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Investigation of Teacher Identities in a Chinese Community School in Scotland

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Abstract

Teacher identity has increasingly attracted scholarly attention for its influence on teacher development and teaching outcomes (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2022; Trend, 2020). Existing studies have primarily focused on the formation processes and influencing factors of teacher identity across different career stages and subject areas, such as novice teacher identity (Schellings et al., 2021), language teacher identity (Pennington & Richards, 2016), and comparative studies of teacher identity development across teacher education systems (Rinne et al., 2023). However, the identities of teachers in community language schools remain relatively underexplored (Nordstrom, 2020; Wu et al., 2011). This thesis seeks to amplify the voices of teachers working in a Chinese community school in Scotland and to address this research gap. It investigates the processes and characteristics of teacher identity formation in this community school, with particular attention to the role of context.

Drawing on the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI) framework as the theoretical foundation (Kaplan & Garner, 2017), this study employed purposive sampling to select a large, historically established Chinese community school as the research site. A total of 22 participants were recruited, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal that teacher role identities in community schools constitute elements within a multi-level hierarchy, reflecting a complex dynamic system composed of individuals' multiple role identities. In other words, participants embodied different role identities—for example, as parents of their own children, teachers of their students, children of their parents, and colleagues to one another. The results further show significant consistencies between participants' parental and teacher role identities in terms of beliefs, purposes, and perceived action possibilities, which facilitated the development of their teacher identities. For instance, as parents, participants drew on experiences from their children's growth and learning, which fostered empathy and understanding toward their students, thereby shaping their classroom beliefs and practices.

Using the DSMRI framework by Kaplan and Garner (2017), this thesis also provides a detailed analysis of participants' beliefs, goals and purposes, self-perceptions and self-definitions, and

perceived action possibilities, as well as the broader influences of context, culture, domain, and dispositions. The findings align with existing literature on teacher identity by underscoring the situated nature of teacher role identities. For example, participants enacted the teacher role within the school setting but stepped out of this role after classes, illustrating the nonlinear and emergent character of community teacher identities. Moreover, the study demonstrates how prior experiences shaped participants' current and imagined role identities, linking past, present, and future to present a more comprehensive view of the dynamic nature of community teacher identity.

At the macro level, the findings highlight the influence of Scottish society and policy, as well as the school's role as a community and a community of practice (CoP), in shaping teacher role identities. This dynamic interaction between context, personal identity, and professional identity also reveals the marginalised status of community language teachers, calling for greater recognition and support from stakeholders. Finally, the thesis outlines theoretical, practical, policy, and research implications to inform future work in this area. By integrating the DSMRI framework into a community language school context, this study extends the theorical application of identity research beyond mainstream educational settings and offers a nuanced understanding of how personal and parental identities intersect with professional roles. It thus contributes to broadening the scope of teacher identity studies and provides new empirical evidence for the dynamics of identity formation in underrepresented educational contexts.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CCS	Chinese Community School
CCSS	Anonymity of the Research Site
CDST	Complex Dynamic Systems Theory
CI	Confucius Institute
CLEC	Centre for Language Education and Cooperation
CLT	Chinese Language Teaching
CoP	Community of Practice
DSMRI	Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity
IT	Identity Theory
L2	Second Language/ Foreign Language
LTI	Language Teacher Identity
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
PGDE	Professional Graduate Diploma in Education
SI	Symbolic Interactionism
SLTI	Second Language Teacher Identity
SSI	Structural Symbolic Interactionism
SIT	Social Identity Theory
TI	Teacher identity
UKAPCE	UK Association for the Promotion of Chinese Education

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Finally, I would like to say to myself: “You achieved your dream—you did it!” From a rural village in Heilongjiang to the academic halls of the United Kingdom, the journey has not been easy. But I have persevered. I should be proud of myself, and I hope my future will be bright.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Strathclyde or any other institution.

Printed Name: SHIPENG CUI

Signature:

STATEMENT OF PRIOR PUBLICATION

A portion of the research findings presented in this dissertation, specifically relating to the analysis of how parental role identity influences teacher identity using DSMRI-based study, has been previously published in a peer-reviewed academic journal.

This previous publication is titled: How parental role identity shapes teacher identity: a DSMRI-based study in a Chinese community school in Scotland.

The published article forms the foundation of Chapter 5 (see 5.6) of this dissertation. The published material has been expanded upon and integrated into the broader theoretical and contextual analysis within this full dissertation.

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study employs the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI) (Kaplan & Garner, 2017) to examine how teacher identity is constructed within a Chinese community language school in Scotland. Chapter One provides essential background information to support the reader's understanding of the research context. Section 1.1 outlines the broader contextual background of the study, with particular attention to globalisation and multilingualism. Section 1.2 then discusses the research motivations, both personal and professional. Section 1.3 presents the researcher's reflections, including background similarities between myself and participants, then Section 1.4 sets out the research aims and questions. Finally, the chapter concludes with an overview of the structure of the study.

1.1 Background to the Research

This section will focus on two key aspects: globalisation, multilingualism, and community languages in Scotland (1.1.1), and the similarities and differences in teaching and learning between China and the West (1.1.2).

1.1.1 Globalisation, Multilingualism and Community Languages in Scotland

This study employs the term "globalisation" to describe a historical context, emphasising the socio-economic, technological, cultural, and educational transformations it has driven, rather than engaging in debates surrounding the contested concept of globalisation (Rizvi, 2007). Globalisation has reshaped the world in profound ways, including fostering migration, multilingualism, and

community language education. Within the domain of globalisation and education, research spans various dimensions, such as global curricula, the knowledge economy and technology, lifelong learning, global migration and brain circulation, multiculturalism, teaching methods, and assessment (Spring, 2008). Among these, global migration is directly relevant to this study.

According to the World Migration Report (2024) published by the UN, approximately 281 million international migrants exist worldwide, accounting for 3.6% of the global population. The report highlights phenomena pertinent to this research, such as the disruption caused by COVID-19 to migration flows (p. 33) and the continued growth in the number of international students (p. 40), which may help explain the phenomenon of international student-teachers in Chinese community language schools. Reasons for global migration are varied, including economic factors (e.g., job opportunities, quality of life) and political factors (e.g., war) (Immigration Organisation for Migration, 2024).

This global migration, driven by globalisation, has fostered multilingualism and multiculturalism. For instance, the Scottish Schools Census data reveals that pupils in Scotland speak as many as 154 languages beyond English, the most commonly spoken languages include Polish, Urdu, Scots, Arabic, Punjabi, and Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) (Scottish Government, 2024). The multilingual and multicultural phenomena observed in Scottish society have been shaped by various factors, such as the free movement of people within the EU prior to Brexit and the acceptance of war refugees (Hancock & Hancock, 2024). Although the Scottish Government introduced the 1+2 Languages Strategy (Scottish Government, 2012), which promotes language learning, it does not prescribe approaches for teaching heritage languages (Hancock & Hancock, 2019). Additionally, mainstream schoolteachers often lack the knowledge and skills required for

multilingual and multicultural education, leaving them ill-prepared to meet the needs of minority ethnic students. This inadequacy is one of the historical reasons for the emergence of community language schools (Li Wei, 2006).

Community language schools address students' needs for using Chinese and engaging in cultural communication while also fostering their ethnic and cultural identity (Francis et al., 2009). These schools positively influence students' learning outcomes, provide a safe space for new migrants (e.g., refugees), and contribute to the integration of migrants (Yiakoumetti, 2022). Nevertheless, community language schools remain under-recognised by policymakers, the broader education system, and society (Cruickshank & Wahlin, 2024).

Paine (2017) argues that teacher education in the context of globalisation should emphasise "understanding immigrant children, addressing the linguistic dimensions of teaching and learning in a world characterised by movement, and adopting teaching methods that leverage the strengths and enhance the resilience of newcomers" (p. 94). Correspondingly, greater attention should be paid to community language schools and their teachers (Hancock, 2012; Lo Bianco, 2024).

1.1.2 Chinese and Scottish Culture of Teaching and Learning

Wu (2006), in her investigation of the "culture of learning" in Chinese community language schools in the UK, highlighted that Chinese teachers' personal experiences profoundly shape their attitudes toward teaching and learning, as well as their expectations of students. Differences in teaching and learning practices between China and the West (e.g., Scotland) constitute significant elements of these experiences. Recognising these differences and their potential implications or

tensions for Chinese teachers is crucial. Therefore, this section briefly reviews the differences between teaching and learning in China and the West (e.g., Scotland).

The two educational systems differ significantly in terms of the roles of teachers, students, and their underlying principles and methodologies. In the Chinese educational system, teachers are portrayed as knowledgeable, morally exemplary role models (Ma & Gao, 2017). Classroom instruction emphasises the teacher's authority, resulting in a teacher-centred, examination-driven approach that focuses on knowledge acquisition and cultural inheritance (Ma & Gao, 2017). To achieve higher scores in examinations, teachers often assign substantial homework and repetitive exercises, requiring students to passively absorb knowledge through rote memorisation and mechanical practice. While this didactic approach enhances academic performance, it often undermines students' abilities to think independently and ask questions (Wen & Zong, 2021).

In contrast, Western (e.g., Scottish) education emphasises equality between teachers and students. In the classroom, teachers primarily act as facilitators, encouraging active student participation through methods such as discussions and group work (He, 2021). This approach fosters students' independent thinking, problem-solving abilities, critical thinking, and creativity (Zhang, 2021). However, this experimental teaching and learning approach may cultivate students' individuality at the expense of achieving the high levels of knowledge acquisition and academic performance typical of Chinese students (He, 2021; Wen & Zong, 2021). Feedback from students further reflects these systemic differences. For instance, Li (2005) found that Chinese and American students differ in their beliefs about learning; American students emphasise personal knowledge and intellectual growth, whereas Chinese students prioritise status and gaining respect.

Community language schools function as transnational sites (Cruickshank & Wahlin, 2024), where Chinese teachers, educated within the Chinese educational system, interact with Chinese heritage students raised in the Scottish educational context. This encounter is likely to generate tensions or even conflicts. Previous studies (e.g., Ganassin, 2019; Francis et al., 2009; Hancock, 2012; Wu, 2006) have revealed that features of the Chinese educational approach, such as teacher-centred practices, persist in the classrooms of Chinese community language schools in the UK. These findings underscore the importance of considering teachers' experiences navigating between the two educational systems and the potential impacts on their actions and emotional well-being.

1.2 Motivations Behind the Research

Following the introduction of the broader context for this study, the next section (1.2) will elaborate on the motivations behind this research. Consistent with Stiles' (1993) perspective, qualitative research inherently involves bias. Revealing the researcher's personal involvement, commitments, and the research process allows readers to incorporate the researcher's role into their understanding and adjust their interpretations to account for potential bias. Accordingly, Section 1.2.1 will provide a detailed account of my personal motivations, followed by Section 1.2.2, which will discuss my professional motivations.

1.2.1 Personal Motivation

The origins of this study are closely tied to my personal learning and professional experiences. Both my undergraduate and graduate degrees were pursued in China, with a focus on Chinese International Education. Before entering graduate school, I served as a volunteer for Hanban (now known as the Centre for Language Education and Cooperation, CLEC) in Mongolia. During that

time, I taught Chinese language classes to kindergarten children and seventh-grade students at a Chinese community school in Ulaanbaatar. The classes typically had over 20 students, and we used textbooks designed for primary schools in China.

Two incidents from that period remain vivid in my memory. The first occurred when two teachers came to observe my class. I made a mistake in writing a character on the blackboard. Out of fear of embarrassing myself in front of the teachers and students, I chose not to correct it and attempted to cover it up instead. The second incident relates to my strong desire to help students improve their Chinese language skills. However, I frequently encountered classroom management challenges, which caused frustration and dissatisfied towards students with poor academic performance.

During my graduate studies, I began reflecting on my teaching practices from that year. Even today, I feel that I was not a qualified Chinese language teacher at that time. These experiences have motivated me to continuously explore and deepen my understanding of the teaching profession. Notably, my graduate thesis also focused on Chinese community schools, examining the learning experiences of Mongolian Chinese preschool students.

Subsequently, I worked as a Chinese language teacher at a Confucius Institute (CI) in Fiji for five years. During this period, I had the opportunity to interact with students from diverse nationalities and backgrounds, including Fijians, Koreans, Indians, and students from other Pacific Islands. Among these learners, the adult students left a particularly deep impression on me. They were highly motivated to learn Chinese and maintained a positive and respectful relationship with me as their teacher.

Before pursuing my Ph.D. at the University of Strathclyde, I also worked for a year at a CI in Cameroon. There, I witnessed the enthusiasm of African students in learning Chinese and observed their unique learning characteristics. They showed remarkable initiative and a willingness to apply newly acquired knowledge in everyday contexts, without fear of making mistakes. While I was able to manage relationships with my students effectively during these stages, I often felt a sense of inadequacy in my teaching abilities and knowledge.

These experiences have strengthened my sense of responsibility as a Chinese language teacher. My learning and work experiences have underscored the crucial role of teachers and inspired me to reflect deeply on my actions and practices in this profession. Although I cannot fully articulate the changes I have undergone, I can sense their presence. These personal experiences have cultivated a strong interest in teacher-related research, particularly in the area of teacher identity, which also forms the basis for my professional motivation.

1.2.2 Professional Motivations

It was not until I encountered literature on teacher identity that I came to a sudden realisation: the confusion I had experienced in my teaching practice might be closely related to issue of teacher identity (TI). For instance, some of tensions associated with TI identified by Pillen et al. (2013) strongly resonated with my personal experiences. One such tension involved the conflict between my desire to build friendly relationships with students and the institutional expectation to enforce strict discipline. This contradiction once led to feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction toward school leadership. If every teacher could contemplate “Who am I as a teacher?” and continually seek

answers to this question in practice, both teaching effectiveness and teacher well-being could improve.

At the same time, I have also realised that the focus of the literature on TI mainly revolves around novice teachers in mainstream schools (e.g., Nazari et al., 2023). There is some attention given to the influence of different subjects on TI formation, as well as cross-national comparisons. However, as pointed out by Archer and Francis (2006) and Li (2006), TI in Chinese community schools (CCSs) has not received much attention. Hancock (2012, 2021) has highlighted the increasing recognition of complementary schools in England and internationally, but they have not received the same level of attention in Scotland.

From the literature review (see Chapter 2), I have learned that CCSs play a significant role in promoting the development of students, supporting parents' cultural involvement and strengthening connections within the broader society. For instance, CCS not only imparts Chinese language and culture but also provides a safe space for Chinese heritage children and local students to engage in communication and companionship, which contributes to their overall well-being (Nwulu, 2015). Additionally, CCS serves as a platform for information exchange among parents, facilitating their integration into Scottish society (Hancock, 2012). Moreover, CCS contributes to the construction of inclusive communities and fosters harmony in Scotland (Hancock & Hancock, 2024).

The aforementioned reasons have prompted me to focus on researching teacher identity in Chinese community schools in Scotland. This research not only deepens my personal reflection on the question, "Who am I as a Chinese teacher?" but also enhances the understanding of teacher identity development within community-based educational settings. The findings will provide insights for improving teaching effectiveness and teacher well-being at the local school level, inform

policy and practice connecting community language education in Scotland, and contribute to the international discourse on teacher identity in multicultural and multilingual contexts.

TI is influenced by multiple factors, not only the profession and current circumstances but also personal and past influences. Factors such as the socio-political environment in CCSs, personal experiences, learning and internships during teacher education, the micro-political environment in the workplace, relationships, and interactions with students in classroom practices, communication with colleagues, parents, and leaders, as well as self-perception, emotions, knowledge, image, motivation, agency, values, and other factors continuously intersect and shape TI in diverse ways in different contexts (Garner & Kaplan, 2018; Hong et al., 2024; Nazari et al., 2023). This fluidity and diversity contribute to the complexity of TI.

To gain a deeper understanding of the participants' life stories and inner worlds, this study will use semi-structured interview to collect data. Additionally, metaphors will be employed as an auxiliary tool in the interviews. This will help to uncover the underlying meanings behind teachers' daily behaviours and serve as a significant representation of their practical knowledge. Moreover, it will facilitate teachers' self-reflection and promote introspection.

1.3 Reflectivity of the Researcher

Reflexivity refers to the researcher's active recognition that their actions and decisions inevitably influence the meaning and context of the experience under investigation (Horsburgh, 2003). Reflexivity is not only a method to ensure the rigor, trustworthiness, and quality of qualitative research but also a means to deepen readers' understanding of the study (Dodgson, 2019). Berger (2015) further elaborates on how researchers' social positions (e.g., gender, age, immigrant status),

personal experiences, and political and professional beliefs potentially impact reflexivity. She identifies three types of reflexivity related to researchers' positionality, including reflexivity when the researcher shares the participants' experiences; and reflexivity when the researcher transitions from an outsider to an insider role during the study, reflexivity when the researcher has no prior familiarity or personal experience with the research subjects. These insights are highly relevant to this study. As Palaganas et al. (2017) noted, researchers emerge from the research process with new understandings, the origins of which are sometimes unclear or even perplexing, making reflexivity a journey of learning and relearning.

Similar to Berger's (2015) observations, I share a common language, cultural background, and values with most participants in this study, which brings both advantages and challenges. For instance, using Mandarin for participant recruitment, data collection, and analysis ensures mutual comprehension between the researcher and participants. Additionally, my prior experience as a Chinese language teacher and my current role as a teacher in a Chinese community school help foster closer relationships with participants. However, I must avoid imposing my subjective views on participants' perspectives or leading their responses during interviews, ensuring their genuine expressions. I regard my teaching experience as the initial interest and motivation for this study and as an opportunity to validate and understand participants' views.

Throughout the research, I have remained mindful of the need to actively listen to participants and objectively present their perspectives. For example, in the Findings section (see Chapter 4 and 5), I aimed to include as many interview excerpts as possible to explain the findings. Finally, I acknowledge that reflexivity must permeate the entire research process, requiring continuous self-

examination of the collected data from the researcher's perspective to ensure the trustworthiness and quality of this study.

1.4 Aims and Research Questions

The primary aim of this thesis is to explore the characteristics and influencing factors of the process of constructing teacher identities in a Chinese community school within the Scottish (CCSS) context. As discussed in Section 1.2, "Motivations Behind the Research," existing studies on community schools in Scotland remain limited, with even fewer focusing on teacher identity construction in this context (Cho, 2014). Therefore, another objective of this research is to address this gap in the literature. In line with these goals, the primary research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are the defining characteristics of the identity construction process among CCSS teachers in Scotland?
2. How do contextual factors influence the formation and development of CCSS teachers' role identities?

Additionally, this research aims to emphasise the complexity of teacher identity construction within the domain of community schools. Various factors, ranging from the broader Scottish social context (e.g., multilingual and multicultural) and the environment of Chinese community schools (e.g., school leadership) to individual teachers' personal experiences and teacher-student classroom interactions, contribute to shaping and developing teacher identities.

Finally, the findings of this study may offer insights into teacher identity construction in other Chinese community schools and potentially extend to other community schools or mainstream educational institutions.

1.5 Organisation of the Thesis

This Chapter provides the necessary background to better understand the context of this study, including globalisation and multilingualism, as well as the differences between Chinese and Western (Scottish) education. It also introduces the personal and professional motivations behind this research. I outlined the main aims and research questions of the study and identify potential beneficiaries of the findings.

The other sections of this thesis are as follows:

Chapter 2 is the literature review, which is divided into several subsections that present topics such as identity, teacher identity, language teacher identity, studies on Chinese community schools and teachers in the UK, and the theoretical framework adopted in this study.

Chapter 3 introduces the research design and methodology, including participant recruitment, a description of the school involved, the use of interviews and metaphors, data collection and analysis, and strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

Chapters 4 and 5 present a detailed data analysis and findings. Specifically, Chapter 4 analyses the data based on the control parameters in DSMRI, such as social context, culture, dispositions, and domain. Chapter 5 focuses on the core elements in DSMRI (e.g., beliefs, purpose and goals, self-perceptions, action possibilities, emotions), summarises participants' various role identities, and consolidates the difficulties and issues they raised.

Chapter 6 and 7 provide discussion and conclusion respectively. Based on the analyses from the previous two chapters, Chapter 6 offers an in-depth discussion of the two research questions. It then provides recommendations for research and theory, policy, and practice. After outlining the study's main limitations, the Chapter 7 concludes the research.

Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Following the background information presented in Chapter One, this chapter examines the concept of identity as the foundation for understanding teacher identity, particularly within the context of Chinese community school teachers in Scotland. The review is structured progressively, it begins with a discussion of identity and its theoretical perspectives, moves to an exploration of teacher identity and its formation, and finally narrows the focus to language teacher identity, particularly in relation to Chinese community teachers.

By synthesising relevant empirical research, this chapter aims to establish the theoretical foundation for the present study. It critically reviews theories, methodologies, and key findings from existing scholarship, offering insights into the factors shaping identity and the challenges encountered in community language schools. In addition, it provides an overview of Chinese language education in the UK and consider the theoretical underpinnings that inform this study. Specifically, this chapter is organised into three main sections: Identity, including its definitions, developmental processes, and key debates; Teacher Identity – theoretical and methodological perspectives, including the features, formation process, and influencing factors, with particular emphasis on research into Chinese teacher identity**;** Theoretical Framework – a critical review of relevant theories that inform this study.

Through critical engagement with the literature, this review identifies research gaps, refines relevant conceptual framework, and underscores the significance of the research questions. In doing so, it situates the study within the broader field of identity research in education and enhances its scholarly credibility.

2.1 Identity

This section is divided into three sub-sections: Definitions of identity – comparing dictionary-based and academic perspectives; Categories of identity – examining the different types of identity discussed in the literature; Theoretical perspectives on identity – reviewing key theories and conceptual frameworks relevant to identity research. Together, these discussions address three guiding questions: "What is identity? What factors shape it? Which theories may inspire this study?"

The section begins with an exploration of the concept of identity from a day-to-day understanding, before moving to academic definitions and theoretical debates that have shaped understandings of the term.

2.1.1 Definition of Identity

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) lists 15 meanings of identity. A selection of these illustrates key aspects of the term: The quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, or properties; absolute or essential sameness; oneness. Secondly, the sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition of being a single individual; individuality, personality. Thirdly, who or what a person or thing is; a distinct impression of a single person or thing as perceived by others; a set of characteristics that distinguish a person or thing.

A common theme across these definitions is "sameness", which is central to many theoretical discussions of identity. The term can be further understood through two philosophical distinctions: Qualitative identity – sameness in properties or characteristics. Numerical identity – the condition of being one and the same entity (McKinlay & McVittie, 2011). These distinctions align with Erikson's (1968) concept of ego identity, which emphasises a sense of continuity and sameness over

time. Erikson further argues that identity formation is shaped by self-perception, social relationships, and community interactions (Côté & Levine, 2009). In this sense, the word "identity" literally refers to sameness (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004).

Yet this emphasis on sameness does not fully capture the complexity of identity in academic research. Identity is widely recognised as a dynamic and multidimensional construct that varies across disciplines (Richardson & Watt, 2018). Scholars from psychology, sociology, anthropology, and neuroscience have provided diverse perspectives (Avraamidou, 2018; Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Buckingham, 2008; Huddy, 2001). For example, Erikson (1968) examined identity formation in adolescence and highlighted the role of psychosocial development; Hoffman (1998) described identity as the "bread and butter" of educational anthropology, highlighting its fundamental role in education; Gee (2000) argued that individuals possess multiple identities that shift across different social contexts; Geijsel and Meijers (2005) suggested that identity is not an intrinsic trait or merely the product of the social attribution, but rather an ongoing process of interpreting one's past, present, and future. Collectively, these perspectives point to identity as fluid and relational, shaped by both internal self-perceptions and external social recognition.

Identity is thus a contested and multifaceted concept (Buckingham, 2008), making it difficult to arrive at a single, universally accepted definition (Rogers, 2018). At its core, identity seeks to answer the fundamental question "Who are you?", a question that encompasses not only 'how you perceive yourself' but also 'who you portray yourself as' in interactions with others, and whether these actions receive social recognition (Vignoles et al., 2011). In social psychology, for instance, social identity refers to the social aspects from which individuals draw to perceive themselves as either similar to or different from others; personal identity signifies the unique individual aspects of oneself that persist

over time (McKinlay & McVittie, 2011). However, Côté and Levine (2009) argue that defining identity is further complicated by two key factors: the distinction between identity and self, and the divergence between theoretical perspectives (e.g., psychological vs. sociological approaches) and empirical research. Even within the same discipline, competing theoretical and methodological traditions add further complexity (Vignoles et al., 2011). Moreover, identity as lived and experienced in everyday life often differs significantly from its conceptualisation in academic discourse (McKinlay & McVittie, 2011).

Burke and Stets (2023) conceptualise the self as both a social product- shaped by social structures and interactions- and a social force- capable of producing social outcomes. They argue that the self emerges through diverse and complex social interactions in which individuals assume multiple roles. The self reflects this differentiation and takes on different components, which James (1890) referred to as 'multiple selves.' These smaller selves within the overall self are referred to as identities. Rodgers and Scott (2008) further assert that the self is not only a series of shifting identities but also encompasses continuity and coherence, even amid discontinuities, changes, and crises that signal an evolving self. They further suggest that if identities are stories, the self is the storyteller- the creator of meaning. Nonetheless, the boundaries and overlaps between self and identity continue to demand theoretical and empirical clarification (Vignoles et al., 2011).

In summary, comparing dictionary and academic perspectives on identity reveals both points of convergence and divergence. The OED's emphasis on sameness and continuity aligns with Erikson's psychological perspective, yet it fails to capture the fluid, dynamic nature of identity emphasised by post-structuralist scholars such as Kouhpaeenejad and Gholaminejad (2014). Moreover, these definitional debates raise questions about the relationship between identity and self, a topic that

warrants further exploration in identity studies. This dissertation will examine this relationship in greater depth, particularly within the context of teacher identity in Section 2.2.2.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of identity research, scholars approach the subject with diverse methodologies and priorities. To navigate this complexity, the following section considers the categories of identity presented in the literature, thereby providing a clearer foundation for this study's conceptual framework.

2.1.2 Categories of Identity

As seen in the previous section, the concept of identity has been categorised in various ways depending on theoretical perspectives, encompassing individual and collective identity, national and ethnic identity, cultural identity, and role-based identity. These classifications reflect how individuals define themselves in relation to others, either as distinct persons or as members of larger social groups. At the same time, identity categorisation is shaped by societal structures and ideological positioning, influencing how identities are formed, negotiated, and recognised. This section critically examines Gee's (2000) identity framework, followed by a discussion of national, ethnic, and cultural identity, and concludes with an acknowledgment of diaspora identity as a relevant category for understanding Chinese community school (CCS) teachers.

Gee (2000) proposed a four-dimensional model of identity, conceptualising identity through nature-identity (N-Identity), institutional-identity (I-Identity), discourse-identity (D-Identity), and affinity-identity (A-Identity). These categories are not mutually exclusive but rather interwoven and co-constructed. Firstly, N-Identities are biologically ascribed (e.g., race, gender, physical characteristics). Yet such traits become identities only when socially recognised. For instance, CCS

teachers' ethnicity and linguistic background do not automatically define them as "migrant Chinese teachers" until these traits are framed within social or institutional contexts.

Secondly, I-Identities are socially assigned through institutional structures and legitimised through authorisation. For CCS teachers, their role as educators is validated by the community school, which grants them rights and responsibilities. However, this legitimacy may remain fragile given that many CCS teachers lack formal teaching qualifications. Next, D-Identities are constructed through discourse and interaction. CCS teachers gain recognition as teachers through relationships with students, parents, and colleagues, although the absence of formal certification may render their professional identity contested. Lastly, A-Identities arise through participation in communities of practice. Despite diverse backgrounds, CCS teachers share a voluntary commitment to teaching Chinese language and culture, which forms a strong affinity-based identity as cultural transmitters within the diaspora.

While Gee's framework provides a valuable lens for analysing identity, it largely foregrounds social construction and pays less attention to the historical, political, and emotional dimensions of identity that are central to national, ethnic, and cultural identity formation.

National identity

National identity is shaped by historical narratives, cultural symbols, and geopolitical factors (McKinlay & McVittie, 2011). It emerges through shared understanding, common history, and collective belonging, yet remains fluid and context dependent. Parekh (1995) conceptualises national identity as a dynamic system of values and dispositions, influenced by historical inheritance, contemporary demands, and future aspirations. Smith (1992) contrasts Western and Eastern models of national identity, with the former emphasising territory, law, and civic culture, while the latter

prioritises ancestral origins and cultural continuity. Media, globalisation, and migration further complicate national identity, as individuals negotiate their sense of belonging across multiple cultural spaces (McKinlay & McVittie, 2011). National identity is particularly relevant for Chinese diaspora teachers, as they navigate tensions between their home-country identity and host-country belonging. Their linguistic and cultural ties to China may reinforce transnational identity, while their professional roles in the UK position them within a localised educational framework.

Ethnic identity

Ethnic identity is both overlapping and distinct from national identity. While both involve self-perception and social categorisation, ethnic identity is more group-oriented, often emphasising ancestry, heritage, and shared cultural practices (McKinlay & McVittie, 2011). Phinney and Ong (2007) describe ethnic identity as a multifaceted construct involving self-categorisation, which involves identifying as a member of an ethnic group; Commitment and attachment – emotional connection to ethnic heritage; Values and beliefs – transmission of cultural norms, and the salience of group membership – the extent to which ethnic identity influences daily life. Umaña-Taylor (2011) highlights ethnic identity development as a process of exploration and commitment. Ethnic identity has been found to provide psychosocial support, fostering resilience and well-being among diaspora communities.

For Chinese community school teachers, ethnic identity plays a crucial role in their professional positioning, as they act as cultural intermediaries between Chinese heritage and British educational structures. However, diaspora teachers may experience tensions between maintaining cultural authenticity and adapting to local educational expectations.

Cultural identity

Cultural identity extends beyond ethnicity, encompassing acculturation, intergroup relations, and orientations such as individualism and collectivism. It addresses the question "Who am I as a member of my group, and in relation to others?" (Schwartz et al., 2008). Hall (2015) identifies two contrasting perspectives: the essentialist view, which treats cultural identity as stable and enduring, and the constructivist view, which views it as fluid and historically contingent. Unger (2011) differentiates cultural identity from ethnic identity, noting that the former can transcend ancestry to include shared symbolic practices and affiliations. Bicultural identity, increasingly relevant in globalised societies, highlights how individuals navigate dual cultural frameworks (Huynh et al., 2011). For CCS teachers, cultural identity is enacted through pedagogy: they transmit language, values, and traditions, acting as cultural brokers while balancing authenticity and adaptation.

Diaspora Identity and Its Theoretical Implications

Diaspora identity provides a critical perspective for understanding Chinese community school teachers. Bhandari (2021) outlines the four stages of conceptual change in the understanding of diaspora. The first stage refers to the forced displacement of a group of people who have lost their homes and taken refuge in the host country. The second stage encompasses the proliferation of the concept of the diaspora to include different groups and experiences of migration. The following stage emphasises the formation of migrant subjectivity, while the last stage partially adopts the social constructionist perspective while upholding the importance of origins to address historical exploitation and injustice. Postmodernism deconstructs traditional notions of homeland and host country, viewing diasporas as hybrid cultural intersections in a third space. Diaspora identity challenges essentialist views of national, ethnic, and cultural identity, instead emphasising hybridity, transnationalism, and social reconstruction (Schwartz et al., 2008).

Summary

This researcher acknowledges that the definitions of the aforementioned forms of identity, much like those of “nation” and “culture,” remain the subject of ongoing scholarly debate. Identity is a complex and contested concept, with different theoretical traditions offering distinct interpretations. For example, postcolonial theory has focused on examining ethnicity, culture, and identity, particularly as they manifest within diasporic communities (Archer et al., 2010). Beyond the identity categories discussed, additional classifications exist, including personal/individual identity, role-based identity, category-based identity, and group member-based identity, as outlined by Owens et al. (2010). Given this complexity, this researcher recognises that individuals often embody multiple, overlapping identities, reflecting the fluid and dynamic nature of identity formation. Moreover, in researching teacher identity, it is essential to adopt a pluralistic approach that acknowledges the strengths of diverse theoretical frameworks. As Vignoles et al. (2011) argue, different methods and perspectives contribute valuable insights to identity studies. Rather than seeking to resolve tensions between contrasting theories, researchers should embrace an integrative perspective that leverages the unique contributions of each approach.

In light of these considerations, the following section outlines four theoretical traditions that inform this study: Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory; Symbolic Interactionism and Structural Symbolic Interactionism; the Sociocultural Perspective; and the Poststructuralist Perspective. Together, these perspectives provide the analytical foundation for examining the identities of CCS teachers within the broader contexts of education, migration, and sociocultural adaptation.

2.1.3 Relevant Theories on Identity Studies

This section provides a brief overview of six common approaches to identity research and offers a comparative analysis of four of them.

Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory

Identity Theory (IT) and Social Identity Theory (SIT) represent two of the most influential frameworks for understanding identity in psychology and sociology. IT, rooted in structural symbolic interactionism, emphasises the role of social positions and roles in shaping individual self-conceptions (Stryker & Burke, 2000). It conceptualises identity as role-based, meaning individuals define themselves through the roles they occupy in society (e.g., parent, teacher, student). Central to IT is the concept of salience—the relative importance of particular identities—which guides behaviour across different contexts.

By contrast, SIT, pioneered by Tajfel and Turner (1979), shifts the focus to group membership and intergroup relations. It argues that individuals derive part of their self-concept from belonging to social categories (e.g., nationality, ethnicity, profession). SIT highlights processes such as social comparison, in-group favouritism, and out-group differentiation, showing how collective belonging shapes attitudes and behaviours.

While IT explains micro-level role enactments and SIT illuminates macro-level group dynamics, both share a tendency toward structural determinism, underplaying the fluid, negotiated nature of identity. For CCS teachers, these theories are particularly relevant: IT highlights the salience of their “teacher” role in shaping behaviour in the classroom, whereas SIT underscores how their group membership (e.g., as Chinese, as migrants, as educators in the UK) influences their sense of

belonging and legitimacy. Yet these frameworks are limited in capturing the tensions and hybridity of identities across transnational and multilingual spaces.

Symbolic Interactionism to Structural Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism (SI), rooted in the work of Mead (1934) and later Blumer (1969), views identity as emerging from social interaction. SI posits that the self is constructed through the interpretation of symbols, language, and meaning making in everyday encounters. Unlike IT and SIT, which emphasise social structures, SI foregrounds agency, highlighting how individuals actively negotiate and construct identities in dialogue with others.

Structural Symbolic Interactionism (SSI), developed by Stryker (1980), bridges the gap between SI's micro-level focus and sociological concerns with social organisation. SSI introduces the concept of identity hierarchies, in which individuals prioritise certain identities over others based on commitment and social networks. This framework acknowledges both agency and structural constraints, allowing a more dynamic view of how identities are enacted across contexts.

For CCS teachers, SI and SSI provide a useful lens to understand how identity is co-constructed through interactions with students, parents, and colleagues. Their "teacher identity" is not merely imposed by the institution but is constantly negotiated in classroom discourse, parent–teacher interactions, and community practices. At the same time, SSI reminds us that some identities—such as being a cultural ambassador—may hold greater salience due to community expectations, while others may be less foregrounded. However, critics argue that SI/SSI tends to focus on interpersonal encounters and may overlook larger sociopolitical forces, such as migration policies or racialised discourses, which also shape identity.

The Sociocultural Perspective

The sociocultural perspective draws on Vygotskian traditions, emphasising the mediated nature of human development and the role of cultural tools, language, and social practices in identity construction (Vygotsky, 1978; Holland & Lachicotte, 2007). Here, identity is conceptualised as situated in cultural-historical contexts and shaped through participation in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Individuals construct identities not in isolation but through engagement with social, cultural, and historical resources.

This perspective has been influential in education, where teacher identity is seen as shaped by cultural scripts, institutional discourses, and broader sociocultural norms (Gee, 2000). It highlights how identities are mediated by practices such as teaching methods, curriculum design, and language use, as well as by the broader sociocultural context of schools and societies.

For CCS teachers, the sociocultural perspective offers insights into how their identities are shaped by both Chinese cultural traditions and the educational practices of the UK. Teaching Chinese language and culture situates them in a community of practice that transcends geographical boundaries. At the same time, their identities are influenced by sociocultural forces such as the status of community languages in the UK and parental expectations within diaspora communities. A limitation of this perspective, however, is its tendency to emphasise collective practices, which may underplay the fragmented and contested aspects of identity experienced by individuals.

Poststructuralism Perspective

Poststructuralist approaches challenge essentialist and static notions of identity, framing it instead as fragmented, fluid, and discursively constructed (Hall, 1996). Identity, from this view, is not a fixed attribute but an ongoing process shaped by discourse, power relations, and social

positioning. Poststructuralism emphasises hybridity, multiplicity, and contradiction, recognising that individuals occupy shifting subject positions across different contexts.

This approach is particularly attentive to issues of power and inequality. It examines how dominant discourses—such as those around race, language, or nationhood—construct certain identities as legitimate while marginalising others (Foucault, 1980). In education, poststructuralist scholars have analysed how teacher identities are shaped by neoliberal discourses of accountability, multiculturalism, and professionalisation, often revealing tensions between institutional expectations and personal commitments.

For CCS teachers, poststructuralist perspectives illuminate how their identities are negotiated at the intersection of multiple discourses: as "heritage language teachers" within UK education, as cultural brokers within diaspora communities, and as migrants navigating issues of race and legitimacy. This perspective also highlights how power relations—such as the marginal status of Chinese community schools or the racialisation of migrant teachers—shape the possibilities and constraints of identity construction. Its limitation, however, lies in its abstractness, which can make it difficult to operationalise in empirical research.

Summary

Taken together, these four perspectives illustrate the complexity of identity research. IT and SIT emphasise structural roles and group membership, SI and SSI highlight interactional negotiation, the sociocultural perspective foregrounds cultural-historical practices, and poststructuralism underscores discourse, hybridity, and power. Each offers valuable insights but also carries limitations, whether through determinism, overemphasis on agency, or abstraction.

For this dissertation, drawing on multiple perspectives provides a richer understanding of identity. In the case of CCS teachers, these frameworks collectively illuminate how their identities are shaped by roles and groups, co-constructed through interaction, mediated by cultural practices, and negotiated within discourses of migration and diaspora. By integrating these perspectives, this study seeks to capture the dynamic, multifaceted, and contested nature of teacher identity in transnational educational contexts.

2.2 Teacher Identity

Building on the foundational understanding of identity studies, this section delves into the concept of teacher identity (TI). Following a logical progression from broad definitions to more in-depth discussions, it first explores the definition of TI before briefly introducing key factors that influence its development. In the context of this study, the author uses the term “teacher identity” to refer to the combination of personal and professional aspects of identity, as described by Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) and Olsen et al. (2022).

2.2.1 Definition of Teacher Identity

As with the broader concept of identity (see Section 2.1), defining teacher identity is a complex and evolving process. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) highlight the lack of a standardised definition, emphasising that TI is shaped by contextual, personal, and situational factors. Sachs (2001) argues that professional identity is traditionally imposed externally, characterised by attributes and values assigned to teachers by society. However, Sachs (2005) later contends that TI is not merely imposed but negotiated through experience and personal interpretation.

Beijaard et al. (2022) define professional identity as a teacher's self-perception, shaped by reflective questions such as, "Who am I as a teacher?" and "What kind of teacher do I aspire to be?" They emphasise that identity formation is closely linked to professional learning and the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) further conceptualise TI as being both singular and multiple, continuous and discontinuous, and simultaneously individual and social. Their definition encapsulates the dynamic nature of TI:

> Teacher identity is an ongoing process of negotiating and interrelating multiple I-positions in such a way that a more or less coherent and consistent sense of self is maintained throughout various participations and self-investments in one's (working) life (p.315).

These perspectives highlight that teacher identity is shaped through external influences, internal self-exploration, and the negotiation between personal and professional roles. To provide a clearer overview, Table 2.1 summarises key definitions of teacher identity proposed by different scholars.

Table 2.1 Definitions of Teacher Identity

Author(s)/ Year	Definition of TI	Notes
Coldron & Smith (1999)	Being a teacher involves both self-perception and social recognition; identity is acquired and redefined through social legitimacy.	Tension between agency and socially given; Teachers as craftsperson; teaching requires teachers' moral judgement; teachers as artistic;
Beijaard et al. (2004)	TI is a dynamic process shaped by interpreting experiences, influenced by individual and contextual factors, and composed of multiple sub-identities.	Continuous evolution; multiplicity of identities; contextual influence; agency. Ballantyne et al., (2012) cited this definition
Canrinus et al. (2011)	TI is how teachers perceive themselves based on their ongoing interactions with their professional environment.	Dynamic and context dependent. Similar with Beijaard et al. 2022
Pillen et al., (2013)	TI is a fluid, continuous process shaped by personal attributes, past experiences, and professional contexts, integrating knowledge, beliefs, and institutional demands.	Fluidity; ongoing negotiation; tensions between personal and professional roles. Supported by Beijaard et al. (2004)

Lindqvist et al., (2017)	TI is a multifaceted, dynamic construct emphasising identity development rather than a fixed state. It involves negotiating professional and situational aspects.	Becoming rather than being; negotiation; reciprocity; values, emotions, and beliefs.
Hong et al., (2024)	TI is shaped through goal-oriented, agentic regulatory processes, facilitating the interpretation of personal and professional experiences within socio-cultural contexts.	Agentic regulation; self-beliefs; contextual influences.

The above table aligns with the five common characteristics of teacher identity (TI) conceptualisation summarised by Yazan (2018): TI encompasses teachers' self-concepts and beliefs about themselves as educators; TI involves others' expectations and social positioning; TI is a dynamic and continually evolving process; TI is constructed and reconstructed in social contexts and interactions; TI develops through teachers' commitment to, engagement, and involvement in the profession. While numerous studies have explored the definition of TI, a comprehensive listing is beyond the scope of this review. However, in general, TI is closely linked to teaching practice (Beijaard et al., 2004), teacher education (Bullough & Gitlin, 2013), teacher effectiveness (Day et al., 2006), self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and motivation (Canrinus et al., 2012).

The challenge in defining TI arises from its dynamic and multifaceted nature, which involves interactions between agency, context, emotions, roles, and self-perception (Alsup, 2018; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2004; Zembylas, 2003). Akkerman and Meijer (2011) advocate for moving beyond binary and dichotomous views of TI, recognising its simultaneous singularity and multiplicity, continuity and discontinuity, and individual and social dimensions.

Building on this analysis, the following section will briefly examine the key factors that shape TI—namely agency, context, and self—to provide deeper insight into its formation. Although quantitative approaches to TI exist (e.g., Beijaard et al., 2004; Canrinus et al., 2011), the field

remains dominated by qualitative studies (e.g., Alsup, 2018; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Olsen, 2008).

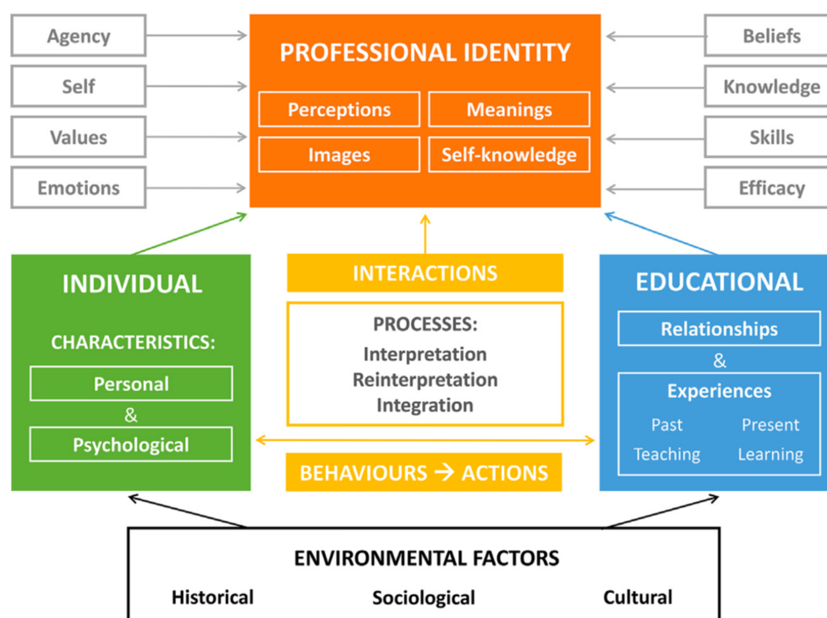

Figure 2.1 Items that Constitute and Influence of Teacher Identity (redrawn from Rodrigues & Mogarro, 2019)

2.2.2 *Salient Elements in Teacher Identity Studies*

In the previous section, an analysis of the literature on TI revealed certain factors such as agency and context being mentioned repeatedly. To gain further understanding of the formation of TI, four salient factors (agency, context, emotion, self) will be discussed in this section.

Agency

Agency plays a crucial role in shaping and reconstructing TI. It enables teachers to navigate critical incidents, manage tensions between different identities, and respond to professional challenges (Day et al., 2006). At the same time, the recognition and affirmation of one's TI foster a

sense of agency, empowering teachers to advance their pedagogical goals and influence their professional environments (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Agency is influenced by both external and internal factors. Parkison (2008) argues that societal structures, governmental regulations, institutional policies, and curricular frameworks all impact teachers' agency. For instance, power mechanisms, information control, and evaluation systems shape the micro-political context in which TI develops, often through the actions of school administrators and policymakers. When teachers work in environments that empower them, they experience a sense of professional fulfilment. Conversely, when constrained by strict accountability measures and rigid educational policies, they may feel alienated or disempowered. In such situations, psychic capital becomes a key factor in understanding the identity crises teachers may face (Parkison, 2008).

Moreover, Lasky (2005) highlights the influence of educational reforms on teacher agency, emphasising that teachers are not passive recipients of change but active agents who mediate their responses to structural transformations. Buchanan (2015) supports this view, noting that teachers actively draw on their pre-existing identities to interpret, assess, and adapt to policy shifts, thereby shaping their professional agency. A significant source of agency lies in teachers' deep commitment to their professional identities, particularly their relational engagement with students, which reinforces their sense of purpose and motivation (Lasky, 2005).

However, Reeves (2022) cautions against limiting considerations of agency to observable actions. Instead, she advocates for a broader perspective that examines teachers' thoughts, motivations, and reasons for inaction. She further suggests that future research on teacher agency should address four key dimensions: investment, time, (non)action, and emotions.

In summary, agency does not exist in isolation; it is embedded within social structures that define both the constraints and possibilities of teachers' actions. When engaging in teaching, teachers bring with them a sense of agency and identity that guides their decisions and behaviours. Their goal is to affirm their professional identities, seeking recognition that aligns with their self-perception. Ultimately, professional agency is deeply intertwined with social, contextual, and structural influences, while also being shaped by individual characteristics.

Context

Contexts make it easier to invoke certain role identities over others, irrespective of their significance to the individual (Thoits, 2021). Broadly speaking, the relationship between context and TI can be examined at two primary levels: macro and micro. At the macro level, Parkinson (2008) explores how government agencies and educational policies shape TI, whereas Flores and Day (2006) investigate the influence of school culture and leadership (meso level) alongside classroom practices (micro level).

The dynamic nature of TI is further illustrated by Lamote and Engels (2010), who highlight the impact of workplace experience on identity transformation. More specifically, teachers' personal and professional backgrounds—including their educational training, the subjects they teach, interactions with students, collaboration with colleagues, and relationships with parents—contribute to the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of their professional identities within specific contexts (Beijaard, 1995; Beijaard et al., 2004; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Flores & Day, 2006; Schellings et al., 2021; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). Similarly, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) argue that factors such as the school environment, the nature of the learner community, collegial

influences, and school leadership significantly shape TI. Additionally, emotions both brought into and generated by these contexts play a crucial role in identity development.

A particularly evident example of contextual influence occurs when teachers transition from being students to professionals within school communities at the start of their careers. This shift places them in a liminal space between their former identities as learners and their emerging identities as educators, resulting in continuous identity renegotiation as they adapt to new environments (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011). The increasing recognition of context in TI research is emphasised by Olsen et al. (2022), who identify four key trends: (a) a growing focus on context in TI development, (b) the inclusion of 'community' as a factor in teacher development, (c) the globalisation of TI research through cross-national comparisons, and (d) the exploration of TI within contemporary neoliberal and 'new managerial' frameworks.

Despite these advancements, gaps remain in the literature. For instance, Avraamidou (2014) highlights the lack of research on the role of informal contexts in TI development. Furthermore, Flores and Day (2006) observe that teachers often shift from an idealistic 'student-centred' approach to a more pragmatic 'teacher-centred' approach to maintain classroom order. This contradiction not only leads to professional tensions but also signals a transformation in TI—one that is closely linked to the next discussion on 'Emotion,' illustrating the complex interplay of factors in identity formation.

Emotion

As discussed in the previous section, changes in context can lead to shifts in emotions. It is important to recognise that emotions can either expand or limit the possibilities for teaching, as

different emotional states can prompt teachers to think and act in distinct ways, thereby influencing the formation of TI (Nichols et al., 2016). According to Zembylas (2003), the development of TI and the emotional discourse surrounding it are shaped by the specific political structures within a school, as well as the expectations that teachers will adhere to certain emotional regulations. This viewpoint is supported by Parkinson (2008) and Beijaard et al. (2022). Moreover, the tension between idealised and actual teaching roles can contribute to emotional challenges, which may act as a catalyst for the growth of TI (Golombek & Doran, 2014). For example, in Schaefer and Clandinin's (2018) study, a teacher named Alis ultimately decided to leave the profession, despite her students' success and her colleagues' and leaders' wishes for her to stay. This decision stemmed from a dissonance between her envisioned role as a teacher and the reality of her job.

The emotions associated with TI can be categorised as both negative and positive (Nichols et al., 2016). Lindqvist et al. (2017) suggest that student teachers may experience feelings of professional inadequacy due to daily hassles or significant events, often resulting in a sense of powerlessness, limited agency, and uncertainty. Other negative emotions include anger, frustration, tension, vulnerability, reduced job satisfaction, diminished efficacy, and a sense of resignation, which can all contribute to decreased commitment and motivation (Canrinus et al., 2012; Flores & Day, 2006; Lasky, 2005; Nichols et al., 2016; Zembylas, 2003). In contrast, positive emotions—such as joy, satisfaction, success, happiness, fulfilment, energy, and confidence—have also been highlighted by researchers as integral to the emotional experience of teachers (Mommers et al., 2021; Nichols et al., 2016).

Beijaard et al. (2022) provide a summary of key issues related to the identity of both novice and experienced teachers, which help explain the emergence of these emotional phenomena. Firstly, tensions arise from the interaction between personal and contextual factors. For instance, the transition from student to teacher, changes in the teaching context (e.g., from school to workplace), and the conflict between ideals and reality all contribute to these emotional dynamics. Secondly, the way teachers position themselves in relation to others in their work influences their emotional experiences. Relationships with pupils are often seen as crucial, but interactions with colleagues—especially those teaching the same subject—school leaders, and parents are equally significant. Additionally, issues arising from the micropolitics within schools, such as school climate, leadership, and working conditions, also play a role. Lastly, the concept of 'stories to live by,' which refers to the personal narratives teachers construct about their roles and identities, can further contribute to emotional challenges.

Coping strategies for managing these emotional experiences have been discussed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). These strategies include seeking social support, attempting to find solutions, establishing a reasonable level of acceptance, receiving positive supervision from mentoring teachers, and fostering skills and self-efficacy. Lindqvist et al. (2017) argue that the development of TI is intricately linked with the interplay between emotions and coping processes. Additionally, the study by Benesch and Prior (2023) highlights the need to consider the impact of "emotion labour" on the construction of TI, particularly in the post-pandemic, neoliberal, and managerialist contexts.

Self

According to Rodgers and Scott (2008), a teacher's understanding of their TI evolves from their developmental capacities of self. In responding to questions such as "How does a teacher comprehend social, cultural, political, and historical forces? How do they understand their relationships with others? How do they construct and reconstruct meaning through stories?" teachers exhibit diverse ways of understanding their experiences. These variations reflect the distinct developmental capacities of their selves, which, in turn, influence how they perceive and form their TI (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). The development of TI requires a deep comprehension of the self and its role in surrounding contexts, such as the classroom or school. This necessitates self-reflection in relation to others, much like Mead's (1934) study of the self within society (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Teachers' identities are formed and transformed through their interactions with others in a professional setting. Thus, the understanding of self is recognised as a significant component of teacher development and the formation of TI.

Kelchtermans (1993, 2009) posited that the professional self is a dynamic construct, evolving over time and consisting of five interconnected components: self-image, self-esteem, job motivation, task perception, and future perspective. Lauriala and Kukkonen (2005) suggested that social context plays a decisive role in shaping an individual's self-concept, particularly when examining the development of teacher and student identities in classroom situations. They argued that identity and self are synonymous, both stable and changeable. Core self-concepts provide stability to identity, while other self-concepts are more fluid, varying according to the situation. Lauriala and Kukkonen (2005) proposed three categories of self: the actual self (which is more variable over time and context), the ought self (which aligns with societal or significant others' expectations), and the ideal self (which represents a possible aspiration). To some extent, Sfard and Prusak's (2005) distinction

between ‘actual’ and ‘designated’ identities aligns with Lauriala and Kukkonen’s (2005) actual and ought selves, though they emphasised that identity is essentially a narrative.

In contrast, Beijaard et al. (2004) argued that identity and self may not be identical and that the relationship between the two concepts remains unclear. Rodgers and Scott (2008), from the perspective of constructivist developmental psychology, further clarified the relationship between teacher identity and self. They defined the self as a dynamic and cohesive entity that encompasses teacher identity and is continuously constructed, reconstructed, and influenced by interactions with cultural contexts, institutions, and individuals. They suggested that if teacher identities are narratives, the self might serve as the storyteller. Thus, when seeking to understand a teacher’s identity, it is essential to consider the inseparable connection between their personal and professional selves.

Summary

Numerous factors and activities influence the formation of TI, such as role, reflection, and other key elements. While it is not feasible to list all of them here due to time and space constraints, this does not imply they are of lesser importance or that the researcher has overlooked their significance. From the discussion above, it can be seen that factors influencing TI—such as subject disciplines (Thompson, 2022) and tension (Van Wal et al., 2019)—are not isolated but interact with one another. These factors are also influenced by both internal and external elements (Izadinia, 2013). For example, from an agency perspective, societal influences, government mechanisms, and school structures play a shaping role in the formation of teacher identities. Moreover, various real-world factors, such as the rigidity of schools, can stifle teacher agency (Parkison, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial to recognise that TI is a complex configuration of individual and contextual factors (Schgelling et al., 2021; Beijaard et al., 2022).

This review provided several key insights for this study: (1) The personal and professional experiences of the participants, both past and present, should be taken into account. (2) Both qualitative and quantitative research methods are valuable, though this study will place more emphasis on qualitative research. (3) It is essential to consider the context and community, including an exploration of the societal, governmental (policies), and school environments in both Chinese and English contexts. (4) The bidirectional effects of factors such as emotions should be given due attention.

2.3 Language Teacher Identity

Building upon the existing literature on teacher identity (TI), this section narrows its focus to language teacher identity (LTI), particularly that of second/foreign language teachers. Additionally, this section explores the limited research available on the identity construction of Chinese immigrant teachers. Following Kanno and Stuart (2011), this discussion does not distinguish between second language teachers and foreign language teachers, instead referring to both as L2 teachers.

It is acknowledged that LTI is a multidimensional and dynamic construct, shaped by both personal and social factors (see, for example, Beijaard et al., 2004; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). LTI plays a central role in the learning and practice of L2 teaching and is critical to the professional development of language educators. A growing body of literature has emphasised the significance of LTI, largely due to its impact on teachers' perceptions of themselves as professionals and their career trajectories. Kanno and Stuart (2011) argue that TI development is crucial in the learning-to-teach process, particularly for novice L2 teachers, as identity formation is both a long-term and iterative process shaped by classroom experiences, which, in turn, influence their pedagogical practices.

