

# A Comparison Between Roles of Professors Teaching English Literature Or TEFL at B.A Level and Professors Teaching TEFL at M.A Level In the Light of Goffman's Footing Theory

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## Abstract

This study aims to examine the metaphors selected by two hundred and forty Iranian B.A and eighty eight M.A students about their professors' roles. The participants were asked to select their preferred metaphors among twenty one metaphors of the checklist about their professors. The metaphors were then categorized based on Goffman's Footing Theory. The results revealed that professors teaching at B.A level mostly take on principal and author roles while professor teaching at M.A level take on author and animator roles.

**Keywords:** Footing Theory, Metaphor analysis

## 1. Introduction

The challenge of education has always been in choosing and retaining qualified teachers. The experts in teaching profession have also been concerned with providing qualified teachers with necessary knowledge and motivating them to have the optimum function (Vegas & Umansky, 2005). Key elements in the process of teaching and learning, teachers have undeniable influences on student achievement (Moafian & Pishghadam, 2008). More specifically, "development of teaching competence is our professional responsibility" (Pettis, 1997, p.70).

These and countless other studies gave special attention to teacher in any teaching profession. More specifically, it should be noted that teacher's role and language play crucial roles in classroom. Regarding this view, this study zero in on teacher's language from a different perspective, Goffman's footing theory, in which role of teacher is classified into three categories, namely, animator, author and principal.

## 2. Review of Literature

Late in his career, Goffman introduced the concept of Footing in conversation. Footing is the alignment that participants in interaction take with regard to one another (Goffman, 1981). As Lock and strong (2010) believed, "Footing was Goffman's way of showing how people shifted the ground of their conversation"(p.211). 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).

According to Goffman (1981), the terms speaker and hearer are too gross to provide us with anything beyond sound. Furthermore, the term speaker does not decompose the role of the one who speaks into smaller and more detailed elements. Attacking the general and oversimplified notion of speaker, Goffman proposed the theory that three roles of animator, author, and principal are taken on by the one who speaks.

As Goffman (1981, p.145) explained, reciting a fully memorized text or reading aloud from a prepared script allows us

to animate words we have no hand in and to express opinions, beliefs and sentiments we do not hold. To put in other words, animator is identified as the "talking machine, the thing that sound comes out of" (p.167), and "the one just moving his lips up and down to the accompaniment of his own facial gesticulations and issuing sounds from the locus of his mouth" (p.144). Animator and recipient are in the same level of analysis.

Author, the second role of speaker identified by Goffman (1981, p.144), is "someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded". Reading off from a text or a group of utterances which has not been memorized gives the speaker the role of author. In other words, "authoring an utterance means formulating and scripting the statements that have been made".

Finally, as Goffman (1981) clarified, principal is "someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken; someone whose beliefs have been told; someone who is committed to what the words say" (p.144), and the one "believing personally in what is said" (p.167). The principal role entails "the extraportaneous, 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).

Each of the roles animator, author, and principal taken by the speaker gives him/her a different production format. Various "production formats provide the speaker with different relationships to the words he utters", and "different grounds for his relation to his hearers" (Goffman, 1981, pp.229-230). 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 and his/her language is cited (Hancock, 1997). 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 "reads or repeats a line sometimes without understanding it" (Hancock, 1997).

Considerations on the nature of Footing Theory have been by definition theoretical. However, a clear operational identification of animator, author, and principal roles enables empirical studies. One way to do so is using hidden and implicit beliefs. As Pishghadam and Navari (2010) pointed out, every individual thinks and acts based on his/her conception of the world.

As efficient research tools for "bringing implicit assumptions to awareness, encouraging reflection, finding contradictions, and fostering change in educational beliefs and practice" (Cameron, 2003, cited in Pishghadam & Navari, 2010, p.172), metaphors are considered to be fundamental to language, thought and experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphors can be exploited to help the researchers find a way toward someone's way of thought (Stegar, 2007). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) also believed that metaphors have some entailments and inferences through which they highlight realities. They stated that "we define our reality in terms of metaphors which play a central role in the construction of social and political reality" (p.113). According to Tendahl & Gibbs (2008, p.1823), "Metaphor is at the nexus of mind and language". In particular, metaphors applied in a classroom "act as a referent for given actions of a teacher" (Tobin & Tippins, 1996, p.716). To sum up, metaphors provide researchers with "a holistic way of thinking about teaching and learning" (p.728).

An individual uses metaphorical language in order to offer a more concrete representation of a concept making it easier for listeners/readers to understand it (Singh, 2010). Metaphors generated about the concept of teaching by students provide insights into not only how do they see their current or previous school teachers, but also how they perceive their future role as a teacher (Singh, 2010).

