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Understanding Language Teachers' Positional Identities in a Professional Promotion Appraisal Context[*]

Abstract: This study examines how forty-eight Polish in-service language teachers position themselves through their discourse during professional promotion examinations for teachers. The data were collected via field notes concerning the participants' narratives and their responses to the questions asked by the members of the examination commissions. Of particular interest were the teachers' three self-positions: the unique self, the ideal self, and the fearful self. The analysis of the data revealed that, apart from the emergence of the references to the three positional identities, each of these self-positions could be further subdivided into other self-position constructions which shed light on what language teachers believe would be appreciated by the examiners under the circumstances. The significance of the study lies in its focus on in-service language teachers' discourses obtained in a particular professional situation— teacher promotion examinations—to which access is rather rare. The findings shed further light on the connection between teacher identity, teacher emotions, and teacher agency and offer implications for in-service language teachers, teacher examiners, and teacher educators.

Keywords: language teacher positional identity, teacher self-positions, professional promotion exam, teacher agency, teacher emotions

1. Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a significant interest in language teacher identity to the extent that some authors argue that we live in the age of identity (Shirley

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and Hargreaves). To this end, comprehensive studies have been offered focusing on multiple dimensions of language teacher identities (e.g., Gallardo; Nagatomo; Rushton et al.). Although these investigations undoubtedly provide further nuance on many teacher identity issues, there is dearth of studies that concern teacher identities in less-obvious job-related contexts, such as language teacher promotion examinations and self-positions which teachers assume in them.

Investigating teacher self-position identities adopted during professional promotion examinations seems vital. This is because the access to teachers' examination discourses is relatively infrequent. Besides, what teachers say under such circumstances and how they behave further elucidates our insights into who they are and what they think, believe, and do.

This paper argues that there are three basic self-position identities that language teachers under such circumstances adopt: the unique self, the ideal self, and the fearful self. Although these self-positions had been identified prior to the commencement of the study, they emerged when the teachers were requested to describe their "professionalism" and respond to their talk-related questions in order to be professionally promoted.

2. Self-positioning

Van Langenhove and Harré, the originators and advocates of positioning theory, distinguish different kinds of positioning, one of which is *self-positioning* discussed here. Self-positioning is very much related to *other-positioning*, because whenever a conversation participant positions another person, at the same time, they position themselves. Of interest to us is *intentional positioning* (Van Langenhove and Harré 23), further subdivided into *deliberate* and *forced positioning* as well as *reflexive positioning* (Van Langenhove and Harré 24).

Deliberate self-positioning happens in situations in which people express their personal identities. This is achieved in three basic ways: by referring to their agency and actions, by showcasing their self-consciousness and unique points of view, and by referring to their (auto)biography. By explaining their agentic behaviour, emphasizing their personal powers and rights, or sharing their biographic stories, people try to achieve the aims they have set. Therefore, engaging in self-positioning can be a kind of "strategic positioning" intentionally adopted for the sake of "presenting" themselves (Van Langenhove and Harré 25).

Forced self-positioning is initiated by another person than the person involved. It can range from a mild question to a promotion examination pressing, such as "Could you talk about your greatest educational achievement?", and invites a kind of self-report, on the basis of which institutional decisions can be made. Both kinds of intentional positioning can be understood as products of people's performative, situational-accountable, and personal features.

In the studies devoted to investigating positioning in SLA (e.g., Kim; Turner), the most popular seems to be *reflexive positioning*, which happens when people assign positions to themselves. Van Langenhove and Harré explain that reflexive positioning, as well as hitherto discussed intentional self-positioning, "occurs in every conversation where one wants to express his/her professional identity", for instance, "by referring to events in one's biography" (24).

In positioning theory, there is a link between positions and identities. To this end, Kayi-Aydar (18) argues that people's positional and conversational identities can be shaped and reshaped through positions emerging in various social contexts. She continues that over time a particular position becomes more dominant in a certain context, and through an accumulation of positions in the context, positional identities are (re)formed (19).

Positioning, as defined above, enables scholars to investigate many different aspects of language teachers' lives. In order to find out what language teachers' self-positions are revealed in the promotion examination situation, I conducted the present study with the following research question: How do language teachers self-position themselves in the narratives in a formal workplace situation when they are being assessed?

3. Orientation to the study

The possibility of being promoted is an integral element of any profession. Apart from moving up in the job hierarchy, teacher promotion satisfies three important needs: financial—related to a higher income, psychological—generated by workplace contentment, and sociological as it offers an opportunity to play a new professional role (Szumiec).

The system of professional promotion for teachers in Poland is based on legal regulations and the most popular professional degrees are those of appointed teacher (AT) and chartered teacher (CT). Becoming an AT is a significant stage in a Polish teacher's professional career in terms of job stability. Becoming a CT means obtaining almost the highest level of professional promotion in the teaching profession, and the promotion at both levels involves an increase in the teacher's prestige.

The teachers applying for both AT and CT status must pass a formal examination consisting of a candidate's presentation followed by the commission's questions (ATs) or a qualifying interview (CTs). The content of the examination or interview questions is a teacher's professional work with reference to the guidelines specified in educational regulations. In both cases, the commission consists of experts from a ministerial list of experts, teachers' principals, representatives of school running bodies, and, for the case of ATs, supervisory bodies.

