

## ESP TEACHER IDENTITY THROUGH THE LENS OF THEMATIC CONTENT AND LINGUISTIC ANALYSES

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### **Abstract**

The broader field of applied linguistics has recognised *identity* as a key construct in the context of investigating the process of teaching and learning languages. It understands it as a contextually situated and changing sense of self, influenced by a number of factors. Language can be regarded as the most salient marker not only of one's personal identity, but also of any socially constituted identity. The constitution of identity can occur and can be reflected in language and discourse. Language is, in that respect, recognised as the lens through which teacher identity can be examined (Block, 2013; Varghese et al., 2005). However, with the emergence of *language teacher identity* as a research topic, the issue of English for specific purposes (ESP) teacher identity both globally and in the Croatian context has not been examined sufficiently. This exploratory, qualitative study seeks to partly fill this gap by investigating the identity of one Croatian ESP teacher, as it is reflected in her language use, and the role she attributes to subject-specific language competence and knowledge (Basturkmen, 2019), the latter being discussed as a potential major identity issue in ESP teachers. The data was obtained through a semi-structured interview and submitted to a thematic content analysis as well as to a linguistic analysis. As a result of the analysis, the study identifies those aspects of ESP teaching that are relevant for the development of a professional ESP teacher's identity in this initial phase. These aspects of ESP teaching arise as themes in the frame of this narrative inquiry study: English teacher identity crisis, disciplinary knowledge awareness, initial (learning-to-teach) strategies, future (possible) identity (related to developing specialist English variety competence). Furthermore, this study explores some central linguistic means and strategies the investigated ESP teacher uses in order to express and negotiate her identity. The established linguistic means are discussed in relation to their methodological adequacy as instruments for the investigation of identity in the ESP teaching context.

**Key words:** ESP teacher identity, ESP teaching, identity, linguistic analysis, thematic content analysis

## 1. Introduction

*I think that the profession and the job that you're involved in and the profession that you have chosen, what you do every day, definitely has an impact on your personal identity.* (interviewee, ESP teacher, female)

The broader field of applied linguistics has recognized *identity* as a key construct, especially with respect to language teaching and learning, and more and more research into the identities of speakers, teachers and learners of second, foreign and multiple languages has been published recently (cf. Block, 2013). At the same time, *identity* is also viewed as a complex, if not problematic concept, often understood as a contextually situated and changing *sense of self* influenced by a number of linguistic and extra-linguistic factors (cf. Kresić Vukosav & Vukosav, 2020; Kresić, 2006). Language can be regarded as one of the most salient markers not only of one's personal identity, but also of any socially constituted identity. With the emergence of language teacher identity as a research topic in applied linguistics, the issue of ESP teacher identity in general and in the Croatian context has not been examined sufficiently. With our paper, we seek to identify aspects of ESP teaching that are relevant for the development of a professional ESP teacher identity in its initial phase. Furthermore, this study explores some central linguistic means and strategies the investigated ESP teacher uses in order to express and negotiate her identity. Both, the identified themes and linguistic means are assumed to be relevant in other cases of ESP teacher identity constitution.

This exploratory qualitative study investigates the current perceptions of one Croatian ESP teacher who has just embarked on an ESP teaching journey after eighteen years of teaching in a Croatian secondary school. The data was obtained through one semi-structured interview which was submitted to a thematic content analysis and a linguistic analysis.

## 2. ESP teacher identity

For the purpose of this study, *identity* is defined and understood in the following way:

*Identity* has a personal (= individual, idiosyncratic) and a social (= shared) aspect, and is constituted through the use of language and other semiotic systems, as well as through non-linguistic means and elements (cf. Vukosav & Kresić Vukosav 2021; Kresić, 2016). It is driven by the need to create and maintain a sense of continuity and coherence for the individual. At the same time, *identity* is flexible and multiple, i.e. subject to change and transformation.

The scope of this article does not permit an extensive review of scholarly work on the topic of identity and language teaching, so the following review of literature offers a

brief and introductory overview on identity research in the context of language learning and language education. The underlying intention is to show why it is a concept worthy of investigation by ESP researchers and applied linguists.

