

Fall 11-21-2016

Teacher Identity, Motivation, and Career in the EFL Setting

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TEACHER IDENTITY, MOTIVATION, AND CAREER IN THE EFL SETTING

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
in English as a Second Language.

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Saint Paul, Minnesota

November 2016

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To the cavalry, foot soldiers, and camp-followers of the marauding army.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to look at how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' identities are formed and transformed throughout their careers. It will look at their initial perceptions of themselves and their motivations for entering the field, and how these perceptions and motivations change with regards to their ever-evolving teacher identity. It will also look at some of the different roles and challenges EFL teachers encounter while working in a foreign country and how this might contribute to their ultimate job satisfaction and desire to continue teaching. This chapter introduces the background of the researcher and some of the important distinctions between different types of ESL/EFL teachers. Additionally, the guiding questions of the research and data collection methods will be discussed.

While there is a significant amount of research pertaining to teacher identity overall, there is noticeably less research into teacher identity within the ESL/EFL field. There are many studies looking at ESL/EFL learners' motivations, but only a few of these studies address the topic from the perspective of teachers. Many researchers that look at teacher identity focus on teaching as a whole, with no distinction shown for the setting or the subject being taught (Hong, 2010; Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1999; Torres, 2011). When looking into teacher identity or motivation within EFL, these researchers usually focus on non-native English speaking (NNES) teachers (Tsui, 2007; Xu, 2012, 2013; Zacharias, 2010), a single country/region (Johnston, 1997; Mullock, 2009), or a select group of teachers at a single school or in one environment (Karavas,

2010; Koran, 2015). While this research is valuable, it fails to take into account many of the unique aspects of native English speaking (NES) EFL teachers who are living and working in a foreign country.

The research in this study will focus exclusively on NES EFL teachers, looking at a group of teachers who have taught outside of the United States for multiple years. The goal will be to investigate these teachers' initial motivations and identities, as well as how some of the identities may have evolved as their careers continued.

Background

I had never planned on becoming a teacher. There was no moment in my life when I felt the call to teach. However, in the spring of 2010, I found myself giving up my comfortable corporate job and moving halfway around the world to teach English as a Foreign Language. Over the next five years I would teach in four countries on three different continents and fly twice around the world. The contrast between my American life of relative ease and the reality of living and working in a foreign country was quite extreme. Each day was a challenging experience. But it was also an exhilarating experience.

During my training in America I learned a lot. I learned theories about language acquisition. I learned about lesson planning. I learned about student-centered classrooms and, most importantly, I learned how to stand at the front of a room and give a lesson. In short, I learned the basics of how to play the role of teacher. However, there are many other roles within EFL teaching and many other factors which influence those roles.

Because NES EFL teachers are often living and working in a foreign country where they do not speak the language and do not know the culture, their personal and professional identities are very different from those of a typical ESL teacher in America. In my five years of EFL

teaching I worked at language institutes, universities, public schools, and private companies. During this time, I was constantly assessing and reassessing my identity as a teacher, trying to figure out what roles I played for the students as well as for the companies and institutions at which I worked. Was I an instructor of English? Was I a cultural ambassador for the United States? Was I pale skinned foreigner who could be used as a promotional tool? What exactly was my role?

I was also intrigued as to whether or not my colleagues were undergoing similar assessments of their roles. I often wondered how they had come to be teachers and how they saw their place within the teaching profession. Did they see their position as the culmination of a journey to help the world, or were they merely passengers along for the ride? Did they see teaching as a piece of a bigger life plan, or had they just fallen into it?

Due to the fact that EFL teaching is not unified in any way, there are vastly different structures, standards, and job duties for teachers that vary from country to country. The profession has been characterized as “fragmented and lacking uniformity” (Valeo & Faez, 2013, p. 3). In addition to that, because many EFL teachers, myself included, either fell into teaching through happenstance or as a second choice (Johnston, 1997) there is often a lack of focus which can lead to frustration and an overall feeling of job dissatisfaction. This, in turn, “may contribute to ineffectiveness, unproductivity, psychological distress, and physical illness in employees” (Pennington & Riley, 1991, p. 60).

The overall lack of focus leads to a larger question: Do EFL teachers even identify as teachers? Or do they see their teaching job as merely temporary? Throughout my travels, I very rarely encountered people who had been in the profession longer than a few years. Those who had taught for longer periods of time typically described the decision as a reaction to some other

event in their life (marriage to a local, general dissatisfaction with America, and so forth). While they may have described their occupation as teacher, very few seemed to identify with that role as strongly as the licensed and tenured teachers I knew in the United States. As I progressed from one country to another, I began to wonder how many people see the choice to teach overseas as a lifelong commitment. If they do, are they happy in this choice?

Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) state, “In order to understand language teaching and learning we need to understand teachers...” I believe that looking at what motivates people to enter the field of EFL teaching and how their identities as teachers evolve and change over the course of their careers is an important topic because how a teacher identifies him/herself is a vital component to both greater effectiveness in that job and long-term sustainability of a career. It can help maximize one’s potential and can also prevent long-term cynicism and burnout.

It is believed that the information in this study will be a useful tool to understanding the mindset of EFL teachers. It could be helpful to schools and institutions with teacher recruitment and could help managers understand certain problems that may arise with teachers. It could be instrumental in keeping teachers employed at institutions for longer periods of time. It may also help teachers better understand the expectations and difficulties of their chosen profession.

Distinguishing Characteristics of EFL and ESL

It is important to distinguish between several aspects of the ESL/EFL field. Many people use the terms ESL and EFL interchangeably. However, there are several distinct groups within the profession. The three which most pertain to the research covered in this paper are:

1) NES ESL teachers that live and work in an English-speaking community. These teachers are usually teaching NNES students. In general, we can say these are citizens of English-speaking countries that Kachru (1985) describes as “inner-circle” (such as the USA, UK, Canada, or Australia). They are native speakers of English, live and work in an inner-circle country, and teach immigrants, refugees, or other NNES students.

2) NNES EFL teachers that live and work in a community where English is not the dominant language. This group may also include teachers who live and work in a multilingual society where English is used as a lingua franca (such as India, Nigeria, or Malaysia) and who are considered native speakers, but who speak what Kachru describes as an “outer-circle” variety of English. These teachers are often from the place where they teach, learned English as their second language (or at the same time as their native language), and now teach it to people who are of similar background. In other words, they are non-native (or outer-circle) speakers, teaching other non-native (or outer-circle) speakers. Often times, these teachers can speak the same language(s) as their students.

3) NES EFL teachers that live and work in a community where English is not the dominant language. These teachers are typically from inner-circle countries (such as the USA, UK, Canada, or Australia) and have left their home country to teach in foreign countries. These teachers may not speak the local language and may have little to no familiarity with the local culture. In other words, these teachers could be classified as ex-pats teaching abroad.

These distinctions need to be made because while there is significant overlap between each of these groups in what they teach, the overall living and working experience of each group is quite different. There are unique challenges and difficulties that one group faces that another group would not encounter. The focus of this study will be on the third group: NES EFL teachers

who are ex-pats living and teaching abroad. For the purposes of this paper, whenever the term *ESL/EFL* is used it will be referring to the profession as a whole. The term *ESL* will be referring to native speakers teaching non-native speakers in an English-speaking country. The term *EFL* will refer to groups two and three listed above (unless otherwise noted).

Guiding Questions

The main question this research hopes to answer is: How are NES EFL teachers' identities formed and transformed throughout their careers? This will look at NES EFL teachers' initial perceptions of themselves and their motivations for entering the field, and how these perceptions and motivations change with regards to their ever-evolving teacher identity. It will also look at how some of the typical frustrations of working in a foreign country might contribute to this evolution of identity and an NES EFL teachers' ultimate job satisfaction and desire to continue teaching.

The guiding questions for this research are:

- What are NES EFL teachers' initial and ongoing motivations for becoming and continuing to be a teacher?
- How do NES EFL teachers believe their own personal and professional identities have changed over time?
- How do these changing identities contribute to a teachers' ultimate job satisfaction?

