TRAMES, 2005, **9**(**59**/**54**), 2, 159–176

RECONSTRUCTING TEACHER'S PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN A RESEARCH DISCOURSE: A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY IN AN INFORMAL SETTING

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Abstract. Informal teacher learning has not been in focus of educational research. This study encourages reconceptualizing the process of "doing" research with teachers treating research context as a possibility for informal teachers' learning. Three dimensions that comprise the theoretical perspective are: an exploration of specific features of teachers as learners, an account of adult learning peculiarities and representation of professional (self)identification as a social process, allocate the trajectory of one teacher's professional growth as a reconstruction of her professional identity in a research setting within contemporary theoretical discourse. Considering the multiple contested and situated nature of identity, the study offers an exploration of how professional growth occurs in informal (research) settings using ethnographic tools. It concentrates on specific ways the teacher reconstructs her core identity as a learner in her interactions with the researcher. By means of discourse analysis, the investigation of language-in-use allows finding out what this core identity is.

Keywords: professional development, informal teacher learning, professional identity, core identity, discourse analysis

> *"Any researcher coming fresh into an environment has the potential for upsetting the local ecology."* Grant et al. 1979:465

1. Introduction

Professional learning occurs in many diverse ways. Educational research investigates teacher learning from diverse perspectives and focuses on its different aspects (the following analysis is based mostly on American research in the last two decades). It sways from delineating the content of professional knowledge (e.g. Shulman 1987) to identifying the mechanisms and conditions of learning (e.g.

Carter 1990), to analyzing the ways in which knowledge is held and assessed (e.g. Fenstermacher 1994, 2000), to illuminating the processes of how professional knowledge develops in practice and informs it (e.g. Connelly & Clandinin 1999, Lieberman & McLaughlin 1992). For the most part, the wide range of pre-service and in-service events and everyday classroom practice bound the context of these researchers' investigations of teachers' learning. However, most of these studies do not account for informal learning that occurs in settings that are not specifically designed for teachers' professional development. Some aspects of informal learning have been analyzed (e.g. Kottler 1997). Nonetheless, little attention has been paid to researching informal teachers' learning in situations in which teachers are subjects of scholarly investigation.

With this ecological study, I focus on teachers' learning in a research project and ask, whether and how a teacher learns as a participant of a study, and other related questions: Are educational researchers always aware of their influence on the situation when they are in the field? What do researchers leave behind after their intrusion? How do teachers respond to being researched? These and similar questions need attention because any interaction (in this case, between a researcher and a teacher) is a particular social experience that creates new learning opportunities. Researchers report on their experiences and findings. Teachers, however, leave the scene in silence. There are only a few studies (e.g. Rex 2002), in which teachers have a voice in expressing their learning from participation in an inquiry. This study, therefore, attempts to fill in the gap existing in understanding how teachers pursue professional growth in informal settings and how they position themselves to do that. The investigation is based on the assumption that research in which voices of teachers are heard can tell us about their learning in ways otherwise not accessible.

Thus, I aim to draw attention to possible outcomes of teacher-researcher interaction. I do so by illuminating the trajectory of one teacher's learning as a reconstruction of her professional identity in the specific social situation. In other words, I explore how the teacher positions herself as a professional in the process of interaction with me as a researcher. This study encourages reconceptualizing the process of "doing" research with teachers. It aims at increasing awareness of all possible figures that engage in helping teachers become better professionals. Hence, researchers, policy makers, teacher educators and teachers, would benefit from knowing how teachers learn in informal settings, how teachers' understandings evolve under researchers' conscious or unconscious influence.

In the first part of this paper, I explore theoretical perspectives of research on teachers' learning paying particular attention to how theories of learning represent teachers as learners in informal settings such as researcher-teacher relationships. The second part is an empirical account of the teacher's learning during the study. I investigate the relationship between the teacher's learning about her teaching and reconstruction of her professional identity. I do so by representing what the teacher *does* in order to learn in the research relationship. I treat the interview data as socially produced texts, which I analyze applying discourse analysis.

2. Theoretical frame and related research

Three dimensions comprise the theoretical perspective: an exploration of specific features of teachers as learners, an account of adult learning peculiarities and representation of professional (self)identification as social processes. It allows conceptualizing teacher informal learning as professional growth that occurs in interaction with a certain social context through reconstruction of one's professional identity.

