



Interpreting Deconstructed EFL Teacher Roles

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Introduction

A number of studies show that external factors negatively affect teachers resulting in changes of their roles. A study by Pennington and Richards (1997) reveals that beginning EFL teachers are influenced by other teachers, especially experienced ones. Similarly, Ogilvie and Dunn (2010) report that pre-service teachers must work with a mentor teacher because of fears that the mentor will fail her in the evaluation process. As a result, a mentor teacher has the potential to influence the shift of preservice teachers' attitudes from positive to negative (Tok, 2011).

Additionally, some other studies also show that teacher roles keep undergoing changes as a result of the enactment of new educational policies. School policy negatively impacts on changes of teacher's roles (Farrell, 2011). Such a policy results in the change of roles from being ideal into more compromised roles (Namaghi, 2009). Further study by Beijaard et al. (2004) suggests that the changes of teacher's roles entail tensions and dilemmas as the changes involve the play of power. By considering power and binary category between native and non-native teachers, Huang (2014) identifies that holding a role as a non-native English speaker, an EFL teacher may feel othered from the native ones. In a similar vein, Aneja (2016) critically argues how one of her respondents feels marginalised as her English sounds to be far from that of the native speakers in her role as a non-native English teacher. Irrespective of how the binary category powerfully influences the teacher's role identity as shown by these two studies, one essential thing the two studies miss to delineate is the dynamic process of role changes as a way to examine how power influences these role changes.

This study is, therefore, conducted to unveil the dynamic process of the teacher's role changes by employing deconstruction as the basis of analysis. Deconstruction concerns an analytical process reading of any form of non-neutral text (Stevens & Bean, 2007) characterised by the unstable meaning it contains. As a painstaking form of critical thinking, in addition, deconstruction is aimed at disassembling a belief system or ideology or a text constructed within the belief system (Reynolds, 1999). In relation to the current study, the text is a discourse about the teacher's roles itself. The roles constructed by the teacher are unstable and the unstable roles in the discourse signifies meanings in which particular ideology plays its power. To interpret such meanings, deconstruction, in this study, becomes the underlying paradigm to dismantle the constructed belief system involved in the dynamic process of teacher's role changes as well as a tool of analysis which focuses to answer a research question: What role is deconstructed by the EFL teachers? Further elaboration on how deconstruction is used to analyse data is presented in the methodology section.



Literature Review

Teacher Role Changes

Teacher's roles assumed reflects the teacher cognition about teaching. In general, teachers' roles are reflections of teacher's actions (Mantero, 2004). This means that a teacher's role signifies one particular duty becoming her responsibility. This role subsequently becomes one variable constructing the teacher's identity (Farrell, 2011) from which the term teacher role identity emerges.

In general teacher roles are categorised into two types: ideal and performed roles (Liu & Xu, 2013). The ideal roles are the ones perceived to be performed by the teacher. These ideal roles are what theoretically refers to as the responsibility of a teacher. As the teacher roles are constructed socially and discursively, the roles constructed are subject to negotiation with other school stakeholders, such as faculty members, management, students, and parents (Virta, 2015). The negotiation results in the performed teacher roles. Such a negotiation is an endless process. Thus, teacher roles constructed are not stable. The roles are in constant negotiation to the influences of external factors. In other words, teacher roles dynamically change (Kim, 2017). The changes take place when there is discrepancy between the role wanted to be assumed and the role which has to be performed (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013).

Understanding teacher's role changes requires critical interpretation as the changes emerge as a result of negotiation involving power relationships. This negotiation takes place in the realm of discourse involving contesting ideologies. This contestation of ideologies can only be understood if teacher role identities are placed as an image-text (Varghese et al., 2005). Thus, using this image-text concept enables us to critically interpret and reinterpret the teacher's role changes by focusing on the relationship of power and hidden ideologies a teacher has to face.

Deconstructive Reading of Teacher's Roles

Changes of teacher roles to a particular degree involve conflicts of interest. Power plays its stake to win a particular interest. This power is often hidden in a particular ideology. The ideology is most possibly hidden behind the transcendental signified, a term denoting a fact which is considered to be a single truth (Kincheloe, 2008). Such transcendental signifieds as "women stay at home while men work outside" and "maintaining root culture while at the same time embracing host culture" are considered to be facts, then are accepted as truths (Prasasti, 2020; Suarcaya & Prasasti, 2017). These mentioned transcendental signifieds are characterised by the existence of a binary opposition – stay at home versus work outside and maintaining root culture versus embracing host culture – in a text (Tyson, 2006).

