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Understanding Dual Teacher and Researcher Identities: A Multiple-Case Study in the Hungarian Context

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Abstract

Nowadays there are more and more studies investigating the joint role of research and practice in the field of applied linguistics. Previous studies have identified many problems or obstacles that led to ineffective communication between the two stakeholders; however, there is little research exploring teacher and researcher identities (cf. Barkhuizen, 2017; Marsh & Vagliardo, 2002). Therefore, this study intends to investigate these internal identities in the Hungarian context using a multiple-case study approach. A qualitative research design was employed with the use of semi-structured interviews to explore teacher and researcher identities. The participants were four Hungarian PhD students studying at a Hungarian university. The interviews were analysed with thematic content analysis using the web-based Atlas.ti software. The main findings show that there are no internal identity conflicts in the researcher and teacher interface in the selected participants. All four participants experienced considerable changes in identity throughout their PhD studies. They mentioned many challenges related to their teacher and researcher roles, and it is apparent that they would need more institutional help to overcome these issues more easily. The participants mentioned that there is no efficient communication between teachers and researchers, thus pointing to the need to bridge this communication gap.

Keywords: *Research-Teaching Interface, Identity Formation, Dual Identities, Interview Study, PhD Students*

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¹Introduction

The relationship between teaching and research as well as teacher and researcher in the field of applied linguistics is traditionally a topic of contention (Illés, 2012). Much research underlines existing difficulties in communication between teachers and researchers and a general sense of disconnect between teaching and research (Grundy, 2001; Gurney, 1989; Mckinley, 2019; Medgyes, 2017). Academics working in tertiary education in the field of applied linguistics, many of whom are teacher educators at the same time, are in an even more complex situation: they are expected to be both teachers and researchers and to excel in both roles (Kaasila et al., 2023). According to Liang et al (2023), this causes challenges for many teacher educators who struggle with performing in one or both of their roles.

An aspect that further complicates the issue is whether university teachers identify as teachers or lecturers (Menyhárt, 2008). Based on the findings of Menyhárt's study within the same context, the picture is rather mixed: instructors teaching at a university either strongly identified as teachers or lecturers, with or without the pedagogical dimension, respectively. Throughout the present study, we refer to this practitioner activity as teaching, and during the interviews, we followed the participants' interpretation of teaching as per their identities. When it comes to identities, "Fundamental to the identification process is the problem of categorisation – that is, how one construes oneself and 'others' in a given context." (MacIntyre et al., 2009, p. 57).

Beyond teaching skills, education and training are often considered to have the power to form mindsets. While doctorate programmes are established as having a crucial role in training academics and forming their identities (Choi et al., 2021), and there has been some research about developing academics' teaching and research identities (McDaniel, 2010; Weidman, 2010), not much research has been done specifically in the field of applied linguistics (cf. Nguyen et al., 2022). Because of the emphatic role of PhD training in identity formation, it is imperative to investigate how PhD students in the field of applied linguistics experience identity development and interaction and what challenges they experience during this process. As such, this study can be seen as a reaction to the call in Kaasila et al. (2023) concerning the investigation of teacher-researcher identity formation. We aim to investigate how Hungarian PhD students' identities form and interact with each other, what challenges these students experience and how they see communication between teachers and researchers.

The next section explores the theoretical background of teacher and researcher identities, the way these identities interact, and how they might be brought closer to each other. The research questions are presented towards the end of the review of literature. Then the next section outlines the design of this study in detail including the description of participants, instrument, data collection and analysis. After this, the Findings and discussion section describes and elaborates on our findings in an orderly fashion centred around our research questions. Finally, the Conclusion provides a brief summary of the most important findings and outlines limitations, pedagogical implications, and future directions for research.

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Theoretical Background

In this section, we are providing the theoretical background to teacher and researcher identities first by showing how these roles relate to the field of applied linguistics. After this, we will describe the nature of these identities, the importance of the dual (researcher and teacher) identity, and the possible ways to bridge these identities.

The Teacher, the Researcher, and the Field of Applied Linguistics

Grundy (2001) identified different motivations as the core reasons teachers and researchers struggle to communicate effectively. He illustrated this with four hypothetical identities: Andy (a researcher uninterested in teaching), Mandy (an English for Academic Purposes teacher testing hypotheses in class), Randy (an English language teacher contributing to journals), and Sandy (a teacher sceptical of research). Andy and Sandy represent extreme ends of a spectrum, highlighting the communication gap. Illés (2012) also identified the enormous gap between teachers and researchers in that they have two different types of context, two different types of knowledge, and two different types of discourse. Specifically, regarding working context, teachers have the inner perspective as active participants inside the classroom, while researchers have an outsider perspective since they are most often not present in the classroom. Grundy (2001) showed that teachers engage in life-long learning, while researchers see the classroom as a laboratory, so their contexts are essentially different due to the way they see them. Illés (2012) contrasted the two types of knowledge as well, namely, pedagogical knowledge and research-based knowledge. McIntyre (2005) explained that pedagogical knowledge is specific to context and practical, while research-based knowledge is less context-specific and theoretical. According to Illés (2012), teachers usually have their own theories about teaching, rely heavily on their experiences, and apply these in their specific teaching contexts, while researchers rely on theories in the literature and previous research results in an attempt to formulate theories that are widely applicable in not just one specific context.