Teachers as learners. Research on professional development and teachers as knowers and learners disperses along a continuum between investigation of mainstream learning by 'delivery models' and defining teachers as lifelong learners (e.g. Duckworth 1986, Korthagen 2001, Lampert 2001, Shulman 1987, Stigler 1999, Zeichner 1998). However, recent studies on teachers' learning are moving toward conceptualizing this process as natural growth (e.g. Day 1999, Evans 2002). Current policy efforts in the United States follow this thread. Policies aimed at transforming teaching are rooted in understanding that "regulations cannot transform school; only teachers, in collaboration with parents and administrators, can do that". [These efforts include] "redesigning initial teacher preparation, rethinking professional development, and involving teachers in research, collaborative inquiry, and standard-setting in the profession" (Darling-Hammond 1996:6). Following this tendency, the current study conceptualizes teacher learning as a continuous development.

Most of the definitions of teacher development fall in two categories: authors either refer to it as a product of specific professional development forms and initiatives (Feiman-Nemser, 1983) or consider teacher development as a process of professional growth (Clarke & Hollingsworth 2002), which is more consistent with this study. Professional growth involves teachers' investigation of their practice and construction of their *own* theories of teaching "rather than others getting teachers to change" (Bell & Gilbert 1994:493). This second trend of research positions teachers as agents of learning who exercise freedom of what, how and when to learn. Such viewpoint calls for a closer look at the concept of development through the lens of the theory of learning. While this theory introduces the concepts of agency and choice, a perspective of how teachers can be agents of their own learning needs more attention.

Post-modern theories of learning, with their focus on contextuality and situatedness of learning (e.g. Lave & Wenger 1991) and complex understandings of the ways in which individual learning occurs and is shared in everyday practice, is gaining attention. Followers of this trend recognize the important role that the idiosyncratic and individual nature of learning in everyday, informal practice plays in continuous professional growth (Fullan & Stiegelbauer 1991, Johnson 1996). In that respect, professional work is viewed as a performance that involves different kinds of individually developed knowledge, which is constructed in and through interaction in a certain context. The ways, in which learning occurs, depend on a previous individual experience and the kinds of interaction involved. For example,

recent research into workgroups, often called 'communities of practice' (Wenger 1998), illuminates social aspects of learning in the form of skills, information, rules, expectations and dispositions that have an emergent property entailing both explicit and implicit characteristics that are consistent with a certain workgroup.

Knight's (2002) exploration of theories that emphasize situated informal qualities of learning as continuing professional development is specifically relevant to this study. His conceptualization of learning – that it develops from multiple sources and in multiple contexts – points out the importance of both formal and informal learning. Seeking to find out how these two types of learning interrelate, and filling in the void of theoretical perspectives on informal learning, he pays special attention to the relationship between a person's tacit and explicit knowing that develops within an individual (intuitive, conscious) and in a group (collective, cultural, objectified). Together with Leontiev (1981/1974), he argues that "the ways in which learning occurs vary with the level of interaction involved" (231). As an alternative way of teacher learning, Knight's perspective illuminates the significance of individual informal learning through interaction within communities of practice.

Becher's point adds emphasis to the reason for the focus of this study on the informal learning a teacher experiences.

> *"…[t]he types of informal learning activity … are not generally recognized as acceptable models of professional development … in reality they play a significant part in the enhancement of professional capacity [so that] to fail to acknowledge their significance is to considerably underrate the extent to which practitioners maintain the quality of their work"* (Becher 1999:205).

Taken together, Knight's and Becher's concepts for how teachers' learning occurs spontaneously in informal contexts, recognize the importance of informal learning in general and teacher learning in particular. It accounts for a dimension of professional growth that is not specifically designed for learning.