A historical review by Kayi-Aydar (2019) provides insight into the evolution of LTI as a research focus. In the 1980s and 1990s, studies primarily examined teacher cognition, beliefs, and learning, with little focus on teachers themselves. It was not until the late 1990s that attention shifted from language learners to L2 teachers. After 2010, second language teacher identity (SLTI) gained greater prominence. Early studies often focused on the native vs. non-native teacher dichotomy and its implications for identity. Subsequently, research expanded to incorporate sociocultural theories and the Communities of Practice framework to examine the social identities of language teachers (Yuan, 2019). More recently, post-structuralist perspectives have reframed SLTI as fluid, multiple, and constantly evolving. Additionally, emerging research has explored the intersection of SLTI, teacher agency, and emotions, highlighting the complexity of identity negotiation in educational contexts (Sang, 2022).

Varghese et al. (2005) identify four major areas of LTI research: marginalisation, the status of non-native teachers, the professional status of language teaching, and teacher-student relationships. A significant contribution of their work is the argument that each theoretical perspective has inherent limitations. They advocate for a cross-paradigmatic approach, where multiple theories are employed to offer a more comprehensive understanding of LTI. This study aligns with Varghese et al.'s view, emphasising the importance of maintaining a flexible theoretical stance while addressing critical themes such as marginalisation, teacher status, and teacher-student interactions in subsequent analyses.

Pennington and Richards (2016) propose a competency-based model for LTI development, distinguishing between four foundational and three advanced competencies. The foundational competencies include Language-related identity (teachers' linguistic self-perception); Disciplinary

identity (affiliation with their subject matter); Context-related identity (adaptation to institutional and cultural settings); Self-knowledge and awareness (understanding personal strengths and limitations). Yazan (2018) supports this model, arguing that linguistic identity is inseparable from teacher identity. He highlights how teachers position themselves and are positioned by others within discourses of nativeness, which subsequently shapes their professional trajectories. Given the context-dependent and fluid nature of LTI, teachers' interactions with students are mediated by language, gender, race, class, religion, and nationality, further complicating identity construction.

The three advanced competencies are transforming knowledge into practice; Transforming practice into knowledge; Establishing membership in a professional community. The interdependence of these competencies is particularly notable. For instance, the transformation of knowledge and practice is driven by self-awareness, while successful integration into a professional community necessitates a strong sense of belonging. Additionally, formal teacher education has been recognised as a key factor in enhancing professional security and career sustainability in language teaching (Pennington & Richards, 2016).

Sang (2022) identifies three major shifts in contemporary LTI research: Language teachers are now viewed as active agents rather than passive recipients of knowledge, shifting the focus from product-oriented to process-oriented teaching and learning; Research methodologies have transitioned from purely psychological approaches to situational and sociocultural frameworks; LTI development is increasingly conceptualised as a socialization process, encompassing both professional and language socialization. Sang (2023) provides empirical support for these claims through an ethnographic study of a Chinese EFL pre-service teacher's culture class. The study identifies three key mechanisms of language socialization that shape LTI: The use of translanguaging

routines in content instruction; The situating of TI within shared cultural contexts; The bridging of current and future professional selves. Miller et al. (2017) further expand this perspective by arguing that language is not merely a pre-existing cognitive resource but rather an emergent, relational, and human-forming activity. From this position, LTI can be viewed as a form of ethical self-formation, shaped by historical and shifting power relations.

2.3.1 Second/ Foreign Language Teacher Identity

Despite the growing scholarly interest in language teacher identity (LTI), research specifically focused on second/foreign language teacher identity (SLTI) remains relatively limited. Sadeghi and Ghaderi (2022), in their work emphasise that understanding the formation, development, and shaping of L2 teachers' identities is essential for comprehending why some teachers thrive in their profession while others experience burnout. Given the diverse backgrounds of L2 teachers and the multitude of factors influencing their professional and personal development—including individual, institutional, sociocultural, and political elements—SLTI remains a highly complex and dynamic construct. Furthermore, the process of becoming a language teacher involves multiple identity constructions shaped by emotions, agency, and investment, leaving many aspects of SLTI still unexplored.

Ng and Cheung (2022) support this perspective by employing pragmatic, critical, hermeneutic, and phenomenological approaches to define SLTI, analysing its formation through cultural, social, contextual, and political lenses. Their findings further highlight the multifaceted and fluid nature of SLTI. Similarly, after reviewing 61 relevant studies on SLTI, Sadeghi and Bahari (2022) conclude that SLTI is shaped by an interplay of personal, educational, institutional, social, economic, and political factors, while also exerting reciprocal influences on these very factors (see also Shin &

Rubio, 2023). Their review identifies diverse theoretical frameworks and research foci in SLTI studies, emphasising the critical role of emotions and sociocultural factors in identity construction. Additionally, they propose both pedagogical and theoretical recommendations, including encouraging novice teachers to articulate their emotional concerns within and beyond professional settings, and advocating for a multicultural perspective in future SLTI research.

Longitudinal studies on SLTI remain scarce in empirical research. Kanno and Stuart (2011) note that very few studies have tracked the long-term identity development of novice L2 teachers, and even fewer have specifically examined the trajectory of their TI formation. In response, they conducted a longitudinal study investigating two novice teachers, Amy and John, through a situated learning perspective. Their findings reveal a reciprocal relationship between novice teachers' identity construction and their evolving classroom practices. Classroom experiences not only shape Amy and John's emerging teacher identities but are, in turn, influenced by these identities. Kanno and Stuart argue that this TI construction is integral to the learning-to-teach process and call for a deeper understanding of SLTI as a core component of L2 teacher education.

A decade later, Li (2022) revisited this issue from a sociocultural and discourse-oriented perspective. Conducting research on two Chinese student teachers in a UK TESOL program, Li identifies two central themes in novice teacher identity formation: developing practical pedagogical knowledge; Establishing authority through agency. Li underscores the necessity of negotiating and refining personal practical knowledge as part of identity development. She further highlights the importance of sustained identity construction, arguing that teacher educators should integrate identity-awareness training into pedagogical programs. Additionally, Li introduces the concept of a core identity (self), which remains relatively stable but is expressed through multiple "I-positions"

that shift depending on the teaching environment. Li advocates for recognising the dynamic and co-constructed nature of SLTI, emphasising how discourse, identity, positioning, knowledge, and socially distributed cognition are intricately interwoven in interactive teaching contexts.

While Kanno and Stuart (2011) and Li (2022) focus on novice teachers, Yang et al. (2021) broaden the scope by investigating SLTI across different career stages. Their study examines three university-level English teachers in China using a comprehensive perspective grounded in the Dynamic System Model of Role Identity (DSMIR). By employing semi-structured interviews and life stories, they explore the complex relationship between emotions and SLTI formation. Their findings reveal a career-stage identity trajectory, where teachers assume distinct roles over time: companion (early career stage), motivator (mid-career stage), life coach (late career stage). Yang et al. identify a surviving-striving-thriving pattern, demonstrating how emotional and professional identity development are closely intertwined. Their study provides valuable insights into the evolving emotional dimensions of SLTI, underscoring the importance of emotional resilience and adaptive identity negotiation throughout a teacher's career.

The study by Yang et al. (2021) offers significant insights into the intersection of emotions and SLTI, which will be further explored in this research. Additionally, their use of the DSMIR model highlights its potential advantages in studying identity development across different career stages. Recognising its applicability, this study will provide a more detailed analysis of DSMIR in Section 2.5, examining how it can be integrated into the broader theoretical framework of SLTI research.

2.3.2 Chinese Immigrant Teachers' Identity

The globalisation of education has facilitated international teacher mobility and migration, shaping the professional trajectories of immigrant teachers (Liu et al., 2019). Within this context, ethnic communities and their institutions play a crucial role in helping immigrant teachers establish social networks, adapt to new environments, and reaffirm their identities. For example, Lu (2001) found that Chinese heritage schools in Chicago provided a culturally affirming environment that promoted psychological well-being and social integration for new immigrants. These institutions not only support cultural adjustment but also facilitate the validation of identity and social acceptance. However, the influence of ethnic communities on the social mobility of their members, including immigrant teachers and students, remains complex and nuanced (Zhu & Li, 2003).

Immigrant teachers are increasingly recognised as valuable educational resources, contributing to labour market needs, multicultural education, and the integration of immigrant students (Niyubahwe et al., 2013). In the context of this study, Chinese immigrant teachers refer to individuals born and educated in China who have migrated to Scotland. These teachers, within the racialised framework of their host country, are often categorised under broader ethnic labels such as "Asian" or "Chinese" (Ennser-Kananen & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2022). This racialisation process further complicates their professional identity construction, affecting their self-perception, employment opportunities, and legitimacy within the local education system.

Despite their contributions, Chinese immigrant teachers encounter significant challenges related to credential recognition, discrimination, professional legitimacy, and cultural adaptation. Bense (2016), in a review of over 120 studies, underscores the complexity of international teacher migration, noting that most research on immigrant teachers is situated within multidisciplinary

frameworks, including globalisation, immigration, labour markets, and sociocultural and human capital theories. One of the most pressing issues is the devaluation of immigrant teachers' prior qualifications and experience, described by Liu and Li (2023) as a process of "downgrading".

Discrimination and professional marginalisation further exacerbate these challenges. For instance, Elbaz-Luwisch (2004) identifies linguistic, cultural, ideological, and behavioural differences as key barriers faced by immigrant teachers in their host countries. Gendered challenges and fluctuating senses of belonging also complicate their professional transitions. Additionally, Beynon et al. (2004) emphasise the influence of national education policies, which often necessitate immigrant teachers to negotiate between their prior teaching frameworks and the host country's expectations. They argue that teacher training programs, practicum placements, and employment opportunities play a pivotal role in either validating or undermining Chinese immigrant teachers' professional identities. A follow-up study by Beynon et al. (2010) highlights firsthand experiences of racism and discrimination among Chinese immigrant teachers. Their findings suggest that such experiences not only influence identity formation but also enable Chinese teachers to engage in authentic dialogues with students about race, discrimination, and identity negotiation.

Chinese immigrant teachers' identity construction is shaped by the sociocultural and political landscapes of their host countries. However, studies indicate significant variations in how these teachers navigate their professional identities. Wu et al. (2010) found that Chinese American teachers tended to develop a weaker sense of professional identity, as teaching Chinese was often perceived as "secondary" or "voluntary". In contrast, parental influence played a significant role in shaping their professional commitment, reinforcing the importance of maintaining students' language proficiency. Liu et al. (2019), using a critical intercultural paradigm and discursive

pragmatic approach, investigated the beliefs and ideologies of Chinese immigrant teachers in Finland. Their findings indicate a strong sense of marginalisation within the Finnish education system, leading to negative perceptions of Finland and idealisations of other countries. Sun (2012) similarly highlights the linguistic and cultural challenges faced by Chinese teachers in New Zealand, noting that their cultural backgrounds profoundly influence their professional identity and teaching approaches.

Jhagroo's (2016) study further supports this, showing that curricular differences and pedagogical expectations in New Zealand require continuous adaptation, reinforcing the importance of reflective practice in identity negotiation. Similarly, Wang and Du (2014) examined identity shifts among Chinese immigrant teachers in Denmark, observing that their roles transformed through interactions with students. Initially positioned as moral exemplars, subject experts, and authoritative figures, these teachers gradually evolved into learning facilitators and cultural mediators. This transition required negotiation and adaptation, reflecting both struggles and growth in cross-cultural teaching environments.

Similarly, Lau and Gritter (2022) highlight structural differences between Chinese and American teacher training systems, emphasising the challenges Chinese immigrant teachers face when transitioning from a collectivist to an individualist educational paradigm. They argue that while immigrant teachers possess valuable cross-cultural competencies, they require additional training and institutional support to fully integrate into their host education systems. This aligns with findings by Beynon et al. (2004, 2010), who underscore the importance of teacher training programs in validating immigrant teachers' identities. Han and Liu (2021) further reinforce this perspective, examining Chinese immigrant teachers' identity reconstruction in Australia. They argue that self-

identity, social integration, and cultural connectivity are fundamental to identity formation. A lack of self-cohesion can create barriers to identity development, while insufficient communication between teachers and local communities may lead to self-positioning crises.

While many studies highlight challenges and struggles, others emphasise positive identity construction and cultural integration. For example, Jiang (2023) explores the interplay between cultural teaching and identity formation among Chinese immigrant teachers in Canada. Her research illustrates how these teachers bridge language instruction with cultural education, customising their approaches to accommodate students from diverse backgrounds. Confucian teaching principles, particularly the idea of "teaching students according to their aptitude", inform their pedagogical methods. These teachers leverage cultural sensitivity to foster students' intercultural awareness, demonstrating a dynamic interaction between cultural, ethnic, and professional identity.

A recurring theme across studies is that Chinese immigrant teachers' professional legitimacy is not necessarily established through expertise or experience but rather through their ability to adapt to the pedagogical expectations of the host country. This process often places them in a perpetual novice position (Ennser-Kananen & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2022). Liu and Li (2023) further argue that insufficient English proficiency poses a significant barrier to professional identity development. The dominance of English in institutional and societal contexts reinforces hierarchical language structures, compelling immigrant teachers to invest in English acquisition while simultaneously navigating their roles as both Chinese language instructors and English learners.

The notion of "place" is also significant in immigrant teacher identity construction. As Elbaz-Luwisch (2004) argues, workplace dynamics, professional relationships, historical positioning, and power structures all influence how immigrant teachers perceive and assert their identities. Some

scholars propose transnational cooperation and professional mentorship programs as potential solutions, advocating for long-term, targeted support for immigrant teachers (Bense, 2016; Ennser-Kananen & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2022; Liu et al., 2019).

Summary

This section reviewed key literature related to language teacher identity (LTI), second/foreign language teacher identity (SLTI), and Chinese immigrant teacher identity. A historical overview of LTI development (Kayi-Aydar, 2019) and major transformations in the field (Sang, 2022) were discussed, along with potential areas for further research (Varghese et al., 2005). While research on SLTI remains limited, scholars emphasise that, like TI and LTI, SLTI is a complex and multifaceted construct (Sadeghi & Bahari, 2022). There is a recognised need for longitudinal studies and greater attention to the role of classroom practice and personal practical knowledge in shaping SLTI (Li, 2022; Kanno & Stuart, 2011). Additionally, the Dynamic System Model of Role Identity (DSMIR), as utilised by Yang et al. (2021), will be examined in detail in Section 2.5 of this study. Their emphasis on political factors in teacher identity formation (Melczko, 2010; Parkison, 2008) provides valuable insights for this research.

Given the sociopolitical context of Chinese community schools in Scotland, this study must consider the broader political dimensions of language and culture between China and the UK in subsequent analyses. Research by Lu (2001) and Zhu and Li (2003) highlights the pivotal role of Chinese language schools as ethnic community institutions, facilitating social networks, parent-child relationships, and resistance to discrimination. These findings inform this study’s focus on the potential social and cultural roles of Chinese community schools (CCS) in Scotland, broadening the research perspective further.

Furthermore, studies by Beynon (2010) and Jiang (2023) illustrate how lived experiences of Chinese immigrant teachers serve as a key resource in identity construction. Notably, across different national contexts, Chinese immigrant teachers encounter similar challenges in identity development, such as the weekend-only class structure of Chinese schools, which impacts their professional legitimacy and career trajectories. Meanwhile, contextual differences strongly shape teacher identity formation, necessitating a nuanced approach to understanding Chinese community schools and their educators in the UK.

Building on these insights, the next chapter will provide a comprehensive overview of Chinese language teaching, Chinese community schools, and their teachers in the UK, setting the foundation for the subsequent analysis.

2.4 Studies on Chinese Community Schools and Teachers in the UK

This section examines how different sociocultural contexts shape teacher identity formation, with a particular focus on Chinese language teaching (CLT) in the UK and the role of Chinese community schools. Given that Chinese language teachers in the UK operate within a complex, multilingual, and multicultural educational landscape, this section contextualises their experiences within broader discussions on language policy, institutional structures, and geopolitical influences.

2.4.1 Chinese Language Teaching in the UK

The development of Chinese language teaching (CLT) in the UK has followed a fluctuating trajectory, transitioning from a community-based heritage language to an increasingly recognised component of the UK's linguistic landscape. However, this expansion has been shaped by multiple

sociopolitical, economic, and educational factors, influencing both the number of learners and the institutional structures that support CLT.

Zhang and Li (2010) argue that the formal integration of Chinese into British schools began in 2004, marking a turning point in CLT's visibility and institutionalisation. Their research identifies four key sectors involved in Chinese language and cultural education: Primary and secondary education; Higher education; Lifelong learning; Confucius Institutes and community-led initiatives. While some universities offer Chinese as a single or joint honours degree, private institutions and community schools remain crucial in expanding CLT accessibility. Chinese language teachers in the UK can be broadly categorised into three groups: guest teachers from China, Chinese immigrant teachers (native speakers), and non-native Chinese language teachers (Yang, 2019).

The rising number of Chinese language learners and the growing recognition of Chinese in the UK have been documented by Zhu and Li (2014) and Yiakoumetti (2022). They observe that CLT, particularly within complementary schools, has experienced significant growth in the past two decades, a trend likely to continue due to China's economic expansion, increasing Chinese migration, and the growing relevance of Chinese for UK economic and diplomatic interests. Wang and Higgins (2008) further attribute the expansion of CLT in the UK to three primary driving forces: UK government support – including funding and policy initiatives, such as the allocation of over £1 million to support Mandarin teaching and research; Chinese government involvement – particularly through the establishment of Confucius Institutes, facilitated by Hanban (now rebranded as the Centre for Language Education and Cooperation).

These developments align with Zhu and Li's (2014) argument that China promotes CLT as part of its broader geopolitical strategy—seeking to enhance its global influence through language

education. They assert that Confucius Institutes have played a key role in raising awareness of Chinese language and culture in the UK, thereby expanding China's soft power and creating long-term political and economic benefits. However, CLT also serves the UK's geopolitical agenda, as its government seeks to maintain international competitiveness and influence through multilingual education (Tinsley & Board, 2013).

Despite CLT's expansion, several structural and pedagogical challenges persist, particularly in relation to teaching staff, instructional materials, and institutional coordination. Firstly, teacher-related challenges: One of the most significant challenges is the shortage of qualified and experienced teachers who are familiar with the UK's education system and cultural expectations. Many Chinese language teachers struggle with unrealistic expectations of British students, leading to cultural and pedagogical mismatches in the classroom (Ping, 2009). Furthermore, the majority of Chinese teachers work part-time, resulting in job instability and limited career progression. The lack of professional networks and formal training opportunities further exacerbates the situation, making it difficult for teachers to develop professionally and exchange best practices (Hsieh, 2012; Wang & Higgins, 2008; Yang, 2019; Zhang & Li, 2010).

Secondly, issues with teaching materials and curriculum. Existing Chinese language textbooks and curricula often fail to address the specific needs of British learners. Many materials are developed outside the UK, making them less relevant to local classroom contexts (Wang & Higgins, 2008). Additionally, local publishers show little interest in investing in CLT textbooks due to low profit margins, further limiting the availability of culturally and pedagogically appropriate resources.

Thirdly, resource and institutional constraints. The absence of a standardised CLT syllabus and the lack of comprehensive examination frameworks remain major obstacles. There is also

insufficient research and policy discussion on how CLT can be effectively integrated into the broader UK education system. Furthermore, limited collaboration between institutions leads to inefficient use of resources, restricting the potential for coordinated development across CLT providers.

Fourthly, teacher well-being and professional development. Jin et al. (2021) identify several well-being concerns among Chinese language teachers in the UK, including heavy workloads, difficulties in professional accreditation, and perceived low social status. They suggest that developing psychological resilience through positive coping strategies, professional recognition, and social support networks could help teachers navigate these challenges.

Summary

This section has highlighted the evolving role of Chinese as part of the UK's multilingual landscape, acknowledging both its growth and persistent challenges. Multiple studies emphasise the political and economic dimensions of CLT, reinforcing the need to examine how UK-China relations impact teacher identity formation (as discussed in Section 2.3).

Additionally, the development of CLT in the UK is deeply intertwined with Confucius Institutes and Chinese community schools. Before turning to a discussion of Chinese community schools, it is necessary to first introduce Confucius Institutes, as they play a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of Chinese language education. This will provide a more comprehensive understanding of CLT in the UK and its implications for teacher identity construction.

2.4.2 Chinese Community Schools in the UK

The formation of diaspora communities in the UK has led to the establishment of community schools, aimed at preserving language, culture, and religion while also facilitating intergenerational

communication. Li (2006) categorises community schools in the UK into three broad types: Afro-Caribbean community schools; Muslim schools; Other immigrant community schools (e.g., Chinese and Turkish community schools). For instance, during the 1960s and 1970s, Black and Muslim communities founded community schools to maintain their linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage, while also addressing issues of racism and marginalisation. Despite their differences, all three categories share a common objective: they were established to fulfil educational and cultural needs unmet by the mainstream education system (Li, 2006). These schools are products of historical migration patterns and contemporary transnational mobility, shaped by sociopolitical attitudes towards language and culture. Given that they typically operate outside mainstream school hours (on Saturdays or Sundays), they are often referred to as complementary schools or supplementary schools (Creese & Martin, 2006; Hancock & Hancock, 2021).

Community schools have several important meanings, for example, they make significant contributions to the linguistic and cultural education achievements of children from minority ethnic groups and also contribute to the negotiation of their ethnic identity; they simulate the public's awareness of multilingual and multicultural realities; they promote the development of political, social and economic life in the wider community (Creese & Martin, 2006; Li, 2006).

Chinese community schools (CCSs) have a long-standing presence in the UK, dating back to the 1970s, when they were primarily established to teach British-born Chinese (BBC) children about Chinese language and culture (Li, 2003). The first CCS in Scotland was founded in Glasgow in 1973, followed by others in Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Dundee (Hancock, 2014). The emergence of CCSs reflects both the self-reliance of British Chinese communities and the limitations of the UK's mainstream education system in meeting the needs of ethnic minority students (Li, 1993). Unlike

mainstream schools, CCSs group students based on language proficiency rather than age, and their curricula remain adaptable to changing community needs (Hancock, 2012; Li, 1993).

Hancock (2014) highlights that the status of community languages is shaped by socio-political and economic factors, with power dynamics influencing biliteracy development. Historically, CCSs in the UK primarily taught Cantonese, reflecting the fact that early Chinese immigrants originated mostly from Hong Kong and southern China (Li, 2003; Francis et al., 2010). However, in recent decades, Putonghua (Mandarin) has gained prominence due to China's economic rise and increased migration from mainland China (Huang, 2020). Therefore, the linguistic landscape of the Chinese community in the UK can be categorised into three main groups, first is Cantonese – spoken predominantly by Hong Kong immigrants and their descendants. The second type is Putonghua/Mandarin – the official language of China, used by mainland Chinese immigrants and some recent arrivals from Hong Kong. Other Chinese dialects (e.g., Wu, Hakka) – primarily used within families or specific ethnic subgroups. A key linguistic distinction between Cantonese and Mandarin lies in their spoken and written forms. Cantonese is traditionally written in traditional Chinese characters, whereas Mandarin is typically written in simplified characters (Huang, 2020). This linguistic diversity presents challenges for CCSs, as students come from a wide range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including native speakers of Mandarin, Cantonese, and local English-speaking students (Hancock, 2021).

CCSs serve multiple purposes, benefiting both students and parents in various ways, such as preserving and transmitting heritage culture to younger generations; Facilitating intergenerational communication between British-born Chinese (BBC) and their relatives; Enhancing BBC students' linguistic proficiency, expanding their cultural and economic opportunities; Providing social capital

by fostering cultural connections, role models, and community engagement (Francis et al., 2009; Lu, 2001; Zhu & Li, 2003); Creating a support network for Chinese parents, offering a space for information exchange and collective parenting strategies (Francis et al., 2009; 2010); Raising awareness of multilingualism and multiculturalism, contributing to the political, social, and economic integration of Chinese communities in the UK (Yiakoumetti, 2022).

Despite their contributions, CCSs face multiple challenges beyond the teacher and curriculum issues discussed in Section 2.4.1. The first of these is language ideology and power dynamics. The shift from Cantonese to Mandarin in most CCSs, driven by geopolitical factors and changing migration patterns, has led to a restructuring of linguistic spaces (Li, 2003; Huang, 2020). While some view CCSs as safe spaces for heritage language preservation, others see them as sites of linguistic and cultural negotiation. The transition to Mandarin instruction has created tensions, particularly among families where Cantonese or other dialects remain dominant (Zhu & Li, 2003).

The second one concerns pedagogical limitations. Ganassin (2019) found that CCSs often employ textbook-centred curricula that allow little room for student agency or critical engagement. Teachers, moreover, have limited involvement in school decision-making. Hancock (2012) further notes that CCSs instruction remain highly traditional, relying on rote memorisation and teacher-centred methods such as dictation and repetition-based learning. These methods diverge from the pedagogical approaches of mainstream UK schools, leading to limited recognition of CCS students' linguistic achievements in formal education settings (Hancock, 2012).

The next concern are institutional and financial constraints. CCSs struggle with insufficient funding, relying on self-funding, local government grants, and support from the Chinese consulate

(Hancock, 2014; 2019). Additionally, coordination between CCSs and mainstream institutions remains limited, restricting opportunities for resource-sharing and institutional recognition.

Despite the growing academic interest in Chinese community schools, Scotland remains largely underrepresented in existing research (Archer & Francis, 2006; Francis et al., 2010). While Yiakoumetti (2022) calls for greater institutional recognition and policy reform to support complementary schools, Hancock (2012; 2014) highlights that CCSs in Scotland have received minimal scholarly attention, underscoring the importance of this study.

2.5 Review of Theoretical and Methodological Literature

Building upon the review of identity studies and teacher identity research, this section introduces the theoretical frameworks that underpin this study: the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI). Before examining DSMRI in detail, this section first provides an overview of Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST), which serves as DSMRI's conceptual foundation.

2.5.1 Complex Dynamic Systems Theory

Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST), originally conceptualised by Larsen-Freeman (1997), was initially applied in second language acquisition (SLA) research, where it framed language, language use, and language acquisition as inherently complex and dynamic processes. Meanwhile, a core tenet of CDST is its emphasis on context as a fundamental factor in understanding developmental processes (Hiver et al., 2021). Over time, CDST has expanded beyond SLA to examine a range of educational phenomena, including learner agency (Larsen-Freeman, 2019), teacher professional development (Garner & Kaplan, 2021), language teacher well-being (Sulis et al.,

2021), and teacher identity formation (Garner & Kaplan, 2018; Henry, 2016; Liu & Li, 2023; Pilcher, 2023).

Kiss's (2012) summarised six features of CDST, namely sensitivity to initial conditions, unpredictability, having a nested structure, showing a non-hierarchical network system, making use of feedback loops, and emergence of self-organisation. Additionally, as Garner and Kaplan's (2021) generalisation of CDST, complex systems are composed of many interacting components, with dynamics reflecting the fact that the system is constantly changing over time in response to changing conditions and parameters. The system may adapt by exhibiting new patterns of behaviour designed to meet the demands of the environment and may sometimes change the environment (also see Larsen-Freeman, 2020). The interactions between system components produce behaviour that cannot be fully described by a linear combination of components. As the interrelationships between system components change over time, the environment in which the CDST exists changes, and new patterns of system behaviour emerge. Interdependencies between elements within the system interact with conditions outside the system, leading to nonlinear and unpredictable effects. This causes two systems that differ only slightly in their initial conditions to exhibit different outcomes. The characteristics of complex dynamic systems are such that they exhibit features that may constitute contradictory behaviour: the system is not completely predictable, but it exhibits certain patterns or universal laws; it is constantly changing due to internal processes or external perturbations, but it can still exhibit stability (Clarke and Collins, 2007).

Complex system behaviour can be understood in a probabilistic way; specific system states called attractors reflect boundary conditions and elemental configurations that may maintain similar behaviour over time and thus appear stable. Even such 'dynamically stable' states are constantly

emerging and have the potential to change in the face of changing events. Under certain conditions, any complex dynamic system can become unstable, with specific configurations that are unlikely to hold (also see Larsen-Freeman, 2013). In another word, CDST is open-ended, non-hierarchical, non-linear, unstable, and boundless, growing and moving in various directions, making it challenging to predict and control. It also operates as an ecosystem and relational system, requiring a careful examination of the relationships between different parts of the complex system to fully comprehend it (Larsen-Freeman, 2019; Nall & Hiratsuka, 2023).

As discussed in Sections 2.1.3 and 2.2.2, multiple theoretical perspectives have been employed to study identity and TI formation. For instance, Bucholtz and Hall (2004), from a linguistic anthropological perspective, argue that identity is a semiotic process shaped by sociopolitical relationships within specific contexts. By integrating CDST principles into TI research, a clearer understanding emerges of how teacher identity evolves as a dynamic and contextually embedded construct. Given the forthcoming section's introduction to the DSMRI framework, the focus will now shift to discussing the aspects of identity associated with CDST, namely, iterative change, attractors and repellors, and control parameters (Kaplan & Garner, 2017).

The Iterative Character of Change in Complex Systems

The change in CDST occurs in an iterative (rather than repetitive) manner, implying that any state of the system arises based on its preceding state, and serves as a foundation for the next state. Therefore, CDST exists in a state of continuous emergence, and new states appear as stability of the system if they involve minor changes in system elements and their relationships ('dynamically stable') (Larsen-Freeman, 2020). However, this ongoing emergence also signifies that even in the most seemingly stable systems, the potential for more significant changes always persists. This is

particularly true due to the interdependent relationships among system elements, where momentary influences on different elements (some of which might seem trivial) reverberate throughout the entire system and could potentially lead to abrupt and fundamental shifts in the system's subsequent iterations under certain conditions (i.e., imagine butterfly effect) (Larsen-Freeman, 2007, 2020).

Attractors and Repellors

In a complex dynamic system, not all states are equally stable. Some states tend to hold the system in balance---these are called attractors. When elements within the system reinforce each other through positive feedback, the system gradually settles into one of these attractor states. External conditions can also guide the system toward stability. In essence, an attractor state is a relatively steady condition shaped by both internal dynamics and outside influences. Some attractors are stronger and harder to disrupt than others (Hiver, 2014).

Conversely, some system states are highly unstable, causing the system to reorganise itself to avoid them. These are repellors. In repellor states, negative feedback loops prevail: the activation of one element triggers adverse effects in others, increasing tension and instability. As these negative feedback loops persist, the system naturally self-0rganises to move away from the repellor state (Kunnen & van Geert, 2012).

Control Parameters

Control parameters define the boundaries and guiding principles that shape the behaviour of a complex dynamic system. Unlike an independent variable in a simple system, which exerts a deterministic causal influence, a control parameter in a complex system does not predetermine or encode a fixed pattern of system behaviour. Instead, it orients the system within a range of possible states or patterns, influencing how the system evolves and adapts over time. Rather than operating in

a linear or additive manner, control parameters interact with one another, forming dynamic configurations that can give rise to nonlinear or even chaotic system behaviour. Although control parameters do not dictate specific outcomes, they can reach critical thresholds that trigger phase transitions, leading to significant shifts in system behaviour. In this way, control parameters serve a fundamental role in shaping the identity and dynamics of a given CDS, offering insight into the forces, constraints, and structural properties that both enable and limit system behaviour (Guastello & Leibovitch, 2009).

In summary, this section has briefly introduced Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) and the perspective of considering identity research as a form of CDST. It has also highlighted elements within CDST that are relevant to identity, such as iterative change, attractors, and repellors. These elements are closely connected to the DSMRI framework discussed in the next section of this study.

2.5.2 The Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity

The Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI) is a comprehensive and integrated metatheoretical framework developed by Kaplan and Garner (2017). Its objective is to capture the intricate interplay of content, structure, and process in the formation of identity within diverse social-cultural contexts. Specifically, DSMRI draws upon the Complex Dynamic Systems theory, integrating psychology, social psychology, symbolic interactionism, and social-cultural theory. DSMRI emphasises that TI is rooted in an individual’s interpretation of the teacher role within their lived context (Garner & Kaplan, 2018). There are four central components in DSMRI that are conceptually constructed, highly interdependent, and partially overlapping: (a) Ontological and

Epistemological beliefs; (b) Purpose and Goals; (c) Self-perceptions and Self-definitions; (d) Perceived action possibilities (Figure 1).

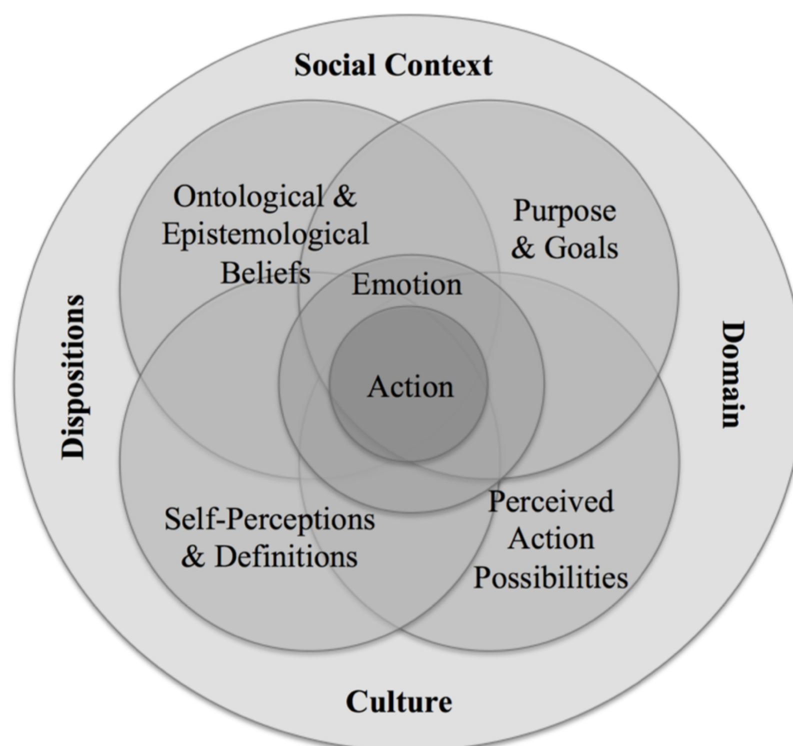

Figure 2.2 The Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI), redrawn from Kaplan and Garner (2017)

Ontological beliefs refer to the individual's knowledge and the corresponding emotions they hold to be true about the world related to their role (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). An individual's ontological beliefs encompass their knowledge and assumptions regarding cause and effect within a specific context. For CCS teachers, this may include their assumptions, knowledge, and beliefs about any aspects of the world related to classroom teaching effectiveness, including but not limited to textbook content, teaching materials, student characteristics, as well as more general beliefs regarding student learning and achievement, and the role of parents in students' education.

Epistemological beliefs involve the individual's perception of certainty, complexity, and the credibility of the sources of their ontological knowledge, along with the emotions linked to these beliefs (Peng & Geng, 2025). For example, CCS teachers may believe that traditional teaching methods are also effective, but considering the characteristics of their students, they may have uncertainties about the effectiveness of this teaching approach.

Purpose and goals encompass the individual's knowledge and support of an overarching purpose for their role, as well as the emotions associated with these purposes and goals (Garner & Kaplan, 2018). Goals can vary along multiple dimensions, such as intrinsic and extrinsic goals, self-oriented and other-oriented goals, proximal and distal goals. For instance, when teachers come to CCS to teach, some may do so to educate their children, while others may do so to impart the Chinese language and culture.

Self-perceptions and self-definitions encompass the individual's understanding of their personal and social attributes and characteristics that they deem relevant when assuming the role, along with the emotions associated with these self-perceptions and self-definitions (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). For example, CCS teachers may define themselves by gender, position in the school (i.e., James, male, the director of the CCS). Other elements within this component may encompass the teacher's self-perceived physical, cognitive, social, or other personal attributes, as well as the emotions associated with them. This may include how the teacher defines themselves, such as being curious, committed to certain values, or endorsing specific interests. This component also relates to self-concept, self-efficacy, self-categorisation and group membership.

Perceived action possibilities refer to the strategies and behaviours that individuals perceive as available to them to pursue their goals (purpose and goals) within their role. These perceptions are

influenced by their interpretation of the situation (ontological and epistemological beliefs) and their understanding of themselves within that situation (self-perceptions and self-definitions) (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). For example, CCS teachers aim to enhance students' academic performance (purpose and goals). Although teachers may have concerns about their ability to handle new teaching methods (self-perceptions), they believe that educational reforms are imperative (ontological/epistemological beliefs), and they continuously experiment and try new approaches in their practice (action).

Figure 2.2 presents the highly interdependent and partially overlapping relationships among the four components described above, with action positioned at the centre. These relationships are dynamic, continuous, nonlinear, uncertain, and chaotic. The role identity system is strongly influenced by the context, and it is also domain-specific (e.g., school, work, family; science, humanities, social science). It is mediated by cultural meanings and influenced by individual implicit dispositions, such as temperament, repressed emotions, and conditioned responses (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). The DSMRI components (ontological and epistemological beliefs, purpose and goals, self-definitions and self-perceptions, and action possibilities) associated with any given role will vary among CCS teachers and across different contexts. Additionally, there will be variations between the multiple roles held by Chinese teachers. This provides an opportunity to explore and investigate the structure of role identity.

The DSMRI emphasises three comprehensive aspects of the role identity system: content—the quantity, type, and complexity of the elements, like knowledge, beliefs, goals, self-perceptions; structure—the degree of harmony, alignments, integration, and tension within and between components; process—the dynamic nature of change in the content and structure of the role identity components (Garner & Kaplan, 2018; Kaplan & Garner, 2017). The control parameters in DSMRI

establish boundaries in which an identity system is formed, but do not impose restrictions on the system or determine its behaviour in a deterministic manner. Instead, they emphasise the continuous emergence of role identity. Domain means a specific area of interest or expertise relevant to role identity (e.g., education, law). Disposition refers to an individual's inherent physical and psychological tendencies, including emotional conditioning and implicit personality traits. Culture encompasses normative processes, practices, values, and associated meanings and beliefs. Social context refers to the temporal, spatial, and situational factors in which a role identity is constructed (Brock, 2020).

In addition to works published by Kaplan and Garner, DSMRI has been applied by empirical researchers in various fields, including mathematics education (Heffernan & Newton, 2019), translation studies (Chen & Huang, 2022), and science teaching (Hathcock et al., 2020). For example, Yang et al. (2021) utilised DSMRI to explore identity development among three experienced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in China, identifying a progression of identities at different career stages: companion in the early stage, motivator in the middle stage, and life coach in later years. In contrast to studies focusing on experienced teachers, Wang et al. (2021) applied the DSMRI framework to examine the evolving identity construction of a novice Chinese EFL teacher across three phases: pre-practicum, practicum, and the first year of teaching. Their findings highlighted dynamic shifts in the teacher's beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, and action possibilities, underscoring DSMRI's utility for tracking professional growth and identity development among language teachers.

While the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI) provides a powerful and integrative framework for conceptualising teacher identity as an emergent, dynamic, and action-

oriented system (Kaplan & Garner, 2017), it is not without limitations and warrants critical consideration.

First, as a meta-theoretical framework, DSMRI is primarily intended as a heuristic device rather than a predictive model (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). This flexibility enables its application across diverse contexts; however, it also places considerable interpretive responsibility on the researcher. In the absence of clearly specified procedures for operationalising its core components, researchers must make context-dependent analytical decisions, which may limit the comparability and transparency of empirical studies.

Second, although DSMRI incorporates contextual influences through the notion of "control parameters," its analytical emphasis tends to focus on the internal configuration of identity systems. As a result, broader structural dimensions—such as institutional hierarchies, power relations, and ideological discourses—may not be sufficiently foregrounded. This concern resonates with recent work by Hong et al. (2024), who argue for a reconceptualisation of teacher identity that more explicitly accounts for the interplay of social, cultural, and historical forces, as well as the intersection of multiple identity positions.

Third, while DSMRI's focus on non-linear emergence provides valuable insight into the fluid and evolving nature of identity, it offers relatively limited conceptual tools for examining issues of recognition and legitimacy. In marginalised or peripheral educational contexts, teacher identity is not only shaped by internal system dynamics but also contingent upon external validation and institutional positioning (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004). The extent to which such processes of recognition function as enabling or constraining conditions remains underexplored within the original DSMRI formulation.

Notwithstanding these limitations, DSMRI remains particularly well suited to the present study. Compared to more static or stage-based models of teacher identity, DSMRI offers a nuanced framework for capturing the dynamic interplay between beliefs, emotions, goals, and practices, as well as the non-linear trajectories through which teacher identity develops. This is especially relevant in community language school contexts, where teachers often navigate multiple roles, institutional spaces, and cultural expectations simultaneously. The model's emphasis on emergence and system interaction enables a more fine-grained analysis of how identity is continuously negotiated across personal, relational, and contextual dimensions.

Building on the limitations identified above, this study also seeks to extend DSMRI by foregrounding the role of relational and contextual dynamics in shaping teacher identity. In particular, it highlights how identity construction in marginalised educational settings is deeply embedded in interactions with significant others and influenced by broader socio-institutional conditions. In doing so, the study contributes to the further development of DSMRI as a framework capable of accounting for both internal system dynamics and the external conditions under which teacher identity emerges and evolves.

Chapter 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The previous two chapters outlined the background, motivation, research questions, and aims of this study (Chapter 1), as well as a literature review on identity, teacher identity, and community language schools (Chapter 2). Building on this, the present chapter begins by discussing the research questions and aims (Section 3.1.1), followed by an account of participant recruitment and sampling strategies (Section 3.1.2). It then introduces the key concepts underpinning case study research (Section 3.1.3), demonstrating its alignment with the nature of this study.

Section 3.2 offers a detailed description of the research site and the school context, enabling readers to gain a clearer understanding of the study setting. The primary data collection method, semi-structured interviews, in which metaphors are employed to prompt participants' deeper reflection on the interview questions (Section 3.3). Section 3.4 explains the data analysis procedures, with particular attention to the coding process guided by the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI). Finally, Section 3.5 discusses the measures taken to ensure the credibility and reliability of the research, along with ethical considerations, researcher reflections, and study limitations.

3.1 Research Philosophy and Design

This section first introduces the philosophical assumptions underpinning the study before outlining the research aims, questions, and strategies. The research aims and questions serve as the foundation for this study, guiding its design and implementation. This section first outlines the two overarching aims and corresponding research questions that frame the study. It then introduces the

role of gatekeepers, sampling strategies, and participant recruitment methods, followed by an overview of the case study approach.

3.1.1 Ontological and Epistemological Positioning

This study is informed by a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology, which together provide a coherent foundation for examining teacher identity as a dynamic and contextually situated phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

From a constructivist ontological perspective, reality is understood as multiple, socially constructed, and continuously negotiated rather than fixed or objectively given (Richards, 2003). In this study, teacher identity is therefore not treated as a stable internal attribute, but as an emergent and evolving system shaped through ongoing interactions between individuals and their social, cultural, and institutional environments. This position is consistent with the view that individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences, resulting in a plurality of perspectives rather than a single objective reality (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Epistemologically, the study adopts an interpretivist stance, which assumes that knowledge is co-constructed through the meanings individuals attribute to their experiences (Schwandt, 2015). This perspective is particularly well suited to research on teacher identity, as it foregrounds participants' sense-making processes and emotional engagements. Rather than seeking generalisable statements, the study aims to develop an in-depth understanding of how Chinese community language school teachers in Scotland negotiate their role identities within specific socio-professional contexts (Flick, 2018).

These philosophical assumptions inform the overall research design, data collection, and analysis. A qualitative case study approach is adopted in line with the interpretivist emphasis on depth and contextual understanding (Yin, 2018), enabling a detailed exploration of participants' lived experiences. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews and metaphor elicitation, both of which are well suited to capturing the nuanced beliefs, self-perceptions, and emotional dimensions embedded in identity construction (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

For data analysis, the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI) is employed as an interpretive framework to examine the interrelationships among identity components and their development over time. Consistent with the study's philosophical positioning, the analysis does not aim to produce an objective or definitive account; rather, it offers a theoretically informed interpretation (Bryman, 2016) of how teacher identity emerges through the dynamic interplay between individual agency and contextual conditions.

3.1.2 Research Aims and Questions

This study investigates the identity formation of Chinese Community School (CCS) teachers in Scotland, with a particular attention to the processes, characteristics, and influencing factors shaping their professional identities. The research is driven by two central aims:

1. To examine the processes of teacher identity formation in CCSs in Scotland, identifying its defining characteristics and the key influencing factors.

2. To explore how CCS teachers' identity formation and professional development can be better supported and facilitated.

To achieve these aims, the study considers several interrelated aspects, including exploring teachers' life stories, educational backgrounds, and professional experiences to understand how individuals with diverse experiences perceive identity development and transformation; Identifying critical incidents and tensions encountered by teachers during the identity construction process and analysing the strategies employed to navigate them; Assessing the impact of relationships with students, colleagues, parents, and school leaders on teachers' emotions and identity development; Investigating the influence of institutional contexts- such as leadership practices, policies, and school culture, on TI formation; Conducting comparative analyses of immigrant and international student teachers, to identify patterns, similarities and divergences in identity construction.

The research is structured around the following two key research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What are the defining characteristics of the identity construction process among CCSS teachers in Scotland?

RQ2: How do contextual factors influence the formation and development of CCS teachers' role identities?

The first research question emphasises teachers' personal narratives, aiming to capture how they construct, negotiate and sometimes reconfigure their identities within their professional roles. The second question shifts the focus to institutional and sociocultural contexts, examining how structural forces interact with individual agency in shaping teacher identity. In order to address these questions, they study adopts an interpretive research approach, which is well-suited to exploring the subjective experiences and meaning-making practices of individual teachers. Semi-structured interviews are employed as the primary method of data collection, enabling in-depth engagement with participants' perceptions, beliefs, and identity formation processes.

3.1.3 The Gatekeeper, Sampling and Recruitment Strategies

This section outlines the gatekeeping, sampling, and recruitment strategies employed in this study. These procedures ensured that participants were appropriately selected and that the research was conducted ethically and systematically. Together, they provided a structured approach to accessing participants, maintaining trust and collecting rich and relevant data.

Gatekeepers

Gatekeepers are individuals who control researchers' access to participants (Miller & Bell, 2012). Their involvement is essential for enabling access, yet it can also introduce potential bias or constraint (Cree et al., 2002; Robinson, 2014). Sixsmith et al. (2003) emphasise the need to approach gatekeepers with respect and caution to maintain objectivity and ethical integrity. Seidman (2019) identifies three types of gatekeepers: formal, informal and self-appointed.

In this study, the Vice Principal of the Chinese community school acted as the formal gatekeeper, facilitating access to participants (Roulston, 2022). The Vice Principal was also interviewed to provide contextual insight but did not recommend teachers for participation to minimise power imbalances and preserve voluntariness (Seidman, 2019). Ethical considerations, including informed consent, autonomy, and confidentiality were closely observed and further discussed in Section 3.5.

Sampling Strategy

Following the establishment of gatekeeping arrangements, purposeful sampling was used to identify information-rich participants (Patton, 2014). This approach is particularly suitable for qualitative research that seeks depth and contextual understanding rather than statistical representativeness.

Teachers from one Chinese community school in Scotland were selected based on their relevance to the research focus and accessibility. The study included the Vice Principal, academic directors, and around twenty teachers, representing diversity in gender, teaching experience, and cultural background. The sample size was determined by the need for analytic depth, aligning with Robinson's (2014) suggestion that qualitative studies often achieve adequacy with 3 to 16 participants.

Recruitment Strategy

Participant recruitment followed ethical approval from the Institute of Education Ethics Committee at the University of Strathclyde. Recruitment was conducted through email communication and posters distributed with the Vice Principal's assistance (see Appendices A-C). Interested teachers contacted the researcher via email or in person, received detailed information sheets, and provided written informed consent prior to interviews (see Appendices D-E).

To ensure transparency and comfort, confidentiality measures were clearly explained. Participants were assured that pseudonyms would be used and that no data would be shared with school administrators. These efforts aimed to foster openness and trust throughout the recruitment and data collection process.

An Introduction to Participants

Using the recruitment strategies outlined above, a total of 22 participants were recruited for this study. Of these, three were male (NT-2, NT-4, ET-12) and nineteen were female, reflecting the gendered nature of the teaching profession (Lahelma, 2000). Participants ranged in age from their 20s to 60s. Among them, three were international students (NT-4, NT-6, ET-8), while the remaining

nineteen were immigrants residing in Scotland. Fifteen participants were also parents, highlighting the dual role of many teachers in community schools.

Participants came from diverse professional backgrounds, with only four (ET-3, ET-8, ET-9, NT-4) having a background relating to education or teaching. Educational qualifications also varied, though most held a master's degree (11), followed by undergraduate degrees (8); only three participants (NT-4, ET-2, ET-3) held doctoral degrees. Further demographic details are presented in the table below.

Table 3.1 Participant Demographics

Variable	Category / Range	Number of Participants (N=22)
Gender	Female	19
	Male	3 (NT-2, NT-4, ET-12)
Age	20s to 60s	All participants
Residency Status	Immigrants in Scotland	19
	International Students	3 (NT-4, NT-6, ET-8)
Parental Status	Parents	15
Educational Background	Doctorate	3 (NT-4, ET-2, ET-3)
	Master's Degree	11
	Undergraduate Degree	8
Professional Background	Related to Education/Teaching	4 (ET-3, ET-8, ET-9, NT-4)
	Non-Education Background	18
Interview Format	Online	17
	Face-to-Face	5
Teaching Experience	Novice Teacher	6
	Experienced Teacher	16

3.1.4 The Case Study Research

This study purposefully selected a Chinese community school located in Scotland as the research site, to listen to the teachers' voices and capture their personal stories. Through this approach, the study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of how teacher identity is constructed and developed within this specific context. The following section outlines the conceptual and methodology basis of the case study research to contextualise the study.

Definition of Case Study Research

Following Yin's (2018) recommendation, this study adopts the term "Case Study Research" to emphasise methodological rigour. While "case study" is widely used, "case study research" highlights a structured and systematic design.

Case study research is commonly defined as the in-depth exploration of a bounded system, such as an individual, organisation, or community, within its real-life context (Bryman, 2016; Denscombe, 2017; Thomas, 2021). It allows researchers to investigate complex phenomena holistically, capturing relationships, experiences and process.

Debates persist regarding its representativeness and generalisability. Critics argue that case studies lack generalisability (Bryman, 2016), while others contend that they offer theoretical and conceptual insights through analytical generalisation (Denscombe, 2017; Yin, 2018). This view aligns with the present study, which values contextual depth over statistical breadth.

Rationale for Case Study Research

The adoption of case study research is justified by its flexibility and compatibility with the research aims. As a methodological framework, it accommodates multiple data sources and allows

an in-depth exploration of identity formation within authentic educational settings (Hong & Francis, 2018; Thomsas, 2021).

The research question, how teacher identity formation occurs within Chinese community schools in Scotland, meets Yin's (2018) criteria for case study research: it investigates a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context where variables cannot be controlled, requiring evidence from multiple sources such as interviews and documents. Consequently, this design is well suited to examine how teachers' identities are shaped within community-based educational environments.

Benefits and limitations of case study research

Case study research offers several advantages relevant to this study. It supports detailed exploration of naturally occurring phenomena, provides methodological flexibility, and integrates qualitative approaches essential for understanding teachers' lived experiences (Denscombe, 2017). It also facilitates a holistic view of social processes by situating them in context.

However, challenges include defining clear case boundaries, addressing researcher bias and managing limited generalisability (Bryman, 2016; Denscombe, 2017). To mitigate these, this study established explicit parameters for the case, secured ethical approval through formal committee, and ensured the data sources to enhance validity.

Overall, case study research provides a robust framework for examining identity formation among Chinese community schoolteachers in Scotland, balancing contextual richness with methodological rigour (Yin, 2018; Thomas,2021).

3.2 Introduction to Research Site and the School Context

As previously mentioned, pseudonyms are used in this study to protect participant confidentiality. The term “Base City” refers to the location where the research was conducted, while “CCSS” (Chinese Community School in Scotland) denotes the specific school in which the participants are based. The importance of context in teacher identity (TI) formation has been highlighted in existing literature (e.g., Kaplan & Garner, 2017; Olsen et al., 2022). Accordingly, this section provides a detailed description of Base City and CCSS, aiming to identify key contextual factors that influence the identity construction of CCS teachers.

3.2.1 Introduction to Research Site

According to National Records of Scotland (2022), the country has 1,994 primary schools serving 388,920 students with 25,451 teachers, 358 secondary schools accommodating 309,133 students with 24,874 teachers, and 109 special schools educating 7,821 students with 2,097 teachers, with a total of 5,242 students of Chinese ethnicity (2,602 females and 2,640 males). The pupil-teacher ratio in primary, secondary, and special schools is 15.3, 12.4, and 3.7, respectively. Scotland is currently experiencing demographic shifts, including a rising aging population and a declining birth rate, which are beginning to affect the labour market. However, Base City exhibits a contrasting demographic trend, primarily driven by immigration, which has increased population diversity. The largest occupational sector in Base City is now science, research, engineering, and technology professionals, with a growing number of young working-age individuals, contributing to employment growth and the expansion of the knowledge economy.

As one of Scotland's largest urban centres, Base City has a population exceeding 600,000[1] and an education system comprising over 140 primary schools, over 30 secondary schools, and over 20 additional support-for-learning schools, with a total student population of over 70,000, including over 40,000 primary students, nearly 30,000 secondary students, and over 1,500 students in additional support needs schools, supported by nearly 6,000 teachers. Base City is linguistically diverse, with over 100 languages spoken in schools, the most common after English being Urdu, Arabic, Polish, Punjabi, and Chinese (Mandarin/Cantonese), and more than 25% of students speaking English as an additional language. The city prioritises inclusive, high-quality education and lifelong learning, and its five-year strategic plan (2022-2027) focuses on reducing poverty and inequality, enhancing educational opportunities, and improving student attainment and well-being.

The selection of Base City as the research site was based on three primary considerations: first, although CCSS may not fully represent all Scottish Chinese community schools, it plays a crucial role in supplementary education for the Chinese community in Base City, reflecting the historical and cultural background of Chinese language education in Scotland. Second, personal and practical considerations influenced this decision, as discussed in Chapter 1, where the researcher's educational background and teaching experience shaped a strong academic interest in Chinese community schooling, providing familiarity with the CCS context and enhancing the study's depth and relevance. Third, geographical proximity and accessibility played a role, as the researcher is based at a university near Base City, allowing for regular field visits, in-depth engagement with participants, and ease of data collection. The accessibility of transportation and established professional

[1] The data for this section was sourced from the official website of Base City. However, to protect the privacy of the participants, certain identifiable information has been modified. For example, specific URLs have been omitted, and numerical values have been anonymised or blurred.

networks—including connections with the Vice Principal and teachers of CCSS—further facilitated participant recruitment and data collection. Furthermore, Base City's unique socio-economic and cultural characteristics offer a rich context for investigating the evolving roles and identities of CCS teachers, as well as their relationships with students, parents, and the broader community.

3.2.2 Introduction to the School Context

Contextual data on CCSS were collected through on-site observations, interviews with the Vice Principal and two curricular coordinators, and an analysis of school documents (e.g., the school website, internal emails, and reports). Themes emerging from these sources were synthesised to illustrate the perceived characteristics of the school environment and its potential influence on teacher identity (TI) formation.

Description of CCSS and Surroundings

CCSS is one of the largest Chinese community schools[2] in Scotland, surpassing most other CCSs in student and teacher population. Like most community schools in the UK, CCSS is a charity organisation and does not have its own building; instead, it operates within the facilities of a local college. Located on the outskirts of Base City, it is relatively close to the city centre, with a nearby train station. The school is surrounded by residential areas, with no commercial establishments such as shopping malls or restaurants nearby, creating a quiet environment. Most students are driven to school by their parents, leading to traffic congestion during drop-off and pick-up times. Additionally, some students commute via public buses and trains, though the school has received complaints from nearby residents regarding traffic issues.

[2] I have chosen not to explicitly state the exact number of students and teachers at CCSS to protect the privacy of participants.

The teaching building is a modern four-story structure with an elevator. Each classroom is equipped with a projector, computer, and electronic whiteboard, with local school administrators providing accounts and passwords for Chinese teachers to access these devices. Class sizes are typically limited to 25 students, and the classrooms are sufficiently spacious. The corridors and classroom walls display handmade crafts by local school students, though there are no artworks from CCSS students. A communal learning area in the building is equipped with computers and printers, with dedicated CCSS personnel managing printing services for teachers. Although the building includes a fitness room, it is not accessible to the public. There is a small outdoor green space adjacent to the building, but there is no dedicated sports field, and Chinese students are not permitted by CCSS leadership to play outside during school hours.

