews, Classroom observations, Classroom materials, teaching plan, syllabus,	1 participant; Uzbekistan
Wernicke (2017)	French	France Canada	Primary school; Secondary school	Questionnaires; Travel journal; Videos of classroom session and activities; Interviews	7 participants Canadian
Weinmann and Arber (2017)	Language	Australia	Secondary school	Vignettes; Interviews	2 participants Chinese, Japanese
Wang (2024)	English	United States	ESL composition program for international students	observation, reflection journals; interviews; a CV; artifacts provided by participant; GTA meeting observations	1 participant; East Asian

(continued)

Reference (author(s), year)	Subjects	Country setting	Type of education as identified in the article	Methodology	Participants
Walker and Bunnell (2024)	English	Northern Europe	International school	Interviews	6 participants British
Wen et al. (2024)	Ranged in discipline: Business; Mathematics; Computer science; English language; etc.	China	University	Narrative inquiry Interviews	6 participants Western foreign teachers; American; European
Yip et al. (2019)	Chinese language	Singapore	Government secondary school	Narrative inquiry approach	1 participant Chinese
Yip and Saito (2024)	Ranged in discipline: English; Math;	Australia	Urban school Rural school	Semi-structured interviews	8 participants Singapore; Malaysian; Indian; Japanese
Zheng (2017)	English	United States	College	Interview Participant observation Survey Course-related document	2 participants Chinese; English-Arabic bilingual;
Zacharias (2019)	English	Indonesia; United States	University	Autoethnography	1 participant Indonesian
Zang et al. (2024)	Chinese	United States	Elementary school	Interview; Observation Journal	2 participants Chinese
Zhu and Alsup (2024)	Teacher Assistant	United States	University	Narrative inquiry Interview	3 participants East Asian; South Asian



Chapter 1: General Introduction

Because of the increasing interest in the Chinese language globally, more and more CFL teachers are now teaching in intercultural contexts abroad. Nevertheless, most of these teachers are likely to encounter challenges, such as adapting to different educational systems and (re)constructing their teacher identity in a new cultural context. Teacher identity is important for CFL teachers because it influences their teaching efficiency in an intercultural context. However, there is currently little research available on how these teachers negotiate and develop their teacher identity when working abroad. Understanding this process is important as it will help provide the necessary support and resources to CFL teachers who are facing these unique challenges while teaching in intercultural settings. Through four interrelated studies, this research therefore aims to gain deeper insight into CFL teachers' identity development in the intercultural context.

To picture CFL teachers' teacher identity development in an intercultural context, we employed three frameworks on teacher identity: poststructuralist perspective of teacher identity; Hanna et al.'s (2019) six domains of identity; personal, professional, and sociocultural dimensions of teacher identity. Overall, these frameworks all reflect that teacher identity is developed in the process of negotiation between the individual and professional self and sociocultural environment (Varghese et al., 2005).

Based on the descriptions of the CFL teachers' teacher identity in an intercultural context and prior conceptual frameworks, four

studies were designed. The first study was an empirical study that examine how CFL teachers perceive their identity in intercultural contexts. By following this line of inquiry, the second study investigates the construction and reconstruction process of teacher identity and identifies the factors that shape this process. By extending the insights from the first two studies, I explore, in the third study, how CFL teachers' teacher identity development is influenced by their interactions with students. Finally, a systematic literature review provides an overview of how international educators construct and reconstruct their teacher identity in intercultural settings.

Chapter 2: Understanding Chinese Foreign Language Teachers' Identity in an Intercultural Context

In this Chapter, the way Chinese foreign language (CFL) teachers perceive their teacher identity in an intercultural environment in the Netherlands was explored. By adopting Foucault's poststructuralist theory of identity as the theoretical framework, the purpose of this chapter was to contribute insights into CFL teachers and enrich existing research on language teachers' identity. The primary research question was as follows:

How do native-speaker CFL teachers perceive their identity in the intercultural context in the Netherlands?