Thus, informal teacher learning is learning that occurs in situations, which do not explicitly aim at teachers' attainment of professional knowledge. For example, Lortie's (2000/1975) "apprenticeship of observation" when schoolchildren gain knowledge about teaching by observing their classroom teachers, is an informal way to learn about the profession. Such learning does not seem to be considered of great importance. However, as Lortie argued, it has a strong influence on acquisition of professional knowledge. Informal experiences (such as the "apprenticeship of observation") have a tendency to transform into strong beliefs about teaching. Those beliefs develop into cultural myths that provide a set of ideal images, definitions, justifications, and measures for thought, feelings, and agency that define the reality in a unitary way. Cultural myths are persuasive and stable because they aim at reorganizing contradictory elements into a comfortable picture of the world. That means that together with the years of professional college and in-service training, teachers' continuous everyday learning significantly contributes to their professional becoming and development. Research settings create one more opportunity for such learning to happen.

Adult learners. For this study, it is also important to define informal teachers' learning in terms of andragogy, in which self-image, experiences, and readinesses to learn differentiate it from pedagogy (Knowles 1989, Terehoff 2002). Adults tend to see themselves less as full-time learners and more as "producers or doers" (Knowles 1980:45). For teachers' self-image as learners, that would mean exercising personal freedom to learn, choice of learning, and interdependence of learning and experience. Teachers as adult learners feel readiness to learn depending on *their* individual needs and interests at a particular developmental stage. They are self-directed, autonomous, experience-based professionals who realize their educational needs through challenging themselves with new ideas in a social setting. They become learners to improve their ability to solve professional and personal problems that they face at that moment.

In summary, for this study I conceptualize informal teacher learning as professional growth, which is a spontaneous, contextual process that positions teachers as independent self-directed learners. It occurs in diverse situations and environments. Traditionally, such occasions are not recognized as specific types of professional development. It might be for this reason, that among the considerable amount of research on various aspects of teacher learning, I have found only few studies that address how teachers learn in informal settings in general (Olson & Craig 2001), and by participating in research projects in particular (Richardson & Ratzlaff 2001, Glazier et al. 2000).

Identity formation in a social context. The third dimension important for this study conceptualizes how teachers construct their identity. This study views a teacher's professional identity as being shaped by social and structural relations that exist both within and beyond the social context of researcher-teacher relationship. I borrow this perspective for studying identity formation from Habermas (1993) who refers to it as "communicative action". According to Habermas, we can only know ourselves and recognize others when we have come to terms with, and reflect upon, our structural "embeddedness" in formal and informal structures. Consequentially, the 'embedded" subject is one who communicates, negotiates and acts upon differences in relation, and response, to meaningful social interactions with others. This social position of the "embedded subject" is situated intersubjectively in social and dialectical relation to others. Therefore, in this study, it is important to explore how the immediate context (research) as well as other contexts that the teacher and the researcher bring in interact in shaping the teacher's identity.

This study also draws on the perspective of the "intersubjective" theory of identity formation that originated in the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. It argues that individuals always have multiple and competing identities that are grounded in social circumstances and are reflected upon through social mediation. Thus, the meaning once ascribed to one's identity formation is never fixed or predetermined. It arises out of the relation between those who interpret and ascribe meaning to action, language and everyday practices in varied social contexts and circumstances. For example, the teacher in this study tells autobiographical stories

to illustrate her becoming a teacher and her professional growth. She shapes these stories so that they show how her multiple identities contribute to the process of becoming a better teacher.

Identity theorists argue that we experience constant pressure "to examine and re-examine our identities against the flux of unstable representations around us" (Howarth 2002:145). Therefore, Howarth defines identity as inherently unstable (156). As a result, different aspects of identity intertwine and define each other. The changing nature of social environment calls for a dialectical approach to researching identity in a social context taking into consideration both how environments shape identity and how identity embodies certain environments. This ongoing process of negotiation with self and environment brings instability and fluidity into the process of identity-construction. Hence, I would agree with Dillabough (1999) who notices that the concept of identity embraces both the post-modern notion of the authentic, discursive, embedded, collective self, and the critical modernist conception of the self as a reflective agent. Thus, according to Dillabough, any overarching theory of identity formation must consider the relationship between the two.

Summarizing, the concept of professional identity yields a rich understanding of the relationship between self and a certain context of practice (Foucault, 1988). In this respect, professional identity is the outcome of an interface between the personal experiences of teachers and the social, cultural, and institutional context in which they function on a daily basis (Van den Berg 2002). However, it is impossible to address the whole complexity of this relationship in this study (for a wider perspective see, e.g. Britzman 1992, Connelly & Clandinin 1999, Franzak, 2002). Therefore, I will concentrate only on one domain – how the teacher reconstructs her professional identity in teacher-researcher interaction.

