

Investigation into the Roles of Iranian Professors Teaching TEFL: A Study Based on Goffman's Footing Theory

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Abstract

This research intends to examine the roles that professors teaching TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) at the M.A level take on based on Goffman's Footing Theory according to which speaker's role can be classified into three roles of animator, author, and principal. To this end, 218 Iranian M.A students and graduates were given a checklist comprising 21 metaphors representing three roles of animator, author, and principal in both current and ideal situations. The results of statistical analyses indicated that there is a mismatch between the roles professors take on in the current situation and the roles students prefer the professors to adopt. In the end, pedagogical implications of the research findings are discussed.

Keywords: footing theory, metaphor analysis, animator, author, principal

1. Introduction

Universities are considered to have a major role in the development of scientific, cultural and human resources (Yarmohammadian, Mozaffary, Esfahani, 2011). Ideal universities should provide the university students with opportunities "to enter a world of discovery in which they are active participants, not passive receivers" and "to open new paths of inquiry" (Shakibaei, Ghourchian, Khalkhali, 2011, p.2259). More specifically, multi-literacy era requires an educational system in which a classroom is a milieu for learners to negotiate their own beliefs and identities (Yayli, 2009).

Meanwhile, the quality of education depends on harmonious relationship among student, teacher and curriculum. Among these elements, teacher has the most profound impact on student and curriculum. In addition, it is impossible to expect efficient educational processes and products unless the teacher is qualified enough (Sahan, 2009). Roma (2011) pointed out that university professors take on a significant role in educating and reforming new

generations, and the role they adopt in the classroom is the most crucial factor in students' achievement. To put in other words, any deficiency in the roles teachers adopt in a classroom adversely impacts the fulfillment of expected learning outcomes (Fareh & Saeed, 2011).

Moving with multi-literacy era in which new ways of thinking are required, teachers have to take on new roles. A teacher is no longer transmitter of knowledge but "co-inquirer", "mediator", "intellectual", and "researcher" (Yayli, 2009, pp.207-208). In other words, teachers are not required to implement pre-specified programs. Rather, they should master critical thinking skills to empower themselves and have a role in making educational policy. Furthermore, they should provide students with opportunities to negotiate their own identities and ideas. Demirbolat (2006) also believed that teachers are expected to discard their static roles and take on an innovative one. To put it more clearly, while a teacher adopting static role is merely concerned with subscribing to curricula and academic standards, a teacher taking on innovative role responds to ever-challenging community by reconstruction of educational program. An innovative teacher places critical thinking at the core of teaching program.

University teachers are demanded to reshape and improve their professional developmental path enlarging their strategic and methodological competencies. However, this can be done just through providing new educational opportunities for university teachers (Cately, 2011). Sahan (2009) also accentuated the fact that changes in understanding of education require new roles adopted by a teacher. He, further, investigated one hundred and sixty teachers' evaluation on characteristics that teachers should have and the teachers' self-evaluation regarding the current role they adopt. Significant difference between teachers' evaluation on their current and expected roles revealed that the teachers do not find themselves moving with new changes of contemporary educational approaches.

In order to explore whether teacher characteristics such as social congruence, teacher's concern for his/her students, subject-matter expertise, cognitive congruence, teacher scaffolding providing students with structure in their thinking increase learners' situational interest such as focused attention and affective reaction in learners, Rotgans and Schmit (2011) handed thirty teachers and four hundred and ninety eight students a program evaluation questionnaire and situational interest scale, respectively. According to the findings of the study, the teacher characteristics were significantly associated with learners' situational interest. The identification of cognitive congruence as the strongest factor suggests that

teachers providing students with scaffolds in their thinking processes positively impact students' situational interest. Similar results were gained by Buth and Rehman (2010) investigating three hundred and fifty-students' satisfaction in higher education in Pakistan focusing on four factors of teachers' expertise, course offered, learning environment and classroom facilities as all four factors had significant influence on students' satisfaction.

