Possible Selves and Student Teachers' Autonomous Identity

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Abstract Although numerous research studies have explored the concept of learner autonomy, the synergy of autonomy, motivation and identity has received scarce attention in language learning literature. This article aims to shed some light on this issue by reporting the findings of a longitudinal four-year study which sought to investigate autonomous behaviors of two English language student teachers. The point of departure was the subjects' future-oriented self-narratives, in which they imagined their professional careers as language teachers, followed by the author's tracking of their autonomous behaviors through three research instruments (logging 'autonomous events', analyzing their narratives of tension and investigating interviews for the subjects' I-statements, that is, their 'autonomy' language). The study seems to suggest that the anticipation of a person's future, derived from motivational functions of possible selves and recognized already at the inception of studies, may influence the person's future professional identity.

1 Introduction

Although autonomy has been the focus of intensive investigation for several years now, it has been acknowledged recently that a convergent approach to researching autonomy alongside motivation and identity—two other frequently explored concepts—might provide a better understanding of the role they all play in the language learning and teaching process than dealing with them separately (Gao & Lamb, 2011; Chik & Breidbach, 2011; Paiva, 2011). The need for the joint treatment of these three constructs seems especially interesting in the case of investigating autonomous behaviors of young adults who are still in the process of their identity formation. Although naturally delimited by the course of personal history, shaping a young person's identity does not have to take place mechanically, through the imitation of biological processes, but can involve conscious effort on the part of the

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person concerned. This basic ‘drive’ can be provided by so-called temporal integration of the person’s past with the present, or even more, the present with the future. In other words, such an approach to developing one’s identity assumes the possession of prospective mindsets and the creation of future scenarios which derive from motivational functions of future selves.

This article, therefore, aims to combine the three constructs by studying student teachers’ *autonomy*, understood as agency in influencing their own *identities* through implementing or not ideal-self *motivation*. The point of departure is future-oriented self-narratives collected at the beginning of the subjects’ BA studies, in which they imagine their professional careers as language teachers. The study then focuses on searching examples of the subjects’ autonomy development throughout the rest of their studies and well into the first year after completing university education. All in all, the study seems to suggest that anticipation of the future derived from motivational functions of possible selves may have a significant influence on what really happens.

2 Motivation, Identity, and Autonomy

In language learning literature, motivation has been traditionally expressed in two dichotomies. The first one, originated by Gardner and Lambert (1972), is motivation understood as integrative or instrumental orientation, where integrative orientation stands for a desire to learn a language arising from a fascination with the language, its culture and the target community, and instrumental motivation represents a desire to learn a language for a particular purpose. The other dichotomy is the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55), sometimes referred to as inner motivation versus external motivation (Hadfield, 2012, p. 4), where intrinsic motivation springs from a desire to learn a language because the very experience of learning it generates pleasure and interest, and extrinsic motivation is the result of an “external incentive, as distinct from the wish to learn for its own sake or interest in tasks” (Ur, 1996, p. 277).

Taking the above four kinds of motivation into consideration, it can be easily observed that only integrative motivation can be specific to language learning, whereas the other three can apply to any other learning activity. However, integrative motivation has become problematic recently, especially in light of Yashima’s (2009) concept of *international posture*. According to her, in the period of English being a global language, the notion of *community* is untenable. She argues that “international posture is a valid construct that relates to motivation to learn and willingness to communicate [WTC]” (p. 147). This means that *integrativeness* as a primary motive to learn was only partly successful because “it did not offer any obvious links with the new cognitive motivational concepts that had been emerging in motivational psychology (…) and partly because the label ‘integrative’ was rather limiting and, quite frankly, did not make too much sense in many language learning environments” (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 10).

Questioning the validity of integrativeness, new theories of motivation focused on linking motivation with research on post-modern understanding of identity. The key assumption helping understand them is that identity is a dynamic entity, prone to intentional modification propelled by alternative representations of who a person could be. In their description of identity, Augustinos, Walker, and Donaghue (2006) claim that the "ability to picture oneself in a range of potential futures, to evaluate these futures and to aspire towards realizing or avoiding them is a powerful force guiding our behavior in and experience of the present" (p. 192). An authority on identity in L2 literature, Norton (2000) defines it as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 4). Likewise, Markus and Nurius' (1986) *future possible selves* are individuals' ideas of what people could become, what they would like to become and what they are afraid of becoming. Higgins (1987) develops the list adding what people would like to be (the *ideal self*) and what people feel they should be (the *ought-to self*). These two kinds of definitions in fact boil down to four possible future selves: the *ideal self* (what people would like to become), the *ought-to self* (what people feel they should become), the *feared self* (what people are afraid of becoming) and the *default self* (what people could become if they do nothing to transform their future self into the ideal self) (Hadfield, 2012, p. 5). Therefore, possible selves can stand for things that an individual wishes, expects or fears, but because they are "vivid and personalized representations of goals that have associated behavioral plans and strategies, they form stronger motivators of behavior than more abstract, non-self-referential representations of goals or values" (Augustinos et al., 2006, p. 193).