*Identity* today is a heavily theorised concept and a subject of interest across many disciplines (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). The first call for more research of *identity* as a construct within the wider field of applied linguistics was formulated in Norton's article from 1995 (Block, 2013; Preece, 2016). Norton (1995) calls for 'a comprehensive theory of social identity that integrates the language learner and the language learning context' (p. 12). Although originally intended for SLA researchers, since Norton's article, many applied linguists have taken *identity* as a valid research topic, with a subsequent 'explosion' of interest in language and identity research (Block, 2013). At the same time, the predominant, cognitive and psychological approaches within the field of SLA expanded with respect to social aspects of language learning, often referred to as the 'social turn in SLA' (Block, 2003). Since then, studies on identity in language education tackled different issues including identity and ideology, identity and race, identity and gender, identity and social class, identity in writing, as well as language learner and language teacher (professional) identities (Rezaei, 2012). Research on language learner identity has increasingly pointed in the direction of language teacher identity. More specifically, the teacher was no longer seen as a *neutral player in the classroom* and the position of the teacher, especially in relation to the students, was considered vital (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 22). Teacher professional identity is now recognised as *the core of the teaching profession* (Sachs, 2015, p. 15), and investigating teachers' professional identities helps us understand who teachers are, how they operate, and how they learn to move through the various social, cultural, political, and economic discourses that permeate their workplace (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Professional identity is thus understood as an ongoing development characterised by the processes of *identification* and *negotiation* (Horn, Nolen, Ward, & Campbell, 2008, p. 66), dependent on context and constituted in discourse. *Identification* describes the process by which teachers integrate their emerging identities, and *negotiation* is the process in which teachers modify their identities based on what they have encountered in teaching (p. 67). Teacher identity development is also dependent on the contexts that a teacher encounters, as the context represents "space and location", as well as past and present landscapes where a teacher has lived and worked (Huber & Clandinin, 2005, cf. also Vukosav & Kresić Vukosav, 2021). A central role is also attributed to language in the process of teacher identity constitution. Language is seen as a window to identity and a place of identity emergence as "any self is defined, made, and continually remade by participation in language and language practices" (Olsen, 2011, p. 262).

However, in the field of English language teaching, the issue of *identity* among ESP teachers seems to be an under-researched topic. To the best of our knowledge,

there are only a small number of studies directly investigating ESP teacher identity (cf. Tao & Gao, 2018; Mahendra, 2020; Chang, 2017). The studies in this field reveal a complex process of transforming professional practices and constructing identities in relation to the struggles of becoming ESP teachers. In Tao and Gao's (2018) study, the construction of professional identities did not run smoothly for the participants since their identity development process was affected by the marginalised status of ESP within their own institution. However, the participants expressed a sense of personal satisfaction when being able to help their students acquire ESP skills they could then use to support the socioeconomic development of their region. These ESP teachers also emphasised that more attention and support was needed in order to ease the professional development of teachers and therefore their identity formation. Using the same theoretical framework and methodology as Tao and Gao, Mahendra's (2020) findings suggested that participants constructed their identities through acquiring subject knowledge, through the personal satisfaction of becoming ESP teachers and through professional development activities.

Chang's (2017) study is slightly different as it focuses on the narratives of an EAP teacher's transition to ESP with the aim to gain insight into the teacher's identity development. The findings of the study revealed eight key identities that emerged from the participant's teaching experience. The most prominent ones are: learner (an ESP teacher needs to acquire knowledge constantly), communicator (ability to communicate with learners), collaborator (cooperates closely with learners to create, adjust and modify the materials used in instruction), multi-tasker (playing several roles at the same time to digest new information and come up with explanations), presenter (ability to clearly present course materials and to explain differences in language expressions, word choice and sentence patterns), problem-solver evaluator (provides solutions quickly, identifies the weaknesses of learners) and manager (knows how to prioritise and deal with unexpected classroom situations) (ibid, p. 84).

These studies indicate that the emergence of new identities for these teachers sprang from the new teaching contexts in which they found themselves and the necessary adaptations and negotiations that they had to undertake in both their personal and professional lives.

We believe that investigating and understanding ESP teacher identity is crucial for learning how ESP teachers develop their practical knowledge and professional expertise. We also take the opportunity to raise the questions posed by Belcher (2013, p. 544), as the answers to these questions might provide an insight into the development of ESP teacher identity:

*How do those interested in language education become ESP specialists? How do those actively engaged in ESP praxis exercise and hone their expertise? How do ESP practitioners*

*know that what they do results in the learning outcomes that they and their students desire?*

In the light of recent research on the topic, we hope that investigating the content of the teacher's narrative and identifying some of the linguistic strategies that the participant uses in order to express and negotiate her professional identity will shed light on those aspects of ESP teaching which are relevant for the initial development of ESP teacher identity.

### 3. Methodology

this paper reports part of an ongoing longitudinal case study conducted on a novice ESP, yet highly experienced EFL teacher.<sup>1</sup> It is believed that the narrative related to the teacher's acquisition of professional knowledge and expertise within the ESP domain reveals those aspects of ESP teaching relevant to this teacher's identity development.

In order to draft the story of the identity development of this novice ESP, yet highly experienced EFL teacher, we adopted a method of narrative inquiry to investigate how ESP teacher identity is constituted **of** language (through the lens of thematic content analysis) and how identity is constituted **in** language (through the lens of linguistic analysis). *Story* and *storytelling* are thus used as a methodological tool to investigate this ESP teacher's identity. The main focus of narrative inquiry is placed on stories that the narrators (research participants) tell about their life experiences. This very focus on how people use stories as meaning-making activities to understand their experiences and how researchers investigate that phenomenon from the participants' own perspective is the main strength of narrative inquiry (Barkhuizen et al., 2014, p. 2). As Kramp (2004) puts it, "stories assist humans to make life experiences meaningful, stories preserve our memories, prompt our reflections, connect us with our past and present, and assist us to envision our future" (p. 107). In researching teachers, narratives offer the possibility to see who the teachers are through the stories they narrate, i.e. how they organise their experiences and identities from their own perspectives and represent them to themselves and others (Barkhuizen et al., 2014, pp. 5-6).