The data will be in the form of a narrative inquiry with a number of NES EFL teachers who have experience teaching outside of the United States. Data will be collected through a semi-structured interview. While there will be some general topics and questions in the

interviews, the idea is to allow the teacher to tell his/her own story in the hopes that these stories will help answer the research questions.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the topic and discussed the overall purpose of the study. It introduced the background of the researcher and how the study could be useful. It also looked at a few important distinctions between ESL and EFL teaching. Finally, it offered the guiding questions of the research and how the data will be collected.

Overview of Chapters

The first chapter of this paper looked at my background as a teacher and why I believe this topic is important. The second chapter will look at some of the other research that has been done on this topic. It will look at some of the distinctions between ESL and EFL and at teachers' initial motivations for getting into the profession. It will discuss teacher identity, its continual evolution and the roles teachers play throughout their careers. Finally, it will look at some of the daily stresses of being a teacher and how these stresses can play into burnout, attrition, and career longevity. The third chapter will discuss the participants, context, and methods that were used to collect data during the study done for this paper. The fourth chapter will summarize the results of that data collection. The fifth chapter will discuss the results of the study and also attempt to see how these results line up with the research discussed in Chapter Two. It will also describe some limitations of the study and ideas for further studies on the topic.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter looks at some of the research that has been conducted into the question of how NES EFL teachers' identities are formed and transformed throughout their careers. It describes some of the history and differences between ESL and EFL and it looks at some of the daily stresses of being a teacher and how these stresses can play into burnout, attrition, and career longevity. Finally, it discusses a gap in the majority of research on this topic.

The guiding questions for this research are:

- What are NES EFL teachers' initial and ongoing motivations for becoming and continuing to be a teacher?
- How do NES EFL teachers believe their own personal and professional identities have changed over time?
- How do these changing identities contribute to a teachers' ultimate job satisfaction?

Background: ESL, EFL, and the Marauding Army

Throughout history, many languages have dominated the world. Migration, trade, technology, and war have all contributed to the rise and fall of international lingua francas such as Greek, Latin, Chinese, French, and Arabic. Over the last hundred years, the dominant language for international communication has been English. For this reason, the need for

teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has grown (Brundage, 2007).

While there is significant overlap between ESL and EFL, there are also a number of important differences. ESL is generally taught in areas where English is the primary language (such as the USA, UK, Canada, and Australia). Brundage states that those studying ESL tend to be motivated by “physical and social needs to learn English” (p. 2). Living in a community where English is the dominant language is an incentive for students to learn and assimilate into the culture. Sometimes this assimilation is forced, through the exclusion of other languages in schools or through political machinations, and sometimes it comes about through necessity, but the goal is usually to prepare people to live, work and survive in an environment where English is used everyday (Cavanaugh, 1996).

EFL, on the other hand, is typically taught in a setting where English is not the dominant language (such as Thailand), or is used more as a lingua franca in a multilingual society (such as Malaysia). In these countries, students sometimes have very little motivation to learn English. Hawes (1989) states that these students’ often view learning English as a waste of time with little practical use for them personally. In addition to that, it is “all too often an agonizing, frightful experience marked by repeated failure and teacher ridicule” (p. 93).

These difficulties and frustrations are not limited to students. Because these settings are often developing nations, or nations still dealing with the effects of colonialism, EFL teachers are often faced with nationalized problems. Hawes lists a multitude of these problems, including large and overcrowded classrooms, a shortage of available resources, and very little contact time between teacher and student. While these problems are not limited to EFL classrooms, they are sometimes much more severe within a developing nation. Also, American or British approaches

to teaching are often used with no thought as to how these methods should be adapted for local conditions. While the introduction of these new methods can be a good thing, the methods cannot be brought wholesale into a new culture. Hawes notes:

...instead of engaging in mindless pattern drills, many rural Asian students are now learning the language appropriate for opening a bank account or applying for a driving license – an equally mindless endeavor as few students will ever do either, and if they do, it will certainly be in a language other than English. Likewise, techniques germane to the communicative approach like information gap activities, paired practice and shared group work are not succeeding as intended simply because students find it difficult not to succumb to the urge to use their shared native language (p. 93).

Even if teachers of EFL have a job in a country where economics, socio-political climates, and foreign methods are not a significant factor, they still have to deal with other things, such as an inadequate number of teachers and teachers who are not properly trained or motivated (Oladejo, 1991).

Many K-12 ESL teachers in America benefit from things like full time employment, the backing of a union with collective bargaining powers, and summer vacations. EFL teaching, with its myriad of locations and settings, is often not as generous. While good EFL jobs exist, many EFL jobs provide limited compensation and benefits to teachers. Every country has a different way of doing things, and there is great diversity in the structures, standards, and job duties required of a teacher, depending on the type of school and the amount of funds available. The diversity even extends to qualifications, which can range anywhere from a multi-year college education for professional teachers, to simply the status as a native English speaker for backpackers looking to make quick money (Maley, 1992).

While the profession is often treated as a singular group teaching the same thing, there is very little uniformity within the ESL/EFL community. Valeo and Faez (2013) believe this lack of uniformity makes it difficult for teachers to form a professional identity and can encourage attrition. Maley (1992) even takes issue with the very notion of calling ESL/EFL teaching a profession:

We are not ‘professionals’ in quite the same sense as medics or lawyers. To take a military analogy: we are not an army of career soldiers, all equally well-trained, battle-hardened, well-equipped and committed. We are more like one of those marauding armies in 17th Century Europe with a core of highly trained and motivated cavalry, surrounded by foot soldiers of sometimes dubious reliability and a host of camp-followers bringing up the rear (p. 99).

Initial Motivation: Accidental Altruism?

There is very little information with regards to EFL teachers and their initial motivations to enter the field. Kumazawa (2013) makes the observation that the research that has been conducted has not been done “in a consistent manner under rigorous theoretical frameworks” (p. 46). But despite this, there have been several studies that are significant. One such study, by Manuel and Hughes (2006), concluded that participants chose teaching due to strong altruistic and intrinsic motivations like a desire for personal fulfillment, or to make a difference in people’s lives. Other studies (Karavas 2010; Koran 2014) similarly found that altruistic motives were a big factor in teachers choosing EFL as a career.

In his study of EFL teachers in Poland, Johnston (1997) came to a slightly different conclusion. He found that none of the people he surveyed “spoke in terms of a vocation or claimed that [teaching] was their first choice of occupation” (p. 694). For some, it was a second

choice or second career and for others teaching arose out of an interest in the English language. These teachers described their entry into the profession as less of a calling and more an accidental “response to external circumstances” (p. 695). In her study of expatriate EFL teachers in South-East Asia, Mullock (2009) reports similar findings. While many of her participants had always thought of teaching, or had become ESL/EFL teachers due to a previous positive teaching experience, a large percentage became teachers as a second career or because they simply fell into it.

Upon initial review, it might appear as if these studies came to quite different conclusions, but when the studies are broken down into the types of teachers being looked at, one notices a pattern. Manuel and Hughes’ study was not exclusive to ESL/EFL teachers and Kumazawa and Karavas were looking at NNES EFL teachers teaching in their native countries. Koran’s study similarly focused on NNES teachers, but they were from a country (Turkey) that bordered the country they worked in (Iraq). In addition to that, these Turkish teachers were in a school with a Turkish administration, even though the school itself was located in a foreign country. Johnston’s and Mullock’s studies, on the other hand, included the views and opinions of a number of NES EFL teachers. It would appear that when these views and opinions are taken into account, the number of EFL teachers who feel a strong call to the profession declines, and the number of those whose path to teaching was a second choice or an accident increases.

Teacher Identity In and Out of EFL/ESL: A Constantly Changing Community

A teacher’s professional identity has been shown to be a vital part of the job of teaching and something which is constantly in a state of transition (Abednia, 2012; Tsui, 2007; Zacharias, 2010). Researchers looking at teacher identity do so because, not only does it help to understand

teachers, but it helps to understand language teaching and language learning (Varghese et al., 2005).

When investigating the research, one sees that the roles and identities teachers have throughout their careers are varied and ever evolving. Wenger (2010) talks about the development of identity through the interactions one has with different “communities of practice.” He looks at three main modes through which identity is formed: engagement, imagination, and alignment.

