

Teacher Agency in Localizing Textbooks for International Chinese Language Teaching: A Case of Minsk State Linguistic University

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Abstract : The teacher is at the core of the three fundamental factors in international Chinese language teaching, the other two being the textbook and the method. Professional development of the teacher comprises a self-renewing process that is characterized by knowledge impartment and self-reflection, in which individual agency plays a significant role. Agency makes a positive contribution to teachers' teaching practice and their life-long learning. This study, taking Chinese teaching and learning in Minsk State Linguistic University of Belarus as an example, attempts to understand agency by investigating the teacher's strategic adaptation of textbooks to meet local needs. Firstly, through in-depth interviews, teachers' comments on textbooks are collected and analyzed to disclose their strategies of adapting and localizing textbooks. Then, drawing on the theory of 'The chordal triad of agency', the paper reveals the process in which teacher agency is exercised as well as its rationale. The results verify the theory, that is, given its temporal relationality, teacher agency is constructed through a combination of experiences, purposes and aims, and context, i.e., projectivity, iteration and practice-evaluation as mentioned in the theory. Evidence also suggests that the three dimensions effect differently; It is usually one or two dimensions that are of greater effects on the construction of teacher agency. Finally, the paper provides four specific insights to teacher development in international Chinese language teaching: 1) when recruiting teachers, priority be given on candidates majoring in Chinese language or international Chinese language teaching; 2) measures be taken to assure educational quality of the two said majors at various levels; 3) pre-service teacher training program be tailored for improved quality, and 4) management of overseas Confucius Institutions be enhanced.

Keywords : international Chinese language teaching, teacher agency, textbooks, localization

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