Of all the self-positions presented by the teachers, I decided to focus on three: *the unique self*, *the ideal self*, and *the fearful self.* The first and most expected to appear in the teacher promotion situation is the one that positions the teacher as someone

who is one-of-a-kind, different from other teachers, in a word, an exceptional teacher. I anticipated that the teachers would like to make use of this self-position due to the appraisal context in which they found themselves and the people who were present there, such as their school principals or other language teachers who were exam experts. In addition, the teachers were expected to self-present as teachers who are very much oriented towards aspirations, professional or personal development, which is in line with the possible selves theory (Markus and Nurius). Such a projective dimension with a clear professional direction was even more anticipated after the introduction of modifications in the regulations in 2019, according to which the teachers taking a qualifying interview for the status of a CT had to discuss their professional visions and orientations for the future. Although these two self-positions were more frequent and perhaps more important for the teachers, the third position— the fearful self (Kubanyiova) was also sought after. In line with this possible self, the teachers were predicted to perceive the whole examination situation as an opportunity to share their tensions, doubts, and frustrations with the other professionals and to give vent to their being reflective and reflexive. That was more anticipated among the more senior teachers, as their promotion was formally called a qualifying interview, not an examination. Hence, the promotion interaction provided a channel to facilitate the teachers' sense-making of their self-positions.

4. Participants and situating the researcher

The present study, which is part of a larger research project[1], includes forty-eight language teachers of whom twenty-two were applying for the position of AT and twenty-six for the CT status.

According to the recent trend on addressing reflexivity statements in qualitative studies (Gilgun), it must be acknowledged that I acted as one of the commission experts. This function provided me with an emic perspective, which is critical to qualitative studies of this kind.

5. Data collection and analysis

This study covers the years 2017 to 2020. The principal method of data collection were in-the-field notes "inextricably linked to participant observation in that they serve as the primary means of recording the detailed observations and insights gleaned through such experiences" (Harrison 346). The data sources were detailed notes of interactions that took place during my participation in various examination commissions. There were forty-eight note files of twenty-two ATs and

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[1] Full information about the project is provided in Werbińska (53–69).

twenty-six of CTs, that is one note file for each teacher. The whole analysis can be divided into two phases.

5.1. Phase 1

Once all forty-eight files of my field notes were ready, I proceeded to coding. First, I read all of them several times until I felt confident about their content. Then I made initial comments, focusing on what "'was actually going on" rather than what I expected to happen. To do this, I made comments on each line of the notes. While identifying the concepts, I went through the data to find any "signs" of possible indicators of one of the three pre-selected self-positions. Then I reviewed the data to make better decisions about my understanding of them. Collecting more instances to confirm specific issues led me to creating a new file with the data concerning the teachers' self-positions. Finally, I referred back to the original notes, but now thinking of them as possible "candidates" for examples of three "self-positions" discussed in the study. For the sake of the article, the excerpts have been loosely translated into English.

5.2. Phase 2

In order to find out more nuanced categories within the identified three self-positions and to convey the voice of each teacher's I-position, I looked for phrases starting with first-person singular personal pronouns and then assigned a name to each thematic unit. As a result, each thematic unit was given two labels: one corresponding to the teacher's individual way of acting in this position (i.e., enthusiast/inspirer) and the other corresponding to the self-position (i.e., "an IT enthusiast" under enthusiast/inspirer in Table 1, row 2) identified within the unique self-positions. With the teachers' illustrative words, Tables 1–6 in the Appendix provide a flavour of the sense of the three self-positions.

6. Findings

6.1. Unique self

In the educational literature, the term teacher's unique self usually refers to teacher effectiveness. It is associated with differentiating certain teachers from other teachers and highlighting particular teachers' unique status, unique preparation for the job, or unique position and experience to provide education (Preston 335). Those teachers who rely on their unique resources may better overcome various work-related challenges (Collie et al. 359).

As the teachers' participation in the interview was caused by the definite purpose—to become promoted—the teachers certainly desired to successfully pres-

ent their professional uniqueness. They tried to use arguments which justified the validity of their uniqueness claim in their minds. The claims were grounded in their actual experience and, perhaps, imagination of what would be relevant to their goal-directed behaviours in the promotion situation.

Reading their unique self-positions, I found it remarkable how many unique selves the teachers came up with, perceiving them as important under the circumstances: eleven in the AT (Table 1) and ten in the CT group (Table 2), almost all of them overlapping between the two groups. This is why I decided to treat them together. Clearly, their unique self-positions did not seem to depend on the group to which they belonged: ATs or CTs. After reducing the self-positions to broader groups, I received six constructions of language teachers that they have and/or claim they have as distinctive about them. They include: *an enthusiast and inspirer*, *a formalist*, *a pursuer of knowledge*, *a manager*, *a good relations carer*, and *a unique knowledge holder.*

The teachers describe themselves as enthusiastic and inspiring both students and their colleagues. Teachers' enthusiasm and inspiration are important, as they can be translated into what students call "interesting lessons". The teachers in the study were enthusiastic about IT (AT1), interesting and home-made teaching aids (AT4), using drama (CT6), even the ways of making the classroom environment as authentic as possible (CT26). Their engendering of others with enthusiasm for English, learning English, taking part in English competitions, even becoming an English teacher, as was the case in mentoring novice teachers (CT13), seems one of the principal qualities of a good teacher.