Students' rating can be used to identify exemplary educational context upon which increased emphasis is currently being put (Feldman, 1996). To this end, Yumru, Inozu and Sahinkarakas (2010) asked one hundred and forty two senior students to rate to what extent they acquired one hundred and forty three expected learning outcomes categorized under three headings of 'knowledge and understanding' involving subject-matter confidence, cognitive skills and intellectual growth, 'strategies and skill', and 'values'. While 59.1% of students reported that they gained subject-matter confidence, cognitive skills and intellectual growth were gained by only 28% of students. This indicates that learners have not yet developed the ability to critically analyze concepts and knowledge learned. Furthermore, 4.2% and 43.2% of the participants reported that they acquired strategies and skills, and values respectively.

Overall, there has been a large body of research which addresses the importance of teacher in educational context (e.g. King Rice, 2003; Moafian & Pishghadam, 2008; Sanders & Rieves, 1996). Thus, teacher's role assumes seminal role within educational context. Teacher's role can be explored from various perspectives. A typical prism through which teachers' roles can be investigated is Footing Theory.

1.1. Footing Theory

Introducing the concept of Footing in conversation, Goffman (1981) defined Footing as the alignment that participants in interaction take with regard to one another. In other words, "the alignment of an individual to a particular utterance can be referred to as Footing" (Goffman, 1974, cited in Goffman, 1981, p.221).

Goffman (1981) believed that the terms speaker and hearer are too shallow to provide us with anything beyond sound. Furthermore, the term speaker is troublesome and ambiguous since it does not decompose the role of the one who speaks into smaller and more detailed elements. As a result, Goffman rejected the oversimplified notion of speaker and proposed Footing theory.

According to Footing theory, a speaker may take on three roles of animator, author, and principal. As Goffman (1981) explained, animator is identified as the talking machine who is engaged in acoustic activity. An animator is merely concerned with issuing sound from his/her mouth and moving his/her lips up and down. Reading aloud from a fully memorized text or a prepared script allows us to animate words we have no hand in and to express opinions, beliefs and sentiments we do not hold. We can speak for someone else and in someone else's words. As a result, it can be said that animator and recipient are in the same level of analysis.

The speaker's second role identified by Goffman (1981) is author. An author selects the sentiments expressed and the words in which they are encoded. To put in other words, authoring an utterance means reformulating and paraphrasing the statements having been made before. Reading off from a text or a group of utterances not having been memorized gives the speaker the role of author.

Principal, the speaker's third role clarified by Goffman (1981), is someone who expresses his/her own beliefs, someone whose position is identified by his/her ideas expressed and the one committed to what s/he says. The principal role entails "the extraneous, ongoing assembly and encoding of the text under the exigency of immediate response to one's current situation and audience, in a word, fresh production" (p.227).

As shifting from one role to another, for example from repeating a text to expressing original ideas, a speaker is changing his/her footing. A change in footing implies "a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the other present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance" (Goffman, 1981, p.128).

The combination of these three roles taken on by a speaker in a specified turn is named production format (Hancock, 1997). A speaker can adopt different production formats by taking on each of the roles animator, author, and principal. Various production formats provide the speaker with different relationships to the words he produces and to his hearers (Goffman, 1981). In a conversation, when the speaker takes all three roles, the production format is said to be complete. In cases in which the speaker does not take on the role of principal the production format is incomplete (Hancock, 1997).

According to Goffman (1981), different production formats in conjunction with the participants' status comprises frame space. A frame space is the space in which the speaker operates while availing himself/herself of certain options and forgoing the others.

Acceptability can be defined in terms of frame space. If someone stays within the frame space allowed to him/her, s/he speaks acceptably. However, to speak unacceptably is to move outside this space. This means that a speaker needs to fit his/her talk to different contexts moving from one space to the other (Lock & Strong, 2010).

To have a more comprehensive outlook to what happens in the classroom, Bannick and Dam (2006) accentuated the application of a more dynamic notion of educational context. This implies giving special attention to changes in footing occurring in a classroom. To this end, Skidmore and Murakami (2010) marked prosodic features of teacher-student dialogue during whole-class discussion to show changes in footing and signal boundaries between different kinds of pedagogic activities. The result showed that teacher led IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) discussion, which displays teacher's role as animator, was marked prosodically by fast interaction pace and echoing of students' answers with minimal uptake. However, teacher's principal role, identified by thought and reflection was marked prosodically by low pace, vowel lengthening, and quickened tempo.

