



## IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF A TRAINEE TEACHER: A CASE STUDY

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**Abstract.** Teacher training involves a wide range of missions, especially at the stage of transitioning from a trainee teacher into a teacher. While much attention has been paid to what is required of by the trainee to be qualified as a teacher, not much has been paid to looking at the trainee teacher himself or herself in terms of what he or she thinks and does in the real classroom to empower himself or herself to be a teacher in particular discourses across the classroom landscape. Drawing on the sociocultural view of identity, this paper presents, but not limits, the concept of teacher identity as an ongoing process constructed, negotiated, and maintained primarily through classroom discourse. The theoretical concept is then exemplified with a case study of a trainee teacher of English. Preliminary data from interviews and classroom observations provide insights into the teacher's perceptions and practices towards what she meant to be recognised as a teacher. The paper calls for more attention to be given to viewing identity construction in relation to classroom discourse on the part of not only teacher educators but also trainee teachers themselves to facilitate the process of teacher training.

**Keywords:** teacher identity, identity construction, classroom discourse, trainee teachers, case study

### 1. Introduction

Transitioning from a trainee teacher into a teacher so that he or she can be fully qualified to teach in the real class is a mission taking huge endeavor from different parties. Conventionally, the trainee teacher has to meet requirements of various types, mostly of professional ones including appropriate qualifications and probation. The former is required to be obtained from teacher training courses and/or programmes. The latter is started when a graduate (either undergraduate or postgraduate) is staffed by an institution and becomes a trainee teacher, and then is carried out within a year. During that one year of probation, the trainee teacher, if for a university staff, often needs to take a higher degree, that is a Masters one for example, participate in as many professional training workshops and seminars as s/he can manage, and take charge of teaching classes as a teaching assistant alongside with a senior or

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Submitted: 03-11-2020; Revised: 21-12-2020; Accepted: 01-04-2021.

supervisor teacher. That huge load of work is challengingly demanding to the trainee teacher. Significantly, there are even more challenges in sustaining it that go beyond work accomplishment to amplify the pressure that the trainee teacher has to undergo.

Scholarship on teacher training has previously emphasised on knowledge and skills required for teacher professional development. Particularly in today's era of social development and/or technological development, which critically transforms the knowledge economy, requirements of knowledge and skills for teachers have proliferated in both quantity and quality. The teacher is expected to be able to do many things, inside and outside the class, while in multiple contexts profoundly impacted by endless changes of various volumes. Knowledge and skills have thus remained the touchstones in teachers' professional development. However, literature in teacher training has recently witnessed a shift away from expecting and evaluating teachers of what they do, to a view for a better understanding of what they do, how they do and why they do so. Teacher identity, in this view, offers an analytical lens (Gee, 2000). This lens proves to be employable in various research contexts including English for Specific Purposes (ESP), when teachers may confront teaching learners who are more knowledgeable of the related studies (Tao & Gao 2018), student teacher training programmes (Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010), university teacher development programmes for academics (Nevgi & Löfström, 2015), teachers becoming teacher researchers (Taylor, 2017), and early or novice teachers (e.g., Nordin & Samsudin, 2017; Oruç, 2013). A common point shared by all those studies is that teacher identity is complex and multi-faceted; both personally and socially featured; and likely to be changed by specific contexts. Precisely, identity is not something fixed but its construction is ongoing (e.g., Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005; Tao & Gao, 2018; Taylor, 2017). It is the idea of fluidity of identity construction that attracts investigation across research contexts.

From the above-described perspective of teacher identity construction, this paper sheds light into a case of a trainee teacher who was in the required period of transitioning into an official teacher within a year in a university in Vietnam. What the paper looks at is when the trainee teacher acts in the context of classroom discourse, which is, arguably, most reflective of teacher identity construction in terms of what s/he does, how s/he does, and why s/he does so to empower himself or herself to be a teacher in front of students. Drawing on the sociocultural approach to identity, which, according to the literature (e.g., Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005), views teacher identity as an on-going process constructed, negotiated, and maintained primarily through discourse, this paper first exemplifies the view with a case study, and then calls for more attention to teacher identity construction on the part of both teachers and teacher educators as a tool for better understanding teachers. With that, the paper is guided with this research question: What are the trainee teacher's perceptions and practices to be recognised as a teacher in the official teaching classroom?