Engagement refers to engaging in activities that give someone a direct experience. Working, talking, exercising, or virtually anything that gives an immediate experience is an example of engagement. *Imagination* is defined as the construction of an overall image of the world, or a picture that is then used to define oneself and to see oneself from different perspectives. It is used as both a way to reflect and explore new possibilities. An example of this is when a social worker (or a doctor, or a teacher) envisions others in the same profession, using things like language, stories, TV shows, and other tools of imagination. This leads to people being able to picture themselves from a different perspective and allows them to explore new possibilities and ideas. *Alignment* is how one organizes and orders oneself within the context of the situation. Alignment is needed because engagement frequently requires some degree of alignment in order to work. Negotiating a plan with other colleagues, or convincing a manager to change a company policy are examples of alignment.

Wenger goes on to discuss how, through these three modes, identity is navigated within different “landscapes of practice.” He views identity as a trajectory within and across different communities that accumulates over time. It is also a “nexus of multi-membership” that reflects

the different communities one is a part of, and a multi-scale construct that allows people to identify (or not identify) with each other simultaneously on multiple levels.

Building on Wenger's research, Farrell (2011) and Xu (2012) further refined professional identities within ESL and EFL, respectively. Xu's research within the EFL setting looks at four different aspects of teacher identity in order to group and classify how teachers look at themselves: imagined identities, practiced identities, external factors that contribute to the transformation of identities, and internal factors that contribute to the transformation of identities.

Imagined identity is the identity that one forms in the imagination. It is a construct formed in the mind reflecting who a person wants to be. This is in contrast to a *practiced identity* which is a reflection of what a person actually does. The imagined and practiced identities are frequently in conflict with one another as the imagined identity struggles with the reality of the practiced identity.

These two identities are further shaped through both *internal factors*, things like personal experience or educational background, and *external factors*, such as institutional policies or different cultural or social norms. Internal factors can often be controlled by a person, whereas external factors are out of any personal control. For Xu, identity is a continuum in which the imagined identity of a teacher is always coming into opposition or realignment with the practiced identity one has while teaching.

In order to investigate professional roles, Farrell (2011) came up with three broad roles for teachers in the profession: teacher as manager, teacher as acculturator, and teacher as professional. The *teacher as manager* refers to the role where the teacher is trying to control and oversee what is going on in the classroom. Quite often the teacher works as a motivator and

presenter while also trying to “sell” the teaching method being presented. In the role of *teacher as acculturator*, the teacher is seen as the person who is introducing students to new cultural aspects of the language and exposing them to social norms that might be different from the ones they know. *Teacher as professional* refers to the role teachers play within the professional community in which they work. It is the role of someone doing a job, taking it seriously, collaborating with colleagues, and seeking further professional development.

Looking at Farrell’s roles can be a helpful way to further classify Xu’s work exploring the conceptual self-image (imagined identity) that a teacher has in his/her mind, and the professional (practiced) identity of what a teacher actually does. For instance, certain aspects of the role of teacher as manager can be looked at to see where the conflict between imagined and practiced identity occurs. The imagined identity of classroom manager who motivates students and keeps them on task can clash with the practiced identity of a teacher who has great difficulty controlling the class. This comes through when internal forces, such as a lack of teaching experience, collide with external realities, such as students who have little interest in the topic.

During the first years on the job, establishing an identity can be particularly complicated as teachers “find their long held beliefs challenged, their perceptions of the work of teachers incomplete, and their preparation inadequate for the tasks of teaching” (Schempp et al., 1999, p 157). Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013) shows that for some, discovering that their initial imaginings of themselves do not line up with reality is a time of disappointment and betrayal while for others it is time of establishing positive working relationships and acquiring a growing confidence in the classroom.

As one’s career progresses, a teacher takes on many different identity roles and begins to negotiate different meaning out of these roles. Sometimes the roles are created for a teacher and

sometimes the roles are created by a teacher (Farrell 2011). However, no matter what identities a teacher might associate with him/herself, they all play a part in one's long term satisfaction with the profession and decision to ultimately stay or leave the career. It is important to understand this part of teaching in order to develop professional confidence and avoid long-term problems (Tsui, 2007).

Job Satisfaction: Not Clear, Not Consistent, Mostly Satisfied

Due to the many difficulties of living and working in a foreign environment, it is important to also look at the job satisfaction of an EFL teacher. Cowie (2011) indicates that the research that has been done shows that how teachers deal with their emotions can have a major impact on personal growth and development. However, he points out that "most studies on emotion and teacher development have been carried out by researchers working in general education contexts rather than within EFL" and even within these studies "it is difficult to find a clear research agenda or consistent approach" (p. 235). It would appear that, much like research into their initial motivations, the emotions and overall job satisfaction of EFL teachers has often been overlooked.

Overall, ESL/EFL teachers are mostly satisfied with their career choice, but they are not always satisfied with the job they are currently in (Kassabgy, Boraie, & Schmidt, 2001). In his study of Japanese EFL teachers, Cowie (2011) found that relations with colleagues and students were generally positive but that relations between teachers and the institutions they worked for were only positive when a teacher could see improvements at the institution. If the mission or overall goals of the institution were not aligned with the reality, or the teacher could not trust the institution, then the feelings were generally negative. Pennington and Riley (1991) came to similar conclusions. They found that ESL teachers were similar to teachers in other fields with

their level of job satisfaction, but less satisfied when it came to issues dealing with job advancement, compensation, or administrative policies and practices.

It is possible to see a connection between identity and job satisfaction. In multiple studies (Kumazawa, 2013; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Tsui, 2007; Xu, 2012) one notices how the imagined identity of novice teachers comes into conflict with the practiced identity. These studies show that the first years of teaching are about navigating through this conflict in order to bring the identities into alignment. Teachers who are able to attain this alignment of identity tend to be more satisfied in their job than those who do not.

Burnout/Attrition: Early Exits, Easy Exits, and the Problem of Professionalism

Rostami, Ghanizadeh, and Ghapanchi (2015) found that burnout amongst EFL teachers was correlated to how long they had been teaching. Marseth (as cited in Byrne, 1998) states that 50 percent of all beginning teachers in America quit within the first seven years, and of that 50 percent, two-thirds do so within the first four years. The studies seem to indicate that the longer a teacher is in the classroom, the higher the chance of burnout and leaving the profession altogether.

It is difficult to know whether or not the cause of teachers leaving ESL/EFL is due to burnout or simply choosing another career (attrition). Regardless of whether or not burnout is a major problem, attrition seems to be quite high in the field. In his review of literature pertaining to the subject of teacher attrition, Macdonald (1999) points out, “Teacher attrition is frequently positioned as either a problem for work force planning and resources or an indicator of the relatively poor quality of school life and teacher morale” (p. 835). He goes on to state that in places where teachers do not have a high commitment to teaching, or where people have become teachers by accident or as a second choice, the rate of attrition appears higher.

Valeo and Faez (2013) argue that one cause of high attrition could be the fact that teachers are constantly changing and moving from one position to another. Johnston (1997) concurs, offering up the fact that the relative ease for teachers to go from one job to the next might lead to teachers walking away from the profession relatively easily.

Even the drive to make ESL/EFL more professional can actually have the effect of making teachers leave the profession as teachers become dissatisfied with a constant call for new curriculum and sometimes intrusive oversight. If that is combined with sub-standard classrooms, overcrowding, and limited resources, the struggles only increase. Macdonald (1999) points out that while some attrition can be seen as positive due to the fact that it means new methods and materials can be introduced more easily, the fact that attrition leads to a discontinuity in staffing at many schools and inhibits greater efficiency is far worse. Those who stay behind may feel that they are failures, due to the fact that they are not leaving for better jobs.

Attrition can also be seen as an extension of a teacher's continuing quest for identity. The imagined identity might frequently come into conflict with the practiced identity as someone's internal desire to be a collaborator with colleagues at the school or institution where they teach interacts with external forces. These external forces, such as institutional policies they do not agree with or coworkers unwilling to collaborate may, over the course of many years, build to the point where a teacher makes the decision to give up teaching or leave the profession altogether. Tsui (2007) states that "The ability to participate in the construction and negotiation of meanings, and to claim ownership of meaning is another crucial aspect of identity formation" (p. 676). It appears as if one of the side-effects of a teacher feeling he/she cannot participate or claim ownership of these negotiations of meanings is a high rate of teacher attrition or eventual burnout.

