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Investigation into the Roles of the Professors
Teaching TEFL at the MA level in the Light of
Goffman's Footing Theory

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We hereby certify that we have read this thesis written by *Sara Shirmohammadi*, entitled *Investigation into the roles of the professors teaching TEFL at the MA level in the light of Goffman's Footing theory*, and that it is satisfactory in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of M.A. in Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

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Abstract

In any instructional program, the most influential factor influencing the students' level of achievement is the teacher (Rama, 2011). Indeed, the teacher is assigned such an importance that any deficiency in the role s/he takes on adversely impacts the learning outcomes that are supposed to be fulfilled (Fareh & Saeed, 2011). This study intends to examine the roles that the professors teaching TEFL at M.A level take on based on Goffman's Footing theory according to which the speaker's role is classified into the three categories of animator, author, and principal. Goffman (1981) stated that an animator is someone who reads aloud from a text; an author is someone who paraphrases the statements, and a principal is someone who expresses his/her own ideas. In order to achieve the goals, the researcher conducted this study in both qualitative and quantitative phases. During the quantitative phase, 218 Iranian MA students and graduates were given a metaphor checklist and were asked to select among the 21 metaphors representing the animator, author, and principal roles those that picture the professors in both the current and ideal situations. The results of statistical analysis indicated that while the professors take on the animator role dominantly in the current situation, the students prefer to have the professors adopting the principal role in the ideal situation. During the qualitative phase, observational data in 10 classroom settings was gathered through audio-taping classroom interactions. The collected data was transcribed, analysis was carried out on footing changes, and the professors' roles were identified in details. In-depth analysis of the transcripts revealed that classroom practices are dominated by the author role taken on by the professors. The results offer implications and suggestions for the pedagogical consideration within the higher education context.

Key terms: Footing theory, animator, author, principal, metaphor analysis, metaphor

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.0. Introduction

In this section, a brief background of the teacher's role and Goffman's Footing theory in the educational context will be discussed. Moreover, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research questions will be mentioned. Finally, the limitations of the study and the definitions of the key terms will be provided.

1.1. Background

In the teaching profession, teachers are accustomed to being in spotlight (Pettersson, Tina, Postholm, Felm & Gudmundsdottir, 2004). It is a known fact that teachers can affect the classroom environment to a large extent. Every individual teacher is an important element of what happens in the classroom (de Guerrero & Villamil, 2002). In fact, the teacher's qualification and effectiveness are the most influential contributors to student success (Wenglinsky, 2000). Suwantee (1995) pointed out that, in the complex process of teaching and learning, the teacher's degree of commitment to the teaching task highly impacts students' achievement.

Brown (2001, p. 445) stated that teachers are "agents for change in a world in desperate need of change: change from competition to cooperation, from powerlessness to empowerment, from conflict to resolution, from prejudice to understanding". Many thinkers (Incecay, 2010; Rotgans & Schmidt, 2011; Suwantee, 1995) have examined the teacher's role from various perspectives. Sometimes, the teacher's main role was regarded as a leader conducting a search for the truth through knowledge (Rama, 2011; Sahan, 2009); some considered the teacher as the creator of relationship for human existence (Pettis, 1997; Rama, 2011), and some regarded the teacher's role as the facilitator of liberation through critical consciousness (Ghaemi & Taherian, 2011; Marin & Halpern, 2011). Indeed, there is a need to evaluate the teacher's role from various aspects so that

the drawbacks of teaching approach can be removed (Shim, 2008). A typical prism through which the teacher's role can be investigated is the Footing theory.

Goffman, one of the twenty century's most influential sociologists and interactionists, introduced the *Footing theory* in conversation. According to Goffman (1981), the term speaker is such an oversimplified, troublesome, and ambiguous concept that it does not decompose the role of the one who speaks into more detailed elements. Hence, he proposed Footing, defined as the alignment that participants in interaction take with regard to one another. In other words, Footing is a concept which concerns participants' stance or posture in interaction. In terms of the Footing theory, a speaker may take on the three roles of *animator*, *author*, or *principal*. Plainly, reciting a text allows us to animate the words we have no hand in and to express the beliefs we do not hold. An author is someone who reformulates and paraphrases the pre-made concepts. Finally, a principal is the person who is behind the utterance; someone whose attitudes are brought forward.

