Abstract

While teacher–student relationships are of central importance for students' motivation, they remain under-investigated. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, and focusing on the 'relationality' of teacher–student relationships (Mercer 2016), this study examines the identity-work that takes place when a teacher makes visible an aspect of identity not normally salient in the classroom. Framing self-disclosure as a relational practice, and drawing on ethnographic data that includes observations of English lessons (N=258) in Swedish secondary schools, a relational conceptualization of the motivational influences of teacher identity-work is offered. Since language teachers are sensitive to the psychology of learning–teaching processes, relationally-grounded perspectives on motivation can be of particular importance in shaping classroom practices.

Introduction

Learning a language is a social process involving interactions with others (Byrnes 2013). Emotions lie at the heart of the language learning (Dewaele 2015), effective teaching hinging on the teacher's capacity for social and emotional connectedness and ability to create positive relationships (Arnold and Murphey 2013; Gkonou and Mercer, 2017). While teacher–student relationships are central to learning processes, research has hardly touched on the dynamics and "relationality" of these relationships (Mercer 2015, 2016). One aspect of teacher–student interaction to have received attention in motivation research is the idea that when students have opportunities to shift from identities conferred upon them by the interactional context, positive influences on motivation can follow, such shifts being facilitated when teachers' reveal personal information about themselves (Ushioda 2009, 2011). While self-disclosure is an important aspect of teachers' interactional practices (Cayanus and Martin 2016), empirical

inquiry into the identity-work involved when teachers make self-disclosures is lacking, both in SLA and mainstream educational paradigms. Responding to Mercer and Ryan's (2016) identification of a need for "a more overtly interdisciplinary approach" in the investigation of the psychology of language learning and teaching (1), and Mercer's (2015) call for research that adopts "more explicitly relational perspectives" (81), we draw on concepts from interpersonal communication to explore language teachers' self-disclosures from a relational perspective. Using Tracy's (2002/Tracy and Robles 2013) framework of identities in communication to analyse ethnographic data, and examining the identity-work that takes place when a teacher discloses personal information, the study has two purposes; while one is to develop a relationally-focused understanding of language teachers' self-disclosures, the other is to identify and conceptualize the influences on students' motivation.

Literature review

Teacher self-disclosure

Rooted in the humanist psychology of the 1960s, self-disclosure is a construct capturing "the act of making yourself manifest, showing yourself so that others can perceive you" (Jourard 1971, 17). Of interest to researchers across a range of disciplines, few psychological concepts have attracted such widely differing focuses of investigation, research being directed to the types of feelings and information people disclose, their reasons for making self-disclosures, when and how disclosures take place, and the effects that self-disclosures have on relationships (Berg and Derlega 1987). In education a teacher's self-disclosure can be understood as "statements in the classroom about the self that may or may not be related to the subject content, but reveal information about the teacher that students are unlikely to learn from other sources" (Sorensen 1989, 260). Although the links between teachers' self-disclosures and students' emotional and cognitive responses are not fully explored, a

teacher's self-disclosure signals a personal investment in interaction, the creating of connections, and reductions in teacher–student distance (Cayanus et al. 2009).

Teachers' self-disclosures are associated with a number of positive learning outcomes (Cayanus and Martin 2016). Behaviours where teachers talk about who they are, tell stories about themselves and share personal values and beliefs, have been found to be associated with increases in students' understanding of subject knowledge (e.g. Wambach and Brothen 1997), increased levels of attention (e.g. Webb 2014), and greater enjoyment of the learning situation (e.g. Sorensen 1989). Teachers' self-disclosures are also shown to be related to students' engagement and motivation (Cayanus et al. 2009; Cayanus and Martin, 2008, 2016). In classrooms where teachers talk about themselves, students are more willing to become involved in activities (Zhang et al. 2008), have greater levels of participation (Goldstein and Benassi 1994), greater engagement (Cayanus 2004), and greater interest in subjects learned (Cayanus, Martin and Weber 2003). As well as increasing motives for classroom communication (Cayanus et al. 2009; Cayanus and Martin 2008), teachers' in-class self-disclosures increase out-of-class teacher–student communication (Cayanus et. al. 2003).

Research shows that the purposes teachers attribute to making self-disclosures vary. While some strongly-endorsed reasons are instrumental, and relate to the content of learning, for example clarifying learning materials and providing real-world examples, other purposes are relational and aimed at developing positive teacher–student relationships and creating a comfortable classroom environment (Zhang et al. 2009). Generally, students are aware of teachers' self-disclosures and recognize their value in creating a climate conducive to communication. Students often see beyond the personal stories teachers tell, interpreting their self-disclosures as attempts to be honest and open about themselves, to make personal

connections, and to create an open and positive learning environment (Cayanus, Martin and Goodboy 2009).

Language teachers' self-disclosures

Establishing rapport and creating positive relationships are fundamental to motivational language teaching (Dörnyei 2001; Lamb 2017). However, empirical work specifically investigating relational constructs such as self-disclosure is thin on the ground. In work on teachers' motivational strategies, teacher behaviours that involve aspects of self-disclosure have been demonstrated to be important for students' motivation (Cheng and Dörnyei 2007; Guilloteaux and Dörnyei 2008). In a study of Iranian English teachers' perceptions of self-disclosures, teachers reported making purposeful use of self-disclosure and considered judgments about the types of private information they were willing to disclose (Rahimi and Askari Bigdeli 2016). While some aspects of private life were regarded as appropriate (e.g. personal experiences, stories, opinions and interests, and information about family and social life), others were not (political and religious beliefs).

