A teacher-in-context: Negotiating professional identity during the job promotion exam

Dorota Werbinska
Pomeranian University, Poland

Although there is an increasing body of research on the formation/re-formation of language teacher professional identity, there are still contexts of the language teacher's professional practice that remain hardly explored. One such context is an oral examination situation encountered by experienced language teachers in Poland who aspire to being promoted in their teacher professional ranks. Drawing on the three-A (affiliation, attachment, autonomy) model of professional identity, I will focus on the narratives of 10 examinees who are in-service English language teachers (purposive sample) in the hope to discover: 1) what "repertoires" (Kalaja, 2015) the participants employ with regard to their interpretations of the language teaching profession (affiliation), 2) how they index themselves as language teacher practitioners (attachment), 3) how they express their agency through canonical self-presentations and responses to examiners’ questions (autonomy). In addition to addressing the research questions, the findings seem to give insights into what projected images of language teachers the examinees perceive as the right ones in the teacher promotion examination context, in which moments/topics of the interviews they choose the role of passive interlocutors, and which aspects of language teaching they feel ready to question. Although the study is set in the Polish context, it may contribute to the knowledge on language teacher identity (re)construction in general through its focus on one area of language teachers’ professional practice – taking a teacher promotion exam.


Keywords: Poland, language teacher exam, professional identity.