## 2. Literature review

This section first presents key literature of such concepts relevant to the topic as identity and approach to identity construction, teacher identity, teacher identity construction, and L2 classroom discourse. It ends with a brief summary of related studies to reveal the gap for the current study.

### Perspectives on identity

The concept of identity is addressed differently with different meanings in the literature. In the field of teacher education, research into identity is most influenced by the work of the well-known author James Paul Gee (2000), which this paper, too, is drawn its theoretical perspective on. The author defines identity as being recognised as a certain kind of person in a given context. For example, a person may be recognised as an academic, a community activist, an “at risk” student, an overly macho male, and so on and so forth, through numerous possibilities (p.99). Those “kinds of person” ones are recognised at a given time and place, likely to change from context to context, and can be ambiguous. In this sense, Gee claims that people have multiple identities, which are connected not to their permanent states but to their interactions and performances in the society. With that, Gee does not deny the fact that every one of us has a “core identity” (p. 99), which is fixed; the author, instead, takes the sociocultural approach to identity to explain why this concept can be used as an analytical tool for education research.

For an understanding of what it means to be recognised as a certain kind of person in a given context, Gee (2000) draws on four ways to view identity, as presented in the following table:

Four ways to view identity

	Process		Power	Source of power
1	Nature-identity: a state	developed from	forces	in nature
2	Institution-identity: a position	authorized by	authorities	within institutions
3	Discourse-identity: an individual trait	recognized in	the discourse/dialogue	of/which “rational” individuals
4	Affinity-identity: experiences	shared in	the practice	of “affinity” groups

(Gee, 2000, p. 100)

An example given by Gee for each perspective on identity is being an identical twin,

being a college professor, being a charismatic person, and being a “Trekkie”, a fan of a US television programme Star Trek. Roughly, the first perspective concerns we are what we are primarily because of our natures; the second perspective: we are what we are primarily because of our positions in the society; the third perspective: we are what we are primarily because of our accomplishments as recognised by others; and the fourth perspective: we are what we are because of the experiences we have within our affinity groups. It is crucial, the author emphasizes that, these four perspectives are not separate but interrelate to each other. Indeed, these are four ways to understand how identity is functioning for a person to act in a specific context. In this view, and also shared by other researchers (e.g., Flum & Kaplan, 2012), identity, in contemporary literature, means both individually and socially, and concerns the interplay between the individual and the society.

### **Sociocultural approach to identity construction**

A sociocultural approach to identity conceives identity as dynamic and fluid across contexts (Norton, 2006). Under this approach, identity construction is viewed to be empowered or constrained as individuals use cultural and social resources for constructing identities when actively engaged in particular local activity settings (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995).

As claimed in the previous section, identity encompasses the individual and the society. Researchers share a point that the process of identity formation attaches to the sense of being part of (Flum & Kaplan, 2012) or being recognised by others (Gee, 2000). It is an ongoing developmental process of constructing and reconstructing oneself, making some identities obsolete and creating opportunities for other identities to develop to fit the change, especially in the contemporary society (Gee, 2000). Indeed, literature on identity in the sociocultural framework views identity as an active, ongoing process constructed through social practice, not as a set of inherent characteristics (Taylor, 2017). Not because you say you are a teacher means that you are a teacher; instead, that you are a teacher is recognized through your activities in a particular discursive context. When you move to another discursive context, you carry that identity as a base from which you create new activities, new worlds, and new ways of being. In that sense, identity provides space for one’s endeavor for better work and serves as a resource for constructing one’s new being (Taylor, 2017). Flum and Kaplan (2012) share that identity formation is a product of interrelatedness between the context and the individual person.

Within the literature on identity in teacher education, sociocultural view to identity construction allows us to see how a teacher is coming into being in a broader view. It is found that how (new) teachers get engaged in professional activities such as seminars, workshops, training courses, or adopt new teaching methods and technologies, and so on and so forth can lead to how they shape and reshape their identities as teachers (Flores & Day, 2006). For new

teachers particularly, it is a “two-way struggle”, according to Flores and Day (2006): they try to create their own practice by both attempting to match their work to their vision of how it should be, and at the same time being subjected to powerful forces from the school (p. 220). This process is open, ongoing, dynamic, and shifting, mediated by both teachers’ practices, and their beliefs and values, which are, inherently fluid, shaped by what they hold for them and aspire them to be as teachers. Teacher identity formation, in this sense, concerns the interplay between the teacher’s self and the context in which the teacher operates.