In qualitative work complementing the shorter-term perspective of motivational strategy research, Lamb and Wedell (2015) investigated the pedagogical qualities of inspiring English teachers, finding self-disclosure to be a noticeable aspect of practice. Similarly, Lamb and colleagues (2016) found the personalization of content to be an important relationship-building strategy. Teachers described how they used stories from their own lives as lesson content, and how they could provide insights into their personal life by allowing students to become 'friends' on Facebook.

Rhetorical perspectives

While teacher self-disclosure can be understood as the "voluntary (planned or unplanned) transmission of information not readily available to students" (Cayanus and Martin 2016, 243), this does not mean that unplanned self-disclosures are unintended. Rather, teachers

make conscious decisions to make personal investments in students' learning, and all teacher talk can be understood as intentional and strategic (Cayanus and Martin 2016). In interpersonal communication, rhetorical perspectives are used to study the nature and effects of institutional talk (Tracy and Mirivel 2009). In a rhetorical perspective, talk in commonplace social interactions in workplaces and classrooms is regarded as instrumental, goal-oriented and purposeful, with even the smallest communicative actions consequential in accomplishing desired identities.

Since talk is the means through which identities are accomplished, the researcher's task is to understand the effectiveness of choices made in everyday discourse, and the effects that choices have on relationships (Tracy and Robles 2013). In teacher–student interactions, two identity-relevant issues are often at stake. While the first concerns the nature and quality of the teacher–student relationship, the second involves "the particular speech acts that are being performed and what the acts signify about the teacher and the student" (Tracy and Robles 2013, 28). Everyday communication in teacher–student interactions is thus a presentational medium. In relationships that are fluid and shifting, understandings of who the other person is are subtly altered in constant processes of inferencing. Inferencing is the in-the-moment deciphering of an interaction partner's identity accomplishments, and the stances they take in a particular communicative situation. Inferences are based both on things a speaker may intentionally convey, and what they may "give off" (Tracy and Robles 2013, 199).

As accomplishments of identity, self-disclosures provide powerful indicators of momentary shifts in identity and stance. In ordinary day-to-day situations, such as language classrooms, interaction partners have established relationships. This means that they "react to one another not only as co-present, linguistically competent individuals but also as people with whom they have a history of interaction and knowledge" (Duck 2002, 53). As a source of interpersonal influences, self-disclosure involves the creation of possibilities for particular

types and styles of communication. Not simply a sharing of knowledge, self-disclosure can be understood as the marking of a relational form (Carl and Duck 2004; Duck and Usera 2014). In classroom interactions, a teacher's disclosure of personal information needs therefore to be understood as a relational move influencing the quality of the teacher–student relationship.

Study and Purpose

In explorations of teacher self-disclosure, research has drawn on questionnaire-generated data of students' perceptions of teachers' interactional behaviours, and designs have sought to explore group-level relationships between teacher self-disclosure and students' motivation and learning. However, as Waldeck and Labelle (2016) observe, in the quest for generalizable findings, research of this sort ignores the settings and situations in which classroom communication occurs. Thus, while the influences of teacher self-disclosures on student outcomes are well-established (Cayanus and Martin 2016), little is known about self-disclosure as a relational practice. In recognition of the need for (i) interdisciplinary approaches in the investigation of language learning and teaching (Comanaru and Dewaele 2015; The Douglas Fir Group 2016), (ii) situated explorations of teachers' self-disclosures (Waldeck and Labelle 2016), and (iii) research that combines aspects of language learner psychology with socially-situated and relationally-oriented understandings of teacher–student interactions (Mercer, 2015; Mercer & Ryan, 2016), the study has two objectives. The first is to develop a relationally-focused understanding of language teachers' self-disclosures. This is carried out by drawing on ethnographic data from secondary English classes in Sweden. Using Tracy's (2002/Tracy and Robles 2013) framework of identities in interaction, analyses of teachers' identity-work are guided by the research question: 'What identities are revealed when teachers make self-disclosures?' In research examining everyday communication in institutional settings, the aim is "to conceptualize one or more communication techniques that

had been used implicitly in practice and to assess those practices in terms of a theoretically informed interpretation" (Barge and Craig 2009, 65). In line with this aim, the study's second objective is to identify and develop relationally-focused conceptualizations of influences on students' motivation.

Methodology

The data comes from the Motivational Teaching in Swedish Secondary English (MoTiSSE) project where ethnographic observations of secondary school English language lessons in Sweden were conducted. The project methodology is described in Henry and Thorsen (2018) and in the supplementary material.