Description of Key Relevant Individuals

CCSS is overseen by a management committee and a parent committee. The leadership team comprises a principal, two Vice Principals, and four academic coordinators, supported by staff members responsible for finance, administration, secretarial tasks, and extracurricular events such as the talent show.

Teaching staff are drawn primarily from two groups: parents of CCSS students and Chinese international students (master's and doctoral candidates studying in Scotland). Teachers come from diverse academic and professional backgrounds, many unrelated to education. The majority are novice teachers without prior teaching experience, which contributes to a relatively high turnover rate. Parent-teachers, who typically have full-time employment elsewhere, are more stable in their roles.

Most classes are conducted in Mandarin, though a smaller number are delivered in Cantonese, and a few targets local Scottish children through English-medium Chinese lessons or online courses. While some teachers (around 10%) hold a Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), many do not. Others hold Chinese teaching credentials, Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (TCSOL) certificates, or other relevant qualifications, which are not officially recognised by local authorities.

According to interviews with the Vice Principal and academic coordinators, CCSS recruitment emphasises responsibility, enthusiasm, and possession of a university degree as minimum criteria. Ideally, candidates should also have teaching experience, a National Insurance number, and the capacity for long-term commitment. Like many CCSs, CCSS organises classes according to students' proficiency rather than age, which sometimes results in mixed-age groups, where teenagers may be placed in the same class as much younger children. Each teacher is supported by a teaching assistant, typically a senior CCSS student, graduate, or parent, who assists with grading, classroom management, and general instructional support.

Teaching and Learning

CCSS utilises two primary types of textbooks: one for regular classroom instruction and the other for exam preparation. Both are developed and published in China. For example, *Zhongwen*, compiled by Ji'nan University, serves as the core instructional material for regular coursework and is accompanied by exercise books. Meanwhile, HSK Standard Course is designated for Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK[3]) preparation, also supplemented with practice materials. In addition, CCSS

[3] HSK stands for "Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi," which translates to "Chinese Proficiency Test." It is a standardised test that assesses proficiency in the Chinese language. It can be compared to the IELTS or TOEFL exams for English proficiency.

has internally developed supplementary materials, including homework record booklets, attendance sheets, dictation books, and additional exercise books.

CCSS follows a dual-session schedule, with morning classes attended by students in grades 6 to 12, while afternoon sessions accommodate students in grade 5 and below. Each class lasts for two and a half hours, with a 10-minute break during which students may use the restroom, have a snack, or, in the case of younger students, watch Chinese-produced cartoons such as Xi Yangyang Yu Hui Tailang (Pleasant Goat and Big Wolf). Mandarin classes currently outnumber Cantonese classes, and the number of English-taught Chinese classes for local learners is the lowest, though, according to an academic coordinator these classes have strong potential for future expansion. Additionally, CCSS provides online courses for students who reside far from the school or have limited time.

CCSS does not impose a standardised teaching methodology, allowing teachers considerable autonomy in pedagogical approaches. For example, within the same second-grade course, some teachers incorporate PowerPoint presentations with images and animated demonstrations of Chinese characters, while others adopt a more traditional approach, leading students through handwritten character practice on whiteboards.

Activities and Training

CCSS organises and participates in various extracurricular activities to enhance students' understanding of the Chinese language and culture. These include talent competitions, recitation contests among UK-based Chinese schools, and cultural celebrations. At the end of each semester, CCSS awards certificates of achievement to all students, with evaluations provided by their respective teachers. The top three students in each class receive special certificates presented by the principal.

To celebrate the Chinese New Year, CCSS hosts a dragon dance performance at the school entrance, an event that involves teachers, students, and parents. Additionally, the school organises a Spring Festival reception for teachers, during which the principal reflects on school achievements and expresses gratitude to staff. At the end of the semester, CCSS arranges a spring outing for teachers, providing an opportunity to engage with Scottish landscapes and cultural heritage.

Teacher training at CCSS primarily derives from Confucius Institutes, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAC), and the UK Association for the Promotion of Chinese Education (UKAPCE). Confucius Institutes invite community schoolteachers from across Scotland for on-site training. OCAC dispatches expert lecture teams and offers teacher training programs in China, covering accommodation and meals. UKAPCE organises competitions among Chinese schools and provides pedagogical training, including online workshops during the COVID-19 pandemic to support Chinese language instruction. However, according to interviews with the Vice Principal and two curricular coordinators, such training programs, which were frequent before the pandemic, have since declined significantly. Furthermore, CCSS has limited interaction with local Scottish schools (Kenner & Ruby, 2012).

Support and Challenges

CCSS has received support from local government, educational institutions, the Chinese government, and private donors. As previously mentioned, CCSS does not have a permanent building and has undergone multiple relocations. Throughout this process, local government assistance has been instrumental, and local educational institutions have provided access to classroom spaces on Saturdays. The Chinese government has contributed financial support and

teacher training opportunities, recognising CCSS as a ‘Chinese Language Education Model School’ and awarding it funding for its contributions to Chinese language education.

Financially, CCSS relies on three primary sources: student tuition fees, sponsorships from consulates and municipal departments, and private donations from individuals and social organisations. According to the Vice Principal, the current school premises were secured with the assistance of the Base City council, and unlike some other Chinese schools, CCSS does not currently face financial difficulties. However, it encounters other significant challenges such as the lack of a permanent school building and high teacher turnover. Additional difficulties include a lack of parental cooperation and understanding, as well as potential risks related to policy changes and international relations. Other difficulties and challenges mentioned by teachers can be found in Section 5.7.

Contributions, Benefits and Operational Features of the CCSS

According to interviews with the Vice Principal and academic directors, the Chinese Community School in Scotland (CCSS) provides significant contributions and benefits to students, teachers, parents, and the wider community. For students, it offers a structured environment for learning Chinese language and culture, which not only facilitates family communication but also enhance academic performance and strengthens university applications. The school also fosters a sense of belonging, supporting students’ emotional and social well-being. For teachers, CCSS serves as a valuable professional platform to develop teaching experience, pursue their passion for education, and build professional credibility, including opportunities for recommendation letters for career advancement. For parents, CCSS creates a collaborative network and encourages active parental involvement, which school leaders identified as essential to the school’s operation and community

ethos. Beyond its immediate stakeholders, CCSS contributes to the wider local community by promoting multilingualism and cultural diversity.

The daily operation of the school further reflects its community-based ethos. After classes, designated parents help maintain classrooms by cleaning and ensuring facilities are properly secured. Dismissal is managed systematically, with younger students dismissed class by class. The Vice Principal and curriculum coordinators use a loudspeaker at the school gate to announce class dismissals and remind parents to collect their children. To maintain communication and coordination among staff, the Vice Principal sends a weekly email to all teachers every Thursday, providing key reminders and updates. Interestingly, these emails are signed as “Teacher X” rather than “Vice Principal X”, symbolising a culture of collegiality and mutual respect rather than hierarchy.

3.3 Data Collection Methods: Interviews and Metaphors

This section outlines the primary data collection methods employed in this study, namely interviews and metaphors. Given that the analysis primarily relies on interview data, this section provides a comprehensive discussion of the rationale, design, and implementation of interviews as a qualitative research tool.

3.3.1 Use of Interviews

Interviews are one of the most widely used qualitative research methods for gaining deep insights into participants’ lived experiences (Bryman, 2016; Seidman, 2019). As Seidman (2019) argus, interviews enable researchers to understand how individuals make sense of their educational experiences.

This study employed qualitative interviews to explore how Chinese community schoolteachers construct and interpret their professional identities. Interviews were selected because they allow participants to articulate their experiences in their own words and provide contextualised insights into their beliefs, practices and self-perceptions (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Mason, 2018). Consistent with Seidman (2019), the term “participant” is used to acknowledge teachers’ active engagement in this process.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were adopted to balance flexibility and comparability (Bryman, 2016). This format enabled the collection of rich, detailed accounts while ensuring consistency across different teacher groups, such as novice and experienced educators. The design also allowed iterative refinement of questions during the research process (Ruslin et al., 2022).

A combination of face-to-face and online interviews was used to accommodate participants’ preferences and logistical constraints (Hancock, 2016; Roulston, 2022). While five participants were interviewed in person, seventeen participated via Zoom or Teams. Online interviews enhanced flexibility and accessibility, especially for teachers with additional professional commitments (Adams-Hutcheson & Longhurst, 2016; Bryman, 2016).

Interview Design

The teacher interview guide was structured around three temporal dimensions—past experiences, present roles and future aspirations—to capture teachers’ professional identities. A separate guide for the Vice Principal explored leadership perspectives and institutional context. This design ensured alignment between interview themes and the study’s research questions.

All interviews were conducted in Mandarin, which participants found most comfortable for expressing nuanced reflections on their professional identities. Translations were carried out carefully through a multi-step process involving digital tools, manual review, and supervisory feedback to ensure accuracy and fidelity to participants' intended meanings.

Trust and Rapport

Building trust and rapport was central to ensuing the authenticity of participants' accounts (Seidman, 2019). Prior to data collection, the researcher prepared extensively, reviewed interviewing literature, and practised techniques to foster empathy and credibility (Emmel et al., 2007). During interviews, participants were encouraged through open-ended questions, active listening, and culturally sensitive interaction. After each session, field notes were reviewed and clarifications sought when necessary.

While the researcher shares a background as a Chinese teacher, the research approached the CCSS context with curiosity and reflexivity, acknowledging that meaning was co-constructed through interaction with participants. The interview process was thus understood as a dialogic exchange based on respect and reciprocity.

Limitations

Despite their strengths, interviews involve challenges such as researcher bias, interpretive subjectivity, and the time required for transcription and analysis (Mason, 2002; Seidman, 2019). To address these limitations, this study followed a rigorous and transparent process in interview design, execution, and data analysis, as discussed in Section 3.5.

3.3.2 The Use of Metaphors

This section outlines the theoretical foundations and methodological use of metaphors in teacher identity (TI) research and explains their relevance to the present study.

Understanding Metaphors

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) conceptualise metaphors as cognitive mechanisms that enable individuals to understand one domain of experience in terms of another, for example, conceptualising "time is money". In education, metaphors illuminate how teachers interpret their roles and professional experiences. They provide access to personal meanings and tacit beliefs that may not easily surface through direct questioning (Armstrong et al., 2011; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011).

Metaphors have been shown to reveal socio-cognitive connections between thought and practice, making them valuable tools for exploring identity formation (Billot & King, 2015; Erickson & Pinnegar, 2016). However, interpretation can be subjective and must be situated within the socio-cultural context of participants (de Guerrero & Villamil, 2002; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011).

Metaphors and Teacher Identity Research

Metaphors have been widely applied to study teacher identity across different contexts and career stages (Erickson & Pinnegar, 2016; Gao & Cui, 2021; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). They help visualise the dynamic and evolving nature of identity, capturing teachers' emotions, aspirations and professional self-perceptions (Buchanan, 2015). Previous research also shows that metaphors can serve as reflective tools, allowing teachers to articulate and reassess their professional values.

While some scholars have integrated visual elements such as drawing (Ben-Peretz et al., 2003; Cobb, 2022), this study focuses on linguistic metaphors due to practical considerations and the need for analytical consistency.

Metaphor Analysis in This Study

This research employs metaphor analysis to explore how Chinese community school teachers conceptualise their professional identities. Following Thomas and Beauchamp (2011), a hybrid approach was adopted, identifying naturally occurring metaphors in teachers' narratives while also inviting participants to generate their own metaphors when appropriate. This approach capture both spontaneous and reflective expressions of identity.

When participants encountered difficulty articulating metaphors, a standard prompt metaphor was provided (adapted from de Guerrero & Villamil, 2002) to ensure consistency and minimise researcher influence. Participants were then encouraged to elaborate on the meaning and context of their chosen metaphors. The analysis focused not on judging metaphors as positive or negative but on interpreting them as indicators of how teaches perceive and construct their professional identities.

Challenges and Relevance

Metaphors analysis presents interpretive challenges, as metaphors may reflect aspirational or socially shaped aspects of identity rather than stable self-concepts (Buchanan, 2015; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2002). Nevertheless, it remains a powerful method for uncovering how teachers make sense of their roles within cultural and institutional contexts (Armstrong et al., 2011; Brown et al., 2018). In this study, metaphor analysis complements interview data by offering deeper insight into the cognitive and emotional dimensions of Chinese community school teachers' identity formation, linking individual meaning-making with broader social and cultural influences.

3.4 Data Storage and Analysis

When transcribing and analysing the collected audio data, pseudonyms were used to replace the names of participants to ensure their confidentiality and anonymity. Any identifiable information about participants, such as names of colleagues, students was anonymised. Participant data, along with a Word document for the code names and personal contact details, was securely stored in the researcher's Strathclyde OneDrive with password protection. Only pseudonyms were employed in any presentations or publications associated with the study.

High-quality qualitative data analysis provides plausible explanations, uncovers unexpected insights, generates new understandings, and offers compelling evidence to support theoretical structures (Miles et al., 2020. The data analysis process in this study follows the structured qualitative research guidelines recommended by Kumar (2019) and incorporates analytical frameworks from the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI) proposed by Kaplan and Garner (2017). Additionally, metaphor analysis was employed, drawing on the methodologies outlined by Armstrong et al. (2011) and Gao and Cui (2021).

This section outlines the data processing steps, including transcription, coding, thematic analysis, metaphor analysis with an emphasis on how these approaches interact to provide a comprehensive understanding of CCSS teachers' identity formation.

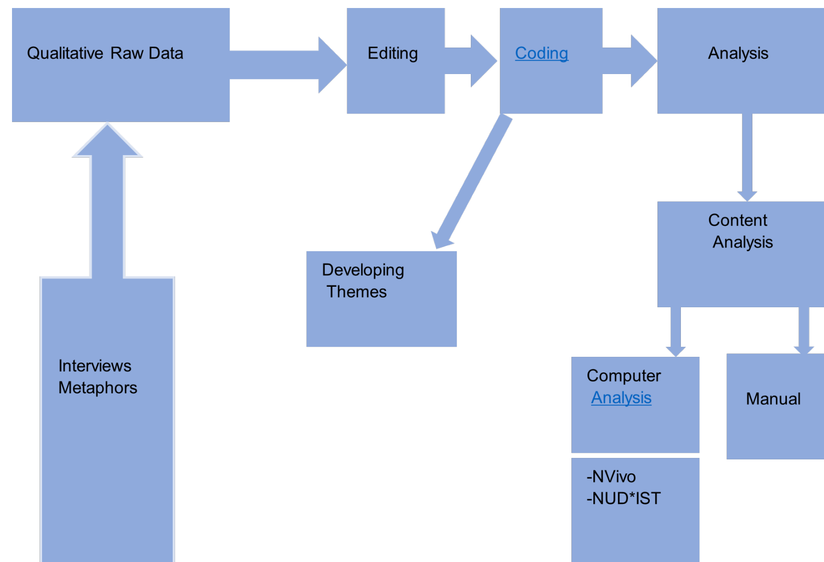

Figure3.1 Steps in data processing Kumar (2019:377)

3.4.1 DSMRI Analysis Guide and Codebook

This study employed the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI, Kaplan & Garner, 2017) as the theorical framework. As outlined in Section 2.5.2, DSMRI conceptualises teacher role identity as a dynamic system composed of four interrelated components: purposes and goals, self-perceptions and self-definitions, ontological and epistemological beliefs, and perceived action possibilities, with each component encompassing both cognitive and affective dimensions.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed prior to analysis. To enhance efficiency and organisation, NVivo, a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), was used. The researcher carefully checked each transcript against the audio recordings, incorporating relevant non-verbal features such as pauses, laughter, and filler expressions. Multiple readings of the transcripts were conducted to ensure familiarity with the data. In line with Miles et al. (2020), data collection and analysis proceeded concurrently, allowing emerging insights to inform subsequent interviews and enabling clarification of developing interpretations.

The DSMRI analysis guide and codebook provided a structured yet flexible framework for examining teacher identity. Rather than functioning as a rigid coding template, DSMRI served as a sensitising framework that guided attention to key dimensions of identity, including beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, emotions, and perceived action possibilities, as well as the relationships among these components. In this respect, the analysis incorporated a deductive element, as the framework informed how identity-related data were organised and interpreted.

At the same time, the analysis remained open to inductively generated insights from the data. Initial coding was conducted in a data-driven manner, with meaning units identified through participants' own narratives, expressions, and metaphors. NVivo tools, including word frequency queries, memos, and annotations, were used to support the identification of recurring patterns, salient experiences, and emerging themes. These themes were not restricted to the predefined DSMRI categories, but instead captured context-specific aspects of identity construction, particularly those related to community expectations, institutional constraints, and teachers' lived experiences in Chinese community language school settings.

The analytical process was iterative and recursive. Emerging themes were continuously compared with DSMRI components to examine areas of alignment, tension, and extension. In some cases, inductively identified themes could be meaningfully mapped onto existing DSMRI components; in others, they pointed to dimensions of teacher identity that were less explicitly addressed in the original model. This process enabled the study not only to apply DSMRI, but also to refine and extend it in response to empirical findings.

Following coding, thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns, narrative structures, and the sociocultural and institutional factors shaping identity development. Themes were

organised hierarchically in NVivo, forming broader analytical categories. The coding scheme was continuously refined to ensure that it remained grounded in the data while maintaining theoretical coherence.

The final stage of analysis involved producing analytical summaries for each participant's role identity. These summaries addressed identity content (beliefs, emotions, and motivations), structural dynamics (coherence, tensions, and contradictions), and developmental processes (changes over time and across contexts). Individual role identities were then examined in relation to broader identity sub-systems and social contexts. Finally, these analyses were synthesised to generate an overarching account of identity construction among CCSS teachers, integrating both shared patterns and individual variations.

3.4.2 Metaphor Analysis

In this study, metaphors are embedded within the interview process and are considered an integral part of the entire interview content. Considering the role of metaphors in the research on TI (see section 3.3.2), as stated by Armstrong et al. (2011), 'metaphors indeed provide rich information about the speaker's conceptualisation of a given topic and situation, making them highly valuable for educational researchers (p.162).' Therefore, metaphors provided by the participants were extracted and analysed, following the steps outlined by Armstrong et al. (2011) and Gao and Cui (2021).

To address concerns regarding the credibility and reliability of metaphor analysis, Armstrong et al. (2011) proposed two triangulation methods to strengthen the validity of research findings. The first method, metaphor checking, involves systematically verifying metaphor interpretations with participants to ensure alignment between researcher and participant perspectives. The second method

integrates metaphor analysis with broader thematic analysis, allowing conceptual metaphors to be supported by additional observational or contextual evidence. Armstrong et al. (2011) outlined seven procedural steps for conducting metaphor analysis, including identifying patterns within the data and ensuring conceptual coherence between metaphors and other thematic findings (p.161). Similarly, Gao and Cui (2021) employed metaphor analysis to examine the impact of academic English reform on the professional identity of Chinese university English teachers, demonstrating its applicability in identity research. In their article, they provided a detailed description of the steps involved in metaphor analysis, as shown in the diagram below:

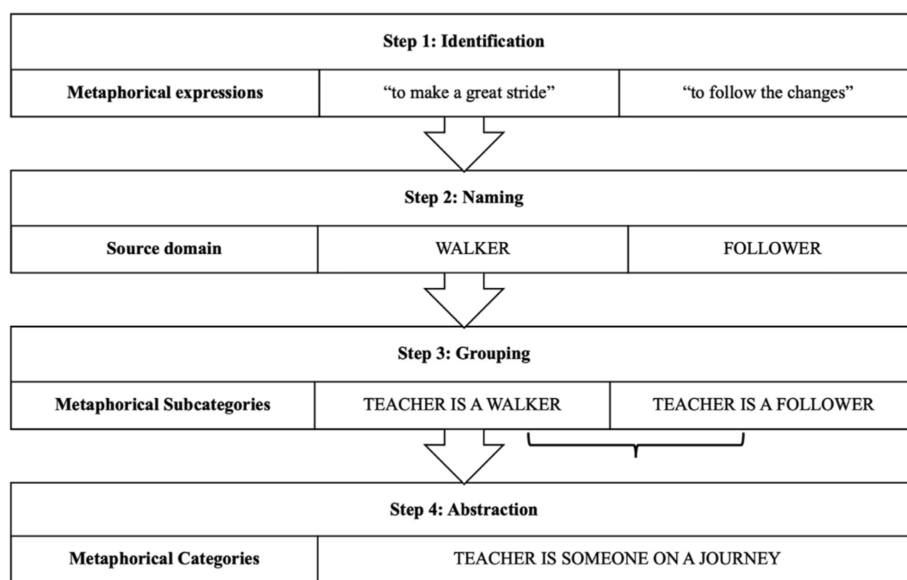

Figure 3. 2 Coding Procedure Reproduced from Gao & Cui (2021)

In line with these approaches, this study extracted metaphorical expressions from interview transcripts and categorised them based on their conceptual themes, structural coherence, and contextual relevance. This process involved both inductive and deductive approaches, wherein emergent metaphorical patterns were identified while being cross-referenced with theoretical insights from TI research. To further enhance analytical rigor, metaphor analysis was triangulated with

thematic analysis, ensuring that metaphors were interpreted within participants' broader narratives and sociocultural contexts.

Given that metaphors are inherently shaped by personal experiences, cultural influences, and professional beliefs, special attention was paid to how participants used metaphorical language to describe their teaching roles, relationships with students, and experiences within CCSS. By integrating metaphor analysis with DSMRI-based identity analysis, this study aimed to capture both explicit and implicit dimensions of CCSS teachers' professional identity formation, providing a nuanced, multi-layered understanding of their lived experiences.

3.5 The Rigour and Quality of Qualitative Research

This section addresses the rigour of the study, ethical considerations, and limitations while also responding to the confidentiality, such as consent forms and participant information sheet, raised in Section 3.1.2.

3.5.1 Ensuring the Rigour and Quality of This Research

Ensuing rigour and quality is fundamental to qualitative research. Bryman (2016) notes three broad approaches among qualitative researchers: adopting traditional criteria of reliability and validity, replacing them with alternative concepts such as trustworthiness and authenticity, or taking a more balanced position that adapts quantitative principles to qualitative contexts. Despite ongoing debates between quantitative and qualitative paradigms, most scholars agree that qualitative studies must demonstrate transparency, reflexivity and methodological consistency to establish credibility (Gray, 2018; Kumar, 2019).

Tracy (2010) identifies several key markers of high-quality qualitative research, including rigour in design and data collection, reflexivity sincerity and coherence between research aims, methods, and findings. Similarly, Spencer et al. (2003) propose a framework for assessing qualitative research through four overarching principles: contribution, defensibility, rigour and credibility. These frameworks collectively provide a foundation for evaluating the trustworthiness and authenticity of this study. Table 3.3 summarises the specific strategies employed to ensure the validity and reliability of this study.

Table 3.2 Methods Used to Ensure Validity and Rigour

Research Stage	Key Questions (Adapted from Spencer et al., 2003)	Strategies Used in This Study
Research Design	-How defensible is the research design? -Is there a clear rationale for methodological choices? -Are potential limitations addressed?	The study investigates Chinese community school teachers' identity formation in Scotland using purposive sampling and a case study research approach. Research questions were guided by existing literature, and interviews and metaphor analysis were chosen as primary methods. The design prioritised depth over generalisability (Kumar, 2019), acknowledging limitations such as a small sample size.
Data Collection	-Were data collection procedures systematic and transparent? -Were interviews properly recorded and transcribed? -Was data collection comprehensive, ensuring sufficient depth and detail?	Semi-structured interviews, following Seidman (2019), generated rich and contextual data. All sessions were recorded with consent, and ethical approval was obtained. A metaphor-based interview guide aligned with research aims ensure clarity, neutrality and consistency.
Data Analysis	-How well was the analytical approach communicated? -How were contextual influences retained? -How was the complexity of data addressed?	Interview data were transcribed and coded in NVivo using DSMRI. Analysis involved iterative reading, thematic coding and crosse-case comparison. Contextual and metaphorical dimensions were preserved to capture the nuanced construction of teacher identity.

This study recognises the importance of methodological rigour while acknowledging the limitations inherent in qualitative research. By adopting systematic procedures, ensuring transparency in data collection and analysis, and incorporating multiple validation strategies, the study aims to produce trustworthy and insightful findings. The next section will further address ethical considerations and researcher reflexivity to reinforce the study's integrity.

3.5.2 Engagement and Ethical Considerations

This qualitative study explores the formation and influencing factors of teacher identity within a Chinese community school in Scotland, through semi-structured interviews and metaphor analysis. Given the interpretive nature of qualitative inquiry, ethical integrity was maintained throughout the research to protect participants' rights, ensure confidentiality and manage potential power dynamics. All participants were assigned pseudonyms and anonymity was preserved across the entire research process.

Ethical engagement in qualitative research extends beyond procedural compliance to encompass reflexivity, contextual sensitivity and moral responsibility (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005; Kumar, 2019). Researchers must address risks such as bias, misuse of data and unequal power relations (Bryman, 2016). As Brinkmann and Kvale (2005) argue, ethical competence develops through reflective engagement with real-world dilemmas rather than adherence to fixed principles. Accordingly, this study adopted a situated and context-sensitive ethical approach that balanced adherence to formal standards with critical awareness of relational and institutional dynamics.

The research followed the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines (2018, 4the ed.) and was approved by the University of Strathclyde Institute of Education Committee. Institutional permission was first obtained from the CCSS Vice Principal. Participants received detailed information sheets and consent forms, which outlined the study's purpose, procedures and data use as well as their rights to withdraw or decline questions. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring voluntary and informed participation.

Addressing Bias and Power Dynamics

The research's dual roles, as a doctoral student and a teacher with the same school, created both advantages and challenges. Insider status facilitated access, trust and contextual understanding (Shen, 2015), but also introduced potential bias and power asymmetry (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015). Participants might have moderated their responses due to collegial relationships or perceived expectations. To mitigate this, the researcher engaged in continuous reflexivity, consciously separating professional and research roles, maintaining transparency and using member checking to enhance credibility (Bukamal, 2022; Kennedy et al., 2024). These practices align with the ethical principle of respect, ensuring participants' voices were represented authentically and without distortion.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Confidentiality was upheld through strict pseudonymisation and anonymisation procedures I line with BERA (2018). The school was referred as CCSS, and participants were coded (e.g., ET-1, NT-1). Identifiable information was removed from transcripts, which were securely stored on Strathclyde's OneDrive. Audio files were deleted after transcription, and anonymised data will be retained for five years. Participation details were kept confidential, including from school administrators, ensuring privacy and data integrity (Bryman, 2016).

Informed Consent and Participant Rights

Participants were provided with a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and Informed Consent Form detailing the research aims, confidentiality measures and withdrawal rights prior to participation. While signing consent forms can occasionally cause apprehension (Bryman, 2016), the researcher explained that written consent is standard in doctoral studies and reassured participants

that interviews focused solely on professional experiences. Consent was obtained only after participants fully understood the study and agreed voluntarily.

By integrating these strategies, this study demonstrates ethical responsibility, reflexive awareness and transparency, ensuring that participants’ experiences were represented respectfully and that research integrity was upheld throughout the process.

3.5.3 Power Relationships and Reflexivity

Power Relationships

Power dynamics inevitably shape qualitative interviews, influencing both data collection and interpretation. As Patton (2015) and Brinkmann and Kvale (2005) note, interviews are asymmetrical interactions where researchers control the agenda, interpretation and representation of participants’ narratives. Such imbalances can affect the authenticity of participants’ responses and place them in potentially vulnerable positions, especially when gatekeepers or institutional hierarchies are involved (Seidman, 2019).

To mitigate these dynamics, this study adopted several strategies. Semi-structured interviews ensured a flexible yet balance dialogue, enabling participants to express their perspectives freely while maintaining coherence with research aims. Member checking was employed by returning transcripts to participants for review and clarification, enhancing accuracy and interpretive transparency. The Vice Principal, while a participant, was not involved in recruitment, safeguarding voluntary participation. Strict confidentiality measures were upheld, with participants’ identities concealed form all administrators. This reassured participants, especially those offering critical

reflections, that their views remain private, fostering a safe and open research environment and enhancing the authenticity of the data.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is central to ensuing the credibility of qualitative inquiry (Hong & Francis, 2020). It requires researchers to examine how their positionality and assumptions shape research processes and interpretations (Lincoln et al., 2013; Reich, 2021). However, as Lynch (2000) cautions, reflexivity is not a guarantee of objectivity but a continuous act of critical self-awareness. Adopting Gray's (2018) view, this study treats reflexive engagement as integral to the research data itself.

Throughout recruitment, data collection and analysis, the researcher remained critically aware of power, positionality, and emotional responses. Informed consent and rapport-building were prioritised to ensure comfort and trust. Participants could skip questions or withdraw at any point and interviews were conducted at convenient times and locations. After each interview, the researcher reflected on personal biases and how prior experiences as a teacher and doctoral student might influence data interpretation.

Positionality and Researcher Identity

The researcher's multiple identities, as a teacher, doctoral student, and former international educator, shaped both access and interaction. Shared professional backgrounds helped establish rapport but risked hierarchical or evaluative dynamics, particularly with novice teachers (Mercer, 2007). To minimise this, the researcher emphasised equality and mutual learning rather than expertise. Identifying as a "student researcher" rather than "academic authority" also reduced status differences, encouraging more open dialogue.

As an international scholar teaching within the same community, the researcher simultaneously occupied both insider and outsider roles, experiencing dependence on participants’ cooperation while managing professional boundaries. Following Seidman (2019) guidance, the researcher maintained confidence and humility, engaging with participants as collaborators rather than subjects. This dual positionality required careful boundary management to prevent familiarity from influencing responses or long-term relationships within the school.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological and ethical foundations of the study, including research design, data collection, analysis and reflexivity. Rigorous attention was paid to contextual factors, power relations and researcher positionality to ensure credibility and authenticity. Ethical standards were upheld throughout, ensuring participants’ autonomy, privacy and dignity. While acknowledging limitations, the study contributes valuable insights into the lived experiences of teachers in Chinese community schools in Scotland and offers new perspectives on teacher identity in multilingual educational contexts.

Chapter 4 FINDINGS

The previous chapters have provided the background of this study (Chapter One), reviewed the relevant literature (Chapter Two), and discussed the research methodology (Chapter Three). This chapter presents the analysis of the collected data and findings. This study aims to explore the process of teacher identity formation, influencing factors, characteristics, and their impact on teaching practices in a Chinese community school in Scotland. As outlined earlier (e.g., 3.1.2), the Chinese community school (anonymised as CCSS) teachers can be classified by teaching experience into novice teachers and experienced teachers. They can also be categorised into different groups based on participant backgrounds: immigrants and international students, with some overlap between the categories, namely novice international student teachers, novice immigrant teachers, experienced international student teachers, and experienced immigrant teachers. In addition to the aforementioned criteria, other potential categorisation such as gender (male or female), academic discipline (education or non-education), occupation (education-related or non-education-related), and parental status (yes or no) were also considered and examined. Data analysis was conducted using the DSMRI theoretical framework (see 2.5.2), which includes social context, domain, culture, dispositions as control parameters; ontological and epistemological beliefs, purpose and goals, perceived action possibilities, self-definitions and self-perceptions and associated emotion as central elements, with the assistance of NVivo.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the defining characteristics of the identity construction process among CCSS teachers in Scotland?

2. How do contextual factors influence the formation and development of CCSS teachers' role identities?

The chapter will discuss the DSMRI dimensions observed among various participants. The findings will be presented in the form of themes based on DSMRI framework. This section will begin with the social context (4.1), discussing five sub-themes related to the participants: social context, CCSS and teacher identity, the community function of CCSS, CCSS as a community of practice, classroom teaching, language use, and CCSS leadership. Next, the domain (4.2) and its three sub-themes—lower years, higher years, and community language education—will be discussed. The following section will explore cultural-related content (4.3) and its three sub-themes: cultural differences between teachers and students, CCSS culture, and traditional Chinese culture in textbooks. Then, disposition (4.4) will also be discussed.

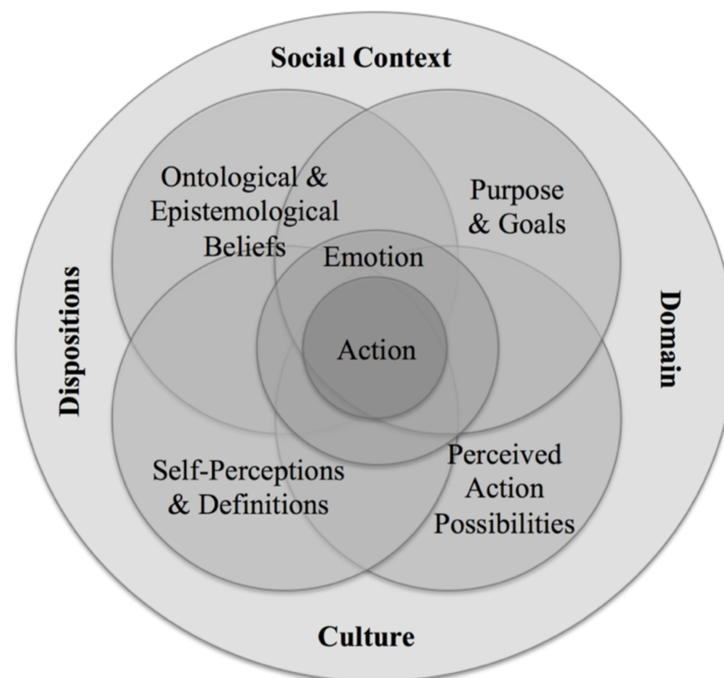

Figure 4.1 The Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI), Kaplan and Garner (2017)

To protect the privacy of participants and facilitate discussion, each participant will be anonymised in the follow descriptions. The specific method involves assigning codes to experienced teachers and novice teachers, for example, ET-1 represents ‘Experienced Teacher 1’, and correspondingly, NT-1 stands for ‘Novice Teacher 1’.

4.1 Social Context Factors in the Construction of Community Language Teachers’ Identities

This study employs Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI) framework to explore the process and influencing factors of teacher identity within a Chinese community school in Scotland. In the DSMRI framework, the social context is considered an essential factor in the construction of teacher identity. Data was collected through semi-interviews with 22 teachers and 3 school leaders. Analysis revealed that the context had a quite significant influence on shaping identities of these non-mainstream teachers. The context of community language school was identified as both tangible (such as school buildings and classrooms) and intangible (community function, school leadership, interpersonal relationship) spaces for teacher identity formation.

In general, CCSS functioning as a community provides a favourable context for the formation of teacher identity, and whether having their own school premises or not does not significantly impact their identity construction as a community language teacher. However, school leadership, students, and relationships/interactions with them demonstrated strong influence. Other factors intertwined with context factors may include personality and personal experiences, highlighting the complexity and diversity in the construction of identity among community language schoolteachers. This section will present contextual factors related to the formation of the participants’ teacher identity discussed during the interviews, including those perceived to have a significant impact and those considered to

have no impact by the participants. Additionally, some problems related to context factors mentioned by the participants will be addressed.

4.1.1 Social Context, CCSS and Teacher Identity

In the UK, there are an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 supplementary schools, primarily established by immigrant and minority ethnic groups (Evans & Gillan-Thomas, 2015). The broader social and educational context influences not only the organisational structure of these schools, including CCSS, but also shapes teachers' perceptions of their roles within this environment.

One of the most evident ways in which the social context affects CCSS's structure is through its curriculum design and subject offerings. At lower grade levels (grades one to six), instruction is primarily focused on fundamental language skills, such as Pinyin, strokes, and radicals. In contrast, at higher grades (grades seven to twelve), the curriculum is structured around formal exam preparation, including HSK 3 in grade seven, HSK 4 in grade eight, GCSE and National Five in grade nine, A-Level in grade ten, and Higher and Advanced Higher in grades eleven and twelve. This distinction in curricular focus creates a clear division in teaching responsibilities across different levels, influencing teachers' role perception and identity construction. As ET-12, who teaches higher-grade exam classes, observed: "My focus is on urging students to study and achieve good results; lower-grade teachers must ensure the children's safety during school hours." This contrast underscores how curricular demands shape teachers' identities and professional responsibilities at CCSS.

Additionally, these curricular decisions reflect the examination systems of China, England, and Scotland, as CCSS tailors its courses based on students' needs and the broader social context.

According to the CCSS Vice Principal, the purpose of this approach is to “help students gain more knowledge, adapt to different types of exams, and accumulate capital for future university applications and employment.” This highlights how social expectations, and academic pathways inform CCSS’s educational mission and, by extension, shape teachers’ professional identities.

Beyond institutional structures, the social context also shapes teachers’ identities through their own educational experiences. Many teachers at CCSS have firsthand knowledge of both Chinese and UK education systems, which directly influences their pedagogical philosophies and teaching practices. NT-3, for example, immigrated to the UK after completing elementary school in China and later pursued higher education in the UK. Reflecting on their cross-cultural schooling experience, they remarked: “My elementary school days in China were very oppressive, whereas my education in the UK was happy and joyful.” They further noted that the UK system is “more relaxed, with less pressure and no forced studying.”

Similarly, participants such as NT-4, ET-1, ET-5, ET-9, ET-10, and ET-12 have drawn on their own schooling experiences to inform their current teaching styles in CCSS. Many (18 out 22) clearly reject the strict and exam-driven approaches they encountered in Chinese schools and instead strive to create supportive, encouraging learning environments that resemble their own experiences in UK classrooms. ET-1 recalled that their primary school Chinese teacher was a top teacher in the province, and the teaching methods influenced them for many years. The dictionary competition that ET-1’s class will hold is modelled after their teacher from back then. Similarly, ET-12 highlighted that their own teaching approach was significantly influenced by a past teacher whose strong organisational skills and genuine care for students made them highly approachable. Although

biology was not heavily weighted in grading at the time, the teacher's enthusiasm created an energising classroom atmosphere that inspired students to actively engage in learning.

These experiences demonstrate the interplay between personal educational backgrounds and the broader social environment in shaping teachers' evolving professional identities. For instance, NT-1 reflected on how the more encouraging educational approach in the UK, particularly the positive focus of parent-teacher meetings and the greater enthusiasm children show towards attending school compared to their own schooling experiences in China, contributed to reshaping their educational values and pedagogical choices. This underscores the significant role of contextual factors in the development of teacher identity.

Tensions Between the Social Context and CCSS Teacher Identity

This study also reveals a paradoxical relationship between the Scottish social context and CCSS teacher identity formation. On one hand, research has frequently highlighted the negative impact of social and educational reforms on mainstream teacher identity (e.g., Buchanan, 2015). Compared to mainstream schools, community language schools like CCSS operate outside formal policy frameworks, facing fewer regulations and institutional constraints (Nordstrom et al., 2024). While this lack of oversight may suggest insufficient governmental support, it also provides CCSS with greater autonomy in designing its curriculum and instructional practices. However, this flexibility comes at a cost: if Scottish education authorities were to introduce stricter standards for community language teachers, many CCSS teachers might fail to meet the new qualifications, exacerbating staffing challenges.

Moreover, the lack of standardised guidelines created both a sense of autonomy and feelings of uncertainty among teachers. ET-14 highlighted the challenges of having to independently collect

teaching materials, noting that exam classes initially had no provided resources and that, without formal teaching certification, teachers were unable to access the Scottish Qualifications Authority's internal materials. Similarly, NT-6 conveyed a sense of frustration, explaining that while the school granted considerable freedom and did not enforce strict adherence to a curriculum, the absence of formal training and structured guidance led to slower professional development, particularly for teachers without an educational background.

These perspectives highlight how the structural limitations of CCSS create both opportunities and challenges for teachers. While some view teaching at CCSS as an informal role, others struggle with the ambiguity of their professional status. This is further complicated by how teachers define their own identity in relation to societal perceptions of professionalism.

A notable finding in this study is that many CCSS teachers do not fully perceive themselves as professional "teachers", a view largely influenced by the school's status as a charitable organisation. Several participants deliberately distanced themselves from the professional identity, stressing their role as volunteers rather than salaried educators. For instance, ET-5 described CCSS as more of an extracurricular setting than a formal school, emphasising that without payment or official titles, they could not regard their work as a profession. Echoing this view, ET-12 pointed out that, under UK standards, teaching minors requires formal certification and an educational background beyond native language proficiency, suggesting that many CCSS instructors fall outside traditional definitions of teaching professionals. ET-14 similarly commented that lacking formal qualifications and working in a volunteer capacity within a charity framework made it difficult to view themselves as genuine teachers, framing their role instead as one of supporting students' exam preparation.

Nevertheless, not all participants shared this view. Some embraced a teacher identity based on their practical classroom roles and interactions with students. NT-4, for example, acknowledged the distinction between certified teachers and their own situation but ultimately affirmed their teaching identity through the nature of their classroom engagement. These varied perspectives highlight the subjective and context-dependent processes of identity formation among CCSS teachers, a topic explored further in Section 4.4.

4.1.2 Community Role of CCSS

As discussed in Section 3.2.2, CCSS operates similarly to other supplementary, complementary, or community schools in the UK, relying on borrowed facilities from local mainstream educational institutions. While Chinese teachers at CCSS have access to classroom resources such as whiteboards, computers, projectors, printers, and water dispensers, there is no direct interaction between CCSS teachers and local school staff. Additionally, the teacher composition at CCSS is highly diverse, with only a few teachers holding formal teaching qualifications (see Section 3.2.2 for further details).

A defining characteristic of CCSS is its strong community role, a view supported by 17 out of 22 participants, including 15 experienced teachers and two novice teachers. This community identity distinguishes CCSS from the broader concept of supplementary schools, emphasising that its role extends beyond just academic instruction. CCSS functions as a social hub for teachers and students alike, fulfilling multiple communal and cultural needs.

For many teachers, CCSS serves as a crucial social hub, especially for new immigrants who initially face challenges in building local networks and navigating the Scottish social context. Several

participants described CCSS as a supportive and welcoming environment where they were able to establish friendships and access communal resources. For instance, ET-12 shared that upon arriving in Scotland with only their child, CCSS provided an important connection to the local Chinese community, offering opportunities for social interaction and mutual support. Similarly, ET-15, who had no prior acquaintances in Scotland, explained that their involvement with CCSS enabled them to meet other Chinese individuals and gain valuable information about the local area. These accounts highlight the dual role of CCSS as both an educational institution and a vital community space for new immigrants.

This community role does not diminish over time, even for those who have lived in Scotland for years. Many participants continue to rely on CCSS as a space for cultural identity and belonging. For instance, teachers like ET-8, ET-9, and NT-3 noted that working at CCSS has helped them expand their social circles. Additionally, ET-7, who has worked in Scotland for many years, observed a decline in their Chinese proficiency due to working in an English-speaking environment. They actively sought out CCSS as a way to maintain his language skills: “I noticed my Chinese was deteriorating, so I wanted to teach at CCSS to keep using the language. Talking to colleagues and students in Chinese helps a lot.”

Beyond the personal benefits for teachers, participants also underscored the broader role of CCSS in fostering a shared cultural identity among the Chinese community in Scotland. Several participants emphasised that such spaces help mitigate feelings of isolation among Chinese immigrants. For instance, ET-6 observed that although Chinese people constitute a minority group in the UK, the existence of communities like CCSS alleviates loneliness and fosters a sense of belonging. This observation illustrating that community spaces play a crucial role in supporting

immigrant well-being. Similarly, ET-9 reflected that one of the primary motivations for joining CCSS was to expand their social network, noting that opportunities for interaction with other Chinese individuals are otherwise limited. ET-13 further highlighted that CCSS holds an indispensable position within the community, fostering close relationships among colleagues and friends through shared cultural experiences.

The community spirit at CCSS benefits both teachers and students. Teachers gain encouragement and practical support from working alongside like-minded peers. For example, NT-5 indicated that the support network within CCSS helped ease the challenges they faced during their first year of teaching. Likewise, ET-4 expressed a strong sense of happiness and belonging, suggesting that mutual sincerity among colleagues and students nurtures positive relationships within the school environment.

Students similarly benefit from CCSS by accessing a culturally familiar space where they can form friendships and develop their bicultural identities. NT-5 pointed out that students are able to learn Chinese, experience cultural practices, and connect with peers who share similar backgrounds. ET-1 emphasised that CCSS particularly assists newly arrived Chinese students in adjusting to the local educational system, offering them a supportive environment to express themselves and enhance their academic and social development. A counterexample provided by ET-6 highlights the risks of not engaging with CCSS. They noted that children who do not attend community schools often experience a gradual decline in their Chinese proficiency, which ultimately weakens their connection to Chinese culture and leads them to identify exclusively as British.

CCSS also plays a crucial role in helping parents understand their children's experiences in Scottish schools. Many Chinese parents face language barriers, making it difficult to communicate

with local schoolteachers. CCSS provides a familiar space where parents can engage with teachers in their own language, allowing them to gain insights into their children's academic and social progress.

For instance, ET-7 described a situation where a CCSS teacher was able to identify signs of a student's learning difficulties, which had previously been overlooked by the student's parents, largely due to communication barriers with the local mainstream school. Upon observing the student's difficulties with concentration and independent behaviour, the teacher advised the parents to seek a professional assessment, which ultimately confirmed the issue. This demonstrates how CCSS serves as a bridge between parents and mainstream education, demonstrating that community schools empower parents by providing them with insights into the mainstream school system.

Despite its strong community function, CCSS faces challenges in maintaining teacher interaction and cohesion. One of the most frequently mentioned concerns in the interviews was the cancellation of communal lunch breaks after the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly reduced opportunities for teacher interaction. ET-16 lamented this change: "Before COVID-19, we used to have lunch, and teachers from both morning and afternoon sessions would usually come. Although the lunch was simple teachers had the opportunity to sit down together, eat, and chat, getting to know each other." This concern was echoed by ET-5, ET-9, ET-11, and ET-12, with ET-5 noting: "Now there is no time. Teachers leave immediately after class. At most, we meet in the corridor and exchange a few words. It's nothing like the sense of community we had before."

The growing size of CCSS has also contributed to changes in community dynamics. In recent years, the number of teachers and students has increased significantly, straining the available facilities. This is one of many "growing pains" of CCSS, which will be further explored in Section 5.2.

Overall, CCSS serves as both an educational institution and a community hub, supporting teachers, students, and parents. It fosters cultural identity, social integration, and professional collaboration, while also facing challenges related to expansion and structural changes. As Creese and Martin (2006) argue, community schools, such as CCSS, play a crucial role in shaping the political, social, and economic lives of ethnic minority communities in the UK. This is echoed by participants (e.g., ET-12), who described how participation in CCSS enabled them to make friends and feel more connected to the local community, further highlighting the school's vital role as a community space.

4.1.3 The Construction of Teacher Identity in CCSS as a Community of Practice

As discussed earlier, CCSS serves as a community that brings teachers, students, and parents together, providing a unique environment for teacher identity construction. From the perspective of Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice (CoP) framework, identity formation occurs through engagement, imagination, and alignment—all of which are evident in CCSS. The interactions among teachers, students, leadership, and parents create a shared culture that shapes participants' psychological and professional development, fostering their alignment with broader societal expectations of what it means to be a teacher.

One of the most significant influences on teacher identity formation at CCSS is parental involvement, as 15 out of 22 participants were also parents. Among them, nine explicitly stated that they became teachers because their children attended CCSS. This "parental love" not only motivated their engagement in teaching but also influenced their perceptions of professional identity. Many participants transferred their experiences as parents into their teaching practice,

shaping their pedagogical approaches and student interactions. This tendency was consistent across different teaching levels and experience levels, with NT-1, ET-1, ET-4, ET-5, ET-9, ET-10, ET-11, ET-13, and ET-14 all expressing similar sentiments. For example, ET-4 reflected on their motivation for joining CCSS, emphasising how their role as a parent influenced their understanding of students:

> When my child was old enough to go to Chinese school and I also could teach (the content of the textbook), so I came… I have my own children, I know what they are thinking, and I can also understand the feelings of the students' parents.

Beyond personal motivations, direct interactions with students played a key role in shaping participants' teacher identity. The grade level and exam status of students significantly influenced how teachers perceived their roles. Lower-grade teachers often described their students as "children" or "friends", emphasising a nurturing and engaging approach to encourage interest in learning Chinese. In contrast, higher-grade teachers—particularly those responsible for exam preparation (GCSE, A-Level, Higher, Advanced Higher, HSK)—framed their student relationships differently. They aimed to maintain a balance between authority and approachability, ensuring student motivation and discipline. For instance, ET-1 highlighted the complexity of working with adolescent students: "You have to be careful with adolescent students, you need to strike a balance in how you treat them. You have to respect them as well as point out their problems. It's important to use the right way."

Meanwhile, ET-16 emphasised the importance of maintaining teacher authority: "I can't be friends with students. You must maintain boundaries. The moment you become friends with a student, you lose your authority to give orders, and they won't respect you anymore, and what

you say will not work." Conversely, some novice teachers, such as NT-3, saw their role as more collaborative and friendly, stating: "We are like friends; we can chat and share happy things freely."

Teachers also reported that student progress significantly impacted their self-perception and motivation. When students performed well, teachers felt a sense of achievement and professional validation. On the other hand, when students struggled or exhibited disciplinary issues, teachers experienced self-doubt and frustration, which influenced their identity construction. For example, NT-3 expressed her sense of accomplishment when seeing student improvement:

> Their (the students') learning progress really makes me proud and makes me more motivated to do this job well. I feel that what I am doing is meaningful. It's truly gratifying to see their oral skills and grades improve gradually.

On the other hand, ET-10 described the emotional toll of struggling with classroom challenges: "I don't know what to do when my teaching methods can't convey my instructional intentions. I felt lost and exhausted."

School leadership played a crucial role in shaping teachers' engagement and professional autonomy. CCSS leaders were perceived as providing substantial support and trust, which in turn strengthened teachers' sense of belonging and agency. Compared to the stricter hierarchical structures typically found in mainstream schools, CCSS offered greater flexibility in pedagogical choices, reinforcing teachers' ownership over their teaching practices. One

participant (ET-3) appreciated this supportive leadership approach, attributing their job satisfaction to the high degree of trust and autonomy they experienced.

Nonetheless, despite the generally encouraging environment, some teachers reported tensions between their personal teaching philosophies and management expectations. For example, ET-16 reflected on a situation where school leaders recommended increasing reading practice in lessons, while they preferred to focus on knowledge transmission rather than traditional rote methods. Although they acknowledged these suggestions, they emphasised that CCSS leadership did not impose rigid curricular demands, allowing teachers the space to pursue their individual approaches within a flexible framework.

Several organisational practices at CCSS reflect characteristics of a Community of Practice (CoP). These include attendance tracking; midterm and final exams (with teacher discussions before and after); student ranking and award systems and social media groups for ongoing teacher collaboration. However, unlike mainstream schools that often use standardised evaluations to rank teacher efficiency (Sledge & Pazey, 2013), CCSS assessments were non-punitive. Exams served as motivational tools for students rather than mechanisms for teacher evaluation.

The process of “talking about and talking within practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991) was also evident. Teachers’ discussions and reflections on pedagogy and classroom challenges helped shape their professional development, demonstrating how participation in CCSS deepened their teacher identity.

Despite its strengths as a CoP, CCSS had several limitations that hindered teachers’ professional development, particularly among novice teachers and those without a background

in education. One major issue was the lack of formal training. NT-6 expressed a desire for practical training from experienced teachers, stating:

> I didn't study education. I don't think I'm professional enough. A teacher should be full of knowledge and have many ways to teach kids. If there is training, I hope it will be with experienced teachers—not just theoretical content, because we all have limited time.

Another challenge was frequent grade rotation of teaching assignments across year groups, meaning that teachers where often moved from one grade level to another, which required teachers to continually adapt to new content and student groups. Some teachers struggled with this transition, feeling like novices again each time they changed grades. ET-6, who moved from third grade to seventh grade, described feeling overwhelmed and uncertain: "I had experience teaching third grade. Then I was moved to seventh grade, and I felt like a new teacher again. I didn't know what to do or how to teach without the appropriate support. It was really difficult, and I truly felt lost."

Additionally, the short class duration (2.5 hours per week) created tensions between teachers' ideals and classroom realities. Teachers expressed frustration over their inability to develop deeper relationships with students, implement engaging teaching methods, or track student progress effectively. ET-14 explained how exam pressure limited interaction:

> The number of students in exam classes is much higher than it used to be. Combined with the pressure of preparing for exams, it's challenging even to ensure that every student is paying attention in class, let alone develop teacher-student relationships.

In summary, CCSS operates as a Community of Practice, where shared experiences, values, and interactions shape teacher identity. The engagement between teachers, students, leadership, and parents plays a crucial role in identity construction, though challenges such as lack of training, grade rotation, and time constraints create barriers. Despite these limitations, CCSS fosters a participatory identity, reinforcing teachers' alignment with the broader teaching profession. The next sections will further explore how classroom practices and school leadership influence teacher identity construction within CCSS.

4.1.4 The Impact of Classroom Practice on Teacher Identity Construction

For non-mainstream teachers at CCSS, classroom practice is not always a smooth journey: participants (18 out of 22) lacked a formal background in education and had no prior classroom teaching experience before joining CCSS. As a result, their understanding of teaching and their identity as teachers was shaped by their own life experiences, including their time as students, their professional backgrounds, and their experiences as parents. For example, ET-1 acknowledged the positive impact of their own primary and secondary school teachers on their teaching approach, noting how their teachers' guidance contributed to their personal and professional development. Similarly, ET-2 reflected on how innovative and interactive teaching methods used by a history teacher inspired their classroom strategies, particularly methods aimed at testing students' understanding. ET-4 also recognised the significant influence of past educational experiences, specifically their math teacher's approach, which is now applied in their teaching practice.

However, not all participants attributed their teaching behaviours to the influence of their former teachers. For example, ET-14 argued that their decision to join CCSS and their behaviour in the

classroom were entirely based on their personal choices and personality, rather than being shaped by past experiences.

For the small subset of participants with prior teaching experience (four participants), classroom practice at CCSS presented fewer challenges. These teachers exhibited greater confidence and composure in their roles. For instance, ET-10, who had previously taught in China, reflected on their earlier experience as an assistant, noting that despite grading assignments at the back of the class, the chaotic nature of the classroom left a lasting impression: "I deeply realised that organising a classroom without teaching experience is absolutely bewildering. It's not about looking down on them, it's just stating the facts." This experience highlighted the importance of prior teaching experience in navigating classroom dynamics and effectively managing students.

Classroom discipline significantly influenced how teachers perceived their effectiveness and how they were evaluated by others. Approaches to discipline varied based on grade level, subject, and personal teaching style. Many participants faced a misalignment between their beliefs (ideal teaching) and reality (classroom discipline challenges), which sometimes led to self-doubt and frustration.

For lower-grade teachers handling non-exam classes, typical issues included students talking in class. These teachers aimed to balance discipline with maintaining students' interest in learning Chinese. Some, like ET-3, embraced a "loving kids" approach, seeing discipline issues as part of students' charming and playful nature, leading to greater tolerance for minor disruptions.

> ET-3: The children are still young. You cannot expect or require them to sit still and stay quiet for the entire lesson, that's unrealistic. Being active and lively is part of their nature. If you observe carefully, their chatting during class is quite an interesting phenomenon.

For teachers handling higher-grade exam classes, the challenge was not a lack of discipline but rather a lack of student participation. These teachers needed to encourage engagement while maintaining authority, recognising the impact of adolescence on student behaviour. For instance, ET-1 highlighted the delicate balance required in handling adolescent students: “You have to be careful with adolescent students, you need to strike a balance in how you treat them. You have to respect them as well as point out their problems. It’s important to use the right approach.”

However, ET-16 emphasised maintaining professional distance: “I can’t be friends with students. You must maintain boundaries. The moment you become friends with a student, you lose your authority to give orders, and they won’t respect you anymore, and what you say will not work.”

For some novice teachers, disciplinary challenges were overwhelming and contributed to a crisis of identity. NT-6 described a particularly difficult experience:

> I was really angry that time. They (students) were really noisy, kept talking to each other, and kept standing up. I said I could call your parents and take you away… I will try to take some measures, but sometimes I feel really powerless. After you scold a child once, it happens again, you can’t completely control them.