As our analytical focus is twofold, we first looked at the content of the stories in order to examine how identity is constituted **of** language. We therefore collected the stories using a semi-structured interview and then applied a thematic analysis to the data. This thematic analysis involved repeated readings of the data, a coding and categorisation of data extracts and their organisation under thematic headings. The interview data was viewed and approached as a teacher's story of experience taking place in a new

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<sup>1</sup> The longitudinal case study is conducted for the purposes of an ongoing PhD study by Birtić Vučić.

professional setting. It is believed that the new institutional context and a different approach to English language teaching have an impact on this teacher's professional identity. The analysis was conducted following Clarke and Braun (2013) and Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014).

As far as the language-oriented perspective of this study is concerned, we have analysed our interview data with respect to the use of specific grammatical, lexical, narrative and conversational means, thereby offering an insight into language-related aspects of ESP teacher identity, revealing who language teachers think they are, how they view their teaching environments and into further aspects that can have an effect on students' learning processes. The main research question pertaining to this part was: What are the linguistic means and strategies that contribute to the *narrative constitution and expression of teacher identity*?

In our data, language is important for the development of ESP teacher identity on two levels: the content level (the role of language as a topic in the interview data) and the formal, procedural level of linguistic forms and strategies used by the interviewee.

## 4. Data and analysis

For the purposes of collecting the teacher's stories, we conducted one semi-structured interview with the participant (see Appendix A). The interview was digitally recorded, and the recording was transcribed verbatim. The participant is a novice ESP teacher who started teaching English to maritime students at a Croatian university after having been an English as a foreign language teacher in a Croatian secondary school for eighteen years. The data analysed in this paper forms part of the interview conducted for the purposes of the above mentioned ongoing longitudinal case study (sections of the interview not dealing with ESP teaching experience were excluded from the analysis).

### 4.1. Thematic content analysis

The aim of the following thematic analysis is to isolate the aspects of ESP teaching relevant for this ESP teacher's identity development in the initial stage of her teaching.

The results of the thematic analysis are presented in the form of a thematic framework consisting of an overarching theme identified as *An initial stage of ESP teacher identity development* which unifies four lateral themes with pertaining subthemes (see Table 1). The identified themes and subthemes are found to reveal the most relevant aspects of the initial stage of this ESP teacher's professional identity development. In the following, the themes and subthemes are discussed in turn. Each theme is exemplified by the most relevant passages from the interview.

**Table 1.** Thematic framework

An initial stage of ESP teacher identity development: themes with sub-themes

THEMES AND SUB-THEMES
<b>1. ENGLISH TEACHER IDENTITY CRISIS</b>
a) Learning about the new teaching context (subtheme)
b) Recognizing the necessity of developing new skills and knowledge
c) Satisfying students' specific language needs
d) The need of support for novice ESP teachers
<b>2. DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE AWARENESS</b>
a) Recognizing the relevance of subject content knowledge in ESP teaching (subtheme)
b) Teaching specific vocabulary
c) Satisfying students' specific language needs
d) The need of support for novice ESP teachers
<b>3. INITIAL (LEARNING TO TEACH) STRATEGIES</b>
a) Extensive lesson preparation (subtheme)
b) Relying on students' knowledge and experience
c) Showing an interest and a will to learn about the students' discipline
d) Being positive and feeling confident regarding the process of teacher learning
e) Lesson per lesson strategy
f) Knowing the syllabus
g) Peer collaboration
h) Saving-face strategies:
- learning vocabulary by heart
i) Comparing English and Croatian texts:
- to deduce meaning
- to find accurate translation
- to understand the context of language use
<b>4. FUTURE / POSSIBLE IDENTITY – DEVELOPING SPECIALIST ENGLISH VARIETY COMPETENCE</b>
a) Developing awareness of language use in a specific area (subtheme)
b) Becoming a good user of the target language
c) Satisfying students' specific language needs
d) The need of support for novice ESP teachers

#### 4.1.1. English teacher identity crisis

According to Erikson (1968)<sup>2</sup>, an identity crisis is a time of analysis and exploration of different ways of looking at oneself. In that respect, the following subsection analyses how this initial identity crisis is represented in the teacher's narrative.

*'ESP teaching in my opinion entails a lot of specific vocabulary knowledge and dealing with all the aspects of this specific vocation ... quite different from what I was doing before ... we can say that learning English is one level but getting the knowledge and mastering the skills needed to cover professional English in terms of ESP teaching is another level ... it's being better and digging deeper and deeper into this specific vocation ... I have the need to empower my professional role with the knowledge of their course. I think that it is only upgrading you.'*

The initial stage of this novice ESP teacher identity development is taken to set off with an identity crisis of an experienced English language teacher. As the teacher identifies with her profession, she makes it evident that her professional identity makes up a substantial part of her own self.