Fieldnotes containing ethnographic descriptions of observed lessons (N=258) were entered into NVivo 11.0, each constituting a unique source. To identify common themes, a constant comparison analysis was conducted. Operationalized using Sorensen's (1989) definition of things said or done that "reveal information about the teacher that students are unlikely to learn from other sources" (260), 'teacher self-disclosure' was an a priori code. Sequences containing a self-disclosure were assigned to this code. In a second step, an inclusion assessment was carried out. Here the criterion was that the description provided a sufficiently clear picture of the interaction upon which analyses could be based. This resulted in 25 instances of teacher self-disclosure.[i]

The combining of ethnographic and discourse analytical approaches is common in interpersonal communication research (Ellingson 2009; Tracy and Mirivel 2009). Here, teacher–student interactions recoded in ethnographic fieldnotes were analysed from a discourse perspective (Tracy and Tracy 1998). In interpersonal communication, analyses take place in data sessions, the aim being to discern patterns in interactions (Ellingson 2009). Endeavoring to remain as open as possible to "reflections, reactions, and interpretive insights" (Tracy and Mirivel 2009, 156), our analyses were rhetorically guided, and involved

the application of three perspectives. *First*, we viewed discourse choices as strategic and reflective of individuals' agency. While people may not be fully conscious of their discourse choices, casting discourse as volitional functions to make visible "the hidden truth that some other way of talking could have been selected" (Tracy and Robles 2013, 33). *Second*, we viewed a self-disclosure as embedded in identity-work within which "talk makes available to participants and observers who the people doing the talking must be" (Tracy and Robles 2013, 7). We therefore focused on ways that interactions were marked by aspects of identity, and how these discourse actions constructed pictures of the parties. *Finally*, because a rhetorical perspective involves normative evaluation, and because identities accomplished in discourse are open to interpretation, for each identified self-disclosure we considered the effects on the immediately unfolding interaction, and on the teacher–student relationship. Since an interaction can be analyzed with a focus on content (its literal meaning), and its meaning-in-context (its interactional meaning), we paid additional close attention to the relational context in which the self-disclosure occurred.

In any interaction, some identity types will be highly visible and are "brought to interaction, and shape how people talk" (Tracy and Robles 2013, 24). Others may emerge within the interaction. To identify identities made salient when a self-disclosure occurred, we used Tracy's (2002/2013) framework of identity types. These are *master identities* (which reference stable, unchanging aspects of identity that are visible to others such as age, gender and ethnicity), *interactional identities* (which refer to the roles taken on in interaction with regard to particular interaction partners), and *personal identities* (which involve personality aspects of the self and include a person's *relational* identities).

Analyses

Interpretive analyses of each identified self-disclosure were made, the aim being to develop understandings of purposefulness, functions and influences. A schedule containing

descriptions of self-disclosures and analyses of the identity-work is provided in the supplementary material. Many self-disclosures involved identity-work where aspects of a teacher's master identity were displayed. Often, such self-disclosures occurred in interactions where teacher and students participated in conversations largely incidental to learning topics and activities. In some self-disclosures, master and personal identities were jointly enacted. In others, orientations were primarily to personal identities.

Identity-work involving master identities

An example typical of a self-disclosure in which a master identity is revealed is in a grade 7 class where teacher and students were engaged in friendly banter about a forthcoming assignment, joking as to whether it could be written in a language other than English. Here, the teacher provides insights into an unchanging aspect of an identity integral to who she is as a teacher and a private person:

> EXAMPLE 1
>
> Students are joking about which language to write assessed peer-reviews in. Different suggestions arise, including French. T indicates that this would be OK but says that her French is rusty. She then explains that she learnt French and German at upper secondary school which the students think is strange. T then says "*well, if you are a language nerd, then you like languages …If you are a language nerd you chose the humanities program*"

Although master identities were often revealed in everyday talk, they were also made salient in topic-oriented interactions. As in example 2, a self-disclosed master identity could function as a scaffold for students' own identity-work. Here, at the beginning of a project where students shared aspects of their lives and interests with peers in another country, the teacher created a collage of images representing her life:

> EXAMPLE 2

T tells the students that she can function as an example, and puts up a slide she has made that illustrates her life. It includes a portrait photo, a picture of her kitchen, her coffee mug, and images detailing her journey to work.

While this example constitutes a carefully planned self-disclosure providing students with insights into personal taste and daily routines, self-disclosures occurring in spontaneous student–teacher interactions can also be understood as purposeful in the accomplishment of particular identities. With a new class of 12-year-old students, and in the context of an activity where students wrote about early life-experiences, the teacher in example 3 tells a story that involves the strategic enactment of the master identity of motherhood:

EXAMPLE 3

T rapidly moves into the place S vacated and starts engaging the boy who he was sitting next to in a discussion of crazy things that he had done as a baby. She begins telling a story about when her daughter was a baby, and how, when they were visiting friends, she had written on the friends' leather sofa with a permanent marker. This engages the four other pupils immediately around them. Soon the whole class becomes involved in asking about the story. What happened? T explains how the families remained friends and how the sofa was old and while it was very embarrassing it was OK because the family sold the sofa and got some money to buy a new one. I see that the pupils are, for a moment, captivated by this, watching T, who is now sitting round facing the class, waiting to hear what happened next. T then, standing up, says to the whole class, "*You know, you can write about these crazy things that you did in the chapter about 'Me as a Baby', and you can interview your parents to find out what you did, and I can't wait to read these crazy things!*"

Interestingly, this teacher's master identity as a mother of similarly-aged children is frequently displayed (see the supplementary material). For instance, in another self-disclosure, she describes how she helps with homework, explaining how she is "*a mum not just a teacher*". In the emerging teacher–student relationships in this 6th grade classroom, the frequency that the master identity of motherhood is made visible constitutes identity-work of a highly strategic nature.