Some of the teachers resorted to their accountability in an effort to become promoted. In practice, they referred to their scrupulous fulfilment of legal regulations and procedures. They pointed to their good understanding of educational law (AT4), implementing the Minister's annual directions for educational policy (CT10), or flawless performance of an examiner's role (CT10). It can be assumed that they viewed their participation in a formal professional event as an "accountable" occasion and expected that the members of the commission awaited "accountability" from them, which could be seen in their emphasizing the formal accounting of their teaching actions. To support this view, AT3's words may be recalled: "I'm convinced that the presentation of my professional output has met all the requirements needed to become an appointed teacher".

Being an effective classroom manager is a popular quality of a good teacher in the language teaching literature (e.g., Harmer 3; Ur 17). This role involves efficient organizing language learning activities, dividing students into groups, closing down tasks, giving instructions and feedback. The teachers indicated their successful role of teacher as manager by using a discipline contract with students (AT1), as well as less obvious ways of being effective, such as meeting the expectations of students' parents and organizing afternoon English remedial classes (CT26), or

trips to English-speaking countries during which the teacher, apart from playing the usual teacher roles, is a tourist guide conducting culture lessons (AT23).

Other teachers perceived their uniqueness in their willingness to pursue new knowledge. They drew the commission's attention to their regular reading English websites and magazines with a view to finding interesting aspects of culture (T6a), while developing linguistic skills. Interestingly, some of the teachers opt for classroom observation and reflection as a way of learning about the profession (AT20, CT7). They claim to be inspired by everyday critical events (Tripp) and use classroom situations to gain new knowledge about learners. In a way, teachers, like CT7 who finds it interesting to observe how different students communicate with one another, epitomize Dewey's characteristics of an open-minded teacher or Schön's idea of reflection-in-practice.

Learners were also all-important for some teachers (AT4, AT8, AT20, AT22), as they strongly featured in the narratives. Their unique self-position construction stresses the emotional relation to the pupils, that is the teachers' kindness and caring on the one hand, and the students' well-being and development on the other. This expression of uniqueness positions the teachers who use it as people who recognize students' individual needs, which is important in establishing good relationships with students.

Interestingly, there was a teacher whose construction of self-position was related to another field of knowledge. Teacher CT2, who is a professional dietician alongside being a teacher of English, was very keen to highlight this. She chose to talk about her food educational project, organized in all her classes, and throughout the whole interview she tended to come back to her possession of this unique knowledge. Clearly, she desired to make an impression of being a teacher who is competent in teaching English but, in addition, has another unusual asset—paying attention to students' eating habits.

6.2. Ideal self

The ideal self-position is closely related to Dörnyei's L2 motivational self-system and the concept of "future L2 selves" (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova 20). In this teacher identity construction, an individual's current state is different from a desired state. Future selves are important because they play a motivating role in creating teachers' visions, making future plans, and bringing into existence teachers' ambitions and goals. As Miyahara (26) emphasizes, imagination cannot stand for people's fantasies and must be grounded in what is realistic for teachers. Ushioda (20) adds that ideal future selves are continuations of current selves—ambitions and aspirations mediated by what people feel they are able to achieve. Interestingly, teachers' ideal selves need not encompass only teaching practices or strictly professional goals. They can be treated broadly and include teachers' personal aspirations in

accordance with the spillover model (Bakker and Demerouti), which refers to out-pouring of plans from one domain to another.

I further reduced the obtained ideal self-positions, in which the teachers present their hoped-for future selves, to four self-position constructions. The ideal self-positions— their dream positions—of the investigated teachers are presented in Table 3 for ATs and Table 4 for CTs. As the obtained visions overlapped among the teachers from both groups, I discuss them together without differentiating between the groups, as I did with their unique self-position constructions.

The emergent narratives reveal that the teachers' ideal-selves refer to *finishing various formal courses*, deriving *satisfaction from the job*, better *helping their learners*, and *participating in educational experiments.*

As professional teacher development is an integral part of being a teacher, it can be expected that the teachers' willingness to attend formal courses for the sake of learning more would appear. It seems more important what kind of courses teachers would like to attend, because in-service teacher development is typically connected with school-organized development courses for all teachers working in a given institution. Therefore, the training that is promoted by regulatory educational bodies may not coincide with particular language teachers' views on their professional development.

Professional development forms that the teachers in the study seem to need are both formal courses preparing for higher qualifications: MA studies in English (e.g., CT1), PhD studies in American culture (e.g., CT12), courses in IT tools which are believed by teachers to contribute to their better teaching (e.g., AT1, CT4, CT20), and, what struck me, a lot of plans to learn another language, for example English in the case of German teachers or Spanish, to a level sufficient to be able to teach it (e.g., CT2, CT11). There were also aims to attend a Matura preparation course for teachers or intentions to participate in a European project, even to co-ordinate one (CT13). One teacher (CT3) emphatically said that learning is part and parcel of being a teacher, and what she needs is a better transfer of what she reads or hears from experts into her school practice. It can be concluded that in terms of professional development, the teachers are more focused on themselves as people than on themselves as teachers.

Another insight, more in line with being a person than being a teacher, is striving for job satisfaction. Although the teachers may understand it differently, it is interesting that they mind their own well-being in this respect. AT3 hopes that her teaching enthusiasm is sustained, whereas CT13 and CT6 point to the opportunity to teach in another area in which they have qualifications. Hence, deriving satisfaction from the job is both broad and non-specific (the experience of joy) as well as more narrowed-down (teaching a particular subject in the future).