The identity crisis in this initial stage of development is primarily seen through the teacher's perceptions and revelations of ESP teaching in her own context which she compares to her former EFL teaching experience. The teacher sees ESP as the 'superstructure of ELT' in which the 'English language is the core of ESP'. However, central aspects of the students' discipline, primarily specific vocabulary and disciplinary knowledge, are considered to be the most distinctive factors of ESP teaching and the most difficult for this teacher to master.

She also realises that this identity development path entails a loss of confidence, a considerable necessity for self-learning, a lack of both direction and support in the form of teaching materials or any other organised way. At the same time, the teacher needs to discover what new skills and what type of knowledge she needs to acquire so that the specific language needs of her students can be met, as the following quote from the interview illustrates:

*'some kind of teacher's help...I have no support whatsoever, so I'm never quite sure whether this is the right answer, I always have to go back to the text, I always have to dig online, I always have to go back to refer to my colleague is this really the right answer so any kind, that kind of help.'*

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<sup>2</sup> Erik Erikson is a psychologist known for his stage theory of psychosocial development and the concept of identity crisis.



#### 4.1.2. Disciplinary knowledge awareness

The following section analyses the effect that disciplinary knowledge (or rather the lack of it) as the most prominent theme of the thematic analysis has on identity formation.

*'my most important obstacle is the content, I don't like the feeling of not knowing what I'm getting into... I cannot teach them if I don't get it.'*

Disciplinary knowledge can be encountered under different terms throughout ESP-related literature, including subject-matter knowledge, content knowledge, or specialist knowledge (Bocanegra-Valle & Basturkmen, 2019). However, all the terms refer to the extent of the knowledge of the specific discipline or profession needed by ESP teachers. The issue of disciplinary knowledge as a major obstacle in effective ESP teaching has been already recognised and debated in ESP literature and concurs with the works of Ferguson (1997), Master (2005), Bocanegra-Valle & Basturkmen (2019) and others.

The amount of dedication needed to overcome a lack of knowledge and boost confidence is one of the most prominent challenges in the ESP teaching of this teacher as evident from her narrative:

*'you know it's like opening the door to something that is completely new and never never known to you never never heard about it never found yourself in that situation I think it's extremely demanding.'*

She particularly emphasises her struggles with understanding and making the target discipline vocabulary teachable. Her recognition that ESP teachers need to be knowledgeable in the subject matter of their students' discipline has also been recognised in the literature (cf. Ferguson, 1997; Master, 2005; Campion, 2016; Bocanegra-Valle & Basturkmen, 2019).

*'you have to be aware of the subject of what it entails what it wants from them and what the specific English connected terminology is about so I think that you have to have this basic knowledge and the sense of importance for the course... knowledge of their profession is for me and the terminology is equally split'*

Although not quite sure of how specific her teaching needs to be (another highly debated issue in ESP, cf. Hyland, 2002; Belcher, 2006; Anthony, 2007, 2011), the teacher recognises the importance of at least being familiar with the subject-matter at this early stage and the imperative of learning it for the future for the benefit of meeting her students' needs. She believes that teaching ESP is not possible without possessing disciplinary knowledge, as she claims that *'maybe in theory you can, but I don't think it goes like that in practice'*. She expresses the need of any kind of professional development opportunities, coinciding with the results of research interest on ESP teacher education and teacher needs (cf. Master, 1997; Bocanegra-Valle & Basturkmen 2019; Campion, 2016).

### 4.1.3. *Initial learning-to-teach strategies*

The analysis of the following section presents a set of strategies that this teacher intuitively employs in order to satisfy her students' specific language needs, and to overcome her English teacher identity crisis, as well as her lack of disciplinary knowledge.

*'(...) Internet search, articles reading, I have found numerous teachers' presentations online both in English and Croatian, then I would I would compare them, so if I found a very similar topic I would compare them to see what this one is about what the expression meant how does this work OK and I asked I asked a lot of things to my colleague'.*

The issue of learning-to-teach strategies in the initial stage of ESP teaching has not yet been investigated by ESP researchers (Bocanegra-Valle & Basturkmen, 2019), with the exception of Wu and Badger (2009) and Mansoor, Najmeh and Mohsen (2013), so it is particularly interesting to look at the strategies this teacher develops. The development of this intuitive set of strategies may be attributed to this teacher's rich English teacher past experience and her still present core identity and might provide an insight to how ESP teachers acquire and develop necessary skills and knowledge in teaching ESP (Belcher, 2013).