A further difference concerns training and mindset. Generally speaking, teacher training aims to develop a practical mindset and skills and competencies that can be immediately used: classroom practice, pedagogical knowledge, instructional design, problem-solving skills, and reflection. Furthermore, most teacher training includes some level of practical component, that is, teaching practice (Shidiq et al., 2022). This practicality is perhaps reflected in the fact that in order to start teaching, a person may only need a Master's degree at most, and in reality, much shorter training programs exist (Astaíza-Martínez, 2020). On the other hand, completing a doctoral programme is an integral part of a researcher's education, and candidates tend to realise their desire to become academics by undergoing PhD training, a scholarly and theoretical endeavour (Cotterall, 2013). These differences in basic training also reflect the differences in mindset between the teacher and the researcher in applied linguistics.

When talking about teachers and researchers, what is best for the field of applied linguistics should be taken into consideration. To illustrate this idea, one may imagine researchers and teachers as the pillars that hold up the building of applied linguistics. As such, those pillars cannot be vastly different in size or strength lest the building collapses. Following this analogy, teachers and researchers should have similar roles and importance while being active in the field, and effective communication is indispensable. More importantly, it should be possible to switch between these identities; the one that is needed at a specific time or situation comes to

the front, while the other identity is “on hold”. The same person might be a teacher in the morning and a researcher in the afternoon; thus, identity shifts and transitions can occur (Griffiths, 2014). This, of course, requires a flexible mindset. Therefore, the ideal scenario would involve teachers and researchers working in cooperation and teacher researchers having a dual role where roles complement each other. Since most teachers engage in life-long learning, it would be beneficial for them to follow research in a way that they interpret the findings based on their specific working contexts. Similarly, researchers could be informed based on practice as they do not have active insight into the classroom. This idea is also explained by Gurney (1989): “the researcher wants the insider perspective, and the teacher wants to adopt the perspective of the researcher” (p. 15).

The Nature of Teacher and Researcher Identities

F. Taylor (2010) has proposed a quadripolar model of identity containing a self-dimension (possible/actual), internal (ideal/private), and external (imposed/public) aspects, and F. Taylor et al. (2013) tested and validated this model. In this study, we were primarily investigating internal selves (ideal/private) in which ideal subsumes a possible self-dimension of what the person would like to become, and private involves an actual self-dimension of honest and straightforward reflections of the person’s current characteristics.

Teachers in tertiary education are expected to be teachers and researchers parallel. There is no agreement regarding the relationship between these two identities in the literature; Kaasila et al. (2023) noted that teaching and research are either seen as integrated, one influencing the other or both influencing each other, or separate activities.

Some research endeavours seem to underline that teaching and research interact in a negative way by competing for time, focus, and resources. Thus, this results in the bifurcation of teaching and research (Mckinley, 2019). Even though teachers in tertiary education spend most of their time teaching, their performance is mostly evaluated based on research activities – this necessarily creates tension between identities (Dugas et al., 2018). McIntosh et al. (2022) also claimed that teaching and research-related duties compete for limited time and work-related motivators seem to favour research-related activities. More generally speaking, many researchers do not have enough time or incentive to teach. On the other hand, teachers are often disconnected from applied linguistics research because of practical problems like lack of time or deep understanding of academia (Medgyes, 2017). Such difficulties contribute to teaching and research being seen as separate or competing professions (Wong, 1995). For instance, Liang et al. (2023) studied 34 Chinese teacher educators holding PhDs and found that most of them struggle with at least one of their identities. The researchers note that the background of teacher educators predisposed them towards struggling with the other identity: teacher educators with a background in research were uncomfortable with having to teach, while teacher educators with a background in teaching struggled with research activities and seeing themselves as researchers. Liang et al. (2023) suggested trying to bring these identities closer to each other.

Other sources in the literature demonstrate that teacher and researcher identities are not inherently in conflict and should not be seen as such (Wilson, 1995). Although it can be fully acknowledged that the nature of classroom teaching is unpredictable (e.g., Illés, 2012), Wilson – a teacher researcher – assures that these unpredictable situations should be seen as something

to exploit and not something that paralyses the learning process. Wilson also argued that teachers and researchers are groups of allies rather than enemies. The researcher encourages critical thinking, critical reading (also highlighted by Illés, 2012), and forewarns readers that interpreting teaching and research as two competing professions is an idea that results from a fixed mindset, and viewing teaching and research as two conflicting professions does not lead to positive change. Accordingly, teacher and researcher identities complement each other in a way that taking the advantages of both might lead to new opportunities in practice, professional development; last but not least, enhancing more effective learning in the classroom. As highlighted by Nguyen et al. (2022), creating a researcher mindset in teachers may lead to more effective communication and cooperation between the two stakeholders. Additionally, Sato and Loewen (2022) emphasised the importance of reciprocal contributions between teachers and researchers.

Advantages of a Dual Identity

Banegas and Cad (2019) stated that developing teachers' researcher identity would train "stronger reflective practitioners", and these practitioners would become "generators of situated knowledge and context-responsive pedagogies" (p. 23). Banegas and Cad pointed out that in order for this to happen, it would be indispensable to show teacher trainees the opportunity of enhancing their practice-based knowledge with activities based on inquiry. Borg (2017) also commented on the importance of including language teaching research in student teachers' curriculum. Therefore, implementing research into teacher education, thus creating teacher researchers seems to be a promising start to bringing teaching and research closer.

