Shaken identities and newly-won perspectives: The impact of globalization on English language teachers in Austria

Petra Kletzenbauer¹, Alia Moser², Andrea Kulmhofer³

¹University of Applied Sciences FH JOANNEUM, Austria
²University of Graz, Austria
³University of Graz & BIFIE (Department of Educational Standards & International Assessments), Austria

Being flexible, highly-qualified, dedicated, and engaged in continual professional development are just a few expectations of the ELT teacher working in a globalizing world. Not only at university but also at secondary levels, strategies of internationalization have affected their professional identities due to topics that go beyond the general ELT syllabus (i.e. CLIL, international research projects, and teacher training). As teachers are encouraged to step out of their comfort zone – a situation causing their traditional teaching roles to alter – the impact on teacher identity is immense. Hence, ”the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which they claim or which are assigned to them” (Varghese et al. 2005: 22) need to be investigated to get a clearer sense of who these teachers are.

In our paper, we want to explore the re-defined roles of six Austrian ELT teachers – teaching either at secondary or tertiary levels – facing the pressures of globalization. Seeing teachers as ”active, thinking decision-makers [] by drawing on [] networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs” (Borg 2003: 81), we based our research on written autobiographies and narrative profiles to get a unique perspective into these teachers’ inner voices, thus providing us with a better understanding of what drives changing teacher identities.

The findings of this qualitative study highlight the role of identity, notions of self, and other psychological factors (i.e. pressure, increased stress) as drivers for changes in language teachers’ identities by addressing skills and competencies beyond those traditionally defined for this professional field.


Keywords: language teacher’s psychology, globalization, re-defined roles.