When teachers struggled with classroom discipline, they often had to suppress their authentic and personal identities to emphasise their “formal teacher identity” (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Lower-grade teachers typically set class rules (e.g., a three-step process of reminders, warnings, and contacting parents), while higher-year teachers relied on mutual trust and direct communication. However, when these methods failed to yield quick results, teachers often escalated issues to school leadership. Unfortunately, CCSS’s status as a community school meant that not all students or

parents valued teachers' feedback, further undermining teachers' authority and self-perception as legitimate educators.

Classroom practice did not just affect teaching effectiveness—it also had a profound emotional impact. When teachers failed to manage classroom issues, they experienced negative emotions, including frustration, helplessness, and stress. For example, ET-3 openly admitted: "Dealing with classroom issues brings me a lot of negative emotions." ET-8 echoed this sentiment, describing a feeling of disrespect: "You (the teacher) are speaking here, and the students interrupt there, feeling more like not being respected." While NT-3 found classroom disruptions particularly demotivating: "(Students) don't listen to your discipline, they like to talk to their classmates, and it really feels a bit uncontrollable."

On the other hand, when students performed well, teachers felt a renewed sense of professional purpose and validation. ET-1 described how student progress reinforced their commitment to CCSS: "Students' progress and achievements are the driving force behind my perseverance at CCSS." NT-3 reflected on a pivotal realisation: "The only time I realise I'm a teacher is when students' grades improve. At that moment, I understand that my work is meaningful, and I won't pay attention to anything else."

Although CCSS leadership encouraged teachers to use only Chinese, in reality, all participants used a mix of Chinese and English. Chinese was the primary language of instruction, while English was used to explain difficult concepts. This bilingual approach was consistent across novice and experienced teachers as well as lower and higher-grade teachers. NT-3 explained their reasoning: "(Chinese and English) are mixed, but mostly I speak Chinese. I want them (students) to get used to

this habit; I don't want to keep using English." Similarly, ET-7 emphasised the importance of balancing both languages:

> I mix Chinese and English, mostly Chinese. Especially when explaining abstract terms, I use English. I believe that both higher and lower-grade teachers must know English because if students don't understand what they are learning, they will get frustrated. Using English to explain makes things clearer for them.

Ten teachers expressed concerns over the lack of diverse and effective teaching methods, as well as the limitations of teaching materials. For example, NT-6 reflected on their struggle saying that "I hope my teaching methods can be more diverse and efficient. For example, how can I make the lesson content easier for students to understand? What strategies can I use to manage the classroom better?" Meanwhile, ET-10 criticised the textbooks used: "The textbooks we use are designed for beginners, which do not suit our students (Chinese heritage students). Moreover, the textbook's content is not engaging, and the supplementary materials are quite simplistic."

Interestingly, most participants did not feel that teaching in a borrowed venue negatively impacted their work, contrasting with findings from previous research (e.g., Nordstrom, 2020). ET-12 stated: "(Not having our own venue) has no impact on our work. Many companies and organisations rent offices. Setting up our own school would require a significant investment."

Through classroom practice, teachers developed a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Responsibilities commonly mentioned included professionalism (8 times), student safety (8 times), knowledge transmission (7 times), sense of responsibility (7 times), traditional culture (5 times), patience and interest in teaching (2 times), and communication with parents (2 times).

Teachers learned through experience, gaining insights into student discipline, classroom management, and the role of language in instruction. However, challenges such as a lack of training, limited teaching resources, and discipline management issues created barriers to identity formation. Despite these difficulties, teachers gradually shaped their professional identity, understanding the unique role they played within the community language education system.

4.1.5 The Supportive Role of Leadership in CCSS as a CoP in Constructing Teacher Identities

Among the 22 participants, 19 explicitly recognised the supportive role of CCSS leadership in helping them navigate the challenges they encountered in their teaching, highlighting the critical role of leadership in shaping teacher identity within CCSS as a Community of Practice (CoP). Teachers described leadership as responsive, encouraging, and deeply committed to their well-being, which strengthened their sense of belonging and professional confidence.

For many teachers, CCSS leadership was instrumental in resolving classroom challenges, whether it was managing malfunctioning equipment or handling student discipline issues. Teachers felt reassured knowing that the leadership team would stand by them, reducing their anxiety about dealing with difficult situations. ET-9, for instance, noted how the supportive leadership environment allowed them to remain committed to teaching: “Whenever there’s an issue, they do their best to help resolve it. You don’t need to worry about parents causing trouble for you, which reduces a lot of pressure. They will stand by you and solve problems from your perspective. This is a huge help and allows me to work here longer.”

Beyond practical assistance, teachers also appreciated the leadership’s encouragement and trust, which motivated them to take ownership of their teaching. ET-3, for example, described how the

leadership's trust gave them autonomy in shaping her classroom practices, allowing her to develop a strong professional identity: "The leadership is very supportive of me. They trust me completely, allowing me to do things my own way. This might be the reason why I have been happy working here." Similarly, ET-6 emphasised how one of the leaders' abilities to effectively communicate with parents and provide guidance made a significant impact on their decision to stay at CCSS: "I think at least half of the reason I stay at CCSS is because of her (one of the curricular coordinators). She handles things well, is flexible, and communicates with parents from the teachers' perspective."

While most teachers valued the leadership's guidance, they also appreciated the balance between support and autonomy. The school leaders offered constructive feedback without imposing strict mandates, allowing teachers to develop their own approaches to classroom instruction. However, occasional differences in teaching philosophy between teachers and the management team sometimes created tensions. ET-16, for example, described a moment when their teaching methods were questioned:

> The management team observed my class and thought I spent too little time on reading texts and new words. However, I just want to impart the knowledge I intend to teach in my class. There is a conflict between traditional and modern education here, and our school's dominant teaching style is still relatively traditional. CCSS provides a platform to showcase my ideas, which I am very grateful for. They offer suggestions but do not force you to follow the curriculum strictly.

Despite these occasional differences, most teachers felt that CCSS leadership created an environment where they could grow and refine their teaching identity. The flexibility and non-hierarchical nature of leadership meant that teachers were encouraged rather than pressured, which fostered a sense of professional agency.

Not all participants actively sought leadership support. Three participants preferred to handle issues independently, reflecting their self-sufficiency and confidence in problem-solving. NT-3 deliberately avoided seeking help, recognising the busy schedules of school leaders, saying "I see how busy they are, so I try not to bother them unless absolutely necessary." Similarly, ET-11 noted that while they maintained a positive relationship with leadership, they preferred to resolve classroom challenges on his own: "I have a good relationship with the management team and the principal. Honestly, I don't need too much support from them. Even if something happens, I can handle it myself."

This suggests that while leadership played a critical role in shaping teacher identity, its influence was not uniform across all teachers; some teachers actively relied on leadership for support, while others engaged with it minimally, relying instead on their own experience and problem-solving skills.

Recognising the significant role CCSS leadership played in teacher identity formation, the researcher conducted follow-up interviews with CCSS leaders to understand their perspectives. Unlike mainstream school administrators, CCSS leaders do not perceive themselves as hierarchical figures but rather as facilitators serving teachers and students. The Vice Principal, who previously worked as a teacher at CCSS for eight years, described her leadership philosophy as one of advocacy and collective problem-solving: "I never saw myself as a leader; I am just someone who brings everyone together to get things done. We work together to serve the community."

Likewise, Director A, who transitioned from a teaching role to an administrative one, also emphasised a collaborative leadership approach: "I really don't see myself as a leader, just an ordinary member, mainly doing odd jobs, hahaha (laughter)." This humble and service-oriented

approach contributed to teachers' sense of security and belonging, reinforcing their commitment to CCSS and their identity as educators.

The charitable nature of CCSS plays a critical role in shaping its leadership approach. As a volunteer-based institution, CCSS cannot implement rigid management structures like mainstream schools. The leadership team recognises that teachers join CCSS out of passion rather than for financial gain, which necessitates a leadership style grounded in appreciation and encouragement. For instance, the Vice Principal noted that the school often faces a shortage of teachers, and at the beginning of each school year, those who are available are asked to step in. However, managing the situation becomes more challenging as the year progresses, as it is difficult to ask someone to leave once they have joined. The Vice Principal emphasised that despite the financial limitations, the teachers are very supportive, willing to engage in discussions, and collectively contribute to the school community, likening the environment to a large family coming together every Saturday to build relationships.

This persistent shortage of teachers places additional pressure on CCSS leadership, particularly in terms of recruiting and retaining staff, which directly affects their interactions with teachers. Director A described the ongoing challenge of ensuring a stable teaching staff team the growing number of students and classes. The increasing demand, particularly for qualified teachers for exam classes, creates significant pressure, leading to nearly continuous interviews for new teachers throughout the year.

In addition, Director B highlighted the variability in teacher quality and engagement, which complicates the implementation of standardised oversight. The director acknowledged the insufficient number of teachers and the varying levels of their qualifications, explaining that while

the leadership team hopes teachers will prepare their lessons diligently and teach conscientiously, some teachers still fail to read school emails or adhere to expectations. Despite their desire to visit each class, time constraints prevent them from doing so regularly. However, Director B noted that as long as there are no major issues with teachers' adherence to school policies, the leadership team does not intervene. When teachers do not follow the suggested approaches, the leadership team resorts to repeated communication, as they can only offer advice but cannot impose any directives.

Overall, CCSS leadership significantly influences teacher identity formation by providing practical support, professional trust, and emotional encouragement. Teachers feel valued and respected, reinforcing their sense of belonging to CCSS as a Community of Practice. At the same time, leadership's service-oriented approach, shaped by CCSS's volunteer-based nature, fosters a non-hierarchical environment where teachers are guided rather than dictated to. This mutual respect between teachers and leadership contributes to a harmonious power dynamic, strengthening teachers' commitment to community language teaching. Ultimately, CCSS leadership plays a dual role: it provides essential guidance and advocacy, ensuring teachers feel supported and empowered, while also balancing institutional constraints such as teacher shortages and varying levels of professional preparedness. This complex leadership approach allows CCSS to maintain a stable and engaged teaching community, fostering the continued development of teacher identities within its unique educational setting.

In summary, this section, based on the DSMRI framework and centred on the theme of social context, analysed the role of various factors such as the social context of Scotland, the context of CCSS—including community functions, the community of practice, and CCSS leadership—in shaping the identity of Chinese community language teachers. The next section will continue the

analysis with a focus on the theme of Domain.

4.2 The Influence of Domain Features

In the previous section (4.1), the impact of contextual factors on the construction of community language teacher identity was discussed. This naturally involved differences across subjects and grade levels, reinforcing Kaplan and Garner's (2017) argument that the control parameters in the DSMRI framework do not operate additively or interactively, but rather integrate in complex ways, sometimes producing nonlinear or even chaotic system behaviours. As Pennington and Richards (2016) suggest, the subject and content of instruction play a crucial role in shaping teacher identity. Given that "Domain" is one of the key control parameters within the DSMRI framework, this section will focus on the impact of different subjects on teacher identity formation, distinguishing between lower-year (non-exam) classes and higher-year (exam) classes. Additionally, the role of CCSS as a form of community language education will be explored in shaping teacher identity.

At CCSS, official examinations are not introduced until Year Seven, while students in years seven to twelve must prepare for various exams, including HSK, GCSE, National Five, A-Level, Higher, and Advanced Higher (see sections 3.2.2 and 4.1.5). For clarity, this study classifies years one to six as lower years and years seven to twelve as higher years.

4.2.1 Findings from Lower Years

For many teachers, teaching lower years serves as a manageable starting point, particularly for those without prior teaching experience or a background in education. Eleven participants teach lower years, including five novice teachers and six experienced teachers. The Chinese

textbook used for instruction introduces basic Chinese knowledge, such as Pinyin, stroke order, and radicals, with a focus on listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The relative simplicity of the content allows participants to gain confidence in their ability to teach. For instance, NT-1 initially hesitated to join CCSS due to their lack of formal training in education, but after reviewing the textbook, they realised that their language proficiency was sufficient. Similarly, NT-5 emphasised that the manageable difficulty level of lower-year content allows non-education professionals to adapt to teaching, as NT-5 said:

> I have no teaching experience and no pedagogical background, but I can teach in this setting, and other teachers should be fine as well. There are challenges, but none so difficult that they can't be overcome. My students are very young, and the content I teach is not difficult. With the Internet being so advanced, even if there are problems, we can find solutions quite easily.

Even experienced teachers reaffirmed the accessibility of teaching lower years, attributing their confidence to their own Chinese proficiency. ET-6, for example, noted that their northern Chinese background gave them an advantage in pronunciation, making them feel comfortable in the role, saying that: "I have been teaching lower-year students, and since Chinese is my mother tongue and I come from northern China, my pronunciation is better than southerners'. I don't think teaching content is difficult, but classroom discipline can be challenging."

Similar to ET-6, ET-10 feels confused and fatigued due to the issue of classroom discipline, which hinders the realisation of their teaching intentions. However, NT-3 takes pride in the improvement of classroom discipline and students' academic progress, finding the work meaningful and gaining motivation to continue in the role. Classroom discipline reflects the nature of teacher-student interaction, and feedback from NT-3, ET-6, and ET-10 suggests that

good classroom discipline fosters positive emotions in teachers, while poor discipline leads to negative impacts. Further information on emotions can be found in section 5.5.

The Positive Cycle Between Experience, Professional Growth, and Confidence

As teachers gain experience, their professional abilities improve, which in turn enhances their confidence—both in their subject knowledge and in their ability to convey it effectively (Nolan & Molla, 2017). Over time, this positive reinforcement strengthens their sense of identity as teachers. ET-3 reflected on how their perspective evolved, noting that after becoming a teacher, their mindset improved. With increased experience, they became more patient with students and better at understanding the difficulties students face in learning Chinese, a perspective they did not have initially. ET-3 suggested that, after many years of teaching, they realised that learning Chinese is not an easy task for students.

Similarly, ET-6 described how, initially, they were fearful of deviating from the teaching plan due to concerns about potential complaints from parents. However, over time, as they gained students' respect, their confidence grew. ET-6 noted that, as their experience was recognised by the students, they began to listen more attentively. Reflecting on their growth, ET-6 explained that, while they initially focused on imparting knowledge and improving students' skills, their perspective had broadened. Now, they emphasised not only teaching but also considering students' overall well-being, emotions, and personalities.

For NT-5, progress in classroom management over successive years enhanced their confidence and sense of professional identity: "In my first year, it was quite difficult to manage

students because I didn’t have any experience. I gradually sought advice from other teachers, and by the second year, it was much better. Now, I manage class time more effectively and better understand students’ preferences.”

Prioritising Student Safety and Fostering Interest in the Chinese Language

For lower-year teachers, ensuring student safety and sparking an interest in learning Chinese are primary responsibilities. This emphasis is likely related to students’ young age and the absence of formal exams at this stage. NT-6 summarised these priorities: “For us lower-year teachers, our primary responsibility is to ensure the safety of the students at school. Then, we need to follow the curriculum pace for our lessons. Additionally, we try to make the classes as engaging as possible.”

However, when difficulties or critical incidents occur—such as student safety concerns or failure to engage students—teachers experience significant emotional impact, prompting self-reflection and adjustments in their teaching approach (see section 5.7 for further discussion on difficulties mentioned by participants).

The Impact of Participants’ Professional Backgrounds

Participants come from diverse educational backgrounds (e.g., finance, logistics, law) and work in various professions (e.g., corporate employees, entrepreneurs, homemakers), which brings both advantages and challenges in shaping their teaching at CCSS. Teachers with prior teaching experience often feel more confident in their roles at CCSS. For instance, ET-9 drew on their previous teaching experience in China to adapt more quickly, noting that their

experience helped them understand students' psychology and manage the classroom effectively. However, they also observed differences between students in China and those at CCSS, particularly regarding the students' reluctance to interact with the teacher.

Similarly, ET-10 emphasised the role of structured teacher training in building confidence, noting the difference in presentation skills between trained and untrained teachers. ET-10 felt they could adapt quickly to new students and textbooks but identified classroom organisation as a significant challenge for those without prior teaching experience. While acknowledging that their past experiences had somewhat limited their approach, ET-10 expressed a desire to make their teaching more vivid and engaging.

In contrast, not all participants felt that their primary profession influenced their teaching. NT-3, an online tutor, found minimal overlap between their primary job and CCSS teaching, apart from similar lesson preparation methods. ET-3, who works in a mainstream local school, expressed a similar sentiment: "Despite some commonalities in approach, I don't feel my primary job has much influence on my CCSS teaching. I keep these two roles separate; at CCSS, I teach Chinese, whereas in my local school, I don't teach Chinese."

The findings suggest that teaching lower years at CCSS serves as a low-barrier entry point for individuals without teaching experience, gradually strengthening their professional identity. Teachers gain confidence through accumulated experience, refine their pedagogical skills, and adapt their teaching philosophies based on their interactions with students. However, challenges such as classroom management and self-doubt continue to shape their identity development.

4.2.2 Findings from Higher Years

In contrast to the lower years, which focus on foundational language learning, the higher years at CCSS are exam-oriented, with a structured approach aimed at helping students achieve academic qualifications in Chinese. Interviews with the curricular coordinator reveal that CCSS initially experimented with interest-based classes, but due to low student engagement, these were eventually replaced with exam-focused courses to provide students with clear goals and motivation. As Director B explained: “The school initially set up interest-based classes based on teachers’ suggestions, but without pressure, students did not take their studies seriously. Some even dropped out. Later, the school introduced exam subjects to set goals for students, motivating them to study.”

Over the years, the exam classes at CCSS have undergone significant development, starting from scratch with no study materials or structured support. Teachers initially had to navigate the examination system independently, often studying and preparing materials in their free time. Today, these classes are well-established, with comprehensive resources, a stable teaching team, and strong leadership support. Beyond language and cultural education, the exam-oriented structure has become a defining characteristic of CCSS. The process of overcoming challenges has not only showcased the resilience and dedication of senior teachers but also strengthened their professional commitment. This continuous learning experience has deepened teachers’ understanding of the examination system, enabling them to refine their pedagogical approaches. For example, ET-14 has worked in the exam preparation class for around ten years, during which they have not only supported their colleagues in becoming familiar with exam content and teaching strategies, but have also helped many students achieve excellent results in their university entrance examinations.

As Director A emphasised, ensuring both the quality and quantity of teachers for higher-year classes is crucial, which is why they transfer experienced teachers from the lower years to support the higher levels. Similarly, ET-14, who played a key role in shaping the current exam class structure, recalled the challenges faced in the early years. At that time, there were no available materials or channels to obtain information, and it took a considerable amount of time to compile a set of resources. Over the years, they have continuously gathered materials, leading to the development of the system in place today.

The Pressure and Responsibility of Teaching Higher-Year Classes

Like lower-year teachers, those teaching higher years stress that student safety remains a priority. However, they also recognise that their main responsibility is to prepare students for exams, as these qualifications play a crucial role in university applications. This dual responsibility—ensuring both student well-being and academic success—places high expectations on higher-year teachers, particularly in terms of their subject knowledge and teaching competencies. For ET-4, the balance between student safety and academic success is fundamental to their role: "My first responsibility is to ensure student safety, which is also my primary concern as a parent. Secondly, I aim to teach Chinese well and ensure students learn effectively. I always prepare my lessons in advance to the best of my ability."

Some participants emphasised that teaching higher-year students requires a strong sense of professionalism, arguing that teachers should not view themselves merely as volunteers but as dedicated educators, like ET-7 stated:

> Our profession is to educate, just like in formal schools. Don't see yourself as a volunteer; once you accept the job, you need to be competent. Do not mislead students; prepare lessons seriously so that students learn effectively and pay attention to their moral and character development.

The contrast in responsibilities between higher-year and lower-year teachers was also a point of discussion. For instance, ET-12 observed that while lower-year teachers are primarily concerned with ensuring children's safety, higher-year teachers focus on academic performance. They explained that the responsibilities of teachers differ across year levels and types of classes. Their own role centres on encouraging students to study and achieve good results, while lower-year teachers must prioritise the children's safety during school hours.

Given that exam qualifications directly influence students' future educational paths, ET-14 highlighted the additional pressure associated with preparing students for formal Scottish exams. They explained that exams such as Higher, GCSE, and HSK are distinct, with the Scottish exams being crucial for university applications. As such, the pressure is significant, not because the content is particularly difficult or easy, but due to the weight of responsibility involved.

Despite the pressure and challenges associated with teaching higher-year classes, participants also experienced a positive cycle of professional development. They refined their pedagogical strategies and grew in confidence over time. For example, ET-2 described how their teaching approach evolved, stating that they now tailor their teaching to the different levels of students, rather than primarily focusing on their own teaching as they had in the past. This shift allowed them to focus more on individual students and teach from their perspective to provide the most effective instruction.

However, while gaining experience enhances confidence, the short class hours and heavy teaching workload create a conflict between teachers' ideals and reality. Teachers expressed a desire to prioritise students' holistic development, but exam pressures often force them to focus solely on preparing students for assessments.

The Influence of Participants' Professional Backgrounds

As with lower-year teachers, those teaching higher years had diverse views on how their professional backgrounds influenced their CCSS teaching. Some participants found strong connections between their primary profession and their teaching at CCSS, while others saw no overlap. For example, ET-14, who works in a local school as support staff, felt that their day job had strengthened their problem-solving skills, making classroom management at CCSS relatively easier: "In my job, I encounter many challenging student issues, which has helped me develop strong problem-solving skills. As a result, teaching at CCSS feels much more manageable."

Similarly, ET-8, who teaches online Chinese language courses, found that their experience with one-on-one online teaching enhanced their classroom teaching skills at CCSS. They noted that some of the course materials provided by the online platform could be adapted for use in CCSS teaching. While online teaching typically involves one-on-one interactions, CCSS involves teaching larger classes. This experience, ET-8 explained, has strengthened their teaching and adaptability skills, contributing to a more stable performance in both online and classroom settings. However, not all participants felt that their primary profession influenced their CCSS teaching. ET-5, for instance, stated that their regular job had no connection with teaching and that they did not find any transferable skills that applied to their work at CCSS.

Teaching in the higher years at CCSS presents both unique challenges and rewards. Teachers face considerable pressure, as they must balance student well-being with academic performance, develop their subject knowledge, and ensure effective exam preparation. However, the experience of overcoming these challenges fosters a strong sense of professional growth. Participants' backgrounds play varying roles in shaping their teaching identities—while some find direct connections between their professional skills and CCSS teaching, others see their teaching role as a separate endeavour. Regardless of background, higher-year teachers recognise the significance of their work, not only in helping students achieve academic success but also in defining their own professional identity.

4.2.3 The Domain of Community Language Education

Community language schools play a distinctive role in language education, shaping both teaching practices and teacher identities. Their subject offerings and how teachers perceive themselves are interwoven with social context (see Section 4.1.5). These schools are variously referred to as community language schools, supplementary schools, or complementary schools, reflecting their marginalised status within the broader educational system. This positioning not only differentiates them from mainstream institutions but also influences how teachers construct their professional identities.

Some participants struggle with their identity as teachers, as their lack of formal teaching qualifications and the voluntary nature of their work lead them to question whether they truly belong to the teaching profession. For example, ET-14 expressed doubts about their teacher identity, explaining that they did not consider themselves a teacher due to the absence of a teaching certificate. They described CCSS as a charitable organisation where volunteers assist by reviewing

what students should learn and guiding them through exams. ET-14 pointed out the differences between CCSS and mainstream schools, including variations in class hours, content, and the amount of practice taught, leading them to conclude that they were not teachers at all. This sense of professional uncertainty is further reinforced by the structural inequalities that community language schools face in comparison to mainstream institutions.

As discussed in 4.2.2, CCSS has gradually evolved into an exam-oriented institution, a shift maybe shaped by government policies such as England's Modern Language Policy and Scotland's examine content. These policies subtly shape teachers' instructional practices, emphasising exam preparation over broader language learning goals. Teachers in higher years, for instance, are increasingly driven by exam outcomes, as their students rely on Chinese language qualifications for university applications. This external pressure compels teachers to align their pedagogy with exam standards, further reinforcing the formalization of CCSS teaching despite its community-based identity.

Due to the marginal status of community language schools, parental attitudes toward CCSS vary. Some parents fully support their children's learning, while others do not take CCSS seriously, either neglecting their children's progress or failing to cooperate with teachers. For instance, ET-9 highlighted the crucial role parents play in their children's learning: "Parents play a significant role. If parents are busy with work and have no time to guide their children, it is very difficult for students to learn on their own."

However, some teachers face challenges related to parental disengagement, as described by NT-6. NT-6 shared their frustration with parents who neglect their children's education, explaining that even after sending homework to parents via email, some still failed to be aware of the assignments.

This situation caused significant frustration for NT-6, who ultimately had to reassure themselves that they had fulfilled their responsibilities and that what happened at home was beyond their control.

This lack of parental engagement not only creates obstacles for students but also undermines teachers' sense of professional legitimacy, as their feedback and efforts are sometimes disregarded. The marginal position of CCSS in the education system contributes to lower parental expectations, which in turn negatively impacts teacher identity construction.

The domain within the DSMRI framework functions as a control parameter influencing teacher identity construction in multiple ways. One significant aspect is that regardless of whether participants teach lower years (non-exam classes) or higher years (exam classes), the content itself is not particularly difficult. The combination of low external teaching requirements and the fact that Chinese is the participants' main language facilitates a relatively smooth transition into teaching, particularly for those without formal teaching qualifications. While some participants recognise a connection between their previous professional experiences and CCSS teaching, others do not perceive their prior fields as influencing their teaching practices. However, accumulated experience in teaching contributes to greater confidence and professional development.

For higher-year teachers, subject knowledge is particularly crucial due to the exam-oriented nature of their teaching, requiring more than just reliance on experience. As ET-12 pointed out, ensuring students achieve high exam scores for university applications places additional pressure on teachers, reinforcing the need for expertise in exam content and strategies. Despite these challenges, teacher identity is not merely an accumulation of experiences but a dynamic and evolving process. As teachers move between different domains, challenges, and communities, they continuously

redefine their professional identities, incorporating both personal agency and external expectations into their evolving self-concept.

Furthermore, teacher identity is shaped by interactions with multiple stakeholders, including students, leadership, parents, and the broader social context. Collegial support plays a crucial role in helping teachers develop content knowledge and teaching strategies, contributing to their sense of professional belonging. This reinforces CCSS's role as a community (see 4.1.1) and as a Community of Practice (see 4.1.2), where teachers learn from each other and adapt to new pedagogical challenges. However, the marginalised status of community language schools in the broader educational system leads to challenges in professional recognition, as some parents often undervalue the professional expertise of CCSS teachers, which in turn affects how teachers view their own professional legitimacy.

Additionally, teachers with education-related backgrounds are more likely to recognise the influence of their previous experiences on their current teaching, whereas those from non-education-related professions tend to see no connection between their past and present roles. This difference in perception suggests that awareness of professional learning processes varies among teachers, influencing how they construct and interpret their identities. Importantly, teacher identity does not follow clear-cut boundaries between lower and higher years or exam and non-exam classes but instead emerges from the complex interplay of personal experiences, pedagogical challenges, and institutional structures.

Overall, the domain of community language education presents both challenges and opportunities for teachers at CCSS. The marginal status of these schools creates obstacles in professional recognition, while policy-driven exam orientations influence teaching priorities.

Parental engagement, or lack thereof, directly impacts both student outcomes and teachers' professional confidence. Despite these challenges, the process of identity construction remains dynamic and multifaceted, shaped through teaching experiences, peer support, leadership guidance, and continuous interaction with students. While subject knowledge is essential, particularly in exam-focused classes, identity formation extends beyond content mastery, involving negotiation and adaptation within the broader community of practice. Ultimately, CCSS teachers navigate a complex landscape, balancing pedagogical realities, external pressures, and personal aspirations, as they continually redefine their roles as community language educators.

4.3 The Impact of Culture Dimension on Teacher Identity Formation

According to the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI), identity development is an ongoing process shaped by intra- and inter-personal dynamics. These processes are mediated by socio-cognitive and cultural influences and framed by contextual and dispositional factors (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). As previously discussed, social context (4.1) and domain (4.2) act as control parameters in identity construction; in this section, culture is explored as another key control parameter in the DSMRI framework.

Participants in this study frequently referenced cultural differences between China and the UK, particularly in relation to teachers, students, and pedagogical approaches. For example, NT-3 recalled they had felt constrained while studying in China but experienced a sense of ease and happiness after coming to study in Scotland. Another central theme was the school culture of CCSS, which plays a critical role in shaping teaching practices and teacher identity. Additionally, an essential objective of community language schools is to help students understand their ancestral

culture, making cultural transmission an integral aspect of teacher identity construction. Cultural influences on teacher identity can manifest in overt and subtle ways, some of which are immediately visible, while others emerge over time. This section presents the culturally relevant information shared by participants, providing insights into how cultural factors shape teacher identity formation at CCSS.

4.3.1 Cultural Differences in Teachers and Students

Participants who had received education in both China and the UK were particularly aware of the differences between teachers in the two countries. Many described Chinese teachers as "strict" and their classroom environments as "oppressive", whereas they characterised British teachers as "gentle," "encouraging," and "relaxed". NT-3 recalled that their primary school teachers in China were very strict, making them feel pressured throughout early education. However, when they moved to the UK for secondary school, they found the learning environment to be completely different: "In China, my teachers were extremely strict, and I always felt under pressure in primary school. When I moved to the UK for secondary school, the atmosphere was completely different. It was much more relaxed, and the teachers were very gentle, often saying 'well done' to me."

Similar reflections were shared by ET-2, ET-9, and ET-10, who described Chinese teachers' rigid methods and exam-oriented teaching approaches. While these methods were intended to improve academic performance, they often failed to consider students' interest in learning. For example, ET-9 said that "My politics teacher left a very bad impression on me. His class was the most boring because he just read from the textbook and strictly enforced classroom rules. There were too many restrictions on what we could and couldn't do."

These experiences highlight the strong exam-oriented culture in Chinese education, rooted in Confucian traditions that emphasise discipline, respect for teachers, and academic excellence. In this teacher-centred approach, students are expected to passively absorb knowledge, reinforcing a rigid student role identity. However, participants also recalled positive experiences with certain teachers who stood out due to their patience, respect for students, and engaging teaching methods, such as ET-2 mentioned that "I wasn't good at history, but one history teacher changed my perspective. Unlike my previous teachers who simply lectured, he was interactive and always checked whether we truly understood the material." Similarly, NT-3 gave the other example:

> My primary school English teacher was different from all the others. She was very gentle and encouraging and even took us on a field trip—the first time a teacher had ever done that. We were very excited and loved her class, even though we didn't understand much at the time.

Interestingly, not all participants had entirely positive experiences with British teachers either. NT-2 recalled how one art teacher was extremely disengaged, simply playing music and allowing students to draw freely without guidance. As a result, NT-2 failed exam twice. However, when NT-2 later encountered a teacher who took teaching seriously, they mastered essential skills and passed exam.

These reflections suggest that teaching quality varies in both educational systems, but the cultural differences between China and the UK are real and impactful. Participants who have experienced both systems reflect on these differences, selectively integrating positive aspects from each into their own teaching practices at CCSS. This process enhances their pedagogical flexibility and confidence in their teaching identity. As ET-4 stated: "I cannot use purely Chinese teaching

methods for students here. Even though they have Chinese backgrounds, they have grown up in the UK and think like local students. I have to adjust my approach accordingly." ET-8 reflected their experience said that: "Having grown up in China, I have a deep understanding of Chinese culture and education. But studying in the UK has helped me grasp the learning habits of local students. Combining both perspectives has been beneficial for my teaching at CCSS." These insights illustrate how teachers' cross-cultural experiences shape their teaching beliefs, instructional methods, and overall professional identity.

Just as teachers are influenced by cultural differences, students at CCSS exhibit distinct learning attitudes and motivations compared to students in both China and the UK. Unlike students in China, CCSS students face less academic pressure, as Chinese exam scores are not mandatory for university admission in the UK. Consequently, some Chinese heritage students see learning Chinese as a personal choice rather than a necessity, this is evidenced by ET-4: "For Chinese heritage students, learning Chinese at local schools is too easy. The content is too simple for them, so they attend CCSS to advance their skills and progress at a more suitable pace." ET-12 experienced similar situation: "I advised a friend that since his daughter already had top grades in other subjects, she didn't need to take the Chinese exam. If she did and didn't get an A, it could negatively impact her overall results."

Cultural differences also shape disciplinary approaches in the classroom. Unlike in China, CCSS teachers do not adopt harsh punishments but rather emphasise discussion and student engagement. For example, ET-14 said that they would not yell at students, would not force students to do something, but would communicate with them to resolve the issue. And ET-14 said that they would never physically punish students. ET-5 support this view with saying that: "Here, students negotiate

with me, which I find interesting. They see me as a friend, and I joke around with them. It's a different dynamic from China."

According to Vice Principal, CCSS students have diverse motivations for learning Chinese. For Chinese heritage students, parental expectations or pressure are the main driving factors to attending Chinese school, and learning Chinese helps them connect with their cultural identity. In contrast, local British students often choose to learn Chinese out of personal interest rather than cultural heritage.

Through reflecting on their cross-cultural educational experiences, participants developed a deeper understanding of the differences between Chinese and British teaching cultures. Their exposure to different teaching styles, student behaviours, and educational expectations allowed them to adopt a hybrid teaching identity that integrates the strengths of both systems. Additionally, their experiences as parents raising bilingual children further shaped their approach to teaching and classroom management. These reflections and adaptations enhance their pedagogical strategies, making them more effective and confident as CCSS teachers.

The intersection of personal educational experiences, cross-cultural awareness, and pedagogical adaptation highlights the complex and evolving nature of teacher identity construction at CCSS. By navigating and negotiating cultural differences, CCSS teachers establish a professional identity that is uniquely positioned within the landscape of community language education.

4.3.2 The Role of Culture of CCSS in Teacher Identity Construction

The charitable nature of CCSS forms the foundation of its school culture, shaping how teachers perceive their roles and responsibilities. As a charity-based institution, CCSS relies on the voluntary

participation of teachers, who dedicate their time and effort not for financial gain, but out of a commitment to students and the community. Many participants explicitly stated that monetary compensation was not a motivating factor for their involvement. ET-6 acknowledged that the workload at CCSS is substantial, and the financial reward is minimal, making it clear that the decision to teach at CCSS must be driven by passion rather than financial considerations. Similarly, ET-7, who has been teaching at CCSS for over seven years, emphasised that their continuous engagement stems from enjoyment and commitment to professional growth, rather than salary concerns. For example, ET-6 said: “The salary at CCSS is really not much, and the work is exhausting, so it’s not about cost-effectiveness. You can’t consider financial aspects when working at CCSS.” Meanwhile, ET-7 stated that:

> I’ve been working at CCSS for over seven years, and it has helped me stay engaged with teaching. I truly enjoy the process, and I have never missed a single class—not because of the pay, but because I love what I do.

Despite this selfless dedication, the volunteer-based nature of CCSS leads some participants to struggle with identifying as teachers, as discussed in Section 4.1.5. ET-1 described themselves as a volunteer rather than a teacher, stressing that their motivation comes from the need for teachers rather than financial compensation. Similarly, ET-5 viewed CCSS not as a formal school, but as an extracurricular program, reinforcing the idea that CCSS teaching does not equate to a professional teaching career. For instance, ET-1 expressed that:

> I always emphasise that we are volunteers. The time and effort we invest in CCSS are significant, and we are driven by passion, not by the small subsidy. The payment is disproportionate to the effort, but I do this because the children need teachers every year.

However, other participants strongly identified as teachers, arguing that the charitable nature of CCSS does not diminish their professional role. ET-11, for instance, insisted that regardless of CCSS's organisational structure, stepping into the classroom meant fully embracing the role of a teacher. ET-11 explained that "The charitable nature of CCSS doesn't affect me. Every Saturday, when I go to CCSS and teach, I am a teacher. I must live up to the title of 'teacher' while I am here."

Beyond its charitable identity, CCSS functions as a community, reinforcing shared goals and mutual support among teachers, students, and parents. As explored in Section 4.1.1, the community aspect of CCSS fosters strong social connections, allowing teachers to form friendships and find a sense of belonging. ET-13 highlighted that CCSS serves as a vital community hub, bringing individuals together through shared experiences and a common purpose: "The Chinese school plays a significant and indispensable role in the community. It brings everyone together because we have common topics, get along well, and support each other—not just as colleagues, but as friends."

Unlike mainstream schools, where teachers pursue career advancement through salary increases and promotions, CCSS teachers find motivation in student progress, peer relationships, and leadership support. These factors shape their self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and professional commitment, becoming key components of the CCSS school culture.

As discussed in Section 4.1.4, CCSS leadership plays a critical role in shaping the school culture by supporting teachers and fostering professional development. Leadership at CCSS differs from hierarchical structures in mainstream schools, as leaders position themselves not as authoritative figures but as facilitators who serve the community. The Vice Principal emphasised that their role is not to dictate, but to create an environment where teachers and students thrive together, saying that

> Before coming to Scotland, I ran a kindergarten and later worked as a teacher at CCSS for eight years. Now, as Vice Principal, I continue to advocate for teachers' interests and view myself not as a leader but as someone who brings people together. We work as a collective to serve the community.

While leadership provides support, there are significant challenges in offering professional development opportunities due to limited resources and funding. NT-6 noted that while CCSS grants teachers a great deal of freedom, the lack of standardised guidelines makes it difficult for new teachers to navigate their roles effectively, slowing their professional growth. NT-6 explained that:

> The school gives me a lot of freedom and doesn't require me to strictly follow a curriculum, but as a new teacher without an education background, I sometimes feel lost. The lack of standardised guidelines means I don't always know how to proceed, and this slows my personal growth.

The other obstacle in shaping a strong school culture is the lack of leadership training and limited internal communication. The CCSS principal admitted that although they had previously attended a principal training program in China, the experience was not particularly memorable, and there have been few leadership development opportunities since: "I once went back to China for principal training organised by the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council, but honestly, I don't remember much from it. There haven't been many other training opportunities either." (CCSS principal)

Additionally, internal communication among teachers has weakened over time, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted social interactions. ET-5 lamented that teachers now have minimal interactions outside of class, making it difficult to build relationships and share experiences:

"Now there is no time. Teachers leave immediately after class, and at most, we meet in the corridor for a quick exchange. The sense of community we had before is no longer there." Similarly, ET-16 recalled how pre-pandemic communal lunches provided valuable opportunities for teachers to connect and support each other, a tradition that has since disappeared: "Before COVID-19, we used to have lunch together. Teachers from both morning and afternoon sessions would join in, even if it was just instant noodles. It gave us a chance to sit down, eat, chat, and get to know each other."

The school culture of CCSS is deeply influenced by its nature as a charitable organisation, fostering a sense of dedication and volunteerism among teachers. This shapes how participants view their roles, with some identifying as teachers, while others see themselves primarily as volunteers. At the same time, CCSS functions as a strong community, offering teachers social connections and intrinsic motivation. Leadership at CCSS plays a vital role in shaping the school culture, providing support and flexibility while also facing challenges in professional development and communication. The lack of leadership training and reduced teacher interactions pose obstacles to building a cohesive school culture, particularly after the disruptions caused by COVID-19.

Ultimately, CCSS school culture is a dynamic and evolving element in the construction of teacher identity. While dedication and autonomy are defining features, addressing existing challenges will require collaborative efforts from leadership, teachers, and other stakeholders. As such, CCSS school culture remains a crucial factor in understanding the formation of teacher identity in community language schools.

4.3.3 Chinese Traditional Culture in CCSS

Teaching traditional cultures and ethnic languages is a common goal of all community language schools. At CCSS, Chinese traditional culture is part of the curriculum for both teachers and students. For teachers, the curriculum encompasses the formal cultural pedagogy training and the ability to embody and transmit the culture. For students, it includes the explicit knowledge and cultural activities. This includes the knowledge of Chinese traditional culture presented in textbooks and the cultural activities organised or participated in by CCSS. Additionally, there are intangible cultural influences that teachers, parents, and the larger Chinese community have on students in their daily lives.

Both lower and higher-year textbooks contain elements of Chinese traditional culture, including lessons that emphasis interpersonal respect, care for others and cultivating appropriate social behaviour. These lessons foreground moral education as an integral part of language learning in CCSS. For example, the second-year textbook includes a lesson titled "Practice Good Manners", introducing everyday expressions such as "hello, thank you and sorry", which encourage children to develop courteous communication habits. This demonstrates how character formation is embedded alongside linguistic learning, reflecting the broader role that community language schools play in supporting children's social and cultural development.

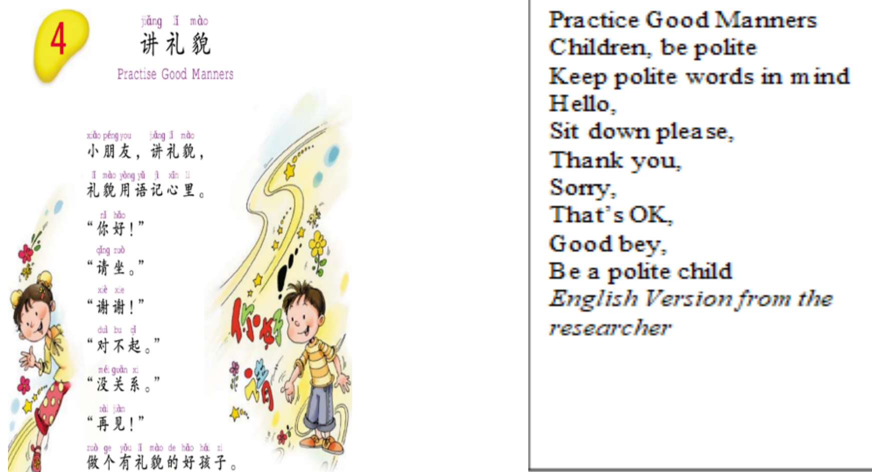

Figure 4.2 Cultural Excerpt from Lower Year

Higher-year textbooks contain more culturally related content. For instance, the eighth-year textbook includes ancient poems, idiom stories, and many historical tales. Stories like ‘The Farmer and the Snake’ teach the distinction between good and evil, the importance of helping good people, and the dangers of being lenient towards bad people. ‘Zheng He’s Voyages’ conveys sentiments of ancient China’s strength, love of peace, and promotion of global exchange. Ancient poems embody the value recognition and emotional expressions of Chinese people. These are direct manifestations of Chinese traditional culture in the textbooks. For example, in the following ancient poem, the author blends environmental descriptions with emotional expression, using just a few lines to convey the deep sorrow of missing loved ones from a foreign land. This poem is rich in cultural knowledge. For instance, ‘Qing Ming’ is a traditional Chinese festival and a solar term. On this day, Chinese people commemorate their deceased loved ones. Additionally, there are differences between ancient Chinese and modern Chinese, as well as the specific expressive techniques used in poetry and the historical context.

古诗二首

清 明

［唐］杜牧

清明时节雨纷纷，
路上行人欲断魂。
借问酒家何处有，
牧童遥指杏花村。

A drizzling rain falls like tears on the Mourning Day;
The mourner’s heart is going to break on his way.
Where can a wineshop be found to drown his sad hours?
A cowherd points to a cot mid apricot flowers.

English Version from Internet

Figure 4.3 A Chinese Poem from Year Eight’s Textbook

Interviews with participants reveal that the cultural knowledge embedded in CCSS teaching primarily serves to shape students’ cultural and ethnic identities, rather than influencing the teachers themselves. Since students at CCSS already receive their primary education in the UK, their worldview and values are largely established, making the cultural content in textbooks more of a means to reinforce their connection with Chinese heritage rather than reshape their perspectives. ET-14 echoed this sentiment, stating that while cultural education helps students develop a sense of identity with Chinese history and traditions, it has little influence on teachers, whose own identities and worldviews have already been shaped by prior experiences: “The cultural knowledge in textbooks mainly helps students understand Chinese history and Chinese ways of thinking, fostering a sense of identity with Chinese culture. But for us (teachers), we are already adults with fully formed worldviews, so we are not likely to be influenced by the teaching content.” (ET-14)

Interestingly, most participants had already learned this cultural knowledge during their own schooling in China, meaning these cultural elements had long been internalised and were not new to them. This prior exposure enables teachers to communicate cultural knowledge with confidence, reinforcing their sense of competence and authority in the classroom. However, the simplicity of the

cultural content in textbooks does not necessarily translate into easy instruction, as students often struggle with both linguistic barriers and conceptual differences, particularly when engaging with traditional Chinese texts.

Despite teachers' familiarity with cultural content, students often encounter difficulties when learning traditional Chinese culture. These challenges manifest in several ways, such as an inability to read or write new words in classical texts, a lack of contextual understanding, or even disagreement with cultural perspectives. Such difficulties disrupt the pace of teaching, requiring teachers to adjust their methods and expectations, sometimes leading to frustration and self-doubt (e.g., NT-6). A prime example is the teaching of the classical poem Qing Ming, which requires both linguistic and cultural interpretation. When students struggle to grasp its meaning, teachers may feel their instructional efforts are falling short, affecting their confidence. In this case, ET-4 shared their solution for making classical poetry more engaging, inspired by a past teacher in China. By using music to teach ancient poems, they help students both memorise the material and emotionally connect with the language. ET-4 said:

> I learned from a teacher in China to use singing to study ancient poems. This not only helps children memorise the poems but also allows music to touch their souls, helping them better understand and feel the beauty of Chinese language and culture.

However, cultural differences remain a significant barrier. ET-13 highlighted the unique challenge of teaching Chinese culture to diaspora students, noting that while they have Chinese ancestry, they have grown up in a completely different cultural environment. This results in a weaker emotional connection to Chinese traditions compared to students who have lived in China:

> These children may have Chinese faces, but they were all born and raised in the UK. Although they have learned a lot about Chinese culture, they haven't lived on Chinese soil. It's actually very difficult for them to develop a strong sense of identity or deep love for China.

Beyond textbook-based instruction, CCSS organises cultural activities to deepen students' engagement with Chinese traditions. During major festivals such as the Spring Festival, CCSS arranges dragon dance performances at the school entrance, allowing students and parents to participate and celebrate together. Additionally, CCSS takes part in Chinese poetry recitation competitions organised by external educational associations, providing students with an opportunity to immerse themselves in cultural learning beyond the classroom.

However, due to the increasing number of students, limited school space, and short class hours, many cultural activities cannot be fully implemented. Teaching occurs in borrowed premises (see Section 3.2.2), meaning CCSS cannot create a fully immersive cultural environment by decorating classrooms with Chinese cultural materials or setting up permanent teaching aids. This lack of physical reinforcement of cultural identity further limits the depth of students' engagement with traditional Chinese culture. For example, ET-4 expressed frustration over these practical limitations, explaining that cultural instruction is often sidelined due to time constraints: "It is indeed challenging. We have classes once a week for two and a half hours, and all the time is used for teaching. There is simply no time to conduct activities related to Chinese traditional culture. Students who grow up in the UK have a very limited understanding of Chinese culture."

Teaching traditional Chinese culture is a shared goal among CCSS teachers, who primarily rely on textbooks and cultural festivals to convey knowledge and reinforce students' cultural identities. Participants feel confident in teaching cultural content, as they had previously learned it themselves,

and this familiarity enhances their sense of professional competence. However, students' struggles with traditional Chinese culture, the limitations of instructional time and space, and the challenge of fostering deep cultural identity in diaspora students create tensions between teaching goals and actual outcomes.

These unmet expectations impact CCSS teachers, sometimes hindering their professional identity construction. When students fail to engage with or understand traditional culture, teachers may feel their instruction is ineffective, leading to self-doubt and frustration. Furthermore, the isolated teaching environment, lack of practical training, and limited opportunities for teacher collaboration exacerbate these difficulties, making it harder for teachers to refine their cultural teaching methods.

In conclusion, this section highlights how cultural factors within the DSMRI framework manifest in CCSS. Teachers reflect on their cross-cultural educational experiences in China and the UK, integrating effective teaching strategies from both traditions. While supportive leadership and a strong school culture help retain teachers, the challenges in delivering cultural education remain significant. The next section (4.4) will explore the role of disposition in teacher identity construction, further examining how individual traits shape teachers' engagement, confidence, and resilience in CCSS.

4.4 Disposition

After analysing the social context (4.1), domain (4.2), and culture (4.3), this section will present the fourth control parameter, namely disposition. In previous sections (see 4.1 and 4.3.3), disposition has been touched upon, underscoring that control parameters do not function in an additive or even

interactive manner but rather integrate to form a combination (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). Similar to cultural elements discussed in section 4.3, disposition can manifest in various forms. This section will describe the dispositions exhibited (or intended to be exhibited) by the participants during the interviews. Overall, the participants' descriptions of their dispositions reveal diversity, with both similarities and differences, and these dispositions influence their attitudes toward students, teaching behaviours, and their outlook on the profession.

4.4.1 Disposition in Relation to Students

Some participants, such as NT-1, NT-3, and ET-3, reported that they had always enjoyed working with young children, describing them as innocent and endearing. This affinity led them to primarily teach lower-grade classes, where they tended to perceive classroom management challenges as natural expressions of children's personalities rather than as disruptive behaviour, resulting in a relatively higher tolerance for such issues. For instance, NT-1 noted that being around young children felt uplifting and likened the experience to a form of emotional renewal. They also observed that children who might not receive sufficient attention at home could respond positively to encouragement and praise from teachers, highlighting the transformative potential of teacher–student interactions.

Beyond their fondness for children, participants like NT-1 emphasised the importance of subtle cues, such as tone of voice and eye contact, in conveying care and responsibility to students. This sensitivity suggests that they recognised students as individuals with independent personalities and understood the significant influence their own behaviour could have. Such awareness contributed to shaping their pedagogical beliefs and practices. Moreover, participants' experiences of witnessing

children's growth and progress appeared to enhance their sense of accomplishment and reinforce their commitment to community language teaching.

In contrast, other participants, such as ET-16, expressed a clear preference for teaching older students, indicating a self-assessed mismatch with the demands of early childhood education. ET-16 reported setting conditions upon joining CCSS, specifically requesting not to teach exam classes or lower grades. They felt unsuited to the highly nurturing approach required for younger children and preferred working with middle- to higher-grade students who had stronger comprehension skills, allowing for more sophisticated pedagogical engagement. Similarly, NT-6 reflected on their limited interaction with younger students, attributing this to both personal disposition and prior educational experiences where communication with teachers had been minimal. While NT-6 did not feel a strong affinity for younger students, they noted that maintaining a neutral but respectful relationship was sufficient to foster a functional classroom environment.

Overall, although not all participants explicitly articulated their dispositions, the accounts discussed above suggest that individual differences in teachers' natural inclinations influence their attitudes and behaviours toward students. Some participants demonstrated a stronger predisposition towards nurturing young children, while others preferred working with older, more independent learners. However, it would be inappropriate to assess the quality of teaching based solely on these dispositional differences, as effective teaching can manifest in various forms depending on context and personal strengths.

4.4.2 Disposition in Relation to Teaching Behaviours

Participants' dispositions were found to significantly influence their teaching behaviours. Some participants, such as ET-9, attributed a perceived lack of classroom dynamism to their naturally reserved personality, while others, like NT-6, emphasised a belief in personal responsibility and independent problem-solving within the teaching role.

For example, ET-3 described themselves as methodical and indicated a preference for stability in daily work routines, suggesting that the relatively consistent nature of the teaching environment at CCSS aligned well with their disposition and may have contributed to their sustained commitment to the school. Similarly, ET-9 reflected on their introverted nature, expressing concerns that this trait might lead to less lively classroom interactions, which they recognised as an area for improvement. However, while ET-9 appeared motivated to enhance their teaching practices, the process of adjusting behaviours contrary to their personality could present ongoing challenges and potential impacts on personal well-being.

In contrast, NT-4 described an easy-going approach, characterised by a willingness to communicate and negotiate with students while maintaining clear boundaries regarding classroom discipline. This suggests a pedagogical approach that, while responsive to student needs, ultimately retains a teacher-centred framework. NT-6, on the other hand, highlighted a strong preference for individual autonomy, asserting that teachers should be able to independently address challenges using available resources. This perspective, while fostering self-reliance, may inadvertently create a sense of distance from colleagues and students, potentially affecting the support systems necessary for effective teaching.

Although the above accounts were not directly compared among participants, they collectively illustrate how individual dispositions shape various aspects of teaching behaviour. These findings also reveal the interconnections between dispositions, goals, beliefs, and actions as conceptualised within the DSMRI framework, offering a more nuanced understanding of the complexity involved in teacher identity formation.

4.4.3 Disposition in Relation to Teaching Profession

Some participants, such as ET-3, ET-4, and ET-6, expressed strong enthusiasm for education and a sense of enjoyment in working in the field. ET-3, for instance, reflected that despite varying opinions regarding the status of teachers in community schools compared to public schools, the act of imparting new knowledge to students each week fostered a strong sense of professional accomplishment. ET-4 similarly indicated that sustained teaching at CCSS had deepened her passion for education, developing a growing sense of responsibility and mission over time. ET-6 attributed her active engagement with parents and dedication to students to her naturally enthusiastic personality and prior volunteer experiences, highlighting that work at CCSS was driven by intrinsic motivation rather than financial gain.

Although participants entered CCSS with diverse motivations, these accounts suggest that genuine passion and interest in education were important factors for many. It is noteworthy that the participants mentioned (ET-3, ET-4, and ET-6) had prior or concurrent experience in education-related roles, reinforcing the idea that their personal backgrounds may have significantly shaped their psychological orientations and teaching behaviours at CCSS.

This study presents the evidence illustrates how personal traits influence interactions with students, teaching approaches, and broader perceptions of educational work. Differences in disposition may explain divergent views on similar issues, such as the contrast between NT-1 and ET-16 in their attitudes toward students. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that these traits cannot be fully isolated for analysis, consistent with discussions in Sections 4.1 and 4.3.3. This finding further supports the idea that control parameters within the DSMRI framework operate in an integrated manner.

In summary, this chapter discussed the four control parameters, namely social context, domain, culture, and disposition within the DSMRI framework. For example, section 4.1 explores the social context and revealed how the Scottish examination system influences the curriculum content of CCSS, thereby shaping teachers' awareness and practices. The community-oriented function of CCSS and its role as a Community of Practice (CoP) were also examined, particularly in relation to their implications for teacher identity construction. Section 4.2 looked at the aspect of domain and findings addressed the marginalised status of CCSS impact on teachers. Moreover, differences and similarities in pedagogical beliefs and practices between lower-year and higher-year teachers were explored. In Section 4.3, the influence of Chinese culture, Scottish culture, and the unique institutional culture of CCSS on teachers' identity development was analysed. Finally, Section 4.4 highlighted how individual disposition traits, as illustrated by participants such as NT-3 and ET-3, affected classroom management and conceptualisations of Chinese language teaching. Together, these discussions have illustrated the multifaceted ways in which control parameters contribute to the shaping of teacher identity within the CCSS context. Following this line of thought, it reminds the author to carefully attend to the interactions among the core elements of the DSMRI—beliefs, goals,

self-perceptions, and perceived action possibilities—when examining them in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 FINDINGS (PART 2)

Building on the previous chapter's discussion of the four control parameters within the DSMRI framework—social context (4.1), domain (4.2), culture (4.3), and dispositions (4.4)—this chapter turns to the framework's four core elements. Section 5.1 examines participants' ontological and epistemological beliefs; Section 5.2 explores their purposes and goals; Section 5.3 considers perceived action possibilities; and Section 5.4 analyses self-perceptions and self-definitions. Section 5.5 then addresses the role of emotions in shaping identity. Finally, Section 5.6 reviews the diverse role identities expressed by participants, and Section 5.7 summarises the key issues and challenges that emerged.

5.1 Ontological and Epistemological Beliefs

According to DSMRI, ontological beliefs refer to the knowledge an actor holds as true about the world, along with the emotions tied to this knowledge. These beliefs involve the actor's knowledge and assumptions about cause and effect in a particular context, as well as attributions based on these assumptions and the emotions associated with these assumptions and attributions. Epistemological beliefs, on the other hand, concern the actor's assumptions about the certainty, complexity, and credibility of sources of their knowledge, and the emotions tied to these assumptions (Kaplan & Garner, 2017) (see 2.5.2 for more information).