The Gap in Research

As has been noted in the literature in this section, much of the research into ESL/EFL focuses exclusively on ESL teachers. When EFL teachers are taken into account, the research frequently groups ESL and EFL together, with little to no distinction between the two fields. For instance, Pennington's (1991) study purports to be about work satisfaction within the ESL profession. Throughout the study she frequently writes of ESL in a global way, even citing the travel opportunities as a satisfying aspect of the career, yet makes no mention of EFL. She also makes no distinction between NES ESL teachers and NNES ESL teachers. This lack of distinction can be found throughout the research and even in research where EFL is considered a unique component, these studies rarely consider the differences between NES teachers and NNES teachers.

This gap in the research is intriguing because the working situation for a K-12 ESL teacher is sometimes very different than that of a NES EFL teacher. Also, K-12 ESL teachers often benefit from things like tenure, union membership, summers off, and a cultural familiarity with where they work. These benefits are far rarer for a NES EFL teacher working on a poorly translated one-year contract at a private institution. In addition to that, an NES EFL teacher who is living and working in a foreign country where the attitudes, beliefs, culture, and language are all alien to him/her is going to engage in different activities and negotiate with vastly different communities as his/her career progresses.

The result may be that an NES EFL teacher undergoes an internal and external journey for identity that is different to that of a K-12 ESL teacher or a NNES EFL teacher who lives and works in the place of his/her birth. The fact that the possibly unique nature of NES EFL teachers is not frequently investigated is an omission that this study will attempt to address.

Conclusion

This chapter gave an overview of the history and distinctions between ESL and EFL teaching and some of the motivations that teachers have for choosing to be a teacher. It then looked at how a teacher's identity is formed and might change over time as well as how some of the fragmentation and stresses of the profession can cause teachers to either leave the profession or quit due to burnout. It finally looked at a significant gap in the research that the study conducted for this paper hopes to fill. The next chapter will present the methods of research that were used in this study. It will also discuss the various participants, context, and methods that were used to collect data during the study.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Introduction

This chapter presents the methods of research that were used to answer the question of how NES EFL teachers' identities are formed and transformed throughout their careers. These methods also aimed to look at how these changes play into a teachers' job satisfaction and career longevity.

The guiding questions for this research are:

- What are NES EFL teachers' initial and ongoing motivations for becoming and continuing to be a teacher?
- How do NES EFL teachers believe their own personal and professional identities have changed over time?
- How do these changing identities contribute to a teachers' ultimate job satisfaction?

In order to answer these questions, data was obtained using qualitative research methods. As defined by Mackey and Gass (2005), qualitative research "can be taken to refer to research that is based on descriptive data that does not make (regular) use of statistical procedures" (p. 162). Qualitative research uses descriptions instead of measurements and scores, is a natural and holistic representation of individuals and events, and involves few participants. It also aims "to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people attach to them" (p.163) and is an open-

ended process “with the purpose of observing whatever may be present there, and letting further questions emerge from the context” (p.163). For all of these reasons, qualitative research was determined to be the best possible method to use for this study and was thought to be the most effective way for the participants to share their thoughts.

Research was conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews relating to how NES EFL teachers identify their roles as teachers. The purpose of the interviews was to look at NES EFL teachers’ attitudes and motivations at the beginning of their careers, how these beliefs evolved along with their identified roles and responsibilities after several years of teaching overseas, and their ideas of where their careers may go in the future.

Participants/Timeline

The study was conducted with a single group of four participants. Participants were chosen based on their level of experience and longevity within the EFL profession. The participants were all NES EFL teachers who have taught for multiple years in foreign countries. The interviews were conducted over the course of four weeks during August of 2016.

Participants were sent a brief background questionnaire via email to complete before the interview process began (see Appendix A). The purpose of the questionnaire was to receive biographical information regarding where each participant had taught, how long they had been a teacher, and their professional qualifications. This information was then used as a way to help guide certain questions during the personal interviews which took place.

Table 1

Participant Background

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Years teaching</u>	<u>Location(s)</u>	<u>Degree(s)</u>
Charlie	5	Japan	Asian Languages
Amy	9	Japan, Turkey	Architecture
Diane	11	Saudi Arabia, Middle East	Communications, Teaching and Learning
		East	
Brian	15	Morocco, Middle East, Europe, Asia	Philosophy, Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature

Data Collection Technique: Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted with each of the four participants. The interviews ranged in length from 30-50 minutes and attempted to look at NES EFL teachers through the modes of identity as outlined by Wenger (2010) and the aspects of identity as outlined by Xu (2012 & 2013). They also looked at the engagement EFL teachers have with their daily working conditions as well as the imagined picture that teachers have of themselves and others in the profession. Additionally, the interviews attempted to show ways in which teachers navigate through their environments in order to achieve an alignment between their imagined and practiced identities. The internal and external factors that contribute to this journey further

helped to explore the ongoing evolution of identity and a teacher's ultimate feelings of job satisfaction.

The questions asked were adapted from interview questions and surveys given by Johnston (1997) and Abednia (2012). Each interview was divided into four sections covering the following topics: a teacher's background and initial motivations for entering the profession; their perceived roles and identities; the challenges and responsibilities of being an EFL teacher; and their perspective of teaching in the future (see Appendix B).

Since the participants were located in different cities around the world, interviews were conducted via Skype. The interviews were recorded using QuickTime on a MacBook computer and with a handheld voice recorder as a backup. The interviews were semi-structured, using a series of questions as a guide. The purpose was not to have a rigid, formal interview, but to engage in a dialog with the participant that constructed a narrative and showed the continuum of teacher identity and the many communities of practice in which a teacher finds him/herself while living and working overseas.

Data Analysis

After the interviews were conducted and recorded, all of the data was transcribed. This data was then printed out and read through multiple times. It was analyzed and coded using a holistic method in which themes and emergent patterns were highlighted, with special attention being paid to references to teacher identity and identity evolution. Analysis and coding was also done with regards to motives, job satisfaction, and career longevity. Pertinent quotes from participants were then grouped according to the four main sections of the interview. These quotes were then summarized and assembled into a narrative, the results of which are located in the following chapter.

Ethics

The participants all took part in individual interviews. The potential risk in this study was relatively low due to the fact that all the participants were adult native speakers of English and the information being solicited was not of a highly sensitive or embarrassing nature. To protect against any unforeseen risks, all participation in the study was voluntary. The only cost to the participants was that of the time it took them to be interviewed.

Informed consent was obtained through a signed and dated letter. Confidentiality has been maintained by using pseudonyms for all participants. All recordings obtained have been stored in a secure location and can only be reviewed by the researcher. All recordings will be destroyed after seven years, in accordance with federal law.

Conclusion

This chapter looked at the guiding questions which were used as a framework for the study. It then discussed the different types of research which were conducted, the procedure, and any possible risks to the participants. Finally, it discussed how confidentiality has been maintained for the participants. The next chapter will present the results of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted the methodology of this study and outlined the data collection techniques that were used. This chapter will present the results of the data collection process. The data collected was in service of attempting to answer the three guiding questions for this research:

- What are NES EFL teachers' initial and ongoing motivations for becoming and continuing to be a teacher?
- How do NES EFL teachers believe their own personal and professional identities have changed over time?
- How do these changing identities contribute to a teachers' ultimate job satisfaction?

Data Collection Process

In order to help answer the research questions, a series of interviews was conducted with NES EFL teachers. These interviews were held via Skype throughout the month of August 2016. Four participants were chosen for the study based on their experience and longevity within the EFL field. The interviews lasted between 30-50 minutes and covered a variety of topics related to EFL teaching and careers.

The four participants in the study were: Charlie, who has taught for five years in Japan; Amy, who has taught for nine years in Japan and Turkey; Diane, who has taught for eleven years in Saudi Arabia and throughout the Middle East; and Brian, who has taught for fifteen years in Morocco, and throughout Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.