The teacher's main concern is the disciplinary content of the syllabus, where the respective strategies are most prominent. The teacher invests an astonishing amount of time and dedication into preparing her lessons (it takes her a week to prepare a 90-minute class). She applies a lesson-per-lesson strategy and believes that learning the syllabus is a good way to deal with the lack of content knowledge at this early stage. She turns to all available resources, but mostly relies on internet sources, available articles, and PowerPoint presentations created by both teachers and students in English and Croatian, as she tries to deduce the meaning and/or to find an adequate translation to understand the context of the language use. She does not even hesitate to ask her students for clarifications and explanations, believing that, by including them in her own learning process, she is showing her students respect and appreciation of their discipline. She does not assume authority over her students, but rather sees them as collaborators in her teaching and learning-to-teach process. What is helpful in this initial stage is the fact that she does not need to develop her own materials, as a senior and more experienced colleague has given her useful materials and is the person she turns to for help. Peer collaboration therefore represents an important and valuable strategy for her. However, as an experienced English teacher with an identity crisis, she also uses some face-saving strategies which are evident when she learns specific vocabulary off by heart, so that she can teach more confidently, and when she hopes that students will not ask her any questions.

#### 4.1.4. Future / Possible identity

In this section's analysis, the concept of *possible selves* is adopted in order to relate the teacher's hopes and fears regarding her transition to ESP and the future acquisition of specialist English variety competence. The concept of *possible selves* has been introduced by Markus & Nurius and represents individual's ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954).

*'I'm going along with them (the students), to be upgrading myself in their profession ... maybe for a couple of years I'm going to be able to say OK I think that I am good enough for what I need to teach them and help them with.'*

Since identity development always assumes a certain temporal dimension (ranging from the past to the future), acquiring specialist English variety competence and becoming a fully competent ESP teacher in all other relevant aspects of the profession can be conceived of as a future or a possible identity of this teacher. The teacher is aware that her 'transformation' will be a long-term process during which she has to 'upgrade' herself, in other words, she has to learn how language is used in a specific context and how to become knowledgeable in her students' discipline, again for the benefit of meeting her students' specific language needs.

## 4.2. Linguistic analysis

The table below contains a list of linguistic strategies that contribute to the constitution, expression and negotiation of the interviewee's identity (cf. also Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann's 2002 strategies for the narrative construction of identity) as an ESP teacher. The left column names the respective linguistic means, and the right column contains examples from the analysed interview accompanied by a close linguistic analysis. Passages from the interview are printed in italics, and the relevant expressions that are analysed are marked bold.

Linguistic means or strategy	Examples for the linguistic constitution/expression/negotiation of teacher identity
<p><b>Lexical means</b> (specific lexical/word categories used, belonging to specific semantic fields, used to denote the process of identity development, transformation, or construction)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>upgrade</i>, verb used as a neologism, i.e. with a shift in meaning, entailing a semantic extension from the use in the context of digital technology and computing to identity work</li> <li>2. <i>empower</i>, verb usually used with the meaning “to give someone official or legal authority, or the freedom or confidence to do something” (Cambridge English Dictionary 2021), here also used with a semantic extension denoting the personal strengthening and growth in the role as an ESP teacher: <i>If I am going to be teaching them (.) in the future then of course I have the need to <b>empower</b> my professional role with the knowledge of their course. I think that it is only <b>upgrading</b>, you know, like you <b>upgrade</b> to the next level or you <b>upgrade</b> your smartphone, you <b>you have to upgrade yourselves</b> along with them. So I'm teaching my first year students maybe next year, I'm going to be teaching second year students, so I think that I'm going along with them to be <b>upgrading myself</b> in this professional vocational, I mean in their professional, right, terms, learning, studying, finding, searching, <b>empowering</b> myself to be better, to understand more, to gain knowledge, maybe for a couple of years I'm going to be able to say: 'Ok I think that I am good enough for what I need to teach them and help them with'."</i></li> <li>3. repetition of the adverb <i>never</i>, i.e. a lexical/stylistic means known as the stylistic figure of <i>epizeuxis</i>, used for the purpose of stressing the difficulty and novelty of the situation with respect to the development of a new ESP teacher identity <i>Interviewer: But you could still teach ESP?</i> <i>Interviewee: I could still teach ESP, BUT (.) with a huge difference the amount of time I needed for preparation for my 90 minutes lesson, was, I don't know, a week, you know, it required a huge amount of time, because, you know, it's like opening the door to something that is completely new and <b>never never</b> known to you, <b>never never</b> heard about it, <b>never</b> found yourself in that situation. I think it's extremely demanding.</i></li> </ol>
<p><b>Morphosyntactic means</b> (e.g. deictic expressions, use of personal pronouns, types and forms of verbs, syntactic repetition etc.)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. use of deictic expressions, specifically the personal pronouns 'I' and 'you' as linguistic means which render possible the expression of subjectivity, by opening up the speaker and the hearer position ('positioning'), i.e. the 'I' and the 'you'; these are the central dialogue roles and carriers of identity, around which certain identity relevant propositions are expressed (cf. Diewald &amp; Kresić, 2012) <i>Interviewer: But <b>you</b> could still teach ESP?</i> <i>Interviewee: I could still teach ESP, BUT (.) with a huge difference the amount of time I needed for preparation for my 90 minutes lesson, was, I don't know, a week, you know, it required a huge amount of time, because, <b>you</b> know, it's like opening the door to something that is completely new and <b>never never</b> known to you, <b>never never</b> heard about it, <b>never</b> found yourself in that situation. I think it's extremely demanding.</i></li> <li>5. Verbal time: a) <b>past tense</b> use to refer to <i>past selves</i>, b) <b>present progressive</b> used to refer to <i>ongoing identity work/development</i>, c) <b>simple present tense</b> to describe <i>current, stable ESP teacher identity aspects</i></li> </ol>