### **Perspectives on language teacher identity**

Theories on identity center three perspectives: first, identity is not fixed, stable, and unitary, but shifting, multiple, and conflictual; second, identity is not context-free but related to social, cultural, and political context; and third, identity is constructed, maintained, and negotiated through discourse (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2009). Drawing on these perspectives, Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson put forth ways of theorizing language teacher identity within three frameworks: i, social identity theory, ii, situated learning – the process of becoming part of a community of practice; and iii, the notion of image-text. According to social identity theory, the concept of identity draws on the social categories created by the society. Language teacher identity is thus clearly seen to be multiple and tied primarily to group membership (i.e., related to social, cultural, and political context). Situated learning reminds us that identity is something constructed, not fixed, and the process of construction takes place in particular social settings, that is the process of becoming. The notion of image-text allows us to specify how identity emerges through and in language. While each perspective has its own limitations, as the authors claim, an openness to the multiple theoretical approaches enables a richer understanding of language teacher identity.

While understanding teacher identity can be from various perspectives: the on-going process of re-inventing of teachers themselves deriving from the interplay between teachers’ self and particular contexts, the reflective narratives that teachers create to talk about their teacher life, the variety of discourse that teachers produce and participate in, further caution towards any attempts for defining teacher identity is interjected by Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), revolving the connection of identity and self. From a sociological perspective, self is defined as “meanings we hold for ourselves when we look at ourselves” (Stets & Burke, 2003, p. 130). Markus and Nurius (1986) construct the notion of possible selves representing “individuals’ ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming” (p. 954). In relation to teacher identity, the concept of self composes of three dimensions: the actual self (the one that currently prevails), the ought self (the one recognized as the goal), and the ideal self (the one that the individual set as target for

achievement) (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 179). In that sense, it is noted both the internal factors and external factors when it comes to teacher identity formation. While a teacher may have her or his own idea of what kind of teacher s/he wants to become, ideally, the interaction between her or his values and the context may lead to a (different) kind of teacher s/he comes up with at the end, in a particular context. In Beauchamp and Thomas's discussion, identity should be viewed in relation to not only the personal dimension of self but also with respect to the profession (the teaching), thus the "professional identity" (p. 179). The authors emphasise that within a teacher's professional identity are sub-identities, which may be more or less central to the over-all identity.

### **Features of second language classroom discourse**

When it comes to classroom discourse, it is commonly referred to as the discourse, conventionally defined as language in use (e.g., Chang, 2016; Gee, 2014; Irwin & Hramiak, 2010; Rymes, 2015), of the classroom. Literature normally concerns the interactions between the teacher and students for an understanding of intended learning outcomes with respect to an investigation into classroom discourse (Walsh, 2006). On the part of the teacher particularly, it is claimed that the teacher plays a significant role in constituting the classroom discourse. This section presents features of second language (L2) classroom discourse, which reflects the centrality of the teacher in the classroom, which facilitates an exploration of how the teacher constructs identity in the classroom. The features are derived from Walsh's book (2006), typically comprising: control of patterns of communication, elicitation, repair strategies, and modifying speech to learners.

Regarding communication patterns, features of the L2 classroom discourse are simple in terms of its structure, for the teacher controls both the topic of the conversation and turn-taking. It is claimed by many authors that the teacher controls most of the patterns of communication through ways s/he facilitates or restricts interactions and thus learning opportunities, like the one who "orchestrates the interaction" (Walsh, 2006, p.5). The teacher has the topic for discussion, controls who may talk and when, gives cues, and manages the interaction. The structure of an L2 lesson is well-known represented by Sinclair and Coulthard (cited in Walsh, 2006) as a three-part exchange I-R-E/F, in which I stands for teacher initiation, R stands for learner response, and E or F stands for teacher evaluation or feedback.

Elicitation concerns the teacher asking questions as a principal way to control the discourse. Because the teacher has the topic or content of the lesson, and classroom questions typically are to facilitate the production of the target language or to correct students' content-based responses, most of the questions the teacher asks are of close-ended questions or questions that lead to short responses (Walsh, 2006). Many authors examine types of questions

the teacher asks and focus on two main types: one is to check information (teacher already knows the answer, e.g. *what is the past tense of go*), and the other is to seek information (teacher does not know the answer, e.g. *do you have any brother or sister?*). The use of question types depends on the pedagogical goal of particular lessons. At some point or stage of the lesson, it may be more or less appropriate for the teacher to ask questions that produce communicative and longer responses, for example *Why*-questions. It is thus important for the teacher to be aware of functions of questions: to aid comprehensibility, to manage class, to encourage students' participation and involvement, to signal turns. To put it in another way, quality, quantity, and complexity of learner contribution and interactions is strongly influenced by the nature of elicitation questions.