Inspired by possible selves theory, Dörnyei (2005, 2009) proposes a new approach to the understanding of language learning motivation, the *L2 motivational self system*, based on three components: the *ideal L2 self*, the *ought-to L2 self*, and the *L2 learning experience*. The ideal L2 self is the most powerful imperative to reduce the discrepancy between a person's actual and ideal selves. The ought-to self concerns the attributes that a person should possess so as to avoid possible negative outcomes, and which may bear little resemblance to the person's real wishes. The L2 learning experience relates to situation-specific motives comprising the learner's immediate learning environment and experience. These three pillars progress from wholly internal (the ideal L2 self), through first external and then possibly internal (the ought-to L2 self), to wholly external (the L2 learning experience) motivation. Since possible selves, understood as the learners' personal images of themselves in the future, are an object of investigation in this paper, we will confine ourselves to the first two pillars only.

The construct of possible selves can be compared to Marcia's (Brzezińska & Appelt, 2004) concept of identity comprising exploration and commitment. The former signifies the stage of looking for alternatives and experimenting with possibilities, whereas the latter stands for a person's engagement, an outcome of previous decisions or a consistent realization of established aims. The combination of the two phases—exploration and commitment—has inspired Marcia to distinguish four identity statuses, out of which 'achieved identity' and 'foreclosed identity' seem to somewhat correlate with two selves in Dörnyei's motivational construct. Achieved identity (resembling Ideal L2 Self) is characteristic of mature individuals, resistant to other people's pressures, not shunning challenges or having problems with finding an answer to the question of who they are, because they have already made an autonomous and conscious decision. If they have decided to become teachers, they have made it on the basis of their competence or personal preferences. In turn, foreclosed identity (resembling ought-to L2 self) is typical of individuals who have not explored enough by themselves, and the choices concerning their commitments are informed by strong external pressures. Such individuals are rather devoid of reflections on their careers or professional achievements and, if they become teachers, this is usually a result of someone else's persuasion.

Our third concept to be discussed here, autonomy, has been a preoccupation in much of the SLA literature. A number of definitions on autonomy have been proposed stressing different learner's and teacher's dimensions, such as taking charge of learning (Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1981; Little, 1991), parallel the process of learner's language development and teacher's professional growth (Kohonen, 2001; Little, 1991), responsibility (Jimenez, Lamb, and Vieira 2007, p. 1), noticing (van Lier, 1996, p. 11), self-regulation (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), being reflective (McGrath, 2000) and metacognitive awareness (Ellis, 2000). Martinez (2008, p. 105) even argues that the notion of autonomy is difficult to grasp because it is a 'semantic neologism' whose old meanings relating to philosophical and educational concepts overlap with new ones not sufficiently explored yet. Hard though the notion of autonomy can be, in this study it is understood as the construct comprising; (1) a capacity for independent action, initiative taking, consistent development of one's motivation and intentionality, (2) a capacity for noticing the complexity in the realization of the selected goal, and (3) a capacity for constructing one's identity through 'autonomy oriented' language. In other words, an autonomous person would be considered here as *someone who on his or her own has selected a goal to pursue, does his or her best to head in this direction, perceives the complexity of this goal achievement, and uses reflective language when describing his or her goal experiences*. Such understanding of autonomy goes hand in hand with possible selves in Dörnyei's concept of motivation and Marcia's construct of commitment, or achieved identity in his description of identity statuses.

Moreover, possible selves can relate not only to the person's future but also to the present time in a twofold manner. On the one hand, the anticipation of the future influences an individual's present activity, which is that of his or her actual self, and, on the other hand, it will transform in the future the possible ideal self into the actual self, so it indirectly informs what will happen in the future. Therefore, it is highly likely that possible future identity structure can be defined that provides a description of what a person in the future will be like as well as what will assume a central place in his or her life and what will be assigned to the background. In other words, anticipating the future may have a significant influence on what may really happen in the future, not as the result of self-fulfilling prophecies but deriving from motivational functions of an individual's vision of a possible self in the future.

Expectations connected with language learning, going abroad or choosing a job may be reflected in the real course of changes in one's identity.