This study involved semi-structured interviews with 21 CFL teachers working in the Netherlands. The interview outline was based on poststructuralist theory. The data were analyzed using an inductive-deductive thematic approach, drawing upon the six domains of identity

in Hanna et al. (2019) study: self-image, motivation, self-efficacy, task perception, commitment, and job satisfaction. The generalized categories under six domains showed good reliability and validity.

The current study found that CFL teachers' identity (re)construction is a non-linear process that is influenced by teachers' previous beliefs and also teaching context. Furthermore, teachers stressed the importance of maintaining self while adapting to meet new contexts' expectations. Although CFL teachers faced many challenges while working abroad, they demonstrated strength and were willing to grow professionally. Some practical implications were drawn from this study. The implications involve developing professional development programs, build collaborative CFL teacher community and provide the necessary teaching materials.

Chapter 3: Construction and reconstruction of Chinese foreign language teachers' identity in an intercultural context: A longitudinal multiple case study

This chapter aims to investigate the processes by which CFL teachers construct and reconstruct their teacher's identity in an intercultural context. In the context of increasing globalization and teacher mobility, this study focused on the specific issues that CFL teachers face in an intercultural context in the Netherlands. Two research questions were addressed:

- 1) How do CFL teachers develop their professional identity in an intercultural context?
- 2) What factors influence CFL teachers' identity development

in an intercultural context?

This study used a longitudinal design to examine three Chinese language teachers over two years. Reflective journals, oral narratives, interviews, and storylines were primary sources of data. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data.

The findings showed a three-stage trajectory, referred to here as the ‘survival’ stage, the ‘exploratory’ stage, and the ‘proficient’ stage. Throughout all three stages, three clusters of factors (context, secondary characters, incidents) have been found to have a significant impact on participants’ identity construction in the intercultural context.

The findings showed that identity construction is a long term and complex process. The participants changed from adaptive to reactive, and then proactive. CFL teachers showed strength in incorporating intercultural experiences to refine their teacher identity despite barriers. The study also found that CFL teachers’ identity development is a process of negotiation between individual’s agency and contextual factors. These findings may be of assistance to both policymakers and educational institutes in designing more inclusive and effective teaching environments.

Chapter 4: Teacher-student relationship as a lens to explore Teacher identity in an intercultural context

In this chapter, teacher identity - the inner side of teaching, is explored through teacher-student relationship – the outer side of teaching. Using the teacher-student relationship as a lens to explore and interpret

teacher identity provides a new perspective to investigate teacher identity. The research question was:

How can Chinese foreign language (CFL) teacher identity be characterized based on their teacher-student relationship, in an intercultural context?

In this cross-sectional design, semi-structured interviews, survey, and classroom observations were used as the primary source of data. Fourteen native-speaker Chinese language teachers and one hundred and ninety-two Dutch secondary school students participated in this study. Data analysis was divided into two phases. Firstly, survey data was analyzed via SPSS 26 to identify teacher participants' interpersonal profiles. Then, inductive content analysis was adopted to analyze the interview data.

The findings revealed that the new teaching environment provided teachers a space to reposition their roles and enhanced their teacher identity. Across all teachers, identity construction involved embracing the “other” culture and retaining some original beliefs. Despite this, the findings indicate that teachers' pathways of identity construction varied according to their interpersonal profiles. This chapter may prove beneficial for aiding those who are just starting as teachers in an intercultural context. Moreover, suggestions were offered to teacher education and institutions to develop a more supportive teaching environment for international teachers.

Chapter 5: Navigating Cross-Cultural Landscapes: A Systematic Literature Review of Teacher Identity development in Intercultural Contexts Abroad

A systematic literature review of international teachers' teacher identity development in intercultural settings was conducted in this chapter. The purpose of this study was to investigate the formation, transformation of teacher identity in diverse educational settings, as it has implications for teachers' teaching efficacy, integration, job satisfaction, and career advancement. The following research question is posed to review:

How do international teachers develop their teacher identity in intercultural settings abroad?

This systematic review examined research on international teachers' teacher identity development in intercultural contexts based on 38 peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2024. The principles of the PRISMA statement (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis) (Moher et al., 2009) were used as a guideline to conduct and report this review work. Three dimensions of teacher identity, namely personal identity, professional identity, and sociocultural identity were adopted as the framework.