Repair, or error correction, though might be subject to conflicting views of criticism, prevails in a language class and is done by the teacher as a "ritualistic behavior" (Walsh, 2006, p. 10). It can be direct or indirect, overt or covert. During a lesson, the teacher has many options for error correction, which may introduce or impede learning opportunities to learners. Researchers thus claim that error correction should be related to pedagogical goals of the lesson (Walsh, 2006).

Language modification by the teacher is studied from different perspectives by many authors. It is claimed to be critical to students' comprehension and thus progress. It is for the teacher to model the target language for students, which, in many cases, is the students' only opportunity for target language exposure. It is also for the teacher to modify or simplify his or her language when students do not understand their teacher. For some other authors, the ways in which the teacher modifies his or her language provide insights into the interactional organization of the classroom, underlying which reveals the teacher's various use of verbal strategies for desired learning outcomes. Lynch (1996, cited in Walsh, 2006), identifies a number of ways in which teachers can modify their language, namely confirmation check (ensuring the teacher understands the student), comprehension check (ensuring the student understands the teacher), repetition (the teacher repeating), clarification request (asking the student to clarify), reformulation (rephrasing the student's utterance), completion (finishing the student's utterance), and backtracking (returning to a previous part of the dialogue). These strategies can help optimize the desired learning outcomes when they are used consciously and deliberately by the teacher, as claimed by some authors (Walsh, 2006).

What all of the features of L2 classroom discourse briefly presented above reveals is the central role of the teacher in the class and in the learning outcomes when the teacher is aware of and equipped with classroom strategies suitable for pedagogical goals of particular lessons.

### **Summary of related studies**

A great deal of research studies in the field of teacher education employing the analytical lens of identity has been done across contexts. In the context of ESP programmes at university, research by Tao & Gao (2018) reveals that teachers were confronted with challenges when they worked with learners who were more knowledgeable of the related subjects than the teachers, thus underwent the “professional identity struggles” (p.1). Research by Nevgi and Löfström (2015) with a focus on the development of academics’ teacher identity in the context of an extensive university teacher development programme reveals that the research-intensive environment may facilitate the development of strong researcher identities but teacher identities for academics may remain underdeveloped. In the context of teachers constructing their identities as researchers as a tool to better their teaching profession, research by Taylor (2017) shows how a case teacher through personal narratives positioned herself and was positioned by learners as a teacher researcher in the classroom discourse. Remarkably, research into identity construction of early or novice teachers is investigated much in terms of both quantity and quality and uncovered worthy findings. A common point shared by most studies (e.g., Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Flores & Day, 2006; Gu & Benson, 2015; Hong, 2010; Oruç, 2013) is that teacher identity construction of novice teachers is a process of continuously inventing and re-inventing themselves, the process that reveals the interplay between personal and contextual factors. While findings from those studies have been of significance in that they help strengthen theories of teacher identity with various research methodology and contexts; not much has been done about the relationship between identity construction and classroom discourse. Particularly, how a novice teacher shapes her teacher identity in particular discourses across the classroom landscape is left with much to explore. It is this under-explored area that the current study aims to investigate.

### **3. Methodology**

This paper is derived from a study on a large scale over a period of two years, bringing focus into the construction of identity of novice teachers. Qualitative perspective is employed in this particular case study because this perspective enables a better view of process rather than product (Markee, 2015), which aligns with research in identity construction. Moreover, qualitative case study allows a unique, detailed, and comprehensive presentation of the teacher in particular classroom discourses. This section presents the research setting and the focal participant, instruments and procedures of data collection.

#### **The research setting and the focal participant**



The research setting of this study is a university in the central of Vietnam. The university was established in 2004, offers training programs and carries out research in the fields of foreign language teaching and learning, language study, and culture. Languages being trained include English, French, Chinese, Russian, Japanese, Korean languages and training programs vary from pedagogy, translation-interpretation to language and culture, tourism. The immediate setting is English Department, offering training in Translation and Interpretation, Linguistics, Methodology of English Language Teaching, and Practical Language Skills to English-majored students both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

The focal participant in this study is a female Vietnamese trainee teacher in English Department. Her name is Megan (pseudonym). Megan was recruited in 2019 by the university and started the one-year probation period for trainee teachers since 2019. Megan completed her Bachelor of English degree in the same department of the university. She was in her early twenties when she participated in the study.

