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Multiple identities displayed by post-graduate English majors at personal, academic and professional level

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Abstract

This article is an attempt to contribute to the existing body of research on identity formation among post-graduate students of teacher education and, more specifically, the multiple identities these early career teachers are expected to adopt. Teaching goes far beyond mere instruction and most teachers undertake a number of different roles within the school context (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 225). Teachers who are at the same time university students need to incorporate further roles, while trying to reconcile them with their professional self-image and personal identities. The process of identity formation in this context may be difficult because "(student) teachers have to make sense of varying and sometimes competing perspectives, expectations, and roles that they have to confront and adapt to" (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004, p. 115). This paper is centered on a study that explores identities displayed by post-graduate students of teacher education programs at personal, academic and professional level. The study compares two groups of subjects: students of regular and extramural programs. The findings show that switching between the roles is not easy for both groups and it seriously jeopardizes their professional motivation and enthusiasm. It is hoped that the study contributes to a more profound understanding of the concept of identity among early career teachers.

Keywords: identity; multiple identities; personal identities; teacher identities; student identities; post-graduate students; English philology

1. Introduction

The inspiration for this paper was our work as academic teachers. When teaching post-graduate students of English philology (i.e., 1st and 2nd year students of the MA program) of teaching specialization we could not help but notice that many, if not most of them, already work as teachers. This is reflected in the upward tendency among students to apply for Individual Studies Program (pol. *indywidualna organizacja studiów*, IOS), although many students decide to reconcile studies and work, without asking for any form of exemption. That many students of English philology get employed during studies may be the result of the conducive situation on the job market: language schools are on the constant lookout for teachers to run language courses or in-company trainings. A further trend visible in tertiary education is that present-day students consider studying two or more faculties far more often than students a few decades ago. In the case of English philology, young people decide to study collaterally different specializations (e.g., teaching and translation or business), combine English studies with a different philology (e.g., Spanish, Russian) or try to reconcile English with different, non-philology faculties (e.g., law, history, psychology). At the personal level, post-graduate students of daily studies are at the age of major changes as they are on the verge of leaving family home and raising a family.

The situation is even more complex in the case of extramural students who come back to university from increasingly varying contexts, prompted by the policies of life-long learning or required to obtain further qualifications by their employers. Extramural students in the present-day classroom are often mature students with considerable experience as teachers of English, teachers of a language other than English, teachers of content subjects (e.g., geography, biology), early-school educators, pedagogues, school psychologists or other professionals. Extramural students often already display a considerable number of personal roles; they are parents, spouses, divorcées, grandparents, caretakers, etc.

Regular and extramural students who function in this context are required to take on many different roles, imposed on them by the nature of personal, academic and professional domains. This plurality of roles prompted us to ask about our students' motivation, commitment, enthusiasm, efficacy and job satisfaction. We became interested in potential contradictions or tensions that might build up between different roles. For instance, we wondered whether a fully-functioning professional who had been required to come back to university was able to easily incorporate the role of a student within her/his teacher identity or whether this role would become a source of discomfort.

A further inspiration for this paper was research by Werbińska (2005), which argues that teachers of English are at a greater risk of stress and burn-out

than teachers of foreign languages other than English and content teachers. The reason for this, as discussed by Werbińska (2005, p. 39) is primarily the privi-leged position of the English language on the job market. Vis-à-vis their col-leagues, teachers of English have far more opportunities for additional earnings: after school, they often run classes in private language schools, in the evening they run tutorials for individual students and at the weekend they do transla-tions for translation agencies, friends, neighbors, etc. Werbińska (2005) also points out that because the knowledge of English in the society has improved considerably, teachers of English often feel that their language competence is unsatisfactory, still not as native-like as they wish it to be. It seems to us that this intensification of work combined with the constant pressure teachers of English may feel with regard to their language skills, make it reasonable to ask post-graduate English majors about their motivation, enthusiasm, confidence, feeling of burn-out and willingness to self-develop.

2. Identity and multiple identities

Research on teacher identity is wide (e.g., Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Bei-jaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Flores & Day, 2006; Gee, 2000; Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Trent, 2010; in the Polish context, e.g., Kwiatkowska, 2005; Werbińska, 2009, 2016, 2017). In fact, teacher professional identity has been acknowledged as a separate research area (Beijaard et al. 2004, p. 107). Much theoretical and empirical literature points to its role in teacher development (e.g., Beijaard, Ver-loop, & Vermunt, 2000; Izadinia, 2015; Stenberg, Karlsson, Pitkaniemi, & Maar-anen, 2014); teacher identity has been called "the nucleus of pedagogic aware-ness, of educational professionalism" (Voinea & Pălășan, 2014, p. 363). For this reason, the concept in question is critical in the process of developing teacher education programs (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Beijaard et al. (2004) in their systematic review study of teachers' profes-sional identity note that the concept is defined in different ways across the lit-erature. Some studies (e.g., Knowles, 1992) present professional identity in re-lation to teachers' images of self. There are also studies where the concept is understood in terms of teachers' perceptions of themselves as an occupational group, while a number of studies (e.g., Volkmann & Anderson, 1998) analyze teacher identity through teachers' roles. It is the latter perspective that reso-nates most fully in the present paper. Regardless of the perspective taken, Rodg-ers and Scott (2008, p. 733) enumerate the following assumptions that underpin the notion of identity: (1) identity is dependent upon and formed within multi-ple contexts; (2) identity is formed in relationship with others and involves emo-tions; (3) it is shifting, unstable, and multiple; (4) it involves the construction and

reconstruction of meaning through stories over time. The dynamic nature of identity is worth emphasizing. Although some scholars (e.g., Nias, 1989) perceive teacher identity as relatively stable, most research (e.g., Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006; Flores & Day, 2006; Gabryś-Barker, 2010; Lave & Wenger, 1991; MacLure, 1993; Sachs, 2005) recognizes teacher identity as dynamic and unfixed. Professional identity formation is generally acknowledged to be a long, complex and ongoing process that is full of challenges and difficulties (Ivanova & Skara-Mincāne, 2016, p. 530).