Although this study focuses on the participants' beliefs about teachers, students, teaching, parents as demonstrated during their work at CCSS, it is important to acknowledge that participants' personal beliefs existed before they joined CCSS. As they work at CCSS, they may need to evolve their existing beliefs to develop new beliefs related to their teaching profession. Transforming

personal beliefs into professional beliefs is not an easy process and often involves friction and resistance. However, thanks to the CCSS's role as a community (4.1.2), the function as a CoP (4.1.3), and the supportive leadership at CCSS (see 4.1.5), the side effects caused by this friction have been minimised. Overall, the beliefs held by the participants strongly influence their professional decisions and actions and are closely linked to the development of their teacher identity. The following discussion will explore the participants' beliefs about teachers, students, teaching, and parents. However, this study finds that these beliefs are interwoven and interdependent with goals (5.2), actions (5.3), and self-perceptions (5.4), demonstrating the complexity of the teacher identity construction.

5.1.1 Beliefs About the Role of Teachers

Participants acknowledged that their work at CCSS involves not only teaching the Chinese language and culture but also shaping students' worldviews, values, and life perspectives. Many expressed a desire to serve as role models who guide students toward intellectual and personal growth. For example, ET-1 underscored the importance of offering positive guidance, believing it would be beneficial for students' future development. Similarly, ET-6 articulated a view of teaching that extends beyond the transmission of knowledge, expressing a sincere hope to influence students' outlooks on life and to cultivate habits that would support their long-term academic and professional success. Teachers also reflected on their responsibilities within the classroom, noting the significant and lasting impact they could have on their students. ET-7, for instance, emphasised the importance of recognising and encouraging students' strengths, and linked effective classroom discipline to a

teacher's ability to meet students' expectations. ET-8 conveyed a heartfelt aspiration to be a supportive figure who could offer meaningful assistance to students.

The participants' metaphors also expressed the same intention, for instance, ET-7 viewed teachers as "engineers," who shape and influence students. Additionally, ET-8 described their ideal vision of a teacher by saying: "To give a bowl of water to students, a teacher must have a bucket of water," suggesting ET-8's commitment to personal growth and the pursuit of becoming an ideal educator to better help students to achieve their goals.

Moreover, some participants connected their teaching to fostering a sense of cultural identity among students. ET-11 noted, "Since students' roots are in China, they should have a certain level of national identity. I hope that through my teaching, I can help them become aware of this." NT-1 added that learning Chinese is important for students to communicate with relatives in China. Even if students forget many Chinese characters they have learned, they will understand Chinese culture and recognise that at least one of their parents is Chinese. Growing up in the UK, students are at least partly Chinese, and they should not forget their roots. ET-6 used metaphor to describe themselves as a "messenger" responsible for transmitting Chinese culture to heritage students, reminding them not to forget their cultural roots. Additionally, ET-6 likened themselves to a "walkie-talkie" between students and parents, facilitating communication by conveying students' classroom experiences to their families.

Finally, several participants reflected on the broader role of teaching, emphasising its dual purpose of imparting knowledge and inspiring students. ET-12 explained, "Being a teacher is essentially about sharing experiences with students," while ET-13 highlighted, "A teacher not

only teaches but also significantly impacts children. As role models, teachers have an enlightening effect and must be clear about their responsibilities, not just to impart knowledge but also to recognise their influence on children.” ET-16 further elaborated, “Every teacher, when imparting knowledge, is not just talking about the knowledge itself but conveying the teacher’s understanding of that knowledge.” These insights underline the multifaceted nature of teaching at CCSS, where educators view their roles as both academic instructors and mentors shaping students’ cultural and personal identities.

To achieve the impact described above, participants emphasised the importance of continuous learning and self-reflection for teachers, aligning with the concept of lifelong learning. This perspective illustrates how beliefs significantly influence teachers’ thought processes and actions, playing a pivotal role in identity formation by serving as guides for practice. For example, ET-3 highlighted the need for adaptability and innovation, indicating that they actively sought change in the classroom and viewed teaching as a continuous process of exploration and experimentation. Similarly, ET-13 stressed the value of self-assessment, noting the importance of being mindful of one’s responsibility to impart knowledge and the expectation from students to gain something meaningful from each lesson. This participant described regularly engaging in post-lesson reflection to identify areas for improvement, with the aim of enhancing the quality of subsequent lessons. ET-16 further emphasised the necessity of ongoing professional development, suggesting that teachers should continuously learn, embrace new ideas, and remain aware of societal changes. According to this view, effective teaching involves not only updating instructional methods but also reassessing expectations of students.

Participants' conceptions of what it means to be a teacher revealed a range of perspectives, demonstrating how beliefs act as powerful perceptual frameworks that shape teachers' self-concepts and influence how they perceive, experience, and perform their roles. For instance, ET-2 adopted a broad definition, viewing anyone who teaches and nurtures others—whether at home or at CCSS—as fulfilling the role of a teacher, regardless of subject area or setting, as long as trust is established with students and parents. In contrast, ET-7 articulated a more traditional and culturally rooted understanding, referring to the teacher's role as one who disseminates knowledge, resolves students' doubts, and embodies passion and responsibility. This participant also emphasised the importance of humility and accountability, asserting that teachers should apologise when they make mistakes.

Participants also reflected on the unique nature of teaching at CCSS compared to mainstream schools. ET-9 observed that teaching in the community school context relied more heavily on the teacher's personal willingness and initiative, offering greater autonomy than in mainstream educational settings. Additionally, NT-1 highlighted the moral dimension of teaching, contending that moral integrity is more important than formal qualifications. From this perspective, a teacher with strong moral values would naturally be kind and caring toward children, reinforcing the ethical underpinnings of the profession.

These accounts reveal a multifaceted understanding of the teaching role. Participants' perspectives encompassed not only the conventional image of teachers, such as those in mainstream schools, but also qualities beyond institutional definitions, including compassion and moral integrity. ET-7's reference to "propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts" directly draws from Han Yu's seminal Tang dynasty essay *On the Teacher* (*Shi Shuo*, 819 AD), one

of foundational texts in Chinese educational thought. In this essay, Han Yu defines the teacher as a moral and intellectual guide, responsible not only for transmitting knowledge but also for cultivating students' values and resolving their confusions, both intellectual and ethical. His articulation of teacher's role has deeply influenced Chinese pedagogical culture for centuries and continues to inform contemporary Chinese understandings of educational authority and responsibility. This cultural legacy shaped many participants' beliefs about the teaching profession. Meanwhile, NT-1's emphasis on moral standards over formal qualifications highlights broader debates around teacher certification systems, which have contributed to varying self-perceptions among participants (see Section 5.4).

The participants' diverse experiences and reflections on these experiences shaped their different beliefs about what it means to be a 'teacher,' illustrating the integration of personal and professional beliefs. For example, ET-4 joined CCSS due to a passion for education and actively practiced the teaching philosophy of 'learning through play' by organising activities in class to increase students' interest in learning Chinese. This approach received support from the CCSS leadership (see 4.1.5), and ET-4 was appointed as the cultural activity coordinator at CCSS. It is obvious that what is occurring is perceived as going the way ET-4 would like. This alignment of beliefs, goals, and actions enhanced ET-4's job satisfaction and commitment and is accompanied by pleasant emotions. ET-6 further believed that being a teacher reflected her life's value. They said:

> The primary value of my life is being a teacher. I don't just impart knowledge; I genuinely hope to have a profound impact on my students' lives. I didn't realise this at first; it became clear to me after I had an experience. So now, regardless of how well students learn, I look forward to sharing some of my views and experiences with them. I will not impose behaviours that I disliked as a student on my students.

The above excerpts from ET-4 and ET-6 once again illustrate the complex and intertwined relationships between participants' beliefs, goals, actions, and self-perceptions. The above excerpts also reflect the participants' understanding of their tasks and responsibilities at CCSS, namely, that as community language teachers, they are to impart Chinese knowledge and culture to students while having a positive impact on students as individuals and their future development. Represented by ET-4, within the space of CCSS (see Section 4.1), they can work according to personal normative program, strengthening their work enthusiasm and motivation. For teachers like ET-6, one of the primary reasons they came to teach at CCSS is their love and passion for teaching (another significant reason is that some participants' children attend CCSS). Over time, they discover that their work, presence, and actions hold other meanings for students, such as influencing life plans, personal identity, and growth. Teachers who find that they, as individuals, have a meaningful impact on students experience this broader educational significance as a highly motivating factor in their careers. Obviously, not all participants only realised the profound effect of teachers on students after working at CCSS; some may have already recognised the role of teachers from their previous experiences as students, their roles as parents, or from different career experiences. When their children reached the age to attend CCSS, they came to CCSS to put their beliefs about teachers into action. This also reflects that participants' beliefs about the role of a CCSS teacher are person-based and heterogeneous, which may indicate that this study can only partially summarise some of the common beliefs about the teacher's role exhibited by the participants.

Another important aspect of participants' beliefs is their sense of efficacy as CCSS language teachers. Overall, participants expressed confidence in their ability to handle teaching

responsibilities at CCSS, although this confidence often developed over time. While some participants initially doubted their teaching abilities, they found, after a period of adjustment, that they could effectively manage classroom teaching. For example, NT-1 recounted their initial hesitation:

> My daughter asked why I didn't come to CCSS to teach Chinese. I thought about it, looked at the textbooks, and realised it wasn't that difficult. Although Chinese is my mother tongue, I'm not trained in education, so I had doubts about whether I could teach well, as I didn't want to hinder the students. But after trying it out, I found it wasn't a problem.

The relatively low expectations of CCSS regarding teacher performance and teaching outcomes (see Section 4.1) further reinforced participants' self-efficacy. NT-6 reflected on their own experience, noting that despite not having a background in education or prior teaching experience, they were still able to manage classroom responsibilities effectively. They believed that if they could teach under such circumstances, others could do the same. According to this participant, although challenges inevitably arise, none are insurmountable; assistance from teaching assistants, collaboration with colleagues, and access to online resources can all support problem-solving and ensure the continuity of teaching.

Participants with prior teaching experience or those currently employed in education-related roles demonstrated greater confidence in their teaching abilities compared to those without such backgrounds. ET-10, for instance, attributed their sense of efficacy to previous teaching experience in China, which had enhanced their communication skills, instructional techniques, and classroom management strategies. They believed these competencies enabled

them to address classroom issues more calmly and effectively than individuals lacking teaching experience or formal training.

These accounts illustrate that a combination of personal experience, institutional expectations, and available resources plays a critical role in shaping participants' sense of efficacy as CCSS language teachers. While challenges exist, many participants demonstrated adaptability and resilience, enabling them to fulfil their roles effectively.

5.1.2 Beliefs About the Role of Students

Participants (e.g., ET-1, ET-5, ET-7) recognised students' uniqueness, emphasising that most CCSS students were born and raised in Scotland, with their ways of thinking and behaviour aligning more closely with local children than with their peers in China. Participants acknowledged the need to adapt their teaching practices to these cultural and developmental contexts, especially considering the students' adolescent years (see Section 5.1.3). They highlighted that their own experiences as students in China were insufficient for effectively educating Chinese children abroad.

For example, ET-1 explained, "Most students are born locally, so we cannot expect their Chinese language skills to reach a certain level. We need to tailor our teaching to each student's individual needs, and our lesson plans vary depending on the situation." Similarly, ET-4 stated that they cannot fully use Chinese methods to educate the children here. Although students have Chinese facial features, they were born and raised locally, receiving British education. Students' thinking is very close to that of the local people, so the Chinese education at CCSS must be localised. ET-7 added:

> CCSS teachers need to be aware that the students are born and raised in Scotland. They should pay attention to the students' backgrounds and the local culture, striving to integrate both systems as much as possible. We can't be as strict as in China and shouldn't expect students to score 100%.

Participants universally recognised the importance of students' mental and physical well-being, often prioritising it over exam scores. Some participants (e.g., ET-5, ET-6, ET-10, NT-3) explicitly stated that students' overall development should take precedence, while others (e.g., ET-4, NT-1) advocated for a balance between academic achievement and well-being. For example, ET-6 remarked, "I believe that students' mental and physical development is definitely more important than their grades. Language is meant to be used, and the focus should be on improving students' language abilities, not just on grades and exams." NT-1 echoed this sentiment, noting, "As long as we don't overemphasise exam scores, they shouldn't conflict with mental and physical development. This also depends on the attitudes of parents."

Although participants did not relax their expectations, they emphasised the importance of progress relative to each student's starting point, rather than enforcing a uniform standard. ET-1 gave an example that students respond differently to the positive guidance teachers give them. ET-1's students who speak well or are more outgoing will express gratitude, while others may not show it as clearly, since every student is different, teachers cannot force everyone to meet very high standards; teachers need to allow for individuality. ET-11 added, "Some people have a certain level of learning ability, and as long as they make progress compared to themselves, that's enough. We can't expect everyone to be at the same level."

Participants consistently emphasised the importance of cultivating students' interest in learning Chinese and engaging with Chinese culture. ET-3 explained, "Chinese class is only once a week, so I hope the students find it interesting. I've always upheld this belief while teaching here, aiming to create a happy learning environment for students." Similarly, ET-4 explained that when students are genuinely interested in a subject, they tend to engage more fully, making classroom discipline less of a concern. According to ET-4, if the Chinese class is engaging, students will listen attentively and participate actively. ET-4 also mentioned incorporating elements such as Chinese ways of thinking, cultural customs, and talent contests to spark and maintain student interest. Meanwhile, reflecting on their own children's resistance to learning Chinese, ET-5 remarked, "This is an extracurricular class, so interest should come first. When children are interested, they'll learn Chinese well. I've adhered to this approach since, ensuring they enjoy their learning, which is why our class has the least homework."

However, participants acknowledged the tension between fostering interest and CCSS's exam-oriented trends (see Section 5.1.5). Many students attend CCSS due to parental expectations, and teachers view interest as a way to transform students' attitudes, encouraging sustained learning and personal growth. ET-9 pointed out that students often attend CCSS because of parental pressure, but as they reach adolescence and begin to assert their independence, they are no longer easily compelled by their parents and may choose to stop attending. ET-9 also highlighted the contrast between the local schools, which promote enjoyable and stress-free learning, and the more demanding nature of CCSS, where homework alone can take at least an hour. Participants also highlighted the students' independent learning abilities and adaptability. ET-16 stated, "Learning is something they should take charge of

themselves, without the need for parental involvement. If they want to succeed in their future studies and life, independent learning is something they must develop now."

These findings reveal that participants not only respect students' individuality and cultural backgrounds but also strive to balance academic goals with fostering well-being, independence, and sustained interest in learning Chinese.

5.1.3 Beliefs Related to Teaching

Participants' beliefs about teaching at CCSS are influenced by the subject domain (see Section 4.2). Across different grade levels, there is a shared consensus on the importance of teaching Chinese language and culture, fostering students' 'Chineseness,' and ensuring their safety. However, the focus varies between lower and higher-year teachers. Lower-year teachers who teach Year one to Year six prioritise creating a safe and engaging learning environment while adhering to the curriculum. As NT-6 described, their primary responsibility is "to ensure the safety of the students at school," followed by maintaining the curriculum pace and making classes as engaging as possible. In contrast, higher-year teachers who teach Year seven to Year twelve concentrate on helping students achieve good academic results, which are crucial for university applications. ET-12 emphasised that the responsibilities of teachers differ significantly between grade levels and class types, indicating that lower-year teachers focus on students' safety, higher-year teachers are primarily tasked with encouraging students to study and perform well in exams.

Participants also recognise the limitations of traditional Chinese education methods in teaching Chinese heritage students, highlighting the importance of adapting approaches to suit

students' unique circumstances (see Section 5.1.2). Many advocates for encouragement-based teaching that fosters growth through care and praise rather than criticism. For example, ET-4 noted that while children may appear Chinese, they grow up in local educational environments with thinking patterns aligned to their surroundings. Therefore, "Chinese education must be localised," aligning with local methods to make learning more accessible. ET-14 further emphasised the importance of empathy, explaining that understanding students' perspectives and avoiding forceful teaching methods is crucial, particularly during adolescence, when students already face significant academic pressure.

This encouragement-driven approach aligns with the belief that teaching is a moral responsibility. Teachers like NT-1 expressed that showing care, asking questions, and offering praise often led to noticeable improvement, emphasising that "there are no bad students, only bad parents and bad teachers." Similarly, NT-3 argued that if students struggle to learn, the issue often lies in the teaching method, underscoring the value of an encouragement-based approach to ensure students retain their interest in learning Chinese.

These perspectives reflect participants' aspiration to be "good teachers" (see Section 5.1.1). For instance, ET-2 highlighted the importance of putting in extra effort outside regular class time; ET-4 advocated for integrating lively activities such as talent competitions into teaching; and ET-7 discussed the significance of expanding students' extracurricular knowledge. However, while differentiated instruction is considered ideal, practical challenges often arise. As ET-1 noted, the composition of exam classes varies each year, requiring adjustments to teaching plans based on students' evolving needs (see Section 5.1.5).

Another key belief is that language should be viewed as a tool for communication rather than merely a subject for testing. ET-11 emphasised that “language is meant to be used, not just tested,” while ET-15 noted that studying is only one pathway to language mastery, as learning Chinese ultimately serves the purpose of communication rather than achieving perfect scores. Clearly, the perspectives of ET-11 and ET-15 stand in contrast to the exam class’s goal of “achieving high scores to gain admission to a good university.”

The participants’ beliefs are also shaped by the challenges within CCSS, such as varying teaching quality due to teachers’ diverse educational backgrounds and the inadequacy of teaching materials. Current textbooks were criticised for being rigid, outdated, and lacking engaging content. NT-1 described the materials as “not suitable for Chinese-heritage elementary students,” noting that they are less lively compared to online Chinese education platforms. ET-10 observed that many textbooks are designed for beginners, which does not align with the needs of Chinese-heritage students. Additionally, ET-16 pointed out that some teachers lack formal training and primarily rely on traditional exam-oriented methods, leading to inconsistent teaching quality.

Participants’ metaphors also offer insight into their conceptualisations of Chinese language teaching. Both ET-6 and ET-16 independently described their role as “planting a seed” in students. They acknowledged that most pupils attend Chinese school primarily due to parental encouragement and may not yet appreciate the significance of learning Chinese. Through teaching, however, they sought to plant seeds that would gradually take root as students matured and developed an awareness of its value. They also believed that Chinese language learning

contributes to students' long-term development, with future teachers continuing to nurture these seeds until they eventually bear fruit.

Similarly, ET-4's metaphors reflect their pedagogical strategy. They argued that effective Chinese teaching should be "like placing the apple just within reach if students stand on tiptoe," implying that instruction should be pitched slightly above students' current abilities—challenging yet achievable with effort. ET-4 also cautioned against excessive homework, warning through the metaphor of "the last straw that breaks the camel's back" that overburdening students could diminish motivation and increase the risk of dropout. Reflecting this belief, ET-4 deliberately assigned minimal homework in their classes.

5.1.4 Beliefs About the Role of Parents

Participants appear to hold a contradictory attitude toward parents. On one hand, they recognise the important role parents play in students' Chinese language learning and personal development, often seeing themselves in a supportive role. The rationale commonly provided is that students spend more time with their parents, while they only attend CCSS for two and a half hours each week. Several participants noted that the level of parental involvement is directly correlated with students' academic achievements. For instance, ET-5 explained, "Parents have a significant impact on students' performance. If parents are able to supervise, students will definitely improve quickly. If parents do not prioritise it, the students' performance will certainly be affected." Furthermore, ET-9 emphasised that a child's performance is greatly influenced by the family environment, stating that:

> If parents like watching Chinese programs, the child's Chinese will definitely improve by watching with them. If parents are busy with work and have no time to guide the child, it's

> very difficult for the child to learn on their own. We only have a bit more than two hours, so we can't help much; it mainly depends on the parents.

Interestingly, participants believe that working-class parents tend to communicate more with their children in Chinese, while parents from more educated backgrounds often use English for convenience, creating different language environments for their children. ET-11 highlighted the centrality of parental involvement, noting, "A child's performance is entirely related to their parents. Parents are very important—we teachers only account for thirty percent, and the rest is all down to the parents." Moreover, the importance of parental involvement extends to enrolment in the CCSS, as many students attend at the request of their parents, ensuring continued student enrolment. ET-13 acknowledged this, stating, "Parents are very important. It's the parents who require their children to come to CCSS to learn Chinese and culture. The parents accept our teaching methods, but students often have different opinions." Similarly, ET-15 remarked, "CCSS only has one class a week, so I can't pay attention to every child. Things like writing practice have to rely on the parents. I think parents are more important than us; we play a supporting role."

These reflections suggest that participants attribute greater student success to parental involvement than to their own role as CCSS teachers. This attribution is crucial in shaping their teacher identity, as it influences how they perceive their own effectiveness and ties into their sense of teacher agency and efficacy. As ET-5, ET-11, and ET-15 illustrate, parents are seen as the primary determinants of student outcomes, while teachers play a supporting role. This external attribution, especially in relation to uncontrollable factors such as parental attitudes and behaviours, may evoke feelings of powerlessness, which can undermine the development of teacher agency and efficacy. Consequently, teachers might adjust their understanding of their ideal teacher identity.

On the other hand, while recognising the significance of parents, some participants express reluctance to communicate with them. One such manifestation is the refusal to set up class group chats. When students face challenges, participants typically adopt one of three approaches: first, some believe students can solve problems independently and communicate directly with them to resolve the issue. If this approach is unsuccessful, they refer the matter to the school's, which may involve the vice-principal or curriculum coordinators contacting the parents. If the problem persists, the student may be advised to leave the school until they are willing to make changes.

A major reason for participants' hesitation to communicate with parents is the limited class time available to complete teaching tasks, with many unwilling to use personal time after class to address teaching-related issues. Additionally, some parents do not fully support the teachers' methods, and some even attempt to impose their own views on CCSS teaching. ET-1 described this frustration, stating, "There are all kinds of parents, some think that sending their child to CCSS will ensure an A in the exams. We try not to bother them, and we do not accept parents imposing their opinions on the teachers." Reflecting on the management of parental expectations, ET-10 added, "Some parents are very impolite. I address them formally, but they still speak informally to me. Sometimes, it's hard to communicate clearly, so I try to avoid communicating with them." Other participants, like ET-12, expressed a firm stance against excessive parental involvement, saying, "In a certain sense, I oppose parental involvement. They are already out in society and come with all sorts of attitudes; students, on the other hand, are pure." ET-16 echoed this sentiment, stating, "I don't encourage parents to contact me. Children at this age have the ability to manage what they need to learn."

Despite these challenges, some participants are more willing to maintain communication with parents, particularly regarding students' learning progress. ET-4 explained, "I set up a WeChat group

where I promptly post what was taught today or any important announcements. I've experienced the frustration of my own child going through adolescence and not telling me anything, so I understand these parents." Similarly, ET-9 described a cooperative approach, saying that:

> At the beginning of the school year, I set up a parent group chat and made it clear that students should not be in the group. If students have any issues, I address them at school. I communicate with parents to encourage them to motivate their children at home. We work together, and so far, the parents have been very cooperative.

Moreover, ET-11 maintained that she remains open to communication with parents, explaining that they always agree when a parent wants to add them on WeChat and responds promptly when mentioned in the group. They justified this approach by noting their identity as a parent and emphasised that those who reach out are typically more engaged in their child's education, which ET-11 hopes to support. As ET-15 pointed out, "We are partners; parents need to cooperate with teachers, and teachers also need to cooperate with parents, creating a good communication channel."

As ET-4 and ET-11 mentioned, many participants are parents themselves, which allows them to empathise with the concerns of students' parents. However, the varying experiences and interactions with different parents have shaped differing attitudes toward parental involvement. This demonstrates that parents' perspectives and attitudes toward CCSS teachers and teaching can significantly influence participants' behaviours and self-perception.

5.1.5 Conflict of Beliefs

The four sections above have demonstrated participants' beliefs regarding teachers, students, teaching, and parents. This section addresses the conflicts between participants' beliefs and their disputes with CCSS.

Participants exhibit differing views on their relationships with students, for example, some believe that becoming friends with students fosters their development, while others maintain that such a relationship should not be established. For example, ET-12 expressed a belief that fostering friendship with students is crucial for their learning, suggesting that the way to engage students is by becoming friends with them. ET-12 believed that effective communication and a friendly relationship would naturally lead to a positive learning environment. ET-12 also emphasised that teachers at CCSS should recognise a shift in their role, noting that acting like a tyrant is inappropriate and that the teacher-student relationship should be based on negotiation. In contrast, ET-16 disagreed, arguing that they would never become friends with their students. They believed that a clear boundary must be maintained, as crossing it could undermine the teacher's authority and reduce the effectiveness of instruction.

Although both ET-12 and ET-16 are higher-year teachers, this difference in belief may not stem from the grade level they teach. Even though they differ in gender, gender does not appear to be a decisive factor, as not all female teachers share ET-16's perspective. For example, ET-5 and ET-7, both female teachers, view themselves as friends to their students. Likewise, not all male participants, such as NT-2 and NT-4, share ET-12's viewpoint. This suggests that the varying beliefs about teacher-student relationships are not solely influenced by gender but may arise from individual teaching philosophies and experiences.

The section also reveals discrepancies between participants' beliefs and the exam-oriented culture of the CCSS. Many participants place a strong emphasis on the physical and mental well-being of students, as well as their interest in learning Chinese, rather than solely focusing on exam scores. This stance conflicts with the exam-driven expectations at the school. For example, ET-6 emphasised the importance of well-being over grades, stating, "Personally, I believe that physical and mental well-being are absolutely more important than grades. Language is meant to be used, and the focus should be on improving students' language abilities, not on exams and grades." Similarly, ET-11 noted, "Keep forcing students, they might do well in this exam, but they may not want to continue learning next semester. Or worse, it could cause them psychological harm, which isn't worth it. I want them to enjoy learning Chinese." ET-14 added:

> I've always believed that students' physical and mental well-being should come first, but we can't monitor them like full-time teachers can, focusing on their overall development. We only have two and a half hours, so it's difficult to pay attention to their mental and physical health.

NT-2 highlighted the broader societal perspective, stating, "Physical and mental well-being are more important than academic performance. If a student has excellent grades but commits a crime, then what good are those grades? We need to prioritise students' physical and mental health. Society needs well-rounded individuals" Similarly, NT-4 remarked, "If a student has issues with their physical and mental health, then high scores don't matter."

However, as ET-14 mentioned, the limited class hours at CCSS present a challenge for teachers to fully address students' well-being and individual needs. Despite recognising the importance of physical and mental health, teachers are often unable to provide tailored education due to time constraints. The exam-focused culture at CCSS further compounds this issue. Additionally,

following the cancellation of lunch breaks after the COVID-19 pandemic, opportunities for teacher-student interactions were further reduced, limiting teachers' ability to foster students' overall development (see Section 4.1.2). These constraints force participants to reconcile their beliefs with the realities of the teaching environment, which in turn impacts their teacher identity formation.

This tension is reflected in ET-16's experience, where their approach to teaching was questioned by the school management team. They recalled:

> I was questioned by the school's management team. They observed my class and thought there was too little time spent on reading texts aloud and learning new vocabulary. I believe that every second of my class is valuable, and I don't have time to waste on activities like student reading, which should be done in their own time. My focus in class is on conveying the knowledge I want to teach.

This reflects a conflict between traditional and modern educational approaches, with the school's focus on traditional methods clashing with ET-16's more progressive views. ET-16 further explained, "The teaching methods promoted by our school are still quite traditional. I never assign homework that involves copying vocabulary."

It is noteworthy that conflicts in beliefs also exist within the participants themselves. A typical example is NT-6, who expressed her ongoing internal struggle. On one hand, NT-6 feels that since students are giving up their weekends to attend CCSS, they should be helped to learn something valuable. But at the same time, NT-6 acknowledges that her students are young, lacks a language environment, find Chinese difficult to learn, and that CCSS is a charity institution, so NT-6 questions whether it is necessary to push them to achieve a high level of proficiency. Additionally, when students perform poorly in exams, NT-6 wonders if a different teaching approach might be better. However, considering that the students were raised locally, NT-6 is hesitant to adopt the Chinese

educational methods, fearing that the students might not handle it well. Amidst these conflicts, NT-6 also has doubts about whether they truly see themselves as a teacher. On one hand, NT-6 believes that if they were a real teacher, they would be stricter and more responsible than they are now, which leads them to view themselves as merely an adult supervising child in a CCSS interest class. Yet, NT-6 also sees themselves as a teacher—one who does not prioritise exams but hopes to have a positive influence on their students.

To summarise, this section has elaborated on the participants' beliefs concerning teachers, students, teaching, and parents, and the conflicts between these beliefs. It highlights the diversity of participants' beliefs, such as their recognition of the potential impact CCSS teachers have on students' growth and future development; their awareness of the unique characteristics of CCSS students, and the emphasis on fostering students' interest in learning Chinese; and their understanding of the dual role parents play. Particularly when parents challenge the deeply ingrained beliefs of the participants, teachers may feel that their moral integrity, both as individuals and professionals, is being questioned, potentially leading to negative emotions that can hinder their professional development and identity construction. This section reaffirms the community role of CCSS and its function as a CoP, along with the support of leadership (see Section 4.1), which allows teachers to bring their personal beliefs into classroom practice and connect them with their evolving professional selves. The analysis above reveals that beliefs are heterogeneous and based on personal experiences. The summary of the participants' beliefs about teachers, students, teaching, parents, and the conflicts between these beliefs may be incomplete, biased, or incorrect, but it does underscore that participants' ontological and epistemological beliefs are indispensable elements in the construction of teacher identity.

5.2 Purpose and Goals

This section will continue to discuss the second core element, namely Purpose and Goals. According to DSMRI, purpose and goals encompass not only the actor's knowledge and endorsement of an overall purpose for their role but also more specific goals, objectives and aims within that role, along with the emotions associated with these purpose and goals. It is worth noting that purpose and goals can differ in many dimensions, such as intrinsic-extrinsic, personal-social, proximal-distal, specific-global, self-oriented-other-oriented, with consequences to affect and motivation (Kaplan & Garner, 2017).

5.2.1 Purpose for Joining CCSS

Many participants shared that their decision to join CCSS as teachers was driven by personal and practical considerations, particularly related to their children. For many, the opportunity arose when their children reached the age to attend Chinese school. This motivation, centred on supporting their children's education, highlights a distinct characteristic of CCSS teachers compared to those in mainstream schools, whose motivations may include salary or career advancement. Additionally, CCSS offers a partial tuition waiver for teachers' children (see Section 4.1.2), further reinforcing this practical incentive.

The role of children as a primary motivator was echoed in various accounts. For example, ET-1 mentioned that their son was about to start his higher exams when the Vice Principal asked if they wanted to teach at CCSS. They happened to know another higher-year teacher at the time, and since working with someone familiar would make things easier and smoother, ET-1 decided to stay. ET-5 shared a similar sentiment, noting: "My child reached the age to start learning Chinese, and my

Chinese is pretty good, so I decided to join. Additionally, I wanted to do something for the community and the next generation.” This was echoed by five other participants (e.g. ET-4, ET-9, ET-10) who gave ‘for their children’ as a reason.

Parental identity also emerged as a strong influence. ET-11 noted: “Because my child needed to attend CCSS, I took on the role of a teacher because of my identity as a mother. And it’s also because of being a mother that I’ve stayed on.” ET-13 added: “I’m a mother and I wanted to provide a language environment for my child—I believe many parents are similar to me. Another reason is that this is my community, and I wanted to contribute something to it.” These narratives demonstrate how participants’ motivations intertwine their roles as parents, educators, and community members, shaping the unique identity and agency of CCSS teachers.

The above excerpts once again emphasise that ‘parental love’ serves as the primary motivation for participants to teach at CCSS, with ‘for the sake of the children’ being their main goal. For instance, ET-5 and ET-13 highlighted their desire to contribute to the community, suggesting that this act of citizenship provides them with both spiritual fulfilment and emotional satisfaction. Additionally, the experiences shared by ET-9 and ET-10 illustrate how participants’ personal backgrounds and prior experiences give them certain advantages in their teaching roles at CCSS. Moreover, ET-9’s excerpt also suggests that some participants have personal purposes for working at CCSS. Like ET-9, participants like ET-2, ET-3, ET-7, ET-8, ET-16, NT-3, and NT-4 also express their personal purposes. For instance, ET-2, ET-3, and ET-8 mentioned that they were previously involved in education-related work and wanted to continue teaching after moving to Scotland. For example, ET-3 said: “Shortly after I arrived in the UK, I started working at CCSS because I had

previously worked in schools in China. When I came here, I hoped to stay close to my professional field.”

Other examples of personal reasons for joining CCSS are also evident. For instance, ET-7 noticed a decline in Chinese language skills after working in an English-speaking environment for an extended period, prompting ET-7 to join CCSS to maintain Chinese proficiency. ET-16 sought a space to express her emotions and find someone to listen to. NT-3 aimed to gain more teaching experience, while NT-4 was interested in understanding how local teenagers learn Chinese. These examples illustrate how personal and cultural experiences, values, needs, and beliefs influence the formation of goals. This highlights that the motivations and goals for becoming a CCSS teacher are often deeply personal. Whether consciously acknowledged or not, participants may derive personal benefits from their roles as CCSS teachers.

These ‘personal projects’ highlight the human aspect of the participants, and teaching at CCSS allows them to fulfil these personal objectives not only creates a win-win situation for both the teachers and the school but also suggests that the education system, as a whole, should pay attention to the individual needs of teachers, showing respect for them as individuals. However, it is important not to overlook the persistent issue that ‘for the sake of the children’ brings to CCSS, namely teacher turnover. Some participants leave CCSS once their children graduate. This may indicate that at different stages of a participant’s life, new goals may emerge, potentially replacing existing ones based on their importance and priority throughout life. As Director A mentioned:

> Every year, our school faces a shortage of teachers, as some leave and new ones join. We understand that when teachers leave after their children graduate from CCSS. While we

would be grateful if they stayed, we also respect their decision to move on. We can't ask for too much.

Some participants (such as NT-3 and ET-4) view becoming a teacher and their passion for education as life tasks. Due to real-world constraints (such as age, qualifications, professional background, and market demand), they are unable to fulfil these life tasks in mainstream schools. CCSS provides them with a platform where becoming a CCSS teacher can be seen as achieving a subgoal, which will help them move closer to their overarching life task of becoming a teacher or gives them a sense that they have, to some extent, achieved their goal. For example, NT-3 expressed that they had long aspired to become a teacher and later began working as a tutor, primarily offering one-on-one instruction. Upon joining CCSS, they aimed to gain experience in group teaching and further develop teaching skills in preparation for a future full-time teaching role. Additionally, ET-4 shared that they had a strong interest and passion for education. They noted that the longer one teaches at CCSS, the stronger the sense of responsibility and mission becomes. Starting from teaching Chinese characters in lower grades, observed that their mindset gradually evolved over time.

This study also notes that some participants (such as ET-2, ET-3, ET-8, and ET-10) had teaching experience in China before joining CCSS, and therefore one of their goals was to continue their career. When asked about the initial reasons that motivated them to become teachers, some mentioned having family members who were teachers, others were influenced by their favourite teachers, and some referred to the stability of the teaching profession. For instance, ET-3 recalled that they had worked in a school while in China, and after moving to the UK, they wished to remain within the education field. They have been teaching at CCSS for 15 years. Although they completed

a master's degree in computer science in the UK, their long-standing interest in education and enjoyment of working with children led them to pursue a PhD in education. After graduating, they completed a one-year PGDE and is currently employed at a local secondary school. ET-10 stated that they had been determined to become a teacher, describing their passion as almost obsessive. After finishing university, although their family had arranged a job for them at the city transportation bureau, they declined the offer and insisted on pursuing a teaching career.

Another significant phenomenon is the involvement of international students as teachers. Unlike participants who are parents, these individuals do not have children, so motivations like 'parental love' and 'for the sake of their children' do not apply to them. Their reasons for joining CCSS teaching are more personal, as mentioned earlier with NT-3 and NT-4. This further highlights the importance of considering participants' circumstances and experiences, as these factors may lead to different characteristics in their teacher identity construction. However, whether parents as teachers or international students as teachers, their goals for joining CCSS do not include financial gain. On the contrary, some participants mentioned that volunteering in the community is regarded as a noble act in Scottish society. This cultural perspective strengthens their resilience, but it may also lead to participants viewing themselves more as volunteers rather than as language teachers. As ET-6 said that: "If you're talking about salary, there's practically no salary here (CCSS), and it's very exhausting." ET-11 added that: "We're all volunteering our time, and the subsidy from CCSS hardly counts for anything. We have our own jobs and responsibilities to take care of, and yet we still spend so much time preparing things for the Chinese school."

5.2.2 *For Children's Bright Future*

As mentioned earlier, 'for children' is one of the primary motivations for participants to teach at CCSS. Many participants expressed a belief that CCSS provides their children with opportunities to interact and play with peers of similar backgrounds, fostering friendships that support their physical and mental well-being. Additionally, attending CCSS equips students with essential skills for future development, such as learning Chinese and understanding their cultural heritage. This goal aligns with mainstream educational principles, which emphasise student development and the cultivation of responsible, well-rounded citizens. However, CCSS teachers often extend their vision beyond academics and material achievements, emphasising students' mental, psychological, and character development. This aspiration becomes even more pronounced when participants combine their roles as parents and teachers.

For instance, ET-7 shared their hope to "not just teach a language" but also "nurture students to be positive and have a healthy mindset." Similarly, ET-10 emphasised broadening students' perspectives and deepening their understanding of the world while fostering an appreciation for "the Chinese way of thinking." ET-11 stressed the importance of maintaining students' interest in learning Chinese and ensuring they remain aware of their Chinese heritage. ET-16 expressed a desire to see students grow into "curious, independent individuals who can adapt to their environment." This sentiment was echoed by NT-1, who highlighted the importance of students integrating well with relatives in China and remembering their roots. NT-2 articulated a goal of raising students to be "good people who can contribute to society,"

while NT-3 aimed to help students maintain an interest in learning Chinese and build friendships.

It is worth noting that, similar to participants' beliefs (see Section 5.1), their admirable goals are also constrained by the limited class time in CCSS and the domain of the community language school (see Section 4.2). Moreover, students' growth and development are long-term processes. As ET-10 mentioned, "I hope to guide them onto this path, but whether they can walk on it or how far they can go is not something I can determine. However, I hope to at least guide them to it." This reflects that participants are aware of the potentially profound impact they can have on students as community language teachers. At the same time, they recognise that their influence may not be as strong as they wish. Nonetheless, they have not abandoned these goals, demonstrating a commendable quality of perseverance in their role as community language teachers.

5.2.3 Purpose and Goals of Class Teaching

The previous sections (see Section 5.2.1 and 5.2.2) considered the personal motivations and goals for being a teacher at CCSS. This section will consider the pedagogical and academic aims of the teachers. When analysing the purpose and goals of classroom teaching mentioned by participants, 'academic performances' and 'interest' emerge as two key themes. This is not only related to the distinction between lower and higher years in CCSS as discussed in the Domain section (see Section 4.2), but it also reflects the participants' conflicting perspectives to some extent. Specifically, academic performances represent the immediate teaching goals for each class, where students are expected to master the new characters and texts taught in that lesson. CCSS requires teachers to conduct dictation tests during class, and the test results are factored into the students' final results,

affecting their rankings. To ensure students remember each lesson's content, participants often draw on the learning and teaching methods they experienced as students themselves. However, these methods may not align well with the educational environment that CCSS students are part of, leading to a potential mismatch between the participants' teaching strategies and their goals. This misalignment can place participants in a position of self-doubt or evoke feelings of helplessness and other negative emotions. Nonetheless, many participants, upon reflecting on their teaching practices, have recognised these issues and have adjusted their teaching approaches. For instance, they might incorporate singing into learning new material or use various methods to encourage students. As NT-4 mentioned: "I use a more entertaining approach to encourage students to remember difficult points, like giving medicine with a spoonful of sugar." Additionally, ET-14 observed that students' proficiency levels were quite uneven. ET-14 noted that in their class, the results of dictation tests varied significantly. Over time, the focus shifted from teaching Chinese itself to teaching exam strategies aimed at helping students achieve an A grade. ET-14 remarked that many students had studied Chinese for years primarily to obtain that A for their university applications.

The examples above reflect a shared goal among CCSS, parents, and some teachers: helping students acquire solid Chinese language knowledge and achieve good academic performances. In this regard, the participants' goals and actions align with the standards expected by CCSS as a professional community, as well as with the expectations of others (such as parents). This indicates that the goals set by the participants are consistent with external standards. The professional community standards, as a core aspect of the educational environment in which teachers work, can guide the identity development process of CCSS teachers.

Another goal of classroom teaching is to increase students' interest in learning Chinese. This has been a consensus among teachers from Year one to Year six, but teachers of higher years hold different opinions. For example, ET-6, a second-grade teacher, expressed the hope that students would genuinely enjoy learning Chinese and be willing to attend CCSS, rather than reject the language. In contrast, ET-12, who teaches Year Twelve, shared a different perspective. ET-12 noted that teachers' responsibilities vary between higher and lower-year classes. As a teacher of an exam-level class, ET-12's primary focus is to encourage students to study diligently and achieve strong academic results. For younger children in lower years, however, teachers must prioritise ensuring students' safety and finding ways to make the classroom more engaging to capture their attention.

However, not all higher-year teachers prioritise exam skills and academic performance exclusively. Some, such as ET-11, also emphasise maintaining students' interest in learning, which may be related to participants' disposition (see Section 4.4). One reason for this divergence is the limited class hours available for CCSS exam-level students. To help students achieve satisfactory exam results for applying to their desired universities, it is necessary to fully utilise class time to train test-taking skills, leaving little room to simultaneously cultivate students' interest in learning.

At the same time, it is important not to overlook that Chinese language teaching in the classroom is a fundamental element in building cultural identity for students of Chinese descent. Creating a safe space (see Section 4.1.2) under the shared cultural identity is more likely to provide the conditions for students' healthy physical and mental development, which is also a reflection of 'for the sake of the children' (5.2.2). Such as ET-11stated: "I want to cultivate the students' interest in Chinese, while also making them aware that they have Chinese heritage in their blood." Similarly, NT-1

hoped when the children go back to China, they can integrate into the lives of their relatives and friends there. When they grow up, NT-4 hopes “they don’t forget their roots, and that they know, even though they grew up in the UK, a part of them is Chinese.”

5.2.4 The Purpose and Goals of CCSS

As mentioned in Section 2.4.3, the goals of CCSS, as a community language school, are influenced by the socio-historical context. It is precisely because mainstream Scottish schools are unable to meet the needs of minority children and parents in teaching minority languages and cultures and fostering students’ ethnic and cultural identity that community schools like CCSS have been established. Therefore, the goals of CCSS are to teach students the Chinese language and culture, help them establish a Chinese ethnic identity, serve the Chinese community, and strengthen connections and understanding with other ethnic communities. As Vice Principal said:

> CCSS is an important part of the Scottish Chinese community. Our primary mission is to teach Chinese and Chinese culture to young people of Chinese descent. While serving the Chinese community, we also provide an opportunity for people of different ethnic backgrounds to learn about Chinese culture, promoting integration among various ethnic groups.

The goals of CCSS establish a shared vision and mission for the teachers, which helps guide their thinking and actions while strengthening team cohesion. It is worth noting that CCSS is composed of individuals with independent thinking, and there may be goal conflicts among team members. Some members may not (fully) agree with the goals set by CCSS. Considering the nature of CCSS as a community language school, alignment between personal goals and team goals is more likely to enhance team performance, whereas misalignment may have negative effects on both

individuals and the team. For example, ET-16 shared their personal experience and feelings in CCSS:

> After observing my lesson, the management team felt that I didn't spend enough time on the textbook exercises. But I have my own ideas about teaching, and there's definitely a difference in our viewpoints — they're more traditional. Still, I really appreciate that the school gives me a platform to try out my approach. They offer suggestions, but they never force me to follow the lesson plan strictly.

Another phenomenon related to the team goals of CCSS is the extent of information sharing. As mentioned in Section 4.1.2, due to the school's continuous expansion and the impact of COVID-19, opportunities for communication among teachers have become less frequent, leading to poor information sharing among members. The CCSS leadership does not involve teachers in the decision-making process, and many teachers only know the outcome of decisions without knowing the process behind them. ET-5 recalled that in the past, teachers would sit together to eat and chat, creating a harmonious atmosphere. However, ET-5 noted that this had changed—now, there was no time for such interactions. After class, most teachers would leave immediately, and at most, they might briefly greet each other in the hallway. ET-5 felt that opportunities for interaction had significantly diminished, and CCSS no longer felt like the close-knit community it once was. Instead, it had become somewhat privatised and commercialised, losing the sense of being a unified collective.

The goals of CCSS, such as teaching Chinese language and culture and establishing students' ethnic identity, will not be achieved overnight but will be gradually realised through classroom teaching objectives (see Section 5.2.3). By comparison, the classroom teaching objectives of CCSS teachers are specific goals, while accumulating capital for students' futures and building ethnic

identity are long-term goals. The success or failure of short-term or specific goals may impact the development or continued pursuit of long-term goals. When participants see that they can grow and tackle work challenges by pursuing and achieving important and meaningful goals, they gain a sense of success in the workplace. This indicates that goals are related to emotions, as goals set the primary standard for self-satisfaction with performance. A good example is ET-6, who feels delighted to see students working hard to learn Chinese in class. ET-6 feels a deep sense of happiness when former students and parents express their gratitude. Having a positive impact on students' growth aligns with ET-6's teaching philosophy and goals. When these ideals are fulfilled, the resulting positive emotions enhance ET-6's professional commitment and further strengthen their confidence in the work they are doing.

These long-term goals require participants to put in greater effort and persistence, directing their attention, effort, and actions toward goal-related tasks. For example, ET-16 devoted personal time to reading and gathering a large amount of information in order to understand the requirements of the Scottish education system for Chinese exams. They made a significant contribution to the development of the exam class teaching framework at CCSS. This process, consciously or unconsciously, implies a participant's goal of learning how to become a teacher—a teacher capable of achieving the set goals. This requires participants to have the necessary knowledge and skills for the tasks, which may manifest as using their existing knowledge and abilities (e.g., ET-4 referring to their own experiences as students or reflecting on the behaviour of teachers who left a strong impression), or motivating them to seek new knowledge (e.g., NT-6's desire to attend practical training). These long-term goals may explain why some participants have been able to work at CCSS consistently for over a decade.

5.2.5 Goals and Feedback

An essential factor closely related to goals is feedback, which is a key regulatory factor in goal setting. Participants need feedback to track the progress of their goals and adjust their goals and behaviour based on the feedback, which can influence the participants' action possibilities (see Section 5.3). Goals and feedback behaviours related to teacher identity are present in interactions between teachers and parents, teachers and CCSS, teachers and students, as well as within the teachers themselves. Therefore, goals and feedback are dynamic and emerge and change through constant interaction with selves and others, and the physical environment.

For example, ET-1 initially set up a parent chat group to facilitate communication. However, the feedback received was that parents attempted to impose their individual preferences on the existing teaching arrangements, which did not align with ET-1's original intent. To prevent similar situations from occurring again, ET-1 decided not to set up a parent group anymore. ET-6 had a similarly unpleasant experience with a parent, which led her to realign their goals and behaviours. ET-6 initially intended to start with simpler content and gradually transition to more difficult texts, but this approach was misunderstood by the parents. This negative feedback caused ET-6 to lose enthusiasm for teaching higher-year students, and since then, ET-6 has only taught lower-year students. Here is ET-6's reflection:

> I used to teach seventh grade, but based on the difficulty of the textbooks, I didn't follow the order, and parents had complained my teaching methods. Although the issue was explained and resolved, since then I've been teaching the lower grades.

CCSS generally provides positive feedback on teachers' goals and behaviours, with supportive leadership being one of the manifestations (see Section 4.1.5). This may be due to the nature of CCSS is a community school, which are characterised by less strict power dynamics and standards, or possibly due to teacher shortages. Teachers typically respond positively to the school's decisions. For example, although ET-10 is not skilled at organising cultural activities, ET-10 still makes an effort to participate in the school's talent show. This could be because CCSS and its teachers share common goals catered around students, such as improving exam results, fostering cultural and racial identity, and accumulating capital. These shared goals influence the formulation of secondary goals, such as classroom teaching objectives, as well as the plans, tactics, or strategies used to achieve these goals, whether they are exam-oriented or interest-driven.

It should be noted that not all teachers fully agree with CCSS's goals and expectations. For instance, the school mandates the exclusive use of Chinese in class to increase students' exposure to the language, yet participants (e.g. ET-3, ET-7, NT-2) generally use a mix of Chinese and English in their teaching, like NT-2 said: "In my class, I use about 75% Chinese and 25% English. Especially for words that students don't understand, I explain them in English." This shows that goals are self-directed, while also emphasising the teachers' human nature and independent consciousness.

Students' feedback on teachers' goals is reflected not only in classroom behaviours but also in interactions outside the classroom. In classroom teaching, good discipline and student participation help teachers achieve their teaching objectives. This positive feedback from students motivates teachers to invest more enthusiasm in their teaching. Conversely, poor discipline can create negative feedback, leading to tension between teachers and students. This may prompt teachers to adjust their

teaching methods or their attitudes toward students. Just as NT-6 has difficulty controlling their emotions when faced with students walking around and talking in class, NT-6 will question their abilities and then have to take measures, such as consulting colleagues, to deal with classroom discipline issues.

Interactions outside the classroom often leave teachers with deeper emotional impacts. Teachers are particularly touched when students they taught years ago still remember them, come back to visit, or apply what they learned in practice. Such moments provide a profound sense of accomplishment. For instance, ET-1 and ET-16 shared that many of their former students returned to CCSS as teaching assistants after graduating, which gave them great fulfilment. Similarly, ET-7 mentioned that students she taught years ago still greet her whenever they meet, making them feel the lasting influence they have had on the students.

Finally, teachers also conduct self-assessments of their goal implementation. These self-assessments may align with or differ from external feedback, serving as a filtering mechanism. For instance, ET-16 was once questioned by the management team regarding their teaching methods. However, ET-16 affirmed their teaching goals and approach, filtering out the management's opinions and attributing the differences to a contrast between modern and traditional education philosophies.

In summary, this section centred on the theme of purposes and goals, analyses participants' motivations for joining CCSS, classroom teaching objectives, CCSS's overarching goals, and the interaction between goals and feedback. The consistency and conflicts between goals at different levels coexist, with participants navigating through these dynamics and adjusting accordingly. These

fluctuations influence their behaviours and emotions, further contributing to the construction of their teacher identity.

By viewing goals holistically, it is possible to discuss the potential decision-making process people undergo when deciding whether to join the CCSS teaching team. Participants' goals for joining must be formulated, balanced, and pursued in the context of other personal goals they are interested in. In other words, if CCSS can understand and meet participants' goals for joining, it may contribute to longer-term commitment from them. However, limited information sharing, and unpleasant feedback hinder the achievement of participants' self-set goals, forcing them to change their behaviour. Similarly, the goals set by teachers may not align with external standards, or they may feel pressured to align their actions with their understanding of the image of a qualified teacher based on such standards, which can lead to emotional and behavioural changes in participants. Thus, goals emerge from transactions among emotive (e.g. parental love, for the sake of their children), environment (e.g. mainstream school vs. community language school), and cultural influences (e.g. Chinese culture, cross-culture). Goals are dynamic and linked to emotions and actions. The next section will further focus on participants' action possibilities.

5.3 Perceived Action Possibilities

This section will continue to discuss another core element of DSMRI—perceived action possibilities. According to DSMRI, perceived action possibilities relate to an individual's understanding and perception of actions they can take within their role, especially in relation to advancing their role's purpose and achieving its goals, as well as the emotions associated with these actions (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). This concept encompasses declarative behavioural intentions and

the procedural knowledge of these potential actions, which includes specific cognitive and behavioural strategies, as well as the self-regulation of thoughts, behaviours, emotions, and motivation. Actions that the individual views as unsuitable, ineffective, or impossible to perform in the role are not considered part of their perceived action possibilities (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). In DSMRI analysis guide, perceived action possibilities referred to statements that indicate internal (such as thoughts, planning) and external behaviour in relation to the role. This code includes practices and strategies that one is aware of as possibilities or that one has put into practice, as well as indications for those actions that the person perceived as not possible for him or her to enact (Kaplan & Garner, 2022).

5.3.1 Action Possibilities and Teaching Activities

Before the start of each semester, CCSS requires teachers of each grade to agree on a teaching plan. This is a rare opportunity for all the teachers to gather together. During this time, teachers exchange the issues encountered in their respective classes from the previous semester and discuss possible solutions. They also shared the teaching methods they had used and worked together to finalise the teaching plan. As NT-5 said, the experience of colleagues helps address the classroom challenges currently being faced. The teaching plan is developed based on the textbooks used, combined with the number of lessons for the new semester, and outlines the steps, key knowledge points, and teaching objectives for each lesson. Typically, the plan is adjusted from the previous version, partly because there are no changes to teaching materials or schedule, and this may reduce teachers' workload.

In practice, teachers do not strictly follow the plan. For instance, they (like ET-8) can adjust the teaching focus and pace based on the level of the students in their class. CCSS also does not require teachers to adhere rigidly to the plan, allowing them the flexibility to exercise initiative. At the same time, the plan specifies the dates for the midterm and final exams, providing guidance for teachers in pacing their lessons. This strikes a balance between flexibility and overall consistency. Particularly considering teacher turnover, the teaching plan serves as a reference for new teachers, helping them to quickly adapt to their role. This is supported by ET-1 who said: "We lay out the entire teaching schedule and then design the teaching plan accordingly. So, whether they are experienced teachers or new teachers, they can immediately know the general teaching tasks for the class." The other example comes from ET-8, who explained that they adjust teaching plan according to the students' learning progress. For instance, if students show limited retention during a review, they may allocate more time to revisiting previous material. ET-8 emphasised that they do not follow the plan rigidly, as they believe it is important to build students' understanding step by step and aims to complete the teaching tasks before the exam. ET-8's approach is to adapt based on the students' learning situation rather than adhering strictly to a predetermined plan. Furthermore, NT-5 mentioned that when discussing the teaching plan, teachers raise various issues which are then discussed collectively. They typically implement one or two lessons in practice and make adjustments based on student feedback, as different classes may yield different results. NT-5 also noted that suggestions shared by other teachers during meetings can be very helpful and sometimes directly address the challenges they are currently facing.

Although they are teaching Chinese at a community school, the participants do not take this job lightly. They invest time and effort in carefully preparing their lessons, like ET-9 would spend at

least half day on this. One reason is that the participants like ET-9 are aware that they do not have an educational background, and they want to achieve the teaching results they envision or play their role as CCSS teachers well. As ET-14 said, “It’s about having a sense of professionalism.” Another reason could be that participants recognise students as independent individuals with the ability to discern whether teachers are dedicated and responsible. This awareness motivates participants to prepare their lessons diligently. As ET-11 mentioned, “Investing my time and effort to help students gives me a sense of accomplishment.”

Additionally, participants are attuned to parents’ expectations, which also serves as a source of motivation. For instance, ET-9 shared that if they have classes on Saturday, they typically spend half a day on Friday preparing. ET-9 sometimes finds it challenging to explain certain concepts clearly using only the teacher’s manual. Therefore, during lesson preparation, ET-9 thinks carefully about how to simplify the content to make it more understandable for students—especially for concepts like subject, predicate, and object, which students often struggle to grasp. Similarly, ET-11 stated that they spend a great deal of time preparing for classes at the Chinese school because ET-11 worries about potentially missing important points during the lesson. Since their own child also attends the school, ET-11 hopes that the teachers take their roles seriously. This sense of responsibility motivates ET-11 to put themselves in the shoes of the parents when they teach other children. NT-5 also expressed the belief that teachers must at least prepare the basic lesson materials in advance, considering it a fundamental part of the job. NT-5 emphasised that even though the class lasts only two hours, it should not be treated casually or without proper preparation.

The participants’ teaching practices demonstrate a conscious effort to integrate elements of both Chinese and Scottish educational systems. For example, they have emphasised memorising

knowledge from the Chinese education system while rejecting corporal punishment. Instead, they have adopted encouragement-based teaching methods, a hallmark of the Scottish educational approach. However, limited class hours often prevent them from fully implementing their ideal teaching approaches, leaving some feeling powerless and questioning their identity as teachers. Over time, repeated frustrations can erode confidence in teaching innovation, prompting participants to revert to traditional methods, potentially leading to burnout and eventual resignation. For instance, ET-14, a teacher of an exam-class, emphasised that the limited classroom time should be dedicated to training students in exam techniques rather than ensuring their enjoyment. Furthermore, ET-14 does not perceive themselves as a teacher.