3 The Research Study

3.1 Participants

Originally, 13 BA students of English philology with a teaching specialization were asked to write a one-page narrative from the perspective of the actual self. In particular, they were given the following instructions: *Although you are a young person and a greater part of life is still awaiting you, you can imagine your future. Please write what your imagined professional life will be like after finishing your studies.* The purpose of this task was to find how many and which of the students, already at the inception of their studies, identified with the language teaching profession, their major specialization. The responses indicated that 8 students would like to perform a life occupation different from teaching, 3 students found it difficult to imagine themselves being an English teacher although they wrote that they might become one and only 2 students explicitly wrote that they would like to be English teachers, and that was why they had intentionally selected the teaching specialization. Having this knowledge of student future possible selves, the author began her longitudinal study (2008–2012) on each subject, continuing up to the present, which is one year after the students finished their studies, with a view to investigating the changes in their mindsets regarding the language teaching profession. For the sake of the present chapter, only two teachers are investigated: Weronika, who has always wanted to be a teacher (representing the ideal L2 self), and Anna, who has never considered language teaching as a future occupation in earnest and began her studies due to her parents' pressure (the ought-to L2 self).

3.2 Objectives

The specific research question to be pursued here was whether or not the temporal future perspectives (in particular Ideal Self) generate autonomous behavior on the part of the individual. Therefore, in line with the accepted definition of autonomy, the author was motivated to find answers to three sub-questions:

1. Does the assumption of a possible future self affect the subjects' activity as reflected in higher exploration and engagement?
2. Does the assumption of a possible future self promote the subjects' noticing of higher complexity of their goal?
3. Does the assumption of a possible future self influence the subjects' use of 'autonomy' language?

3.3 Instruments

Although the whole study employed a number of research tools, three instruments are considered here: a logbook kept by the author for the whole period of the subjects' studies in which their 'autonomous' behaviors were recorded, the subjects' written narratives produced after their teaching practice at the end of the second year of the study, and a lengthy three-hour interview conducted with each of the subjects in their first year of working as a professional teacher. The purpose of the researcher's logbook was to register the activities initiated by the two subjects aimed at better pursuing the ultimate teaching goal; the focus on the written descriptions of their first teaching encounters was aimed at identifying their independent noticing of complexity in teaching English educational settings; and the interviews with the same, now novice in-service teachers, were conducted to provide material for the analysis of their language for autonomy. In a nutshell, the three instruments aimed to provide answers to the three sub-questions specified above in order to seek the response to the main question motivating this paper, whether possible selves foster teacher learners' autonomous behaviors.

3.4 Results and Discussion

This section describes the methods as well as the findings resulting from the three modes of data collection, followed by a discussion. All of the methods were used to keep track of the teacher learners' autonomous behaviors.

3.4.1 Logbook

The logbook as an easy way to register the participants' 'interesting' behaviors was used by the author throughout the whole of the period of their BA studies. It was found to be more useful than keeping a diary because mere recording of events took less time, and yet enabled the researcher to keep track of experiences and developments on a regular basis as well as reflect later on the event registered. The logbook consisted of the time period (Term) and examples of the subject's behavior (Events); the number of pluses indicates their intensity in the opinion of the researcher, as illustrated in Table 1.

The question at the beginning of this paper was whether or not the motivated language teacher learner (possible ideal L2 self) exhibited more autonomous behaviors than the teacher learner who decided to study language teaching as a result of external pressure (possible ought-to L2 self). Based on the results from these case studies, the answer is definitely positive, because Weronika with the possible ideal L2 teaching self demonstrated the development of autonomy, which was hardly the case with the other participant. The first student seemed *to take*

Table 1 Examples of Weronika's and Anna's 'autonomous' behaviors over the course of their BA studies

Term	Events	Weronika	Anna
Term 1	Expressing the desire to become a language teacher and changing to the teaching profile when she learnt she was in a nonteaching group	+++	–
All terms	Being always prepared in advance for methodology classes, seminar meetings	++	–
Term 3	Borrowing methodology books and reading them in her free time	+++	–
All terms	Staying to talk to lecturers about subject matter issues after classes	++	–
Terms 4, 5, 6	Frequent voluntary attendance at free-of-charge in-service teacher professional meetings in town	+++	+
Term 4	Volunteering for conducting the display lessons	++	–
Term 5	Coming to the first seminar with a few topic proposals	+++	–
Terms 5, 6	Working on the BA paper on a regular basis, no need for pushing	+++	–
Term 6	Being interested in her job prospects, visiting schools for potential work opportunities in March on her own initiative	+++	–
Term 6	Reporting on group work findings in an in-service teacher meeting	+++	++
Terms 4, 5, 6	Voicing less popular opinions during methodology and seminar classes, and standing up for her own viewpoints	+++	+
Terms 4, 5, 6	Giving private lessons to primary and secondary school students	+++	–
Terms 4, 5	Noticing "hidden curriculum" aspects in her own primary and secondary classrooms, despite the fact that earlier she had only praised her school teaching	+++	+
Terms 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Skillful ability to reflect on language education issues	+++	+