Although we tend to think of identity as a unitary entity, its defining characteristics, that is, dynamic nature, fluidity and complexity may suggest that pluralizing the term into *identities* or *multiple identities* is a more adequate reflection of reality. Developing multiple identities may be seen as the result of the ongoing changes and trends in society, such as globalization, diversity, job insecurity or the ever-expanding use of technology (Dronia, 2017, p. 224). Intensification of work, increasing work demands and focus on marketization reflect a more general workplace trend, from which the teaching profession is not isolated or protected (Williamson & Myhill, 2008, p. 25). Cooper and Olson (1996) talk about the multiple I's and multiple selves of teacher identity; teachers in a study by Flores and Day (2006, p. 225) identify themselves as "possessors of multiple roles".

Multiple identities emerge and develop not in isolation, but in interaction with each other (Dronia, 2017; Gee, 2000), which may result in tensions and contradictions within an individual (Day et al., 2006, p. 601). In fact, identity has been recognized as "a continuing site of struggle for teachers, as no doubt it is for us all" (MacLure, 1993, p. 313). This sentiment is reiterated by Beijaard et al. (2004, p. 115), who state that "identity formation is often presented as a struggle because (student) teachers have to make sense of varying and sometimes competing perspectives, expectations, and roles that they have to confront and adapt to". Concluding, as indicated by research in MacLure (1993, p. 320), "teachers' identities may be less stable, less convergent and less coherent than is often implied in the research literature".

An interesting concept in the context of the present paper is *skill flexibility*. Although studies on skill flexibility are most often located in the context of business and management, there are also studies that explore the concept from the perspective of educational institutions (most notably, Rosenblatt, 1997, 2001; Rosenblatt & Inbal, 1999). Skill flexibility can be defined as "the ability to switch easily from one job to another and the capacity to integrate skills" (Rosenblatt & Inbal, 1999, p. 347). In essence, constant intensification of work, which results in the necessity to take on new roles and to acquire and utilize new skills, requires from teachers to become skill flexible (Rosenblatt, 2001, p. 684). Skill flexibility involves the development of new competences that often relate to extra teaching tasks and activities in addition to those connected with teaching (Rosenblatt,

2001, p. 685). The term *skill flexibility* is used in the empirical part of the present paper, although its meaning is slightly modified. For the purpose of this paper, *skill flexibility* is treated as synonymous to "taking on new roles" or "playing multiple roles", irrespective of whether reconciling these roles is easy or not.

The following part of the paper discusses various roles that teachers adopt. The focus is put on tensions and conflicts that build up between different elements of their personal, teaching and learning selves.

2.1. Personal identities

There has been an ongoing line of research affirming that teachers' personal lives are intricately linked to their professional identities and classroom performance (e.g., Acker, 1999; Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Carter & Doyle, 1996; Day et al., 2006; González-Calvo & Arias-Carballal, 2017; González-Calvo, Barbero González, Bores Calle, & Martínez Álvarez, 2014; González-Calvo & Fernández-Balboa, 2016; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996). The interrelations between the two spheres may be due to the fact that teaching is not merely a technical skill, but "demands significant personal investment" (Day et al. 2006, p. 603). It has been claimed that it is especially early career teachers whose lives affect work to a great extent because their professional identity is still in the making, which makes those teachers "most vulnerable" (González-Calvo & Arias-Carballal, 2017, p. 1693). The interrelationships between personal and professional identities take different forms and follow various scenarios, as evidenced in research literature. A few exemplary cases of tension between personal and professional elements in teachers' lives are reported here.

The first evidence for the troubled relation between personal and professional comes from MacLure (1993) who talks about subversive identities of some of the teachers in her study who prefer to see the source of their identity in personal life and consciously reject the professional identity as unattractive. It was found that more than half of the teachers MacLure interviewed wanted to deny at least part of teacher identity, suggesting that it is associated with negative qualities, such as dullness, and that teachers as a group are boring. During the interviews the teachers emphasized that they were not interested in socializing with other teachers and were eager to contrast teachers' boring lives with their own life that is interesting and eventful – a claim often illustrated with examples of the colorful past, e.g. exciting college days. Some teachers pointed out that their "real" identities were to be found outside work, for example, in their hobbies or family life. MacLure (1993, p. 317) concludes that these teachers "seemed happy to embrace the role of teacher, but wanted to shrug off the identity".

A different aspect of how teaching affects personal life and personal relationships, this time among early career teachers, is reported by Timoštšuk and

Ugaste (2010). In the study they conducted among teacher trainees, the respondents expressed concerns about harmonizing their personal life with teaching, both during their studies and later in life. An illustrative comment comes from one of the respondents:

> I always have to prepare very thoroughly, because otherwise the lesson might be a disaster (...) I spend so much time on preparation that my family was a bit upset. I'm afraid that this is how it's going to be. I don't know if I will be able to continue teaching when I have children of my own (...) (Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010, p. 1567).

The student who expressed this comment is concerned that the amount of time she spends preparing for work may negatively impact her personal relationships. The student's family is upset about how time-consuming teaching is, which may stem from the stereotypical social perception of teachers as those who work less than other professionals. The student also expresses doubt as to whether she will be able to continue teaching when she becomes a mother, which, again, stands in contrast with a popular belief that teaching and parenthood are relatively easy to reconcile (e.g., Thornton, Bricheno, & Reid, 2002).