This awareness of blending two different educational systems stems from participants' personal experiences, many of which are tied to their memories of traditional Chinese education. Several participants recalled painful instances of corporal punishment during their schooling, which shaped their rejection of such methods at CCSS. For instance, NT-3 described her "terrifying experience of being physically punished" as a key reason they adopted encouragement-based teaching instead. Similarly, ET-14 shared an incident where a parent requested physical punishment for their child, but ET-14 firmly refused, emphasising that "students have rights, especially at their age, and we would never use corporal punishment."

Participants also recognised that their students, born and raised in Scotland, are shaped by local educational values and approaches. ET-4 observed that while their students may have Chinese heritage, their thinking aligns more with their Scottish upbringing, noting that "Chinese education must be localised; we can't teach them exactly the way we were taught in China."

Reflecting on their own experiences, ET-4 shared how they adapted their teaching by adopting language and methods that made them feel comfortable as students. Similarly, ET-7 highlighted the importance of understanding students' unique backgrounds, stating that "you can't be as strict as in China; engaging their interest is key."

The participants' focus on encouragement-based teaching reflects their commitment to fostering a positive learning environment. NT-5 emphasised the importance of recognising each student's strengths rather than measuring success solely by grades, asserting that "only through encouragement can they gradually come to enjoy learning Chinese, avoiding harm to their physical and mental well-being." ET-12 and ET-14 echoed these sentiments, stressing the need for equal treatment, effective communication, and non-punitive problem-solving approaches. Collectively, these practices reveal how participants navigate the challenges of teaching at CCSS by balancing their cultural heritage with the realities of their students' local contexts.

Participants consistently oppose corporal punishment and focus on improving the effectiveness of Chinese teaching by considering students' unique characteristics. However, classroom issues vary between lower and higher-year classes, prompting participants to adopt tailored strategies. In lower years, managing classroom chatter is a primary challenge, while higher-year teachers grapple with engaging students and fostering enthusiasm for learning.

To address these issues, ET-7 highlights the importance of patience and balancing strictness with encouragement. ET-7 shares an approach of assigning manageable tasks, such as distributing worksheets, to give students a sense of participation, which can gradually lead to behavioural improvements. Similarly, ET-9 stresses the value of building rapport with students by discussing their interests outside the classroom. Creating a friendly atmosphere helps bridge

gaps, making students more attentive. For disengaged students, ET-9 advises occasionally calling on them in class to prevent feelings of neglect and encourage accountability.

In contrast, NT-2 adopts a firmer stance during lessons to maintain discipline, as they believe that poor classroom behaviour can reduce teaching time. When faced with particularly challenging situations, they prefer escalating the issue to the leadership team. Meanwhile, NT-5 emphasises establishing clear rules from the outset to prevent chaos, balancing strictness in quizzes and homework expectations to avoid student resistance. This structured approach ensures that students understand what is expected of them, creating a more productive learning environment.

These diverse strategies demonstrate the participants' adaptability in addressing the distinct challenges presented by different age groups, ensuring their teaching methods remain effective and responsive. In NT-2's excerpt, it is mentioned that when teachers encounter difficult-to-resolve issues, they typically hand the problem over to CCSS's management team (comprising the Vice Principal and two directors). This reflects the supportive leadership described in Section 4.1.5. It also highlights that, despite the reduced communication among teachers due to the school's rapid expansion and COVID-19 (see Section 4.1.2), when teachers need assistance, both school leaders and fellow teachers are quick to offer help. This fosters a sense of belonging among participants, strengthens their professional commitment, and once again demonstrates CCSS's role as a community (see Section 4.1.2).

These teaching behaviours might be guided by the goal mentioned in Section 5.2.2, 'For the Bright Future of the Children,' which supports students' physical and mental well-being. In Section 5.2, it is noted that classroom teaching goals aim to pass exams and spark students' interest in

learning (see Section 5.2.3). Under this framework, participants display different action possibilities. For instance, some teachers emphasise teaching Chinese knowledge (like ET-13), while others focus on aligning their teaching with exam systems (such as ET-2), and others prioritise test-taking strategies (like ET-1). Additionally, some teachers, like ET-5, assign less homework to encourage joyful learning, while ET-3 incorporates games into their lessons. For example, ET-1 stated: “To help them achieve good results after a year of study, we must emphasise teaching test-taking skills. If students work hard but don’t get good results, it will dampen their enthusiasm and make them resistant to learning.” In the meantime, NT-1menationed that: “Learning Chinese can be quite tedious, it’s essential to add some fun elements, like games, drawing, or activities involving idioms to engage the students. It shouldn’t be just a matter of sitting there listening for the entire class.”

The participants have their own understanding of teaching. They believe that teaching is not just about imparting Chinese language and culture to students, but also about sharing their subjective understanding of knowledge and life experiences, which can influence the students’ future development. As ET-2 explained that they use what they have learned, or focus on areas where they are more sensitive, to guide students in that direction. Similarly, ET-16 said:

> When teaching knowledge, it’s not just about the knowledge itself; it’s about conveying the teacher’s own understanding and perspective of that knowledge. There is a significant degree of subjectivity involved. For example, when I notice that my students lack knowledge about Chinese aesthetics, I teach them what I know, including my personal interpretation of aesthetics.

5.3.2 Action Possibilities Related to Students

Despite the fact that the previous section (5.3.1) also touched on students—for instance, ET-4 mentioned that students born and raised in Scotland think similarly to locals, which suggests the need to blend Chinese and Scottish educational methods—this section delves deeper into the behaviours of participants in their role as CCSS teachers when interacting with students.

Participants are aware of the uniqueness and diversity of their students and thus pay extra attention when managing teaching and relationships with them. Precisely because they recognise that students were born and raised in Scotland, participants try to incorporate games, drawing, or other classroom activities to bridge the gap between Chinese and local classrooms. Yet, it is important to note that teaching at CCSS remains primarily teacher-centred, with the teacher holding the dominant role in imparting knowledge. For instance, lower-year teachers often establish classroom rules to maintain order and promptly correct behaviours like talking, walking around, or not paying attention in class. For older students, teachers are more likely to use communication to address issues, understanding that these students are going through adolescence. Some teachers even give extra attention to particular students. However, due to limited classroom time, when efforts to engage students don't yield results, teachers are often forced to proceed with the lesson to ensure that the majority of students can still acquire the necessary knowledge. For example, ET-10 said:

> When it comes to classroom issues, there's no need to say more—students already know what they should be doing, they just deliberately choose not to. In such cases, it's best to let the school handle it rather than waste too much class time addressing these matters. If you're appropriately strict with students, they'll actually become more restrained.

The participants consistently strive to treat all students fairly and impartially, regardless of their academic performance, reflecting their awareness of the diverse Chinese language proficiency and learning abilities within their classrooms. They emphasise creating an inclusive environment that supports students who may struggle academically, using strategies to engage and encourage them while fostering a positive classroom atmosphere. For example, ET-12 underscores the importance of building rapport with students, emphasising that a teacher should act as a friend or at least ensure they are not disliked. Mistakes are addressed with fairness, and extra help is offered when needed, rejecting punitive measures like those sometimes used in traditional Chinese classrooms. NT-2 shares a similar approach, mentioning that they strive to treat all students fairly and avoid punishing the entire class for the mistakes of a few. They aim to maintain a positive relationship with their students by being serious during class but less strict outside of it. NT-5 also explained that there are a few introverted students in their class, and NT-5 makes an effort to engage them by inviting them to participate—for example, by asking them to read part of the lesson. If they are unwilling, NT-5 does not force them but tries again in future lessons. NT-5 also noted that differences in learning speed among students present challenges for teaching.

Students are recognised as independent individuals with the ability to form their own judgments, requiring teachers to approach their interactions with thoughtful preparation. ET-7, who works with older students, observes that their active minds and strong sense of judgment demand a deliberate approach. Teachers must carefully meet these students' needs to earn their trust and engagement in the classroom. At the same time, students' emotional and mental immaturity calls for patient and attentive guidance. NT-1 highlights the heightened sensitivity of children compared to adults, noting that students can easily discern a teacher's emotions, such as care or irritation, through subtle cues

like tone and expression. This sensitivity reinforces the need for teachers to communicate in ways that foster trust and encouragement.

Beyond academic instruction, NT-2 stresses the importance of character development alongside learning. Teachers aim to cultivate individuals who not only avoid harm to society but ideally contribute positively to it. This holistic perspective underscores a shared belief among participants that nurturing both the intellect and character of students is a central aspect of their role. As NT-2 stated:

> While learning is important, a student's character is even more so. I want to raise my students to be good people who don't make mistakes when they enter society. It would be great if they contribute to society, but even if they don't, they shouldn't do harm.

5.3.3 Action Possibilities Related to Teachers

The participants' reflections on lesson preparation (see Section 5.3.1) and equal treatment of students (see Section 5.3.2) highlight their nuanced understanding of teachers' responsibilities. Beyond these, they emphasise the importance of continuous learning—not only in terms of subject knowledge but also in skills like technology and English proficiency. For instance, ET-7 highlights how the shift to online teaching during COVID-19 exposed the need for technical proficiency. Teachers are expected to solve problems effectively, protect students' self-esteem by avoiding unnecessary criticism, and develop a keen awareness of their students' weaknesses and needs. For the participants, teaching is a dynamic process of self-growth, where experience and reflection drive improvement. ET-16 agreed with ET-7 and added that teaching is not only about delivering knowledge but also about conveying the teacher's personal understanding of that knowledge. ET-16

stressed that teachers must continually learn and embrace new developments to stay connected with a changing world. In ET-16's view, if teachers fail to improve themselves and rely solely on outdated knowledge, they will be unable to meet the demands of modern society.

The excerpts above reflect participants' desire for self-improvement, embodying the principle of lifelong learning. If there is proper professional training, it may accelerate teachers' growth. The commitment to preparing lessons carefully and teaching exam strategies illustrates their sense of responsibility toward students, with the goal of helping them achieve good academic results and secure admission to prestigious universities. This sense of responsibility extends beyond academics to moral and ethical guidance, with participants aware of their role as role models for students.

Teachers emphasise the importance of being consistent in attendance and setting an example of dedication and reliability. Participants also demonstrate their commitment through actions, such as ensuring students' safety during class breaks and after school. This reflects a holistic concern for students, addressing not only their academic progress but also their well-being. As ET-7 pointed out that the role of community schoolteachers is to educate and shape students, just as teachers in mainstream schools do. ET-17 argued that they should not see themselves merely as volunteers but rather take full responsibility—by preparing lessons thoroughly, helping students acquire knowledge, and fostering their moral and character development. Furthermore, ET-9 echoed the importance of responsibility and accountability in teaching. ET-9 stated that regardless of a teacher's individual capabilities, it is essential to take the role seriously, prepare lessons carefully, and attend classes consistently. ET-9 believed that teachers should not treat attendance casually or come and go at their convenience.

5.3.4 Action Possibilities Related to Parents

The interview data reveals a divergence in participants' attitudes toward communicating with parents, which can generally be categorised into two groups: those who willingly maintain communication and those who prefer to avoid it unless absolutely necessary. This divide stems from varying experiences and perspectives among teachers.

For some participants, past negative experiences with parents have shaped an avoidance strategy. ET-1, for instance, explains that their preference to avoid parent interaction stems from challenges encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic when parent groups on messaging platforms like WeChat became arenas for unsolicited interference in teaching arrangements. They emphasise the need for teacher autonomy and express confidence in students' ability to handle issues independently. Some participants encounter difficulties in communication due to parents' attitudes. ET-10 shares their frustration with parents who respond impolitely or fail to engage respectfully, despite their attempts to maintain professional courtesy. These negative interactions discourage them from initiating communication, reinforcing ET-10's preference to minimise contact. As ET-10 said:

> Some parents are very impolite. Even when I address them with respect using '您' (the formal 'you' in Chinese), they still respond with '你' (the informal version). They also don't listen to what I'm saying, which makes communication difficult. So now, I try to avoid communicating with parents as much as possible.

Other participants, however, embrace communication with parents, often influenced by empathy or personal experiences as parents themselves. ET-4 highlights their effort to keep parents informed by sharing class updates and assignments in a WeChat group. They relate this practice to their own frustrations as a parent during their child's adolescence, when ET-4's child resisted parental

involvement. This understanding motivates them to provide parents with necessary updates while respecting students' autonomy. Participants like ET-11 view parent communication positively, especially when parents show genuine concern for their children's progress. ET-11 actively responds to parents' inquiries and welcomes their connection on WeChat, interpreting their engagement as a sign of care. ET-11's dual perspective as a teacher and parent enhances their empathy, driving commitment to collaborative dialogue. For example, ET-11 mentioned:

> I communicate with parents, and if they want to add me on WeChat, I don't refuse. If they mentioned me in the group, I respond promptly. As a parent myself, I understand that if a parent contacts me, it's probably about their child. I believe that parents who privately message me care about their children's progress.

It is also worth noting that participants expressed a strong desire to engage in professional training, particularly training that offers practical content directly applicable to their classroom teaching. This likely stems from their awareness that their academic backgrounds are not in education, or from encountering challenges in their actual teaching experiences. For example, ET-4 shared that, although they did not study Chinese at university, they make a conscious effort to enhance their professional knowledge by dedicating time and energy to continuous learning. ET-4 stated that they attend nearly all meetings aimed at sharing teaching experiences, as well as lectures given by invited experts, and participates in any training opportunities available.

However, given their regular work and personal lives, they find it difficult to allocate large chunks of time for training, and it's even harder for them to return to China for training. As NT-6 expressed the view that since time and effort are invested in organising training sessions, they should

yield practical results. NT-6 hoped that the training would be delivered by professional and competent educators, rather than by leadership discussing vague or superficial topics.

This reality places higher demands on both the format and content of the training. Participants need flexible and practical training that fits their schedules and provides practical solutions for classroom challenges. The tension between their desire for professional growth and the constraints on their time and resources can lead to feelings of stress or inadequacy. Some may feel they are not able to fully perform in their teaching roles, while others might seek creative solutions or alternative training opportunities to cope with these limitations. This desire for effective professional development reflects participants' commitment to their students and their role as educators, despite not having formal educational backgrounds, and underscores the emotional complexity they navigate in their professional growth journey.

In summary, this section analyses the participants' action possibilities in terms of teaching, interacting with students, their role as teachers, relationships with parents, and professional development. In terms of teaching, participants formulate lesson plans, carefully prepare for classes, and attempt to integrate aspects of both Chinese and Scottish educational systems into their classrooms. For instance, they oppose corporal punishment and advocate for encouragement-based education. On a deeper level, participants see teaching not only as imparting Chinese language knowledge but also as sharing their subjective understanding of knowledge and life experiences. Participants recognise the uniqueness and diversity of their students, taking steps to reduce the differences between Chinese lessons and local school settings. They aim to treat all students equally and give extra attention to those struggling academically. The participants aspire to contribute to the student's future development, although the current CCSS teaching model remains teacher centred.

They believe that, as teachers, continuous learning is essential—not only in terms of subject knowledge but also in developing skills like technology and English proficiency. They aim to set a good example for students, focusing not only on improving their academic performance but also on their well-being. Regarding parents, participants have two distinct approaches: some are open to communication with parents, while others prefer to minimise contact. Finally, participants expressed a desire to participate in practical, solution-oriented professional development programs to address real challenges in their teaching. The next section will analyse another core element of DSMRI, self-perceptions and self-definitions.

5.4 Self-Perceptions and Self-Definitions

In the previous section (5.3), the discussion focused on the action possibilities of CCSS teachers in areas such as teaching, students, teachers, parents, and training. The following section will further analyse another core element of DSMRI: self-perceptions and self-definitions.

According to DSMRI, self-perceptions and self-definitions relate to an individual's understanding of their own personal and social traits that they view as pertinent to their role, along with the emotions associated with these views. Key self-perceptions in various roles include the individual's general self-concept of their competence within that role, self-efficacy to achieve specific objectives, and the emotions linked to these perceptions. Typically, prominent self-perceptions and self-definitions also encompass how individuals categorise themselves and their group affiliations that become important in that context, as well as the meanings and emotions that arise from these classifications.

Furthermore, this aspect includes the individual's self-perceptions regarding their personal beliefs, ideologies, values, interests, personality traits, or physical attributes considered relevant to their role in that context, along with the emotions connected to these aspects (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). In DSMRI analysis guide, self-perceptions and self-definitions refer to statements that include reference to the self in relation to the role. This includes how participants define themselves in relation to the domain/profession, what participants think about themselves in the role and as part of a role-related community, and how they think about their own functioning in the role (e.g., self-perceived abilities and efficacy, personal values, interests, personality attributes, self-characteristics and definitions) (Kaplan & Garner, 2022).

5.4.1 Self-Perceptions, Self-Definitions on Teaching Profession

Participants' responses to the question "Do you consider yourself a teacher?" can be categorised into three types: those who clearly affirm they are teachers (e.g., ET-2, ET-3, ET-4, ET-6, ET-7, ET-8, ET-9, ET-10, ET-13, ET-15), those who explicitly deny it (e.g., ET-5, ET-12, NT-6), and those who are uncertain (e.g., NT-4). Further analysis reveals that participants with prior teaching experience all clearly identify themselves as teachers. For example, ET-8 stated that they had taught students from different countries and had always considered themselves a teacher. ET-8 described themselves as a gentle, responsible, reflective, and continuously growing educator. Additionally, ET-9 explained that they had previously worked as a teacher in China and had always seen themselves as one. ET-9 felt that their commitment and sense of responsibility had become even stronger over time. Similarly, ET-10 noted that they had taught for nine years in China and believed they had more experience than some of peers. ET-10 was aware of the expectations placed on formal schoolteachers

and consistently held themselves to those standards in lesson planning and classroom management. ET-10 felt that prior teaching experience significantly influenced current practices and sometimes made ET-10 question whether they were being too strict with students.

The participants' understanding of their identity as teachers stems from their role in imparting knowledge and fostering both the academic and personal development of their students, reflecting a strong ethical responsibility. This self-identification underscores the significance of students as significant others who shape the participants' self-perception and validate their identity as teachers through interactions and shared narratives. This ethical commitment, paired with their adherence to the curriculum agenda, serves as the foundation of their professional practice. However, a contrast emerges with another group of participants who reject the label of teacher (will be discussed in Section 5.4.2), despite engaging in similar teaching practices.

For many participants, the act of teaching itself is central to their sense of identity. For instance, ET-2 emphasises that anyone involved in educating and nurturing others is a teacher, regardless of the context or subject, as long as they earn the trust of students and parents. ET-3, who teaches both at a local school and CCSS, feels an even stronger sense of teacher identity at CCSS, attributing it to the respect students show them there. ET-3 associates the teacher's role with direct engagement in helping students learn and grow. Similarly, ET-15 underscores that the essence of being a teacher lies in fulfilling one's duty to educate and take responsibility for students. For ET-15, external titles or salaries are irrelevant; the act of successfully teaching and guiding students confirms their identity as a teacher.

The participants' commitment to their roles as teachers is deeply rooted in an ethical sense of responsibility, which manifests in various forms of dedication and self-expectation. Their actions and reflections reveal a profound understanding of their duty, extending beyond the mere delivery of academic content to encompass broader educational and moral principles. For instance, ET-6 emphasises their heartfelt dedication to teaching, striving to meet the standards of a professional educator despite lacking formal training. ET-6 actively invests in professional growth through reading and online courses, earning recognition from parents who even become friends due to their appreciation of ET-6's efforts.

Similarly, ET-7 frames teaching as not only about imparting language skills but also about instilling life principles that students can carry with them, demonstrating a commitment to their holistic development. Meanwhile, ET-11 acknowledged that while they might not describe their teaching as excellent, ET-11 believed they were deserving of the title of a Chinese school teacher and of the trust that both students and their parents placed in them. Furthermore, NT-1 emphasised the importance of embracing the identity of a teacher. NT-1 asserted that one should not view the role as merely a form of entertainment or casual assistance. Instead, once entering the classroom, teachers must respect the students' time and strive to teach them as much as possible—both the content in the textbooks and beyond.

Among the participants who identify as teachers, there are discernible differences in how they perceive and enact their roles, particularly regarding the balance between authority and relational dynamics with students. While some participants emphasise maintaining a sense of authority and distance to ensure respect and effective classroom management, others advocate for fostering equality and closeness in the teacher-student relationship. For example, ET-16

underscores the importance of authority, emphasising that teachers must establish boundaries to maintain control and respect. According to ET-16, “the moment you become friends with students, you lose the authority to issue commands, and your words lose their impact.” This perspective reflects a more traditional approach, where authority is seen as essential to fulfilling the teacher’s role effectively. In contrast, ET-6 advocates for an egalitarian relationship with students, shaped by their reflections on their own educational experiences and exposure to foreign education systems. ET-6 consciously avoids the hierarchical teacher-student dynamic typical of Chinese education, instead adopting a Western approach where students call them by their name rather than “teacher.” ET-6 believes in treating students as equals, ensuring their teaching style aligns with what they perceive as more inclusive and empowering practices.

A second group of participants (e.g. ET-5 and ET-12) explicitly reject identifying themselves as teachers, viewing their involvement with CCSS as voluntary and emphasising the organisation’s charitable nature. They see their roles at CCSS as informal, driven by a desire to help rather than by professional obligations associated with teaching. One key reason for their stance is their lack of formal teaching qualifications or certification. For example, ET-12 explains that “teaching minors in the UK requires a teaching certification,” noting that CCSS does not meet the standards of a formal school, as its certificates lack official recognition. Similarly, ET-5 highlights that CCSS is not a traditional school but an extracurricular program, underscoring the absence of titles, salaries, or career advancement opportunities within the organisation. ET-5 states, “We’re just volunteers. We don’t get paid, we don’t have any titles, and I don’t have a teaching certification.”

Meanwhile, one individual (NT-4) navigates a complex dilemma in their identity as educators. While they acknowledge that their roles involve imparting knowledge and guiding students, which

aligns with the essence of teaching, they also recognise their lack of professional credentials, such as formal teaching qualifications, and the structural differences between CCSS and formal schools. For example, ET-14 reflects on this tension, stating, “I don’t really count as a teacher because I don’t have a PGDE teaching qualification. However, I am indeed teaching.” ET-14 highlights how CCSS’s volunteer nature and limited teaching hours create challenges in focusing on each student’s academic progress and well-being, emphasising differences in teaching practices compared to those in formal educational institutions. Similarly, NT-4 shares a nuanced perspective, noting:

> If I compare myself to teachers in schools back in China, I feel like we are not really teachers because I don’t have a teaching certificate. But in the classroom setting, you are the one teaching, so we tend to think of the person teaching as the teacher.

This person’s internal conflict underscores the blurred lines between their self-perception and their functional roles as teachers. While their actions align with the responsibilities of educators, their lack of formal accreditation and the unique context of CCSS contribute to their hesitancy in fully embracing the teacher identity. This tension reveals the influence of professional qualifications and institutional frameworks on how individuals perceive and define their roles.

5.4.2 Self-Concept in the Role as Teacher

The analysis reveals that participants with prior teaching experience exhibit greater confidence in their ability to perform the role of a CCSS teacher. This confidence is largely influenced by their previous work in education, which has familiarised them with the teaching process and student psychology. The relatively less stringent demands at CCSS compared to their former schools also contribute to a smoother adaptation, further boosting their self-

assurance. For instance, ET-3, who has long been interested in education and enjoys working with children, reflects on how their previous teaching experiences have shaped their confidence in current role. ET-3 states, “I have always worked in the education field, and after moving to the UK, I didn’t want to stray too far from my previous work.” ET-3’s background in education, along with perception of being patient, allows ET-3 to approach teaching at CCSS with ease.

Similarly, ET-10, with nine years of teaching experience in China, notes that while CCSS operates in a different context, the standards and expectations remain ingrained in them. ET-10 explains, “I still hold myself to the same standards” and sometimes wonders if they are being too strict with the students. Their extensive prior experience in mainstream schools have had a significant impact on their approach at CCSS, demonstrating how past experiences continue to shape their teaching practices and self-perception.

Regardless of whether participants identified themselves as teachers, they all felt confident in their ability to teach at CCSS. The relatively relaxed requirements at CCSS provided them with the opportunity to demonstrate their teaching capabilities, even if they lacked formal teaching qualifications. This belief in their ability was based on their perception of the students’ needs and the simplicity of the material they were teaching. For example, ET-5, despite not having an educational background, expressed confidence in their ability to teach basic Chinese to primary school students, noting, “We’re not teaching university or high school students, just primary school kids. The lessons are basic Chinese knowledge, so I feel qualified enough to teach them.”

Similarly, ET-14 reflected on the challenges they faced but concluded that overcoming them was achievable: “I’ve encountered a lot of challenges along the way, and there are many

difficulties at CCSS too, but I've overcome them all. Looking back, they're just small matters—anyone can overcome them if they try." This perspective emphasises the manageable nature of the challenges at CCSS and the belief in their capability to perform the role. NT-1 shared a similar experience of initial hesitation but gained confidence after reviewing the materials: "I was worried I wouldn't teach well and might hold the kids back. But after looking at the textbooks, I realised they were quite simple, so I gave it a try. It wasn't that hard."

An interesting trend emerged when participants compared their abilities to those of others at CCSS, which further boosted their confidence. ET-10, whose child attends CCSS, felt encouraged after seeing that other teachers without prior teaching experience were successful. They remarked, "There are also many international students teaching there. If they can teach, then I definitely can too." NT-6, who also lacked formal teaching experience, shared a similar sentiment: "I didn't have any teaching experience or educational background, but even under those circumstances, I could still teach. So, I figure if I can do it, others shouldn't have a problem." This comparison to others reinforced the belief that, despite their initial doubts, they were capable of performing the role. Therefore, the combination of the manageable nature of the teaching tasks at CCSS, participants' self-assessments, and comparisons to others helped foster a sense of self-efficacy among participants, allowing them to feel capable in their teaching roles despite lacking formal qualifications.

5.4.3 Self-Categorisation and Group Memberships

The participants in this study recognise their role at CCSS as part of a larger cultural and ethnic mission. They are aware that they belong to an ethnic minority in Scottish society, and their

involvement at CCSS allows them to both connect with others who share their background and contribute to the cultural identity of Chinese students. This dual purpose gives them a sense of belonging and a sense of responsibility, which strengthens their professional commitment and their sense of purpose in teaching. For example, ET-2 highlighted the challenges that Chinese people face in integrating into Scottish society, noting, “We are all minorities here, and we all go through a process of integration. Some people may never fully integrate into the local society.” Despite this, ET-2 emphasised that their generation did not struggle with issues of identity, although they recognised that the younger generation, their children, might face such challenges. They view their involvement with CCSS as part of their children’s journey to “find their identity,” reflecting a broader mission of cultural transmission.

Similarly, ET-10 acknowledged the importance of language and culture in maintaining cultural identity, stating, “People living in a foreign country, no matter where they’re from, certainly hope their descendants will have a good grasp of their home country’s culture and language.” This sentiment reflects a strong sense of responsibility for passing on the Chinese language and culture to the next generation. ET-10 emphasised that mastering the language is key to understanding culture, and they view their role at CCSS as essential to preserving this connection. They expressed, “the role of CCSS and Chinese teachers is crucial. Without them, many children would give up learning Chinese.” This sense of mission was not fully realised by ET-10 when teaching in China but has become a crucial part of their identity and purpose as a Chinese language teacher in Scotland.

ET-10’s reflection also highlights how context can deepen an individual’s understanding of their role (see Section 4.1). In the excerpt, ET-10 mentions that while teaching in China, they did not view

spreading Chinese culture as their responsibility. However, upon teaching at CCSS, they recognised the importance of their role in transmitting Chinese language and culture to students. This shift in perception illustrates how the situational environment—teaching Chinese as a minority in Scotland—made ET-10 more aware of the cultural and educational responsibilities tied to their role. It also underscores the idea that one's surroundings and the cultural needs of the community can lead to a deeper self-awareness and a revaluation of the responsibilities associated with a professional role.

Participants are aware of their status as ethnic minorities, which leads them to voluntarily become part of the community school to seek a sense of belonging and security. However, due to limited space at the school and the impact of COVID-19, interactions between them have decreased, with even fewer exchanges across different grade levels. This has resulted in a phenomenon where they form a community but are not very familiar with each other. Some participants, such as ET-16, classifies themselves as different from the others, considering themselves unique because their classroom behaviour differs from that of other teachers. When facing scepticism from other teachers, ET-16 displays strong self-awareness, which may be related to their dispositions (see Section 4.4).

5.4.4 Worldview, Ideology, and Values

The participants' perceptions of their worldview, values, and personal traits play a significant role in shaping how they perform their roles as teachers at CCSS. Some of the participants identified personal qualities and motivations that made them well-suited for teaching, while others emphasised the importance of teaching as an integral part of their values and sense of purpose. For example, ET-2 reflected on how their personality aligns with the teaching profession, stating, "I think I am very

well-suited to being a teacher... I believe my personality and strengths align with the education field." This confidence in their fit for the profession is also bolstered by years of experience, which they see as reinforcing their competence in the role.

Similarly, ET-3 expressed a deep interest in education and a strong personal connection to working with children. They noted, "I enjoy being with children, and I am very patient." Despite challenges, such as dealing with student misbehaviour, they viewed such experiences as opportunities for growth, further reinforcing their teacher identity. The respect they received from students at CCSS, particularly in comparison to teaching in other environments, strengthened their sense of purpose, stating, "I feel a stronger sense of teacher identity at the Chinese school."

The other example is ET-6 who placed teaching at the forefront of their personal priorities, describing their work as not just about imparting knowledge, but also about influencing students' values and lives. They said, "the first priority in my life is to be a teacher... I genuinely hope to influence students' values and their lives." Even though they did not have formal training in education, they made a conscious effort to uphold high teaching standards by reading educational books. For ET-6, teaching is more than a job; it's a means of promoting Chinese culture and helping students stay connected to their roots. Their teaching style emphasises equality rather than hierarchy, reflecting a more progressive and inclusive approach. These expressions of personal motivation and values suggest that the participants view teaching as not only a professional role but also a personal calling that aligns with their strengths, interests, and broader worldview. This alignment between personal characteristics and professional duties contributes to their sense of competence and fulfilment in their work at CCSS.

At this point, some conflicting perspectives can be observed among participants. The different interpretations of similar behaviours may be influenced by individual worldviews, values, ideologies, or personality traits. For example, when it comes to classroom interaction between teachers and students, some participants, like ET-14, believe that they are simply sharing experiences with students and doing something similar to what a teacher does. Meanwhile, others, like ET-2, ET-3, and ET-15, believe that both teaching knowledge and life lessons are acts of a teacher, leading them to identify themselves as teachers. Similarly, some participants view themselves as volunteers rather than teachers (ET-5, ET-14), while others, such as ET-7, explicitly state that they should not be seen as volunteers but should hold themselves to the same standards as teachers. There are two opposite examples:

> ET-2: As long as you're educating and nurturing, you're a teacher. Whether you're tutoring at home, teaching painting, English, or Chinese, as long as you attract students, and both the children and parents trust you enough to send their kids to learn from you, you're a teacher.
>
> ET-5: We're just volunteers. We don't get paid, we don't have any titles, and I don't have a teaching certification. CCSS isn't even a school; it's just an extracurricular class.
> and
> ET-14: This question has puzzled me for a long time. I don't really count as a teacher because I don't have a PGDE teaching qualification. However, I am indeed teaching.

In summary, this section analyses participants' self-perception and self-definition using the DSMRI framework, revealing three distinct categories: those who clearly identify as teachers (e.g., ET-3, ET-4, NT-1, NT-5), those who deny being teachers (e.g., ET-5, ET-12), and those in a state of ambivalence (e.g., NT-6). Participants' understanding of the CCSS teacher role is influenced by personal and social characteristics. For instance, some participants, like ET-2, believe they are suited

for teaching, while others, like ET-5, define themselves as volunteers, influenced by CCSS's status as a charitable organisation.

Additionally, participants' self-concept and self-efficacy in their teaching roles are reflected in statements such as ET-5's, where they express confidence in teaching primary school students, not university or high school students, and ET-10's, who sees their nine years of teaching experience in China as an advantage at CCSS. The fact that international students also teach at CCSS further reinforces ET-10's confidence in their ability to fulfil the role. In the upcoming sections on self-categorisation and group membership, analysis shows that participants spontaneously became part of the community school but, due to practical limitations, they form a group where members are not very familiar with one another. Participants also categorised themselves into different types, such as the authority-oriented (ET-16) and the equality-oriented (ET-7). Some participants, like ET-6, view their role at CCSS as fulfilling a personal life goal. Thus, participants' self-perceptions and self-definitions demonstrate both similarities and contradictions, revealing a diversity of perspectives within the group.

5.5 Emotions

The relationship between emotions and teacher identity has already been discussed in the literature review (see Section 2.2.2). According to DSMRI, emotions are identified as a crucial aspect that can be connected to content, structural feature, and process within the framework (Kaplan & Garner, 2022). Emotions have already been highlighted in previous sections of this analysis, for example, in Section 4.1, regarding the community function of CCSS, participants described feeling a sense of belonging. In Section 4.2 (Domain), participants experienced feelings of achievement when

they successfully fulfilled the teacher role. In Section 4.3, participants reflected on the painful experiences of receiving education in China compared to the relaxation and joy of teaching within the UK education system. In Section 4.4, participants expressed their natural affinity for children and interest in education, which found fulfilment through their work at CCSS. In Section 5.1, participants' belief in making a positive impact on students motivated them to continue teaching at CCSS. In Section 5.2, participants experienced negative emotions when their teaching practices received critical feedback. Section 5.3 illustrated how emotions and the action possibilities influenced one another. In Section 5.4, when participants felt capable of performing their role as CCSS teachers, they experienced positive emotions that, in turn, enhanced their teaching.

To further clarify the relationship between emotions and CCSS teacher identity, while also aligning with the literature review's emphasis on the significance of emotions in teacher identity development, this section will list participant statements that reflect their emotional experiences. This will demonstrate how emotions contribute to the shaping of their teacher identity at CCSS.

5.5.1 Positive Emotions

A sense of achievement emerged as the most frequently mentioned positive emotion among participants. This feeling was strongly tied to moments when students demonstrated academic or behavioural improvement under their guidance or when parents provided positive feedback. For ET-15, seeing students make progress brought immense happiness and a profound sense of accomplishment. ET-16 shared a similar sentiment, recalling a former student who had become a teaching assistant at CCSS and whose parents acknowledged the lasting influence of their teaching. This reaffirmed their meaningful impact over the years. NT-3 emphasised that they truly felt like a

teacher when students’ grades improved or when parents recognised their children's progress, as it validated the effectiveness of their teaching methods. NT-4 described how students’ recognition of their teaching methods, such as selecting topics they taught during speaking exercises, gave them a great sense of achievement and strengthened their commitment to teaching. These experiences motivated participants’ teaching behaviours, enhanced their sense of teacher self-efficacy, and reinforced their identities as competent educators.

Participants also described how emotional connections with students made their efforts feel worthwhile, sustaining their sense of purpose and dedication. ET-1 found emotional motivation in small but meaningful moments, such as when even one or two students expressed appreciation. For ET-5, being greeted as “teacher” on the street or receiving handmade Christmas cards and small gifts like a lantern evoked feelings of happiness and achievement. Similarly, ET-11 spoke of the joy in seeing former students become assistant teachers and maintaining contact with them or their parents. ET-12 noted the warmth they felt when a student from years ago called out to them in the hallway, reinforcing the enduring nature of their teacher-student bond. NT-6 highlighted how receiving heartfelt gifts such as cards or drawings with messages like “teacher, I love you” deeply touched them and made their efforts feel appreciated. These moments of recognition, whether through small gestures or long-term relationships, underscored the meaningful impact of their teaching and contributed to their identity and resilience as educators.

That means establishing a positive and harmonious relationship with both former and current students brings participants positive emotional experiences. This also includes situations where previously tense relationships with students improve. For example, ET-7 emphasises the importance of maintaining an equal and friendly relationship with students, which contributes to a smooth and

tension-free classroom environment. When the teacher prepares well and meets students' expectations, they naturally engage in learning. ET-7 says: "My relationship with students is very good. We are equal friends, and there's no tension. In class, there's a sense of 'flow.' When the teacher prepares well and meets the students' expectations, they will naturally pay attention."

ET-12 shares that treating all students equally, regardless of past mistakes or disciplinary actions, can lead to improved student behaviour and academic performance. This creates a positive emotional response for the teacher. ET-12 says:

> Whether a student has made mistakes in the past or has been disciplined by the administrative team, once they return to the classroom, they should be treated equally. When they need help, provide it immediately. Later, such students follow your instructions, and they apply the exam techniques you taught them right away. It feels very rewarding.

It is observed that participants provide different emotional responses to similar student behaviours. For example, when ET-3 receives affection and small gifts from students, ET-3 feels a sense of fulfilment. ET-3 believes that this satisfaction, along with the recognition from students, has been the driving force behind their long-term dedication to working at CCSS. It makes time there both joyful and rewarding. This highlights how positive interactions with students can evoke different but equally meaningful emotional responses, contributing to participants' motivation and strengthening their identity as teachers.

The analysis also reveals that these emotions are closely tied to relationships with colleagues, support from leadership, the CCSS environment, and participants' personal sense of self and contribution. Regarding colleagues, participants highlighted how collaboration and camaraderie contributed to their sense of belonging and enjoyment at CCSS. For ET-1, cooperating with two

other teachers in the senior exam class over many years not only made teaching more effective but also fostered close friendships, leading to private gatherings outside of school events. Additionally, ET-2 emphasised the unique friendships formed among teachers at CCSS, explaining that shared values and hobbies among those who dedicate weekends to teaching create opportunities for deep connections. ET-4 also noted that despite being at CCSS only once a week, they felt a strong sense of belonging through positive interactions with both students and teachers, emphasising the importance of sincerity in building relationships. Similarly, ET-14 described the collective purpose shared among colleagues, which reinforced a strong sense of unity and belonging.

Participants also expressed appreciation for supportive leadership, which elicited feelings of value and comfort. For example, ET-3 felt motivated and at ease due to the trust and autonomy granted by the leadership, describing their work environment as enjoyable and free of restrictive rules. ET-6 recalled a specific incident in which Director B provided support during a misunderstanding with a parent, making them feel cared for and appreciated. ET-6 said:

> At that time, I had just moved from Year 2 to Year 7. I adjusted the sequence of the text based on my own understanding, but a parent came to question me and basically suggest that I wasn't capable. Even after I explained my reasoning, the parent still didn't accept it, and the experience left a deep shadow on me. Later, Director B stood up for me and explained everything to the parent. I was really grateful to Director B, and I also decided that I would never teach higher years again.

The CCSS environment itself was described as fostering positive emotions through its cultural and professional atmosphere. ET-6 found the school's cultural environment welcoming and harmonious, with approachable leaders and smooth communication. ET-12 highlighted how the supportive atmosphere encouraged reciprocal kindness among colleagues, comparing it to a positive

company culture. NT-3 felt a sense of inclusion and importance due to consistent updates in the group chat, which reinforced their feeling of being part of a larger, meaningful collective. NT-5 appreciated the administration's prompt support during unexpected situations, describing the environment as warm and reassuring. For example, NT-5 explaining that: "I feel very reassured. No matter what unexpected situation arises, you're not alone—you can immediately contact the administration, and they will assist you right away. This environment feels very warm."

Personal fulfilment and societal contribution also played a significant role in evoking positive emotions. Many participants expressed pride in their teaching roles at CCSS, viewing their work as meaningful and impactful. For instance, ET-5 described their role as both enjoyable and rewarding, particularly in the UK context, where teaching others about Chinese culture felt like a significant achievement. ET-16 echoed this sentiment, emphasising their pride in contributing to society by sharing cultural knowledge. NT-1 and NT-3 both noted how their Saturday teaching sessions provided a sense of accomplishment and pride in doing something beneficial for the children and the community.

Additionally, participants highlighted the personal benefits of working at CCSS, such as fulfilling their teaching aspirations, gaining valuable work experience, and enhancing their confidence. For ET-7, teaching Chinese and promoting culture brought pride and satisfaction, which they often shared with colleagues in their local workplace. ET-8 expressed their love for teaching at CCSS, noting how the experience of interacting with numerous students had enriched their teaching skills. Similarly, ET-15 described their work at CCSS as deeply fulfilling, making their days feel purposeful and meaningful.

This multifaceted analysis underscores the interplay between positive emotions and various aspects of participants' experiences at CCSS, highlighting the value of supportive relationships, a nurturing environment, and a shared sense of purpose in fostering both professional and personal growth.

5.5.2 Negative Emotions

Classroom issues, particularly discipline problems, emerge as a major source of negative emotions among participants, especially novice teachers working with lower year students. These challenges often leave teachers feeling frustrated, powerless, and uncertain about how to effectively manage disruptive student behaviour. ET-3 shared that most of their negative emotions stemmed from dealing with "unruly" students who disrupt lessons, expressing a wish for better classroom attentiveness. Similarly, NT-2 described the frustration caused by discipline problems, explaining that they detract from valuable teaching time, which presents a significant challenge.

For NT-3, the inability to maintain control in a noisy classroom led to feelings of inadequacy, while NT-4 expressed anger when students disregarded classroom boundaries, such as continuing to use phones during lessons despite being allowed to do so during breaks. NT-6 recounted a particularly upsetting experience where excessive classroom disruption forced them to call parents to intervene. While they strive to handle such situations regardless of their mood, they admitted to feeling powerless when students repeatedly ignore instructions, finding it impossible to maintain complete control.

Beyond discipline issues, limited class time and large student numbers contributed to participants' feelings of frustration and guilt. ET-14 highlighted the strain of managing an exam class

with over 60 students, even when divided into smaller groups. The demands of exam preparation left little room for addressing individual students' needs or focusing on their personal development, especially when balancing teaching with family and other job commitments.

Interactions with parents also triggered negative emotions for participants, particularly when cooperation was lacking. ET-5 explained how uncooperative parents dampened their motivation, forcing them to abandon efforts to support certain students. ET-6 recalled a challenging year when a lack of initial school support and parental complaints about teaching methods left them feeling miserable. Although the misunderstanding was later resolved with the school's backing, the experience led them to switch to teaching lower grades. NT-6 also expressed frustration with uninvolved parents who neglected to communicate homework instructions to their children, resulting in incomplete assignments. They eventually reconciled with the situation by focusing on their own responsibilities, stating, "I've done my part—I assign homework and teach in class—and what happens at home is up to them."

From the excerpts above, it is evident that the lack of support or even misunderstandings from parents leaves participants feeling helpless and disheartened. This emotional response leads to changes in their action possibilities. For example, participants like NT-6 find themselves in a state of internal conflict—on one hand, feeling that they have fulfilled their duties as teachers, but on the other, realising that they have not met their own expectations. This results in a sense of uncertainty and frustration. This internal struggle highlights how the emotional impact of parental disengagement or misunderstanding directly influences teachers' self-efficacy and their perceived ability to perform their roles successfully. This results in participants feeling uncertain about how to balance their efforts with their expectations, causing them to question their capabilities as teachers.

Another source of negative emotions, as reflected in the excerpt from ET-6, is the lack of communication between colleagues, especially when participants are transferred to teach in a new grade. In cases like ET-16, who was moved from teaching lower to higher-year students, the absence of guidance from fellow teachers may have led ET-16 to develop their own teaching approach, which resulted in complaints from parents. A similar situation is seen in ET-9, who also transitioned from teaching lower grades to higher ones. ET-9 expressed feeling unsupported by colleagues, describing their experience as one of self-exploration. ET-9 said:

> I've been teaching lower grades for a long time, and this year I moved to higher grades. I'm still in the process of figuring things out. No one told me how to teach, what to teach, or to what extent. It's all based on my own trial and error.

These experiences highlight the emotional burden caused by a lack of peer support during transitions, leaving teachers like ET-9 and ET-6 feeling isolated and unsure of their teaching methods. Without clear guidance or collaboration with colleagues, they may face increased stress, uncertainty, and self-doubt, particularly when they encounter challenges or complaints in their new roles.

Another significant source of negative emotions for participants is related to identity transitions. Shifts in professional identity often evoke feelings of struggle, fear, or confusion. For example, NT-5 described feeling anxious and fearful when transitioning from an assistant teacher role to a full teaching position, noting that the new responsibilities of leading lessons and engaging in full teaching tasks felt overwhelming. Similarly, ET-14 shared their initial uncertainty about whether they could consider themselves a teacher, as they lacked a formal teaching qualification like a

PGDE, even though they were actively teaching. NT-4 echoed this sentiment, explaining that while they did not view themselves as teachers compared to those with formal certifications in China, the classroom environment naturally framed them as educators. This duality left them feeling conflicted about their professional identity.

The emotional struggles related to identity were further complicated by the participants' roles and expectations. As NT-5 reflected, moving from supporting tasks such as grading homework and managing classroom discipline to leading a class was a significant and intimidating shift, one that heightened their sense of conflict and fear about whether they could succeed in the new role.

Critical incidents, such as the challenges posed during the COVID-19 lockdown, also elicited strong negative emotions among participants. The sudden shift to online teaching disrupted traditional routines and created new difficulties for both teachers and students. Although participants generally felt confident in their computer skills and ability to use online teaching platforms, the lack of engagement from students—particularly when cameras were kept off—was a major source of frustration.

For example, ET-1 recounted how disheartening it was to teach online classes during COVID-19, as none of the students turned on their cameras. This left them unable to gauge whether students were paying attention or learning, leading to a profound sense of disconnection and frustration. Furthermore, ET-7 highlighted the additional burden of teaching both students and parents how to use the necessary software, noting that the real challenge lay in maintaining student engagement during lessons. The lack of visual feedback and active participation drained their motivation. NT-5 also shared their experience during the transition back to in-person classes, where poor

communication via WeChat about safety protocols caused anxiety among parents, resulting in an overwhelming number of messages that added significant pressure.

The work at CCSS may not be as easy as it seems. Some participants expressed that they experience significant stress, which can stem from various factors. For instance, those responsible for exam preparation classes felt increased pressure, as students' examination outcomes are closely tied to university applications. The higher the stakes, the greater the sense of responsibility, and consequently, the higher the stress. Additionally, many participants already have demanding jobs and families. Balancing their full-time work during the week with CCSS teaching on Saturdays adds to their workload. Preparing lessons also requires a considerable amount of time and energy, further contributing to the participants' stress levels. Evidence came from ET-1 and ET-14:

> ET-1: The workload for exam classes is huge. There are a lot of materials that need to be prepared, and in recent years, the number of students has grown exponentially. A few years ago, we had a dozen students, but now we have 60, and every student comes with the expectation of achieving an A in their exams. So, you can imagine the amount of pressure.

> ET-14: From Monday to Friday, we have our regular jobs, and then on Saturdays, we come to CCSS. Essentially, we're working six days a week. Balancing my full-time job with CCSS work is a lot, and the pressure is definitely there.

Some negative emotions may be related to perceived personal traits. For example, ET-15 is concerned that they did not graduate from an education-related field, and they worry that their limited abilities might affect the students' learning outcomes. However, as previously mentioned, NT-6 also does not have a background in education, but NT-6 does not seem to share the same concerns as ET-15. As NT-6 believes that various challenges will inevitably arise in teaching, but none of these challenges would make teaching impossible, and with the help of the Internet, the tasks

can still be completed smoothly. For experienced teachers like ET-10, who has a lot of confidence in teaching at CCSS but finds preparing for talent shows quite challenging. ET-8 is uncertain whether they will continue teaching at CCSS because their PSW visa is about to expire. For example, ET-8 says: “I currently hold a PSW visa. If I can stay, I will continue working at CCSS, but if I cannot stay, then there’s nothing I can do.” ET-10 added: “I get really stressed every time it comes to organising the talent competition. I never know what to do, and the assistant doesn’t really know much either, plus the kids are still quite young.”

To sum up, in their introduction of each component of the DSMRI, Kaplan and Garner (2017) emphasised the emotions associated with these components, such as how emotions arise when participants evaluate whether or not they have achieved their teaching goals. Although this study has already addressed emotions throughout each section (as seen in the introduction to this section), emotions are discussed separately in Section 5.5 for clarity, and to align with the literature review (see Section 2.2.2), which highlights the significant role of emotions in studies of teacher identity. This research acknowledges that emotions are complex and that there are many different triggers for emotional experiences. Here, participants’ emotions are broadly categorised into positive and negative, which may be one limitation of this study. It is important to note that interactions between participants and their students were a primary source of emotions in this study. For example, several participants (e.g., ET-15, NT-6) mentioned feeling touched by students they had taught many years ago. This highlights that being recognised by students as a teacher is a keyway in which participants’ teacher identity is manifested.

Up to this point, this study analysed participants’ perspectives according to the control parameters and core components of DSMRI. For example, in Section 4.1, where the data reflecting

the social context was discussed, five specific points were elaborated. These included how the exam subjects in the Scottish education system shaped the CCSS teaching system, which in turn influenced the participants' teaching objectives and behaviours. It was also highlighted that CCSS functions as a community, bringing students and teachers together, and even more as a Community of Practice (CoP), where shared vision reshaped participants' behaviours and psychology during their time at the school. The classroom performance of students was shown to affect teachers' emotions and actions, and support from CCSS leadership enhanced teachers' sense of belonging and professional resilience.

In Section 4.2, the domain was divided into lower years, higher years, and the attributes of CCSS in Scottish society. It was observed that participants teaching different grade levels had varying teaching goals, beliefs, and behaviours, and that the charitable nature of CCSS influenced how some participants perceived their roles. Regarding culture (see Section 4.3), participants had experienced both Chinese and Scottish educational systems. Based on their reflections, they developed their own styles in dealing with teaching and students. Participants also demonstrated different personal dispositions towards students, teaching, and the teaching profession (see Section 4.4). For example, some participants claimed that their personality naturally inclined them to like children, and they viewed classroom problems as opportunities to highlight the children's endearing qualities (NT-1).

Section 5.1 addressed one of the core elements of DSMRI, beliefs, from five different perspectives: beliefs about teachers, students, teaching, parents, and belief conflicts. Section 5.2 explored participants' purposes and goals from five angles, including their purpose in coming to CCSS, their teaching objectives, and how goals related to feedback. The section on action

possibilities (5.3) listed various behaviours related to teaching activities, as well as interactions with students, teachers, and parents. In terms of self-perception (Section 5.4), the participants were divided into those who identified as teachers and those who did not, with additional explanations related to self-efficacy and self-categorisation. Although emotions were touched upon in all of the above sections, Section 5.5 revisited the theme of emotions to emphasise its significant relationship with teacher identity.

On this basis, the next chapter will explain the different role identities displayed by the participants and the relationships between them.

5.6 Role Identities

According to DSMRI analysis guide, this model's primary unit-of-analysis is the social-cultural role identities as occupied by participants (Kaplan & Garner, 2022). This section will summarise and analyse the different role identities highlighted in the participants' interviews in chronological order. The analysis will include the following aspects: content (i.e., the beliefs held, goals pursued, expressed self-perceptions and definitions, recorded actions and strategies, and emotions related to roles and components); structure (i.e., the harmony or tension within the components, alignment or misalignment between components, and the integration of tensions between different role identities); and the process of formation (i.e., signs of change, reflection, experimentation, challenges, and exploration) (Kaplan & Garner, 2022). Specifically, this section will elaborate on the participants' role identities as a student in China, as a student in the UK, as parents, as CCSS teachers, as colleagues, and more.

5.6.1 Participants' Role Identities as a Student in China and Scotland

The 22 participants range in age from 22 to 65 years old, all have lived in both China and the UK. Eighteen of them experienced both the Chinese and Scottish education systems, two received education only in China, and one was educated solely in the UK. Through the analysis of interview data, it is evident that the participants' experiences as students educated in China and UK, alongside their other roles, have collectively shaped their self-perceptions, beliefs, goals, and action possibilities.

The Socio-cultural Context as an Indispensable Control Parameter

When discussing their educational experiences in China, the topics of the High School Entrance Examination (Zhong Kao) and the National College Entrance Examination (Gao Kao) are unavoidable. In the social context of China's education system, gaining admission to a well-known middle or high school significantly increases the chances of entering a prestigious university, which in turn boosts the likelihood of securing a good job after graduation—something both students and parents aspire to. Schools with high advancement and top university acceptance rates attract more students, benefiting the schools and teachers as well. As a result, Chinese society places great importance on the Zhong Kao and Gao Kao, with schools, teachers, parents, and students generally believing that 'hard work and diligent study will lead to good results.' Under such circumstances, students may strive to excel academically, aiming for high scores, while teachers are more likely to emphasise classroom discipline and knowledge transmission.

This phenomenon has historical roots. Chinese cultural traditions, particularly Confucianism, place a high value on education, stressing that students should be diligent and respectful of their teachers. In return, teachers are expected to be knowledgeable, virtuous, and dedicated to imparting

knowledge to their students. This has led to a teacher-centred tradition in the Chinese education system, which, whether intentionally or unintentionally, has fostered an exam-oriented student identity. NT-3 shared their experiences:

> I moved to the UK halfway through middle school, but I still have memories of my time in China. The teachers there were extremely strict, and the atmosphere was very tense. You had to finish your homework, take exams, and perform well—all under this constant pressure. If you made a mistake or didn't memorise a text, the teacher would make you copy it ten times, and sometimes there was even corporal punishment. I was rarely punished, but many of my classmates were, so the entire class wasn't learning in a happy environment.

The above excerpts indicate that, despite being from different eras, participants were profoundly impacted by their experiences preparing for the Zhong Kao and Gao Kao within the socio-cultural environment of China. These experiences were often accompanied by negative emotions, such as high levels of stress. When contrasted with their educational experiences in the UK (as discussed below) and reflected upon, these memories have influenced the participants' classroom behaviour as teachers at CCSS.

Alignment between Beliefs, Goals, and Action Possibilities

During their time as students, some participants believed that studying hard was essential to gaining admission to a good university. They aimed to achieve high scores in various exams, aligning their beliefs, goals, and actions by following their teachers' guidance, memorising texts, and completing practice exercises. However, participants differed in how they perceived and approached their studies. While some identified as "good students" who worked diligently, others did not see themselves as particularly studious and may not have invested the same effort in their academics.

These differences suggest the influence of factors such as gender, personality, and upbringing on their attitudes toward education.

For instance, ET-15 reflected on their relaxed attitude toward studying, attributing it to their family's laid-back approach to education. Growing up in southern China, where business was often prioritised over academic success, they felt little pressure about exams and viewed education as just one of many potential pathways in life rather than the only route to success. This upbringing shaped their perspective, contrasting with peers who may have experienced greater academic pressure. In contrast, NT-4 recounted a more intense educational environment, having attended key schools from elementary to university and served as a class monitor and subject representative. They described a 'pressure-cooker' atmosphere, where teachers employed various methods to push students to excel academically. However, such approaches could be detrimental to students' emotional well-being. NT-4 recalled a particularly distressing moment when a teacher announced their low math score in front of the entire class, causing a significant blow to their self-confidence. This experience highlighted the tension between academic performance and the neglect of students' self-esteem in such high-pressure environments.

When participants achieve good results and meet their goals, they experience positive emotions, which are further reinforced by their teachers' approval. Conversely, poor performance can lead to negative emotions (as seen in NT-4's narrative). Additionally, ET-15's comments illustrate how family environment shapes her awareness and behaviour, while NT-4's excerpt highlights the significant impact of teachers on students' mental and emotional development. Teachers serve as significant others for participants, with their behaviour and ideology having a profound influence on the participants' possible future selves.

Notably, positive role models inspire participants to emulate their teachers, while negative examples lead them to avoid similar behaviours in their own practice. This stems from participants' reflections on their experiences as students, leading to a newfound recognition of the importance of respecting each student as an individual. For example, ET-1's teachers contributed positively to their development, setting a positive example. In their interactions with CCSS students, they are aware of students' individual identities and respects them, a view that was further reinforced by their experiences in the local education system. As ET-1 stated:

> The education I received as a child had a lasting impact on me. I know that respect is key, and this applies to children as well—they are independent individuals, and we should respect them. I also really appreciate the encouragement-based teaching approach I experienced in Scottish universities, which I fully embrace.