#### **Instruments and procedures of data collection**

Semi-structured interview and classroom observation were two primary instruments for data collection in this study.

Semi-structured interview, the instrument for obtaining deep responses and insights, was used two times: one was before the researcher observed the trainee teacher's first class, and the other was after the researcher observed all the trainee teacher's classes. The first interview was to obtain the trainee teacher's general perceptions of teacher identity and teacher identity construction. The second interview was to capture the trainee teacher's reflection upon her practices in her classes in terms of what she did to build her teacher identity in the specific classrooms. Although the interviews were based on a number of specific questions planned beforehand, they allowed for further exploration according to the interviewee's responses. Each interview lasted approximately an hour, was carried out in the Vietnamese language in a quiet staff room in the university between the trainee teacher and the researcher, tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interview transcripts were then read many times, coded by grouping relevant words or chunks of word expressions, and analysed with the inductive method to generate emergent themes.

Classroom observation, for classroom discourse, was the other main source of data for the study. The researcher observed three classes taught by the trainee teacher at the university. All the classes were Translation Practice classes for three different groups of first-year English majors, each of which lasted for 90 minutes. The purpose of classroom observation was for the researcher to capture the trainee teacher in her real classroom in terms of what she did and said,

to be recognized as a teacher in front of the students. The observation was recorded with an I-phone and transcribed verbatim. The researcher observer also took notes of as much of what happened in the class as she could to support the collection of data. While interview provided data on how identity and identity construction was perceived and expressed in language, data from classroom observation allowed for an exploration of how identity was constructed by the trainee teacher through practices in the real classrooms.

#### 4. Research findings

In this section, the data about teacher Megan are presented in three areas: the image of teacher Megan as generally perceived and verbally depicted by herself, Megan's classroom climate, and pieces of lecture discourse in Megan's classes. Data presentation, as guided by the research question, is to illustrate the theoretical concept of teacher identity construction as an effortful, ongoing, and dynamic process implemented primarily through discourse.

##### **The general image of teacher Megan**

Megan was in her early twenties when she participated in this study. She was a non-Pedagogy student – her BA was in English Language Studies. She had been teaching official classes for undergraduate English majored students for six weeks when she participated as a case in this study. Regardless of being a home tutor of English as a part-time job when she was a university student, the six-week experience as a teacher was remarked by Megan as follows:

It went fast and I was not able to see everything clearly until I started my official teaching classes. I have started to see my identity as a teacher in my real classes.

So what had she been doing to be recognized as a teacher, i.e. to construct her teacher identity, in her teaching classes during that six-week period of time? In the interview, she came up with three important things without any hesitation:

[To construct my teacher identity] for one third of the semester so far, I think the most important factor is pedagogical competence, the second is classroom management skills, and the third is teacher-student relationship.

To clarify the comments, she differentiated the pedagogical competence with expertise, about which she was not most concerned. Megan stressed that pedagogical ability, the ability to deliver the lesson to suit students of all levels in a (big) class so that the very-able students do not get bored and the less-able ones can catch up well, must only be achieved through experience. This is an on-going process of building and re-building from practice, or reality, without being pre-taught from theory, she claimed. When it came to classroom management

skills, the skills of how to get all students to have constructive contribution to the lesson, according to her, this is where Megan exerted her teacher power strongly and clearly in specific classes, as she said in the interview and did it evidently in her teaching classes through what she called 'martial law'. She said that she had to exercise teacher power right from the first classes and in every day of all her classes. As for the third factor, the teacher-student relationship was perceived by Megan from her own perspective. Megan affirmed that it was her young age and young look that made her students feel closer to her, which, fortunately, in her words, was beneficial for students' learning process in that they would not feel hesitant to ask the teacher right away when necessary; and she would always help the students as a teacher. Megan expanded that the teacher-student relationship was not necessarily that of a clear-cut boundary, say, between senior teachers and their students, but it was the closeness in students' feeling, something the teacher should be aware of, that brings the teacher and students together.