A more complex example of how becoming a teacher impacts one's personal identity and, as a consequence, personal life comes from Brown (2006). He talks about one of his students, Merryn, who approached him after a lecture and confessed that in the process of becoming a teacher she has developed personality traits she did not accept or did not like, but at the same time considered those traits as indispensable for her job as a teacher. Merryn, committed to becoming a teacher, decided that her success in the profession depends on whether she manages to behave like a teacher, which affected her personal self, causing confusion and frustration, which, in turn, impacted her personal relations. Brown (2006) comments:

> She had changed her behavior in several ways; deliberately changing the way she responded to her boyfriend, who had subsequently rejected her, and the way she related to her female friends, who no longer wanted to spend time with her and who were highly critical of her: saying she was 'offhand' and dismissive of them (Brown, 2006, p. 676).

Brown (2006, p. 680) observes that students' burgeoning teacher identity may develop in ways that they disapprove of, which, however, does not stop it from transferring into further aspects of life. When examining Merryn's case, Brown talks about "becoming an increasingly fragmented person" (2006, p. 676), "the coexistence of potentially contradictory selves" (2006, p. 676) "psychological difficulties of identification" (2006, p. 675), "an increasingly split and fragmented identity" (2006, p. 681), and being "threatened by the emergence of multiple identities and the difficulties that this multiplicity invites" (2006, p. 676).

2.2. Teacher identities

Most teachers undertake a number of different roles within the school context. Teaching goes far beyond mere instruction and engages teachers in taking responsibility for the overall development of pupils, including their socialization process (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 225). Apart from being required to be experts in the subject(s) they teach, classroom practitioners perform the role of form teachers whose responsibilities include intellectual, emotional and social development of pupils, as well as a wide range of administrative and organizational duties. The plurality of roles that this situation evokes and its potential impact on teachers' efficiency, enthusiasm and motivation are discussed in the study presented in this paper. Here let us make a few comments on some of the possible tensions between these roles.

One of the major sources of contradiction, affecting especially primary school teachers, observed by Nias (1989, cited in Day et al., 2006) is the conflict "between the impulse and requirement to 'care and nurture' and the impulse and requirement to 'control'" (Day et al., 2006, p. 605). The same sentiment is reported to accompany Maria, an early career teacher in Volkmann and Anderson (1998) who expressed the need to care for her students, show them support, sympathy and warmth, but found this role completely incompatible with the obligation to exact discipline, although she knew it was expected from her. Expectations of others are a further source of potential role conflict within teacher identity. School administrators, fellow teachers, parents, students and other parties involved impose certain, sometimes contradictory, roles on teachers, which may run deeply against their own image of teaching. Being required to manage often incompatible elements of the complex enterprise that teaching is is likely to have an influence on teachers' well-being. As put by Nias (1989, p. 193, cited in Day et al., 2006, p. 605), "teachers' inevitable inability fully to satisfy their own consciences and their wider audiences leaves them feeling simultaneously under pressure, guilty, and inadequate".

The role conflict within teacher identity may also be attributed to a different phenomenon. It is not only the significant others who impose roles on teachers; it is often the classroom reality that effectively verifies teachers' beliefs and decision-making. The widely researched and acknowledged reality shock (e.g., Bezzina, 2006; Huberman, 1991; Mok, 2005; Veenman, 1984), that is, the feeling of inadequacy experienced by novice teachers when they realize the discrepancy between the real world of teaching and their idealized visions of it, acts as a major and powerful contributor to teachers' identity shifts. Gabryś-Barker (2010, p. 34) talks about disequilibrium and destabilization that early career teachers experience when faced with the dilemma of whether to be the teacher

they want to be or whether to adopt the roles dictated by the school reality. Flores and Day (2006, p. 228) also talk about "permanent dilemma" of classroom practitioners who teach against their initial beliefs, instilled in them during teacher training programs. Confronted with school life, these teachers seem to eschew ideas of inductive, student-centered, constructivist perspective and shift towards more traditional, teacher-centered classroom.

2.3. English teacher identities

Being a teacher of a foreign language carries further possibilities of the reshapings in one's identity because speaking a foreign language is reported to have a powerful effect on one's identity. A wealth of empirical research has shown that a majority of bilinguals and multilinguals feel different when they switch from one language to another (Chen & Bond, 2010; Dewaele, 2015; Dewaele & Nakano, 2013; Grosjean, 2010; Koven, 1998, 2007; Pavlenko, 2006; Ramirez-Esparza, Gosling, Benet-Martinez, Potter, & Pennebaker, 2006; Ożańska-Ponikwia, 2012, 2013; Veltkamp, Recio, Jacobs, & Conrad, 2012; Wilson, 2013). In many cases language switches affect respondents to such a degree that they report developing a new personality or possessing a new persona in different languages. A thought-provoking quotation comes from Ilan Stavans, the Mexican-American author of Jewish origin, who ponders on his hybrid self:

> Changing languages is like imposing another role on oneself, like being someone else temporarily. My English-language persona is the one that superimposes itself on all previous others. In it are the seeds of Yiddish and Hebrew, but mostly Spanish (...) But is the person really the same? (...) You know, sometimes I have the feeling I'm not one but two, three, four people. Is there an original person? An essence? I'm not altogether sure, for without language I am nobody (Stavans, 2001, p. 251, in Dewaele, 2015, p. 93).

Granted, most studies on feeling different in different languages are conducted in immigrant communities and second language acquisition contexts, but the results are likely to apply, at least to a large extent, to all users of at least two languages, including language teachers.