Identity-work involving personal identities

While master identities are displayed in many self-disclosures, they are not the only identity-types made visible. Other frequent orientations are to personal identities. Personal identities reference personality aspects of the self and, like master identities, are generally stable. In examples 4 and 5, the self-disclosures involve identity-work in which personality aspects of identity are made visible:

> EXAMPLE 4
>
> T moves around the room asking about places where students are planning to enrol on language courses. A girl says she is going to Los Angeles. T describes a trip she made to LA and tells of an embarrassing moment when she was desperate to go to the toilet, but could not find one.
>
> EXAMPLE 5
>
> Some Ss ask T about the dates, and T talks about how the dates can be written differently in British and US English. She tells a story of how she misread a date, confusing the month and the day on her passport, and how at the airport she had to apply for a temporary passport. This cost a lot of money and she almost missed her plane. Now she says she always looks very carefully at dates wherever they are written.

In both examples, the self-disclosure functions as a concretization of the topic, the identity-work providing clues about personality aspects of the teachers' identities. Not only do these self-disclosures reveal fallibility (not thinking ahead about needing a restroom, and not properly checking the passport's expiry date), they also reveal resourcefulness; in both cases the problem is adequately solved. More importantly, the personal identities revealed in the telling of these stories reference openness and approachability, attributes of significant importance for connecting the personal and the professional aspects of teaching, and for the construction of positive teacher–student relationships (Korthagen, Attema-Noordewier and Zwart 2014).

Interestingly, a number of self-disclosures involved identity-work where both master and personal identities were accomplished. In example 6, the self-disclosure is made by the teacher who told the story about the permanent marker:

> EXAMPLE 6
>
> At one point during the game T says "*I taught my girls to say Dad, and when he came home he was so happy!*"

Here, during an interaction sequence occurring in the structured turn-taking of a vocabulary-focused game, in addition to the recurrent identity move of making visible parenthood, identity-work also involves the accomplishment of personality aspects of identity that reference warmth and empathy ("*I taught my girls to say Dad ….when he came home he was so happy!*"). In language learning, empathy is central in the construction of well-being and a positive relational climate (Lamb 2017; Oxford 2016). Here, a capacity for empathy revealed, the self-disclosure signaling to these students that their new teacher is someone able to understand them and their concerns.

A second example where master and personal identities are simultaneously accomplished is in a student-initiated conversation incidental to the ongoing activity in the classroom:

EXAMPLE 7

Two students are discussing music and dance. T joins in, mentioning that she too likes dance and goes to a dance studio. S1 says she does too. T says that she has started dancing popping. S2 says he has danced shuffling and waving. S1 says that she dances burlesque. S2 asks what this is. T says that it is an erotic dance. Then she says "*Well, not erotic but stylish and feminine, they dance with chairs and high heels*"

As a new interaction partner, the teacher's disclosure of her 'dancer' master identity establishes legitimacy for her continued participation in the conversation, and encourages continued interaction on the part of the students (S1 tells how she dances at studio and, following T's disclosure that she has started to dance popping, S2 tells about similar dance-styles he has tried). However, following S2's question about burlesque, the nature of the identity-work shifts. Suggesting first that burlesque is erotic, she then qualifies this statement by saying "*Well, not erotic but stylish and feminine*". In initially suggesting that burlesque dance is erotic, she reveals a personal identity as someone who is liberal and open-minded. By changing tack, and subsequently describing it as "*stylish and feminine*", a change in stance takes place. In relation to a dance-style that involves a heavily-gendered form of expression, this shift reveals additional aspects of her personal identity, as someone critical of gender-stereotyping and the gendering of social practices.

In the self-disclosures examined so far, identity-work has involved the display of master and personal identities, these identity accomplishments taking place within the parameters of institutionalized dialogue generally characteristic of language classrooms. To be specific, the identity orientations in examples 1–6 do not involve shifts in the parties' *interactional identities*. Interactional identities refer to the roles people take on in relation to others. Formulated at different levels of abstraction, they make visible the discourse actions people

are doing, meaning that "rather than identifying a person as a student, at any moment we could think of him or her as a questioner, a presenter, a discussant, a debater, and so on" (Tracy and Robles 2013, 22). In examples 1–6, even though a self-disclosure makes a master identity visible, there is no shift in interactional identities; teacher and students remain in their interactional discourse roles. However, in the discussion about dance styles, a shift in interactional identities occurs. Here, the conversation bears none of the interaction styles generally characteristic of teacher–student discourse, and which are evident in the other examples. Rather, the pattern of initiation and response lacks hierarchical ordering, and claims to knowledge are not a privileged domain of the teacher. This is evidenced in the way that the question asked by S2 is not specifically directed to the teacher (even though it is she who provides a response). Here, in the context of a student-initiated conversation centring on a commonly-shared interest, along with the display of a master identity, identity-work also involves a shift in the teacher's interactional identity. Not only is she now 'someone who dances', she no longer orchestrates the interaction (as a teacher), or interacts from a privileged position of knowledge. Rather, in the sharing of experiences, she becomes a discussant.