**Morphosyntactic means**

(e.g. deictic expressions, use of personal pronouns, types and forms of verbs, syntactic repetition etc.)

a) *Past self*: I **have never been** that type, I **have never been interested** in geography or maritime studies or physics, and I **found** myself that I want to because I **found** myself in situation that, if they ask me, what the difference is, I have to know that, right, so I **had to learn** it, I **had to watch** numerous videos to try to approximately get the idea what the difference is. And I **ended up** calling my colleague, the geography teacher.

b) *Ongoing identity work*: I'm **going** along with them **to be upgrading** myself in this professional vocation, I mean in their professional, right, terms, **learning, studying, finding, searching, empowering** myself to be better to understand more, to gain knowledge, maybe for a couple of years.

The verbs used (**learning, studying, finding, searching, empowering**) here are mostly taking an (active) agent as a thematic role in the subject position. Many of them are from the semantic field of *learning*, which indicates that the main identity work is accomplished through intellectual work from the point of view of the interviewee.

c) *Stable aspects of the current ESP teacher identity*: The grammar, the grammar that's in our course **is** basically not very demanding and when, again, when you **have** grammar, again, you **have** grammar on the basis of the examples that are related that they are related to the content of their studies, so we **have** the same issue, you know, even when we **talk** about simple simple grammar exercises, such as, I don't know, switching from active to passive voice or similar again, you **have** the terminology.

6. Syntactic nesting/repetition through the insertion of semantically relatively empty sentences, i.e. filler phrases, and thereby indicating insecurity with respect to a particular identity aspect; in this instance, insecurity is expressed concerning subject-specific knowledge, which is considered to be a central part of ESP teacher identity, and possibilities to acquire it through courses etc. *This could be maybe a good way of covering this issue would be courses for teachers, courses and seminars for teachers that would allow them a kind of, you know, a kind of a maybe course, I don't know, as much as it needs to be mastered in teaching that they have to get familiar with the subject, so, I don't know, a specific course, I don't know, that would last for several months for the first year and then for the second and for the third, I don't know, getting to know the basics.*

## 5. Discussion

The research presented here contributes to partly closing an evident gap in the literature on the relationship between language and identity in the ESP teaching context. Due to the novelty of its focus it can hardly connect to existing research on the topic. In fact, a large number of studies have been conducted on different aspects of the communicative, discursive and linguistic constitution of identities in general (cf. e.g. Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Reazai, 2012; Preece, 2016; Diewald & Kresić, 2012; Vukosav & Kresić Vukosav, 2021). Methodological issues of investigating linguistically negotiated identity have been tackled, e.g. by Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann (2002) from a linguistic and a psychological perspective. Such empirically oriented investigations have suggested

how the emergence and expression, as well as the construction of identity through language can be approached and described from a scientific point of view. As part of a specific strand of research in the field of applied linguistics, studies investigating language teacher identity have recognized work on teacher identity as an important means for the continual professionalization of English language teaching in the past two decades (e.g. Varghese et al. 2005; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

However, only few publications have dealt with the question of ESP teacher identity, such as Chang (2017), Tao & Gao (2018) and Mahendra (2020). These studies have stressed that the emergence of new identities for ESP teachers is largely influenced by their specific ESP teaching contexts. They have investigated the necessary adaptations and negotiations that these teachers have to undertake in their teaching, which concurs with the results of our study. The necessity to acquire new disciplinary knowledge, the lack of support in terms of professional development opportunities, the need for creating course materials in order to satisfy students' language needs, and the challenge of collaborating with students in the creation of teaching materials, are some of the issues raised in these studies (Chang, 2017; Tao & Gao, 2018; Mahendra, 2020), and they are also found to be relevant in our study. However, none of the mentioned studies considers the role of language in the constitution of ESP teacher identities. By looking at the participant's language on the content level and by investigating specific linguistic means and strategies she uses, we have demonstrated that identity is constituted both **of** and **in** language, offering thereby a new perspective on how ESP teacher identities can be investigated.

The thematic content analysis to which the interview data was submitted has revealed aspects of ESP teaching that are relevant for the initial formation of this teacher's professional identity. The main challenge for the teacher is the content of her students' discipline followed by the lack of knowledge of what ESP entails and what new skills and knowledge are required in this new teaching context. This humanities based teacher is confronted with the content of a discipline (= Maritime studies) which she has no prior knowledge of nor personal interest in. The struggles that the teacher faces in understanding the content of the material and the teaching of that content (especially subject-specific vocabulary) have appeared to have the greatest effect on the development both of her personal and professional identities.