Being a highly proficient user of a foreign language (and language teachers are undoubtedly also users of this language), apart from affecting one's personality, is a complex and difficult process also because it requires the mastery of the whole range of competences and skills. Language competence is considered to be a sine qua non for an effective language teacher. The time-honored, widely quoted model put forward by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) argues that the knowledge of a foreign language is centered on communicative competence which consists of four components: grammatical competence, discourse

competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. A different outlook on language competence is offered by Szupica-Pyrzanowska and Malesa (2017, p. 50), who relate this concept to an adequate level of language appropriateness and correctness, which include: lexical knowledge, syntactic flexibility, a repertoire of registers, pragmatic understanding and the knowledge of the target language culture. Although foreign language teachers usually leave universities or other teacher training institutions with an extensive knowledge of the target language, language-specific competences require constant upskilling because, otherwise, as discussed in the following paragraph, they are likely to attrite.

Language attrition in foreign language teachers, that is deterioration or a (partial) loss of their language skills, is caused by a number of factors, discussed in many research studies (e.g., Pawlak, 2011; Wysocka, 1999, 2009; Szupica-Pyrzanowska, 2016; Szupica-Pyrzanowska & Malesa, 2017; Włosowicz, 2017). These factors include: discontinuation of learning a language, restricted contact with the target language community, using L1 in a foreign language class, adjusting language to the learners' level, teacher talk, constant contact with students' errors, excessive use of some parts of the language, over-reliance on the same coursebook, limited opportunities for advanced language use, devoting little time to improving one's language competence (as a result of being burdened with other responsibilities). Paradoxically and somewhat counterintuitively, although language teachers are expected to be experts in the language they teach, the foreign language classroom is far from being the optimal place for their language development. As aptly put by Szupica-Pyrzanowska (2016, p. 109), "non-native linguistic knowledge is not given once and for all and as such cannot be taken for granted. It requires maintenance, effort, and diligence".

Complexity of the English teaching profession goes far beyond the challenges connected with the language. After all, foreign language teachers not only teach the language, but also develop students' awareness of cultural and pragmatic norms functioning in target language communities. They also need to know how to teach effectively and how to cope with many classroom management issues, such as keeping discipline or timing the lesson. This implicates a further array of competences teachers need to acquire and roles they need to adopt. Szplit (2010, p. 245) enumerates the following requirements that teachers of a foreign language are expected to comply with: general and specialist world knowledge and skills, policy-connected knowledge and skills, workplace- and society-connected knowledge and skills, tools-connected knowledge and skills, flexibility and inclination to life-long learning, mission-connected knowledge and skills, technical-connected knowledge and skills, and subject-connected knowledge and skills. As far as teacher roles are concerned, methodologists (e.g., Harmer, 2011; Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Tudor, 1993; Wright, 1987) have distinguished many

potential roles for a foreign language teacher. Harmer (2011) proposes the following: controller, organizer, assessor, prompter, participant, resource, tutor and observer. Of course, teachers' roles and functions are highly dependent on the teaching method a given teacher has pursued; different roles are to be taken in audiolingualism and different in communicative language teaching. However, the dominant trend in present-day education – eclecticism or taking advantage of individual techniques taken from all teaching methods, is conducive to the multiplying of teacher roles rather than their reduction.

2.4. Student identities

As already stated, teachers need to assume many different, often conflicting identities. Teachers who are at the same time university students need to incorporate even more roles, while trying to reconcile them with their personal and professional selves. As Castañeda (2014) comments, "being students and teachers at the same time may in itself become a source of tension" (p. 56). The plurality of roles has the potential to impact the process of professional identity formation because the burgeoning sense of teacher identity may get easily dampened by the teacher's lack of solidarity with the teaching community. Volkmann and Anderson (1998, p. 299) give an example of Mark, a novice teacher, whose youthful appearance and the connection he feels towards students through common music, language and dress make him feel like a student coming back to school rather than a professional. The same authors offer and elaborate on a further case, Maria, who "felt caught between two worlds" (1998, p. 299) and who "struggled to establish herself in a land that looked familiar but felt strange" (1998, p. 299). Her struggle for identity shift is described in her own words as follows:

> I'm still having problems adjusting to being a teacher from being a student. I find myself even dressing like a student – an explanation is necessary. I look very young and I am mistaken for a student, frequently. One thing I try to do is to dress a little bit older to kind of separate myself. Usually I'm not very comfortable, but I do it to establish my adulthood (at least outwardly). Lately I have been dressing casually – like "they" do (...) (Volkmann & Anderson, 1998, p. 299).

The case study of Maria shows that early career teachers may experience difficulties with two types of transition: one from being a student to becoming a teacher, the other from being a teenager to becoming an adult. As put elsewhere in the study, "internally, she still felt like a student; externally, she was treated like a teacher and as an adult. Her adult face felt strange (...)" (Volkmann & Anderson, 1998, p. 299). The cases of Maria and Mark are far from isolated. Fuller and Brown (1975), in their widely cited description of stages of concerns inexperienced

teachers go through, describe the problem in question as the first stage in the sequence of concerns. What they observe is that newly-employed teachers identify more realistically with students, but not with the role of a teacher.

Early career teachers are likely to feel like students and identify with students, which makes professional identity construction more complex. But it is also other teachers who sometimes resist acknowledging them as true teachers (Castañeda, 2014; Rippon & Martin, 2006). This situation is especially frequent in the case of students doing their practicum, an obligatory component of their teacher education when they spend time at schools both observing and teaching, but it also affects regular teachers in the early years of their career. Needless to say, being recognized as a fully-functioning teacher and colleague by the community of teachers acts as a powerful motivator to enter this community, while the experience of professional exclusion works the opposite (Castañeda, 2014, p. 56f).

A further aspect that may contribute to early career teachers feeling more of a student and less of a teacher is potential insecurity about one's competence in the subject area. Teachers who are also university students may feel that their process of acquiring field-specific knowledge is still not finished and thus they are not fully competent in the subject they teach. Also, they may compare their profession-related knowledge and skills to those of veteran teachers who have taught the same content for many years and feel experts in the field. A newly-qualified teacher in the study by Volkmann and Anderson (1998) experienced this kind of insecurity and "felt less than competent" (1998, p. 305), while being fully aware that school administrators and students expected her to be an expert. What is more, teachers who are also students may have difficulties recognizing themselves as fully-fledged teachers. They may feel not fully qualified for the job or may consider their limited teaching experience as inadequate. All these factors may negatively impinge on their confidence.