Teacher research could have beneficial consequences for both professional and identity development. Myers (2016) conducted a study in which the researcher investigated how teacher research shaped teacher identity, and the main conclusion was that teacher research encourages practitioners to engage in research since it enhances their professional development, creates new opportunities, and leads to positive changes in the classroom. Hammersley (1993) contrasted traditional educational research and teacher research. Hammersley argued that traditional research presents an undemocratic nature towards teachers and that teacher research should be encouraged because it is not to be seen as an additional activity but as a transformation of teaching. Although L. A. Taylor (2017) emphasised that teacher research can be very challenging, the researcher highlighted that it can be valuable because constructing teacher researcher identities can lead to a reform in teaching, and teachers could be the agents of this change (also see Van der Linden et al., 2015). Bissex (1986) stated that a teacher researcher is an observer, a questioner, a learner, and finally, a more complete teacher in that the aim is not to split identities but to merge teaching and research.

On the other hand, researchers could also benefit from cultivating a more teacherly mindset. Medgyes (2017) argued that academic research in applied linguistics is often far removed from life, oriented towards broad, general, and theoretical issues, and often phrased in a way that is difficult to understand for teachers. As a result, research may not reach the aim of helping teachers (and students) towards more successful teaching and learning. Following from this, it is imperative that researchers develop their teaching identities in order to better understand and address these difficulties.

Steps towards Bringing the Identities Closer

Once it is established that teacher and researcher identities complement each other – or at least complement each other ideally–, the question of how this may be implemented naturally arises. Illés (2012) proposed two important changes that may be able to bridge the gap between researchers and practitioners: changes in attitudes and changes in practice. Illés (2012) explained that changes in attitudes require that teachers and researchers should be treated as equals; thus, teachers should not aim to read research papers as holy scripts but should address the findings critically. Additionally, changes in practice should include teachers developing a knowledge of how to conduct pieces of research that contain reliable data and valid conclusions. Borg (2009) explored teacher beliefs on research and concluded that teachers associate research with more scientific empirical investigations which they probably would not be able to perform. This unapproachable nature of research in teachers' mindsets creates a seemingly unbridgeable obstacle and thus, they fail to pursue research as it is. Consequently, two steps towards bridging the gap would be changes in attitudes or beliefs and changes in practice. However, this is not easily done as beliefs are notoriously difficult to change (Borg, 2003; Pajares, 1992).

As Illés (2012) argued, “The ever-growing demands of research and teaching has resulted in a situation where the two groups work in isolation from each other” (p. 67). In addition to this, both camps lack the time and energy to engage in additional activities. For this reason, inserting a mediator between teacher and researcher may seem, at first, a viable option. This person would be trained to filter up-to-date, high-quality research articles with reliable data and valid conclusions that may be relevant for English language teaching, and based on this, they would formulate suggestions for the practitioner which may or may not be followed by the teacher. As teachers and researchers usually speak two different languages, the moderator would be the interpreter in this case who speaks both languages to the extent to be able to translate what one tries to convey to the other. In a way, this would mean transforming or translating research-based knowledge into pedagogical knowledge and vice versa. While this idea offers a practical solution to a real problem, many questions arise when executing it in practice. Who would train these moderators and how? Who would pay for their training and later for their continuous employment? Unfortunately, the idea of moderators might prove unfeasible in real life.

McIntyre (2005) proposed three steps to bridge the gap between teaching and research: dialogue between teachers and researchers, using research strategies designed to inform practice, and starting from the centre of the continuum. Dialogue involves transforming research into practical teaching suggestions and conducting self-critical, classroom-based action research. Research strategies should be tailored to make practical suggestions for various teaching contexts. However, while many research efforts aim to facilitate teaching, results may not apply universally; these are to be interpreted in their own contexts. The third step involves school-based action research by teachers, which need not be as rigorous as traditional research but should aim to integrate theory and practice in specific contexts. This enhances teachers' professional development and teaching skills. McIntyre (2005) cautioned that teachers need time, resources, and support from authorities to conduct research effectively; a fact that seriously limits the feasibility of these suggestions.

The suggestions elaborated so far focus on bridging the gap between teachers as professionals with a distinct teacher identity and researchers as professionals with a distinct researcher identity. The picture is more complex once we consider those professionals in the field who work in tertiary education: academics in applied linguistics who teach at university. Because of their unique situation, these professionals are often described as having both a teacher and a researcher identity (Kaasila et al., 2023; Liang et al., 2023). One convenient option to influence forming identities is to investigate education.