In relation to the EFL teaching context, deconstruction can be used to "read" a text that contains structures of power which is manifested in a form of binary opposition (Newman, 2001). Such transcendental signified as 'a beginner teacher is less able to teach than experienced teachers' is often used to justify domination of senior teachers over new ones. By isolating beginner teacher versus experienced teacher, we have one binary opposition. Deconstruction requires us to keep interrogating this binary category. Such questions as 'Are all beginner teachers less able to teach? Or only some or only a few?' are opening queries to identify ideology behind such a binary. By questioning this binary, we opt to seek what agenda is hidden (Norton & Early, 2011).

By positioning teachers' roles as a text, teachers potentially deconstruct their roles. This deconstruction takes place because of the influence of a particular external power. A study shows that teachers in their in-service education become the subject of reflective practice as a way to deconstruct the roles and positions of native speakerism (Hall, 2012). In the study, deconstruction is used to interrogate a text which dichotomises teacher identity into an opposing binary: native and non-native. In the text, deconstruction works by identifying a transcendental signified hidden in a form of a binary opposition between non-native and native speakers. Additionally, the cultural diversity, in terms of minority and majority, of elementary teachers is deconstructed in a study conducted by Aujla-Bhullar (2011). The

results reveal the possibility that teachers can be representatives of anti-oppression as they do the reflection based on the equity initiatives. These two studies denote that binary opposition should be seen critically as to convey particular meanings (Norris, 2002).

In this current study, specifically, deconstructing text about teacher roles means that the teacher roles are critically positioned as dynamic, always changing. Deconstruction takes place when a particular role moves away from one end to the other opposing end and turns into another role. By reading the move in its context, meanings about such deconstructed roles can be interpreted. Finally, deconstruction is of benefit to reveal dominant assumptions of the agenda or ideology (Handsfield, 2011) adhered to teacher's roles.

Methodology

This study is framed to adopt a qualitative inquiry by focusing on teacher narrative. The use of narrative enables the researcher to explore the teacher role dynamics. These dynamics should be revealed in the existing episodes of the narrative.

Participants

Five experienced EFL teachers from five different schools agreed to participate in this study. The process of recruiting the participants was by contacting some potential experienced EFL teachers. They were contacted via email and by visiting the school directly. Among those contacted, five teachers were willing to participate in this study. The respondents were identified as T1, T2, T3, T4, and T5. The schools are located in two different areas in Indonesia, Java and Bali. T1 and T5 are senior high school teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience. T2 is an experienced junior high school teacher with eight years of teaching experience. T3 and T4 are also experienced senior high school EFL teachers. They both have been teachers for ten years.

T1 and T2 are EFL teachers from two different high schools located in one of the cities in East Java. They both are of Javanese ethnicity and are competent at speaking Javanese as their mother tongue, Indonesian language as the second as well as English as their professional language. T3, T4, and T5 are teaching staff members in three different senior high schools in Bali. They are Balinese who are competent at speaking Balinese and Indonesian, and English as their professional language.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collected were in a form of a co-constructed teacher narratives. The initial data were collected in the form of a teacher's reflective note dealing with his or her experiences while assuming their duties as an EFL teacher. This note was a response to a set of questions delivered to them via email. The note collected was further followed up in a form of a recorded verbal interview to fill in existing gaps identified in the note.

Later, the recorded interview was transcribed verbatim. Then, the researcher combined both this interview transcript and the previous note into a narrative. This narrative, with the approval of the corresponding respondents, becomes a co-constructed narrative. The approval was done by sending the constructed narrative to each of the respondents. Having received the approval, the researcher analysed the narrative and gave interpretation to the meaning of the identified deconstruction. A rubric on the basis of binary opposition was used for analysis purposes. As shown in Table 1, the binary opposition is marked by two opposing groups: constructed and deconstructed roles.