The findings reveal that teacher identity development in intercultural settings is a complex, multidimensional process shaped by personal, professional, and sociocultural factors. Moreover, the findings highlight the dynamic interplay among these dimensions and underscore the importance of continuous adaptation, reflection, and support. The findings show the challenges and opportunities faced by

international teachers as they develop their teacher identity, which is both authentic to their personal beliefs and responsive to the intercultural dynamics of their host environments. By addressing the challenges identified in this review and implementing evidence-based interventions, educational institutions can better support international teachers in their transformative journeys.

Chapter 6: General discussion and conclusions

The final chapter of this dissertation provides a general discussion and conclusions of the four studies. To begin with, I summarize the main findings of the four studies. Following that, the main and interesting findings were identified and discussed in further detail. The following three aspects were discussed: influence of intercultural contexts on teacher identity development; personal, professional, and sociocultural dimensions of teacher identity; Similarities and differences between CFL teachers and their international peers. Following this, I discussed the major limitations of this dissertation and directions for future research. In addition, the practical implications for teacher education, schools and institutions, and international teachers were discussed. Lastly, I wrote a conclusion to summarize the main goal of this dissertation and provide some take-home messages.

In conclusion, this dissertation calls for a global education system that not only embraces cultural diversity, but also makes best use of it to improve international teaching and learning. Through maintaining self while adapting, international teachers would fulfill their professional development in today's global education contexts.



Hoofdstuk 1: Algemene inleiding

Vanwege de wereldwijd toenemende belangstelling voor de Chinese taal geven steeds meer CFL-docenten les in interculturele contexten in het buitenland. Toch zullen de meeste van deze docenten waarschijnlijk tegen uitdagingen aanlopen, zoals het aanpassen aan verschillende onderwijssystemen en het (her)construeren van hun docentidentiteit in een nieuwe culturele context. Docentidentiteit is belangrijk voor CFL-docenten omdat het hun efficiëntie in het lesgeven in een interculturele context beïnvloedt. Er is momenteel echter weinig onderzoek beschikbaar over hoe deze leerkrachten onderhandelen over hun leerkrachtidentiteit en hoe ze deze ontwikkelen wanneer ze in het buitenland werken. Inzicht in dit proces is belangrijk omdat het zal helpen bij het bieden van de nodige ondersteuning en middelen aan CFL-docenten die geconfronteerd worden met deze unieke uitdagingen tijdens het lesgeven in interculturele omgevingen. Door middel van vier onderling gerelateerde studies wil dit onderzoek daarom meer inzicht krijgen in de identiteitsontwikkeling van CFL-docenten in een interculturele context.

Om de ontwikkeling van de identiteit van CFL-docenten in een interculturele context in beeld te brengen, gebruikten we drie raamwerken voor docentidentiteit: het poststructuralistische perspectief van docentidentiteit; de zes identiteitsdomeinen van Hanna et al. (2019); persoonlijke, professionele en socioculturele dimensies van docentidentiteit. In het algemeen weerspiegelen deze raamwerken allemaal dat de identiteit van leraren wordt ontwikkeld in het proces

van onderhandeling tussen het individuele en professionele zelf en de socioculturele omgeving (Varghese et al., 2005).

Op basis van de beschrijvingen van de identiteit van docenten CFL in een interculturele context en eerdere conceptuele kaders werden vier studies ontworpen. De eerste studie was een empirische studie die onderzocht hoe CFL-docenten hun identiteit in een interculturele context ervaren. Door deze onderzoekslijn te volgen, onderzoekt de tweede studie het constructie- en reconstructieproces van docentidentiteit en identificeert de factoren die dit proces vormgeven. Door de inzichten uit de eerste twee studies uit te breiden, onderzoek ik in de derde studie hoe de identiteitsontwikkeling van CFL-docenten wordt beïnvloed door hun interacties met studenten. Tot slot geeft een systematisch literatuuronderzoek een overzicht van hoe internationale docenten hun docentidentiteit construeren en reconstrueren in interculturele omgevingen.