The participants answered a series of questions pertaining to four broad topics: background and motivation; roles and identity; job challenges and responsibilities; and future perspectives. The interviews were semi-structured, using a series of questions as a guide. The purpose was not to have a rigid, formal interview, but to engage in a dialog with the participant. This method was utilized because it is believed that the answers given in a dialog are richer and more engaging than those given in a formal interview.

Interview 1: Charlie

Background and Motivation

Charlie says he first became interested in teaching during high school, but was never sure it was the route he wanted to take until he began volunteering in an ESL setting. He enjoyed teaching new materials and helping students. He also says he really liked the moment when “something just clicks with them and they finally understand.”

He studied Asian languages in college and had a strong desire to travel to Japan, so he enrolled in the JET Program. “I thought that was, like, a good opportunity to, you know, see if I really wanted to do this and, sure enough, I really enjoyed it so I wanted to continue my path in [teaching],” he says. Through the JET Program he was able to spend five years in Japan, only returning to the US recently to complete his master’s degree.

In order to evaluate his teaching, he often takes notes on his classes, looking back every now and then to see how much his teaching has evolved. Even though he feels quite confident in

his teaching, one thing he has noticed is that he often feels little motivation to take risks in his classroom, often sticking to what he knows works. He feels this is one thing he can improve on because, he says, “the more you try out, even though you might make mistakes along the way, like, you can learn new things and things might work better if you try doing it a certain way.” When it comes to teaching, Charlie believes “there’s always room for improvement.”

Teacher Roles and Identity

Charlie originally viewed his role as a teacher in a very traditional manner; however, he always tried to make his lessons interesting. After studying and reading more about teaching methods he believes there are many other ways to teach than the traditional way. He was greatly influenced by the language classes he took during high school and college and often tries to figure out what made those classes interesting when preparing his own lessons. One thing he really believes in is getting the students to practice using the language through talking because “you are using it how it is supposed to be used.”

When he evaluates himself next to other teachers he feels like others are better at explanations of new materials. In particular, he feels like other teachers are better with creating explanations that are more concise. “I can get a little too wordy,” he says of his own style. But he thinks he is really good at relating to his students, both inside and outside of the classroom. “I definitely try to connect to them a lot more [than others] and I’ve learned that really benefits your classroom,” he says.

Job Challenges and Responsibilities

Charlie’s challenges outside of the classroom often come in the form of cultural differences and the language barrier. Trying to navigate the school system of Japan also lead to difficulties because he found the system there to be much different than that of the US. He also

finds his awareness of general language knowledge and meta-language to be weaker than some of his colleagues. “I didn't study those things specific[ally] before the program so, compared to some other teachers I know, I am kind of lacking in that area. So whenever we are talking about specific terms for specific things sometimes I'm at a loss,” he says.

Inside the classroom he feels like he is challenged by the responsibility of getting students of multiple levels to understand everything correctly. “Trying to balance all of that is difficult at times,” he says. But he believes that it is his responsibility to meet the needs of the students and the school. This can be tricky when these two things conflict. “For example, sometimes, you know, I like to get out of curriculum for a couple of days, just so like, you know, show [the students] different things, but sometimes that might take too much time, according to the administration, so I have to kind of figure out how to balance those two,” he says. A balance which can be tricky in an environment that relies heavily on tests. “People are just studying the language to get good grades to pass the entrance examination that they need to get to go to the desired school, and once that's out of the way they tend to forget it,” he says.

When asked about the time he first felt like a “real teacher”, Charlie says it wasn't until about halfway through his five years in Japan. During his first few years he was just trying to learn the basics and spent a lot of time planning lessons and gaining confidence. Then, sometime during the third year, he began to be able to look at himself from afar and evaluate how he taught. “At those moments, I [was] like, ‘Oh, hey, I'm actually doing a pretty good job teaching’,” he says.

The things that nurture him as a teacher are the interactions he has with his co-workers and students. Specifically, receiving feedback, although he admits the cultural and language differences between the US and Japan can sometimes make it difficult to get that feedback. “It

takes time to get used to, because, you know, every person is different and, especially with the language barrier, sometimes it can be kind of awkward, but if you get a really good co-teacher and you have the same mindset, like, it can really benefit your classes,” he says.

Future Perspectives

Charlie does not think he will leave teaching any time in the near future, as he is happy with his chosen career. Currently, he is spending his time working on a master’s degree and trying to study as much as he can about both teaching in general and meta-language. He isn’t sure if he will get another job in the US or overseas. “I’m open to going back somewhere. Wherever life takes me, you know?” he says.

As far as the type of teacher he hopes to be in the future, Charlie wants to be the type that teaches things students want to know. He also says he wants to be an open-minded teacher and “someone you can talk to.”

Interview 2: Amy

Background and Motivation

Even though she is currently taking a year off to focus on raising a family, Amy has taught EFL for nine years in total. Her first four years were spent in Japan without any form of teaching credentials. After receiving a TEFL certificate, she worked for five years in Turkey.

Initially, she wasn’t very interested in being a teacher, majoring in Architectural Studies during college. “I mean, it’s not like I didn’t want to [teach], but it wasn’t like my plan to always become a teacher or anything,” she says. Her biggest motivation to teach came through a desire to travel to Japan and she explains that “the easiest way to do that...was to get a teaching job.”

While in Japan, she realized the personal element of teaching was a better fit for her than the office setting of the architectural world. She says that teaching matched her personality and

she enjoyed seeing her students take in the information and grow as people. “I really, really enjoyed that,” she says.

When reflecting on the experiences of her friends in other professions she says that “a lot of them are either unhappy or, you know, when they wake up in the morning they don’t want to go to work or they dread Mondays.” Even though she admits that “I’m not like super happy every morning when I wake up,” she says that, “Generally...I’m never unhappy about going to work.”

She cares for her students and their overall development and also feels a strong motivation to focus on becoming the best teacher she can possibly be. Her colleagues give her ample encouragement but she says it hasn’t stopped her from, “trying to learn more and try to be a better teacher. Because you can always improve.”

Teacher Roles and Identity

When it comes to her role in the classroom, Amy wants to use her native speaker status to get the students to think about English in new and different ways. She feels she is able to do this better as a native English speaker because she says she “never learned English” in the rigid, formal setting that many of her local colleagues endured in a typical Turkish high school or university. She wants to alter their mindset to see that learning English is a valuable skill that will help them through their University years. She also says that she feels it is important to “broaden [the students] minds about English not being a native speaker thing, but a global thing,” noting that students should be able to understand a variety as accents, not just American.

At the start of her teaching career, she spent a lot of time focusing on getting students to speak. Her students in Japan were much younger than the ones she has now. They were shy and hesitant about speaking up, “unless they knew that they were speaking grammatically correct,”

she says. She very much wanted to get her students to enjoy English and see the benefits of learning it. During her initial years she says she, “wanted to really focus on being energetic and fun and engaging, so that students thought that speaking English was fun and that it was something that they wanted to continue doing.”

As her career progressed she became more focused on classroom competency and gaining the trust of her students. She wants her students to feel safe and comfortable in the classroom. She strives to create a balance between knowing her job, getting respect from students, and being flexible enough to make her lessons meaningful.

When she compares herself to other teachers she feels that, because she taught for many years without any formal training, she has learned mainly through trial and error. These experiments have led her to continue trying to integrate new things in the classroom that she believes will appeal to her students’ interests. At her school in Turkey, she often feels like some of her colleagues don’t do enough, often doing only the bare minimum when it comes to supplementing the meager materials they are given to work with.

Job Challenges and Responsibilities

During her time in Japan, Amy was responsible for all her own materials. She spent a lot of time trying to make something that would be fun and satisfying that would also fit within the confines of the Japanese system. She felt that these lessons were mostly focused on communication. In Turkey, she needs to be stricter about teaching content as well. This results in a lot less time making materials, but just as much time planning. Also, in Turkey she is responsible for one group of students, as opposed to rotating through a different class every day of the week.