Identity-work involving relational identities

The momentary shift in the institutionally-ascribed hierarchy in example 7 points to another dimension of identity-work. Interactional identities are specific to both situations and relationships. In the context of teacher–student relationships, shifts in interactional identities coincide with shifts in *relational identities*. As Tracy and Robles (2013) explain, identity-work "always has two sides" (26). While one side is self-presentational, the other is directed to interaction partners. So far, we have examined self-presentational aspects of self-disclosures. However, it should be recognized that because self-disclosures take place in a relational context, a self-disclosure made by one partner can influence the identity-work and

shape the identities and of the other(s). Because relational identities are negotiated "moment to moment", the momentary standing of a relationship will mostly be influenced by shifts in relational identities, these being the identity-types "people monitor most to see whether a relationship is improving or disintegrating" (Tracy and Robles 2013, 23).

Up to this point, self-disclosures have been extracted from fieldnotes without detailed reference to the broader classroom and relational contexts in which they are situated. To examine of shifts in relational identities however, identity-work needs to be explored within the relational context of particular teacher–student relationships. This requires the use of additional data sources. Therefore, in the final example, we first sketch out the relational context by drawing on interviews with the focal teacher and her students.

EXAMPLE 8[ii]

In her practice, Noomi (a self-chosen pseudonym), demonstrated a capacity for responsiveness characteristic of teachers successful in creating a motivational classroom climate, and establishing positive teacher–student relationships (Lamb 2017). In her classes, students nearly always responded enthusiastically to the activities on offer. Reflecting on her practice, Noomi emphasizes the importance of making connections with students ("*making that connection, and acknowledging their interest first*"), and connections between target content and students' out-of-school concerns ("*I always try to teach and bring up subjects or examples out of their life, and their reality, and then connect that to other subjects*"). For their part, students are aware of Noomi's desire to make these connections, and her efforts to acknowledge them as individuals:

> *She wants us to follow discipline and rules and stuff. Respect is incredibly important for her. But then she wants to get to know us, learn to know us at a more personal level. Like 'to connect', I can't think of the Swedish word, but to 'connect' with her.*

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Reflecting on the importance of relationships, Noomi explains that relationship-building

takes place at the micro-level of everyday interaction:

> *You have to have a relationship with the students. I think that you should be*
>
> *flexible and be able to, you have to understand that you cannot teach the same*
>
> *way to the whole group, but you have to be an individualist. You have to see and*
>
> *try to reach the student on the individual level, even if there are small things.*
>
> *For example, I shake hands every time they come into the classroom. /…/ It's all*
>
> *about this little thing of seeing each one of them.*

Continuing, she makes the point that creating positive relationships requires that students

perceive her as acting authentically:

> *I think that they believe also that when I'm interested in them, that is also*
>
> *genuine. Yes, and I'm also not expecting, because I think that a lot of people*
>
> *are… they are afraid to create a relationship with their students, because they*
>
> *think that if they become their friend, they are not going to respect it. But the*
>
> *thing is that they don't know so much about me, you see? So the thing is that it's*
>
> *not that I'm their friend. I'm still their role-model, or whatever, an adult.*
>
> *Because it's not important for me to talk so much about myself.*

Developing this line of reasoning, she says that because students are able to gain insights into

who she is from things that are observable, she does not need to make many explicit self-

disclosures:

> *I mean now, of course I'm saying a few things, but I'm not… they don't know*
>
> *much basically./…/ They also know that I dance a lot and I'm doing that and*
>
> *that it's important for me to move and to be healthy and all that. So they know*
>
> *that. They figured that one out. They see how I dress and how I look, so they*
>
> *probably figured out that I like that style. So they can read that. And they know I*

have two kids, because they've seen the kids when I was here with them.

In this sense, she implies that students are able to gain insights into who she is from things explicitly communicated (she likes performance art), and things that can be inferred (parenthood, style, concerns with healthy living).

Moving to the example, the lesson took place on a Friday afternoon and concerned the topic of advertising. Interaction took place entirely in English. Using a Prezi, Noomi invited discussion of two particular categories of advertisements; adverts designed to attract attention, and adverts containing examples of gender-stereotyping. Arriving in the classroom, students had come directly from an intermural volleyball competition:

> '*So how was the volleyball?*' Noomi asks. Some say that they are tired. '*OK, so did you hear about the Sandman*?' The pupils look blank. Noomi starts singing the 'Sandman' song. '*You don't know him?*' she asks. Noomi then tells the story of the Sandman and how he can send children to sleep. Then Noomi takes the register [using a phone app]. '*OK. So let's roll. We have a lot of stuff to get through so let's get started! Projector please*' (and a boy gets up and switches it on) '*S*' she says to another pupil (who immediately goes to the blind and lowers it). Noomi then asks if they have seen any shocking ads recently. Lots of hands are up. Pupils talk about ads that they have seen, where they saw them, and how they reacted. Noomi quickly moves from pupil to pupil, so that in the space of just a few minutes 7 or 8 pupils have had the opportunity to talk about the attention-grabbing adverts that they have seen.

Responding to the students' mood, their tiredness prompts Noomi's rhetorical question ('*OK, so did you hear about the Sandman*?'). Receiving predictably blank responses, she begins singing the first verse of the song ['Mr. Sandman, bring me a dream / Make him the cutest that I've ever seen']. Gaining the students' attention, Noomi stops singing and confirming

their lack of knowledge ('*You don't know him?*'), proceeds to explain how the Sandman is a fairy-tale character who puts children to sleep by pouring sand into their eyes. Noteworthy here is that Noomi's breaking into song is not part of a normal lesson-opening. At the same time, students do not appear to react in ways indicating such behaviour is entirely unusual. Because she is open about who she is, students know she enjoys music and dance.