The role of doctorate education in developing identities has been widely studied before (Choi et al., 2021). PhD studies play a crucial role in socialising both teacher (McDaniels, 2010) and researcher identity (Weidman, 2010). McDaniels (2010) emphasised that universities can provide support to doctoral students through a range of options: providing opportunities for observation and self-reflection, teaching assistant development programmes, teaching conferences, workshops, and courses on teaching. Weidman (2010) noted that while doctoral programmes usually include courses in research design and methodology, there is much more that universities can do to support researcher identity development. Social factors include interpersonal connections with peers and faculty members and having a mentor while research-related factors are providing opportunities for students to participate in research projects and sharing information about research opportunities and other professional activities. Kaasila et al. (2023) argued that teacher educators are somewhat different in identity formation from other academic professions since they are “Janus-faced due to the competing demands of excellence in both research and teaching” (p. 2). Because of the nature of the profession itself, it is imperative to bring teacher and researcher identities closer to each other. While there are many articles about the necessity of this process (e.g., Sato & Loewen, 2022; Spada & Lightbown, 2022), how identity changes on the teacher-researcher continuum and the role PhD studies plays in this change has not been explored so far. In harmony with the research aims, the following research questions were formulated:

Research Questions

RQ1: What characterises the relationship between the internal teacher and researcher identities of the selected Hungarian PhD students based on their accounts?

RQ2: What characterises the selected Hungarian PhD students’ identity formation during their PhD studies based on their accounts?

RQ3: What challenges do the selected Hungarian PhD students have regarding their teacher and researcher roles and the interaction between these roles?

RQ4: What do the selected Hungarian PhD students think about the nature of the communication between teachers and researchers?

Research Methods

To be able to answer our research questions, we opted for a multiple-case study (Stake, 2006) with an exploratory qualitative research design to be able to gain in-depth insights into the selected PhD students’ perceived teacher and researcher identity formations and understand the investigated phenomena (Dörnyei, 2007). Based on Creswell’s (2007) terminology, this study belongs to a within-site case study as participants were selected from a single study programme. According to Adams et al. (2022), case studies can offer deep and broad analysis of the

constructs under investigation. The cases in our study represent the individuals who have unique identities and identity formations within a single context. The studied programme, which is the shared common feature of the participants, is referred to as the quintain based Stake's (2006) terminology: "This quintain is the arena or holding company or umbrella for the cases we will study" (p. 6). There were two instances whereby we used quantitative reporting of qualitative data, namely, we analysed the groundedness (number of occurrences) of certain emerging themes, and participants were directly asked to express their researcher and teacher identities in percentages if they had not done so by themselves during the interview. We understand that asking the participants to express their identities in percentages may have interfered into their own self-interpretations as this may inherently create separation of the two identities in their minds. However, we were interested in whether they use the sum of 100% to represent their identities on single or multiple continuums, and we could not find a better quantitative display for their identities.

Participants

Purposive and snowball sampling (Creswell & Guetterman, 2018) was applied to recruit the participants. This meant that we deliberately recruited participants from the same doctoral programme to mitigate possible intrusion (Stake, 2006) of moderating effects due to heterogeneity; besides this, we selected participants who had different experiences and enrolled in the PhD programme with different profiles. Another inclusion criterion was that the participants had not finished their PhD studies at the time of the data collection as we thought they are ideal candidates in the middle of identity formation. We asked the previous Director of Studies in the PhD programme to suggest possible participants. In what follows, the background information about the participants is presented in detail with the use of pseudonyms. Table 1 displays the most important information about the participants' background information.

The participants of the study were four female Hungarian PhD students with their age range between 26 and 45 ($M = 33.25$, $SD = 8.54$). Based on Stake's (2006) guidelines, selecting cases between four and ten is ideal to be able to meaningfully interpret the data. At the time of the data collection, the participants were studying in the same PhD programme (within the field of language pedagogy and applied linguistics) at a Hungarian university. As the name suggests, this programme not only involves the study of English language learning and teaching but it also subsumes psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, amongst others (Kormos & Csölle, 2004).

The participants' identities can be categorised if we imagine placing them on continuums. There is one participant, however, who cannot even be placed on the continuum as per her identities before starting the PhD programme. Glória, the youngest participant did not have any teaching and research experience before the start of her PhD studies, and at the time of the data collection, she was a second year PhD student. Based on her account, she did not consider herself either a teacher or a researcher before the start of the PhD. She was teaching at an institution that prepares secondary school students for their university studies, and she was also teaching at the university where she was a PhD student. Occasionally, she was also teaching English in private. As per research-related endeavours, she was conducting research for her dissertation, and she also took part in collaborations with her peers.

Babér, our oldest participant was at one end of the continuum, namely, she had 18 years of teaching experience before the start of the PhD programme and did not consider herself to be a researcher at all, and she was in the fifth year of her PhD studies. She has been teaching in primary and secondary schools, children from 6 years old to students of 18. Admittedly, she has taken part in conferences as an academic activity, and she also had some conference presentations. Besides teaching in a primary school, she was also teaching at the university.

Our third participant, Angyal, 34, also had a strong teacher profile before entering the PhD programme. She was teaching for three and a half years, but she also participated in a national scientific student conference competition (The National Conference of Students' Research Societies; OTDK) where students have to conduct empirical research and write up a paper based on this study. She was teaching in a language school and in an international primary school. She was in her fourth year in the PhD programme, and she was teaching at the university.

Babett, 28, had a stronger researcher profile before the start of the PhD programme as she graduated from the applied linguistics Master's programme, she also participated in the above-mentioned OTDK and had only a couple of months of teaching experience, specifically, she had experience in private teaching. She is a fourth-year student in the PhD, she has been teaching at the university in the last couple of years since the start of the PhD but not during the term of the data collection. Instead, she was teaching in multiple language schools, and she also continued teaching in private.