Some teachers desire to continue to focus on learners' needs in their future plans. For example, AT8 wishes she had access to her students' emotions in a given moment because that would give her more possibilities to appropri-

ately respond to their needs. In the same vein, teacher CT25 dreams of possessing therapeutic skills to make her English classes inclusive and beneficial for all students. Other teachers also align with the ideal-self position that is focused on learners but would keep moving towards making a difference to students' lives outside of the classroom. For example, AT2 creates an ideal image of a teacher who is remembered with tenderness, AT7 would like to be more engaged in voluntary work for the sake of his local community, whereas CT6's and CT21's visions of imagined future states are directed towards organizing trips to English-speaking countries for students.

Finally, there was also an image of a classroom experimenter. Here, the teachers came up with the idea of taking part in innovative English learning projects, or simply continuing what they have started, i.e., working with a method personally perceived by them as effective (CT20). The latter alternative may also suggest that they have not spared enough thought to their future plans and want to convince the commission that they are fulfilling their dreams right now.

Hence, the direction in which the teachers' future attention is focused is primarily dictated by the teachers' way of thinking about themselves (i.e., language courses and job satisfaction), their students (i.e., helping learners with problems and making a difference to their lives), or about teaching methodology (i.e., conducting English teaching experiments).

6.3. Fearful self

In the study, I also wanted to discover what the fearful self-positions the teachers expressed. A feared possible self was argued by Oyserman and Markus (119), according to whom the fear of what would happen if the assumed intention failed was a powerful incentive for action. Although it cannot be said that the fears that the teachers shared with the commission were well-founded or would ever be assuaged, it is definitely interesting to see what they amounted to, as they could stand in the teachers' way to achieving their ideal selves. As in the case of the previous self-positions, some of the fearful selves were common for the teachers in both groups. In general, the emerged teachers' fearful selves relate to *profession specific challenges*, *classroom management*, and *teacher personal characteristics* in the AT group (Table 5) and *profession specific challenges*, fear of *routine*, fear of *language incompetence*, and *classroom management* in the CT group (Table 6).

Although all of the emerged "fears" refer to the language teacher profession, a separate category was created to accommodate the factors which may sometimes occur in this particular profession. Among the examples of challenges there were lesson observations by superiors or colleagues, lack of competence to teach ESP classes or to use IT tools, or facing the issues which result from running international school projects. The challenges mentioned here do not always happen during a teaching career, but they produce a great deal of stress if happen unexpectedly.

A surprising issue could be the fear of the aspects that are related to classroom language teaching and, therefore, well anticipated. In both groups, one of the most feared self-positions was the teachers' anxiety over managing the classroom, in particular a smooth transition from one stage of the lesson to another, or teaching a new group of students, the latter even voiced by more experienced teachers.

Teacher anxiety over linguistic incompetence also emerged. Although long debated with the "death of the native speaker" (Paikeday) and the arrival of the Lingua Franca Core (e.g., Jenkins) and all that this involves, the teachers still are concerned over being compared to English native speakers or other proficient speakers in their students' evaluations. The fact that this pertains to both well-qualified English teachers coming from big cities (CT26) and to teachers from village schools testifies to the fact that the "native-speaker complex" is still somewhat alive and that the teacher's proficiency in the language taught seems paramount in the job.

That said, there were fearful self-positions in one group that did not emerge in the other. For example, AT2, who is dedicated to fostering good relations with students, came up with the fear of being too empathic, which enhances interpersonal competences on the one hand, but, if exceeded, causes difficulty in the teacher's ability to detach and disconnect from school issues on the other. In consequence, such a lack of creating boundaries around work may have a negative impact on the teacher's private life and her overall well-being. On the contrary, CT15 shared a sense of fear in relation to the routine of the job. It seems that monotony, repetitiveness, boredom, or lack of purpose may also, in the long run, lead to the teacher's psychological and emotional destruction. Described by Gmelch (10) as "rust-out", the sense of stagnation in the job may be as damaging to the teacher as too much variety. Put in this way, both extreme stimulation and lack of an appropriate amount of challenge may contribute to teachers' fearful selves.

7. Discussion

In this study, I have endeavoured to identify various self-position constructions which appeared when the teachers talked about themselves. To this end, I have identified six self-position constructions when the teachers revealed their unique selves: an enthusiast and inspirer, a formalist, a pursuer of knowledge, a manager, a good relations carer, and a unique knowledge holder, four positions in which the teachers' ideal selves appeared: attending different formal courses, deriving satisfaction from the job, helping students, and taking part in educational experiments, as well as five positions which emerged in relation to the teachers' fearful selves, such as experiencing challenges specific to the profession (e.g., sudden need to teach ESP, being observed), classroom management (e.g., teaching new classes), some teacher personal characteristics (e.g., too much empathy), fear of routine, and fear of language incompetence. There were no major differences between the self-position

constructions in relation to unique and ideal self-positions, whereas their fearful-self constructions differed in two points: ATs were afraid of being too empathic with students, which did not appear in the other group, and CTs occasionally expressed their concern about boredom, which did not occur in the case of the other group.