Self-disclosures are not restricted to what a person might directly say about themselves. Equally, self-disclosed insights can be "given away inadvertently or may be contained in larger rhetorical visions deduced from everyday activity" (Duck 2002, 54). As a communicative act, Noomi's singing of the first lines of 'Mr Sandman' is situated within an inferential web of previous interactions. In this relational history, it can be understood as an "inferential orientation" to an activity or outcome about to take place (Duck, 2002, 46). More than a simple wake-up call, the singing creates expectations about events to follow.

 Relationships between discursive practices and identities are reciprocal. While identities brought to an interaction influence how a person communicates, a person's discourse choices shape who she or he is taken to be (Tracy and Robles 2013). At the start of a lesson where talk inside the classroom will revolve around experiences from environments unconnected with school, Noomi's singing can be understood as an enactment of a master identity (a lover of performance art) recognizable to the students ('*Something I have noticed is that Noomi likes dance, and that she uses this in lessons*' – Boy, focus group interview). This identity-work is important, since it signals a personal investment in an activity that involves experiences from life away from school.

In any relationship, a self-disclosure takes place within the context of previous self-disclosures. In established relationships, inferences made following an interaction partner's self-disclosure are interpreted within the relationship's history, and in relation to interpretations attaching to similar self-disclosures. Because processes of current inferencing

are historically situated, there is a sensitivity not only to how a communication partner does life generally, but to how they are *doing* life at a particular time (Duck 2002). As Duck (2002) explains, these sensitivities are important, since "knowing someone's bandwidth is as important as knowing his or her center points" (51). Understood in the context of Noomi's openness about herself, her singing signals that, on this particular Friday afternoon, she is at the most relaxed and accommodating end of her 'bandwidth'. Functioning as an invitation to the students to connect with her as individuals, in conjunction with the rapid-fire manner in which the lesson is set in motion ('*OK. So let's roll. We have a lot of stuff to get through so let's get started! Projector please*'), and the first provocative advertisement (a pregnant woman smoking a cigarette), the identity-work involved in breaking into song not only involves the enactment of a master identity, but more importantly a shift in a relational identity. Interlocutors are sensitive to momentary variation (Duck 2002). Thus these identity moves signal the possibility for students to invest in the discussion of the advertisements that Noomi initiates, not simply as students in her classroom, but also, like her, as consumers of advertising media.

The second interaction sequence involving self-disclosure occurs towards the end of the lesson. It begins when Noomi pauses to address a distraction caused by two girls sitting at the back of the classroom:

> The next sub-topic is ads with a focus on men, how they are portrayed in advertisements, and the gender-stereotypes with which they are associated. The first ad that they look at on the Prezi features David Beckham. There is a discussion about the way that he is presented. He has a moody look on his face. He is wearing a tank-top which reveals his muscular body. There is a shimmer of sweat on his body as he looks like he has just finished working out.
>
> ***

Next up is an advert with a man who has a very muscled body and is naked, except for a pair of tight underpants. Two of the girls who are sitting at the back begin to giggle. Noomi breaks off from talking about how men are also portrayed as objects, to say, smiling at the girls, '*is there something that is distracting, girls*?'. The girls smile, and say no, then laugh a bit more and then one of them says '*well, you can see quite a lot*'. The discussion about objectification continues, and several pupils make comments about the image that is presented, talking about how men are portrayed as strong and hard while women are portrayed as soft and feminine. Then they move to the next ad, which shows an actor from Grey's Anatomy. '*OK perhaps this picture is a bit more easily digested, girls*', Noomi says to the two at the back.

<div align="center">***</div>

(I am aware of the time. The lesson has run over but the pupils are still engaged in offering analyses of the ad featuring the actor from Grey's Anatomy). When they are finished Noomi announces that they have an assignment: '*I want you to take pictures on your phones of the ads that you find in your everyday life that are either shocking, or that use stereotypes. Also ads that represent what we have been talking about today where women and men have different roles or are presented differently. And I want you to bring these with you to our next class.*' The pupils get up, pack up, put the chairs up (it is the last lesson on Friday and it is already 5 minutes past the end of the lesson at 15.00 on a Friday afternoon). Slowly the pupils leave the room, everybody, as they leave, wishing Noomi and each other a good weekend. Finally, it is just Noomi and the two girls from the back who are left in the classroom. They are packing up and moving towards the door. '*So that ad certainly generated a reaction*', Noomi

says to them. '*Well, yes, it did*' says one. '*Yes, it can't be denied*' says the other.

'*Well yes, I know*' says Noomi, smiling. The two girls make their way to the

door, wish Noomi a good weekend, and leave the room.

The interaction begins at the point when the girls start giggling. In the relaxed atmosphere of this Friday afternoon class, where teacher and students have become involved in discussions that are meaningful beyond the development of communicative competence, Noomi's admonishment '*is there something that is distracting, girls?*' is gentle and almost playful. The mildest of chastisements, her words also signal a recognition that the advertisement has had an impact. That the function of Noomi's remark is not primarily disciplinary is confirmed immediately afterwards. Introducing the next advertisement (an actor from the TV-series Grey's Anatomy), she says, '*OK perhaps this picture is a bit more easily digested, girls*'. So far in this sequence Noomi's interactional identity involves her role as the teacher managing a large class of 14-year-olds at the end of the week's final lesson.