Hoofdstuk 2: De identiteit van Chinese leraren vreemde talen begrijpen in een interculturele context

In dit hoofdstuk is onderzocht hoe docenten Chinese vreemde talen (CFL) hun docentidentiteit ervaren in een interculturele omgeving in Nederland. Door de poststructuralistische identiteitstheorie van Foucault als theoretisch kader te nemen, was het doel van dit hoofdstuk om bij te dragen aan inzichten in CFL-docenten en om bestaand onderzoek naar de identiteit van taaldocenten te verrijken. De primaire onderzoeksvraag luidde als volgt:

Hoe ervaren moedertaalsprekende CFL-docenten hun identiteit in de interculturele context in Nederland?

Dit onderzoek bestond uit semigestructureerde interviews met 21 CFL-docenten die in Nederland werken. De opzet van het interview was gebaseerd op poststructuralistische theorie. De data werden geanalyseerd met behulp van een inductief-deductieve thematische benadering, waarbij gebruik werd gemaakt van de zes identiteitsdomeinen in de studie van Hanna et al. (2019): zelfbeeld, motivatie, self-efficacy, taakperceptie, betrokkenheid en werktevredenheid. De gegeneraliseerde categorieën onder zes domeinen vertoonden een goede betrouwbaarheid en validiteit.

Uit het huidige onderzoek bleek dat de identiteits(re)constructie van CFL-docenten een niet-lineair proces is dat wordt beïnvloed door eerdere overtuigingen van docenten en ook door de onderwijscontext. Bovendien benadrukten docenten het belang van het behouden van zichzelf terwijl ze zich aanpasten om aan de verwachtingen van een nieuwe context te voldoen. Hoewel CFL-docenten tijdens hun werk in het buitenland met veel uitdagingen werden geconfronteerd, toonden ze zich sterk en waren ze bereid om professioneel te groeien. Uit dit onderzoek werden enkele praktische implicaties getrokken. De implicaties hebben betrekking op het ontwikkelen van professionele ontwikkelingsprogramma's, het opbouwen van een gemeenschap van CFL-docenten en het bieden van de benodigde leermiddelen.

Hoofdstuk 3: Constructie en reconstructie van de identiteit van Chinese leraren vreemde talen in een interculturele context: Een longitudinale meervoudige casestudie

Dit hoofdstuk onderzoekt de processen waarmee CFL-docenten hun docentidentiteit construeren en reconstrueren in een interculturele context. In de context van toenemende globalisering en mobiliteit van docenten richtte dit onderzoek zich op de specifieke kwesties waarmee CFL-docenten in een interculturele context in Nederland worden geconfronteerd. Twee onderzoeksvragen werden beantwoord:

- 1) Hoe ontwikkelen CFL-docenten hun professionele identiteit in een interculturele context?
- 2) Welke factoren beïnvloeden de identiteitsontwikkeling van CFL-docenten in een interculturele context?

Deze studie gebruikte een longitudinaal ontwerp om drie Chinese taalleraren gedurende twee jaar te onderzoeken. Reflectieve dagboeken, mondelinge verhalen, interviews en verhaallijnen waren de primaire gegevensbronnen. Thematische analyse werd gebruikt om de gegevens te analyseren.

De bevindingen lieten een traject in drie fasen zien, hier aangeduid als de 'overlevingsfase', de 'verkennende' fase en de 'vaardigheidsfase'. In alle drie stadia bleken drie clusters van factoren (context, secundaire personages, incidenten) een significante invloed te hebben op de identiteitsconstructie van deelnemers in de interculturele context.

De bevindingen toonden aan dat identiteitsconstructie een langdurig en complex proces is. De deelnemers veranderden van adaptief naar reactief en vervolgens proactief. CFL-docenten toonden zich sterk in het integreren van interculturele ervaringen om hun docentidentiteit te verfijnen, ondanks barrières. Uit het onderzoek bleek ook dat de identiteitsontwikkeling van CFL-docenten een proces is van onderhandeling tussen individuele agency en contextuele factoren. Deze bevindingen kunnen zowel beleidsmakers als onderwijsinstellingen helpen bij het ontwerpen van meer inclusieve en effectieve onderwijsomgevingen.