The teacher's role can be explored from the perspective of the Footing theory. As a speaker, a teacher can also take on the three roles of animator, author, and principal. A teacher who takes on the animator role simply repeats the information presented in the books; the one who adopts the author role paraphrases the information, and the one who embodies the principal role expresses his/her own original ideas.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Teachers, the most outstanding and effective agents in the educational world, have an undeniable influence on the learners' level of achievement (Moafian & Pishghadam, 2008). To move with the expectations of this challenging millennium, teachers are demanded to move beyond transmission of knowledge and provide the learners with a thinking practice in which they can adopt a critical outlook on the taken-for-granted information, challenge the concepts, and express their own ideas (Yayli, 2009). However, teachers have turned into the followers of predetermined paths who just imitate the current flow of information (Badely & Habeshaw, 2006). They are simply concerned with following teaching instruction,

injecting the information into the students' minds, and reproducing the facts (Ghaemi & Taherian, 2011). Thus, they have failed to open the space to promote critical consciousness, higher-level intellectual skills, and projection of their own identities (Badely & Habeshaw, 2006). Such teachers, who are merely concerned with the emulation or reformulation of the current intellectual framework, take on the animator and author roles but not the principal role.

When a speaker takes on all three roles of animator, author, and principal, his production format is complete, yet when the speaker does not embody the principal role, his production format is incomplete. In this case, the language used is "an artifact rather than a language in use" and it is called the "cited language". There are many drawbacks with the cited language. The first downside is that the cited language is not taken as a challenge of the cited code. In other words, the speaker repeats or paraphrases the words without critically challenging them. Moreover, the focus of cited language is on wording not message. This means that the speaker imitating or reformulating the statements may ignore the message (Hancock, 1997, p. 221). If the teacher's role is looked at from the perspective of the Footing theory, it can be said that when the teacher does not embody the principal role, his/her production format is incomplete and his/her language is cited. In this case, not only does the teacher not critically challenge the imitated or restated statements, but also he may ignore the message. The demerits of the cited language call for the dire need to launch a study to explore the extent to which the teachers go beyond the repetition of the information and project their own identities.

1.3. Significance of the Study

In the educational world, the teacher is one of the key elements since s/he has to educate the new generation, shape the learners' minds, and make them responsible members of the society (Rama, 2011). Indeed, any deficiency in the role that the teacher adopts severely hampers the fulfillment of the expected outcomes and the teaching-learning process (Fareh & Saeed, 2011). This study attempted to explore the professors' roles in the higher education context. The first significance of this study is that the teacher's role is investigated from a new

outlook, the perspective of the Footing theory. The application of this theory to the educational context allowed the researcher to explore the extent to which the teachers diverged from repeating or paraphrasing the concepts presented in the books and entered the realm of projecting their own identities and expressing their own ideas.

Another significance of this study is that the professors' roles were identified through exploring the learners' beliefs and ideas. The merit of getting aware of the learners' ideologies is that the professors can reflect on the theories they support, the strategies they choose, and the methodologies they use. In doing so, they can make necessary and appropriate decisions and modifications.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The present study aimed at exploring the university professors' roles based on Goffman's Footing theory according to which a professor's role can be classified into the three categories of animator, author, and principal. In order to do so, this study was done in both the quantitative and the qualitative phases. In the quantitative phase, 218 Iranian MA students and graduates majoring in TEFL were given a metaphor checklist and were asked to select the metaphors which picture the professors' roles in both the current and ideal situations. The metaphors were analyzed in order to find out the participants' hidden ideas and beliefs about the university professors. In the qualitative phase, 10 professors' classrooms were observed and audio-recorded for one session which lasted around 90 minutes. The transcript of the 10 audio-recorded sessions was analyzed to highlight the shifts in footing. Therefore, the present study addresses the following questions.

1.4.1. Research Questions

Qualitative Phase

Q1: What are the professors' roles in classrooms considering Goffman's classification of animator, author, and principal?

Quantitative Phase

Q1: Is there any significant difference among the animator, author, and principal metaphors selected by the MA students and graduates of TEFL about the university professors in the current situation?

Q2: Is there any significant difference among the animator, author, and principal metaphors selected by the MA students and graduates of TEFL about the university professors in the ideal situation?

1.4.2. Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formed to examine the research questions in the quantitative phase:

H01: There is no significant difference among the animator, author, and principal metaphors selected by the MA students and graduates of TEFL about the university professors in the current situation.