On the other hand, NT-4, based on their own experience, avoids exposing students' mistakes in front of the entire class. Instead, they use a more tactful approach, helping students recognise their shortcomings while protecting their self-esteem. They say: 'I won't call out students' issues in front of the class. I'll take a more subtle approach, letting students realise their own mistakes. This helps correct the problem while maintaining their confidence.'

Participants' past experiences as students have significantly shaped their teaching philosophies and methods at CCSS. These reflections reveal both the influence of positive and negative experiences and how they are integrated into or rejected by participants' current practices. For example, ET-9 contrasted the rigid and monotonous approach of their political science teacher in China with their current style. They strive to create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, fostering common ground between themselves and students. Similarly, NT-2 credits their French teacher's

friendly and supportive teaching style for shaping their own approach. They emphasise fairness and avoid punitive measures, as they were negatively impacted by a middle school English teacher who punished the entire class for the actions of a few. NT-1 and NT-4 highlighted the importance of fairness and sensitivity. NT-1 recalled a middle school teacher's gender bias, which they found unfair and unprofessional, influencing their commitment to equitable treatment. NT-4 shared their strategy of subtly encouraging disengaged students by involving their peers, thereby promoting collective responsibility without direct criticism.

For some, former teachers' methods directly inspired innovative practices. ET-1 shared how their distinguished elementary school Chinese teacher's creative use of competitions inspired them to organise a dictionary lookup contest, blending fun with learning. However, not all participants attribute their teaching methods to their experiences as students. ET-14 argued that teaching practices and personal decisions, such as volunteering, stem from individual character and life stages rather than external influences. These varied reflections demonstrate the diverse ways participants incorporate or distance themselves from their past educational experiences, highlighting the dynamic interplay between their identities as former students and current educators.

The Shifts in Beliefs, Goals, Action Possibilities, and Self-perceptions

Based on the participants' personal experiences, the Chinese educational environment they encountered can generally be described as teacher-centred and exam-oriented, with a strong emphasis on students' mastery of knowledge and maintaining classroom discipline. In this context, students were often in a subordinate position, with many restrictions placed on them, frequently accompanied by negative emotions. When participants transitioned into the Scottish education system, they discovered that it was more encouragement-based, with supportive teachers and far less

exam pressure than in China. Additionally, they had more opportunities to develop their personal interests. This stark contrast led participants to redefine the meaning of education—not just as a pursuit of high scores, but as a process that fosters students' development as individuals. They also redefined their sense of self, realising that they had more possibilities for personal growth. Their goals shifted from focusing solely on getting into university to simultaneously nurturing their interests while learning. For example, NT-3 said that:

> I moved to the UK halfway through middle school, but I still have memories of my time in China. The teachers there were extremely strict, and the atmosphere was very tense. You had to finish your homework, take exams, and perform well—all under this constant pressure. If you made a mistake or didn't memorise a text, the teacher would make you copy it ten times, and sometimes there was even corporal punishment. I was rarely punished, but many of my classmates were, so the entire class wasn't learning in a happy environment

Faced with the differing strengths and weaknesses of the Chinese and Scottish education systems, participants at CCSS did not rely solely on one system. Instead, they actively engaged with and reflected on their experiences, synthesising the strengths of both systems to adapt and innovate their teaching methods. This demonstrates their agency as educators and their ability to tailor approaches to the unique needs of their students. For instance, ET-1, who teaches exam classes, explained that their educational background—traditional schooling in China and a formal university education in the UK (see 4.3.1)—enabled them to adopt a mixed approach. They incorporate key elements from Chinese textbooks while utilising Scottish methods, drawing on their personal experiences to create a balanced teaching strategy.

Similarly, ET-4, who completed graduate studies in China before coming to the UK, described how exposure to Scottish teaching methods deeply influenced them. They highlighted the impact of

the “sandwich method,” which frames feedback with praise to make critiques more constructive and acceptable for students. Reflecting on their experiences, ET-4 emphasised the importance of localising Chinese teaching practices for students raised in the UK. Although they may have Chinese heritage, their thinking aligns more closely with local students due to their upbringing and educational environment. They noted that while many Scottish methods are effective, they must be integrated thoughtfully with traditional Chinese approaches to address the cultural context of the students.

These examples illustrate how participants reflect on and adapt their teaching strategies, merging insights from two distinct systems. Their proactive efforts highlight their agency in shaping pedagogical practices that are responsive to their students’ needs. The transition from a Chinese to a Scottish educational context significantly shapes their beliefs, goals, and self-perception as educators. This reflective process fosters a transformation in their views on education, enabling them to leverage the strengths of both systems while addressing their limitations. In doing so, participants contribute to the development of a hybrid educational model that bridges cultural and pedagogical divides, emphasising the profound impact of the educational environment on individual identity and teaching practices.

5.6.2 Participants’ Role Identity as Parents

As highlighted in the literature review (see Section 2.4.3), parents of students play a crucial role in the operation of community language schools, and this is evident in the context of CCSS. Recognising that mainstream schools did not offer adequate education in community languages and cultures, parents took the initiative to establish community language schools. This grassroots

involvement is integral to the functioning of these schools. As CCSS grew, a significant challenge they faced was the shortage of teachers. To address this, parents began stepping into the classroom, taking on teaching roles to ensure the school's continuity. This was reflected in the participants' motivations and actions in this study, as shown in the following examples.

As ET-4 shared that, when their child reached the age to attend Chinese school, their passion for education and their background in the field naturally led them to become a teacher there: "My child reached the age to attend Chinese school, and I personally have a passion for education, as I studied education myself, so it just felt natural for me to become a teacher there." Similarly, ET-5's involvement was motivated by a desire to support their child's education and to contribute their own skills: "I came to CCSS, first for my child because she was about to start Chinese school, and second to do what I could. Chinese is my mother tongue; I had the ability to teach the next generation." Additionally, ET-13 explained their role as stemming from both a parental responsibility and a sense of community:

> Why did I help at the Chinese school? First, as a mother, I wanted to provide a language environment for my child, which I believe is similar to many other parents. Secondly, this is my community, and as a member of it, I wanted to contribute.

The excerpts above reveal that the participants' motivations for joining CCSS were primarily driven by the desire for their children to receive language and cultural education (see Section 5.2.1). While they believed their abilities were sufficient for the roles they undertook at CCSS (see Section 5.4), there were differences in how they viewed their positions. For instance, ET-5 saw themselves as a teacher, while ET-14 explicitly rejected the title, instead describing their involvement as simply

helping out. This variation in self-perception can be attributed to differences in personality and how participants framed their roles (see Section 4.4).

Furthermore, being a parent at CCSS not only led participants to engage with the school but also increased their professional commitment. Several participants expressed that they would continue their involvement until their children graduated, after which they would reconsider their roles. This commitment, fuelled by parental responsibility, provides a certain stability to the school, helping to mitigate the challenges posed by high teacher turnover at CCSS. As ET-2 explained, "I will probably continue working because my son still needs to attend school and take exams. I'll at least wait until he finishes his exams." Similarly, ET-10 and ET-11 expressed similar intentions to stay until their children completed their education at CCSS, such as ET-10 said, "I will stay here (at CCSS), at least until my son graduates before deciding whether to leave," and ET-11 stated that "I will still be here (at CCSS) until my daughter finishes. After that, I might stop. At that time, I might use Saturdays to do things I want to do, but for now, I'm still here."

The participants' resilience in their professional roles is significantly shaped by their identities as parents. Their dual roles as parents and educators enable them to navigate challenges at CCSS with greater empathy and understanding, which directly influences their teaching methods. For instance, ET-1 highlights the extent of their commitment:

> At the Chinese school, we invest a considerable amount of time and energy, which is why I always emphasise that we are truly volunteering out of passion. You can't expect the Chinese school to offer us any subsidies, and the energy and effort we put in are completely disproportionate to any potential benefits.

Despite the pressures of balancing their full-time job and teaching, ET-1 has persisted, demonstrating resilience through their long-term commitment. This resilience is not only a product of their professional dedication but also identity as a mother, where their experience of balancing family and work resonates in teaching role.

Similarly, ET-4 reflected on how their own parenting experiences had influenced their approach to teaching. ET-4 acknowledged that they did not major in Chinese and, as someone aspiring to become a Chinese teacher, felt the need to continuously improve their skills. ET-4 believed that there were many educational methods in the UK worth learning from, while also emphasising the importance of localising Chinese education. Despite lacking formal qualifications in Chinese education, ET-4 actively works to enhance their skills, demonstrating how parenting experience has encouraged a proactive approach to professional growth. Their understanding of the challenges faced by children raised in the UK influences their teaching philosophy, allowing them to adapt methods that are both culturally relevant and effective for students.

The role of parenthood also enhances participants' understanding of students' psychological needs and behaviours. ET-5, for example, reflected on how their experience as a mother changed their perspective on teaching. ET-5 recalled a past incident where they did not fully understand the situation and sided with the teacher, which led their child to develop a resentment toward learning Chinese. This experience made ET-5 realise that such an approach was not appropriate. ET-5 came to believe that children should be happy in their learning and that attending a community language class should be a source of interest rather than distress. This realisation led ET-5 to prioritise student engagement and enjoyment, which they now apply in teaching. Their shift in perspective underscores

how parental experience fosters a deeper understanding of student motivation and engagement, influencing their teaching practices.

Moreover, the awareness of parents' concerns further enhances participants' engagement with students' families. ET-4 demonstrated this awareness by describing how they created a WeChat group to immediately share the day's lessons, homework, and important notices with parents. ET-4 explained that having gone through similar experiences themselves—particularly when their child reached adolescence and resisted parental involvement—ET-4 had felt frustrated and eager to know what was happening at school. This personal experience helped understand the feelings of other parents, especially those with children in the same age group, and motivated ET-4 to ensure parents were informed about key matters.

Similarly, ET-9 emphasised the importance of providing timely feedback to parents regarding their child's school progress. ET-9 noted that, as a parent themselves, they understood the desire to be informed about a child's performance in school. Having their own child deepened their empathy toward both students and parents, which in turn strengthened their sense of responsibility as a teacher.

Overall, the participants' experiences as parents deeply influence their teaching practices and professional resilience. Their ability to empathise with students and parents, adapt teaching methods, and overcome challenges speaks to the significant role of parenthood in shaping their professional identities and actions at CCSS.

5.6.3 Role Identities as CCSS Teachers

This section will provide a brief discussion on the structure and process of participants' identity formation as CCSS teachers, aiming to present a clearer understanding of how their teacher identity at CCSS is formed and evolves. Kaplan and Garner (2017) pointed out that, in terms of structure, the role identity system not only reflects harmony and disharmony, consistency and inconsistency among its components but also involves the degree of integration between the target role identity and other core role identities of the actor—this represents a higher level of analysis within the identity system. Therefore, the structural variability of the role identity system may manifest in changes to the actor's sense of coherence and commitment to the role. Changes in the role identity formation process imply that the nature of an actor's role identity system may evolve over time, including its breadth, depth, emotional intensity, and methods of role identity construction. The foundational processes of role identity formation include changes in the content of role identity elements, changes in the nature of structural relationships within and between elements, and changes in the relationship between a specific role identity and other core role identities.

The Social and School Contexts

As introduced in the literature review (Section 2.4.3), one of the main reasons for the emergence of CCSS and other community language schools is to compensate for the inadequacies of mainstream schools in teaching heritage language and culture to the descendants of ethnic minorities. It is within this socio-historical context that the establishment of CCSS and other community language schools became possible, and this context also shapes one of the primary purposes of CCSS, which is to teach Chinese language and culture to Chinese descendants. More specifically, under the influence of Scotland's examination system and the 1+2 Language Strategy, CCSS's

subject offerings, teaching content and relationships with local school have been notably affected. For example, the Vice Principal emphasised that CCSS plays a vital role within the Scottish Chinese community, with its primary mission being to teach the Chinese language and culture to young people of Chinese descent. In addition to serving the Chinese community, CCSS also provides opportunities for individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds to learn about Chinese culture, thereby fostering integration among different groups.

Furthermore, the division has created different teaching domains within CCSS, such as lower-year non-exam and higher-year exam classes, leading participants to adopt different teaching goals and behaviours. For instance, lower-year non-exam class teachers may emphasise fostering students' interest in learning, while higher-year exam class teachers are more likely to focus on helping students achieve high scores, thus placing more emphasis on academic performance. As ET-12 highlighted the variation in teachers' responsibilities depending on the year group and the nature of the class. For higher-year and exam-focused classes, the main task is to encourage students to study diligently and achieve strong academic results. In contrast, teachers of lower-year groups are primarily responsible for ensuring the safety of the children during school hours.

An important issue that emerges from the data is that some participants feel marginalised in their teaching roles, which can be attributed to both the lack of formal teaching qualifications and the broader societal context that undervalues community language schools. These schools are often referred to as "supplementary schools" in official UK government documents, reinforcing their status as secondary, non-formal institutions. This marginalisation leads some participants to view themselves not as professional teachers but rather as volunteers or individuals doing what they can within the constraints of their circumstances.

For instance, ET-5 expresses a sense of marginalisation, stating: “We’re just volunteers. We don’t get paid, we don’t have any titles, and I don’t have a teaching certification. CCSS isn’t even a school; it’s just an extracurricular class.” Similarly, ET-12 highlights the formal limitations, explaining: “Strictly speaking, we are not teachers because in the UK, teaching minors requires a teaching certification, and after undergoing professional training, one must be registered as a teacher. CCSS isn’t a real school either.” This lack of formal recognition contributes to the perception of these teachers as outsiders in the educational field, limiting their professional identity.

Moreover, this marginalisation is further compounded by conflicts with parents, particularly concerning differences in teaching philosophies or perceived disrespect. The resulting frustration has led some participants to reduce or avoid communication with parents altogether. For instance, ET-1 described how they have modified their approach by choosing not to involve parents too much. They believe that students at this age are capable of managing issues independently and have therefore decided not to establish parent chat groups. Their experience during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that once such groups were formed, parents began imposing their personal preferences on teaching arrangements, which they considered unacceptable and a threat to teacher autonomy.

Similarly, ET-10 expressed frustration over interactions with parents, noting that some behave impolitely. Despite addressing parents respectfully using the formal “您(nín)” in Chinese, they often received responses using the informal “你(nǐ)[4],” and felt that parents tended to disregard what teachers were saying. As a result of these negative experiences, ET-10 now tries to minimise communication with parents. The lack of mutual respect in these exchanges negatively impacts the

[4] “你(nǐ)” is the general second-person pronoun used in most contexts, while “您(nín)” is the polite or formal form in Chinese, used to show respect.

participants' emotional well-being and leads them to adopt more guarded or isolated behaviours in their teaching roles.

The broader community environment plays a key role in shaping how participants view their roles, and this is evident in their interactions with both parents and school leadership. The support provided by CCSS leadership helps mitigate some of the pressures these teachers face. For example, ET-9 described the leadership as highly supportive, explaining that whenever issues arise, the leaders actively assist in resolving them. This support reduces concerns about potential conflicts with parents, as the leadership tends to stand by teachers and address problems from their perspective. According to ET-9, this level of support significantly eases the burden of teaching and has contributed to their decision to continue working at CCSS. Such support creates a safe space where participants can construct their teacher identities in a more supportive and understanding environment.

The importance of community ties is also emphasised by ET-12, who recalled that when they first arrived in Scotland with only their child, ET-12 actively sought out the Chinese community. They found it comforting and enjoyable to connect and talk with other Chinese people. This sense of community offered emotional support and a feeling of belonging, which further contributed to participants' ability to persevere in their roles. Finally, NT-3 reflects on the meaningfulness of their work, stating: "The only time I realise I'm a teacher is when students' grades improve. At the moment, I understand that my work is meaningful, and I won't pay attention to anything else." This statement highlights that, despite the external marginalisation and internal challenges, the sense of accomplishment and the impact on students' learning outcomes remain central to their professional

identity. In this sense, the recognition they may lack externally is replaced by a more internalised, personal sense of achievement.

Harmony and Alignment among the Different Components

The alignment and harmony between beliefs, purpose, action possibilities, self-concept, and emotions in relation to teaching are evident in several participants. For instance, ET-6 views becoming a teacher as a way to realise her life's value. ET-6 believes that teaching is a noble and highly important profession, and their purpose extends beyond simply imparting Chinese language and cultural knowledge to students. More importantly, ET-6 aims to influence students' worldviews, values, and life perspectives, hoping their actions will support students' future development. To achieve these goals, ET-6 purchases educational books at their own expense, enrols in online training courses, and diligently prepares lessons, demonstrating a strong sense of agency. When their efforts are acknowledged by both students and parents, ET-6 experiences a strong sense of accomplishment, which motivates them to continue working hard and solidifies their self-concept as a teacher. As ET-6 noted:

> As a teacher, I am not just a conveyor of knowledge; I sincerely hope to influence students' worldview, values, and life perspective—and impact their lives. I believe that cultivating good study habits in students will benefit their future work and lives……. I genuinely put my heart into teaching. Although I am not a professionally trained teacher, I hold myself to the standards of an educator. I read many educational books and enrolled in online training courses, and the parents can see this. I've even become friends with some parents who recognise my efforts.

Another example is ET-2, who holds a broad understanding of what it means to be a teacher. ET-2 believes that no matter where or what subject is taught, a teacher's role is consistent. Besides

helping students achieve good grades, ET-2 emphasises the importance of paying attention to students' mental health. To support this, ET-2 uses their spare time to understand students' needs. ET-2 is highly satisfied with their work at CCSS and expresses intention to continue:

> As long as you are teaching and nurturing, you are a teacher, whether at home or CCSS. As long as students and parents trust you and send their children to you, you are a teacher, regardless of whether you teach drawing, English, or Chinese……I use what I've learned, or focus on areas where I'm more sensitive, to guide my students in that direction……I think I am very well-suited to being a teacher. Why? Because I have been a teacher for so many years, I believe my personality and strengths align with the education field. Here, I can perform at my best, and I can say that I am a competent teacher.

Similarly, ET-3 also provides a strong example. Though their full-time job is teaching in a mainstream school in Scotland, ET-3 clearly identifies themselves as a teacher at CCSS as well. ET-3 states that they feel more respected by students at CCSS, which strengthens their self-concept as a teacher within the school. ET-3 explained as follows:

> I am a teacher at the local school and also at CCSS. In fact, I feel an even stronger sense of teacher identity at CCSS because the students here respect me more. We face the students, teach them knowledge, and help them grow—so yes, I am a teacher……Chinese class is only once a week, so I hope the students find it interesting. I've always upheld this belief while teaching here, aiming to create a happy learning environment for students. Sometimes I incorporate games into my lessons to make the classroom more lively, but I still need to keep seeking new changes. Being a teacher means constantly exploring and trying new things, growing alongside the students.

The alignment between beliefs, purpose, and actions is also evident in how participants approach their students. For instance, ET-14 believes that senior students are independent individuals. Rather than relying on parents to address students' academic challenges, ET-14 communicates directly with

the students to understand their needs. This approach highlights their respect for students' autonomy and alignment with more supportive teaching practices. ET-14 stresses the importance of empathy, stating:

> I don't get angry, even if they haven't done their homework, we can discuss it because they are under a lot of pressure. If you consider things from their perspective, you'll realise that forcing them to learn doesn't work. You need to understand them, empathise with them, and not force them. You can't use corporal punishment like in China, especially during their teenage years.

ET-1 echoes ET-14's perspective, emphasising the importance of understanding students' individuality and fostering a supportive, non-coercive learning environment. They explain that since most students are born locally, it is unrealistic to expect their Chinese language skills to reach a certain level, and therefore, teaching should be tailored to each student's individual needs. Recognising that every student is different, they stress the importance of allowing for individuality rather than imposing uniformly high standards. ET-1 believes that offering more positive guidance will be beneficial for students' future lives. Their approach reflects a balance between empathy, flexibility, and the goal of fostering positive student outcomes.

Several other participants, including ET-3, ET-4, and ET-5, also highlight the importance of stimulating students' interest in learning Chinese, aligning with the broader aim of making Chinese language education both enjoyable and sustainable. ET-3, for instance, points out that since Chinese classes are held only once a week, it is essential to make them interesting. They mention incorporating games into lessons to create a livelier classroom atmosphere while also acknowledging the need for continuous innovation in teaching. For ET-3, being a teacher involves ongoing

exploration and growth alongside the students. This focus on engagement and student enjoyment enhances the sense of purpose and fulfilment that participants derive from their work at CCSS.

These views also align with the CCSS's mission to teach Chinese language and culture to Scottish Chinese students and support them in building their ethnic identity. The participants' goals are deeply connected to the CCSS's overarching purpose, creating a supportive environment that enhances their professional resilience. The Vice Principal highlights that CCSS plays a vital role in the Scottish Chinese community, with its primary mission being to teach Chinese language and culture to young people of Chinese descent. At the same time, the school serves the broader community by offering people of different ethnic backgrounds opportunities to learn about Chinese culture, thus promoting integration among diverse groups. This shared mission cultivates a sense of belonging and purpose among teachers, strengthening their long-term commitment to the school. ET-3, for example, expresses that a continued desire to work somewhere depends on personal happiness. They note that they have always felt a sense of warmth at CCSS and enjoy working there, which has likely been a source of ongoing motivation.

The integration of participants' roles as both parents and teachers further contributes to their professional identity. ET-4 mentions that they began teaching at the school when their own child was old enough to attend and they were confident in teaching the textbook content. Their experience as a parent allows them to understand both the students' perspectives and the concerns of other parents. They also take care to keep parents informed when important matters arise. This blending of parental care with professional responsibility enhances teachers' empathy. The overall alignment of beliefs, purpose, actions, and emotions among the participants contributes to a strong and coherent sense of

role identity, supporting their work at CCSS and fostering a fulfilling and sustainable professional experience.

Disharmony and Misalignment among the Different Components

The participants express a complex relationship between their roles as teachers at the CCSS and their broader personal and professional identities. Many of them experience a tension between their self-perception and the expectations associated with being a teacher. For example, ET-14 does not consider themselves a "real" teacher because they lack formal teaching qualifications, yet they acknowledge their role in teaching and the emotional distress it causes them due to the differences between their role and that of formally qualified teachers. NT-4 echoes this sentiment, feeling that without a teaching certificate, they cannot consider themselves a teacher, despite being in a teaching role. Similarly, NT-6, while sometimes viewing themselves as an adult who is leading extracurricular activities rather than a teacher, acknowledges that, in the classroom, they do take on the role of a teacher, even if approach differs from traditional, exam-focused teaching.

These internal conflicts are compounded by external limitations, which prevent participants from fully aligning their teaching practices with their beliefs. For instance, ET-6 emphasises that personal development should take precedence over academic achievement, criticising the current system for prioritising grades. However, ET-14 points out that, due to time constraints and the charity-based structure of CCSS, it is difficult to prioritise students' holistic well-being, a belief they hold strongly. This discrepancy between their ideals and reality illustrates the dynamic negotiation of teacher identity within the constraints of the school's context.

Furthermore, some participants, despite believing in their responsibility as teachers, express that personal circumstances, such as career changes or family obligations, may lead them to leave CCSS. ET-1, for example, explains that while they consider themselves a responsible teacher with valuable insights, their high-pressure job and frequent business trips post-pandemic have made it harder to maintain teaching role at CCSS. This highlights how real-life changes can shift the salience of teaching roles in relation to other life responsibilities.

The degree of alignment between participants' full-time roles and their role as CCSS teachers also varies. Some participants, like ET-5, emphasise the lack of formal qualifications and the non-school status of CCSS, which makes them feel more like volunteers than teachers. Conversely, others, like ET-10, draw on their previous teaching experience in China to reinforce their confidence as teachers. Their teaching background allows them to transition more easily into the CCSS teaching role and to integrate effective teaching practices. ET-12, however, stresses that without a teaching certification and with CCSS not being a recognised school, they do not see themselves as traditional teachers, underlining the disconnect between their role at CCSS and their formal professional identity.

Interestingly, some participants, such as ET-11 and NT-1, feel a strong sense of identification with their teaching role despite having full-time jobs unrelated to teaching. ET-11, for example, describes teaching at CCSS as a habit and feels that the progress of the children and their efforts reinforce the sense of self as a teacher, regardless of the informal nature of the institution. NT-1 also emphasises that once in the classroom, teachers must take their role seriously and respect the students' time, indicating a strong commitment to their teaching identity, regardless of the structural

limitations of CCSS. This suggests that a participant's identification as a teacher is not necessarily determined by their full-time job role but by their personal commitment and the perceived impact of their teaching.

5.6.4 Participants' Other Role Identities

DSMRI's fundamental unit of analysis is the actor's context-based social role identity: a system of meanings associated with occupying a specific social position within a particular sociocultural context (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). This insight prompts the author to recognise that, besides the explicit role identities related to being a CCSS teacher (such as the roles of being a student or a parent), it is essential to consider participants' other potential roles—whether formal, informal, personal, or collective. The roles individuals assume within a specific social and cultural context provide them with a framework for interpreting and evaluating their experiences and events and making decisions about their actions within these roles.

The Role Identity of Being an Immigrant

Among the 22 participants recruited for this study, 19 are first-generation immigrants (86%), reflecting the reality that community language schools are primarily composed of immigrant populations. This underscores the importance of examining participants' immigrant roles during data analysis. Interview data reveal a significant integration of the immigrant role with participants' roles as students in the UK (see Section 5.6.1). These combined roles enable participants to navigate the differences between life, society, and education systems in China and the UK, shaping their approaches to teaching and interacting with students in the CCSS classroom. For example, ET-2 highlights how personal experiences, worldviews, and cross-cultural understanding influence their

teaching, emphasising that "your ideology influences your teaching," particularly when explaining cultural concepts or language to students. ET-2 also reflects on the broader societal challenges faced by minority groups, suggesting that attending CCSS is part of helping students navigate identity issues that may arise in their integration into local society.

Similarly, ET-4 stresses the importance of adapting traditional Chinese teaching methods to suit the local context. Recognising that CCSS students are deeply influenced by the local Scottish education system and wider societal norms, ET-4 observes that "although they have Chinese faces, they were born in Scotland," and their thinking aligns more closely with local perspectives. This realisation has led ET-4 to advocate for localised teaching strategies that differ from those traditionally used in China, ensuring that the educational experience at CCSS resonates with students' lived realities.

These perspectives highlight how participants' immigrant experiences inform their dual goals of preserving cultural heritage and supporting students' successful integration into the local community. By leveraging their own understanding of identity negotiation and cultural adaptation, participants aim to help students navigate potential challenges, such as identity formation, while fostering a sense of belonging and cultural pride. This dual focus aligns with participants' roles as CCSS teachers (see Section 5.2.3), the broader mission of CCSS (see Section 5.2.4), and their responsibilities as parents (see Section 5.6.2).

The Role Identity of Being an International Student

Although Section 5.6.1 highlighted "the role of being a student in both China and the UK," this specifically pertains to participants who were studying at Scottish universities during the interviews. Among the 22 participants, three were international students (ET-8, NT-4, NT-6), with ET-8 and

NT-4 studying education-related fields. Their reasons for joining CCSS differ from those of immigrant teachers (see Section 5.2.1). Many immigrant teachers initially became involved with CCSS because their children attended the school, whereas international student teachers were typically unmarried and childless, seeking alternative motivations to participate.

In terms of their roles at CCSS, the three international student teachers expressed diverse perspectives. ET-8, who studied education and taught students from different countries prior to arriving in the UK, confidently identifies as a teacher. They describe themselves as a “gentle, responsible, reflective, and continually growing teacher.” In contrast, NT-4, who lacks formal teaching qualifications and prior teaching experience, feels uncertain about their identity as a teacher. They explain that although they do not fully see themselves as teachers, they acknowledge that in the classroom setting, the person delivering lessons is often regarded as the teacher. NT-6, also without a teaching background, tends to avoid identifying as a teacher, emphasising that their role feels more like that of an adult engaging with students in an extracurricular setting. They view their contributions as creating a positive and enjoyable learning experience rather than adhering to a traditional, exam-oriented teaching model. These differences highlight how prior education and teaching experience influence participants’ self-perceptions. ET-8’s confidence in their teacher identity stems from their background in education and cross-cultural teaching, while NT-4 and NT-6’s hesitations reflect their lack of formal training and previous experience in teaching roles.

As of the completion of this section, ET-8 and NT-4 remained active at CCSS but faced challenges in securing full-time employment, which could affect their continued participation. NT-6, however, had already left CCSS, illustrating the high degree of mobility among international student teachers. Their transient nature reflects a different relationship with CCSS compared to immigrant

teachers, whose involvement is often more stable and family oriented. Despite these challenges, international student teachers have contributed uniquely to CCSS, bringing diverse perspectives and experiences to their roles.

The Role Identity of Being a CCSS Staff

The context of CCSS (see Section 4.1) provides participants with multifaceted roles, primarily as teachers (in relation to students) and staff members (in connection with leadership). Within this framework, participants exhibit notable agency, fostered by the unique dynamics of CCSS as a charitable, non-mainstream school. Unlike mainstream institutions with rigid hierarchies, CCSS promotes a more egalitarian and supportive environment. Many participants form close friendships with school leaders and credit this positive relationship as a significant factor in their continued engagement at CCSS. The leadership's trust and flexibility empower participants to embrace their individual teaching styles and explore their aspirations as educators.

For instance, ET-3 appreciates the leadership's trust and flexibility, which allows them to teach in their own way. ET-6 highlights the supportive and communicative qualities of a leader, attributing their continued involvement at CCSS partly to this relationship. Similarly, ET-16 values CCSS's openness to innovative teaching approaches, even when their methods differ from traditional expectations. Such examples underscore how CCSS provides participants with a platform for self-expression and professional growth, fostering their sense of agency.

Despite the absence of formal teaching qualifications required by mainstream standards, participants actively demonstrate agency through self-directed learning, meticulous lesson preparation, and contributions to school operations. ET-9 and ET-11 dedicate significant time to lesson planning and addressing students' or parents' queries outside of class hours, reflecting their

commitment to their teaching roles. ET-12, leveraging their background as an accountant, contributed to resolving tax-related issues for teachers, showcasing how participants' diverse skills enhance the school community. These actions highlight participants' proactive engagement in shaping their identities as educators while navigating the voluntary and fluid nature of their roles. However, this flexibility also leads to varied self-perceptions, with participants describing themselves as "volunteers," "teachers," or other terms (see Section 5.4).

Another critical aspect of participants' roles at CCSS is their identity as colleagues. Mutual support among teachers facilitates the development of a Community of Practice (CoP) (see Section 4.1.3). However, changes such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the school's expansion have reduced opportunities for social interaction, leading to a decline in the sense of community. ET-5 and ET-16 recall pre-pandemic practices like shared lunches, which fostered connections among teachers. Meanwhile, NT-5 emphasises the importance of networking within CCSS, as it alleviates teaching challenges by enabling access to experienced colleagues for advice and support.

In summary, participants' role identities at CCSS encompass a dynamic interplay of past, present, and future roles. This aligns with the DSMRI model, which suggests that role identity systems integrate past identities, currently unoccupied roles, and future imagined roles. Past identities provide foundational structures for constructing current and future roles, while future imagined roles establish self-related goals within current roles. In this study, participants' identities as CCSS teachers are central, but their other roles are equally significant in understanding identity formation. The DSMRI model positions social roles as components within a dynamic identity system, where sub-roles contribute to broader social role identities, which are then integrated into higher-level identity roles (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). Through this lens, participants' evolving roles at

CCSS illustrate the complexity and fluidity of identity development in a non-mainstream educational context.

5.7 Difficulties and Problems Identified by the Participants

Sections 4.1 to 5.6, based on the DSMRI framework (Kaplan & Garner, 2017), analysed participants' perspectives on teacher identity construction, highlighting several challenges and issues they encountered (e.g., classroom discipline). This section provides a synthesised summary of the difficulties and problems mentioned by participants during the interviews, aiming to present a more comprehensive picture of the lives of CCSS teachers. Additionally, this summary serves as a foundation for proposing targeted and practical recommendations in subsequent chapters. Specifically, the discussion will focus on challenges related to teachers, qualifications, pedagogy, students, community school development, and broader public events.

5.7.1 Issues Associated with Teachers

Participants (e.g., ET-1, ET-2, ET-3, ET-6, ET-11, ET-13, ET-14, ET-16) frequently emphasised the high teacher turnover rate at CCSS, describing it as a persistent and disruptive issue. Teachers often leave for various reasons, including their children graduating from CCSS, changes in personal or professional circumstances, or, in the case of international student teachers, returning to China after completing their studies. This turnover negatively impacts teaching continuity, students' learning outcomes, and staff collaboration.

Frequent teacher departures disrupt the consistency of instruction. Some teachers leave at the end of a term, while others depart mid-term, necessitating replacement teachers. This process interrupts the teaching flow and requires students to frequently adapt to new teaching

styles. ET-1 metaphorically likened the turnover to "quicksand," while ET-13 identified teacher retention as a significant challenge. ET-14 lamented the need to retrain new teachers annually, observing that only a few stays for long. These recurring disruptions hinder the development of stable, long-term teacher-student and teacher-colleague relationships.

The leadership at CCSS also acknowledged the difficulties arising from high teacher turnover. The Vice Principal highlighted the scarcity of teachers, noting that "whoever can step in does so" at the start of the school year. However, addressing issues with unsuitable teachers later becomes problematic, as inviting someone to teach is easier than asking them to leave. Directors A and B echoed these concerns, pointing out the growing pressure to recruit enough qualified teachers to meet the demands of an expanding student body, especially for exam-focused classes. Director A explained that the school's previous practice of assigning separate teachers for morning and afternoon sessions had to be abandoned due to staff shortages, necessitating a more flexible approach. Meanwhile, Director B stressed the varying quality of teaching, with some teachers failing to meet expectations, such as neglecting to read school communications. Although the leadership aims to support teachers in lesson preparation and conscientious instruction, the lack of time and resources to monitor every classroom exacerbates the issue. Leadership resorts to repeated communication and assigns critical tasks to the most reliable teachers, as they lack the authority or capacity to enforce stricter compliance.

Overall, the high turnover rate at CCSS creates a cycle of challenges. It amplifies teacher shortages, forcing the school to lower recruitment standards to fill vacancies, which in turn affects teaching quality. As CCSS continues to grow, the demand for teachers increases, making

this issue even more pronounced. Addressing teacher retention and ensuring a steady pool of dedicated and qualified educators are critical to overcoming these persistent challenges.

5.7.2 Issues Associated with Qualifications

Interviews with the Vice Principal and two directors reveal that CCSS highly values teachers who step in to fill vacancies promptly. However, they also acknowledge significant issues in teaching quality, particularly the lack of formal qualifications among CCSS teachers. Most teachers come from diverse professional backgrounds, with only a few having studied education-related disciplines or holding local teaching certifications in Scotland. This lack of formal credentials affects teachers on multiple levels, including their confidence, professional identity, and societal recognition.

For instance, NT-1 admitted to initially doubting their ability to teach due to lack of educational training, despite Chinese being their mother tongue. They recounted how hesitation stemmed from a fear of hindering students' progress, though their eventual experience reassured that they could manage the role effectively. Similarly, ET-14 expressed a sense of inadequacy, feeling that their role as a teacher was less legitimate because they did not hold a PGDE qualification. They noted the differences between CCSS teachers and formally trained educators, such as disparities in teaching hours, content coverage, and opportunities for hands-on practice. These limitations, compounded by CCSS's nature as a charitable organisation where teachers volunteer their time, make it challenging for educators to fully support students' academic progress and well-being within the constrained class hours.

Beyond individual challenges, the lack of formal teaching qualifications marginalises CCSS teachers in the broader social context, denying them proper recognition for their efforts and contributions. This marginalisation impacts their professional commitment, hinders their development, and complicates their identity construction as teachers. To address these issues, reforms in certification systems that better accommodate the unique circumstances of CCSS teachers are necessary. Such reforms could enhance their professional growth and strengthen their teacher identities.

Despite these challenges, CCSS serves as a CoP that offers a safe and supportive space for teachers. This environment allows educators to experiment with different teaching approaches and gradually evolve into the kind of teachers they aspire to be. The collaborative and community-oriented nature of CCSS thus plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging and professional development among its educators, even in the absence of formal qualifications.

5.7.3 Teaching and Pedagogical Issues

The challenges in teaching methods and pedagogy at CCSS are closely tied to the participants' diverse backgrounds, many of whom lack formal teacher training or structured education in language teaching. This results in significant gaps in professional knowledge, including areas such as Chinese grammar, language teaching methodologies, curriculum integration, and certification. Their understanding of advanced topics such as language learning theories, assessment, curriculum management, applied research methods, and critical pedagogy is even more limited. Consequently, the Chinese language teaching at CCSS often prioritises practical aspects like basic communicative

skills, exam strategies, life experience sharing, cultural introductions, and fostering identity formation over in-depth linguistic or pedagogical approaches.

Despite years of teaching experience, some participants, such as ET-3 and ET-14, continue to struggle with classroom management and discipline. NT-6, who lacks prior teaching experience and educational training, remarked that if someone like them could manage to teach, others could too—although challenges are inevitable, they can be overcome. This reliance on personal experience rather than formal preparation underscores the pressing need for professional development. However, significant hurdles remain in implementing such support, including questions about the delivery, sustainability, and evaluation of training programs, as well as teacher availability and attitudes toward participation. Stakeholders recognise the potential benefits of professional training but achieving meaningful and sustainable impacts in classroom teaching remains a challenge.

Another critical issue highlighted by participants is the quality of teaching materials. The textbooks used at CCSS, developed by Chinese universities for overseas Chinese students, are widely regarded as outdated and ineffective. ET-6 described the textbooks as inadequate and impractical, while ET-9 criticised their lack of relevance and engagement. ET-10 found the materials poorly aligned with CCSS students' levels and highlighted the shortcomings of the companion website. Similarly, NT-1 noted that the rigid content and excessive homework failed to match the vibrancy of modern online Chinese education platforms or local school standards. The outdated and monotonous nature of these materials, combined with a lack of teaching aids, contributes to student disengagement and aversion to learning Chinese.

Participants (e.g., ET-6, ET-9, ET-16) also emphasised disparities in teaching quality, which pose challenges for both students and educators. When students' progress to higher levels without

meeting proficiency standards, incoming teachers must address these gaps while continuing the curriculum. Limited communication between teachers across grade levels exacerbates the issue, leaving educators to navigate these challenges independently. For example, ET-6 recounted the difficulties of transitioning from teaching lower years to higher years without adequate support, describing the experience as akin to starting over as a new teacher. ET-9 shared a similar struggle, noting the lack of guidance on curriculum expectations or teaching standards and the reliance on personal efforts to bridge the gaps.

These observations highlight systemic issues within CCSS, from the need for targeted professional development and improved teaching materials to addressing inconsistencies in teaching quality. Tackling these challenges will require coordinated efforts to support educators, enhance pedagogical resources, and foster a more cohesive teaching environment.

5.7.4 Student-Related Issues

Student-related issues at CCSS primarily revolve around differences in student backgrounds, varying proficiency levels, and classroom discipline, all of which are closely interconnected. A key challenge stems from the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students. Some are born and raised in Scotland with limited exposure to Chinese, while others come from China with a strong foundation in the language. This disparity creates a significant range of proficiency levels within the same class, posing challenges for teachers in designing lessons that meet the needs of all students.

The varying comprehension speeds among students exacerbates these challenges. Teachers must balance maintaining the engagement of advanced students who quickly grasp the content while supporting those struggling to keep up. ET-11 highlighted the difficulty of helping students with

weaker foundations match the class's pace, emphasising that this is one of the most pressing challenges. Conversely, focusing on slower learners may bore advanced students, potentially leading to disengagement. This dynamic often contributes to classroom discipline issues, as students who lose interest or feel left behind may become disruptive. ET-3 noted that managing classroom behaviour, particularly with unruly students, can be a source of frustration and negative emotions. Additionally, the variability of each student cohort, especially in exam-oriented classes, adds to the complexity of teaching. ET-1 pointed out the significant pressure in these classes, where the differing capabilities and needs of each group require constant adjustment in teaching approaches.

These challenges highlight the critical need for differentiated instruction and effective strategies to address classroom diversity. Teachers must develop methods that ensure advanced students remain engaged while providing adequate support for those with weaker foundations. By fostering an inclusive and adaptable teaching environment, CCSS can better support all students in achieving meaningful progress.

5.7.5 Issues Related to the Future Development of CCSS

The future development of CCSS represents a complex systemic undertaking, with participants expressing diverse perspectives on key issues such as teaching facilities. Over the years, CCSS has grown steadily, resulting in an increased number of teachers and students that has strained the availability of classrooms in its current borrowed facilities. To address this, the school leadership has proposed acquiring a permanent teaching venue, which has sparked considerable debate among teachers.

Some participants (e.g., ET-3, ET-4, ET-10, ET-11, ET-12, NT-1, NT-2, NT-3, NT-4) believe that a permanent venue is unnecessary. They argue that borrowing facilities does not hinder teaching and effectively utilises community resources. Given CCSS's status as a charitable organisation and its part-time operational model, they view the proposal as an unjustified financial burden. As ET-10 noted, CCSS is a charitable organisation offering classes only once a week, making the idea of owning a building seem excessive. Similarly, ET-12 emphasised that renting spaces, like many other organisations do, aligns better with the school's limited financial resources and operational needs.

In contrast, other participants (e.g., ET-6, ET-9, ET-15, NT-5) feel that owning a dedicated teaching facility is essential for the school's long-term development. They contend that a fixed venue would foster a stronger sense of belonging among staff and students while creating a tailored Chinese learning environment with cultural decorations and resources. For example, ET-9 expressed a desire for greater ownership, stating that a dedicated space would make them feel more integrated into the school, rather than like a guest. Similarly, NT-5 highlighted practical concerns, noting that the borrowed facilities are often ill-suited for children and that staff hesitate to address certain issues boldly due to the constraints of using shared spaces.

These differing views underline the challenges CCSS faces in balancing resource optimisation, financial feasibility, and the potential advantages of a permanent venue. Decisions on this issue will have far-reaching implications for the school's development and its ability to meet the needs of its growing community. In addition to facility concerns, long-term participants like ET-5 have observed subtle shifts in CCSS's operational dynamics. As the school has expanded, its operations are increasingly perceived to lean toward commercialisation, eroding the close-knit collective atmosphere that once characterised it. The reliance on borrowed facilities, compounded by the

impact of COVID-19 (see Section 4.1.2), has further diminished opportunities for teacher interaction. As ET-5 noted that this lack of engagement may hinder collaboration and weaken the sense of community among staff. These observations highlight the evolving nature of CCSS and underscore the importance of balancing growth with maintaining meaningful collaboration and a strong community spirit.

5.7.6 The Influence of the Public Event on CCSS and Teachers

COVID-19 was frequently cited as a significant challenge for CCSS, impacting both teaching practices and the school's role within the community. One of the most immediate consequences of the pandemic was the abrupt transition from in-person to online teaching in March 2020, which posed various difficulties for students, parents, teachers, and the school as a whole. For instance, ET-1 noted that students often kept their cameras off during online classes, making meaningful interaction and effective teaching difficult. This lack of visible engagement also impacted teachers' emotional well-being, as they struggled to assess students' attention and participation. Parents also faced challenges, including difficulties navigating platforms like Zoom and a lack of electronic devices for multiple children attending classes simultaneously. These issues led many students to withdraw from CCSS during the online phase. ET-7 reflected on how the pandemic disrupted the sense of community at the school, noting that before COVID-19, the provision of lunch created opportunities for teachers to interact and connect with colleagues. However, the discontinuation of lunch services post-pandemic further reduced these opportunities for interaction, diminishing the school's role as a community hub.

Beyond these specific challenges, COVID-19 exposed CCSS's limited preparedness for public emergencies. It is important to note that this situation was not unique to CCSS. Like many supplementary and community-run schools, CCSS operated with restricted resources and limited institutional support, making it difficult to respond effectively to unexpected disruption. These limitations highlight broader structural issues within the community schooling sector. As ET-13 remarked on how difficult it was to capture the attention of younger students online, while ET-15 noted that while teaching from home might have been easier personally, the quality of teaching suffered. For younger students, face-to-face interaction is critical for pronunciation practice and observing the teacher's articulation—elements that were lost in the online environment. These challenges underscored the need for improvements in emergency preparedness, resource allocation, and teacher training to ensure future resilience.

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges faced by CCSS teachers, students, and the institution itself, covering areas such as teaching practices, school operations, and preparedness for public emergencies. This analysis not only offers a clearer understanding of the lived experiences of CCSS teachers but also sets the stage for proposing targeted recommendations in subsequent chapters.

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has examined the participants' ontological and epistemological beliefs (Section 5.1), focusing on their understandings of teachers, students, teaching. The analysis revealed that participants perceived their roles as extending beyond the transmission of Chinese language and culture, placing significant emphasis on shaping students' values and contributing to their future development. Their diverse personal experiences and reflections shaped varying beliefs

about what it means to be a teacher, illustrating the integration of personal and professional belief systems.

Section 5.2 addressed participants' purposes and goals. The data highlighted both personal and practical motivations for teaching at CCSS—for instance, the timing of their children reaching school age and the perceived long-term benefits of Chinese learning for their children's future. These individual considerations were found to align closely with the overarching goals of CCSS.

In Section 5.3, action possibilities were explored. Participants were not strictly bound by a prescribed curriculum and were instead granted autonomy to design and implement their own lesson plans. In pursuit of their intended educational outcomes, many took the initiative to engage in lesson preparation and professional learning.

Self-perception and self-definition were examined in Section 5.4, revealing that not all participants identified themselves as "teachers." Some considered themselves volunteers, a view influenced by the lack of formal teaching certification and the institution's charitable nature.

Next, Section 5.5 investigated emotions, which were broadly categorised as either positive or negative. Positive emotions typically arose when participants' teaching practices aligned with their internal beliefs, while negative emotions emerged in situations of misunderstanding from parents or when anticipated outcomes were not achieved. Both positive and negative emotional experiences were found to influence participants' beliefs, goals, actions, and self-perceptions, highlighting the dynamic and reciprocal nature of identity development in this context.

Subsequently, Section 5.6 traces the participants' diverse, layered, and intersecting role identities in chronological order. It analyses the consistencies and inconsistencies among their beliefs, goals, action possibilities, and self-perceptions, and explores how context, culture, domain, and disposition

influence the formation and development of these role identities. For instance, when participants were students themselves, they experienced both the teacher-centred education system in China and the student-centred system in the UK. Participants, such as those from NT-3, reported that these contrasting experiences deepened their understanding of education. As NT-3 explained, they would not be overly strict or resort to corporal punishment and instead hoped students could enjoy learning Chinese in a joyful and relaxed atmosphere.

Section 5.7 summarises the difficulties and challenges participants encountered, including issues related to students, teaching practices, qualifications, and the development of the school. For example, participants noted significant differences in students' backgrounds—some were born and raised in Scotland, while others had recently arrived from China, resulting in varied levels of Chinese proficiency and learning pace. These differences posed challenges for teaching and classroom management. This study acknowledges that such difficulties are likely to influence participants' beliefs, actions, and self-understandings. At the same time, these challenges offer opportunities for teacher agency and may play a critical role in the construction of teacher identity.

Based on the findings presented in analysis chapters, the next chapter will provide a discussion of the research questions.

Chapter 6 DISCUSSION

Chapters Four and Five analysed the rich interview data using the DSMRI theoretical framework. Building on this analysis, this chapter discusses the research questions and compares the findings with existing literature on teacher identity (as outlined in Chapter Two). The first research question focuses on the characteristics of the identity construction process among CCSS teachers (Section 6.1). The second research question highlights the role of contextual factors in the formation and development of CCSS teacher identity (Section 6.2). Sections 6.3 and 6.4 provide recommendations for research and theory, respectively, while Sections 6.5 and 6.6 offer suggestions for policy and practice. Section 6.7 outlines the limitations of this study and directions for future research. Finally, Section 6.8 presents a summary of the dissertation.

6.1 What Are the Defining Characteristics of the Identity Construction Process Among CCSS Teachers in Scotland?

The process of constructing CCSS teachers' identities aligns with the situated, negotiated, diverse, and dynamic characteristics revealed in existing research (see 2.1.3). For example, Kayi-Aydar (2015) investigated the agency and identity negotiation of a teacher candidate, Janelle, as she transitioned from teaching Spanish to teaching English. The study examined how this process was shaped by multiple factors, including the influence of those around her, the broader environment, and her own racial identity. Additionally, educational or life experiences in both Chinese and British contexts influence the formation of their identities as community language teachers. The close relationship between parental and teacher role identities is another prominent feature of CCSS teachers' identity formation. Furthermore, the lack of relevant background, certification, and

professional training places them in a marginal position. However, participants demonstrate strong agency in their actual teaching and identity construction processes within CCSS.

6.1.1 Situated, Negotiated, Diverse and Dynamic CCSS Teachers' Identities

The sense of teacher identity among community language school teachers (CCSS teachers, in this case) is situated and negotiated in the intersection of people, power relations and language ideologies (Nordstrom, 2020). Specifically, when participants enter the CCSS or classroom context, their teacher role identity emerges from a hierarchical-fractal identity system (Kaplan & Garner, 2017), which means that the CCSS context provides participants with the title of "teacher," highlighting the importance of context (will be discussed in detail in Section 6.2). In other words, participants are situated within diverse contexts, such as home, workplace, classroom, school, community, and broader sociocultural-historical settings, each permeated by specific ideologies, cultural norms, and practices. They also embody multiple role identities, including parent, student, child, teacher, and employee. When placed in CCSS context, the teacher role identity becomes central and salient, indicating that teacher identity is a part of intersecting identities within the social-cultural-historical contexts (Hong et al., 2024). This situated identity, shaped by context and relationships, fosters a conceptualisation of "teacher" in participants' awareness and aligns their behaviours more closely with institutional teaching practices. Some participants, such as ET-13, explicitly stated that:

> Without the platform provided by the Chinese community school, I would not have become a teacher because I do not have a teaching qualification. I would not consider myself a teacher. However, with this platform and the demand it creates, I have become a Chinese

teacher. The school naturally enabled me to take on the role of a teacher without requiring formal qualifications. Now, I am a teacher.

This strongly illustrates the situated nature of teacher identity construction within CCSS. However, given that participants only teach at CCSS for two and a half hours on Saturdays, their situated teacher role identity may be particularly vulnerable due to the limited teaching time. This vulnerability is likely exacerbated by the fact that the roles they play in their daily lives and full-time jobs are largely unrelated to their role as CCSS teachers.

Negotiation of identities could be understood as the interplay between self-representation and others' attempts to reposition individuals or groups (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). On one hand, participants engage in internal negotiation regarding their beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, and action possibilities as CCSS teachers. For instance, ET-1, a teacher in an exam class, hopes students will achieve high scores and gain admission to ideal universities. However, they also realise that students were born in Scotland and cannot be held to overly high expectations. Therefore, they advocate tailoring teaching to each student's individual needs, with lesson plans adjusted according to circumstances. This illustrates that ET-1 is aware of the student's unique backgrounds, has adjusted their goals and actions, and developed a new teaching belief—to teach according to students' abilities instead of focusing on high marks.

Participants also negotiate between their different role identities. For example, a participant may be a CCSS teacher, salesperson, colleague, mother, friend, or running club member. If a participant's full-time job is as a salesperson, this role identity may not provide the necessary support when teaching at CCSS requires professional knowledge or when classroom issues arise. This can create a tension that may lead to self-doubt or even the decision to leave the teaching position. However, it

might also motivate them to overcome challenges and seek professional development, illustrating the powerful role of emotions in shaping teacher identity (trans)formation (Yuan et al., 2019; Zembylas, 2005). At such times, their former role identity and experiences as a student can serve as a valuable source of solutions. That means teacher identity is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience (Sachs, 2005), participants reflect on, (re)interpret, and negotiate their own experiences as students, such as rejecting the use of corporal punishment in CCSS teaching (see 5.3.1).

However, teacher identity does not solely exist in the intra-psychological space (Hong et al., 2024), participants also negotiate with external parties, including students, leaders, colleagues, and parents, as well as broader societal influences. The CCSS context (4.1) provides participants with possibilities and support to negotiate their identities between self-interpretation and external demands and constraints facilitating their agency (Yuan et al., 2019). For example, ET-5 holds a teaching belief that students should be happy when learning; to achieve this, they consult with students about learning activities, such as incorporating games and assigning less homework (see 5.1.2).

Similarly, ET-16 faced questions from the CCSS management team regarding their teaching methods. After discussions with school leaders, they made adjustments to their teaching approach, though their core teaching beliefs remained unchanged (see 5.2.5). Another example is the demand for participants to complete extensive teaching tasks within limited timeframes and the requirement to conduct classes exclusively in Chinese. Specifically, it is challenging for teachers to ensure that 20 students fully comprehend new vocabulary and texts within a two-and-a-half-hour lesson. This difficulty is further exacerbated by teachers' lack of professional training, the varying proficiency

levels of students in Chinese, and potential classroom management issues. These constraints may lead participants to experience identity pressure as they attempt to adapt to such demands. These adjustments and accompanying emotional shifts create opportunities for identity development. Negotiation among colleagues is relatively limited, primarily due to reduced opportunities for interaction (see 4.1.2), an example could be teachers coordinating on teaching schedules or exams.

The influence of broader societal negotiation is evident in participants' differing views on whether they consider themselves teachers despite a lack of formal teaching qualification (see 5.4). Participants navigate their beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, and perceived action possibilities in relation to the competence and performance standards expected by the professional community, as well as the views of others regarding their roles as community language teachers. For instance, CCSS teachers must negotiate their identities against societal and parental standards for the ideal language teacher (e.g., credentialed, knowledgeable, and experienced). This pressure leads some participants to explicitly refuse to identify themselves as teachers (e.g., ET-11, ET-14). Moreover, these standards and perceptions are continuously evolving with socio-cultural and historical shifts, contributing to the dynamic nature of identity construction among CCSS teachers. When participants take the initiative in negotiating their identities with inner or external sources, this can lead to further learning and identity development opportunities; otherwise, it may hinder continuous growth and commitment to the profession (Yuan et al., 2019).

The diversity of teacher identity among CCSS participants manifests itself in various forms, for example some participants identify themselves as teachers, while others explicitly deny this role, and some express uncertainty (Section 5.4). Additionally, some participants may emphasise the role of the teacher as a provider of curriculum and leader of the class. These teachers typically position

themselves at the front of the classroom, directing interactions and requiring students to speak only when called upon or after raising their hands (e.g., NT-2 places particular emphasis on maintaining classroom order to ensure that lessons are completed within the allotted time). Other participants, however, may project a more relationship-centred teacher identity (e.g., ET-12 emphasises that building strong relationships with adolescent students is key to encouraging them to practice speaking). Noteworthily, even the same teacher might adopt different identities depending on the situation, for example, when exams are approaching or when classroom discipline is lacking, they may lean toward a more formal or teacher-centred identity. The choice of identity thus depends on the specific teaching context (Pennington & Richards, 2016), underscoring the influence of context on the identity construction of CCSS teachers (see 6.2).

This diversity may arise from differences in participants' knowledge, beliefs, goals, self-perception, and perceived action possibilities, which vary in amount, kind, and complexity (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). For example, during the COVID-19 lockdown, the UK Federation of Chinese Schools (UKFCS) provided online teaching training for CCSS teachers. Those who were already familiar with online instruction or digital technologies (e.g., ET-7, NT-6) were more likely to embrace and integrate these practices, as they aligned with their teaching beliefs, goals, self-perception, and perceived action possibilities. Conversely, if the components of their role identity conflict with online teaching practices, they were less likely to perceive these methods as viable options (e.g., ET-10 believes that online teaching is less effective than in-person classroom instruction).

Furthermore, the degree of harmony among participants' beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, and the integration of different role identities can also contribute to the diversity of their identity (Chen &

Huang, 2022). For example, participants may initially perceive consistency among their beliefs (the importance of parents in students' learning), goals (collaborating with parents to promote student development), and actions (maintaining communication with parents). However, if parents are uncooperative or impose their desires on teaching, participants may become aware of inconsistencies, leading to tension and negative emotions. Tensions (e.g., crisis, disequilibrium, mismatch, incongruent) among identity dimensions of the identifying processes, which could "serve a systemic trigger for processes of role identity formation that involve iterative change" (Kaplan & Garner, 2017). This also leads to another feature of CCSS teacher identity that is dynamic.