3. Methodology

Aiming at expanding the scarce knowledge of teachers' learning in research projects as informal settings, I explore one teacher's professional growth in the process of conducting a study with her. The underlying assumption of this inquiry is that teachers' natural professional growth, in the words of Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002:948), is "an inevitable and continuing process of learning". Teachers are active learners who shape their professional identity through critical reflective participation in practice (Schön 1983) and social interaction (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, Vygotsky 1978). It is possible to grasp this development through reflection, which, in turn, is enhanced through dialogue (Richardson & Fallona 2001). Therefore, insight into verbal interactions (teacher-researcher dialogues) makes it possible to analyze how the teacher positions herself as a learner. In other words, how she identifies herself during reciprocal meaning making processes.

Considering the multiple contested and situated nature of identity, I offer an exploration of how professional growth occurs in informal (research) setting using

ethnographic tools – interviews, observations, and artifacts' analysis. My **objective** is to examine how the specific informal context of a research project enables the teacher's natural professional growth. In my analysis of how the elementary teacher positions herself as a learner and in order to do so, how she reconstructs her professional identity, I assume that teachers continuously learn by taking on certain identities. However, my goal is not to illuminate the multiplicity and intersubjectivity of identities in general. Rather, I concentrate on specific ways the teacher reconstructs her *core identity* (Gee 2001:39) as a learner in her interactions with the researcher. The language-in-use, therefore, is the main object of investigation, which allows finding out what this core identity is. Hence, it is necessary to identify theories that are relevant to the analysis.

Examination of the situated language use. Bakhtin's (1981) perspective on the language as a *social construct* is important for this study. According to Bakhtin, each language used in discourse is unique. It bears socio-cultural features that individuals and specific situations bring into a discourse. It represents a specific point of view on the world based on personal vision of it. Therefore, the language-in-use reveals how participants of the interaction position themselves in a situation. For this study, it reflects how the teacher identifies herself in the context of this study while communicating with the researcher.

That process of identification with a situation has an *intentional* character (Bakhtin 1981). That means that the teacher pursues a certain purpose by identifying herself one way or another in our interaction. Intentionality, according to Bakhtin, is "realized in specific directions, filled with specific content, … permeated with concrete value judgments" (289); it connects with specific objects, points of view and belief systems. Theorizing the dialogic properties of language, Bakhtin (1981) points out that "the word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention" (293). Therefore, in this study, the analysis of the language used in the dialogic interaction explicates not only the learning process through the teachers' positioning in the inquiry. It also illuminates tacit intentions of the teacher.

To identify and examine key themes that emerge in the researcher-teacher interaction and help identify the core identity that the teacher takes on in this context, I analyze data applying Gee's (2001:93-94) framework of six building tasks: (1) semiotic building, (2) world building, (3) activity building, (4) socio-culturally-situated identity and relationship building, (5) political building, and (6) connection building. These tasks engage participants' use of language in certain ways and not others (Bakhtin's intentionality). According to Gee, six tasks are carried out in negotiation and collaboration with each other all at once. In addition, these categories represent "simultaneously cognitive achievements, interactional achievements, and inter-textual achievements" (85). Following Gee (2001), I hold that "all of the elements in the situation network are like connected threads; if you pull on one you get all the others" (84). Thus, this framework allows reconstructing and scrutinizing the complexity of the speech acts in the specific context by identifing the features that language use represents in them.

In summary, the study involves the analysis of patterns of the language-in-use employing the methodology of discourse analysis. This methodology enables identifying what, in Taylor's (2001:9) words, "constitute(s) aspects of society and people within it". It yields explicating inherent and intentional processes that are involved in professional growth in the informal context. It also allows illuminating what the teacher as a learner *does* through reconstruction of the core identity that she displays in the situation.