1.2 Purpose of the study

Since few numbers of studies (Bannick & Dam, 2006; Skidmore & Murakami, 2010) considered teachers' roles in educational context based on Goffman's footing theory, this study will be an attempt to pursue the roles of animator, author and principal that professors teaching TEFL at M.A level take on in both current and ideal situations. Hence, this research is conducted to find out answers to the following questions:

- 1- Is there any significant difference between roles of professors teaching TEFL at M.A level as animator, author and principal in the current situation?
- 2- Is there any significant difference between roles of professors teaching TEFL at M.A level as animator, author and principal in the ideal situation?

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The participants of this study were 93 Iranian students, 29 males and 64 females, studying TEFL at M.A level and 125 Iranian graduates, 49 males and 76 females, having studied TEFL at M.A level. The participants, chosen from Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, TarbiatMoalem University of Sabzevar, Zahedan University, Semnan University and Alzahra

University, ranged in age between 22-35. The participants all spoke Persian as their mother language. No distinction was made between male and female students.

2.2. Instrumentation

A metaphor checklist was given to 218 M.A students and graduates. This checklist comprised two prompts: "I think a professor teaching at M.A level is like a -----" and "I think an ideal professor teaching at M.A should be like a ----". The prompts were followed by some options which had been selected based on checklists presented in Saban, Kocbeker and Saban (2007), Saban (2010), Saban (2004), Pishghadam, Torghabeh and Navari (2009), Nikitina and Furuoka (2008), Oxford et al. (1998), and De Guerrero and Villamil (2002). The options consisted of 7 metaphors reflecting animator role, 7 metaphors representing author role and 7 ones identifying principal role (see Appendix). The participants were required to choose the metaphors which best described professors teaching at M.A level. The aim of the first question was to determine professors' dominant role regarding Goffman's Footing theory. The aim of the second prompt was to determine the ideal role which participants preferred their professors to have. The content validity of the checklist was substantiated by two experts in the field. The reliability of the checklist was computed by the Cronbach's Alpha which was found to be 0.88 for the whole sample. It shows that the results of the checklist are satisfactorily reliable in terms of their internal consistency.

2.3. Procedure

In the present study, all participants received a checklist and were asked to select as many metaphors that portrayed their views about the present and ideal roles that professors teaching TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) at the M.A level take on. As Moser (2000) claimed, metaphor analysis allows the teacher to identify, categorize, and discuss the hidden beliefs and ideas behind each metaphorical concept. Consequently, the metaphors generated by students enabled the researcher to identify the professors' roles based on Goffman's Footing Theory. For the purpose of analyzing the data, the randomly used metaphors in the checklist that were chosen by the participants were grouped under the three roles of animator, author and principal. Chi-square was run to compare the metaphors selected by the M.A students and graduates to talk about professors in both current and ideal situations.

3. Results

Table 1

The Results of Chi-square for the Metaphors Selected by MA Students and Graduates about Professors in the Current Situation

	Observed N	Expected N	df	χ^2	Sig.
Animator	563	500	2	31.788	.000
Author	539	500	2		
Principal	398	500	2		
Total	1500				

Table 1 presents the results of Chi-square for the metaphors representing roles of professors teaching TEFL at the M.A level as animator, author, and principal chosen by 218 M.A students and graduates in current situation. As it can be clearly seen, there is a significant difference among metaphors determining professors' roles as animator, author, and principal ($\chi^2 = 31.788$, $p < .05$). According to this table, metaphors reflecting animator and author roles (N=563 and N=539, respectively) outnumber what is expected (N=500) among the rest. The results reveal that professors teaching TEFL at the M.A level mostly take on animator and author roles. On the other hand, metaphors reflecting principal role (N=398) are less than expected (N=500). It shows that principal role is the least dominant role taken on by the professors.

