

Teaching in the diaspora: Teacher identities in Chinese community language schools in Australia

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Community language (CL) schools provide linguistic and cultural education to large numbers of learners worldwide. Research has increasingly focused on this educational sector over the past two decades, but CL teachers and their work remain under-researched. To understand language teaching and learning, it is significant to understand teachers themselves, and this requires a clearer sense of who they are, including the professional, cultural, political, and personal identities they claim or that are assigned to them (Varghese et al., 2005). Research on teaching and teacher education highlights that identity is dynamic, evolving in response to various factors, both internal, such as emotions, and external, such as professional and life experiences within specific contexts (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Guided by Bourdieu's theoretical concepts, this study adopts an ethnographic case study methodology, involving one and a half years of immersive participant observation at three Chinese CL schools in Western Australia. Through onsite observations, casual conversations, and formal interviews with various stakeholders, the study finds that teachers' roles extend beyond language education and cultural heritage transmission. Teachers position themselves in complex roles shaped by their multifaceted identities, which emerge through interrelated dimensions including personal dispositions and beliefs, institutional and peer recognition, and social relations. Such identities inform teachers' pedagogical practices and social relations within the field, while also being continuously reshaped and challenged through ongoing participation. From a theoretical perspective, this study demonstrates that teacher identity in CL schools is not static but dynamically constructed and negotiated through teachers' positionalities, beliefs and values, and power relations operating within the field. By engaging with teachers' lived experiences, this study offers a nuanced account of how they position themselves, navigate institutional and parental expectations, and respond to specific challenges they encounter. It contributes to a deeper understanding of teachers' educational practices and the construction of social relations in Chinese CL schools, with implications for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of participation in this educational sector.

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Varghese, M., Morgan, B., Johnston, B., & Johnson, K. A. (2005) Theorizing Language Teacher Identity: Three Perspectives and Beyond, *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 4:1, 21-44, DOI: 10.1207/s15327701jlleo401_2