The context of the study and a research subject. The original research project from which this study draws took place in May 2002, in a secondary school in Lithuania. The overarching idea of that study was to examine the relationship between a teacher's reflection and change of her classroom behavior. It was a pilot case study with one teacher to test methods for identifying reflection and tracing its relationship to the teacher's practice. The elementary teacher, Eleanor (a pseudonym), had 21 years of teaching experience. In September 2002, she started teaching a new four-year "loop". I had known this teacher since 1996 (that year the teacher started participating in the International Child Development Project (ICDP) which I coordinated in Lithuania). I asked her to take part in this study because I anticipated that knowing each other would allow us to save time on getting to know, and developing trust between us. We were able to move to exploring reflection right away without having to develop "synthetic personalization" (Fairclough, 1989), which would have delayed the kinds of personal conversations I wanted to have. We had three weeks of productive cooperation. I conducted a number of morning (before the classes) and afternoon (after the classes) interviews with Eleanor concurrent with video taping of her teaching, as well as collecting artifacts (Eleanor's reflective journal entries). At the end of the study, the teacher surprised me when she concluded that this experience had been a professional development for her. In our last interview (afternoon, May 24), Eleanor reflected,

> … *When I used to do that [reflect], I did not contemplate, that I am doing it. Now your coming just* showed me that difference*: here is the beginning, and here is the end. At the beginning, I thought this way, at the end that way. Maybe, I have been doing that, but I never thought that it is some reflection process, a contemplation of the day. I was just thinking, just planning. Now, when it is verbalized, then you start…*

These Eleanor's reflections raised the question for me of why and how these unintentional contemplative outcomes of the research project happened.

Interviewing. While conducting a qualitative study, it is important to examine one's own role as a researcher and scrutinize beliefs that I as a researcher, held. Interviewing the teacher, I believed that I needed to gradually withdraw from an active lexical interchange, and create a comfortable and plentiful space for the teacher to express herself. If that had happened, I was interested in finding out how the teacher used the situation of my withdrawal. Therefore, before performing the three-level analysis, I analyzed the content of my turns in the dialogues. That allowed me to determine the ratio between my verbal turns (such as questions and

statements) and my back channeling turns (such as *uhu, amm, aha*). The analysis showed a significant continued reduction of my verbal participation and steady increase in back channeling. For example, if the percentage of my back channeling turns was 29 at the beginning of the study, it gradually increased up to 49 percent by the end of the study.

I also looked at whether and how the teacher responded to this tendency. The analysis revealed that toward the end of the study, the teacher started initiating our conversations. The quality of her turns evolved from just answering my questions (at the beginning of the study) to making complex connections: she increasingly referred to events in far and near past (connections in time); she told autobiographical stories, drew on the events from her classroom teaching, and shared psychological sketches of her students (connections between themes). She also illustrated her points with specific examples, made generalizations, raised questions, identified problems in her teaching, and connected them to problems that she used to discuss with her colleagues (connections between and within themes). Thus, my role gradually turned to one of active listener who provided the teacher with feedback through back channeling. That transformation allowed me to assume that the teacher's verbal account was likely to express her idiosyncratic image of her professional self.

Data. To explore how the teacher learned by positioning herself in a certain way during the interviews, I analyzed five of the eight interviews (330 min.), which I conducted with the teacher through the period from May 9 to May 24, 2002. I selected two morning interviews, conducted before the classes started, and three others that were conducted after her teaching day. To be able to trace possible patterns of the teacher's identification in their development, I selected a morning and an afternoon interview conducted at the *beginning* of the study as well as a morning, and two afternoon interviews conducted on *the last days* of the study. In addition, I analyzed the teacher's essay (seven pages) that she wrote the following year (May, 2003), in which she reflected on her experience in the research project.

Interview analysis. The analysis took place on three levels. On the first level, I analyzed chronologically the five interviews, which I transcribed lexically, or word for word. Then, looking across all of the interviews for themes, and focusing on the vocabulary that the teacher used in developing certain themes, I coded the texts. Coding allowed me to look for lexical patterns, which revealed a certain identity that the teacher was taking on. As a next step, I applied Gee's (2001) framework of six building tasks', which allowed me identifying a core identity that the teacher took on. Finally, I microanalyzed selected excerpts that revealed the teacher's use of the language that expressed her core identity.