charge of her own learning when she lingered to chat with her teachers about an English-language related issue, prepared meticulously for her classes or studied for her diploma paper. She was also willing *to take charge of her learning outside of the college context*, be it when she attended job update meetings for practicing teachers and performed the role of a group reporter to the rest of the meeting participants, when she found private tutees from different educational levels, or even when she sent her CVs and visited schools as potential places of work well before her graduation. Moreover, she displayed *high self-esteem* connected with the teaching profession already at the start of her studies when she insisted on being transferred to the teaching group, which indicated her motivation in regard to what she wanted to do in the future and confirmed that she already possessed this knowledge about herself. That conviction of 'belonging' in the teaching profession must have influenced her decision to always volunteer to conduct display lessons as well as helped her voice her opinions about different teaching issues, even though they might have been less popular with her group mates.

By contrast, Anna hardly displayed autonomy-targeted behaviors. She also attended a few in-service teacher meetings and reported on the group work, but active participation on her part was not typical. Her comments in the assigned narratives were *less reflective* than Weronika's and she rarely engaged in activities on her own initiative. In fact, even the topic, the structure and the literature concerning her diploma paper were suggested to her by the supervisor, and she completed it half a year beyond the due date. The other behaviors registered in the logbook for the previous subject did not take place in the case of Anna.

3.4.2 Subjects' Diaries

In accordance with our definition above, exercising autonomy can also refer to a person's 'noticing' as an aspect of critical and independent thinking. Noticing can be propelled by enhanced consciousness derived from internal conflicts, or cognitive and affective dissonance experienced by the individual. Autonomy in this sense is the ability to question the encountered ideologies and events that are not congruent with the person's system of values, rather than reproduce them or accept passively. In other words, autonomy is "the ability to live with initial cognitive dissonance and conflicts [that are] one of the leading edges of resistance and change" (Gee, 2005, p. 179).

The data for examining the participants' ability to 'notice' were their narratives written during their teaching practice. Each subject kept two diaries: one during the whole of term 4 when they observed the school teacher and other students conducting English lessons, and the other during a one-month internship when they were teachers themselves in the primary schools (Weronika had teaching practice in a large county town, whereas Anna taught in a small village school). Altogether, Weronika wrote 12 diary entries (33 pages) in the first diary and 15 (51 pages) in the second one. By contrast, Anna wrote 15 entries (15.5 pages) during the whole term and 16 (15 pages) during the practicum month. Yet, it cannot be assumed that the number of texts matched their corpus size or semantic content.

In order to investigate the 'noticing' dimension in the diaries, the researcher turned towards tensions intimated by the diarists, the teacher learners' questioning of the traditionally established order or their lack of acceptance of something if they were convinced of truth lying somewhere else. For the sake of simplicity, the selected narratives providing the research material in the diaries were called narratives of tension. The categories in the narratives of tension were created after detailed examination of the data and consideration of the research focus in which the subjects' 'noticing' was treated as a sign of autonomy. In particular, the following steps were taken, as suggested by Alsup (2006):

- reading the diary entries once and underlining interesting ideas;
- reading the diary entries a second time, again marking interesting ideas, and combining the ideas that seemed similar to one another;
- constant comparing of the emerging themes;
- suggesting a final list of themes; and
- asking a friendly researcher to review a sample of the data (10 %) and verify the names of the categories.

During qualitative analysis, the 'noticing' aspect of autonomy was identified in three types of the participants' narratives, respectively called *student-teacher tensions*, *personal-institutional tensions* and *theory-practice tensions*. Student-teacher tensions refer to the teacher learner's greater identification with a student's plight or a teacher's role, personal-institutional tensions concern the lack of accord between the subjects' personal opinions and convictions and what they encounter in the school practice, and theory-practice tensions related to disagreements between what they learnt at university that was not reflected in the school reality. It is claimed that the more occurrences of narratives of tensions the participants exhibit, the more 'noticing' they exercise and, in turn, the more autonomous dispositions they represent.