Things that most help her on the job are the many opportunities she has for professional development and the fact that the department often asks for teacher input about what this development should focus on. But one big challenge she encounters are the many exams, sometimes taking place as often as every three weeks. “I mean, because it’s such an exam oriented education system, they kind of see it as a way to encourage students to keep studying throughout the year. And I understand that, but...I really don’t want to teach the test, like, that’s the last thing that I want to do,” she says.

This constant need to “teach the test” resulted in some real challenges during her first years in Turkey, as she often did not have the time she needed to spend on things she wanted to teach. “I tried to do everything and it kind of backfired because I didn’t, like, I was exhausted, the students were exhausted...and I don’t think they got as much out of it,” she says. As she became more comfortable in her position, she was able to figure out a much better balance between what she needs to teach and what she wants to teach.

But she often thinks that some of her colleagues are too comfortable in their positions. While she thinks many of the teachers are good at their jobs, the fact that she works at a public university means that local teachers can rarely be fired. “Some teachers are really comfortable and they just don’t care. And I feel really bad for their students because they are not getting as much out of it, and that’s something that really frustrates me because...the teachers say a lot, but they don’t actually do that much,” she says.

When asked about when she felt like a “real teacher”, as opposed to just saying she was teacher, she said that it was not until about three or four years into her career. She recalled a lesson that received a very positive response from a boy who had previously exhibited very disrupting behavior. The reality that what she was doing could really touch the lives of students

significantly changed her perception of teaching and has stuck with her for many years. “I don't know if that's the moment when I thought of myself as a teacher, but it's definitely a really strong memory that keeps coming back to me of how powerful a teacher can be. And, like, what we can really do to help...individuals,” she says.

Future Perspectives

When Amy looks towards the future, she doesn't really see herself leaving teaching, but she does envision a possible step into teacher training. However, getting to that position might be difficult as she currently finds herself trying to figure out whether or not she wants to return to Turkey or Japan. Her husband's Turkish citizenship is one factor, but she feels a lack of significant financial incentive to return to Turkey. The recent political instability in Turkey is another thing that makes Japan look more appealing. However, her desire to have a job teaching university students, rather than young children, makes a return to Japan less likely.

Regardless of where she ends up, in the future she hopes to be a teacher who treats her students and fellow colleagues with respect. She wants to have an open mind to new ideas from colleagues regardless of how little experience they may have. With her students, she says she wants to “value their voices and... their experiences.” She hopes that they can teach her something, no matter how old she is.

Interview 3: Diane

Background and Motivation

Diane has been teaching for eleven years, the past six at a university in Saudi Arabia. Even though Diane had been teaching at the university level before, she says that she “kind of backed into” her EFL certifications. “Here at the university level, you cannot teach EFL unless you have a degree [in EFL]. And so my degrees were not in line with that. I had two, [one] in

Communication and one in Teaching and Learning. And they said ‘You have to have a match in your master’s. You have to have more background.’ So I went back and I got my TEFL Certificate,” she says.

Her first teaching experience was during her master’s program when she became a graduate teacher assistant, something she says she “absolutely loved.” Even after nearly a dozen years of teaching she still feels a strong desire to teach. In fact, she says she thinks her motivation is even stronger because she has students who have graduated and gone on to successful careers, “and you see the influence when they come back to you.” She also feels there is a cross-cultural benefit as she is able to teach her students more about Western culture and they are able to teach her more about the culture of Saudi Arabia.

Seeing the change that students undergo in her classes is another thing that continues to motivate her. During her early years at the university it was difficult to see this change, but she believes she has come to understand the Arab learner in a way that helps her identify problems they may have when learning English.

Teacher Roles and Identity

Diane says that her knowledge of the English language is much better than some of her colleagues, “just because of a number of years [taught] and degrees and so on.” When she thinks about her overall skill level in dealing with students she judges it at about average. The one area she could improve on is her abilities with technology, which she admits is below average. She thinks her true strengths lie in her rapport with students and her ability to teach writing and speaking, most likely due to her background in communication.

When she reflects back on her initial ideas regarding her role as a teacher, she says she thought she would become a teacher who was “more hands off, maybe more research focused,

more theoretical.” When she first began teaching, she says she was very prescriptive with her students and very “theory based.” She admits to not quite understanding why some of her students back then did not understand the theories and methods she tried to teach them. Now, she tries to be much more descriptive in the way she teaches.

Over the years, instead of becoming the “wise old professor” she says she became “more descriptive” and “more focused on what helps the students. Much more teaching focused rather than research focused. Trying to find new methods that work with students.” She also thinks she should always be teaching them to the best of her ability. She says she sees her role in the classroom as that of a facilitator, a person who helps her students to “find the tools to unlocking different parts of the English language.”

Job Challenges and Responsibilities

One of the biggest challenges Diane faces in the classroom is that of motivation. Students in Saudi Arabia are often forced to learn English, which can lead to them resenting it and not taking it seriously. Also, the students are more used to rote learning and have great difficulty writing even simple sentences. “Forget an essay, some have never written a paragraph,” she says.

The culture of Saudi Arabia is something that challenges her both in and out of class. “Men and women have different roles here in Saudi Arabia and sometimes as a woman, and in the professional sense too, they are not willing to listen to you [the same way] as they would your male counterpart. Even if you have the same...[or] more background or whatever, they are just not as willing to listen,” she says.

In spite of these challenges, she feels it is her responsibility to get the students “where they need to be in the language.” She says she feels a responsibility towards the university to be the best teacher possible and “to go within their guidelines and...help them prepare their quizzes

and their exams to the best of my ability [in a manner] that will actually measure what we are supposed to be measuring.” This can sometimes cause conflicts as a lot of the time she says she feels that “the tests are not measuring what is actually being taught in the classroom according to the book.”

Her teaching is nurtured by her desire to continue doing research and the professional development the university provides for her. This, along with the ability to teach with a wide variety of teachers from different countries and a sharing of ideas with colleagues, have greatly influenced her approach to teaching and her methods in the classroom.

When thinking about the first time she felt like a “real teacher” she cites an incident at the start of her time in Saudi Arabia with an all-female class. “By the end of that semester they were really having full conversations and they were...they were speaking and writing...and I really felt like ‘OK, I really did something here,’” she says.

Future Perspectives

Diane doesn't think she will be leaving teaching at any point and she feels committed to the university where she works. In addition to that, her marriage to a Saudi, and the dual citizenship that gives her, mean she will be living overseas for the foreseeable future. However, she would like to transition out of her current job as a teacher trainer and go back to teaching EFL. Partially because of her desire to do more research and become a professor, and partially because her knowledge of the subjects her current students are teaching is less than her knowledge of EFL. “I am not in their areas so when I give them information it's very general. And when I teach students EFL I feel like I know what I'm talking about and I feel like I can really do that,” she says.

She has a great desire to be a more knowledgeable teacher in the future. She also hopes to be a lot more tech savvy and be a person who is more descriptive in the way she teaches. “I want to continue on that path. To see more of the positive things, instead of the more prescriptive things,” she says.

Interview 4: Brian

Background and Motivation

Brian has been an EFL teacher for fifteen years and has taught in nine different countries. Currently, he’s employed at a language center in Morocco. Brian’s two undergraduate degrees, in Philosophy and Cultural Studies & Comparative Literature, did not portend a future of teaching and it wasn’t until inspiration struck while hanging out with a friend that he decided to pursue it as a career. He explains, “I got laid off from [a proofreading] job during the dot-com crash, which was late 2000. Then a friend of mine, who was also laid off...was watching a Wong Kar Wai movie called *Chungking Express* and he said, ‘Hey! Why don’t we teach English?’... And that’s how it started.”

Originally, he saw the job as a means to travel and he spent his first six years teaching with no credentials, other than his status as a native English speaker. He says that it wasn’t until he began to get some training that he started to see it as something that both intrigued him and that he was pretty good at. He also finds the challenge of teaching to be endlessly interesting. “On one level it’s quite simple to deliver a lesson plan but, every choice on another level [is] infinitely complex. And you know a choice...to do one thing in the classroom, means a choice to not do something else,” he says.