Technically, data analysis was done by highlighting potential themes in the narrative. Then, all themes were summed up in a table and those themes were further categorized into reflecting roles assumed. A further step was taken by pairing up two opposing roles. These pairs were, then, identified as a binary

opposition. It is from this binary opposition that further interpretation about deconstructed roles was initiated. The interpretation of meaning from the deconstructed roles was done by revisiting the co-constructed narrative. The narrative consists of episodes each of which tells a particular role or roles. While an episode may reveal an individual role, inter-episode relations reveal changes of role, the deconstructed role. Interpretation of deconstruction was based on understanding meanings of the inter-related episodes. Thus, understanding the meaning of the deconstructed role was based on the intertextual relations of existing episodes in the narrative.

Findings

As many as four pairs of deconstructed roles emerged in the data. The pairs are presented as a form of binary opposition. The previous ones are constructed roles while the later ones are the deconstructed roles.

TABLE 1
Deconstructed Teacher Roles

| Teacher Roles | | |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Constructed | Deconstructed | Respondent |
| to design | to document | T1, T2, T3, T4, T5 |
| to work with others | to work alone | T1, T4 |
| to model | to learn | T1 |
| to manage | to service | T1, T5 |

The deconstructed roles emerge as a result of interaction taking place between the teachers with either the government policy, the school, and colleagues. These factors play a role as external variables influencing the agency of the respondents while they are performing their duties. Further detailed explanation on each of the deconstruction cases is provided in the following four subheadings.

Deconstruction No. 1: To design vs. to document

The main task of a teacher prior to teaching is designing instruction. Designing instruction involves determining appropriate objectives of the learning, the selection of teaching materials, and learning activities, as well as the evaluation of student achievement. At the end, the design of instruction is set forth in a document referred to as a lesson plan. This lesson plan becomes a guide for a teacher during the process of teaching and learning in the classroom.

On another occasion, however, T5 confessed that his institution had a teacher-meeting programme to review curriculum being used and, most important of all, to prepare curriculum documents. The documents prepared were lesson plans for all teaching subjects. Such a programme is annually conducted during break time in June-July. T5 further admits the designing of teaching materials was not linear with the process of 'preparing' his lesson plans. The word 'preparing' is intentionally used in this context to metaphorically mean something different from the intended original objective. The word 'preparing' shows how T5 has deconstructed the purpose of designing instruction by which a lesson plan is produced. This lesson plan is not for teaching's sake but is functioning as a mere school document.

Workshop programme for preparing lesson plans is normally held by the end of each semester, June or December each year. The lesson plans were parts of the school and individual teacher's administrative documents. With the lesson plans ready at hand for all classes and all levels, we could prepare them anytime a supervisor came and asked for a lesson plan during class observation. (T5, p. 7)

T5 described the process of ‘preparing’ massive lesson plans in a single workshop. In the workshop programme, the lesson plans from all classes, subjects, and levels were discussed, finalised, and finally bound into one curriculum document.

The activity of designing instruction before teaching was surprisingly simplified into an activity of preparing lesson plans to be attached to the curriculum document. The lesson plan was prepared far before the teaching was started. Therefore, T5 and other teachers are deconstructing their role from designing a learning into documenting a curriculum set.

Deconstruction No. 2: To work with others vs. to work alone

Working in cooperation with other teachers emerges as one of the teacher roles in the data. T4 considered working with other teachers as an important activity and as one way to develop professional teaching skills.

I was trying to enrich EFL learning materials with technology either in its function as learning media or learning resources. It would have been much better to work with other EFL teachers as we could share some useful ideas. But time was the only constraint to enable me to interact with them. Therefore, I preferred preparing my own teaching myself ... (T4, p. 2)

T4 also admits this. Yet, she experiences that she had to work by herself because of time constraints dealing with hectic teaching schedules.

At different times, however, T4 had time to discuss her teaching-related problems with another teacher from a different high school.

As compensation, I preferred to having discussion with another EFL teacher of different high school in this town whenever I got some problems with my teachings. (T4, p. 7)

At the beginning, T4 expresses that working with other teachers was impossible because of the hectic teaching schedule. So, she worked by herself on her tasks. In this context, she deconstructed the common idea of working together which was considered to be more beneficial than working alone. On another occasion, however, she had time to communicate with a teacher from another school in her town whenever she had problems dealing with teaching. Ultimately, T4 is deconstructing what she has deconstructed before in that she deconstructed the common accepted useful collaboration by deciding to work by herself.