animator>author>principal

Table 2

The Results of Chi-square for the Metaphors Selected by MA Students and Graduates about Professors in the Ideal Situation

	Observed N	Expected N	df	x^2	Sig.
Animator	85	530.3	2	565.823	.000
Author	717	530.3	2		
Principal	789	530.3	2		
Total	1591				

Table 2 presents the results of Chi-square for the metaphors reflecting roles of professors teaching TEFL at the M.A level as animator, author, and principal selected by 218 M.A students and graduates in ideal situation. As it can be clearly seen, there is a significant difference among metaphors determining professors' roles as animator, author, and principal ($x^2 = 565.823$, $p < .05$). According to Table 2, the participants considered metaphors representing principal and author roles (N=789 and N=717, respectively), comparing to the expected number (N=530.30) are more efficient for ideal professor at the M.A level. The results clarify the fact that M.A students and graduates prefer their professors to take on principal and author roles respectively. On the other hand, metaphors reflecting animator role (N=85) is less than expected (N=530.3). This shows that animator role is the least preferred one selected by M.A students and graduates.

principal>author>animator

4. Discussion

The present study examined professors' roles based on Goffman's Footing Theory, based on which roles of professors teaching TEFL at the M.A level were classified into three categories of animator, author, and principal. The identification of professors' roles was done through a metaphor checklist. The metaphors were selected by the participants to express their ideas about professors' roles in both current and ideal situations.

Regarding the first goal of the study, the results revealed that in current situation, professors teaching TEFL at the M.A level take on animator and author roles respectively. To put it in other words, as animators, professors just recite a fully-memorized text without expressing their own original opinions and beliefs. Metaphors such as parrot, copy machine and microphone chosen by participants disclose the fact that instead of projecting their own personalities, professors transfer the information exactly from the materials. Furthermore, as authors, professors reformulate, paraphrase and transfer the concepts presented in the materials. In this way, professors' main responsibility is to simplify and summarize what is provided in textbooks. Typical examples of this role are scaffolder and mixer.

As Hancock (1997, p.221) claimed, when the speaker embodies all three roles of animator, author, and principal, the production format is complete. However, when the speaker does not embody the role of principal, the production format is incomplete. As a result, it can be deduced that the production formats of professors teaching at the M.A level are incomplete. In this case, the language used is an "artefact rather than as language in use" and it is called "cited language". The peculiar quality of cited language is that, firstly, it is not taken as a challenge of cited code. The teacher merely repeats or paraphrases the words without challenging them through inserting his/her point of view and language. Secondly, in cited language, the focus is on wording not message. In other words, the teacher just imitating or reformulating the statements ignores the message which is the central point of any language. Finally, by using cited language, the teacher repeats a line sometimes without understanding it.

The underlying roots of professors' tendency to take on the animator role can be traced back to some key factors. Firstly, professors in Iran are products of National Entrance Examinations in which traditional multiple-choice item tests requiring memorization are still dominant. Consequently, after passing BA, MA, and PhD Entrance Examinations, professors naturally adopt the animator role. Kennedy and Kennedy (1996) asserted that an intention to change a particular behavior stems from not only one's attitude but also subjective norms and behavioral control. This means that, to modify professors' roles in educational context, not only professors' attitudes but also contextual norms have to be changed. In other words, it seems that National Entrance Examination in Iran should undergo radical shifts so that prospective teachers can be trained to think critically, project their own identities, and have something new to introduce to the field.

Another key factor that stands out is that TEFL in Iran still lives in modern era (Pishghadam & Mirzaee, 2008). More specifically, modernism has brought about ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach prescribing procedures for all learners around the world, represented knowledge as absolute and eternal, and developed the one-way transmission of knowledge from experts (western countries) to non-experts (non-western countries). It seems that professors in Iran strongly adhere to modernism as they are mere consumers of the theories made by the experts. Furthermore, Since English is not the mother tongue of Iranian professors; they may feel incapable in contributing to the field.