The three self-positions seem to show what the teachers identify with (the unique and ideal selves) and what they distance from (the fearful self). It can be seen that the construction of their present selves embraces typical roles of the language teacher—a model of language (pursuer of knowledge, knowledge holder), a classroom manager (manager), a supporter of students (good relations carer), which seems to corroborate Badia and Liesa's study on Catalan teachers' I-positions, such as their four clusters in which teachers focus on instruction and school management, on instruction and improving their educational practice, on educating children and teaching students, and improving their educational practice (86–88). Weighing these facts, there are two interesting points worth noting here. The first one is that within the discourse of the present study, there are only unequivocally good examples of teacher uniqueness. This can be explained by the context of the situation and the teachers' desire to present themselves at their best to become promoted. The second interesting point is the fact that how the teachers imagine themselves in the future is also strictly related to the teachers' common roles, such as: helping students (good relations carer), attending various formal courses and conducting educational experiments (pursuer of knowledge, knowledge holder). What is more, the teachers' fearful selves also seem linked to the same points. When the teachers are afraid of disclosure of their language incompetence, they refer to their linguistic knowledge, when they talk about teaching new classes, or possible suffering from routine, they are concerned about classroom management, and when they express, however subtly, the detrimental effect of being too empathic or too sympathetic with their students, they touch upon teacher-student interpersonal relations. Even in the cases of investing in themselves (i.e., learning Spanish), they (CT2, CT 11) stress that they would like to teach the new languages in the future so as to extend their teaching repertoire. By investing in the new language, they seem to think that they will acquire new symbolic and material resources, enhance their cultural capital and competitiveness on the job market (Norton), which can be illustrated by the words voiced by CT24, who is a German teacher right now and would like to teach English ("As a German teacher I'm very frustrated about my ignorance of English. I'd like to teach it"). Yet, they still identify with the typical roles of the language teacher as specified in the literature, associate their ideal selves with the furthest fulfilment of these roles (i.e., conducting language teaching experiments) but at the same time distance themselves from any disruptions that could affect their comfort (e.g., new classes, exhibition of language incompetence).

This similarity of issues in constructions of the teachers' selves may also derive from the fact that the teachers encounter fearful situations on a daily basis,

realize the problematic nature of such experiences, and predict their own concern as to the appearance of such feared states or outcomes in the future. For example, CT10, who is afraid of a new challenge in the form of having to teach ESP or completely new classes, remembers what was told about the difficulty of that or may even have experienced unpleasant incidents connected with that. It can be surmised that the fearful self-positions represent the teachers' positions of future cases based on their past or future within their experienced past, as the fear of them signals that they may have already happened.

The fact that the fearful selves even emerged from the teachers under the circumstances also suggests that some of the teachers present themselves as human beings, not one-dimensional figures. For example, AT1, who is generally enthusiastic and self-confident, expresses her uncertainty about IT and teaching seventh-graders in the primary school for the first time ("What I lack are specific IT tools. I don't know if and how they can be made. Also, I lack educational competences to prepare them for the school-leaving exam."). AT20, who made an impression of a self-confident person, interested in constant learning and developing a good rapport with students, admitted that her perception of students with special needs had been too stereotypical. What is more, when they talk about their competencies, they usually present them in contrast to someone who lacks this competence (e.g., AT1 talking about her mentor who lacks the knowledge that she has, "She could learn a lot from me"). It can be surmised that the teachers are aware that they depend on the here and now of the promotion situation and therefore use all opportunities available in the interview setting to achieve their goal. These, sometimes dichotomous, self-position constructions may not be seen at first glance, as they only emerged through my multiple readings of a given extract. The existence of several contesting forces in the teachers' narratives also makes space for the negotiation of alternative and different teacher identities.

8. Limitations, conclusions, implications

The study has some limitations which need mentioning. The greatest potential limitation is that the data were only drawn from hand-written notes, however meticulous these may have been. Yet, the goal of my study was not to generalize, but to better understand language teachers and to shed more light on the teachers' discourses about their self-positions expressed during a promotion situation. The impracticality of recording discourses during the interviews makes it well-nigh impossible to obtain ethnographic emic data from this context of language teachers' work. The fact that the study was accomplished thanks to scrupulous notes means that the perceived limitation could also be regarded as one of the strengths of the study.

Another shortcoming that might be levelled against the study is its reliance only on the field-notes. Conducting follow-up interviews with the teachers or members of

the commission, enriching the data with investigations of the teachers' classrooms, or obtaining information about the teachers from their students could have made the study more reliable. However, it also seems reasonable to claim that the study was supported with empirical evidence collected over several recent years and the participants came from different schools, different locations, and taught different foreign languages. These variables significantly minimize the shortcomings related to multi-method issues.

My study provides some insights into teachers' self-positioning in the professional promotion context, which is a small part of the picture of language teachers in Poland and an even smaller part of language teachers globally. The study aimed at presenting what language teachers in Poland tend to say in order to become promoted. It evidenced "localness" with all its nuances and subtleties. Therefore, the obtained findings can scarcely be generalized to all language teachers in the process of their professional promotion, although the ideal-self positions related to being an inspirer, a good-relations carer, or a pursuer of knowledge may somewhat resonate with Badia and Liesa's (84) study and their investigated teachers' I-positions.

It is hoped that the discourses presented here will find resonances with many ATs and CTs in Poland and become informative for readers engaged with language teacher evaluation. They may also encourage language teacher education researchers to consider the task of further problematizing the complex subject of language teacher appraisal, and perhaps initiate greater acceptance of current challenges and more up-to-date ways of coping with them.

Appendix

Table 1: ATs' unique-self positions

1. An inspirer (enthusiast/inspirer)	
By inspiring others	My mentor learnt from me a lot of things, e.g., assertiveness, because she's a wonderful teacher but can't show it (AT1). I exchange information with teachers a lot (AT4). I'd like to infect you a bit with what I've focused on in my internship (AT20).
2. An IT enthusiast (enthusiast/inspirer)	
By active using IT	IT is my hobby, I like it a lot. I make e-coursebooks, YouTube films, use websites (AT1).
3. A successful classroom manager (manager)	
By using contracts	I start each term with joint making contracts and classroom codes. I don't have problems with misbehaviour thanks to using the contract (AT1).
By talking to students in private	I successfully coped with the curbing of students' temperament and their emotional problems (AT7).

