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

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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., 2005examined teacher identity literature and concluded that many aspects of teacher identity connect to the teacher-student relationship. Similarly, Pillen, Den Brok, and Beijaard (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 accommo- date 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 in-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 un-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 factorsc 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 Participants	**Location of School**	**Years of CFL teaching experience in the Nrtherlands**	**Students**	**Teaching context**
Wu	South	15	Adolescents	Secondary school
Su	Middle	10	Adolescents	Secondary school
Xie	Northwest	13	Adolescents	Secondary school
Zhu	Northwest	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 Participants	Location of School	Years of CFL teaching experience in the Nrtherlands	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.

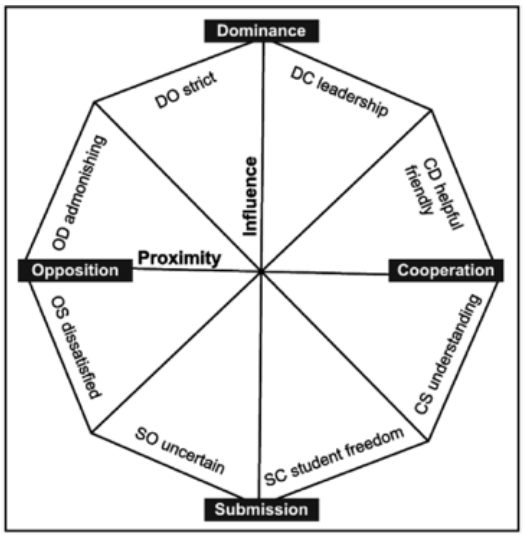


Fig.4.1. *Model for Interpersonal teacher behavior*

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

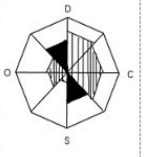
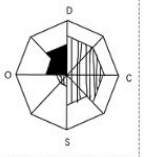
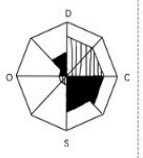
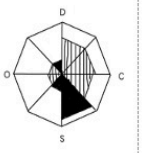
teacher interpersonal behavior typology: directive, authoritative, tolerant/authoritative, tolerant, uncertain/tolerant, uncertain/aggressive, repressive, and drudging (Wubbels et al., 2006) was adopted to describe CFL teachers' interpersonal profiles. Participants were categorized under one of the eight 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)	Admonishing (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**
Yin 16 years of CFL teaching Language school	Importance of adjusting to the overseas teaching environment. Less hierarchical, more freedom for students. Explicitly encouraging and inspiring students. Adapting to requirements takes time. Engaging students by incorporating their interests.	Students should remain quiet and follow instructions. Keeping the Chinese aspect of her identity intact. Dedicated to teaching CFL. Enjoying being around students	Viewed as too strict in spite of adapting. No tensions in current teaching.	Adjusted to the Dutch educational culture as time passed. Considering things from a different perspective. Less strict, more consideration of students' needs. Stronger sense of teacher identity.
Hu 20 years of CFL teaching Secondary school; Language school	Importance of adjusting to the overseas teaching environment. Less hierarchical, more freedom for students. Explicitly encouraging and inspiring students. Demonstrating understanding of students' cultural backgrounds.	Students should remain quiet and follow instructions. Keeping the Chinese aspect of her identity intact. Assigning lots of homework to students.	*"Teacher-centered"* style got negative feedback from students. No tensions in current teaching. Adjusting teaching style to meet students' expectation needs time and effort.	Adjusted to the Dutch educational culture as time passed. Considering things from a different perspective. The necessity to draw the right line for students. Seeing room for improvement.

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

(continued)

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

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**
Xie 13 years of CFL teaching Secondary school; Language school	Meeting the needs of Dutch students: adjust teaching and expectations. Giving students positive feedback to motivate them to strive for greater success. Incorporating Dutch teachers' interactive teaching methods.	Aiming for higher achievement by exerting pressure on students. The "parent" role: showing empathy and sensitivity; taking lots of responsibilities both in and out classroom. 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.	Exploring better ways to engage students reshaped previous teaching beliefs. Realizing value in teaching profession. Improving students' performance without losing their interest is a challenge.
Wu 15 years of CFL teaching Secondary school	Students are considered young adults with their own opinions. Explicitly encouraging and inspiring students. Expectation of students: open-mindedness; intercultural competence.	Aiming for higher achievement by exerting pressure on students. 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.	Learning a great deal from overseas experience. Reshaping previous teaching beliefs, becoming a facilitator 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 Dutch students who think independently and critically. Meeting the needs of Dutch students: adjust teaching and expectations.	The "parent" role: showing empathy and sensitivity; taking lots of responsibilities both in and out classroom. Teaching requires effective classroom management. Does not overly enforce learning outcomes. Besides imparting knowledge, teach students something useful.	Building positive relationships with students takes time and effort. Lacking a diploma in education lowered self-efficacy as a teacher. More confident about relationships with students after overcoming challenges.	Learning a great deal from overseas teaching experience. Realizing value in teaching profession.
Zhu 7 years of CFL teaching Language school	Dutch educational culture places high value on regulations in the classroom. Easy transition. Does not want students growing up in rigid learning environments. Excessive pressure on students might suppress their learning enthusiasm.	The "parent" role: showing empathy and sensitivity; taking lots of responsibilities both in and out classroom. Providing a warm and loving learning environment. Having students develop the rules increases their likelihood of adhering to them.	Low self-efficacy in classroom management. Building positive relationships with students takes time and effort. Despite efforts, did not succeed in being a strict teacher.	Learning a great deal from overseas teaching experience. Realizing value in teaching profession. 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	Adapting approach to students' learning styles and characteristics.	Providing a warm and loving learning environment.	Low self-efficacy in classroom management.	Learning a great deal from overseas teaching experience.
9 years of CFL teaching	Dutch educational culture places high value on regulations in the classroom.	Arousing adolescents' interest in Chinese culture and language.	Decline in the number of students casts doubt on teaching abilities.	Unwise to fully stick to theories or pedagogical methods.
Secondary school; Language school	Improved Dutch will facilitate communication with students.	Seeing students as the window into a country.	CFL teaching experience has been full of challenges.	Drawing the appropriate line is necessary for effective behavior management.
	Dutch colleagues' advice: put on a serious look.	No wish to play the "policeman" with a serious face.		Sees room for improvement.
Xiao	Adapting approach to students' learning styles and characteristics.	Providing a warm and loving learning environment.	Low self-efficacy in classroom management.	Learning a great deal from overseas teaching experience.
9 years of CFL teaching	Students are considered young adults with their own opinions.	Assisting Chinese immigrant students with their identity development.	Building positive relationships with students takes time and effort.	Realizing value in teaching profession.
				Reshaped into a more considerate educator.
Language school	Treating students as individuals.	Dutch language proficiency is not important.	Colleagues' complaint: noise and chaos in her class.	A mentor for students aside from teaching.
	Giving students more autonomy.			

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*

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

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 (Alsup, 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.