Altogether, Weronika produced 23 narratives of tension in the first diary, and 21 in the second one, giving a total of 44. By contrast, Anna's narratives of tension from the first diary amounted to 11 texts, and those from the second diary equaled 8, for a total of 19. The types and the numbers of narratives written by each student are shown in Table 2. A quick glance at the data is sufficient to see that Weronika, considered a very motivated teacher learner in the study, came up with twice as many narratives of tension as Anna. Yet, on analyzing her texts, the inclinations towards autonomous behaviors in our understanding of the concept cannot be determined solely by the quantity of texts. What other evidence, then, exists for her critical awareness?

What strikes the reader of Weronika's entries is her *looking for reasons* behind the described conflictual events. When she expresses the ineffectiveness of a lesson, she explains why it is so and how it could be changed, and when she criticizes the system of teaching used by the regular teacher, she also points to what should be changed, for example, the supremacy of grammar or lack of living language speech. This is what she writes about one of the teachers during her mid-term practice:

Table 2 Subjects' narratives of tension in their two diaries

Narratives of tension	Weronika	Anna	Totals
Student-teacher	8 (2 + 6)	3 (2 + 1)	11
Personal-institutional	22 (13 + 9)	10 (7 + 3)	32
Theory-practice	14 (8 + 6)	6 (2 + 4)	20
Totals	44 (23 + 21)	19 (11 + 8)	63

> Her way of conducting lessons has nothing to do with communication. This is sad because Miss Maria seems to be a very open person to new techniques and 'methodological fashions', and rejects the trend that has been present in English language teaching for a good many years. The children seem to have a great potential but, unfortunately, it is still underexploited.

It seems that Weronika is struck by the absence of teacher's congruence, logicality or a steady progression towards the ultimate aim, which is the learners' communicative competence. Looking for causes may testify to her familiarity with analyzing a problem, the interpretation of a situation found and striving for objectivity, all of which might have had an effect on her own goal selection and realization.

Another interesting fact is Weronika's *high self-confidence* about her own language teaching, probably springing from her sense of connection to the profession, as well as positive interaction with and feedback from the learners, which were clear from a variety of her diary entries. She never felt stressed while introducing teaching techniques; quite the reverse—she always believed in the sense of what she did. Even when misinformation from the school mentor led her to introduce the very same exercises which the mentor had used herself, when the learners informed her that they had already completed those exercises with their regular teacher, Weronika was not in the least embarrassed. Instead, she was able to exhibit her resourcefulness and cope with that unpredictable situation so skillfully that no one even noticed the school teacher's mistake. In fact, the greatest number of her narratives of tension boil down to discrepancies between her own convictions and vision of the English teacher's job and institutional realities, such as the necessity to follow course books, scarce use of English in the classroom, and the predominance of grammar and writing at the expense of oral skills. Interestingly, her narratives of tension never concern problems with discipline, a common complaint of novice teachers.

A number of entries point to Weronika's *sense of responsibility*, without which autonomy is hardly possible. Coming to her lessons unprepared without having considered the aim beforehand is inconceivable to her. She simply states that she owes it to her students to prepare for lessons and teach them as best she can but when the unexpected comes she will have to manage. She cannot understand that her school mentor never takes coursebooks home or has no idea what she will be doing the following day in the classroom. Such an attitude certainly shows how responsible a teacher Weronika is. In the conclusion to her diary she wrote:

> At the beginning of the teaching practice I promised myself that I would check if the learners would like me as a nice and demanding teacher. I was pleasantly surprised because none of them mentioned that they had been lagging behind or had had problems with understanding. It is extremely important for me because I had always wondered if students really liked being forced to work.

Her responsibility for teaching is also demonstrated through the possession of some personal theories, such as: "In my classes everybody must work", "Even though the teacher must sometimes give several identical lessons, already after two such classes it is easy to perceive minuses and try to change them another time. I have promised myself to practice this", "Dividing the alphabet into three letters covered in one lesson is a waste of time. This only confirms my belief that following the course book in a rigid way is absurd". Her statements prove that she gives thought to educational issues and creates her own credos to abide by, which again speaks to her personal goal-setting and its consistent realization.