4. A learner (pursuer of knowledge)	
By extensive reading	I'm trying to read in English, Newsweek or websites. I'm trying to read the articles about European and British culture, so that I can convey something extra, a fun fact, something enriching their knowledge (AT6).
By taking part in in-service teacher training	There wouldn't be any increase in the quality of school work hadn't I taken part in various forms of teacher training (AT12). I very much like to educate myself. During my internship I finished postgraduate studies in two fields: oligophrenopedagogy and rehabilitation of people with the autism spectrum disorder (AT20).
5. A materials designer (enthusiast/inspirer)	
By making teaching aids	As to the teaching aids in the slides, I have to boast myself. All of them were handmade by me (AT4).
6. A learner-oriented teacher (good relations carer)	
By recognizing learners' developmental needs	I always try to recognize students' developmental needs either during the competitions or school events (AT4).
By establishing good relations with students	I always take care of a good rapport with students. I'm trying to be open to them, I want them to feel supported in every situation. They treat me as an answer provider to all possible kinds of questions (AT20).
By observing students	I'm such an interpersonal type of personality. I always try to observe students and I'm able to notice if a person, who is even active in the lesson, has some problems with understanding or not (AT20).
By differentiating work	In my work I try to look at each student individually, adjusting myself to their situation. It's easier for me because I'm from this community, I'm an English teacher and their football coach. I am in contact with their parents practically all the time (AT22).
7. A classroom team member (good relations carer)	
By using lexical choices	I put a lot of emphasis on their saying "we are" because I'm also a member of their team, I'm not a teacher in my class, I'm a member and we're a community. We have to help each other and engage in the school's life (AT20).
8. An accountable person (formalist)	
By admitting to slight negligence	I will definitely read this. We've never had such a case. I'll read this today. I'm embarrassed (AT4).
By referring to accountability	I'm convinced that the presentation of my professional output has met all the requirements needed to become an appointed teacher (AT3).
9. A legal knowledge user (formalist/unique knowledge holder)	
By being able to find necessary legal regulations	Obviously, I don't know the regulations by heart but I know where to find them if I need (AT4).
10. A teacher of English culture (manager)	
By organizing trips to English-speaking countries	I managed to organize a school trip to New York, which was an exceptional event locally. There was no tour office, I was the guide. We'd been to UK a few times before (AT21).

11. A reflective thinker (pursuer of knowledge)	
By changing beliefs	I used to have stereotypical knowledge about children with intellectual deficiencies. I thought they wouldn't learn English, given that they had problems with Polish. I thought the same about people with the autism spectrum disorder who would sit against a wall, without any eye contact, bumping heads against the wall. But working in our school with children with special needs was like illumination. I don't perceive them as disabled but intellectually challenging (AT20).
	I once thought it was enough to explain something and they were obliged to know it. It's different in reality, though. I've learnt to explain difficult things in a simple way, relate English grammar to Polish grammar, to real life practice, and this is the greatest change in my way of teaching (AT21).

Table 2: CTs' unique-self positions

1. An initiator of school projects (enthusiast/inspirer)	
By initiating and participating in school projects	I'm, as a teacher, open to new initiatives and innovations (CT1). As the only one at school, I started a project. At first, I wanted to join others, there was a project with a school from Turkey but I also decided to write my own. If others can write, why not me? (CT4). I've created a syllabus for teaching English in which students decided about the pace of their work, the topics to work on, and forms of assessment (CT23). I'm the author of a teaching German innovation which is an annual German language and culture district competition. A good healthy competition between our local schools (CT24). We regularly organize The Day of Languages. I always engage in it and always write a play, either with students or by myself in which there are lots of languages. Together with my colleague I also organized a contest of songs in other than English languages (CT20).
2. An enthusiastic teacher (enthusiast/inspirer)	
By using drama	I'm a person who likes performing on stage. I'm trying to convey this to my learners because I think it's a good introduction to the foreign language world (CT6).
By using IT	For me a great discovery was using the applications, such as Kahoot or Quizlet. Students like using them. They extend their vocabulary and they are good for revising grammar, even topics related to English-speaking countries (CT11).
By never switching to Polish	I have a method that the door to my classroom is magical. After passing through it only English is used. All my students are used to this, no matter if they are from the 2 grade, or the 8 grade (CT26).
3. A fully-fledged examiner (formalist)	
By finishing the course	It was interesting because I could share my knowledge with other teachers who have been correcting the exam papers for several years. I was proud of myself that the assessment of my exam papers was acknowledged by the verifier (CT1T).

4. A holder of unique knowledge (holder of unique knowledge)	
By holding other attractive qualifications	I coordinated two European projects linked to healthy eating. I'm a certified dietitian. I was able to connect English with the knowledge of nutrition. It was very interesting (CT2).

5. An effective teacher (manager)	
By conducting optional afternoon English classes	That was meeting the parents' expectations. The parents asked about remedial classes because they couldn't afford private lessons for their kids. In the first year there were too many students . We were sitting in one semi-circle, then in another one and this is how I taught them. Most of those who came to the lessons passed scoring 80% (CT26).
By being praised by Americans	When Americans heard her, they were delighted. Such a good accent. I asked her if she was attending any extra lessons of English and she said: "No, only with you at school". And from the Internet, you know (CT12).