Table 1

Summary Data of the Participants

Pseudonym	Main Identity Profile before PhD Studies		Age	Gender	Year of PhD Studies	Teaching Experience	Research Experience
	Teacher	Researcher					
Glória	0%	0%	26	F	2nd	Only from PhD	Only from PhD
Babér	100%	0%	45	F	5th	18 years before PhD	Conferences
Angyal	80–85%	15%	34	F	4th	3.5 years before PhD	OTDK*
Babett	40%	60%	28	F	4th	Couple of months	OTDK*

*National Scientific Student Conference Competition

Instrument

We opted for using an in-depth interview guide that we created based on the theoretical background, and we also used a retrospective emic perspective as former PhD students to collect our experiences. We chose the semi-structured format, which is the most popular format of interview guides due to its various advantages (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). The instrument was uploaded to the IRIS repository for transferability purposes.

The interview guide altogether contained 40 open-ended questions in three main sections. In the first block, biographical and background questions were formulated to be able to provide thick description of the information regarding the participants; in the second part, questions related to the participants' identities were posed (e.g., How have your roles changed during the

PhD programme [if they have]?); and in the third part, we asked the participants about their challenges as teachers and as researchers (e.g., What have been the main challenges for you as a teacher? Can you give specific examples?). The instrument was piloted with Babér, after which no modifications were necessary as the questions seemed to be understandable and straightforward for the participant.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected online in May 2024, using the Microsoft Teams platform whereby we could get immediate transcription of the interviews as it has an in-built voice recognition software. The interviews were conducted in Hungarian, the participants' first language, to ensure complete mutual intelligibility and optimal data quality (Schembri & Jašić, 2022; Taber, 2018). The interviews altogether lasted approximately 189 minutes with the shortest being 36 minutes long and the longest being 67 minutes long ($M = 47.25$, $SD = 13.60$). The interview transcripts made up a corpus of altogether 22,000 words. The transcripts were double-checked and proofread to make sure that there are no discrepancies between the audio and the transcript, after which we started coding the interviews. We used the web-based Atlas.ti computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (<https://atlasti.com/atlas-ti-web>) that enabled collaboration and real-time code tracking between the researchers. First, we familiarised ourselves with the texts and then we used thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in our coding procedure. After this, we arrived at 116 codes using descriptive coding to create relatively short codes, the compilation of which would later formulate multiple emerging themes (Saldaña, 2016).

Ethical Considerations and Quality Control

As per ethical considerations, we obtained informed consent from the participants to record the interviews, and we used pseudonyms for data confidentiality purposes. The participants were ensured that the researchers will not expose any identifying features. Participation in this study was completely voluntary, and the interviewees were also informed that they have the right to opt out of the study at any point. In terms of quality control, the authors comprised the interview guide together based on the review of literature after careful discussions and piloted the instrument after which no modifications were necessary as the items did not seem to cause any misunderstanding. A thick description is provided of the participants to ensure transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Findings and Discussion

In the following subsections, we intend to answer the proposed research questions systematically by providing excerpts from participant quotes as well as discussing our findings in light of previous literature.

RQ1: What characterises the relationship between the internal teacher and researcher identities of the selected Hungarian PhD students' based on their accounts? Firstly, some studies in the available literature found conflicts between teacher and researcher roles, such as Liang et al. (2023), who investigated the professional identities of Chinese teacher trainers and concluded that there are identity conflicts. Contrary to this, none of the

participants in this study saw conflict between the role of teacher and researcher, “One person can be many things at once [...] there is an overlap in it, so, I think there is no obstacle to being both” (Glória). Thus, the participants displayed harmonious identities (F. Taylor, 2010; F. Taylor et al., 2013). All of our participants saw the two roles as connected or as roles that should be connected in some way. Babett emphasised how having both roles at the same time are important to her and how she sees them as closely related:

I don't think the two roles are mutually exclusive and should somehow be merged so that one is not without the other [...] I'm trying to put the two together [...] I think it's important to have both somewhere at all times [...] for me it's really important to have both at the same time. (Babett)

Furthermore, participants perceive teacher and researcher roles as generally influencing each other in a positive way by complementing and inspiring each other:

I think it can have a positive effect on teaching and vice versa. One of the things is that practical problems can arise when you're teaching and that can give you ideas for research, the kind of good sense of questioning things that comes with research you can bring into teaching. So, you can definitely have two at the same time [...] I never felt that I had to choose. (Angyal)

Other participants also noted how roles support each other: “these two help each other”, noted Babett; while Babér said that “the teacher role is definitely supported by the researcher role [...] and the researcher part as well... so, they support each other, I think”. These findings are in line with much of the available literature claiming that teacher and researcher roles should work together to enhance each other (Kaasila et al., 2023).

While participants claimed that their roles are not in conflict but exist together, Angyal commented that this is a new experience for her and she is in the process of learning: “I'm still learning this, that you can only wear these two hats like this, that you put them both on at the same time or you can put them together into one hat or how it is.” This comment could suggest that having a double identity can pose challenges to participants. This will be discussed further when answering research question 3, but before that, the selected PhD students' identity formations are analysed.

RQ2: What characterises the selected Hungarian PhD students' identity formation during their PhD studies based on their accounts?

When we asked the participants to reflect on their identities before and during the PhD programme, it was apparent that all of them experienced a kind of identity formation journey while being a PhD student. A summary table is shown concerning the participants' identity formation as expressed by them in percentages (see Table 2).