Hoofdstuk 4: De relatie tussen leraar en student als een lens om de identiteit van de leraar in een interculturele context te onderzoeken

In dit hoofdstuk wordt de identiteit van de leraar - de innerlijke kant van het lesgeven - onderzocht via de relatie tussen leraar en leerling - de uiterlijke kant van het lesgeven. Het gebruik van de relatie tussen leraar en leerling als een lens om de identiteit van de leraar te verkennen en te interpreteren, biedt een nieuw perspectief om de identiteit van de leraar te onderzoeken. De onderzoeksvraag luidde:

Hoe kan de identiteit van Chinese leraren vreemde talen worden gekarakteriseerd op basis van hun leraar-studentrelatie, in een interculturele context?

In dit cross-sectionele ontwerp werden semi-gestructureerde interviews, een enquête en klasobservaties gebruikt als primaire gegevensbron. Veertien native-speaker Chinese taaldocenten en honderdtweënnegentig Nederlandse middelbare scholieren namen

deel aan dit onderzoek. De gegevensanalyse was verdeeld in twee fasen. Ten eerste werden de enquêtegegevens geanalyseerd via SPSS 26 om de interpersoonlijke profielen van de docenten te identificeren. Daarna werd inductieve inhoudsanalyse toegepast om de interviewgegevens te analyseren.

De bevindingen toonden aan dat de nieuwe onderwijsomgeving leerkrachten een ruimte bood om hun rollen te herpositioneren en hun leerkrachtidentiteit te versterken. Bij alle leerkrachten hield identiteitsconstructie in dat ze de "andere" cultuur omarmden en enkele oorspronkelijke overtuigingen behielden. Desondanks geven de bevindingen aan dat de paden van identiteitsconstructie van leerkrachten varieerden afhankelijk van hun interpersoonlijke profielen. Dit hoofdstuk kan nuttig zijn om diegenen te helpen die net beginnen als leerkracht in een interculturele context. Bovendien werden er suggesties gedaan voor lerarenopleidingen en instellingen om een meer ondersteunende onderwijsomgeving te ontwikkelen voor internationale leerkrachten.

Hoofdstuk 5: Navigeren door interculturele landschappen: Een systematisch literatuuroverzicht van identiteitsontwikkeling van docenten in interculturele contexten in het buitenland

In dit hoofdstuk werd een systematisch literatuuronderzoek uitgevoerd naar de identiteitsontwikkeling van internationale leraren in interculturele omgevingen. Het doel van deze studie was de vorming en transformatie van de identiteit van leerkrachten in diverse onderwijssettings te onderzoeken, aangezien dit implicaties heeft voor

de efficiëntie, integratie, werktevredenheid en loopbaanontwikkeling van leerkrachten. De volgende onderzoeksvraag wordt gesteld ter evaluatie:

Hoe ontwikkelen internationale leraren hun lerarenidentiteit in interculturele omgevingen in het buitenland?

Deze systematische review onderzoekt onderzoek naar de identiteitsontwikkeling van internationale leraren in interculturele contexten op basis van 38 peer-reviewed artikelen gepubliceerd tussen 2015 en 2024. De principes van het PRISMA-statement (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis) (Moher et al., 2009) werden gebruikt als richtlijn voor het uitvoeren en rapporteren van deze review. Drie dimensies van de identiteit van leraren, namelijk persoonlijke identiteit, professionele identiteit en socioculturele identiteit werden aangenomen als kader.