3. The study

3.1. Research questions

This research is to address the following questions:
(1) What roles do respondents play as students, teachers, teachers of English and private individuals?
(2) Are there any tensions or conflicts between these roles?
(3) Does playing multiple roles affect respondents' motivation to study or work?
(4) Do daily and extramural students differ in the number of roles they play?

3.2. The sample

The subjects were 1st and 2nd year students enrolled in a Master's degree of TEFL program of the Philology Department, University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland. The study concentrates on the sample consisting of 61 participants, where 85.2% are females. The cohort consisted of two groups: daily students (N = 34) and extramural students (N = 27). Daily students ranged in age from 22 to 24 years; extramural students from 23 to 49 years, with the mean of 27.4. The traditional distinction between "pre-service" and "in-service" teachers gets somewhat fuzzy in the case of our students because the vast majority of them have at least some teaching experience. Daily students constitute a fairly homogeneous group in terms of age and teaching experience: almost all of them teach English to individual students during the so-called private tuition, while about one third works additionally in a language school. Extramural students, on the other hand, stem from a wide range of teaching and non-teaching backgrounds and levels of experience.

3.3. The instrument

The instrument used for collecting data was a web-based questionnaire administered among 61 respondents: 34 daily students and 27 extramural students. The language of the questionnaire was English. A brief introduction informed participants what our aims were and assured students of their complete anonymity. The instrument consisted of three major sections spanned across 12 questions, preceded by some general questions about background variables of the participants: their sex, year of studies, type of studies and teaching experience. All items included in the questionnaire were closed questions. The first section asked respondents to tick the roles/identities they play in the following domains:

1) personal identities (woman/man, daughter/son, sister/brother, mother/father, student, employee, employer, club member, social community member, other);
2) teaching identities (English teacher, teacher of a second language different than English, teacher of a different subject, form teacher, school pedagogue/psychologist, other);
3) english teacher identities (language model, L2 culture expert, L2 pragmatic norms expert, controller of students' learning process, facilitator of students' learning process, special role towards outstanding students, special role towards less gifted students, other);

4) learning identities (student of English philology department – teaching faculty, student of English philology department – different faculty, student of a different department, other).

Respondents were encouraged to add to the above list any other roles they play. They were also asked to indicate which roles they found the most difficult to play.

In the second section of the questionnaire students were asked to express how far they agreed with the statements on a 5 point scale from 1 = *do not agree at all*, to 5 = *cannot agree more.* The statements inquired, among others, about the extent to which playing multiple roles, including that of student and teacher, affects respondents' motivation, enthusiasm, confidence, burn-out and willingness to self-develop. Exemplary statements from this section include: "While being a teacher myself, it is difficult for me to accept the role of a student", "I find it easy to switch between various roles I play in my life", or "Playing many roles dampens my enthusiasm".

The last section asks a number of questions in the *yes/no* format intended to gather information about whether participants feel successful as students and teachers and whether they experience any conflicts building up among some of the roles they play. Exemplary questions in this section include: "Do you feel successful as an English teacher?" or "Does playing the roles of both a teacher and a student pose a threat to your private/family situation?".

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Personal identities

The analysis of the data gathered indicates that the respondents play a number of personal roles. As can be seen from Table 1, the most striking difference between daily and extramural students can be noticed in terms of playing the role of a parent and an employee. Six out of ten extramural students already face parental responsibilities. It is safe to assume that these tasks require from them additional effort and time, which in turn may also affect their learning contribution and jeopardize academic success. The overall average number of other personal roles played is also bigger in the case of this particular group.

Table 1 Personal identities played by daily and extramural students

Daily students	Extramural students
Woman/man; student; daughter/son 100%	Woman/man; student; daughter/son 100%
Brother/sister 82%	Employee 96%
Employee 65%	Brother/sister 78%

-	Mother/father 59%
Social community member 35%	Club member 37%
Club member 32%	Social community member 30%
Average: 5.2	Average:5.9
SD = 1.28	*SD* = 1.72

4.2. Teaching identities

The data gathered from the questionnaires show a few teaching identities commonly played by the respondents which are graphically presented in Figures 1 and 2.
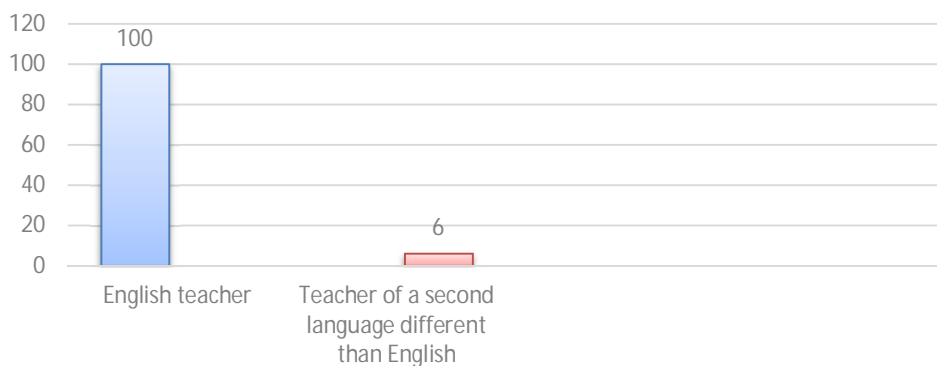