A distinguishing function of metaphor is that it reveals attitudes of the participants without using direct questions (Pishghadam, Torgabeh & Navari, 2009). These researchers analyzed the metaphors forty language teachers in Iranian high school and institute generated about teacher and learner. The result revealed that most of metaphors generated by school teachers showed an atmosphere of behavioristic approach dominating teaching process of schools. Typical examples of the metaphors reflecting behavioristic approach were TEACHER AS CONDIUT and TEACHER AS RECEPIENT. On the other hand, institute teachers considered themselves as followers of guidelines of cognitive and constructive paradigm.

In a similar study through metaphor analysis, Pishghadam and Navari (2010) compared the condition of teaching English in Iranian high school to teaching English in Iranian institutes from learners' point of views. In this study, institute learners chose metaphors like teacher as a friend or teacher as an artist which highlighted the fact that conventions of cognitive/constructive learning are dominant in institutes. On the other hand, students at high schools

selected metaphors that displayed teacher's role as a provider and transmitter of knowledge. Such metaphors emphasized existence of classical behavioristic guidelines of learning in Iranian high schools. In addition, this study confirmed that making learners conscious of their hidden and implicit feelings, metaphor analysis provides an opportunity for learners' self-reflection and critical-awareness. As a result, language learners can perceive and define the classroom problems and decide upon actions for fostering change in educational beliefs and improving educational practices.

Nikitina and Furuoka's study (2008) focused on metaphors generated by language learners about language teachers. While the majority of studies employed a qualitative approach to metaphor analysis, this study used a quantitative analysis. It was conducted into two stages: in stage1, language learners were asked to generate their own metaphors. In stage2, a quantitative analysis of the students' generated metaphors from the previous stage was conducted by ranking them on a likert-type scale. The finding of this study showed that metaphors like teacher as boss reflected the fact that students' conceptualizations of their teachers evolved around the issue of power-sharing.

Saban, Kocbeker and Saban (2007) analyzed metaphors generated by prospective teachers about the concept of teaching. The researchers found association between participants' gender and metaphors generated by them. Male participants provided more facilitative-oriented (like lighthouse) and cooperative-oriented (like coach) metaphors than female while female participants generated more transmission-oriented (like knowledge provider), growth-oriented (like nurturer), and counseling-oriented (like parent) metaphors than males.

In a similar study, Saban (2004) investigated metaphors prospective teachers generated about themselves as future teachers, their elementary teachers, and their cooperative teachers. The results of this study revealed that the participants articulated less teacher-centered (like commander) and more student-centered (like gardener) metaphors about themselves in comparison to their elementary and cooperative teachers. Moreover, female participants were less teacher-centered and more student-centered than males.

### 3. Research Questions and Hypothesis

This research is conducted to find out answers to the following questions:

- 1) Is there any significant difference between roles of professors teaching English Literature or TEFL at B.A level as animator, author and principal?
- 2) Is there any significant difference between roles of professors teaching TEFL at M.A level as animator, author and principal?
- 3) What is the difference between roles of professors teaching English Literature or TEFL at B.A level and those teaching TEFL at M.A level as animator, author and principal?

In view of the above questions, the present study tries to provide empirical supports for the following hypotheses:

HO1- There is no significant difference between roles of professors teaching English Literature or TEFL at B.A level as animator, author and principal.

HO2- There is no significant difference between roles of professors teaching TEFL at M.A level as animator, author and principal.

### 4. Methodology

#### 4.1 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of two hundred and forty Iranian male and female students studying English Literature or TEFL at B.A level and eighty eight Iranian male and female students studying TEFL at M.A level. The participants were chosen from Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Tarbiat Moalem University of Sabzevar, Semnan University and Tabaran University. The average age of students studying at B.A level was twenty three while the average age of students studying at M.A level was twenty eight. No distinction was made between male and female students.

#### 4.2 Instrumentation: Metaphor Checklist

A metaphor checklist was employed in this study in order to address the research questions. The checklist constituted three types of metaphors, exhibiting three roles of animator, author and principal based on Goffman's Footing theory. This checklist comprised a prompt: "I think my professor is 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. The participants were required to choose the metaphors which best described their professors' roles. 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 0.83 for the whole sample. It shows that the results of the checklist are satisfactorily reliable in terms of their internal consistency.

#### 4.3 Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, both B.A and M.A students received a metaphor checklist. The participants were asked to select the metaphors that reflected to the highest degree their views about their professors. As Moser (2000) believed, metaphor analysis helps the researchers to determine the hidden beliefs and ideas behind metaphorical concepts. As for the first step, the metaphors that have been used randomly in the checklist were categorized under three roles of animator, author and principal. Then, the frequency of metaphors of each group was computed and Chi-square was run to find whether the differences are meaningful.