Table 2*Identity Formation Before and During the PhD Programme*

Pseudonym	Main Identity Profile before PhD Studies		Main Identity Profile during PhD Studies	
	Teacher	Researcher	Teacher	Researcher
Glória	0%	0%	50–60%	30–40%
Babér	100%	0%	60–70%	30–40%
Angyal	80–85%	15%	60%	40%
Babett	40%	60%	75%	25%

Participants described unique influences and events that contributed to their changing identities. All participants attributed the changes in their identities directly or indirectly to some elements of the PhD programme, which is in line with the existing literature (Choi et al., 2021; McDaniels, 2010; Weidman, 2010).

Glória credited the development of her researcher identity fully to the effect of the PhD programme (“I was introduced to research work by the PhD programme”). She connected the development of her teacher identity partly to having to teach for credits in the PhD programme (“I think I would have started [teaching] anyway but the PhD still had a very big role”) and partially to encouragement by peers and future colleagues:

At the institute where I teach, colleagues had a really positive attitude and gave me the opportunity and supported me [...] my peers [at the PhD] cheered me on to start teaching, to have the courage, despite not having the experience in teaching. (Glória)

Babér was an experienced teacher who had been teaching for many years before starting the PhD. The emergence of her researcher identity was also fully credited to the PhD programme. She specifically mentioned courses [for data confidentiality, the names of the instructors are displayed as pseudonyms] offered as part of the programme that contributed to this change:

This is connected to those classes in the PhD, like Zelda’s or Kinga’s classes. Maybe Kinga’s classes had the biggest impact on me, the precision and attention to detail that we had to... to analyse an article... I think it definitely had a huge impact. (Babér)

Angyal arrived at the PhD programme with a strong teacher identity and a weak researcher identity. She clearly attributed this shift towards a more balanced ratio to elements of the PhD programme: “we have excellent instructors and really hats off for the courses on research methodology”.

Babett had a slightly stronger researcher identity than teacher identity when starting her studies. Surprisingly, this shifted into its complete opposite: her teacher identity was much stronger during her PhD studies than her researcher identity. Additionally, she was the one within the four participants who had a decrease in researcher identity formation during her PhD studies. She started teaching in her first semester and enjoyed it – she attributed the change in identity to practical reasons that followed this novelty: “I started teaching, and I basically need to work, almost full time, and I don’t have the time [to conduct research]”. This seems to be in line with the existing research that emphasises how teachers in general do not have time or

resources to conduct research (Medgyes, 2017). It is noteworthy that, despite a competition for time and resources, Babett did not perceive her two roles as conflicting. Rather, she described a fluidity between her identities that means her identity shifts necessitated by the situation: “which role dominates depends on which situation I am in”. Indeed, this idea is in line with what Cook (2009) emphasised, originally related to scientists and artists: “But it is a false dichotomy because scientists and artists have a good deal in common ground.” (p. 249). In this sense, the researcher-teacher dichotomy is a false one as it has common grounds and shared aims, as also highlighted by, for example, Sato and Loewen (2022).

When asked about how they feel in connection with the changes in their roles, all participants reported dominant positive feelings: “I’m happy I have these opportunities” (Glória), “I never regretted being in this training” (Angyal). Two of the participants reported minor passing negative feelings as well; anxiety (Angyal) and “momentary panic” (Glória) about the future while emphasising that the overall impression is still positive. The reason why it is imperative that teachers have mainly positive feelings about their internal selves can be explained by the following argumentation. Since there is a reciprocal interconnectedness between teacher and learner emotions (Sato & Loewen, 2022), it may be beneficial for teachers to act as “orchestra conductors” (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2019, p. 281) in trying to foster positive emotions and alleviate negative ones.

RQ₃: What challenges do the selected Hungarian PhD students have regarding their teacher and researcher roles and the interaction between these roles?

The participants reported many different challenges in both of their roles. Details of these for each participant can be found in Table 3. It is also noteworthy that participants reported fewer successes than challenges, and this was especially true in research, where they generally felt less successful and cited objective measures as reasons: “based on the modest results, [...] I don't consider myself a mature researcher yet.” (Angyal) “I wouldn't call myself successful in any case, I think, because in order to be a successful researcher, I would have to have a very, very long list, a publication list, which I don't have” (Babér). Other measures of success were also mentioned, like high internal expectations of oneself, closely related to an ideal (possible, internal) self (F. Taylor, 2010; F. Taylor et al., 2013): “if I measure myself against what I would like to achieve, I always feel that I'm completely behind. And you're never completely satisfied with your work, and you always see what you could have done better.” (Glória). Another measure of success mentioned was peer review and feedback: “I don't consider myself too successful in this field yet [...] well, for example, when I get a manuscript back with loads of comments” (Babett).