To perform the microanalysis of the selected texts on lexical and prosodic (sound landscape) levels, I transcribed the selected excerpts in Lithuanian using Gumperz and Berenz' (1993) system of representing conversational exchange (see the Appendix). Lexical analysis yielded understanding of the themes that the teacher brought into the discourse. It also illuminated lexical choices (a core

theme) that the teacher made in the process of reconstructing her professional identity. The sound landscape (prosodics) analysis provided another dimension to the investigation. By analyzing rhythm, intonation, phrases' internal signs (loudness, syllable lengthening), and nonverbal phenomena (pauses, overlaps and overlays of the lexical stretch), I illuminated how the co-locutors' intonation and voice pitch delineated ideas that were important for them. After that, I translated the excerpts into English and transferred transcription signs correspondingly.

4. Findings

The analysis of the selected excerpts of the teacher-researcher interaction suggests that the teacher reconstructs her relationship to her practice *by taking on a researcher's identity*. In doing this, she displays genre knowledge, which is specific to research discourse by following the steps of a research design while inquiring into her own practice. Specifically, the teacher

- Uses research-based inquiry processes, which involve reflexive metaprocessing of her own practice;
- Takes on an inquiry stance in approaching her teaching problems, which includes:
  - Collecting data for making decisions;
  - Coming up with hypotheses concerning solving her teaching problems;
  - Viewing problems in a wider social context;
  - Shaping and validating her newly developed understanding with the knowledgeable community.
- Presents herself as an investigational person, open to exploration of new ways of teaching.

Following Gee's (2001) building tasks, first, I reconstruct a more general view of the event (my interaction with the teacher) through re-creating the teacher's worldview (Gee's "World building"). The teacher expresses her way of viewing the world through traditional teachers' stories. In the five interviews that I analyze in this paper, the teacher tells stories of her personal (entering higher education, getting a job at the school, organizing her daughter's wedding party) and professional life (an incident in the gym, the story about three boys during a recess, her encounter with her daughter's teacher when she was leading a workshop). Each of these stories illuminate the teacher's philosophy and serve as a basis for professional decisions that she makes in one or another situation. To illustrate how the teacher expresses her worldview, I turn to the excerpt (the afternoon interview on May 23), which is a part of the story about the three boys misbehaving during the recess. Reflecting on her reaction to the boys not keeping their word, she says:

> *I think that it is coming from the family. If I was brought up that way, that was my parents' understanding; and that was transmitted to me. Moreover, later, I found myself in the other family, my husband's family, where the same world-*

> *view was valued. It seems, that I cannot do other way. And of course, that is very upsetting, when somebody is not keeping his or her word.*

In this excerpt, the teacher threads the reflection of her reaction to the classroom situation with family values (both the students' and her own) addressing her system of values as the source for her decision-making in the classroom.

Another example is the story about her encounter with her daughter's teacher, when she herself was presenting a paper at a workshop for elementary teachers (the afternoon interview on May 23). The key moment of the story is when my interlocutor finds out that her daughter's teacher, who has been her "icon-teacher", and from whom she learned a great deal at the beginning of her career ("Yes. I drew a lot from her"), is her student in the workshop. Further, Eleanor delineates what specifically she has learned from her daughter's teacher. She points out that this teacher has enabled a unique communication with her students and their parents ("She didn't need to discipline them. That was not important for her. For her, it was important to communicate with children."). As if concluding what she has learned, later Eleanor says, "Teaching is all about communication". This example illustrates the complexity of her belief and value system. Within one episode, she brings into the discourse different identities (teacher, mother, student, teacher trainer), which are intertwined and interdependent. In her other stories, Eleanor also represents a variety of identities. Her worldview, which she brings to bear on her teaching practice, is the site for different identities (Gee's "Socio-culturally-situated identity and relationship building"). In our interaction, however, from the intricate interplay of different identities within our relationships, the teacher tends to delineate and present *one identity* by multiple means: she refers to the image of a teacher as a researcher. This finding, which results from the first two levels of analysis, guides the further analysis.

The microanalysis of the interviews' excerpts (for this study, I have analyzed eight excerpts from different interviews) shows in details how the teacher reconstructs her professional identity. The limitations of space would not allow me to present it all. Thus, I will illustrate how the methodology of discourse analysis works by a few examples. Excerpt 1 shows how the teacher explicitly defines her identity. Starting from the very first morning interview on May 9, she positions herself as a researcher and, thus, co-author of the work, which we are undertaking together.