Deconstruction No. 3: To model vs. to learn

An EFL Model teacher is a school representative to whom other EFL teachers may refer if they have something to discuss in relation to teaching issues. In his school, T1 was once selected as a model EFL teacher who could provide assistance to other teachers or represent the school in case of incoming guests needing to observe a class.

I have been involved twice in a lesson study programme, especially as an EFL model teacher. But I have often been observed in my capacity as that model teacher by our school guests who paid a visit to our school or in relation to the foundation cooperation programme with other institutions. (T1, p. 17)

As a model teacher, T1 is considered to have more experience in teaching, a good attitude, flexible characteristics, and is also considered to be more knowledgeable in the area of pedagogy. T1, while acting as a model teacher, was also learning how to develop online learning applications.

This learning management system had been used for 6 years now. I used Android as the development platform. Before this one, I had developed PC based online learning application. (T1, p. 21)

He started off by learning language programming and he was able to develop computer-based online learning applications. Further, when technology develops to be more mobile and seamless, he learned Android as the platform to develop his mobile-based learning management system. This was to enable his students to learn by using their smartphones.

Teaching through modelling and learning are two opposite things. Being a teacher means to assume a place as a controller to students at school. Yet as a learner he is a complete beginner, placing him at the lowest available space within the social strata of programme developers. In this context, he is deconstructing himself from an EFL teacher into a developer of EFL learning apps.

Deconstruction No. 4: To manage vs. to service

Besides being a teacher, T1 also holds a position in the school management. He is a vice principal who is held accountable for infrastructure and facility affairs.

As a vice principal for infrastructure and facility affairs, I had my responsibilities based on the discretion or policy set by the school principal. My area of duty was managing all school infrastructure and facilities including teaching and learning facilities. I executed my programmes as they were prescribed in the school annual plan. (T1, p. 34)

On another occasion, T1 directly informed the researcher that he was trying to service out-of-order printers. He thought he was able to repair them by checking the printer driver.

Here are some broken printers and I am trying to fix them. I tried fixing one of them yesterday, its driver, but it still did not work. (T1, p. 43)

T1, in relation to being a vice principal and fixing electronic equipment, is deconstructing his roles. The former is management level work while the latter is the work of a technician.

Discussion

The two findings in this study, as shown in the deconstructed roles number 1 and 4, reveal that external factors, especially policies dealing with education, exert influence on how the teachers deconstruct their role. These findings convergently support Pennington and Richards (1997) and Farrell (2011) on how external factors, especially policies, negatively influence teacher roles.

Irrespective of the convergent findings above, two other findings in this study show that external factors do not negatively influence the teachers. They are deconstructed roles numbers 2 and 3. The two deconstructed roles result in positive achievements after being preceded by internal conflict. Irrespective of feeling othered by her seniors, T4 deconstructs her role and prefers working alone. Later she is deconstructing this deconstructed role by admitting that she seeks support from another teacher having relatively the same number of years of teaching experience. Instead of compromising her role as is identified by Aneja (2016), Huang (2014), and Namaghi (2009), T4 seeks support from another resource to achieve her goal, to succeed in mentoring her students in an English debate competition.

In another case, T1 deconstructs his role from being a model teacher into a learner. He strives to improve his EFL teaching professionalism by developing a mobile learning application from scratch. For a teacher without having coding skills, it is notoriously difficult to build such an application. Yet, he reifies his deconstructed role by learning hard and eventually is successful. This agency he has is driven

by his conflict within when seeing most of his young colleagues graduate from their master's programme while he failed for a particular personal reason. The othering he feels from his master-graduate colleague has moved his agency to pursue something his colleague does not have. In contrary to findings from previous studies conducted by Farrell (2011), Ogilvie and Dunn (2010), and Tok (2011), his agency takes him to choose a different lead which supports his teaching instead of compromising his teaching roles.

Conclusion

This exploratory study shows that teacher roles are dynamic. These dynamics are revealed in the form of deconstructed EFL teacher roles. The deconstructed roles emerge as a result of interaction between the teacher's self with external factors. Additionally, this study shows that the Othering of faculty members to a particular individual teacher does not always end up in a negative result. Two cases show that instead of giving up on the situation faced, the teachers are able to turn the negative power of their faculty members into a drive for them to do positive things for their students. This teacher agency to strive for positive achievement among existing negative influences revealed in this study seems to be a result of positive reflection on seeing their teaching profession.

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