While Megan was fully aware of and endeavoured to practise those three factors to shape and reshape her teacher identity in specific classes every day, she revealed some aspects of her selves to show how that fueled the representation of her teacher identity. This is what she expressed:

I want to be a cool teacher like Ms C. But I think I am now someone like Ms T, someone friendly. Being cool doesn't mean you are cold. I want to be close to the students [...] This also has negative effect, because students are likely to become lazy, they are not obedient when the teacher is easy, like Ms T. [...] So I am friendly but I have to be strict with the bonus system [i.e., academically].

It is clear from her words that Megan's teacher selves were represented differently in different contexts: she wanted to be close for the sake of the teacher-student relationship, but she also wanted to be strict when it came to academic work. With that, Megan brought in the interview her prior experience as a student to explain for her seemingly conflictual selves. Looking back on her university time, Megan recalled both positive and negative effects of many teaching models from teachers she admired, which had influence upon the ways in which she was now trying to form her teacher identity. Remarkably, the fact that some of her university teachers now became her senior colleagues was extending opportunities for Megan to reflect on the process of inventing herself as a teacher. In the interview, she commented on this as follows:

I visited Ms H's class to learn. The distinctive feature of her class was her huge knowledge. Apart from her teaching, she brought in occasional stories to inspire us. She told them from her experience. I couldn't do that now. Besides teaching the lesson, the teacher should be able to inspire students through stories. I want to be like that in the future, when I have more experience.

It is noticeable through the interview that negative and positive effects of teaching models she

had experienced as a student now seemed to play a mediating role in the process of Megan's shaping and reshaping who she was as a teacher. For this initial teaching experience of six weeks, she said that she was confidently "on the right track" being friendly but strict in her classes.

### **The classroom climate**

This body of findings resulted mainly from classroom observation of Megan's classes. Remarkably, to the researcher observer, the ambience of all her classes was very lively in a competitive way. Dialogues like the followings were distinctive in her classes:

Extract 1

Student (S): May I go to the board teacher?

Megan (M): No. Only two people for a question at a time.

Extract 2

M: Check the dictionary for "a piece of cake". What is it in Vietnamese? We say "đẽ như ăn cháo" don't we? It is "a piece of cake" in English.

S: [silent]

M: I told you that idioms are informal. Raise your hand if you know the answer.

Extract 3

M: Question three is easy to get marks. Those who have few bonus marks will be called.

S: [silent]

M: You never went to the board [teacher points to a student]. You, you, and you.

S: [writing on the board]

M: Spelling mistakes will reduce your marks remember. You cannot get it wrong for this question.

To name just a few, but almost all Megan's classes were in that spirit. Nonverbal interactions within a class of Megan's were also as fast and abundant as verbal ones, loaded with students going to the board or standing at their own places to answer questions of translation. Since all Megan's classes I observed were Translation Practice, the class ambience was heavily bonus mark driven. Megan explained for that in the interview:

At university level, students are the center. Students lead their own learning. But I always try to "hold the handle of the knife". I am friendly but I have to bind the students with the bonus mark system. I am not sure if those who do not have enough bonus marks can pass my course.

It was clear from her words and exactly her practice that Megan represented as a teacher with teacher power in her classes (e.g., allowing or disallowing students to go to the board) so

that she could manage and control the bonus mark-driven practice section as fairly, in her sense, as possible. This practice underpinned what she called pedagogical ability, one of the three factors to help form teacher identity, as she explained in the interview as follows:

I have to regulate [students' contribution]. I endeavour so that every student can have constructive contribution to the lesson. I mean their contributions should be equal. I try to create opportunities so that the less active or less able students feel encouraged to get engaged. [...] In order to do that, I have to exert teacher power. I have to implement 'martial law'.

When it came to "martial law", remarkably, Megan said that on the first days of her classes, a number of students appeared impolite upon hearing about the bonus mark system, saying that no one would want to go to class if so, and she said she ignored those comments. But gradually she managed to make the students become more competitive and active because they felt encouraged with the bonus marks.

#### **Lecture discourse: Teacher centrality**

This body of finding is derived from classroom observation data of the lecture section of Megan's classes. Particularly, in every of Megan's classes that I observed, she often had a little lecture in which she taught a point of grammar relevant to particular practice of translation. This piece of lecture discourse was to display teacher centrality through features of classroom discourse described in the literature such as control of patterns of communication, elicitation, repair strategies, and modifying speech to learners.