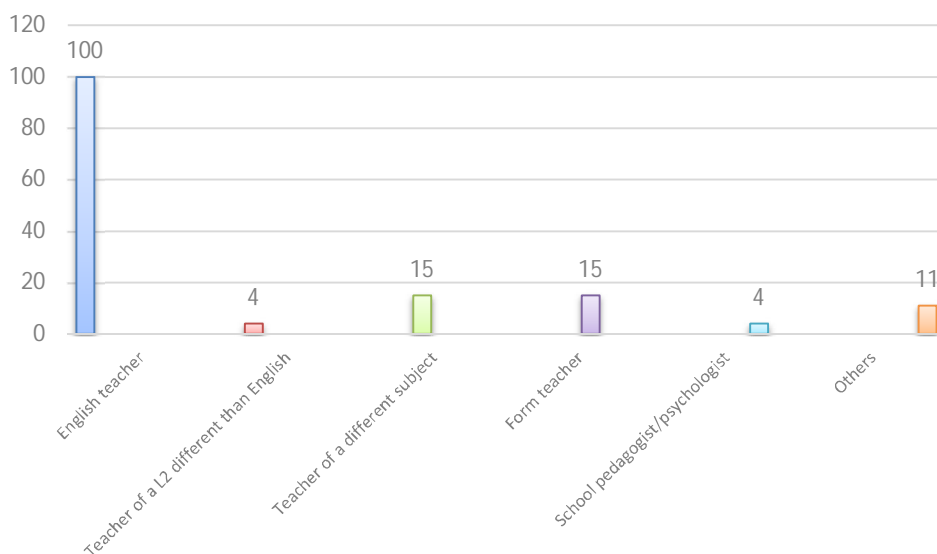Figure 1 Teaching identities played by daily students

Figure 2 Teaching identities played by extramural students

As can be seen, all respondents work as English teachers, but many of them additionally play other roles, such as form teacher, or a teacher of a different subject, or second language different than English. Daily students reported playing only two of the roles mentioned above, namely the roles of English teacher and teacher of a second language different than English (Figure 1). Extramural respondents, on the other hand, admitted to be involved in many other teaching responsibilities displayed in Figure 2. It is thus visible that the number of roles they play at work significantly outnumbers the one the daily students perform.

4.3. English teacher identities

When asked to enumerate the roles typically intertwined with English teacher position, the respondents provided a range of answers included in Table 2. As can be seen, the most significant differences between daily and extramural language students are expressed in their choice and hierarchy of English teacher-oriented roles. The former group pointed, above all, to the role of facilitator, whereas the latter to the one connected with controlling students' learning process. Specific distributions of the respondents' answers are presented in Figures 3 and 4. It has to be emphasized that daily students do not seem to attach much importance to the role of L2 pragmatic norms expert, as it was one but last role that they indicated. Unfortunately, those in the extramural group do not seem to pay much attention to this role, either.

Table 2 Comparison of English teaching roles played

Daily students SD = 4.37	Extramural students SD = 4.23
Facilitator of students' learning process 91% Language model 88% Controller of students' learning process 82%	Controller of students' learning process 96% Facilitator of students' learning process 92% Language model 89%

During the study our task was also to verify the respondents' opinions concerning their teaching and learning self-image. As has already been stated, both groups comprise active teachers who additionally struggle with their MA studies. Having so many responsibilities is likely to induce stress and may lead to low self-esteem and a feeling of not being able to play the role of a multitasker all the time. Changing status (being a teacher in control of the classroom versus becoming a student again in a university context) may also be difficult to accept. One of the queries we posed concerned the respondents' well-being – is it difficult for them to accept the role of a student while at the same time being the teacher? In order to verify this relation, these two categorical variables were analyzed. The
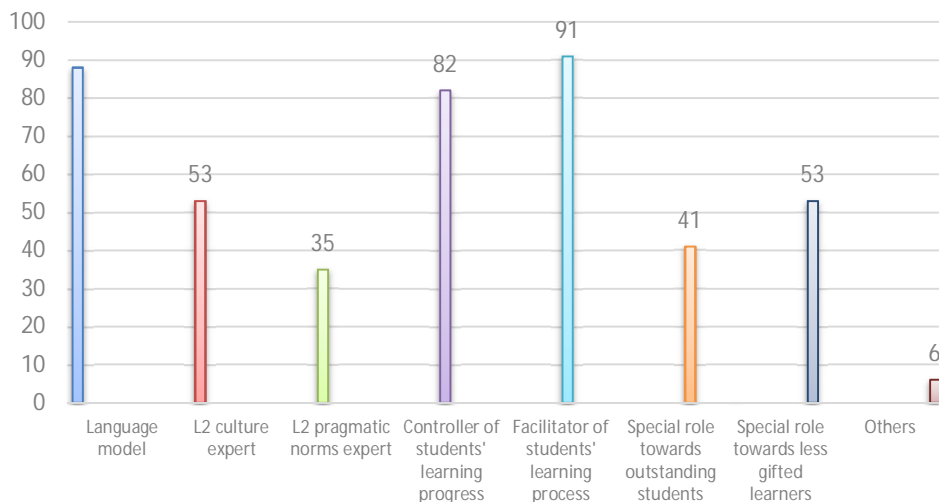
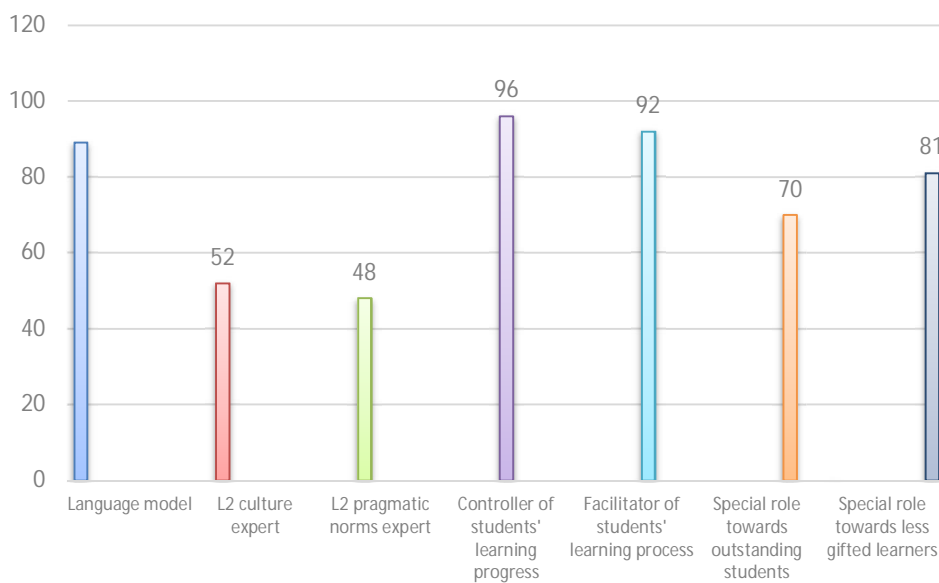Figure 3 English teacher identities displayed by daily students (*SD* = 4.37)