When everyone has left, and Noomi and the girls are alone, she references their prior interaction, saying '*So that ad certainly generated a reaction*'. Following the girls' affirmations, Noomi follows with an affirmation of her own: '*Well yes, I know*'. This interaction sequence, and in particular the words '*Well yes, I know*', can be understood as a self-disclosure where a "leaking" of personal information (Duck and Usera 2014, 193) allows the girls to make inferences about Noomi's stance in relation to the advertisement and about the currently-pertaining nature of the teacher–student relationship. Negotiated from one moment to another, relational identities are variable. When talking about a particular topic, at a particular time, and in a particular style, "communicators offer up an image of how they see self and others" (Mirivel and Tracy 2005, 20). Here, when she says '*Well yes, I know*', Noomi's words function as an identity-work move that, in referencing a shared reaction to the advertisement, altercasts the girls as 'knowing others' and thus brings about a shift in the

nature of their relationship. In the few seconds that it occurs, the otherwise unequal teacher–student relationship (recall how minutes previously, and from the front of the classroom, Noomi quietens down the giggling at the back) is momentarily re-enacted to one that is near-equal and where, through a shared emotional response, Noomi and the girls become "near-peers" (Tracy and Robles 2013, 29).

Discussion: conceptualizing motivational influences

In line with Ushioda's (2009, 2011) proposals about the effects on involvement and effort that follow when participants in language classrooms make identity investments, we found downstream influences on students' engagement following a teacher's orientation to a master identity. For instance, increased engagement was evident following the anecdote about the permanent marker, and in the final example when the teacher began singing. However, observable changes in students' behaviors following orientations to master identities were not generally evident. This was similarly the case when, in a self-disclosure, an aspect of a teacher's personal identity was made visible. Thus, rather than immediate influences on students' investment and levels of motivation, the greater importance of language teachers' self-disclosures may involve *relational effects* that accrue over longer time-periods.

When focus is cast beyond any immediate influences flowing from a teacher's self-disclosure, and the analytical timescale is expanded, motivational influences can be understood as accumulating over time. Relationships are constructed in and through interpersonal interactions, and knowledge about a relationship partner is cumulatively acquired (Duck 2002). In the context of relational histories, each identity orientation taking place when a self-disclosure is made by a teacher can be understood as a micro-accrual in an ongoing process of relationship development. Although these ideas are only beginning to be explored in language learning psychology (Henry and Thorsen, 2018), the notion that relationships arise in and from moment-to-moment interactions is well-established in

mainstream education research. In work examining teacher–student relationships and influences on students' classroom behaviors, moments during lessons when students experience a close personal connection with a teacher have been shown to have both situational and long-term effects, moments of contact functioning as building blocks from which motivationally-positive relationships are constructed (Korthagen et al. 2014).

At the same time that teacher–student relationships are constructed through interpersonal interaction, they also exert an influence on situated interactions. In addition to situational, linguistic, and psychologic contexts, interactions also take place within a *relational context*. Relational contexts are historical; they are comprised of previous interpersonal interactions, and are founded on the development of shared self–other knowledge. The relational context functions to situate interaction in a historical flow, and within a complex web of connections to unspoken referents. It is these referents that condition the quality and trajectories of particular interactions. As Duck (2002) explains, in a relationship "communication is not a disembodied enterprise but one implicitly connected to the knowledge that is shared by, or referentially rich to, the interlocutors" (57). Because language learning is a fundamentally interpersonal enterprise, necessarily involving communication between learners and teachers (van Lier 1996), the teacher–student relationship can therefore be understood as a *contextual referent* highly influential in shaping students' engagement in any learning activity.

While all self-disclosures have a constitutive function in the construction of teacher–student relationships – the disclosure of personal information in and of itself an indicator of the teacher's openness and capacity for creating connections – the disclosure of personality aspects of identity has particular implications for interactions in language classrooms. Because social interactions are central to learning processes, empathic capacity is of singular importance. As Mercer (2016) makes clear, empathy is not simply an individual accomplishment, but equally a property of relationships. Consequently, in understanding

relationships that develop in language classrooms, it becomes necessary not only to consider "the constituent components of empathic relationships (such as learner and teacher)", but also the "relationality" of the relationship (Mercer 2016, 107). It is in the context of the "relationality" of language-teacher–language-student relationships, and in relation to *personal identities* (Tracy and Robles 2013) that the importance of language teachers' self-disclosures most crucially lies. In language teaching, self-disclosures are not simply about sharing information or displaying an aspect of identity generally salient beyond the classroom; rather, self-disclosure involves the development of possibilities for particular types of interaction and styles of communication which grow out of mutual understanding and familiarity, and which can develop into forms of communicative "sharedness" (Duck and Usera 2014). For language teachers, the making visible of *personal identities* enables the development of communicative connectivity that provides students with a relationally-oriented understanding of *who* the teacher is. Here, in our systematic examination of self-disclosures across an extensive dataset collected in classrooms of teachers who are successful motivators, the personal identities made visible reference relational qualities such as warmth, care, humor, love, responsibility, diligence, honesty and open-mindedness (see supplementary material). These relational qualities are not only the foundations of positive teacher–student relationships; they also map onto the key psychological qualities of well-being in language learning, masterfully catalogued in Oxford's (2016) vision of EMPATHICS.