He has a great passion for the job, but also feels this passion is often looked at as too intense by some of his co-workers. While he desires to create a greater dialog with his

colleagues, he frequently finds other teachers very guarded and uncooperative. He thinks one possible reason behind this is a resentment towards inexperienced foreign workers who only stay for short periods of time and are thought of as more valuable due to their native speaker status. "I would say there is a fair amount of resentment between the Moroccan staff and the foreign staff...because they see them as [people]...who are just interested in travelling. For some people that's true, but there is a way that they could be working together that could be positive," he says. But even with these difficulties, he still enjoys teaching. "I love that moment when the light goes on for the students. Absolutely, that's why I'm there," he says.

Teacher Roles and Identity

When Brian thinks about his role as a teacher, he believes that establishing rapport with students is key. He believes a teacher needs to take his students' lives seriously. He thinks there should be a cultural exchange between teacher and student that goes beyond what is taught in the classroom. He is a teacher who wants to focus on open ended and task based activities. He sums up his philosophy thusly, "Find meaningful ways for them to communicate, give them an opportunity to do that, listen to what they are saying, record some of that language somehow, get it on the board, find a way to feedback on it, and then recycle it for later."

When comparing his initial role as a teacher, with his current beliefs he says, "In the past I thought more successful lessons were based more in how I felt about the lesson, rather than what was actually happening in the classroom. Now I'm less interested in my own reaction and really what's happening with the students." Whereas in the past he tried to be a teacher who entertains, now he feels his job is to engage, although he admits it is great when both things happen.

It wasn't until about five or six years into his teaching, after getting his CELTA, that he began the switch to a more task-based, purposeful approach to his teaching. It all came back to

his belief that students should be able to forget they are in a classroom. “They are so intrigued by what they [are learning] ...[and] have such a desire to communicate that they have forgotten that you are in the room. And they are just addressing each other, they aren't even looking at you anymore. And you just get the hell out of the way, go to the board, and just start...noting down effective language and problematic language. And then when the conversation dries up you turn to the board and [you] go ‘look at all the stuff you guys just said,’” he says.

But he thinks teaching is about more than just building rapport with the students. “It’s very much about character building, as well. They usually catch my passion for the craft and it rubs off on them,” he says. He also thinks it’s important to increase the amount of work students do outside of the classroom. Unfortunately, he does not feel supported in this endeavor by other teachers. “I think they just see it as extra work...and their commitment doesn’t go any deeper than the job,” he says.

He thinks his ability to blend outside and inside the classroom learning, as well as a lexical focus are definitely his strong suits. Although he admits being a bit weak on grammar explanations. While he thinks his knowledge of the language is as strong as any other teacher’s, he just does not like to lecture about grammar.

Job Challenges and Responsibilities

Brian says he believes one of his main responsibilities is to get his students to express themselves “with a greater degree of sophistication.” In order to do that, he thinks it’s important to take students’ experiences seriously and see value in all of them. However, he does not believe it is his responsibility to motivate his students. “You have to be going in wanting to learn the language. I’m not a motivator. My job is not to motivate you. If you don’t want to be here, it’s gonna be hard for me to get you interested,” he says. He also feels a great responsibility to share

everything he has developed over the years, whether that be lesson plans or just ideas and activities that have worked for him in the classroom.

Unfortunately, he does not feel he is supported by the school when it comes to sharing ideas or professional development. He believes the administration is more concerned with student evaluation and test taking, then they are with actual teaching and learning. He says he finds it very disheartening that his efforts have “mostly fallen on deaf ears,” even going so far as to describe the atmosphere where he works as “very poisonous.” “I need to find a place where I feel valued and I don’t. The only time I hear anything is if there’s a complaint or if they perceive that I’ve done something incorrectly,” he says. This all leads him to say that he believes that there is a larger problem of there being “no real pedagogical consistency among the staff” where he works.

He finds his greatest challenge outside of the classroom is dealing with an administration that refuses to listen to his ideas. This, combined with the fact that the business side of a language academy often conflicts with his classroom goals, is usually what would convince him to move to a new country. However, he admits that his marriage to a Moroccan woman and deeper commitments to the country itself keep him committed to his goal of “getting people to step out of their comfort zone.”

When he thinks about his students, he thinks they are very talented at learning languages, but tend to have a relatively lazy work ethic. He would like to see a greater commitment from his students to the English language, although he admits his feelings might be partially due to a clash of cultures and his “American culture interfering.” Overall, when he is in the classroom he feels his job is to try to instill his work ethic into students, as well as be someone who gets them to take responsibility for what they are involved in.

When he thinks about the first time he felt like a “real teacher”, Brian remembers several important moments in his career. The first was while working at a technical college in America. He recalls the first time he taught immigrants as a powerful experience. He also lists the first time he realized he was more knowledgeable than other teachers who had teaching certifications, and his post-CELTA focus on task-based learning as important milestones in his career.

Future Perspectives

When Brian looks to the future, he sees many possibilities for himself. His main goal would be to transition away from the classroom and further into teacher training. He sees himself helping set up different programs, doing consulting work, or even being a director of studies. He also says he has dreams of writing a text book that “could theoretically function in almost any culture”, being a full-time musician, or becoming a long distance running coach.

As for the type of teacher he hopes to be in the future, he wants to be somebody who gets the students engaged with the material and excited to learn. He wants to make them aware of new learning styles and have them continually reflect on the learning process. Overall, he wants to be the kind of teacher that teaches students to help themselves more outside the classroom because new technologies are making self-education more and more prevalent.

Conclusion

This chapter looked at the data collected throughout the interviews with the participants of this study. While each participant in the study brings a unique and varied perspective to their teaching, when looked at collectively we can begin to see a few common elements. One thing that came up frequently was that, no matter the location, there seemed to be a strong focus on tests. Charlie, Amy and Brian all struggled with the amount of focus put on tests in their respective classrooms, while Diane felt that the tests she has to give don't accurately measure

what is being taught in the classroom.

Another common thread was the subject of motivation. The teachers spoke about this in one form or another, whether it was Amy's difficulties with getting her students to participate, Charlie's attempts to get students to do more than just study for a test, or Diane's students' struggle with the compulsory nature of English learning in Saudi Arabia. Brian's students also struggled with motivation, but Brian feels it is the students' responsibility to motivate themselves.

Through it all, each teacher showed a strong desire to share knowledge and techniques with others, either through workplace activities or teacher training. They also all spoke of a desire to keep teaching for the foreseeable future and continue to improve their teaching methods. The next chapter will look more closely at some of these findings and the implications for both EFL teachers and their colleagues. It will also look at some of the limitations of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings

Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the results of the four interviews which were conducted for this study in an attempt to answer the three guiding research questions of this paper, which are:

- What are NES EFL teachers' initial and ongoing motivations for becoming and continuing to be a teacher?
- How do NES EFL teachers believe their own personal and professional identities have changed over time?
- How do these changing identities contribute to a teachers' ultimate job satisfaction?

This chapter will discuss the findings and implications based on those results. It will look at some of the similarities, differences and overlap within the interview of each participant. This chapter will also look at some of the limitations inherent to a study of this kind and reflect on the paper as a whole.

Main Findings

Finding 1: EFL teachers' initial and ongoing motives frequently involve external factors not related to teaching

Manuel and Hughes (2006) concluded that people were often motivated to choose teaching due to strong altruistic and intrinsic motivations like a desire for personal fulfillment, or to make a difference in people's lives. Other studies (Karavas 2010; Koran 2014) similarly found that altruistic motives were a big factor in teachers choosing EFL as a career. The present study did not come to the same conclusion. While some of the participants had thought of teaching before they pursued it as a career, they never spoke of teaching EFL in altruistic terms or in a way that would imply it was a part of a life plan. Amy and Charlie expressed some degree of ambivalence towards the job, only coming to the conclusion they wanted to pursue it as a career after being in the job for a period of time. Brian initially got into EFL teaching on a whim and Diane freely admits she "backed into it." For their undergraduate studies, none of the participants chose to pursue English or ESL/EFL, and only Diane had any sort of teaching qualifications before becoming a teacher. In fact, all of the participants received their EFL qualifications only after becoming EFL teachers.