One of the hallmarks of an autonomous language teacher is *promoting autonomy in her students*. Analyzing Weronika's narratives, the researcher can find a great number of episodes in which the diarist describes her attempts to foster autonomy in the language classroom. One example is cited below:

> Today I was unobserved because the teacher was ill. During the lesson in class 5 I wanted the learners to learn English more consciously. I paid attention to learning aims and advantages coming from this knowledge. I wanted them to correctly pronounce new words and structures. I also gave them 'a free hand' – when describing pictures, they were allowed to decide what to talk about. Frankly speaking, I was a bit afraid of how they would respond to such a lesson. I was mistaken. They willingly and creatively described the pictures and worked successfully in groups, controlling and correcting one another, of course within their capabilities. During the lesson in class 2 I introduced new words: chair, bag, floor. First, showing the pictures, I practiced the pronunciation and then, a fluffy elephant helped me with the next exercise. I repeated the question "Where is Dumbo?" and the children learnt it. The I put the teddy on the window sill, saying the phrase "on the window sill". After a few minutes I stepped aside and the children themselves asked questions, putting the teddy in different places and choosing the person to give answers. I liked the lesson very much. I also noticed that they like pretending to be teachers asking their classmates, checking the correctness of responses and correcting if need be. I wonder what Mrs. U would say if she was present at the lesson.

The two lessons from Weronika's diary entry refer to two stages of autonomy introduction, as suggested by Scharle and Szabo (2000): raising awareness of autonomy and role reversal. The student teacher demonstrated that introducing autonomy to students was a characteristic feature of her preparation for lessons. Such a conclusion can be drawn because the choice of autonomy-oriented exercises was made when she was not observed and was allowed to choose the most 'comfortable' mode of teaching for herself. Yet the tension was still present when she expressed her anxiety about the students' acceptance of the lesson or the absent teacher's disapproval.

Since the second method of data collection has made Weronika emerge as a person with autonomous inclinations, the 'autonomy qualities' identified in her narratives of tension served as points of reference for comparing Weronika to Anna, who was unwilling to pursue a teaching career. Therefore, the examples of the ability to analyze the problem, high self-confidence with regard to teaching, responsibility and the attempts to implement autonomy during the internships were sought after in Anna's narratives of tension.

In most cases, in the narratives presented by Anna not too much analysis was employed. The extracts were rather short and most of them were written in the category of activities, as in: "I gave my first lesson. It was in the first class. At first I was very stressed but it is over now…". In comparison to the other student, she described far fewer problems, and rather failed to accommodate causes or possible alternative interpretations, although the conclusions were usually there. Clearly, she seemed less open than the other student, which found its expression in her diaries. As reserved as she seems, Anna cannot be called a self-confident person, either. Her narratives were rich in the descriptions of internal tensions concerning discipline problems, the unpleasant necessity of preparing documentation, lack of motivation on the part of students and her own tiredness. She referred to consulting on the problems with other colleagues, and even mentioned another teacher's intervention during one of her problems with classroom discipline. Such incidents can testify to her responsibility (seeking advice in others) as well as teaching helplessness. Interestingly, her diary entries frequently oscillate around other people than herself, which makes her narratives more allocentric than idiocentric, in which the narrator is the main object of narration (Trzebiński, 2002, p. 61). On several occasions, she wrote about the lack of teacher authority, but she seemed to believe that authority can be simply compelled on the account of the job held, rather than earned ("Even though students don't mind the teacher any longer, it is good that at least parents respect teachers and reckon with their opinions"). In fact, she did not write much about the techniques used during the lessons, so it can hardly be said that she attempted to foster autonomy in her classroom in any way. All these diary findings seem to point to Anna's low level of agency in the choice of her activities, lack of including her own values in the choices and decisions, and, paradoxically, through writing more about others than herself, a greater sense of alienation in social interactions.

To conclude, it can be said that the incidence of autonomy behaviors can be well seen in the first student teacher but not in the second one. The qualities generated from the narrative excerpts of the candidate motivated for teaching well attest to her pro-autonomy proclivities because the tensions in her narratives can be called autonomy-enabling experiences. This means that the episodes selected by her for the descriptions show the teacher learner as a person who possesses analytical skills, who believes in her success, who feels responsible for her decisions and who tries to make her students depend more on themselves. The other student, who was made to study teaching, exhibited almost none of the selected qualities. She found it difficult to analyze her teaching behavior, felt stressed and helpless as a pedagogue, and seemed to rely more on the traditional role of a teacher as a person respected by others, teaching from the book and perceiving classroom discipline as a guarantee for her pedagogical success. The tensions produced in the narratives by that student, who was originally labelled as an ought-to self person can be called autonomy-disabling experiences. This is so because the tensions she experienced in no way made her find herself further on the path to autonomy.