This finding regarding the tendency of professors teaching TEFL at the M.A level to adopt animator role nearly reflects the results gained by Pishghadam et al. (2009), and Purali (2011) which asserted that Iran’s educational system, in both schools and universities, is still under the influence of Behaviorist views of learning. Based on Behavioristic guidelines, language is treated like a habit which needs memorization to be internalized (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). To put in other words, any chance of creative and critical thinking is blocked. In the same way, when a professor takes on animator role, s/he does not make use of challenging pre-made concepts and thinking in a new way. What s/he does is simply moving on a well-trodden way by memorizing what is provided in textbooks.

Furthermore, such results implicate that the concept of banking model of education proposed by Freire (1993), is still dominant in Iran. According to Freire (1993), in educational context, the relationship between teacher and student is fundamentally of narrative character including a narrative teacher and patient listening students. The outstanding characteristic of narrative education is lack of transforming power. In such a context, students are merely demanded to memorize and repeat concepts without realizing their significance. In doing so, teachers also are not exceptions. This is called banking model of education in which students receive and store information issued by the teacher. Therefore, students are robbed of the opportunity to have creativity, critical thinking, and transformation. Instead of such misguide educational system, problem-posing education in which both teachers and students develop their power to perceive the concepts critically and to feel committed to response to educational challenges is suggested.

Considering the second goal of the study, the findings describing professors in ideal situation revealed that the participants prefer their professors to have principal role. In other words, as principals, professors should generate and transfer their own original ideas. Metaphors such

as spring, power plant and writer draw attention to the fact that professors should refrain from mere repetition or paraphrasing of the concepts presented in the materials. In addition, through selecting metaphors such as window to the world, the students show that they prefer their professors to create challenge and bring about change.

The reasons why students prefer their professors to take on principal roles stem from various reasons. Firstly, it is quite natural that learners expect their professors to be knowledgeable, generating new ideas. Besides, they want their professors to be more insightful than reciteful, and more challenger than repeater. However, a professor who is merely preoccupied with repeating, rehashing, and regurgitating the materials cannot fulfill students' expectations. The more consumers of materials professor are, the more dissatisfaction in educational context arises.

Secondly, students' interests to have critically thoughtful professors can be explained in terms of equilibration (Piaget, 1970). According to him, cognitive development is a progressive process from states of disequilibrium, doubt and uncertainty, to equilibrium, resolution and certainty. Brown (2007) believed that disequilibrium provides learners with motivation as learners are eagerly trying to acquire knowledge to achieve the cognitive equilibrium. As a result, professors' major responsibilities is to create disequilibrium which includes challenging the learners' current knowledge, not repeating the materials, in order to enhance learners motivation. Such an aim cannot be achieved unless the professors discard animator and author roles taking on the principal role which is exactly what students demand. Based on the findings, it can be said that there is a mismatch between the roles that professors take on in the classroom and the students' expectations. Students opt for classes in which they are not forced to follow the same trend provided in textbooks. They are inclined to be trained to challenge common concepts, think critically, and express original ideas. However, such aims are not fulfilled in classes where repeating and outmost paraphrasing are the dominant methods of teaching. Ellis (2008) claimed that there is an indirect relation between beliefs and learning. Mediating the actions learner perform, beliefs cannot be ignored by teachers because any possible mismatch between teacher's and learners' belief systems leads to deficiency in learning.

Making implicit assumptions and ideas explicit (Cameron, 2003, cited in Pishghadam & Navari, 2010), metaphors provide the teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their present methods and styles hindering students' learning. As Pishghadam et al. (2009) believed, if

teachers do not get aware of their hidden assumptions, those ideas will be internalized in their mind over time, hence making the process of learning and teaching counter-productive; consequently, reflecting on their implicit ideas, professors and students can develop a reflective mind caring for needed modifications. A reflective mind has such an outstanding significance that Dewey (1933, cited in Oxford et al., 1998) asserted that reflective mind is the prime element of all problem-solving activities.

