The dynamic professional identity of the Vietnamese EL teacher educator

Dr. Khanh-Linh Tran-Dang
The University of Khanh Hoa - Vietnam
Teacher educators’ professional identities

Identity: “a set of reifying, significant, endorsable stories about a person” (Sfard and Prusak, 2005, p. 14)

Getting data about teacher educators’ professional identities:

- From what TEs say about themselves, either about who they think they are (their actual identity), or who they would like to be and how they would like to do their work (their self-designated identity)
- From TEs’ stories about others, or through their evaluation of others’ work
- From the way they teach
Aim of the study

- To understand how the TEs appropriate Task-based Language Teaching in their teaching practice
- the factors that may affect TEs’ decisions about TBLT
- possible mechanism underpinning their appropriation of TBLT

Presentation focus

- TEs’ appropriation of TBLT in relation to their perceptions about themselves
Ms. Fern
Early 40s
MA in TESOL
18 years as TE
Head of English Department
Blue Stone College of Education
1 interview
1 demonstration class
6 class observations
7 focus group discussions

Ms. Willow
Early 50s
BA in Russian
MA in TESOL
28 years as TE, incl.
9 yrs teaching Russian
Head of English Division
White Sand College of Education
1 interview
1 demonstration class
5 class observations
6 focus group discussions
Findings

Neither of the TEs in this research had received any formal training about TBLT or in how to train pre-service teachers to use TBLT.

Both asserted that they had used tasks to a certain extent in their classes.
Findings

Ms. Fern
PPP in class
Real-life tasks outside class as extended last P

Affecting factor 1:
Past learning experiences

Ms. Willow
Random real-life tasks in class

Affecting factor 1:
Past learning experiences
Affecting factor 2:
Willingness & confidence

Younger cohorts (of EFL teachers) may have another orientation better than taught English teachers and perhaps better as established in that using orientation shifts factors of what teachers believe in as learners. We all liked it and learnt so much from him about how to help students to learn trends, which conflict with GTM, and this gets stuck for a long time. Last year I taught Presentation skills and it was another move away from the usual. In the past, I didn't have any book on TBLT or TBLT. I just read on the Internet. But since I attended a course, a training course in X [name of a city], I observed a master trainer work and I followed, I tried to follow.
Findings

Ms. Fern
PPP in class
Real-life tasks outside class as extended last P
Affecting factor 2:
Perceptions of ELT

Ms. Willow
Random real-life tasks in class
Affecting factor 3:
Perceptions of ELT

We teach so that the students can use the target language, not learn about it and keep it in notebooks at home.

In the context of Vietnam, in which people start to learn English when they are no longer children, GTM is definitely OK in this context.

Priority is fluency but I don’t reduce the importance of accuracy. I always make my students be aware of the importance of accuracy when they produce the language.
Findings

Ms. Fern
PPP in class
Real-life tasks outside class as extended last P

Affecting factor 3: 
Perceptions of TBLT

Ms. Willow
Random real-life tasks in class

Affecting factor 4: 
Perceptions of TBLT

For a task-based lesson to be highly appreciated, it should be at a level where students have the right to choose certain language to fulfill the assigned tasks. However, this version of TBLT was only what we two stages as students’ knowledge and language learnt from theory. In reality, the target language is highly difficult to apply TBLT in the first stage. TBLT helps develop students’ language in a natural way, allowing them to use language in their real life...

I just want to create a setting other than a normal classroom: here we gather together to share ideas, so they can sit in groups wherever they choose.
Findings

Ms. Fern
PPP in class
Real-life tasks outside class as extended last P

Affecting factor 4:
Perceptions of language tasks

Ms. Willow
Random real-life tasks in class

Affecting factor 5:
Perceptions of language tasks

I think a task is like an assignment that we teachers give to students to carry out. Tasks can be diverse; a task can be real-world or can have nothing to do with the students' lives.

Tasks are big activities for the students. Role-play is real-life, practical and task-based. The students may use the language they have learnt before but they can complete the tasks in the way they like, the feel the most convenient for them.
Findings

Ms. Fern
PPP in class
Real-life tasks outside class as extended last P
Affecting factor 5: Perceptions of her role in class

Ms. Willow
Random real-life tasks in class
Affecting factor 6: Perceptions of her role in class

For a task-based lesson to be highly appreciated, it should be at a level where students have the right to choose certain tasks, especially if the assigned tasks are not random. However, if TBLT is what we learnt from theory, the target language is provided instead.

If I were you, instead of showing the topic sentence and supporting ideas by underlying the sentences on the Power Point slides, I would let the students explore these features by themselves in a task, and I don't interfere much, and I just interfere when they needed my help.

If the teacher sides, everything the students are learning the features by themselves in a task and provide immediate feedback. In the end, they needed my help.
Findings

Ms. Fern
PPP in class
Real-life tasks outside class as extended last P
Affecting factor 6:
Perceptions of good COP

Ms. Willow
Random real-life tasks in class
Affecting factor 7
Perceptions of good COP

The teachers have the freedom to choose the techniques and methods in designing activities, whether general or specific to the class. Ms. Willow teaches English in the college, and she believes that the effective use of real-life tasks is essential for students to apply their learning in practical scenarios. Ms. Fern, on the other hand, has created a less formal learning environment where students are encouraged to engage in activities that are integrated into their daily lives outside the classroom.

I don't think all the teachers can fulfil the three stages of TBLT, even in its weaker form [PPP]. Yet, my orientation requires hard work on planning and marking; but everyone is supposed to do it for their classes. It's obligatory.

There are two teachers teaching Writing. We often discuss together and the approach we use together is PPP. I don't know much about the other teachers' orientations. The teachers are encouraged to develop their PPP lessons, but everyone is left to decide it for their classes. It's compulsory.

The teachers have the freedom to choose the techniques and methods in designing activities, whether general or specific to the class. Ms. Willow teaches English in the college, and she believes that the effective use of real-life tasks is essential for students to apply their learning in practical scenarios. Ms. Fern, on the other hand, has created a less formal learning environment where students are encouraged to engage in activities that are integrated into their daily lives outside the classroom.

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Teachers’ / Teacher educators’ teaching practice is a continuous process of appropriating teaching methods / approaches in a situated context (Littlewood, 2007).

Teachers’ practice can be substantially affected by their multiple identities: the learner, the teacher, beliefs about ELT, perceptions of learners & their needs, perceptions of their ‘power’ and ‘authority’.

Teacher identity is a complex, dynamic construct.

Teachers, with their multiple professional identities, really matter!

Continuous professional development opportunities are crucial for the teacher, the learner, and the education system as a whole.
References


Q & A?

THANK YOU!