### 5. Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the results of Chi-square for the metaphors representing roles of professors teaching English Literature or TEFL at B.A level as animator, author, and principal chosen by two hundred and forty B.A students. As it can be clearly seen, there is a significant difference among metaphors determining professors' roles based on Goffman's Footing Theory ( $p < 0.000$ ). The result rejects the first hypothesis that *there is no significant difference between roles of professors teaching English Literature or TEFL at B.A level as animator, author and principal*. According to table 1, metaphors reflecting author and principal roles ( $N=1581$  and  $N=1385$ , respectively) were selected the most by the participants, comparing to the expected number ( $N=1217.7$ ). The results reveal that the professors teaching English Literature or TEFL and at B.A level mostly take on the roles of author and principal. On the other hand, metaphors reflecting animator role is ( $N=687$ ) is less than expected ( $N=1217.7$ ). It shows that animator role is the least dominant role taken on by the professors at this level.

<Table 1 about here>

Table 2 presents the results of Chi-square for the metaphors reflecting roles of professors teaching TEFL at M.A level as animator, author, and principal selected by eighty eight M.A students. As evident in this table, there is a significant difference among metaphors determining professors' roles based on Goffman's Footing Theory ( $p < 0.008$ ). This result rejects the second hypothesis that *there is no significant difference between roles of professors teaching TEFL at M.A level as animator, author and principal*. According to table 2, metaphors representing author and animator roles ( $N=406$  and  $N=395$ , respectively) outnumber what is expected ( $N=376$ ). Therefore, the students believe that their professors mostly take on the roles of author and animator in the classroom. On the other hand, metaphors reflecting principal role ( $N=327$ ) is less than expected ( $N=376$ ). This shows that principal role is the least dominant one taken on by professors at this level.

<Table 2 about here>

### 6. Conclusion

This research was conducted to investigate roles of professors teaching English Literature or TEFL at B.A level and roles of professors teaching TEFL at M.A level based on Goffman's Footing Theory, according to which roles of professors were categorized into three classes of animator, author, and principal. Through a metaphor checklist, the students were asked to select the metaphors which best described their professors' roles. Based on the result of this study, a noteworthy comparison was done between professors teaching at B.A level and those teaching at M.A level.

The results reveal that the students selected metaphors indicating that professors teaching at B.A level take on principal and author roles. A professor taking on principal role in classroom is someone who generates and transfers his/her original ideas. In other words, such a professor provides light through conveying his/her own beliefs and ideas. Metaphors such as writer and spring chosen by students display professors' roles as principal. Similarly, metaphors such as scaffolder and summarizer identify professors' roles as author. To put it clearly, a professor taking on author role in classroom is someone who simplifies, reformulates and summarizes what is presented in textbooks.

Another significant finding of this research pointed to the fact that professors teaching TEFL at M.A level take on author and animator roles. Again, metaphors like scaffolder, mixer and summarizer selected by students displayed professors' roles as author. Likewise, by selecting metaphors such as copy machine and parrot, students convey that professors' second dominant role is animator. As an animator, a professor repeats everything exactly from the textbooks without expressing their own original ideas. Such a professor just recites a fully-memorized text and makes the voice of material louder.

Therefore, it can be deduced that there is a difference between the roles of professors teaching at B.A and M.A level. According to the findings of this study, the first dominant role of the professors teaching at B.A level is principal while

author role is the first dominant role taken by the professors teaching at M.A level. It seems that, contrary to common expectations, expressing original ideas, projecting personality, challenging common beliefs and bringing about changes are happening on a more significant scale at B.A level. On the other hand, what is happening in the classrooms at M.A level is just summarizing, paraphrasing and reformulating the previously-made concepts. As a consequence, under such a situation, the students studying at this level are encouraged to follow the same trend presented in textbooks instead of creating new ways of thought. As such students are prospective teachers, the cycle of adopting author and animator roles repeats itself. This brings about the incontrovertible acceptance of concepts presented in textbooks which diminishes students' thinking critically.

In this study age and gender of participants were not taken in to account, so other studies can take these two points in to consideration. Moreover, this study was done just at English field in a few universities in Iran; therefore, other researches can be conducted to compensate these limitations.

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Table 1. The results of Chi-square for the metaphors selected by B.A students about their professors

	Observed N	Expected N	df	$\chi^2$	Sig.
Animator	687	1217.7	2	98.637	.000
Author	1581	1217.7	2		
Principal	1385	1217.7	2		
Total	3653				

Table 2. The results of Chi-square for the metaphors selected by MA students about their professors

	Observed N	Expected N	df	$\chi^2$	Sig.
Animator	395	376	2	98.637	.008
Author	406	376	2		
Principal	327	376	2		
Total	1128				