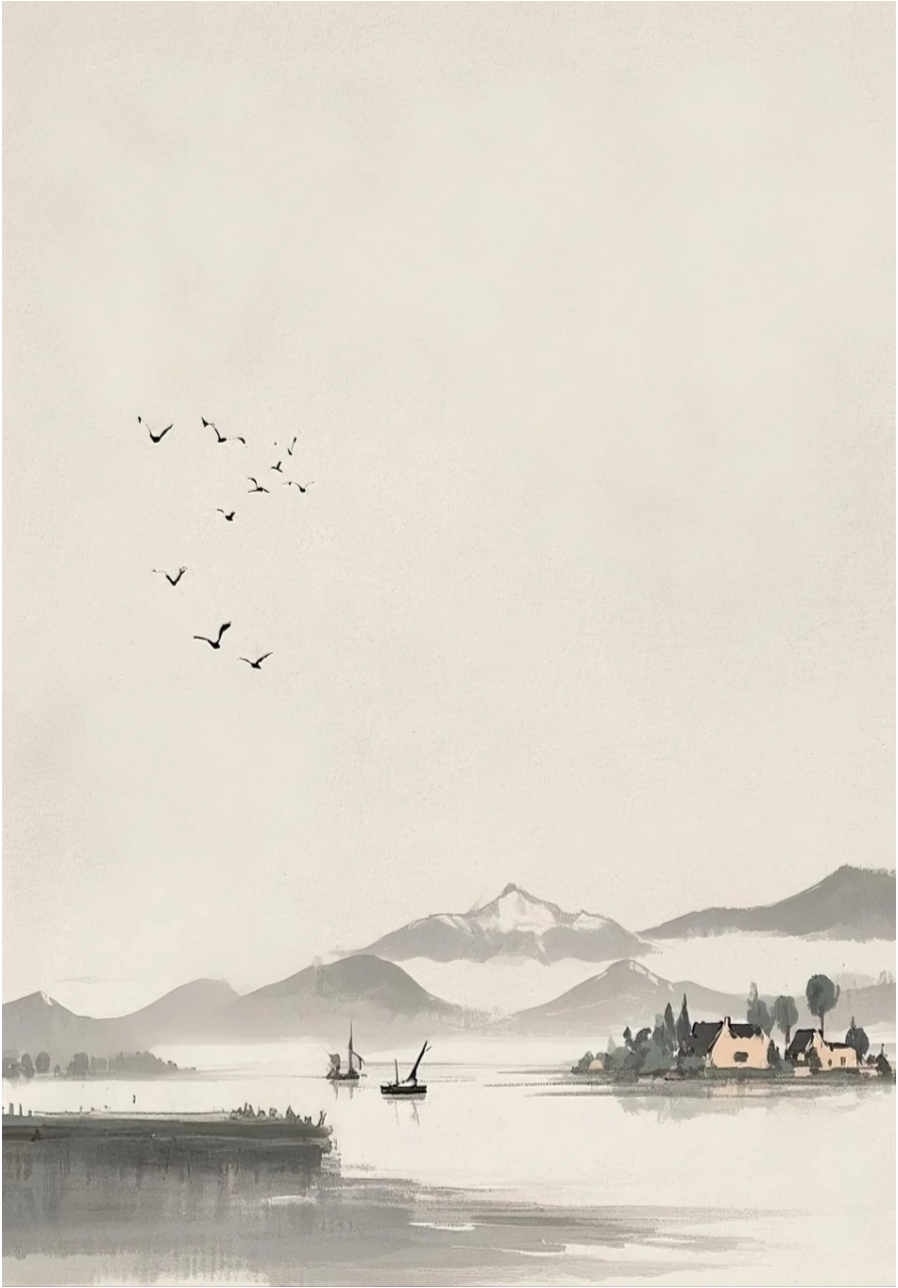
De bevindingen tonen aan dat de ontwikkeling van de identiteit van leerkrachten in interculturele omgevingen een complex, multidimensioneel proces is dat gevormd wordt door persoonlijke, professionele en socioculturele factoren. Bovendien benadrukken de bevindingen de dynamische wisselwerking tussen deze dimensies en onderstrepen ze het belang van voortdurende aanpassing, reflectie en ondersteuning. De bevindingen laten de uitdagingen en kansen zien waarmee internationale leraren worden geconfronteerd bij het ontwikkelen van hun lerarenidentiteit, die zowel authentiek is voor hun persoonlijke overtuigingen als reageert op de interculturele dynamiek van hun gastomgeving. Door de uitdagingen aan te pakken die in dit onderzoek zijn geïdentificeerd en op feiten gebaseerde interventies te

implementeren, kunnen onderwijsinstellingen internationale docenten beter ondersteunen in hun transformatieve reizen.