Figure 4 English teacher identities displayed by extramural students (*SD* = 4.23)

chi-squared statistic was used to calculate a *p*-value by comparing the value of the statistic to a *chi*-squared distribution. The number of degrees of freedom is equal to the number of cells *N*, minus the reduction in degrees of freedom *p*. The result referring to the numbers of degrees of freedom is valid when the original data are multinomial and hence the estimated parameters are efficient

for minimizing the *chi*-squared statistic. The results of *chi*-square test ($p < .001$) clearly indicate that this hypothesis has to be rejected for both daily and extramural students. Only 32% of daily and 26% of extramural group admitted to having problems with a changing status. However, when asked whether it is easy for them to switch between various roles they play in their lives, only 37% of extramural and 47% of daily respondents agreed; yet, according to the results of *chi*-square test ($p < .001$), this hypothesis has to be rejected, too.

As the students pursue their career ladder path, but have not finished their studies yet, we wanted to assess whether the respondents see any potential relationship between being students and not feeling confident while teaching. This hypothesis turned out to be confirmed ($p = .002$) and the existence of such association was verified; however 50% of daily and 74% of extramural respondents did not agree with this statement. Further query was also connected with teaching experience – as expected, it was the group of extramurals who did not agree with the fact that their teaching practice is not sufficient (52%), but in the case of daily students 30% agreed and 35% quite agreed that their teaching experience is still limited.

The aim of the subsequent part of the research was to assess the influence that skill flexibility has on both analyzed groups. Table 3 presents the most significant differences between the groups. As can be seen from the results, skill flexibility affects various dimensions of students' lives. Its most significant outcome can be observed in the domain of teaching enthusiasm, behavioral changes and becoming less patient as well as hindering the quality of L2 respondents produce.

Table 3 Effects of roles played: Differences between the groups

Daily students	Extramural students
Playing many roles dampens my enthusiasm $p = .001$. There is an association between playing many roles and lower enthusiasm	
55% agree or quite agree	48% agree or quite agree
Playing many roles affects my teaching efficiency $p < .001$ The hypothesis claiming that playing many roles affects teaching efficiency has to be rejected.	
68% agree or quite agree	78% agree or quite agree
Playing many roles affects my behavior in the classroom – I am less patient $p = .001$ There is an association between playing many roles and behavior changes in the classroom when teachers are less patient	
62% agree or quite agree	33% agree or quite agree
Playing many roles affects the quality of 2 I produce – I make more mistakes than I used to $p = .002$ There is an association between playing many roles and the quality of L2 respondents produce -they make more mistakes than they used to	
44% agree or quite agree	33% agree or quite agree

Table 3 demonstrates the areas of greatest differences between the groups, yet it has to be mentioned that there were other aspects where both groups represented a very similar standpoint – they agreed with the statement that multitasking influences their manner of teaching by making it more routinized (58% of daily and extramural students agree or quite agree with it), but it also affects their professional motivation limiting the intention to devote time to preparation and introduction of new teaching ideas (70% and 66% of the daily and extramural respondents agree or quite agree with it). Sadly, 53% and 55% of the daily and extramural respondents agreed with the hypothesis ascribing skill flexibility to the appearance of burn-out. This was further verified by the results of chi-square test with p = .001 and thus visible association between these variables.

To sum up, the analysis of the research findings allows us to draw the conclusion that playing many English teacher-oriented roles leads to serious strain and jeopardizes both teaching effectiveness and efficiency. Students responsible for so many duties undergo behavioral changes that in turn lead to significant negative modifications in the classroom – the tendency (especially among more experienced and generally older extramural group) to focus mainly on the role of a controller (almost completely ignoring the role of L2 pragmatic or cultural norms expert), being less patient, becoming lenient when it comes to the quality of L2 input they provide to their learners, and above all, being prone to burn-out.

4.4. Learning identities

The last section of the questionnaire was devoted to learning identities, that is, the major goal was to determine the influence of various roles students play on their attitude to learning and self-development. As has already been mentioned, skill flexibility may lead to the appearance of burn-out, and one of its symptoms is unwillingness to develop and reduced performance. People with decreased work motivation will not be willing to develop linguistically and enrich their lexicon – and this hypothesis was put forward. The results of *chi*-square test (p = .002) seem to prove the existence of an association between these variables. Interestingly, there is a vast difference between the answers provided by both groups. 52% of daily students agree or quite agree with this statement, whereas only 21% of extramurals acknowledge it. This divergence of opinion can be attributed to the fact that the latter group is more experienced and, as a result, probably more able to cope with so many roles imposed, including a constant desire for L2 perfection.