Table 3*Summary Table of Teacher and Researcher Challenges and Success*

Pseudonyms	Teacher Challenges (15)	Teacher Success (12)	Researcher Challenges (10)	Researcher Success (8)
Glória	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – distracted students – no former experience – inner frustration, impostor’s syndrome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – positive student feedback – student enjoyment/engagement – reaching student aims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – data collection procedures – room for development for her as a researcher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – publications – participating in more research projects
Babett	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – no interaction in online teaching – disrespect/doubt due to youth – too much freedom at the university 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – finding the common ground with students – being asked to teach at a language school – managing a difficult group – student obtains a language exam certificate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – publication time – opposing feedback on manuscript – receiving (unfair) criticism on manuscripts – forgetting how to use SPSS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – publications – successful complex exam – prize in competition
Angyal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – too much freedom at the university – proficiency level differences – poor technological equipment at the university 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – positive student feedback – motivated students – passing the language proficiency exam – teacher enjoyment – student engagement – student and teacher in flow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – recruiting possible participants – low support on opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – publications – trying out different research methods – being cited – practical use of pedagogical implications
Babér	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – too much freedom at the university – time management – preparing for every single lesson at the university 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – positive student feedback – positive emotional rapport – student enjoyment – low anxiety classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – finding relevant papers and researchers – writing high-quality manuscripts – opposing views on data analysis with supervisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – her teaching methods improved due to research

Note. The groundedness of the data is indicated in parentheses.

When asked how they overcame challenges, participants reported a variety of ways, mostly approach strategies. This is important as MacIntyre et al. (2020) emphasised that “positive psychological outcomes (wellbeing, health, happiness, resilience, and growth during trauma) correlated positively with approach coping)” (p. 1). These can be sorted into three groups: utilising support, self-reflection and management, and time management. Utilising support means that participants turned to supportive people in their lives like family members, peers, colleagues, or the PhD supervisor.

When I have some difficulty, or I feel really frustrated or that I really can’t do something I talk to my mother every day and in times like this she always has an encouraging thought or two... which helps... this also shows I’m surrounded by supportive people which helps a lot. (Glória)

Self-reflection and management mean that participants tend to truly take the time to think about solutions and to manage their own feelings of frustration: “first, I think alone about what I could do about it” (Babett). Participants mentioned time management as a crucial skill to navigate challenges, “you have to recognise how much you can take and not take on more than that” (Glória).

It was apparent from the participants’ accounts that they would have benefitted from more institutional help as per their teacher and researcher challenges. This is in line with Liang et al. (2023) and Sato and Loewen (2022) who found that there are many challenges for teacher researchers, so institutional support should be considered. Our participants also reported missing certain types of help that could be provided for them. All participants mentioned missing some kind of support or guidance in teaching courses at university. Interestingly, there seems to be a gap concerning tertiary teaching methodology, so there is a need for instruction on how to teach at tertiary level. They cited a list of problems that ranged from insufficient training (Glória) or lack of methodological background specific to tertiary education (Angyal) too much freedom in the content of courses (Angyal, Babett), to missing the opportunity to observe colleagues’ classes (Angyal, Babér). Beyond this, participants also mentioned needing more guidance in issues related to research: “a course on how to pick a journal...how to find trustworthy conferences” (Angyal), “how to deal with feedback and how to manage and send back a manuscript that you got back with comments” (Babett). Based on this, it can be claimed that the participants would have benefitted from workshops related to scientometrics.

RQ4. What do the selected Hungarian PhD students think about the nature of the communication between teachers and researchers?

When trying to unravel the selected PhD students’ perceptions about the communication (or the lack of it thereof) between teachers and researchers, they unanimously claimed that there is either ineffective or no communication apparent between the two major stakeholders. They also agreed that action is needed to be done concerning this issue. For instance, with regard to communication between researchers and teachers, Babér mentioned that there is no communication between the two stakeholders, and this is an enormous fault: “we have so many super motivation researchers, and in the meantime, we have teachers with unmotivated students, so we need to do something, to see how we can improve this, how we can change this” (Babér). Angyal added that even if there is a certain extent of communication, this is not sufficient:

Perhaps what would be worth strengthening in the training later is that this fusion of the two directions somehow better to implement, because it's great that we have, and we talk, but that so many valuable things could be born from this, if concretely would join together, say, a language teacher and an applied linguist and then that certain, that we hear, that everyone is in the ivory tower and we say our ideas, but there is no real dialogue, that if two departments really take this on and we come from two areas, then we can put it into practice. (Angyal)

The same analogue of the ivory tower problem that Angyal presented is followed by De Costa et al. (2022) and Rose (2019). The possible reasons for the ineffective communication

were various, for example, Babett mentioned that teachers doubt the importance of research: “I feel not everyone understands research or why it is good [...] sometimes there are dubious comments from friends or family, like what is this good for?”. Glória mentioned time and perceived difficulty:

I don't know how much literature a secondary school teacher reads, if I had to guess I would say not much, because when? So, this is something I think is worth working on. Obviously, there are probably obstacles, so it's not because nobody cares, it's because it's difficult. (Glória)

This is in line with previous studies based on which lack of time is one of the biggest hindrances concerning the gap between research and practice (Alferink & Marsden, 2023; Andringa et al., 2018; Marsden & Kasproicz, 2017). After identifying the problem of ineffective communication between the two stakeholders, Babett proposed an idea:

We still have a lot to improve in this area. For example, I think conferences are very good for this because they allow people to meet each other. [...] It could be a non-scientific magazine or whatever, where you can say "hi, I did some research". [...] And it could be simpler, not because the teachers don't understand it, but because it would take so much more energy, which is time and money, and unfortunately there's not really any money, so we should somehow bring these two closer together. (Babett)

Fortunately, there are initiatives in the quest of trying to bridge the gap between the research-practice interface. For example, ELT Journal represents an ideal venue of publications primarily for teachers as the audience. Based on the author guidelines of ELT Journal (https://academic.oup.com/eltj/pages/General_Instructions), the readership involves practitioners hence readers are not expected to know advanced statistics or jargon related to it. Additionally, papers should clearly highlight practical aspects, should not exceed 4,000 words, and should not have more than 15 references. The ‘Readers respond’ section of ELT Journal, is particularly useful as “The contributors are often practitioners who, by relating research to their own experiences, explore and/or question the relevance of a particular investigation” (Illés, 2012, p. 70).