6. A knowledge sharer (formalist)	
By conveying knowledge about assessing exam papers in spontaneous conversations	Thanks to the fact that I was an examiner in the past, I'm able to support my colleagues preparing students for exams. I tell them how I would prepare them, what to pay attention to (CT10). The most popular form of sharing knowledge is a spontaneous conversation. This is the easiest method but the most effective. I was able to take part in a course for a Matura examiner and I could use this knowledge with my colleagues to help them how to assess papers (CT11).
By giving talks on a selected topic to colleagues in teachers' meetings	As a leader of foreign language teachers' team, I was asked to give a talk on active methods in a language classroom, especially for novice teachers (CT23). There was one teachers' meeting and I presented the methods concerning mediation (CT25).

7. A learner motivator (good relations carer)	
By encouraging learners to participate in language contests	I have a really big group of students who take part in language contests every year. I think they are motivated by me, my work, and the methods I use. I'd like to think it is like this (CT11).

8. A teacher mentor (good relations carer)	
By being empathetic	I was very empathetic, I took into consideration the fact that the student teacher didn't have father, took care of his younger sister, and I had to adjust the time he was able to spend during his school placement. I have a mentee preparing for being an appointed teacher and we get along very well. She asked the principal for choosing me as her mentor. I had to think this over because this is a very responsible role (CT13).
By giving a lot of practical knowledge	All the English students from the university want to take part in my lessons. I've had thirteen during my internship. Sometimes there are too many of them. One teacher waited for me from 7:15 a.m. to be accepted. She didn't want to go to other English teachers at school. What I was to do when I came breathless at 7:55a.m. Of course, I agreed (CT26).

9. An accountable teacher (formalist)	
By obeying legal regulations	I was a language teachers group leader. I tried to implement all the assumptions of the conception of school's work. I was a mediator between the group and the principals, I made a schedule of our work, of psychological and pedagogical aid. I shared experience with my colleagues. We analysed examination papers. I always paid attention to the Ministry of Education's assumptions for a given year, made sure that teachers talk about cyberviolence, Internet security, health promotion, even the independence anniversary. We also created repair plans, and in this way increased the quality of our school (CT23). Expert: The analysis of your external exam results shows the necessity of change. What actions would you take up? Teacher: We would certainly prepare a repair programme. We would analyse the answers carefully and do Excel calculations for every task. Perhaps we'd offer extra classes. Expert: And what would that be based on legally? Teacher: The Curriculum Core to see if we stick to it (CT10)
10. A reflective thinker (pursuer of knowledge)	
By observing	I had a chance to teach students from different school specializations: art, vets, police specialization. That was interesting. What I got out of these classes was the experience how people's minds communicate (CT7).

Table 3: ATs' ideal-self positions

1. A teacher satisfied with the job (satisfaction achiever)	
By being satisfied	I hope the joy that I'm deriving from my work now will be with me for many years to come (AT3).
2. A professional development pursuer (knowledge pursuer)	
By doing courses and postgraduate studies	My next plan is to take up postgraduate studies in autism, develop knowledge through self-education, use all available forms of professional development in a local in-service teacher centre, especially that they are free (AT4). Postgraduate studies in speech-therapy, develop self-education, and use various forms of professional development (AT6).
By regular updating professional knowledge	I'd like to extend my knowledge as a class teacher. There are so many courses … but what I lack are specific IT tools. (AT1).
By taking part in international projects	I'm going to enrich my work, extend my qualifications and competences, take part in an e-twinning project, as there's a lot of interest, especially the students' parents want me to apply for it (AT11).
3. A contributor (difference maker)	
By doing voluntary work	I'd definitely like to devote more time to voluntary work. I wish I had done more during my internship. Most activities were organized during long weekends but my home is a five-hour-drive from here so I wanted to spend more time with my family (AT7).

By being remembered	I'm from a teacher's family. My mum was always concerned about her pupils. She's still well remembered by them. I'd like to be the same. This is my dream (AT2).
By recognizing learners' needs	I'd like to know what my students are feeling at a given moment and what emotions torment them. A student may be gifted, willing to participate but has a worse day, argued with his mum, unhappy in love, and I know he won't write this test […] If I could get into the mind of each student, I would know what they are guided by at a given moment. I think it would be easier to work and know how to respond and help such a student (AT8).

Table 4: CTs' Ideal self-positions

1. A learner of another language (knowledge pursuer)	
By learning another attractive foreign language for extending a school offer	I'd like to learn another foreign language. Spanish would be useful at school (CT2). I'm seriously deliberating BA Spanish studies to learn Spanish so that I could teach it in the future (CT11).
By learning English to overcome exclusion	As a German teacher I'm very frustrated about my ignorance of English. I'd like to teach it (CT24).
2. A professional development pursuer (knowledge pursuer)	
By completing formal studies (MA, PhD, a new field)	I'd like to finish MA English studies. I learnt the practice first, but formal studies are studies. Teacher development all the time (CT1). I'm dreaming about PhD in American culture studies …, perhaps applying for an honorary title of professor of education (CT12).
By completing IT courses	I'll continue developing my knowledge. Most of all, training related to modern IT methods, speaking, as there are things that we sometimes focus on but are not important in practice (CT4). I'd like to be trained in one of the Microsoft actions and go in this direction to conduct lessons in which my students could learn with students from other countries (CT20).
By becoming an examiner	Taking part in a project on Matura preparation (4CT). I'd like to be an examiner (CT8). To acquire new skills that will help me better prepare children for the exam (CT10).
By taking part in international projects	I'd like to become a coordinator of Erasmus+ (CT11).
By confronting theoretical knowledge with practice	I'm very much interested in the psychological sphere. I'd like to develop in this area. I try to understand students' responses, I often use the ideas from the courses, some of them work, others don't, but I go on (CT3).
3. An interdisciplinary teacher (job satisfaction achiever)	
By teaching a dream subject	I graduated from geography studies. It's been my passion since grade 4. I'd like to have, however small, occasion to teach this subject in a project form. I think projects are the future, not short ones but exceeding the terms, the whole year (CT13).