Excerpt 1: A Researcher's Identity

(Before this excerpt we talked about the teacher's ways of planning. We are talking louder because children are entering the classroom and getting ready for the day. "T" marks the teacher's turn, "R" – the researcher's).

1 T: {[p][lo] teacher's/ work/ is also interesting in the sense, that, … emm, that…}
2 {[f][ac] we don't know ahead, how/ it is going. to come *out//} (...)
3 {[f]*neither bells,.. neither,… neither *bells nor <3> mm .. a *textbook **limit me,}
4 {[hi][ac] I only know how much I have to *teach?}

5 {[lo][ac] and what is my *goal//}
6
7 R: {[lo][p] uhu/}
8
9 T: {[ac][**Which methods I use getting to the goal/}
10 {[dc][lo] is personal/ teacher's/ *business?} and we are... in an *unlimited/ our
11 freedom is/ *unlimited//
12
13 R: {[lo][p] so that helps you =
14 = *choose (unintel)=}
15
16 T: = right/ right//
17 {[hi][f] if? ee, I got with this *class, what I haven't had with the *last one? Mmm
18 … the *problem?…}
19 {[dc] of *capital letters and periods at the end of the sentence//}
20 {[ac][f] *so I started thinking right away, how *how would I do this, what
21 *what's to be done/}
22 ~and::, right away, …
23 {[ff][ac] this is a **researcher's work//}
24 {[p][ac] it may be said, **that a teacher is?.. a **researcher//}
25
26 R: {[pp][lo] wonderful}
27
28 T: {[inh] and,… so I *think// I share with my *colleagues/ how is it with **your class/
29 and, and, and, and {[lo][dc] what you, what **you have done, so that it wouldn't be this
30 way for you/}

In this excerpt, the teacher describes a special "interesting" feature of teaching as a profession full of uncertainty (line 2), where a teacher is free to choose methods in dealing with teaching problems. She identifies and clearly defines the problem she has with her class by comparing it to her previous experience (line 17–19). Further, she refers to some ways she has collected data through reflecting upon the problem (lines 20–21), and consulting with her colleagues (lines 28–30). The significance of her conclusion (that teaching is research) is evident in prosodics of the excerpt, where the high pitch and acceleration of speech within the utterance (lines 23–24) with words "researcher's" (line 23) and "researcher" pronounced with emphatic stress, marks the most substantial place in the dialogue. She seems to make a statement about teachers in general, though providing illustration from her professional experience. In this excerpt, pausing separates the two phrases that contained the key words "a researcher's" and "a researcher". When the teacher first introduced this image she spoke louder [ff] than through the whole excerpt. She switches to a soft tone [p] when talking about a teacher. Usually, she would do that when she utters the word "teacher". She indicates that she is free to use any methods, but the teaching problem she faces is in choosing the right ones. Moreover, having found the exact problem, she starts "thinking right away" what she could do. She envisions this process as a research, which she

performs not on her own, but together with her colleagues. She indicates her special interest in the experience of her colleagues by imitating how she has spoken with her colleagues (direct speech) and by stressing words "you" and "your". In sum, the teacher uses a metaphor that teaching is a research, and a teacher is a researcher at the very beginning of our interaction. This metaphor would lead the exploration of her own professional experience throughout the whole study.

During our three-week interaction, Eleanor explored her teaching and learning, and developed a better understanding of herself as a teacher. Thinking like a researcher and using researchers' terminology, she concludes that in our conversations we "gave birth to great many of different theories" (Excerpt 2, lines 1–2).

Excerpt 2. May 23, afternoon: More Questions

1. T: Overall, our conversations gave birth to great many of different theories//
2. and there is no real answers in those theories//
3.
4. R: no, no
5.
6. T: but how?

She continued to be open, curious about how the world works (line 2 and 6) – taking on a researcher's identity to look for answers and pose new questions.

In the essay written a year later (May, 2003), Eleanor summarized her reflections on the learning experience and learning to teach in general. Describing her learning to teach she used a metaphor of a route, a way. She saw her career as a continuous way of *becoming*, drawing a parallel with life in general (She said, "Teaching should be comprehended like we comprehend the road of life"). Since joining the ICDP, she said, she not only grew as a professional but also developed as a person. Her "professional activity took several routes [*identities – mine*]: a teacher, a lecturer, a researcher, an aid, a consultant, and a student" (Eleanor's essay: 4). Each of them was an invaluable opportunity for learning. Being a teacher she learned from her colleagues; helping them, she discovered something that she had not realized before; as a lecturer she learned from her audience and tested if her own route was correct; as a consultant she observed and evaluated other teachers and shared stories of wonderful practices with her colleagues. Concluding the essay, she repeated, "A teacher is a researcher. Every day brings new experiences, which require contemplation, investigation and decision making" (Eleanor's essay:7).