H02: There is no significant difference among the animator, author, and principal metaphors selected by the MA students and graduates of TEFL about the university professors in the ideal situation.

1.5. Definitions of Key Terms

Some concepts used in this research were operationally defined to make them liable to empirical investigation.

Footing theory: Footing is the alignment that participants in interaction take with regard to one another. Oversimplified and ambiguous, the term speaker needs to be decomposed into more detailed elements. Hence, the three roles of animator, author, and principal were proposed to be adopted by a speaker. An animator is identified as a talking machine who is engaged in acoustic activity. An animator is merely concerned with issuing sound from his/her mouth and imitating the words. The author reformulates and paraphrases the statements having been made before by other thinkers. Finally, the principal expresses his/her own beliefs, and is

someone whose position is identified by his/her ideas expressed, and the one committed to what s/he says (Goffman, 1981).

Metaphor: Metaphor is a linguistic expression in which a familiar object or event is used as a conceptual tool to clarify the features of a more complex phenomenon or situation (Oxford et al., 1998).

Metaphor analysis: The metaphors used by learners and teachers about the problems and experiences they have during the learning process can be examined and analyzed to understand their cognition and feelings. It is used as an accepted tool in educational studies (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 317).

Production format: The combination of the three roles of animator, author and principal adopted by a speaker in a given turn is named production format (Hancock, 1997).

1.6. Limitations of the Study

As it is clear, any experiment can come to different results if it is not faced by a number of limitations. In this study, the gender and age of the participants were not taken into account. Moreover, this study was done in a few universities in Iran while more studies can be conducted in the universities located in other cities to compare the results. Subjectivity of specifying a metaphor as animator, author, or principal seems to be another limitation of the present study. Finally, the size of the studied sample can be increased to produce more valid generalizations based on the results of the study.

Chapter Two

Review of

Literature

2.0. Introduction

In this section, the teacher's role in the educational context will be explored; hence, the previously done studies related to the teacher's role in various contexts will be discussed. Moreover, a new outlook on the teacher's role, the perspective of the Footing theory, will be investigated both theoretically and empirically. Finally, the studies related to metaphor analysis, a research tool used for identifying the teacher's role, will be reviewed.

2.1. Teachers in the World of Education

2.1.1. The Importance of the Teacher's Role

The teaching-learning process can be looked at as an intellectual game in which a number of players take on various roles. In this complex process, the most outstanding and effective factor is the teacher (Fareh & Saeed, 2011). Rama (2011) pointed out that being a teacher is a special challenge as teachers have to educate new generations, and this is of crucial significance for the development of the future of a country. He, further, claimed that teachers are the most significant factors that influence the level of achievement in the student learning since they strive to motivate students, to shape their minds, and to make them responsible members of the society.

Sahan (2009) indicated that the three main elements of the student, the teacher, and the curriculum are the most crucial concepts shaping any instructional program. Among these elements, the teacher has the most profound impact on the instructional process. More specifically, the teacher is assigned such an importance that any deficiency in the role s/he adopts in the classroom adversely affects the fulfillment of the expected learning outcomes (Fareh & Saeed, 2011). In other words, no matter how efficiently the educational program is designed, it is impossible to expect the specified outcomes to be fulfilled at the

end of the teaching process unless the teacher has appropriate qualities (Sahan, 2009).

Undoubtedly, teachers are one of the key elements in the process of language teaching and learning, for they can have fundamental effects on their students' success or failure. Indeed, teachers are student advocates, bridges to the society, and change agents (Pettis, 1997). According to King Rice (2003), teaching is a complex activity influenced by the quality of the teaching practice. More specifically, Sanders and Rivers (1996) considered the teacher as the single most important factor affecting student achievement. Suwantee (1995) regarded teaching as an interaction between teachers and students in which the students' achievement depends highly on the teacher's degree of commitment to the teaching task.

Meanwhile, as the education is highly significant, it is essential that the profession of teaching be trusted to highly professional individuals having expertise in effective teaching. To put it in more specific words, in order to teach more effectively, teachers are required to be aware of their roles, to be able to adopt teaching style needed for a particular situation, and to meet institutional goals (Rama, 2011).