3.4.3 Interviews

The third method of investigating growth in autonomy was I-statement analysis of the subjects' reflective speaking. The method of I-statement analysis examines how people describe their actions speaking or writing in the first person and, via language, construct their situated identities (Gee, 2005, p. 141; Ushioda, 2010, p. 46). I-statements are categorized on the basis of predicates occurring after them. Therefore, according to Gee (2005, pp. 141–142), we can have cognitive statements ("I think…, I know…"), affective statements ("I like…, I hate…"), state versus action statements ("I am responsible, I opened the book"), ability versus constraint statements ("I can…, I shouldn't…"), achievement statements ("This is my ambition".). Gee claims that they were not distinguished by chance but emerged from the consideration of his research data and study focus.

The material for investigation was gathered during a lengthy interview with each of the subjects several months after finishing their BA studies. At the time of the interviews, both subjects were employed as first year teachers teaching in primary schools in the places where almost two years before they had served their teaching practice. Weronika was working in a big school in a large county town, whereas Anna was working in a small rural school where she was the only English teacher. The research aim now was to triangulate the previous data with the use of yet another method and check the developments in autonomy in the same two subjects after a lapse of time and their change of occupational status. In other words, the researcher was keen to find out whether the person with ideal-self motivation for language teaching had changed her preferences, whether she still exhibited autonomy-oriented behaviors and whether her identity was pro-autonomy. On the other hand, it was of equal interest to examine whether the subject of ought-to self motivation for teaching had changed in any way in the context of her performed profession and whether any signs of autonomy would be displayed in her language now. The procedures adopted in collecting the data were as follows:

- inviting the subjects (now teachers) to a recorded interview about their work as full-time teachers;
- transcribing the conversations on the same day of the interviews;
- reading the data several times considering the research focus;
- identifying I-statements in the corpus;
- examining predicates for each I-statement and identifying emerging patterns;
- reducing the corpus to broader categories; and
- defining categories with the consideration of the research focus.

As a result, seven categories were distinguished which appeared to apply to all the dataset. Table 3 presents the categories with sample examples and the number of their occurrences in the case of each participant. It transpires from the data that the number of I-statements used by the participants in the corpus wa comparable. Yet, according to Gee (2005, p. 143; Ushioda, 2010, p. 53), numerical analysis should only provide a rough guide, and it is the meaning of the statements themselves which is more significant. Let us consider the most important findings.

The first glance at all categories shows that there exist differences between the two subjects. Weronika had far more I-statements in the *Thoughts, beliefs* category than Anna and they predominantly refer to her personal philosophies of teaching

Table 3 I-statements categories

I-statement category (with examples from each participant)	Weronika's no. of I-statements (% frequency)	Anna's no. of I-statements (% frequency)
Thoughts, beliefs I know that even if I don't like some people, I have to co-operate with them, obstacles must be overcome I think you should do something well enough so as not to need to revise it afterwards	20 (18.51)	8 (7.27)
Wishes, feelings, likes, dislikes I like when things are done my way I wish I were more confident and consistent in what I do	17 (15.74)	43 (39.09)
Characteristic features I am a very determined person, which helps me at work. I know that even if I don't like some people, I have to co-operate with them, obstacles must be overcome I would never hurt a person	7 (6.48)	14 (12.72)
Actions I made an English exhibition and a performance for parents, I always engage myself After no teacher wanted to organize a school trip, I went to another school, asked the principal there and organized a trip	31 (48.00)	10 (9.09)
Abilities, internal orders I can work 47 h a week and I can manage everything well I can't be consistent. I must change it	13 (88.00)	6 (5.45)
Constraints The only problem for me is the fact that I have to fight for my job (no vacancies next year) I can't change pupils' previous learning habits. I usually give up	7 (40.00)	14 (12.72)
Ideas, suggestions I must be crafty. I suggested to my principal the idea of creating bilingual classes in order to recruit more pupils Being able to watch lessons conducted with my pupils by other teachers would be very useful for novice teachers	7 (6.48)	1 (0.90)
Total	108	110

English. Their number also indicates how much confidence she feels about her teaching language knowledge and skills as well as her individuality. Examples include such statements as "I think a teacher should be a conscious and methodologically well informed person" or "Working alone in my case is more effective—then I am more proud of myself".

The second category, *Wishes, feelings, likes, dislikes*, reveals that the other subject gave more responses. However, it must be said that Anna's statements were mostly wishful ("I wish I was…", "This is my aim…") in which she expressed the image of her future. Anna gave a precise picture of the teacher she is striving to be: consistent, orderly, meticulous, disciplined and executing the principal's orders, all signs for her of responsibility. In fact, she repeats these ideas a number of times, which indicates that she has thought about them before. On the one hand, such an approach to teaching may show that Anna still has to be directed by other people whose instructions she fulfils, continuing the ought-to self. On the other hand, she may be in the process of developing her own teaching style, and being guided by others (school superiors) is her choice.