After eighteen years of teaching English as a foreign language, this highly experienced and professionally accomplished teacher feels incompetent and without a clear sense of direction of what and how she is supposed to be doing. It is this general negative perspective on the entire ESP teaching process that has been recognised as the core of the identity crisis. On the contrary, it is exactly her previous expertise and teaching experience that help the teacher in developing numerous strategies in the process of dealing with the lack of content knowledge and overcoming the feeling of

incompetence. What is astonishing is the dedication, the amount of time she spends in preparing the lessons and the perseverance that this teacher puts in acquiring new knowledge, all for the benefit of her students. She is aware that there is a long road of professional development ahead of her accompanied by her ideas of what she thinks she might become and of what she would like to become, but it is all for her yet to discover. However, she is determined to become a competent ESP teacher, to acquire subject specific language competence and knowledge, and consequently assume the identity of a competent ESP teacher. Besides, although aware of the necessity to adapt and negotiate her English teacher identity, it is her core English teacher identity that is still prevailing.

Although only offering a sneak peek into what appears to be quite a complex identity issue, the thematic analysis of narrative content has proven to be an adequate methodological tool for uncovering and isolating the aspects of ESP teaching that can be related to the development and constitution of ESP teacher identity. As identity is not understood as a product, but as a multiple, shifting and ongoing process, individuals are assumed to develop a number of 'identities' or identity aspects throughout their life cycle. Thus, our professional identity may consist of a number of identities, or identity dimensions. In this respect, the thematic analysis is believed to have revealed several important identity dimensions: *subject-specific knowledge* is recognised as the major identity dimension of this ESP teacher as it represents the main obstacle in this teaching process; the lack of content knowledge and generally the lack of knowledge of ESP have pointed to the significance of, and the *necessity of professional development opportunities* which would greatly ease the entire professional development process and provide a clearer picture of the future or possible self as a competent ESP teacher with the final goal of *acquiring specialist English variety competence*; and at last but not least, the main drive for this teacher are the students, hence the goal *to satisfy the specific language needs of the students* are also recognized as an important professional identity dimension. It is believed that any further investigations might reveal other relevant identity dimensions.

The linguistic analysis has shown how varied the linguistic means and strategies are that the participant uses in order to express, negotiate and/or constitute her ESP teacher identity at this stage of her professional development. Specific lexical means, such as neologisms or verbs belonging to the semantic field of intellectual work (*study, learn, empower* etc.) are used to denote the process of ESP teacher identity development and transformation, as well as to refer to *possible/future selves*. Besides, certain morphological means, specifically the personal pronouns 'I' and 'you' allow the participant to express subjectivity and open up the speaker and the hearer position in the dialogue, thereby functioning as the central dialogue roles and carriers of identity.

Verbal tenses as another type of morphological means are used in order to encode either past aspects of this teacher's identity (= past tense), or currently more stable identity aspects (= present tense), or to express currently ongoing identity work (use of progressive forms). The identified linguistic means need to be complemented by other relevant grammatical, lexical and pragmatic categories on the basis of a larger corpus of equivalent data. However, the analysis presented here has shown that these linguistic and communicative strategies represent a methodologically adequate instrument for the investigation of identities that are constituted *of* language in the ESP teaching context.

To sum up, the thematic analysis and the linguistic analysis within the framework of narrative inquiry have proven to be adequate methodological tools for investigating ESP teacher identity development. The results of each analysis have revealed aspects of ESP teaching relevant for the constitution and negotiation of ESP teacher identity and pointed to the emergence of several identity dimensions. The results have also demonstrated the role that language plays in the constitution of identity. On the one hand, identity is constituted **of** language (on the content level), while the linguistic means and strategies used by the participant have demonstrated how identity may be constituted and negotiated **in** language.

It is believed that further investigations might reveal other aspects of ESP teaching which can lead to the emergence of different identity dimensions as well as the identification of other significant linguistic means and strategies for the expression and manifestation of identities.

## 6. Conclusion

Although this small-scale study was based solely on one interview with a novice ESP teacher, it is believed that the results offer an insight into complex identity issues that seem to be typical of ESP teachers' identity development. These issues revolve around the following, central themes identified in the frame of the thematic analysis of narrative content: an *ESP teacher identity crisis*, mainly triggered by insufficient ESP teaching experience and the lack of content knowledge, and respective *disciplinary knowledge awareness*, then, *initial learning-to-teach-strategies*, as well as an outlook at a *future or a possible self* as a more competent ESP teacher. Thus, the thematic analysis of narrative content has revealed the uncertainties and obstacles which are believed to have an immediate impact on the teacher's identity in the initial stage of ESP teaching. It can be concluded that this method turns out to be useful for the investigation of ESP teacher identity development.