To show how a teacher can affect the student achievement, Inceci (2010) explored the characteristics of the teacher talk regarding learners' learning a second or a foreign language. To reach the aim, he chose 16 seventh grade students and one experienced EFL teacher from a private school in Turkey. At first, the teacher was asked to audio-record the teacher-learner interaction. Then, by using conversation analysis methodology, the researcher analyzed the recordings. Finally, the characteristics of the teacher's language were analyzed under two headings: construction and obstruction. To put it more clear, direct error correction, content feedback, repairing, and extended wait time were determined as subcategories of constructive teacher talk because, through these activities, the teacher provided opportunities for learner involvement and increased learning potential. On the other hand, extended use of initiate-response-feedback, turn completion, and teacher echo were some of the teacher's talk or language which hindered the learner involvement and obstructed the learning potential.

The dominant traditional teaching method, the lecture, has turned the teachers into the followers of predetermined paths rather than the voyagers of exploration (Badley & Habeshaw, 2006). No more do the teachers think critically. Rather, they merely imitate and replicate common trend of knowledge (Lane, Lacefield-Parachini & Isken, 2003). In the same vein, students have been turned into the passive recipients of knowledge who simply wait to copy ill-digested notes. In such a context, no space is assigned for argument, discussion, and critical judgment (Ijaiya, Alabi & Fasasi, 2011; Kitot, Ahmad & Seman, 2010). As a result, in this challenging millennium, it is recommended to reconsider teachers' roles. In fact, the educational system has to be dependent on the teachers who willingly contribute to the educational reform (S mech & Zahavy, 2000).

2.1.2 The Change toward Agency

Teachers have embarked on a long-life journey in which they should be ready to learn and improve their developmental path continuously (Nakabugo, 2008). It is crucial that teachers fulfill the primary aim of education which is the support of both teachers and learners to develop their agency. The basic concept of agency is that teachers do not merely repeat given information. Rather, they should have the ability for autonomous social action through which they can refine the educational world and take the control of their practices. To put it in other words, agency is a dynamic process involving continuous transformation of both the community and the self. Hence, teacher agency is absolutely crucial to provide learners with opportunities to experience an engaging learning environment which extends beyond traditional practices (Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011). An educational system that reaches beyond the transmission of information must work deeper and make the identities of both the teacher and the learners more complex and supple (Zajonc, 2006).

In a similar way, Lane et al. (2003) suggested that teachers become agents of change and manifest such a practice in the interaction with their learners. Certainly, becoming an agent of change requires identity transformation in the community of practice (Wenger, 1998, cited in Lane et al., 2003). To become a contributor to disciplinary knowledge rather than a transmitter of taken-for-

granted information, teachers need to see how acts of agency should be performed against constraints imposed by the institutional system (Morgan, 2009).

As education is an increasingly complicated process requiring high level of knowledge, critical thinking, and problem solving skills, teachers are demanded to expand their visions and modify their roles to mesh with the expectation of education. More specifically, the focus of education has to shift from delivering soon-to-be obsolete facts to fostering critical thinking at all levels. In fact, new millennia teachers and learners should be prepared to enter the 21st century workplace equipped with the ability to deal with complexities through thinking critically and creatively (Green & Jax, 2011). In fact, it is crucial to help educators to teach in ways promoting critical thinking (Marin & Halpern, 2011). This is because the time of the teachers merely concerned with following teaching instruction is over, and no more does the educational system need teachers just injecting information into the students' minds. Instead, the teachers who are researchers, think critically, and look for new and effective teaching techniques are demanded (Ghaemi & Taherian, 2011).

Freire (1994) stated that, in the educational context, the relation between the teacher and the student is fundamentally of narrative character including a narrative teacher and patient listening students. In such a context, students who are considered to be machines operated only for gathering data are merely demanded to memorize concepts without realizing their significance. The outstanding characteristics of narrative education are lack of transforming power and dehumanization of learners because it blocks learners' critical consciousness through which they can transform the world. Such an educational system is called banking model of education in which students receive and store information issued by the teacher. Banking model of education is put in contrast to dialogic approach in which the perspectives and experiences of both teachers and students are central to the education. Instead of such misguided educational system, he suggested the notion of problem-posing educational system in which it is the teacher who presents the problem, but both the teacher and the learners critically examine it, challenge each other, present new ideas, and reform their old views. As a result, the teacher is no longer a transmitter of knowledge but a co-