An interesting aspect of another category referring to what the participants are like is that most of Weronika's I-statements present positive adjectives about her. Anna seems to be more anxious in this respect. Not only does she say what she lacks, but when she talks about her virtues, they are presented with respect to other people: "I am good at listening to others", "I can see who needs more support", and so on.

The category of *Actions* is dominated by Weronika. When she enumerated all the activities in which she engages at school, often of her own accord, the researcher was really amazed. Considered in this study as the prototype of an autonomous person, she is first of all a very active individual. Whenever she is infected with an idea which might be of benefit to her, she implements it and carries it out until she thinks she has achieved her standards and can become engaged in something else. It also means that she has not changed in this respect from the times when she was a BA student. Since the concept of autonomy requires the possession of a great many abilities (i.e., ability to manage learning, ability to self-assess, etc.), the awareness of the possession of them is expressed in many statements by Weronika, and half as often by Anna.

The *Constraints* that the teachers perceive are also different. The first participant finds obstacles in the school environment but, interestingly, comes up with helpful strategies to minimize them. On the other hand, Anna's constraints are, as she says, inside her. She is angry with herself that she does not have enough courage to voice her opinions, refuse to agree to her colleagues' constant requests or gives up because of lack of confidence. It must be added though that she was proud of her decision when she asked another school to help her with organizing a trip. It may signify her fledgling autonomy, just like her awareness of what teaching goal she should follow.

All in all, it can be said that Weronika still exhibits many features typical of autonomous individuals. Her ideal-self motivation or striving for achieved identity has not lost its substance or decreased in any way. Analyzing her job behaviors, it can be said that she is still extremely active, resourceful, convinced of her methodological skillfulness and, above all, self-confident. By contrast, Anna, who has also started teaching and thinking about teaching in terms of her permanent occupation, prefers to be guided and controlled by others. At the same time, she is conscious of her teaching weaknesses, has attempted to reflect on her teaching style and now knows what style she would like to represent. Clearly, the messy organization at her school may have triggered her hidden sense of responsibility and desire for change. Empathetic and sensitive to others, she perceives all the ills of the school she is working in and its deleterious influence on the pupils. Hence, her ought-to self motivation for teaching may have merged or transferred into ideal-self motivation because she knows the ideal she would like to strive for as a teacher. By the same token, foreclosed or nominated identity that in the first place is dictated by external pressures can become achieved identity, also echoing Maslov's sense of fulfilment, which in turn may lead to greater autonomy.

4 Conclusions

This article has aimed at tracking traces of autonomy in two teacher learners, basing on the personal selves discovered at the very beginning of their studies. With the use of three research tools, the author has sought to discover whether, above all, ideal L2-self motivation for becoming a language teacher will generate more autonomous mind sets and continue to last into the working period and produce the teacher's achieved identity. Analogously, the researcher wanted to check whether ought-to L2 self motivation, diagnosed in the first year of language teaching studies, is accompanied by fewer autonomous manifestations on the part of the subject and will turn into the teacher's foreclosed identity once she starts performing her profession. The provisional conclusions are positive; moreover, there are even some intimations in the case of the second participant that foreclosed identity may become achieved identity, as shown by her declarations, desire to remain a school teacher, and even fledgling autonomy manifested in some of her decisions as well as increased consciousness related to her vision of an English teacher. It can be inferred, therefore, that in some individuals opting for a teaching career there might be a progression from the external to the internal, and what we think we should become turns into what we think we want to become; that is, the teacher's ought-to L2 self motivation transfers into the teacher's ideal L2 self motivation, and the teacher's foreclosed identity into the teacher's achieved identity.

The results of the study should be treated with caution as more research needs to be conducted on this issue, possibly with the use of more instruments of a different kind. Yet, it can hardly be denied that the investigation of possible selves and their influence on other constructs, be it teacher autonomy or teacher identity, or still other aspects of the teaching profession, can offer new vistas. They can provide new interpretations of life events realized in goal-orientation, enhanced exploration and activity, which can, in turn, lead to changes in identity. Likewise, a sense of aim, direction and unity as well as optimism and belief in success strengthens a person's actual self. Giddens (2007) claims that identity is not presented to us once and for all but is constructed, negotiated and generated by us through the life events we experience and integrate into a coherent life story. Perhaps the 'imposed' early diagnosis of future personal selves in would-be teachers and offering support in translating this 'theory' into practice, simultaneously keeping track of teachers' autonomous mind sets, might be helpful in generating more future teacher learners' identities which are in fact achieved.

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