At the same time, the analyses of linguistic means and strategies pertaining to the overarching theme of ESP teacher identity crisis have revealed how the participant's



ESP teacher identity is constituted not only *in* language, but also *of* language: the use of certain lexical means, such as neologisms or verbs belonging to the semantic field of intellectual work (*study, learn, empower* etc.), as well as deictic expressions and certain verbal times, such as the simple present in order to refer to current, stable identity aspects.

The prominence of the themes with their pertaining subthemes isolated from the teacher's narrative suggest their relevance to the constitution and negotiation of this teacher's identity and point to the emergence of several relevant identity dimensions. Therefore, *disciplinary knowledge, satisfying the specific language needs of students, professional development opportunities* and the *acquisition of specialist English variety competence* may be regarded as the identity dimensions of our ESP teacher. It would thus be vital to address the validity of the above-mentioned identity dimensions in our future investigations but also to keep an eye on other possible identity dimensions which have not been discovered in the frame of this investigation.

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## IDENTITET NASTAVNIKA ENGLSKOGA JEZIKA STRUKE KROZ PRIZMU TEMATSKE I LINGVISTIČKE ANALIZE

Šire područje primijenjene lingvistike prepoznaje identitet kao ključni konstrukt u kontekstu podučavanja i učenja stranih jezika. Promatra ga kao kontekstualno uvjetovan i promjenljiv pojam o sebi na kojega utječu brojni čimbenici. Jezik se može smatrati najistaknutijim markerom osobnoga, ali i društveno uvjetovanoga identiteta. Konstituiranje identiteta može se očitovati u jeziku i diskursu. Jezik se stoga drži lećom kroz koju se može istraživati identitet nastavnika (Block, 2013; Varghese et al., 2005). Iako se identitet nastavnika jezika afirmirao kao istraživačka tema, identitetu nastavnika engleskoga jezika struke kako na globalnoj tako i na hrvatskoj razini nije posvećena dovoljna pažnja. Ova eksplorativna, kvalitativna studija ima za cilj dijelom popuniti tu prazninu kroz istraživanje načina na koji se identitet nastavnika engleskoga jezika struke očituje u njihovoj uporabi jezika te ulozu koju oni pridaju poznavanju jezika struke (Basturkmen, 2019). Podaci su dobiveni pomoću polustrukturiranoga intervjua te su podvrgnuti tematskoj i jezičnoj analizi. Rezultati istraživanja istaknuli su aspekte podučavanja engleskoga jezika struke koji su relevantni za razvoj profesionalnoga identiteta nastavnika engleskoga jezika struke u početnoj fazi. U okviru ovoga kvalitativnog narativnog istraživanja, aspekti podučavanja jezika struke prikazani su kroz teme: kriza identiteta nastavnika engleskoga jezika, poznavanje jezika struke, inicijalne strategije korištene u podučavanju engleskoga jezika struke te budući (mogući) identiteti (povezani s razvijanjem jezične kompetencije za podučavanje engleskoga jezika struke). Također su se istražila jezična sredstva i strategije koje nastavnik engleskoga jezika struke koristi za izražavanje i pregovaranje svojih identiteta. Utvrđena jezična sredstva razmatrana su u odnosu na njihovu metodološku primjenjivost kao alata za istraživanje dimenzija identiteta u kontekstu podučavanja.

**Ključne riječi:** identitet, identitet nastavnika engleskog jezika struke, jezična analiza, podučavanje engleskog jezika struke, tematska analiza sadržaja

## APPENDIX A. Interview protocol<sup>3</sup>

### Part three: ESP TEACHER'S PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE IN ESP TEACHING

- Q1: What does teaching ESP entail in terms of language based on your experience so far?
- Q2: What aspects of language do ESP teachers need to know in order to teach English for a specific profession?
- Q3: How important is it for ESP teachers to know the language of the field of study they teach English for? Why, explain?
- Q4: What if ESP teachers are not familiar with the target discipline language, can they still teach ESP?
- Q5: How can ESP teachers learn that target discipline language?
- Q6: How is the knowledge of this specialist English variety relevant for ESP teacher identity?
- Q7: Can you describe in detail how you go around preparing for your classes? What are the strategies that you apply in preparing classes?
- Q8: *'English is the core ... ESP is the superstructure of the English language that they have to be good at and familiar with...'* can you explain what you mean by it?
- Q9: In our last interview we spoke about the importance of having subject specific knowledge, so could you tell me what constitutes that knowledge, in your opinion?
- Q10: How can ESP teachers acquire that knowledge?
- Q11: How well should ESP teachers know the content of their students' discipline? How specific should that knowledge be?
- Q12: How familiar are you with the content of your students' discipline?
- Q13: How does the lack of content knowledge affect you?
- Q14: What does ESP teachers' knowledge of their students' discipline mean for the students?
- Q15: Can you consider yourself an ESP teacher without the target discipline knowledge?
- Q16: From your experience so far, what does it take for the teacher to feel as an ESP teacher?
- Q17: Do you feel like an ESP teacher?

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted version of the interview held for the purposes of the ongoing longitudinal case study conducted by Birtić Vučić.