The need for collaboration between the two sides is getting more and more prominent (Sato & Loewen, 2022), and De Costa et al. (2022) have recently shown the advantages of collaborative autoethnographies whereby teachers and researchers engage in discussions which can be characterised by reciprocal reflexivity. Indeed, as the researchers highlighted:

[...] the principles that embody collaborative autoethnography such as criticality, self-construction, agency, self-reflection, transformation, vulnerability, and reader friendliness, made collaborative autoethnography a highly amenable—if not ideal—platform for us to think about how to bridge the gap between us (as critical language educator researchers) and our teacher partners. (De Costa et al., 2022, p. 560)

Another step taken forward recently in the last couple of years that tried to bridge the communication gap between teachers and researchers is the Open Accessible Summaries in Language Studies (OASIS; Marsden et al., 2018) initiative. This initiative was born under the need for easier accessibility (Marsden & Kasprowicz, 2017) and for easier readability (Plavén-Sigray et al., 2017) of articles. These are free, completely accessible language wise one-page long summaries of empirical studies related to language studies (Alferink & Marsden, 2023). The fact that these summaries are just one-page long addressed the lack of time as an emerging theme in Marsden and Kasprowicz's (2017) and Andringa et al.'s (2018) studies. OASIS summaries have four main components, namely, what the research was about and why it is important (the overall outline of the study and rationale), what the researchers did (research methods), what the researchers found (findings), and things to consider (pedagogical implications). The OASIS initiative has already led to fruitful academic discussions and beneficial professional development for teachers (e.g., Alferink, 2023), so it might be imperative to continue reading and writing OASIS summaries.

Another step is initiated locally by the TESOL-Hungary (TESOL-H) organisation, as mentioned by Babér, former president of TESOL-H:

This is going to be a very good initiative of the TESOL-H, because from now on, every conference will have a 'meet the researchers' slot, where the researcher will be there to present the latest research and the teacher will be there to ask questions and all the existing topics that may occur in the classroom. That's the only way to do it, so we have to work together, because then we can move education and the quality of education forward. (Babér)

These initiatives work as evidence that there is an undeniable need to bridge a communication gap between researchers and teachers, as also highlighted by previous studies (e.g., Sato & Loewen, 2022). In fact, the most advantageous proposal is formulated by those advocates who claim that research and practice should work conjointly to inform the field of applied linguistics and contribute to language learning and teaching. For instance, Henshaw (2022) proposed that research and teaching ought to go hand in hand by stating that not only empirical evidence can contribute to practice (what the author referred to as research-informed pedagogy), but researchers can also benefit from practical perspectives born in the classrooms (alluded to as pedagogy-informed research).

Conclusion

The aims of this study were to 1) explore the perceived relationship between the internal teacher and researcher identities of the selected PhD students, 2) discover the perceived identity formation in the selected PhD students, 3) investigate the selected PhD students' challenges associated with their researcher and teacher roles and possible solutions related to this, 4) scrutinise the selected PhD students' perceptions regarding the communication between teachers and researchers.

The main findings indicate that the selected Hungarian PhD students do not see their researcher and teacher roles in conflict, the identities are harmonious; however, admittedly, all of them experienced major identity formations during their PhD studies. They had only minor

experiences of success as researchers and major ones concerning teaching. Interestingly, they also mentioned more challenges regarding teaching as compared to research challenges. Even though they managed (and still manage) to overcome these obstacles, it also emerged that they would need more institutional help from several aspects. Finally, the participants claimed that there is ineffective or no communication between researchers and teachers in general, which is unfavourable for the field of applied linguistics and for the advancement of language learning and teaching. These findings have important pedagogical implications that might be considered for practice. First of all, more institutional help should be provided for PhD students both in teaching and research methods. Second, it would be indispensable to take action in trying to bridge the gap between research and practice, especially since teachers and researchers have the common aim of advancing the field of applied linguistics and thus contributing to language learning and teaching.

As any study, this study has limitations as well. One concerns sampling, namely, although a relatively wide age range was reached, our sample is homogeneous in terms of gender, so it may be imperative to include male participants in follow-up studies to represent a more balanced and realistic gender ratio (even though females are overrepresented in the field of language pedagogy and applied linguistics). We would recommend replicating this study across contexts to see whether these findings are similar in other programmes (multi-site case study; Creswell, 2007), institutes, countries, and cultures. It would also be beneficial to investigate researcher and teacher identities on a larger scale using cluster analysis to arrive at different patterns of profiles and discover in what ways these are different, including perhaps other moderating variables. Additionally, a deeper understanding of the changes in identities could be gained through a longitudinal approach, for example, by collecting data from participants at the beginning and at the end of their studies.

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