Hoofdstuk 6: Algemene discussie en conclusies

Het laatste hoofdstuk van dit proefschrift geeft een algemene discussie en conclusies van de vier onderzoeken. Om te beginnen vat ik de belangrijkste bevindingen van de vier onderzoeken samen. Daarna werden de belangrijkste en interessante bevindingen geïdentificeerd en in meer detail besproken. De volgende drie aspecten werden besproken: invloed van interculturele contexten op de identiteitsontwikkeling van docenten; persoonlijke, professionele en socioculturele dimensies van de identiteit van docenten; overeenkomsten en verschillen tussen CFL-docenten en hun internationale collega's. Hierna besprak ik de belangrijkste beperkingen van dit proefschrift en richtingen voor toekomstig onderzoek. Daarnaast werden de praktische implicaties voor lerarenopleidingen, scholen en instellingen en internationale leraren besproken. Tot slot schreef ik een conclusie om het belangrijkste doel van dit proefschrift samen te vatten en een aantal nuttige boodschappen mee te geven.

Concluderend roept dit proefschrift op tot een wereldwijd onderwijssysteem dat niet alleen culturele diversiteit omarmt, maar er ook optimaal gebruik van maakt om internationaal lesgeven en leren te verbeteren. Door zichzelf te blijven terwijl ze zich aanpassen, zouden internationale leraren hun professionele ontwikkeling in de mondiale onderwijscontexten van vandaag de dag kunnen vervullen.



Curriculum Vitae

Xu Liu was born on July 23, 1990, in Sichuan, China. In 2008, she graduated from Mianyang Dongchen International School. After that, she attended Sichuan International Studies University and majored in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. She received her Bachelor's degree in 2012 and was awarded the Outstanding Graduate Award. Following this, she continued to pursue her interests in linguistics by studying linguistics and applied linguistics at Sichuan University. Under the supervision of Professor Dr. Wenquan Yang, she focused on studying Chinese as a foreign language teaching in applied linguistics. In July 2016, Xu Liu completed her Master's degree and was recognized as an outstanding postgraduate student. Upon graduation, she moved out of campus and became a lecturer at the Chongqing Institute of Foreign Studies. Teaching courses related to linguistics and participating in scientific research are some of her responsibilities at work. After working for five years, in 2021, Xu Liu started her PhD at Leiden University, Graduate School of Teaching (ICLON). She decided to investigate Chinese foreign language teachers' identity development in an intercultural setting as a result of her sustained interest in linguistics and education. Her PhD was supported by the Chinese Government Scholarship Council grant.

Publications and Presentations

Scientific Publications

Liu, X., Mearns, T., & Admiraal, W. (2023). Teacher-Student Relationship as a Lens to Explore Teacher Identity in an Intercultural Context. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 136, 104379.

Liu, X., Mearns, T., & Admiraal, W. (2024). “For Me, It is Important to Maintain Self While Adapting.” Understanding Chinese Foreign Language Teachers’ Identity in an Intercultural Context. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 1-19.

Liu, X., Mearns, T., & Admiraal, W. (2025) Construction and Reconstruction of Teacher Identity in an Intercultural Context: A Longitudinal Multiple Case Study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 157, 104963.

Manuscripts Under Review

Liu, X., Mearns, T., & Admiraal, W. (Under review) Navigating Cross-Cultural Landscapes: A Systematic Literature Review of Teacher Identity Construction in Intercultural Contexts Abroad.

Wang, Zhou, Liu*, Bao (Under review) Fairness of Grading in Blended Learning in Higher Education.

Conference Presentations

EERA 2022 Paper Presentation: Understanding Chinese Foreign Language Teachers' Identity in an Intercultural Context.

EERA 2023 Paper Presentation: Construction and Reconstruction of Teacher Identity in an Intercultural Context: A Longitudinal Multiple Case Study.

ICO National School 2022 Paper Presentation: Understanding Chinese Foreign Language Teachers' Identity in an Intercultural Context.

ICO International School 2023 Paper Presentation: Teacher-Student Relationship as a Lens to Explore Teacher Identity in an Intercultural Context.

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Xu Liu

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