Another aspect connected with learning identities that was analyzed concerned students' commitment to learning and studying. The p value equating .001 enables one to state that there is an association between playing many roles and respondents' commitment to learning and studying. 65% of daily and

63% of extramural respondents agree or quite agree with this statement. However, another hypothesis claiming that playing many roles affects respondents' willingness for self-development has to be rejected ($p < .001$) even though 56% of daily and 63% of extramural group supported this statement. The final set of questions that both groups were asked to answer concerned their self-assessment in terms of being successful as both an English teacher and a student of English philology department.
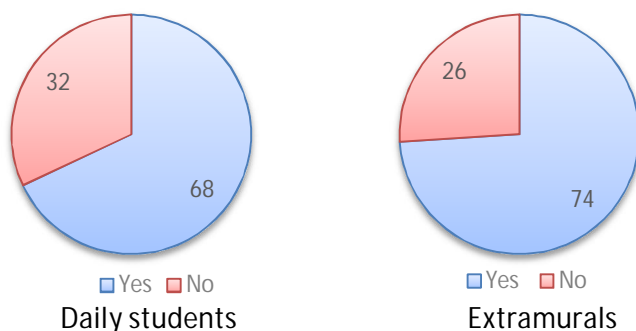

Figure 5 Students' responses concerning feeling successful as teachers of English

According to Figure 5, 68% of daily and 74% of extramural students consider themselves to be successful as teachers. This result is very comparable to their own assessment of themselves as successful learners – students of English philology department. These answers stand in contradiction to the next two queries – whether playing the roles of both a teacher and a student leads to the appearance of any conflicts and tensions and whether playing these roles poses a threat to their private/family situation. When it comes to the former question, 57% of daily and 44% of extramural respondents admitted to having such conflicts and tensions and this hypothesis was also confirmed through *chi*-square test ($p = .001$). The latter query was also supported by 59% of daily and 70% of extramurals ($p = .001$). In sum, it may be concluded that students' learning identities are seriously impacted by the multiple roles they play. Although, when asked, they consider themselves successful as both teachers and learners, it is evident that having so many responsibilities has already started interfering with their home/life situation leading to the appearance of tensions and conflicts.

5. Limitations of the study

Several limitations of the study should be noted. First, the study provided only quantitative data. Collecting qualitative data would have undoubtedly provided a clearer, more accurate picture of the sample and would thus have enriched our

knowledge on multiple identities of post-graduate students of English. Although a limitation, this decision concerning methodology was purposeful as our intention is to use the obtained quantitative results as a point of departure for a further study on multiple identities that would approach the topic from a qualitative perspective. This is also the reason for which the paper does not include implications for teacher education as such. While we suspect that our results may imply the need for separate study programs for daily and extramural students, we intend to collect more nuanced data before suggesting any practical implications.

Second, as our aim was to get general insights into the matter, some of the questions we asked in the questionnaire were quite general in nature. When asking respondents about motivation, enthusiasm, efficiency, commitment, burn-out or self-development, we did not explain what we meant by these terms, leaving them open to the respondents' interpretation.

The third limitation is the small size of our sample, which consisted of 61 respondents coming from only one educational institution. Replicating the study with a more numerous research group that would include students from many different institutions is likely to bring more generalizable results. However, we hope that our study, although more suggestive than conclusive, has managed to shed some light on the topic of teacher identity in the sense that it showed how playing multiple roles affects respondents' functioning as students, teachers, teachers of English and private individuals.

6. Conclusions

Playing multiple roles poses many threats and provides a lot of hazards to early career teachers. First of all, students who happen to be simultaneously studying and working are tired as the number of their responsibilities is considerable. Though, as some believe, teaching profession is a blessing requiring talent, devotion and genuine flair, the price one has to pay hoping it will eventually finish and "live happily ever after", is high. Before the happy ending comes, students obligated to take their practicum, or simply deciding to reconcile studies and work, face at least a two-year period of split personality. Having analyzed the findings of the study, it can be stated that playing many roles provides them with more drawbacks rather than benefits. First of all, a statistically significant number of both daily and extramural students do not feel confident while teaching (this hypothesis was confirmed $p = .002$). This feeling stemming from a relatively short professional experience may in turn seriously undermine their general professional self-esteem and thus lead to smaller engagement in work. Moreover, it is not easy for the respondents to switch between various roles they play. Having so many so highly diversified tasks of personal and professional character dampens their enthusiasm and makes their teaching routinized.

As the results show, skill flexibility has other negative outcomes that manifest themselves in the classroom – behavior changes and being less patient towards the students being cases in point. This lack of enthusiasm and growing impatience may also be the first signal of incoming burn-out, which was confirmed by both groups taking part in the research study (p = .001). Playing so many roles and performing endless responsibilities also entail the risk of language attrition. The respondents agreed that playing multiple roles has a significant influence on the quality of language they produce in the classroom. Not only is the number of mistakes they make bigger, but also their willingness to develop linguistically and to enlarge their lexicon less visible. In the end, their overall motivation to learn and to engage in self-development is impacted, too. Last, but not least, both groups agreed that playing many roles leads to the appearance of conflicts and tensions as well as it poses a threat to their private/family situation (57% of daily and 44% of extramural respondents admitted to having such conflicts and tensions and this hypothesis was also confirmed through *chi*-square test with p = .001). This finding was surprising, especially because it stands in opposition to the final declaration presented by both groups – daily as well as extramural students feel successful as both teachers and students. Analyzing all these facts, it may be stated that the respondents are too young and too inexperienced to actually realize how strong, negative and even devastating skill flexibility can be in the long run. The final conclusion provided by the respondents showing their general optimism and positive self-esteem (perceiving themselves as successful teachers and learners) is quite unexpected bearing in mind their previous answers. Thus it may be inferred that both groups are unaware of the strain they are experiencing, and probably ignoring or turning a blind eye to real problems already happening in their classrooms and homes.

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