Firstly, in terms of patterns of communication, interactions like the followings were prevalent:

##### Extract 4

M: Now we have a sentence like this [PowerPoint slideshow: "Jill was given a bar of chocolate"]. We have to translate it into Vietnamese language. You please?

S: Một thanh sô cô la được đưa cho Jill.

M: Does that sentence sound good? No one would say so. Jill được cho một thanh sô cô la [PowerPoint slideshow "Jill được cho một thanh sô cô la]

##### Extract 5

M: How do you translate this sentence into Vietnamese [Teacher writes on the board "John had his nose broken in a football match"]?

S: [silent]

M: John bị gãy mũi. In Vietnamese language we have "được" or "bị" right? But it is not always the case that when we say "được" or "bị" it is then passive voice in English language.

As can be seen from those extracts, the teacher controlled the communication in terms of the content, the lesson procedure, and who will talk and when. Looking closely at particular exchanges, for every move made by the student, the teacher made two. This kind of pattern typified the structure of three-part exchange IRF, meaning teacher initiates, student responds, and teacher feedbacks, typically in a lecture section.

Secondly, in terms of elicitation, it is evident in a lecture section in terms of question-answer exchange that the teacher asks most of the questions as a principal way to facilitate the production of target language. Literature discusses teacher's question types and questioning strategies as critical to the extent of students' participation and likely comprehension. This can be illustrated with the following extracts:

Extract 6

M: I will give you an example so that you can see it clearer. "You should have your car checked regularly" [Teacher writes on the board] How do you translate this sentence?

S: [silent]

M: Can you think of what we often say in Vietnamese language in this situation?

S: [silent]

M: Bạn nên cho xe đi bảo dưỡng thường xuyên.

Extract 7

M: For passive voice in Vietnamese language, we have "được" or "bị" in Vietnamese right? But it is not always the case that the "được" or "bị" in Vietnamese means passive voice. For example: [PowerPoint slideshow] "Chúng tôi được biết anh và gia đình đã chuyển vào thành phố Hồ Chí Minh" and "We are known that you and your family has moved to HCM city." Who can correct the English sentence? We are known? [voice stresses on the word *known* and raising tone at the sound *n*]

S: We know

M: Ok. Right.

It is clear that the question types used by the teacher, the so called display questions, indicate that she already knew the answer, and they were used to elicit short responses of language forms rather than language content. This is typical in a lecture section, in which the teacher was delivering new grammar points. In terms of questioning strategies, questions like "Can you think of what we often say in Vietnamese language in this situation?", were used to aid comprehension; or, "Who can correct the English sentence? We are known?" served to provide opportunities for students' participation.

While elicitation was prevalent in a lecture session, repair prevailed in the practice

section, when students went to the board or stood at their table to answer questions from the teacher, and the teacher responded to their answers as feedback to either directly or indirectly correct something. As illustrative examples for repair, these following extracts could show what happened in this kind of discourse:

Extract 8

S: [writing on the board] Hoan Kiem Lake, also known as Guom Lake, is a history lake located in central Hanoi.

M: History Lake [voice stress on *history*]? Does that sound right? [asking and laughing]. Who can correct?

Extract 9

S: [writing on the board] I know that the shop on this street has been closed.

M: Is the word *close* OK? What word do we use to mean stop the business? It's shut down. [voice stress on the word *shut down*]

Extract 10

S: [writing on the board] Lecturers still expectations students to use correct grammar and punctuation in essays.

M: Is this sentence correct? This word [pointing to the word *expectations*] is a noun. Expect ok?

Since these were Translation Practice classes, which meant the goal of the lesson was correct language forms, teacher feedback like in those extracts was dominant. Speech modification by the teacher to the students was also prevalent in Megan's classes. In these Translation Practice lessons, modification was observed to take place in such ways as follows:

Extract 11

S: [standing at the table and translating an English sentence to Vietnamese language]

M: [talking to the whole class] Uh huh. I've just taught this. This is causative right? You checked or someone else checked?

Extract 12

S: [writing the translated sentence on the blackboard]

M: [talking to the whole class] Ok. First, please identify the relative clause restrictive or non-restrictive. [a brief pause] So in this sentence, is this clause restrictive or non-restrictive?

Extract 13

S: [writing the translated sentence on the blackboard]

M: [talking to the whole class] Is the word *close* ok? What word do we say to mean stop the business? [a brief pause] It's *shut down*.