5. Conclusions

This study did not aim to identify and analyze the systems of teachers' knowledge and ways of knowing in all their complexity. However, it is noteworthy that by exploring her own practice through a researcher's lens, the teacher identified different systems of knowing: from the point of view of a parent, a student, a teacher, a teacher trainer, her colleagues (Gee's "Semiotic building"). She knitted them into a unique system as she reflected on and inquired into her practice. Eleanor's stories were both "data" for her further development and a way to make sense of her practice at the moment. The teacher reconstructed the status of an experienced teacher and teacher trainer (Gee's "Political building"), who was able to participate in and pursue researchers' discourse. She brought up uncertainty and unexpectedness about the teaching process as a specific professional value, as "social goods" accessible only to expert teachers. She shared her experiences and expertise by teaching other teachers and sharing with her colleagues, by which she indicated that she was exercising a certain power. The delineation of her power together with the social context as well as my positioning of her and myself as collaborators allowed the teacher to take on a researcher's identity and "discover" her learning.

The teacher extensively used metaprocessing as a way to analyze her practice. She took on an inquiry stance in reflecting on her teaching problems. She collected data for making decisions; she came up with hypotheses to solve her teaching problems; she viewed problems in a wider social context; she shaped and validated her newly developed understanding with the knowledgeable community. She reconstructed her identity as investigational, open to exploration of new ways of teaching. In sum, the researcher's identity she constructed reflected her flexibility and openness for inquiry and change, which defined her position as an active learner in and from this social experience.

In conclusion, by focusing on how the teacher reconstructs her professional identity in informal (research) contexts this study embraces the idea of professional learning as growth in which the teacher's agency is a critical factor. The complexity and fluidity of identity-construction that involves multiple contexts and relationships with self and others reflect the learner's intention to develop professionally. Though it is difficult to separate multiple identities created in and by different contexts that constitute a person, for analytical purposes, this study focuses only on one identity dimension – on how a core identity reflects the teacher's learning in researcher-teacher interactions. The study calls for researchers' attention to processes involved in inquiry, and to the ways they position teachers and self in informal contexts.

The relationship between teacher growth, context and professional identity needs additional researchers' consideration. It is important to further investigate how teachers construct their identities while interacting in inquiry and other informal settings; how they learn through interaction with students, colleagues, administrators, and parents; what is the relationship of school culture and informal

teacher learning; how personal culture influences professional teacher identity construction; how teachers make choices to identify themselves one way or another. If we answer these and similar questions, we would be able to help teachers in becoming life-long learners.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the University of Michigan Center for Russian and Eastern European Studies (CREES) for supporting this study, anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful feedback, and Prof. Lesley Rex for inspiring and teaching me to do research by using methods of discourse analysis.

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Appendix

Transcription symbols

(From: J. J. Gumperz & N. Berenz 1993)

/	Slight final fall indicating temporary closure (e.g. more can be said on the topic)
//	Final fall
?	Final rise
,	Slight rise as in listening intonation
-	Truncation (e.g. what ti- what time is it/)
..	Pauses of less than .5 seconds
…	Pauses greater than .5 seconds (unless precisely timed)
<2>	Precise units of time (= 2 second pause)
=	Stacked equal signs show overlapping of speech
::	Lengthened segments (e.g. wha::t)
~	Fluctuating intonation over one word
*	Accent; normal prominence
**	Extra prominence
{[]}	Nonlexical phenomena, both vocal and nonvocal that overlay the lexical stretch
( )	Unintelligible speech
di(d)	A good guess at an unclear segment
[ac]	Acceleration in speed of speech
[dc]	Deceleration in speed of speech
[lo]	Low intonation
[hi]	High intonation
[f]	Loudly spoken
[ff]	Much louder
[p]	Softly spoken
[pp]	Very softly