By connecting English with other qualifications	I did postgraduate studies in professional advising. I'd like to connect it with English. I've got an idea on meetings with people who specialize in maritime themes (CT6).
4. A contributor (difference maker)	
By focusing on inclusion	There's one thing I'd very much like to introduce. I organized a Day of Coloured Socks and I think we could create something about the people with Down Syndrome. The students' tolerance towards them is very low. Even if there are problems in class, students can't cope with acceptance and I'd like to do something that would help them accept such people (CT5).
By organizing trips to an English-speaking country	I dream about organizing a trip to an English-speaking country. I've never participated in such a trip but I'd like to organize one (CT6). I'd like to organize a foreign trip with our students (CT21).
By acquiring therapeutic competences	I noticed that many teachers just come to school to teach and that's all. My plan for the future is to become a specialist working with people with autism, Asperger syndrome, behavioural problems. Such therapeutic competences (CT25).
5. A good practice implementor (classroom experimenter)	
By continuing the current practice	I'd like to continue the work I've started but to extend the organization of the contest and have it between schools, not only within our school (CT11). I'd like to work with the LDL method and organize the song contests (CT20). I'd like to continue the functions that I'm playing at school now. A team leader, an evaluation leader, extra English classes for pupils, a class teacher (CT21). I'll be implementing various innovations because they develop learners and myself. I'll be using learning apps and create my own lessons (CT21). Further cooperation with the Goethe Institute (CT24).
By introducing new ideas to her students	My cousin in Germany teaches English and Spanish via projects. I think it might be interesting to implement the core curriculum in a block form. It might be engaging for kids (CT6).

Table 5: ATs' fearful self-positions

1. Unable to solve an educational problem (fear of job-specific challenges)	
By not having specific tools or educational competences By having lessons observed	What I lack are specific IT tools. I don't know if and how they can be made. Also, educational competences to prepare them for the school-leaving exam (AT1). The principal would come to my lessons and that was very stressful. For a long time, I hadn't had a chance to teach in classes of children with special needs. When I started working in this school I had to do it in the presence of a support teacher. That was a challenge for me. I wondered if I would cope with having an observer in every class (AT17).

2. Too empathic (fear of own vulnerability)	
By empathizing too much	I'm a very empathic person. Sometimes it's a disadvantage. I really see a situation through the other person's eyes. My first experience being a class teacher. I'm about to start crying. I trust them, they trust me. Sometimes the trust is lost and then negative emotions crop up. I come home and talk to myself like "I tried so much, but it has no effect". Sometimes it's too overwhelming and I can't cut off from this (AT2).
3. Methodologically deficient (fear of teaching)	
By observing other teachers	During the observation of other teachers' lessons I noticed that I have to spend more time on the first lesson stage, that is student preparation for what is to be told. I'm better at the final stage, that is the round-off (AT7).

Table 6: CTs' fearful self-positions

1. Afraid of professional challenges (fear of job challenges)	
By complaining about teaching ESP	A big challenge ahead of me. I'm teaching ESP and I've been assigned robotics, automatics, and electronics. I'll be doing firm placements. A big challenge, three new professional areas. It won't do that I'll translate something. The learners may ask "What is it for?", because they are only in the first class learning the job. I'm very stressed about it. These are completely new challenges (CT10).
By being afraid of formalities in project making	There is always some kind of stress, a fear when you do new challenges. The most stressing for me is the time assigned for the project, the deadlines, and doing everything according to the schedule (CT4).
By dismissing taking part in international projects	Expert: Why have you never taken part in Erasmus projects? Teacher: I've never met a person who would deal with it in my school. Expert: But you could be the first one. Teacher: Perhaps, but I'm afraid I may not cope with it (CT22).
2. Afraid of routine (fear of routine)	
By being aware of its destructive consequences	When I invite colleagues or principal to my lessons, they may always look at me with a critical eye and say, "Listen, this method here could've been better" or ask "Why are you doing this in groups?" So, I'm trying to remember about the "routine", as I know this is one of these notions that may decrease my work and my students' outcomes (CT15).
3. Insecure about language skills (fear of language incompetence)	
By acknowledging a native speaker complex	A test for me as a mentor of a student teacher was a university student, about forty, with darker skin, who came to me and said she was from the USA and uttered: "Yes, yes, I'd like to have an apprenticeship". And it got to the point where she started teaching as well. I thought my poor kids wouldn't understand her, but it was wonderful. She understood them, they understood her, and later she said to me: "Why were you so nervous? You give lessons in the same way". Phew! (CT26).

4. A weak classroom manager (fear of teaching)	
By having problems with students' behaviours	I've always felt frightened when teaching a new group. Everything seems fine but you can see a growing frustration and new people are afraid that they are not going to be accepted, including teachers (CT3).

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