Conclusion

One of the main drivers of growth in the emerging psychology of language learning paradigm is recognition of a "need for more focused enquiry into the real-world realities of classroom learning" (Mercer and Ryan 2016, 3). Because linguistic and social psychological conceptualizations of learning phenomena often provide "simplistic and one-dimensional

accounts" of the complexity of classroom learning, Mercer and Ryan (2016) highlight a need for interdisciplinary responses that draw on a wider range of epistemological and methodological perspectives. As Mercer (2015) has persuasively argued, research into language learner motivation needs in particular to move beyond individualist perspectives, and she has called for a shift in focus from "researching isolated individuals, to exploring more explicitly relational perspectives" (80). Embracing "relationality" (Mercer 2016), and taking an interdisciplinary approach, the use of theories and methodologies from interpersonal communication has enabled the development of insights into the motivational influences of teachers' identity-work meaningful both for language learning psychology and instructional communication. In research where everyday communication is studied in institutional settings, an important aim is to develop theoretically informed interpretations of interactions and influences (Barge and Craig 2009). In offering the type of situated investigation of self-disclosure practices called for by Waldeck and Labelle (2016), the extensive examination of self-disclosures carried out in this study has enabled a conceptualization of motivational influences beyond the immediate effects demonstrated in analyses of interactional moves in teacher–student conversation (Richards 2006). By framing language teachers' self-disclosures as acts of identity-work embedded within particular relational histories, and by analysing teacher–student discourse within a relational context, it has been possible to expand current understandings of the motivational influences of teacher identity-work. Specifically, the use of Tracy's (2002/Tracy and Robles 2013) framework of identities in interaction has enabled the conceptualization of language teacher self-disclosure as a relational practice, where motivational influences occur across varying timescales. Similarly, application of Duck's (2002) conceptualization of relational histories has enabled an understanding of how displays of empathic and interpersonal aspects of a teacher's personal identity can have a constitutive function in the creation of a positive teacher–student

relationship which, in classroom learning, functions as a contextual referent that conditions interpersonal interaction.

Limitations and future research

The study draws on extensive data collected in the classrooms of teachers with a demonstrably motivationally effective practice. While this has enabled understandings of teachers' identity-work to be informed by the historical and relational contexts of observed interactions, these interactions were not audio-recorded, meaning that analysis of transcribed discourse data was not possible. In future research, the combination of fieldnotes and transcribed discourse data would enable a finer-grained analysis of the identity-work occurring around a teacher's self-disclosure. Further, given that this ethnographic work was carried out as part of a larger project with varying objectives, ethical considerations concerning the amount of time reasonable to ask participants to give up from the work of teaching and learning (De Costa, 2014) meant that it was not possible to comprehensively explore participant perceptions of self-disclosure in interviews and field-conversations. In future research more specifically focused on the motivational influences of teachers' identity-work, it would be possible to explore experiences in greater depth, thus providing additional layers of understanding of the influences of teachers' self-disclosures. Finally, while research from Middle Eastern, Asian and Western settings (e.g. Cayanus and Martin 2016; Rahimi and Askari Bigdeli 2016; Zhang et al. 2008, 2009) indicates that teachers' self-disclosures can have positive effects on students' classroom behaviours, the nature of teacher identity-work is likely to differ between contexts. Differences are also likely depending on the educational level (Cayanus and Martin 2016). Therefore classroom-based research in other cultural and educational contexts, and in respect of other target languages, would be of significant value.

Taking a broader perspective, research that similarly examines psychological constructs in classroom situations would be of value (Gkonou, Mercer and Daubney 2016). Drawing on

the relationally-focused conceptualizations of classroom identity-work developed in the current study, in future ethnographic research relational perspectives could be applied in the examination of other aspects of learner psychology, such as for example, language anxiety, learner agency and strategy use (Gkonou and Miller 2017; Gkonou, Tatzl and Mercer 2015).

Implications for teaching

Research into the psychology of language learning that takes a relational perspective has particular importance for classroom practice. Not only are language teachers highly aware of relational influences on students' responses to learning, they are also sensitive and receptive to aspects of psychology involved in processes of learning and teaching (Gkonou et. al. 2016). Importantly, teachers who are introduced to theories about interpersonal influences arising in teacher–student interactions are able to adapt their practice in ways that favor the creation of positive relationships (Roorda et al. 2013). For this reason, programs of language teacher education should focus on how teachers' interactional behaviors influence opportunities for interpersonal connections. Attention should in particular be directed to the ways in which self-disclosure can have positive influences on the classroom relational climate. Equally, because in any relationship self-disclosure involves risk-taking, it is important that teachers are provided with space to reflect upon their self-disclosure practices. Such structured reflection could usefully be directed to issues involving authenticity, frequency, appropriateness, integrity-protection and the purposes of self-disclosures (Cayanus and Martin 2016). Given the growth of Net-based language learning/teaching, future research could usefully explore teachers' self-disclosures in online environments.

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[i] It should be noted that in many of the observed lessons, teachers spent time moving around the classroom, interacting individual students and groups. Many of these interactions were not captured, or not captured in detail in the fieldnotes.

[ii] In this example all data is originally in English with the exception of extracts from student interviews.