The findings of this research will be highly valuable for teacher training courses in every field. Teacher trainers are expected to train prospective teachers to develop a complete production format (Hancock, 1997). To put it another way, teacher trainers should encourage prospective teachers to avoid just imitating or reformulating what they are teaching, that is, they should refrain from taking merely animator or author roles. Adversely, teachers must be encouraged not only to pay more attention to content rather than words but also to complete the message by inserting his/her own points of view.

In this study gender and age of participants were not taken into account. Consequently, another study can take these points into consideration. Furthermore, this study was done just on professors teaching TEFL at the M.A level in a few universities in Iran. Therefore, more studies can be conducted to compensate these limitations.

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Appendix

Gender: Male Female Age: -----

Do you teach English? No Yes If you teach, years of experience: -----

Choose the metaphors that best describe a professor teaching at M.A level. You can choose more than one option. Pay attention to the definition of each metaphor.

What is your idea of a professor teaching at M.A level?

☺ A professor teaching at M.A level is like a -----.

- Robot (S/he works automatically and is controlled by pre-programs.)
- Writer (S/he generates and transfers his/her own original ideas.)
- Scaffolder (S/he simplifies concepts and teaches through building on concepts.)
- Power plant (S/he generates original ideas which the students then receive.)

- Missionary (S/he simplifies and transfers the concepts presented in the books for students' better understanding.)
- Sun (S/he provides light when you are confused with materials.)
- Parrot (S/he repeats everything exactly from the books.)
- Copy machine (S/he transfers all the information saved in the books.)
- Artist (S/he moulds us into works of arts through a high degree of skill and creativity.)
- Projector (S/he reflects exactly what the materials are written about.)
- Cook (S/he picks bits and pieces of different materials to find the perfect fit for student understanding.)
- Repeater (S/he repeats everything exactly from the materials.)
- Spring (S/he constantly projects his/her own original ideas.)
- Microphone (S/he makes the voice of material louder.)
- Puzzle doer (S/he arranges different pieces of information to find the perfect fit for student understanding.)
- Mixer (S/he mixes pieces of different information and produces a combined concept.)
- Summarizer (S/he summarizes what is provided by materials.)
- Challenger (S/he makes us interested in taking new challenges in learning.)
- Cassette player (S/he records and then transfers the information of the materials.)
- Molasses (S/he sticks the materials while adding a little sweetness.)
- Window to the world (S/he creates challenges and brings about change.)

Name any other metaphor that can describe a professor teaching at M.A level -----.

Choose the metaphors that best describe an ideal professor teaching at M.A level. You can choose more than one option. Pay attention to the definition of each metaphor.

What is your idea of an *ideal professor* teaching at M.A level?

☺ An ideal professor teaching at M.A level *should be* like a -----.

- Robot (S/he works automatically and is controlled by pre-programs.)
- Writer (S/he generates and transfers his/her own original ideas.)
- Scaffolder (S/he simplifies concepts and teaches through building on concepts.)

- Power plant (S/he generates original ideas which the students then receive.)
- Missionary (S/he simplifies and transfers the concepts presented in the books for students' better understanding.)
- Sun (S/he provides light when you are confused with materials.)
- Parrot (S/he repeats everything exactly from the books.)
- Copy machine (S/he transfers all the information saved in the books.)
- Artist (S/he moulds us into works of arts through a high degree of skill and creativity.)
- Projector (S/he reflects exactly what the materials are written about.)
- Cook (S/he picks bits and pieces of different materials to find the perfect fit for student understanding.)
- Repeater (S/he repeats everything exactly from the materials.)
- Spring (S/he constantly projects his/her own original ideas.)
- Microphone (S/he makes the voice of material louder.)
- Puzzle doer (S/he arranges different pieces of information to find the perfect fit for student understanding.)
- Mixer (S/he mixes pieces of different information and produces a combined concept.)
- Summarizer (S/he summarizes what is provided by materials.)
- Challenger (S/he makes us interested in taking new challenges in learning.)
- Cassette player (S/he records and then transfers the information of the materials.)
- Molasses (S/he sticks the materials while adding a little sweetness.)
- Window to the world (S/he creates challenges and brings about change.)

Name any other metaphor that can describe an ideal professor teaching at M.A level -----.