According to DSMRI framework, the dynamic nature of CCSS teacher identity construction can be reflected in aspects such as breadth, depth, and role identity. For instance, ET-10, who initially focused on imparting knowledge when teaching in China, only realised the significant responsibility of transmitting Chinese culture to students after teaching at CCSS. This experience deepened ET-10's understanding of what it means to be a teacher.

6.1.2 Parental Role Identity Shapes Teacher Role Identity

As outlined above, CCSS teachers hold multiple intersecting identities within the socio-cultural-historical context (Hong et al., 2024), with their parental identity closely aligning with their identity as CCSS teachers across beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, and perceived action possibilities. This alignment fosters identity construction and strengthens professional commitment, forming one of the primary characteristics of CCSS teacher identity construction. This becomes even more evident when considering participants' diverse backgrounds. Although Chinese is their native language, this does not automatically confer advantages in language teaching, as ET-8 put it, to give

students a glass of water, a teacher must first have a bucket of water. While teachers may understand the meaning and usage of a grammatical concept, effectively conveying it to students and ensuring their accurate application is an entirely different challenge.

Additionally, the majority of participants (18 out of 22) have not received formal training in language instruction, resulting in significant gaps in professional knowledge areas such as Chinese grammar, language teaching methodologies, subject integration, and teaching qualifications. Their familiarity with language learning theories, assessment and evaluation, curriculum and classroom management, and applied research methods is even more limited. As these areas of expertise are unrelated to their full-time professions, participants have limited opportunities for in-depth study or professional development in these fields. The expressed need for professional training by some participants (e.g., ET-7, ET-13, ET-14) further reinforces this finding.

However, their identification with the parental role helps to bridge this gap. For instance, many participants are motivated to teach at CCSS because their own children have reached the age to learn Chinese (e.g., ET-4). Participants, especially those without formal teacher training or prior teaching experience, tend to transfer their parenting experiences to classroom instruction. This transfer often results in a greater understanding and care for students, and it also helps them develop specific skills for effective communication with students. Furthermore, this process allows them to continually refine their teaching practices, moving closer to their envisioned ideal teacher identity (see 4.1.3). According to Pennington and Richards (2016), language teachers' identities continuously evolve over time, incorporating collaborative aspects related to student identities and a commitment to student well-being. The participants' parental identities closely align with this view, promoting the construction of their identities as language teachers. However, it is essential to recognise the

significant gaps participants face compared to formally trained language teachers, particularly in areas such as subject knowledge, language teaching methods, language learning theories, assessment, and evaluation. One can imagine the strong negative emotions that may arise when participants encounter difficulties in clarifying certain concepts in class, which could hinder their professional growth and identity formation. This underscores the need for targeted and practical training tailored to support CCSS teachers effectively.

6.1.3 Prior Experience as a Source of Teacher Identity Construction

Another important resource for the construction of CCSS teacher identity is participants' prior experiences, aligning with Beijaard et al. (2004) 's view that teacher professional identity involves an ongoing process of interpreting and reinterpreting experiences. Specifically, participants' past experiences as learners, their formal schooling, and their observations of teachers and courses attended serve as primary sources for constructing teacher identity (Richards, 2023). For instance, some participants (such as ET-1) have experienced both the Chinese and British educational systems, gaining insights into the strengths and limitations of each. This enables them to selectively incorporate the advantages of both systems in their CCSS teaching. Similarly, participants like NT-3 hold strong impressions of former teachers, both positive and negative, prompting them to avoid behaviours they disliked and emulate those they admired in their own CCSS teaching (see 5.6).

The above approach taken by NT-3 aligns with Beijaard's (1995) assertion that personal life experiences have a profound impact on professional identity. Additionally, Chang-Kredl and Kingsley (2014) demonstrated that prior experiences—such as former teachers or previous work experience—can influence teachers' behaviours, including their decision to enter the profession. In

this study, some participants (e.g., ET-12, ET-15) indicated that their teaching at CCSS was shaped by their past experiences, whereas others, such as ET-14, disagreed, attributing their actions to personal choice rather than prior influences. This further highlight the role of personality or disposition in teacher identity construction (Kaplan & Garner, 2017) and underscores the inherent complexity of teacher identity. Meanwhile, reflection on past experiences reflects the autonomy and agency of participants. For example, after reflecting on their child's negative experience learning Chinese, ET-15 not only developed greater tolerance toward students in their class but also actively negotiated between school policies and classroom practices to create a more supportive and stress-free learning environment for students.

6.1.4 Marginalised Teacher Identity Construction

The marginalisation of CCSS teacher identity construction is influenced by multiple factors. On the one hand, the designation as “supplementary/complementary schools” reflects the secondary status of community language schools within the social context (see 4.1). Additionally, the lack of social recognition and limited professional development support for CCSS teachers affects some participants’ self-perceptions (see 5.4). Compounding this issue, some parents undervalue teacher feedback and even attempt to impose their own expectations on teaching practices. For instance, as experienced by NT-2, one parent not only dismissed NT-2’s professional advice but also questioned their competence as a teacher, perceiving them as too young to be qualified. Furthermore, the parent pressured NT-2 to modify teaching approach according to their preferences, which had a profoundly negative impact on NT-2. Other challenges, such as classroom management and varying student language proficiency, also play a role. Together, these factors place CCSS teacher identity

construction at a disadvantage. This finding aligns with Nordstrom's (2020) study, which advocates that "such findings highlight the importance of strengthening the support, research, and professional development of community language school teachers to reinforce their work as legitimate and valued contributions to education" (p. 8).

This marginalisation or lack of recognition can significantly impact participants' job satisfaction, potentially leading to teacher attrition (see 5.2.1), a challenge that CCSS has faced since its inception. In overcoming teaching difficulties and navigating their marginalised position, CCSS teachers demonstrate considerable agency. Teacher agency refers to their capacity to control their learning and environments, set goals, initiate change, and make decisions that influence their work and conditions, rather than passively accepting decisions made by others (Richards, 2023). Given the varied resources and goals, they pursue, participants exercise agency in diverse ways, reinforcing that professional identity is not merely something teachers possess but rather something they construct to bring meaning to their roles as educators (Beijaard et al., 2004)

Teacher agency is linked to the school context and policy landscape (Buchanan, 2015). The community functions of CCSS, as well as its role as a community of practice (CoP, Wenger, 1998), facilitate teachers' exercise of agency (see 4.1). However, the broader social and policy environment in Scotland (e.g., the 1+2 language strategy) has yet to provide direct and effective support for the identity construction of community language teachers (Hancock & Hancock, 2024). CCSS teachers demonstrate significant agency, which can be attributed to several factors. First, the alignment between their parental role identity and teacher role identity in fostering student development motivates participants to address their deficiencies, actively seek solutions to overcome teaching challenges, and strive to improve students' academic performance (see 5.6 and 6.1.2).

Second, CCSS offers a conducive context (see 6.2), such as supportive leadership (see 4.1.5). As previously discussed, the Scottish Government's 1+2 language approach serves primarily as a recommendation, lacking concrete implementation measures and oversight mechanisms. Consequently, Scotland's broader sociopolitical environment does not provide direct and substantial policy support for the professional development and identity construction of community language teachers. However, this lack of structured policy enforcement also creates a relatively flexible and autonomous environment, allowing participants greater freedom to shape their teaching practices according to their own beliefs and approaches. This leniency allows participants to teach according to their own approaches, indirectly fostering agency (see 4.1.1). Furthermore, participants reflect on their personal growth experiences and professional skills, which not only helps them identify strategies but also highlights their areas for improvement, creating opportunities for the exercise of agency.

The above suggests that teachers are people (Nias, 1987) not empty vessels (Kanno & Stuart, 2011), recognising the relationship between teacher agency and identity is crucial (Buchanan, 2015). Stimulating teacher agency requires a comprehensive approach at the micro-level (e.g., classroom teaching), meso-level (e.g., school culture), and macro-level (e.g., social and policy contexts) to foster conditions that support teacher identity formation and development.

6.2 How Do Contextual Factors Influence the Formation and Development of CCSS Teachers' Role Identities?

The significant influence of context on the formation and development of teacher identity has been highlighted in the literature review (see 2.2.2). For instance, Hong et al. (2018) argue that identity is constructed and sustained through the interplay between contextual factors and teachers'

internal worlds. Similarly, Beijaard et al. (2004) emphasise the need for future teacher identity research to pay greater attention to the role of context in its development. Building on these insights, this study applies the DSMRI framework (Kaplan & Garner, 2017) to analyse the role of contextual factors in the identity construction of CCSS teachers (see 4.1). This section further explores the relationship between context and the formation and development of CCSS teachers' identities. By emphasising the critical role of context, this discussion lays the groundwork for the further sections where specific recommendations for enhancing CCSS teacher identity and professional development will be presented.

6.2.1 The Scottish Social Context and Its Influence on CCSS Teacher Identity

As revealed in the literature review section (see 2.4.3), the emergence of CCSS and other community language schools is inseparable from the broader social, linguistic and demographic landscape of Scotland. Community language schools have long been a response to both community-driven cultural maintenance and structural gaps in mainstream educational provision (Li, 1993; MacPake et al., 2007). The first Chinese community language school in Scotland was established in Glasgow in 1973, followed by similar schools in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee (Hancock, 2014). These schools emerged from traditions of self-help within migrant communities, whose linguistic and cultural needs were often insufficiently addressed by the Scottish education system (Li, 1993).

Scotland is characterised by significant linguistic diversity, shaped by long-standing migration patterns, regional languages, and evolving socio-cultural developments. Historical and contemporary migrant communities, including speakers of Mandarin, Cantonese, Urdu, Polish, Arabic, and many others, contribute to Scotland's multicultural landscape (Hancock & Hancock, 2024). Alongside

these community languages, Scotland recognises Scots and Gaelic as part of its national linguistic heritage, reinforcing an environment where multilingualism is increasing seen as both a social and cultural asset (Hancock, 2014). Additionally, Scotland's population has been further diversified by migration from EU states prior to Brexit and, more recently, by refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine (Filauri et al., 2024). Community language schools—including CCSS—play an important role in supporting these evolving linguistic ecologies by providing educational continuity, cultural connection, and social support to migrant families (Hancock & Hancock, 2024).

Although Scotland's 1+2 Language Approach provides a policy backdrop that promotes community language learning in general, community language schools remain largely outside formal policy structures (Hancock & Hancock, 2019). As such, they depend heavily on local community engagement, parental involvement, and voluntary effort. This socio-educational positioning has significant implications for teacher identity formation. In the absence of systemic support, CCSS teachers often draw on personal motivations—particularly parental aspirations, cultural responsibility, and community commitment—which become central to their beliefs, goals, and emotional experiences as educators. The broader Scottish social context therefore shapes CCSS teachers' identities not through direct policy or institutional influence, but through the cultural, demographic, and community realities in which their work is embedded.

In this way, the Scottish social environment provides the macro-context within which CCSS teacher identities develop. However, this macro-context is also characterised by a notable absence of formal structures for the professional development, qualification, and accreditation of community language teachers in Scotland (McPake et al., 2007). This institutional gap means that CCSS teachers often operate outside recognised professional pathways, relying instead on community resources,

parental engagement, and personal commitment to sustain their teaching roles. In contrast, research from Australia such as Cranitch et al.'s (2004) work on challenging monolingual mindsets and developing accreditation pathways for community language teachers, demonstrate that alternative models are possible. The Australian case shows how community language teachers can be supported through structured professional learning frameworks and formal recognition mechanisms, offering a useful comparative lens and potential inspiration for future policy development in Scotland.

In this way, the Scottish social environment provides the macro-context within which CCSS teacher identities develop, shaping both the opportunities and constraints they encounter as they negotiate their roles within community education field.

6.2.2 CCSS Serves as a Platform and Space for the Formation of Teacher Identity

As numerous studies (such as Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Rodgers & Scott, 2008) in the literature review section claim, identity and context are intricately intertwined and complex. In the realm of teaching, identity emerges as a dynamic construct that is shaped by context in which the teacher works (e.g. a parent as a Chinese teacher works at CCSS), and that may have different characters at different times, that is the decisions about what kind of identity to assume will depend on the particular teaching context (Pennington & Richards, 2016). In other words, teacher identity evolves over time and influenced by external factors, primarily the school contexts in which the teachers work (Day & Gu, 2007; Yuan et al., 2019). Teacher identity involves an ongoing interaction between personal identity and professional identity, both of which are contextualised (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Bolívar et al., 2014; Pennington & Richards, 2016). In this study, when these participants enter CCSS to start Chinese language teaching, they delve into various of dimensions of

learning, ranging from mastering the subject matter of language and culture teaching to managing classroom dynamics, and issues involved in developing an understanding of themselves as a teacher (Pennington & Richards, 2016), that means CCSS plays a role in providing space for teachers to negotiate and explore identity positions (Creese & Martin, 2006).

For example, in the early stages of teaching at CCSS, ET-2 focused on whether their teaching behaviour aligned with the general public's perception of a teacher. However, ET-2 now prioritises students' needs and approaches teaching from the students' perspective. As ET-2 stated, "When I first started teaching, my focus was on lesson preparation and making the classes more engaging. However, my priority has now shifted to individual students, and I adapt my teaching based on their specific needs." Similarly, ET-10 experienced new insights through teaching at CCSS, stating that while they previously focused solely on imparting knowledge when teaching in China, their experience at CCSS made them realise the deeper responsibility and mission embedded in teaching the Chinese language and culture. It is the CCSS context that provides participants with the space to (re)conceptualise their identities as teachers.

The nature and significance of community language schools cannot be ignored, they have different appellations, they are called heritage schools in the United States and supplementary/complementary schools in the United Kingdom, reflecting different stances. Community language schools are grassroots-level institutions operated by ethnic minorities to compensate for the mainstream education system's deficiencies in providing language, cultural, and religious education to those communities (Li, 2006; Nordstrom, 2020; Nordstrom & Jung, 2021). Creese and Martin (2006) regard these schools as a response to a historically monolingual ideology;

while Mirza and Reay (2000) go further to suggest that these schools indicate the presence of a covert social movement for educational reform.

Therefore, CCSS has ability to serves as a platform that bestows upon participants the title of “teacher”, as ET-9 puts that the Chinese school gives her the title of teacher, and this has been reinforced by some practices of the CCSS. Research indicates that contemporary teachers are often influenced by accountability and surveillance (Ball, 2003), for example, Buchanan (2015) studied the negative impact of accountability on teacher identity in the context of American educational reform. She pointed out that the current reform context overly emphasises the technical and rational aspects of profession, devaluing the emotional, personal, and relational aspects of teaching. However, in comparation, CCSS does not have strict scrutiny or accountability systems in both selection and daily teaching, granting Chinese language teachers significant autonomy. A typical example is ET-16, who was once questioned by the CCSS leadership regarding their teaching methods. However, the leadership did not impose any mandatory changes but instead provided feedback and suggestions. Although ET-16 mentioned in their interview that they did not fully agree with the leadership’s opinions, they deeply appreciated the fact that they were not forced to do anything against their will. This autonomy allowed ET-16 to teach in a way they preferred within the CCSS platform, thereby fostering their sense of agency.

Moreover, teachers have access to most school resources while teaching, which contrasts with the findings of Nordstrom and Jung (2021), who reported that many community school teachers in Australia faced restricted access to technological resources such as smartboards and computers. There are no rigid requirements for ‘competence’ under fixed standards, making it easier for participants to qualify for entry into the profession, providing them with a relatively comfortable

space and addressing the primary survival concerns as stated by Edwards (1998, cited by McIntyre & Hobson, 2015). The experience of NT-1 supports this claim. NT-1 did not have a background in teacher education or prior teaching experience. As a result, they were initially uncertain about whether they could join the CCSS teaching team and whether they would be able to fulfil the teaching responsibilities. However, after attempting to teach, NT-1 realised that the teaching content was not particularly difficult, which boosted their confidence.

On the other hand, school leaders do not have high expectations of teachers including requiring qualifications, making it easier for teachers to 'construct an identity that conforms to the expectations of others' (Lasky, 2005). As stated by the Vice Principal and Director A, the issue of teacher shortages in CCSS has been persistent, and the leadership is highly appreciative whenever someone is available to fill the vacancies, without raising many additional demands. Therefore, as long as the participants complete their teaching tasks and ensure the safety of the students, they generally meet the expectations of the leadership, which leads to positive emotions such as a sense of affirmation and satisfaction.

Despite its apparent shortcomings (as discussed in 5.7), CCSS provides teachers with favourable conditions and support mechanisms, enabling them to adapt to new fields or domains. This allows them not only to make necessary adjustments to their knowledge but also to revise their perceptions of themselves as community language teachers (Hobbs, 2012). As ET-13 said 'when we come to teach at CCSS, we are teachers. Even without a teaching certificate, we are still teachers'. This is also supported by ET-2, who said "even though CCSS only operates for two and a half hours each week, it is still a school. The work we do is teaching and educating, which makes us teachers, regardless of whether we are teaching art or Chinese."

The analysis in the previous chapter (see 4.1.5) addresses another significant concept, namely the Third Space (Bhabha,1994). Bhabha (1994) defines the Third Space as an ambivalent and contradictory process or discursive space of meaning-making, which possesses dialectical productive capacities, capable of generating new possibilities or synthesis, thereby blurring existing boundaries and categorisations of culture and identity (p.56). Aligning with Kim (2023), who use the Third Space to refers to the conducive socio-psychological site or process, in this research the Chinese community language teachers appropriate and reorganise the ambivalent experiences caused by the contradictory ideologies in the wider society, and (re)create their teacher identities. As revealed in section 4.1.5, participants have experienced ambiguity due to contradictory ideologies, specifically the societal definitions of teachers versus their perceptions of their roles. As shown by ET-14, some participants believe that they are not teachers because they lack externally recognised teaching qualifications, titles, and career development opportunities. This perspective is clearly influenced by societal definitions of what it means to be a teacher. In contrast, some participants, such as ET-2, firmly believe that they are teachers even without a qualification. It is within the space provided by CCSS that participants demonstrate differing understandings of the teacher role, which complicates and diversifies the construction of teacher identity.

As above comparison shows that CCSS facilitates the emergence of new dialogic spaces, within which the Chinese community teachers were able to explore thoughts, feelings and practices that might counter the prevailing views and practices within the school and society, this might help participants navigate differing views, parents' and leaders' expectations and their own desires and understandings of what their experiences as a community language teacher should or could be (McIntyre & Hobson, 2015). For example, the research suggests that in the process of identity

formation among CCSS teachers, the roles of teachers and students are interdependent counter-roles that influence each other, the identities of teachers and students seem to develop within a dynamic interrelationship with their actions or action orientations (Lauriala & Kukkonen, 2005). This is also consistent to some extent with the DSMRI model, which anchors 'Action' at the centre (Kaplan & Garner, 2017, 2018).

Within CCSS as a Third Space, participants gained more confidence in their teaching practice and re-conceptualised their experiences as opportunities for professional learning, where participants are supported and enabled to expand their teacher identity. Meanwhile, the dual role of CCSS as both a community and a Community of Practice, along with support from school leadership, interactions with students, and connections with colleagues and parents, makes participants feel like members of this community and strengthens their willingness to integrate the community's values, attitudes, and actions (Hong et al., 2024). It also concurs with Mockler's (2011) assertion that teacher identity is continuously formed and reformed throughout their professional career, and is mediated by the complex interplay of personal, professional, and policy dimensions in teachers' lives.

Additionally, this involves other factors, such as the Dispositions and Domain dimensions in DSMRI. Moreover, as Bejaard et al., (2004) suggested, teacher identity is shaped by both personal characteristics and contextual factors, offering insights into what it means to be a teacher in today's rapidly evolving educational landscape. Given the constant shifts in education, teachers must navigate these changes, which may at times conflict with their personal values and perceptions of effective teaching. Such conflicts can create tensions within teachers' professional identity, particularly when the personal and professional aspects of their role diverge significantly.

In summary, the contexts in which participants operate present both favouring and disfavouring conditions (Flum & Kaplan, 2012). Favouring conditions contribute to positive potential or capacity for teaching and learning, such as supportive leadership and the sense of belonging fostered by the CCSS community. Disfavouring conditions, however, impose limitations on teaching and learning, including lack of certification, limited professional training, and insufficient policy support tailored to CCSS teachers' needs. When disfavouring conditions dominate, teachers' instructional goals and beliefs may become increasingly disconnected from their actual classroom practices, placing them in a dilemma. This negative emotional impact may lead them to reassess their self-perception, potentially influencing future teaching behaviours as they feel unable to achieve a situated identity aligned with their values. Conversely, in favouring conditions, teachers are more likely to achieve a strong alignment between their teaching ideals and classroom identities, thereby maintaining a higher level of enthusiasm for their work (Pennington & Richards, 2016).

Similar situations may also arise in other community language schools and mainstream schools. To foster identity development among teachers in these settings, a approach of maximizing strengths and mitigating weaknesses should be adopted. For instance, community language schools could benefit from an improved teacher certification system (see Cranitch et al., 2024) and explicit recognition of teachers' efforts (see, for example Nordstrom, 2020). Mainstream schools, on the other hand, could adopt supportive leadership approaches, similar to those in CCSS. This mutual learning and shared insight could contribute to teacher well-being, potentially enhancing retention rates and making teaching a more attractive profession.

6.3 Implications

The findings of this study hold several implications for research, theory, policy and practice. While the study is situated within a specific Chinese community school in Scotland, the insights generated contribute to wider conversations about teacher identity in complementary education settings and multilingual learning environments. The following sections outline how this study informs future scholarship, extends theoretical understandings, and offers considerations for educational policy and professional practice.

6.3.1 Implication for Theory

The findings of this study may provide theoretical insights into the construction of teacher identity among Chinese community language school teachers in Scotland. The participants' role identities as CCSS teachers reflected varying degrees of identification, shaped by their beliefs, purposes, self-perceptions, and perceived action possibilities in teaching. These understandings were interconnected with the school's broader mission of promoting Chinese language and culture while supporting the local community. In their professional trajectories, participants were socialised into cultural activity systems that provided established goals, behavioural expectations and relational norms (Wenger, 1998). Over time, these systems became internalised as habitual role identities that guided participants' expectations, judgments and emotional orientations. Once internalised, these role identities, such as those of "parent" or "language teacher", tend to be activated automatically in corresponding settings (Kaplan et al., 2023), meaning that individuals do not continuously question or reconstruct them unless triggered by identity tensions. Such tensions can open spaces for identity negotiation and transformation.

The DSMRI is particularly productive for theorising these processes. It facilitates a holistic account of identity construction by examining content (beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, emotions and action possibilities); structure (degree of alignment, coherence, or tension among identity components); process (the iterative and dynamic adaptation of identity). For instance, ET-14 initially felt unable to claim teacher identity due to lacking formal qualifications and social recognition. Yet the emotional fulfilment gained from student progress contributed to renewed professional commitment, illustrating how identity coherence can be stabilised through affective and relational experiences. In this respect, DSMRI captures identity as a lived and evolving trajectory rather than as a static category.

This stands in contrast to Social Identity Theory (SIT), which tend to categorise identities in binary terms (e.g., insider vs. outsider). While SIT is useful for explaining how teachers might be positioned socially, it offers limited explanatory power for the dynamic, context-sensitive and individually differentiated nature of identity work observed in this study. Many participants (17 of22) actively resisted externally imposed definitions of "qualified teacher", demonstrating that identity construction is more than group membership, it is negotiated through experience, value alignment and emotional investment.

This study also highlights areas of convergence and divergence between DSMRI and poststructuralist theorises. Poststructuralist perspectives foreground how identity is shaped through discourse, power and cultural politics, reject binary identity classifications and emphasise teachers' capacity for agency and resistance (Zembylas, 2003). However, poststructuralist analyses can be difficult to translate into actionable strategies for supporting identity development, particularly in under-resourced and marginalised educational spaces.

By contrast, DSMRI offers practical utility for designing identity-supportive interventions. The framework allows researchers and practitioners to map the initial configuration of teachers' role identity systems (including beliefs, goals, self-perceptions and emotions); to identify tensions or misalignments that may constrain identity development. And to design reflective or practice-based activities to promote adaptive identity change (Kaplan & Garner, 2017).

Nonetheless, DSMRI also has theoretical limitations. As Hong et al, (2024) note, the model does not explicitly account for attributional processes in how teachers interpret past experiences. The data from this study suggest that such attributional reflections are central in shaping how teachers adapt their practices across cultural contexts. For example, ET-10 drew upon prior teacher-centred pedagogical success in China but later reinterpreted those experiences when adapting to the learner-centred orientation of Scottish classrooms. Future research may therefore strengthen DSMRI by incorporating attribution theory to examine how teachers explain and re-evaluate their past experiences in shaping beliefs and goals.

Overall, following Varghese et al. (2005) and Olsen et al. (2022), this study argues for plural theoretical openness. Rather than positioning DSMRI as superior to SIT or poststructuralist theories, the findings demonstrate the value of theoretical complementarity, where DSMRI supports granular identity analysis while poststructuralist perspectives situate identity within broader cultural and political landscapes. This study builds on the DSMRI to propose a teacher role identity construction model for community language school teachers, see below:

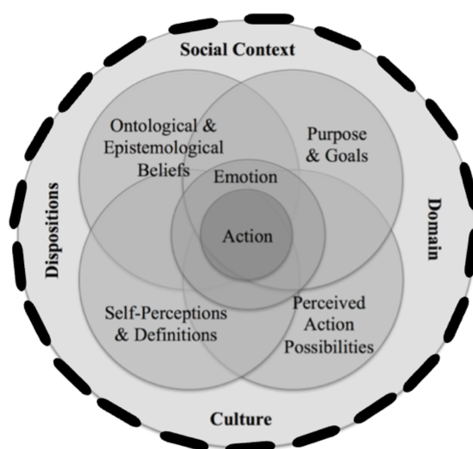

Figure 6.1 DSMRI for Community Language School Teachers

Building on Kaplan & Garner (2017), this study makes three specific theoretical contributions to the development of the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI).

Firstly, it extends DSMRI by foregrounding the role of social and relational context in shaping teacher identity. While the original model conceptualises context as "control parameters," the present study demonstrates that interactions with significant others—such as school leaders, students, and parents—are not merely background conditions but actively constitute and continuously reshape the identity system through ongoing feedback and emotional engagement.

Secondly, the study advances DSMRI by empirically elaborating its non-linear and emergent properties. The findings show that teacher identity development in community language school settings does not follow gradual or predictable trajectories; rather, small contextual changes can trigger disproportionate reconfigurations across identity components. This highlights the need to more explicitly theorise non-linearity and emergence as central, rather than implicit, features of the model.

Thirdly, the study adapts DSMRI to better account for identity construction in marginalised and peripheral educational contexts. It demonstrates that issues of recognition, legitimacy, and

institutional positioning function as critical constraints on identity development, shaping not only perceived action possibilities but also teachers' self-perceptions and emotional orientations. In doing so, the revised model extends DSMRI beyond its original psychological emphasis by incorporating a stronger sensitivity to socio-institutional conditions.

Taken together, these extensions contribute to a refined version of DSMRI that more fully captures teacher identity as a relationally embedded, context-sensitive, and dynamically evolving system, particularly within community language education settings.

6.3.2 Implication for Policy

Rushton et al (2023) note that teacher identity has not received sufficient attention from policymakers, despite its potential benefits for teacher recruitment and retention. This concern is also reflected in the present study (see Section 4.1 and 6.2), which indicates that support from the Scottish government for community language schools (including CCSS) remains limited and could be further strengthened. While the 1+2 Language Approach is the most relevant policy to community language schools, it has not been updated since its launch in 2012 and has faced challenges in achieving its intended outcomes during implementation (Hancock & Hancock, 2021, 2024). For example, there is a lack of effective mechanisms to foster and monitor collaboration between CCSS and local authorities or between CCSS teachers and mainstream school teachers, which has hindered the formation of strong partnerships.

Given these circumstances, it may not be realistic to call for entirely new legislation specifically for community language schools. However, enhancing existing policies, such as the 1+2 Language Approach, offers a feasible approach. For instance, fostering collaboration agreements

between community language schools and mainstream schools could strengthen their connections and encourage further cooperation. This would allow community language teachers to join broader professional learning networks and enable mutual learning between mainstream and community schools, thereby bolstering the 1+2 Language Approach. Additionally, implementing tracking mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and agreements and providing timely feedback and adjustments could improve outcomes. The 1+2 Language Approach implementation group could also explore alternative delivery models, such as leveraging the reach and potential of online learning to integrate community languages into mainstream education (Hancock & Hancock, 2024). Furthermore, learning from other countries, such as Australia, which have more supportive policies for community language schools, could provide valuable insights.

Although this study does not focus on education policy research, the development of CCSS teacher identity would benefit from more supportive policies. The above suggestions, using the 1+2 Language Approach as an example, emphasise the importance of acknowledging the social and cultural capital that community language schools contribute. Strengthened policies could further legitimize and support community language schools and their teachers.

Another critical issue highlighted in this study is teacher certification. This topic is raised for several reasons. First, some participants (e.g., ET-12, ET-14) explicitly denied identifying themselves as teachers due to their lack of formal qualifications (see 5.4.1). At the same time, others, such as ET-6, aspired to teach as a lifelong ambition but could not work in mainstream schools because they lacked locally recognised certification. Furthermore, the discussion of certification is informed by the resources possessed by the participants. Most of them hold at least a bachelor’s degree (18 out of 22 participants, approximately 82%), have rich teaching experience (16 out of 22

participants, approximately 73%), and possess lived experiences of working and living in different cultural contexts. These attributes suggest the potential for community language teachers to obtain recognition within mainstream education systems.

However, significant practical challenges hinder community language teachers from achieving official certification. For example, they often lack access to information about certification requirements, encounter inconsistent or diverse standards across different levels of educational authorities, and face high English language proficiency requirements that may undermine their confidence. Additionally, the financial burden of the application process cannot be overlooked (Cranitch et al., 2024). Underlying these challenges is a persistent "monolingual mindset" (Clyne, 2008) that renders certification structures and processes rigid, misaligned, and opaque. This mindset contradicts Scotland's multilingual and multicultural society and disregards the cultural and linguistic capital of community language teachers, which can meet the needs of students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

To address these issues, greater transparency and flexibility are required among institutions responsible for providing information, assessing qualifications, offering university programs, and granting formal certification. Educational institutions should evaluate and redesign their policies and practices to acknowledge and value diverse cultural and linguistic competencies of community languages schools (Cranitch et al., 2024). In addition to advocating for reforms in educational certification processes, Cranitch et al. (2024) have proposed an initiative called the "Master of Teaching Pathway Programme." This program, spearheaded by two universities, establishes agreements to recognise participants' prior learning experiences, offering tailored curricula and academic supervision throughout the process. The program provides targeted training to community

language teachers, equipping them with the skills and qualifications needed to obtain official certification. This initiative serves as an exemplary model that researchers and policymakers in Scotland could adapt to reform the certification system for teachers in community language schools, including CCSS teachers. Such reforms would not only enhance these teachers' professional commitment but also promote their professional development, ultimately benefiting the broader educational landscape.

6.3.3 Implication for Practice

Building on the DSMRI framework, which enables identity mapping across beliefs, goals, self-perceptions, perceived action possibilities, emotions and their interrelationships (Kaplan & Garner, 2017), this study suggests several practice-oriented strategies to support the professional identity development of CCSS teachers.

Strengthening and Sustaining Supportive Leadership

As discussed in Section 4.1.5, CCSS leadership plays a crucial role in fostering belonging and affirming teachers' identities. When conflicts arose—for example, between teachers and parents—school leaders consistently supported teachers' perspectives, reinforcing feelings of respect and trust. For teachers such as ET-3 and ET-6, supportive leadership was a key factor in their sustained commitment to CCSS.

Research indicates that leadership significantly shapes organisational culture, professional relationships, and educational outcomes (Day et al., 2020). Yet leadership in community language schools remains under-researched (Thorpe, 2020). Given CCSS's multi-stakeholder environment—parents, ethnic community networks, mainstream schools, and host society—leaders must

continuously navigate expectations while maintaining the school's cultural mission (Thorpe, 2024). Additional challenges such as teacher recruitment, retention, financial sustainability, and succession planning further intensify leadership responsibilities (Arthur & Souza, 2020; Thorpe et al., 2020).

Future leadership development could benefit from combined instructional and motivational leadership approaches, particularly in light of CCSS's growing scale and increasing exam-oriented expectations. Structured dialogue opportunities between leaders, teachers, parents and students may also support shared decision-making, while leadership training that recognises individual leaders' personal histories and values may increase uptake and relevance. Strengthened leadership can help sustain supportive professional environments and reinforce CCSS as both a community hub and a CoP that supports teacher identity formation.

Enhancing Communication and Collaborative Professional Spaces

Sections 4.1 and 5.7 illustrate how pandemic disruptions, staff expansion and limited space reduced informal interaction among teachers, weakening the school's community function. Given that CoP development relies on mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998), intentional opportunities for professional dialogue are needed. Practical measures include peer lesson observations (e.g., morning staff observing afternoon classes and vice versa) to encourage reciprocal learning; Online professional groups organised by grade level or interest to support flexible collaboration among teachers balancing full-time work and family responsibilities; Shared resource exchange platforms to make teaching materials and reflective insights more accessible.

Sustaining a shared sense of purpose—such as supporting students' cultural identity formation—may further strengthen cohesion, professional fulfilment, and continuity. Importantly, teachers

should be meaningfully consulted prior to implementation to ensure feasibility and enhance ownership.

Developing Tailored Professional Training Pathways

Professional learning opportunities should focus on practical and context-relevant content, particularly addressing challenges such as classroom management, differentiation, resource selection and assessment. Critical language awareness and sociolinguistic knowledge can also enhance teachers' agency and capacity to support multilingual identities (Becker, 2022). Training should incorporate reflective practice, encouraging teachers to explore how beliefs and past experiences shape classroom decisions. Given high mobility and time constraints among community language teachers, training content, frequency, delivery modes and evaluation strategies must be thoughtfully designed, beginning with an assessment of teachers' stated needs and followed by feedback cycles to evaluate implementation.

A potential reference model comes from Confucius Institutes (CIs). Although this study focuses on Chinese community schools rather than CIs, certain aspects of the CI organisational model may offer useful insights for CCSS development. CIs operate as non-profit partnerships between Chinese and foreign universities, providing structured teacher training, professional development pathways, curriculum support, and opportunities for cross-cultural exchange. Importantly, the CI model demonstrates how institutional collaboration can legitimise Chinese language teaching and strengthen educators' professional identity. While the political dynamics surrounding CIs in the UK require caution, the broader principle of forming partnerships between community schools, universities, and professional training providers remains highly relevant. Such collaboration could

support CCSS teachers in accessing recognised qualifications, stable pedagogical resources, and clearer professional trajectories, thereby enhancing teacher retention and well-being.

Strengthening Institutional Resilience

As Hancock (2012) notes, financial fragility can threaten the sustainability of community language schools. The pandemic further exposed vulnerabilities across organisational capacity, staffing continuity and instructional delivery. While online teaching introduced new possibilities (Hancock & Hancock, 2024; Macleroy & Anderson, 2024), the need to strengthen risk resilience remains pressing. Resilience-building may involve: Diversifying funding streams; Strengthening partnerships with mainstream schools and cultural organisations; Developing contingency plans for staffing, curriculum delivery and technological infrastructure. These measures can enhance CCSS's capacity to maintain educational continuity and safeguard the community functions that underpin teacher identity development.

Summary of Discussion

This chapter has discussed the findings of the study by returning to the research questions and situating the results within the wider literature on teacher identity and community language education. The analysis demonstrated that teacher identity within CCSS is constructed through the dynamic interplay of personal motivations, professional beliefs, emotional investments, and contextual influences. Participants enacted multiple role identities—such as teacher, parent, community member, and cultural heritage bearer—and the alignment or tension among these roles shaped their evolving teacher identities. The supportive and community-oriented environment of CCSS, along with the leadership practices that emphasised respect and trust, played a key role in fostering belonging and strengthening teacher identity. At the same time, challenges such as

institutional marginalisation, limited policy support, and issues related to teacher certification complicated teachers' identity development and professional trajectories.

The discussion also highlighted the usefulness of the DSMRI in examining identity as a dynamic process, while acknowledging the need to consider contextual factors more deeply. By comparing this framework with alternative theoretical perspectives, the study emphasised the importance of adopting multi-layered and context-sensitive approaches to identity research. Furthermore, the implications explored how teacher identity in community language schools is shaped not only within the classroom but also across policy environments, leadership structures, and professional learning networks. These insights inform future directions for research, theory development, policy reform, and practice, underscoring the significance of community language schools as both educational and cultural spaces.

Chapter 7 CONCLUSION

The concluding chapter provides a comprehensive summary of this research, reflects critically on the study's limitations and presents directions for future academic inquiry. It ends with a final closing statement that reflects the broader significance of this study.

7.1 Summary of Research Questions and Key Findings

This section synthesises the main arguments of this dissertation by providing direct, definitive answers to the core research questions established in Chapter One. This study addressed two research questions:

RQ 1: What are the defining characteristics of the identity construction process among CCSS teachers in Scotland?

Findings indicate that teacher identity in CCSS is situated, dynamic, complex, negotiated and shaped by multiple intersecting role identities, particularly the parental role which strongly aligns with teachers' goals, beliefs and action possibilities (see Cui et al., 2025). Identity construction is influenced by prior teaching experience, personal histories and contextual affordances within CCSS. Teachers actively negotiate tensions arising from mismatched pedagogical expectations, role conflicts and institutional constraints, often using reflection and emotional engagement as mechanisms for identity adjustment.

RQ2: How do contextual factors influence the formation and development of CCSS teachers' role identities?

Contextual influences operate at multiple levels. At the macro level, Scotland's multilingual environment, migrant patterns, and sociocultural diversity provide a suitable context for the

formation and development of CCSS teacher identities. At the meso level, CCSS serves as a community hub and a Community of Practice, providing recognition, belonging and collaborative opportunities that reinforce teacher identity. At the micro level, CCSS leadership, peer relationships, student performances and parental interactions directly shape teachers' identity construction. Importantly, the lack of structured certification pathways in Scotland constrains professional growth, while international models (e.g., Australia) offer potential frameworks for improving recognition.

Together, these findings demonstrate that CCSS teacher identities are product of both personal meaning-making and the wider sociocultural ecosystem in which CCSS operates.

7.2 Limitations

While this study contributes to the growing body of research on teacher identity (TI) within Chinese community schools, several limitations must be acknowledged. The constraints of time, sample size, data collection methods, analytical approach, and the generalisability of findings shaped the scope and depth of the conclusions drawn. These limitations are interconnected and should be considered throughout the research process.

First, as a doctoral research project, the study was conducted within limited time frames, which influenced both the number of interviews and the duration of field engagement. Data were collected primarily through single-round, in-depth interviews supplemented by metaphor elicitation. Other qualitative methods, such as (non)participant observations, focus groups, or longitudinal follow up were not included. Such methods could have strengthened data triangulation and provided a more nuanced understanding of how TI shifts over time. As highlighted in Chapter 2, teacher identity is dynamic and evolving construct (Beijaard et al., 2004; Hong et al., 2024), ideally examined through

longitudinal designs that trace identity trajectories. Accordingly, this study captures a cross-sectional snapshot rather than the development unfolding of identity, which future research may address.

Second, the study involved 22 teachers from a single Chinese community school in Scotland. While the sample reflects diversity in teaching experience, background and grade level, the findings cannot be generalised to all Chinese community schools, either within Scotland or internationally. Each Chinese community school is shaped by distinct institutional histories, community demographics, and educational priorities, which influence how teacher identity is expressed and negotiated. Consistent with qualitative traditions, the study does not seek statistical generalisability but offers transferability by providing context-rich descriptions that may resonate with similar educational settings. Readers are therefore encouraged to assess the applicability of the findings to their own contexts.

Third, the analytical framework was guided by the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI, Kaplan & Garner, 2017). While DSMRI has been robustly applied across identity research, no single model can fully encompass the complexity of teacher identity, which is continuously shaped by personal histories, cultural values, institutional structures and professional relationships. DSMRI offered a coherent analytical structure, yet it may not have captured all identity dimensions, particularly those that operate implicitly or relationally beyond verbal articulation.

Additionally, although metaphor analysis was incorporated to deepen insight into participants' self-understandings, the number and richness of metaphors generated were more limited than anticipated. As discussed in Section 3.3.2, while metaphors have strong potential to surface tacit beliefs (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011; Zhu & Zhu, 2018), their effectiveness depends on participants' familiarity and comfort with figurative expression, which varied across interviews.

Despite these limitations, the study provides meaningful insights into the formation of teacher identity in Chinese community school contexts. By making these constraints explicit, the aim is to support transparent interpretation of this study and to highlight directions for further research. The study offers a foundation for future inquiry into identity development within community education settings, particularly in relation to longitudinal identity evolution, comparative school contexts, and expanded methodological approaches.

7.3 Directions for Future Research

Building on the limitations acknowledged in this study, several directions for future research are suggested. First, further investigations could deepen the analysis of DSMRI control parameters—including context, culture, domain, and disposition. While this study primarily focused on school-based contextual influences (such as leadership and peer interaction), future research may incorporate additional layers of context, including participants' family responsibilities, full-time employment, and wider societal discourses about community language teachers in Scotland. Similarly, further work could explore how domain-based factors—such as teaching level, educational background, gender, or years of experience—shape identity construction in more differentiated ways.

Second, future studies may adopt multiple data sources to complement interview-based accounts. Classroom observations, reflective journals, or video-based interaction analysis could provide deeper insights into the enacted dimensions of teacher identity and how identity shifts in real time across classroom practices. Comparative research across different community language schools—both within Scotland and internationally—could also illuminate similarities and

divergences in identity construction, contributing to a broader understanding of how cultural and institutional differences shape identity negotiation.

Third, metaphor analysis remains a promising yet underutilised methodological tool in identity research. Future studies should further refine the methodological value of metaphors, supporting participants in articulating tacit beliefs through deeper guided reflection. The use of metaphor-elicitation questionnaires, for instance, may allow for the collection of a wider range of metaphorical expressions and facilitate thematic interpretation at scale.

Finally, this study focused on Mandarin teachers within one community language school. Including Cantonese teachers, teaching assistants, students' perspectives, or parents in future research could enrich understandings of identity co-construction across multiple stakeholders in community schooling. Such perspectives would help illuminate how identity formation is negotiated relationally and intergenerationally within heritage language contexts.

7.4 Final Conclusion

This study set out to explore the construction and development of teacher identity among Chinese community language school teachers in Scotland, using the Dynamic Systems Model of Role Identity (DSMRI) as the guiding theoretical framework. Situated within the broader context of multilingual education, cultural continuity, and community-based schooling, the study responds to the limited scholarly attention given to teacher identity in community education settings. Through in-depth interviews and metaphor analysis with 22 participants, the research has provided a nuanced account of how community language teachers negotiate, maintain, and reshape their identities within complex social, cultural, and institutional conditions.

The findings reveal that teacher identity in CCSS is dynamic and relational, shaped not only by professional expectations but also by deeply personal commitments. The parental role emerged as a particularly influential identity component, aligning strongly with the teachers' beliefs, goals, emotions, and perceived action possibilities. This alignment enabled teachers to sustain their work despite challenges related to recognition, workload, and institutional marginalisation. The study also highlights the significance of CCSS as both a community and a Community of Practice (CoP), offering a protective and empowering environment where teachers can construct meaning, find belonging, and pursue culturally grounded educational purposes.

Additionally, the role of contextual parameters in DSMRI—especially context and culture—proved essential in shaping how teacher identity was negotiated. CCSS teachers navigated multiple cultural systems, shifting between Chinese educational traditions and Scottish pedagogical practices. Such movement did not dilute identity but rather contributed to its complexity and adaptability. In doing so, the study extends existing identity literature by illustrating how multilingual and transnational life experiences enrich identity construction in complementary schooling environments.

Challenges faced by CCSS teachers were also identified, including limited institutional recognition, constrained access to teacher certification pathways, and communication barriers within the school. Addressing these challenges, the study offered implications for policy enhancement, theoretical refinement, and professional practice, emphasising the need to meaningfully acknowledge the cultural and social capital of community language teachers in Scotland's multilingual landscape.

Overall, this study contributes to teacher identity research in three key ways. First, it advances theoretical understanding by demonstrating how DSMRI can account for the dynamic interplay between multiple role identities within community language teaching. Second, it provides empirical

evidence of how community-based educational spaces can foster identity development and professional commitment. Third, it highlights the crucial social and cultural role that community language schools and their teachers play in sustaining heritage languages and supporting multicultural integration in Scotland.

In doing so, the study underscores that community language teachers are not peripheral actors, but central contributors to Scotland's evolving linguistic and cultural diversity. Recognising and supporting their work is not only a matter of educational inclusion, but also of cultural sustainability and social justice.

This research represents one step toward a more comprehensive understanding of teacher identity in community language schools. It is hoped that future studies will continue to expand this conversation, engage multiple perspectives, and contribute to building more equitable and supportive educational environments where diverse teacher identities can flourish.

7.5 Closing Statement

This study began with a simple but deeply personal question: "What does it mean to be a teacher in a Chinese community school?" Throughout the research journey, it became clear that teacher identity in CCSS is not only shaped by knowledge, qualifications, or institutional recognition, but also by care, responsibility, belonging, and love. The stories shared by the participants reveal teaching as an act of giving and connecting—an ongoing effort to nurture language, culture, and community across shifting cultural landscapes.

CCSS is more than a place where lessons are taught. It is a space where identities are affirmed, friendships are formed, and cultural memory is quietly sustained across generations. The teachers in

this study teach not only words and characters, but also what it means to belong, to care for others, and to remain connected to one's roots while growing into new worlds.

In closing, this research hopes to honour the everyday commitments of community language teachers—commitments that are often invisible, voluntary, and unrecognised, yet profoundly meaningful. Their work, though modest in scale, carries wide-reaching significance. It shapes children's relationships with language and heritage, strengthens families and communities, and contributes to the fabric of a multilingual and multicultural Scotland.

May this study serve as both recognition and invitation:

Recognition of the value already present in community language schooling,

and invitation to continue supporting, researching, and cherishing this work.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Sample Letter to the Vice Principal of the Chinese Community School

Dear Vice Principal of CCSS,

I hope this email finds you well.

I am a Ph.D. student from the University of Strathclyde, about to commence my doctoral thesis. I am particularly interested in exploring teacher identity within Chinese community school. I am writing to request your permission and support to investigate at CCSS, primarily through interviews. I would like to interview teachers who are interested in participating in this study, and I would also appreciate the opportunity to interview you to gain insights into the history and regulations of CCSS. The purpose of this research is to gain insights into teachers' sense of identity and factors related to teaching within the CCSS context. By understanding teachers' life stories and their perceptions of educational roles, sense of responsibility, and self-identity, the study aims to further enhance teacher development and to increase the interest of the academic community and the Scottish society in Chinese teachers and Chinese language education.
Here are some important details regarding the investigation:

1. This research proposal has been approved by the University of Strathclyde, Institute of Education Ethics Committee.
2. Participation in the study will be entirely voluntary, and each participant will give informed consent before any data collection begins.
3. Participants are able to withdraw without any consequence at any time before the completion of this research.
4. The collected data will be anonymized and will be analysed under a pseudonym. Participants' information will be kept strictly confidential.
5. The collected data will be used solely to write my doctoral thesis and will not be used for any other purposes.

I highly value the school's input and support, and therefore, I would like to seek your explicit permission before commencing this doctoral investigation. If you agree to conduct this research, please reply to this email or schedule a meeting with me to discuss further details and arrangements. Thank you for your attention and consideration of this request. I believe that this research will have a positive impact on our school and the professional growth of our teachers, as well as the broader community. I look forward to your response.
Best regards,

Shipeng Cui

Appendix B: Recruitment Email to Teachers

Dear teachers,

I hope this email finds you well.
I am a PhD student from the University of Strathclyde, currently conducting my doctoral thesis research project on teacher identity, and I would like to invite you to participate in this study. The research aims to explore teacher identity within the context of our Chinese school and examine factors related to teaching. This study will be conducted primarily through interviews, focusing on your educational and teaching experiences. Your participation in this study is invaluable.

Here are some important details regarding the investigation:

1. This research proposal has been approved by the University of Strathclyde, Institute of Education Ethics Committee.
2. The directors of our Chinese school have also been informed and agreed to this study.
3. Participation in the study will be entirely voluntary, and each participant will give informed consent before any data collection begins.
4. Participants are able to withdraw without any consequence at any time before the completion of this research.
5. The collected data will be anonymised and will be analysed under a pseudonym. Participants' information will be kept strictly confidential.
6. The collected data will be used solely to write my doctoral thesis and will not be used for any other purposes.

The interviews for this study will be conducted at a time, place, and in a manner convenient for you. We can conduct the interviews at the Chinese School, at the University of Strathclyde, or a local library or café. The interviews can be conducted face-to-face or through phone interviews, depending on your preference.
If you are interested in this research or have any questions, please don't hesitate to email me. Your participation is crucial to the writing of my doctoral thesis. Thank you again for your time.
Best wishes,

Shipeng Cui

Appendix C: Recruitment Poster

Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet for Teachers at the Chinese Community School

Name of department: School of Education
Title of the study: Investigation of Teacher Identities in Chinese Community Schools in Scotland
Introduction
Researcher name: Shipeng Cui
Role: Doctoral student, major in Education
Contact details: shipeng.cui@strath.ac.uk

What is the purpose of this research?
This doctoral dissertation focuses on the identity of Chinese language teachers, which is related to personal educational experiences and life stories, and therefore the author will use interviews and narrative inquiry to collect participants' experiences and stories. This study hopes to understand the formation of teachers' identities in the Chinese community schools in a Scottish context to help teachers improve their teaching effectiveness, enhance their well-being, and promote the development of Chinese schools.
Do you have to take part?
Your participation will be greatly appreciated and will contribute to a wider understanding of teacher identity. You are under no obligation to take part in this interview. Participation in this interview will be entirely voluntary and will give informed consent before any data collection begins. When you join the interview, you have the right to refuse to answer any questions, and you also have the right to withdraw from the interview without any consequences at any point before research completion.
What will you do in the project?
Participants will only be asked to share their educational experiences and personal stories with the author during the interview and may seek clarification on any ambiguities.
No compensation will be provided for participants.
Interviews will be conducted in a format convenient for the participants, either at the Glasgow Chinese School, the University of Strathclyde, or café or cell phone call.
The first interview will be determined after ethical approval is obtained. The time and location of the second interview will be arranged after the first interview.
Why have you been invited to take part?
You are invited to participate in this interview because you are a teacher at Glasgow Chinese School. It doesn't matter which grade you teach, whether you are a novice or experienced teacher, or whether you are of Chinese nationality or an immigrant. If you plan to work at the Chinese school for a duration longer than this survey, you are eligible to participate.
What are the potential risks to you in taking part?
There are no risks envisaged in participating in this interview.
What information is being collected in the project?
The data source for this study is the personal stories of the participants, focusing on participants' education experiences. Work experience, years of experience and place of education may include personally identifiable information.
Who will have access to the information?
The data will be accessible by only the researchers and potentially examiners. No one may have access to the data without the researchers' authorization. The collected data will have identifiable

participant information removed and will be anonymized before analysis. Only pseudonyms will be used during writing thesis or delivering presentations.
This Ph.D. thesis does not involve external funding or external collaborators, nor is it associated with any institution outside of the UK.

Where will the information be stored and how long will it be kept for?

The data obtained will be stored securely on Strathclyde OneDrive.
It will be used solely to write the Ph.D. thesis and will be kept for 5 years after the thesis has been approved.
Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.
All personal data will be processed in accordance with data protection legislation. Please read our Privacy Notice for Research Participants for more information about your rights under the legislation.

What happens next?

If you have any questions or would like to know more about this study, you may email or call the author. Participants will sign a consent form indicating their voluntary participation in this survey.
The author of this paper thank all teachers who read this material, even if they did not participate in the survey.
The author will transcribe and analyse the data upon interview and will contact participants after the transcribed material is generated to ask them to check the accuracy of the transcription and whether the participants have anything else they would like to add.
Participants will be thanked in the acknowledgement section of the PhD thesis.
Researcher contact details:
Researcher name: Shipeng Cui
Email address: shipeng.cui@strath.ac.uk
Address: Doctoral School, Teaching and Learning Building 602, University of Strathclyde, G1 1XQ, Glasgow.
Chief Investigator details:
Chief Investigator: Dr Ingeborg Birnie
Telephone: 01414448088
Email address: Ingeborg.birnie@strath.ac.uk
Address: Lord Hope Building, 141 St James Road, G4 0LT, Glasgow.
This research was granted ethical approval by the School of Education Ethics Committee.
If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the research, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought from, please contact:
Secretary to the School of Education Ethics Committee
University of Strathclyde
Lord Hope Building
141 St James Road
Glasgow
G4 0LT
Telephone: 0141 548 3707
Email: ethics@strath.ac.uk

Appendix E: Consent Form for Teachers at the Chinese Community School

Name of department: Institute of Education

Title of the study: Investigation of Teacher Identities in Glasgow Chinese School

- I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above project and the researcher has answered any queries to my satisfaction.
- I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice for Participants in Research Projects and understand how my personal information will be used and what will happen to it (i.e. how it will be stored and for how long).
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, up to the point of completion, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.
- I understand that my answers will be anonymized and will be analysed under a pseudonym.
- I understand that I can request the withdrawal from the study of some personal information and that whenever possible researchers will comply with my request. This includes the following personal data:
    - audio recordings of interviews that identify me.
    - my personal stories from transcripts.
- I understand that anonymised data (i.e. data that do not identify me personally) cannot be withdrawn once they have been included in the study.
- I understand that any information recorded in the research will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.
- I consent to being a participant in the project.
- I consent to being audio recorded as part of the project.

(PRINT NAME)	
Signature of Participant:	Date:

Appendix F: Sample Interview Format for Teachers

Thank you for participating in this investigation.
I am a PhD student from the University of Strathclyde, conducting research for my doctoral thesis on exploring the process and influencing factors of teacher identity, and attempting to understand the impact of teacher identity on reality.
This interview will be conducted through ask and answers, and the conversation content will be recorded for subsequent analysis. I would like to remind you that the recording content will be kept confidential to protect your privacy.
During the interview, I will ask you some questions related to your educational experience and life stories. The interview is expected to last for 60 minutes. If you have any questions, please feel free to let me know. Thank you again for your participation!

Part 1. Background Information

1. When did you come to the UK?
2. What brought you to teaching?
3. How long have you worked in the Chinese School?
4. What did you do before you become a Chinese teacher?
5. Please briefly describe your job as a Chinese teacher in GCS.
6. How do your students perform in the classroom? How is your relationship with them?
7. Please tell me something about class, like homework, discipline, or activities.
8. Do you have other tasks besides teaching?
9. If you were to share one memorable experience with a colleague, leaders, or from your time in the Chinese School, what would you say?
10. Would you introduce your education experience? Such as you schooling in China or the UK? What's your major? Does there any impressive teachers for you? Do you have disliked teachers? Why?

Part 2. Working Experience and Perceptions

1. Can you describe what it was like and how you felt during your first class?
2. What kind of things have you communicated with students' parents about? Have there been any memorable events between you and the parents?
3. Do you ever question your status as a teacher?
4. What is one incident in your teaching career that has touched you and gave you a new understanding of the teaching profession?
5. Do you think you have something that needs to be transformed?
6. Does the teaching content have an impact on you?
7. How are you supported?

8. What are some of the challenges that you face?
9. Do you use more Chinese or English in your classes? Does your English proficiency affect your teaching process?
10. Which is more important to you, students' test scores or their physical and mental development? Can you give me an example?
11. How do you feel about the status of Chinese in the Scotland? Does it have an impact on you? Do your views on work and life, external policies, school leadership have an impact on you?

Part 3. Future Plan

1. Do you have any plans for your future career?
2. What does the ideal teacher look like to you? How do you view yourself as a teacher?
3. If you were to use a metaphor to describe teachers, what would you say? Why?
4. Do you have any questions about this interview? Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you again for participating in this interview. The interview content will be used solely for my doctoral thesis writing and will not be used for any other purposes. The data will be securely stored and anonymised, with pseudonyms used in the thesis. You have the right to withdraw your data before the completion of this research. If you have questions regarding this interview or my doctoral research, please feel free to contact me. My email is shipeng.cui@strath.ac.uk.

LIST OF REFERENCES

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