Extract 14

S: [writing the translated sentence on the blackboard]

M: [talking to the whole class] This is correct. Last week we talked about the word *lots of*. What are features of formal language?

Modification in those extracts moved beyond linguistic rephrasing or paraphrasing of the particular students' responses to providing information with extensive elicitation, where question strategies were used to scaffold students' comprehension. In this way, speech modification to students were not simply and necessarily rephrasing or paraphrasing of language within an exchange to ease the process of understanding of the particular students who provided the responses. What teacher Megan did was expanding interactions to the whole classroom discourse, involving not only the particular students who provided the responses but also the whole class, to facilitate learning opportunities.

All of those features of classroom discourse that are described above display teacher centrality out of what Megan did in her real classes as a teacher. In a word, the image of Megan as a teacher was well established and fully captured in the classroom discourse, not only through her practice but also through the students' engagement with classroom activities. Teacher identity construction, in this way, took place through both the teacher's positioning herself as a teacher and being positioned by the students in the classroom community.

## 5. Discussion

The research findings presented above gave rise to an issue worth discussion, and responds to the research gap as indicated in the literature review, that is the relationship of identity construction and classroom discourse. As claimed by Megan in the interview, she could not see what she was like as a teacher until she started to teach her real classes. Core to this idea is that identity is formed through discourse, and it is classroom discourse that is, arguably, primary to teacher identity formation. On the one hand, what Megan perceived to do to be recognized as a teacher plays a key role in the constitution of the classroom discourse. That is reflected through the idea of "holding the handle of the knife", as Megan worded her classroom practice and persisted to implement evidently. Megan's classroom climate, which was bonus mark driven and competitively lively, illustrates the one way of identity-classroom discourse relationship, which affords to what Gee (2014) claims: "identities organize our social worlds"



(p. 20).

On the other hand, teacher identity formation also involves the teacher attempting to be a kind of teacher to fit in a particular context (Gu & Benson, 2015). As Gu and Benson point out, drawing on Community of Practice theory by Wenger (cited in Gu & Benson, 2015), engagement, one of the three dimensions of identity formation, involves the teacher developing a sense of who s/he is, how s/he participates in activities, and what competences s/he needs. This goes in alignment with Megan's idea that the teacher's pedagogical ability needs lived experience, or practice, to develop and to be adjusted through particular classes. Obviously, each class is never the same, which requires the teacher's ability to align to fit in. This is especially true for Megan, the novice teacher with only six weeks of teaching, thus experience is crucial. As discussed in the literature, the formation of teacher identity for novice teachers in the early years of teaching, involves both their personal vision of how their work should be and their being subjected to the powerful forces of school culture (Gu & Benson, 2015). This implies the mutually constitutive relationship between identity and discourse: on the one hand, the vision of a kind of teacher that the teacher holds for herself helps shape the classroom discourse the way she aspires; on the other hand, the performance of the teacher in class is hugely impacted by particular classroom discourses, which at both the macro and micro level, are forced by the institutional and socio-cultural contexts.

## 6. Conclusion

This case study, which is aimed to examine the trainee teacher's perceptions and practices to be recognised as a teacher in the class, has presented the formation of teacher identity in the relationship with classroom discourse through the case of Megan as a novice teacher in a university. With data from semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, key findings of the paper show how Megan perceived to be recognized as a teacher and how she actually performed in the class is significantly interrelated with the formation of classroom discourse. The sociocultural view of identity, on which the paper has drawn, affords for a better understanding of Megan's perceptions and practices to illustrate how teacher identity is constructed, negotiated, and maintained primarily through classroom discourse. With that, the paper argues for the mutually constitutive relationship between teacher identity and classroom discourse.

Despite of studying the case teacher with only six-week teaching experience, which may contribute to the limitation of the study into teacher identity construction, a focus on how the teacher shaped and reshaped her identity through particular discourses across individual classroom landscapes can help illuminate the mutually constitutive relationship between

identity construction and classroom discourse.

With particular attention paid to Megan as a novice teacher with very little experience of teaching, the paper would like to provide information for teacher educators and trainee teachers themselves to extend understanding of trainee teachers in terms of who they are, what they do, and why they do so in the transitional period of becoming a teacher. The ultimate aim of the paper is the more information of this kind that we have, the better we can design our teacher education programme.

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