This does not mean that altruistic motives played no role in the decision to enter the profession, just that none of the participants expressed a strong altruistic influence in their motivations. However, the participants did express great enthusiasm when they became aware that their efforts to instill knowledge to their students were successful. It is possible that, while the altruistic motivations were not an initial motivator, they do help keep a teacher from leaving the profession.

Amy, Brian, and Charlie all spoke of travel as one of the prime motivators of entering the profession. Brian simply wanted to see more of the world, while Amy and Charlie had long-standing desires to go to a particular place. For Diane, the decision to live and teach in Saudi Arabia was at least partially based on her marriage to a Saudi citizen. It should also be noted that Diane, Amy, and Brian are all currently married to people who are citizens of a country where they are teaching or have taught. While it is certainly possible that these relationships are merely a byproduct of living overseas for extended periods of time, it is not unreasonable to assume that marriage to a foreign citizen could be a factor in a participant's ongoing motivations to continue living in a foreign country.

In his study of EFL teachers in Poland, Johnston (1997) concluded that none of the people he surveyed "spoke in terms of a vocation or claimed that [teaching] was their first choice of occupation" (p. 694). For some, it was a second choice or second career and for others teaching arose out of an interest in the English language. These teachers described their entry into the profession as less of a calling and more an accidental "response to external circumstances" (p. 695). In her study of expatriate EFL teachers in South-East Asia, Mullock (2009) reports similar findings. While many of her participants had always thought of teaching, or had become ESL/EFL teachers due to a previous positive teaching experience, a large percentage became teachers as a second career or because they simply fell into it. The findings of the present study are similar to those of Johnston and Mullock, with the participants of this study choosing EFL teaching as a career not out of a desire to teach or altruistic motives, but due to previous positive teaching experiences, a desire to travel, or more accidental reasons.

Finding 2: EFL teachers tend to spend many of their beginning years figuring out an identity

A teacher's professional identity has been shown to be a vital part of the job of teaching and something which is constantly in a state of transition (Abednia, 2012; Tsui, 2007; Zacharias, 2010). Most of the participants of the present study described their initial years of teaching as a process in which they were figuring out the mechanics of teaching and searching for one particular identity. During the first years on the job, establishing an identity can be particularly complicated as teachers "find their long held beliefs challenged, their perceptions of the work of teachers incomplete, and their preparation inadequate for the tasks of teaching" (Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1999, p 157). Charlie spoke of trying to develop more confidence and learn the basics of teaching during his first three years on the job. Brian said it took him about two years before he began to think of the job as something more than a means to travel the world. Amy talked about using a great deal of trial and error in her teaching, not really feeling like a "real teacher" until about three years into her time overseas. Even Diane, who had previously taught at a university in America, spoke of a frustration when her initial attempts at being a more prescriptive teacher did not seem to work as well as she had hoped.

Many participants spoke of the initial desire to identify as a fun or interesting teacher. Amy wanted very much for her students to recognize her as energetic and fun but often struggled with the demands of a foreign education system. Charlie also spoke of the desire to make things interesting and trying to find balance, only refining his efforts into a more non-traditional style after pursuing further education in EFL. Brian felt he initially played the role of an entertainer, using his own feelings to assess his work rather than things which were occurring in the classroom. Similar to Charlie, only after going back to school did Brian begin to really look into

his methods and evolve his teaching practices. For Diane, her initial identity of a theory based, prescriptive teacher was problematic due to the fact she was unfamiliar with the way in which language acquisition occurs. This initial struggle is in keeping with the research conducted by Schempp et al. (1999) and Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013) showing that the establishment of identity can be a difficult and complicated procedure.

One possible reason why it took so long for an identity to form, at least in the cases of Amy, Brian, and Charlie, could be due to the fact that they had very little in the way of certification or teaching experience prior to becoming full-time teachers. This forced them to spend a lot of time figuring out the job. For Diane, her unfamiliarity with language acquisition and academic background proved to be a barrier as her previous teaching in the US did not translate well into the EFL environment.

Wenger (2010) talks about the development of identity through the interactions one has with different “communities of practice.” He looks at three main modes through which identity is formed: engagement, imagination, and alignment. Xu’s (2012 & 2013) research within the EFL setting talks about the struggle between the imagined and practiced identity. When looking at the participants of this study through the lens of work by Xu and Wenger, it could be said that their initial, imagined identities needed multiple years of engagement with the profession in order to come into alignment with the practiced identities they have today.

Finding 3: EFL teachers’ motives and identities are often tied to a desire for professional growth and development

In one form or another, all the participants described a desire for ongoing professional growth and development. Brian spoke of his need to share lessons and exchange ideas with other colleagues as an important part of his ongoing growth as a teacher, and Charlie talked about how

his interactions with co-workers were an important part of what continued to nurture him. For Amy and Diane, the professional development opportunities they received from their employers were seen as vital to their jobs.

This growth and development often takes the role of further education. As discussed before, the participants did not have EFL qualifications prior to getting jobs as EFL teachers. However, all of the participants did eventually return to school to increase their EFL qualifications or to get master's degrees in ESL. For Brian, who has been teaching for fifteen years, his evolution from a teacher who entertains to a teacher who engages came about partially through further study of EFL along with a strong desire to develop and share his teaching skills with his coworkers. For Charlie, his development from a traditional style teacher to one who takes more risks is also somewhat due to further study.

The ongoing motivations of the participants also seems to be tied in with this growth and development. For Amy, she needed more education in order to receive a better salary. In Diane's case, she could not continue to teach unless she had credentials in EFL. Charlie was motivated by a desire to better converse with his colleagues and Brian had a wanted to pursue a more active role in curriculum design. It would appear that the longer someone is an EFL teacher, the greater the desire for professional growth and development.

In these examples, we can again see Wenger's ongoing process of engagement, imagination, and alignment. As each teacher engages with the job and progresses through their career, their overall definition of themselves changes. They have more interaction with their peers and their ideas of both themselves and the overall teaching environment begin to evolve. The need for more professional growth and development is a way to get all of these different ideas into alignment.

This can also be looked at as part of an ongoing process of negotiating some of the different identity roles as outlined by Farrell (2011). As their careers continue, each teacher must decide how much of a manager they want to be inside the classroom (entertaining, presenting, and motivating the students) and how much of a professional they want to be outside of the classroom (collaborating, learning, and becoming more knowledgeable about the profession). The professional growth and development they receive, either through school, on-the-job trainings, or interactions with colleagues is one way in which they navigate these roles.

Finding 4: EFL teachers are satisfied with their profession, but are not tied to a single job

In their study, Kassabgy, Boraie, and Schmidt (2001) showed that, overall, ESL/EFL teachers are mostly satisfied with their career choice, but they are not always satisfied with the job they currently have. The present study came to a similar conclusion. All of the participants were satisfied with their chosen profession and none had any desire to leave the field in the near future. But, due to the nature of EFL teaching, none were tied to a specific location or single job. All participants had taught in multiple locations, and all, except Charlie, had taught in more than one country. The longest any participant had served in a single job was Diane, who has taught at the same university for six of her eleven teaching years. When looking at the other participants, Brian taught at the same location for five of his fifteen years, Amy worked at one place for four of her nine years, and Charlie worked for the same company for the duration of his five years.

When looking at where they are in their careers, Charlie and Amy are currently on a hiatus from teaching while Brian is thinking he might leave his current job. Even Diane, who expressed a great deal of commitment to the university that employs her, would like to get a different job within that university.

It is possible that the ever changing imagined and practiced identities of EFL teachers, along with the need for more professional growth and development, creates an environment in which teachers are rarely satisfied with their positions for longer than a few years. This, combined with the freedom of movement that being an EFL teacher provides, may often lead one to pursue other jobs within the same profession, either with a different institution, or in a different country.

While none of the teachers in this study admitted to suffering from burnout or were thinking of leaving the profession, the fact that none of them had remained at any location longer than six years is of particular note. As noted in Chapter Two, burnout among EFL teachers is correlated with how long they have been teaching, with many teachers leaving within the first five years. Valeo and Faez (2013) argue that one cause of high attrition could be the fact that teachers are constantly changing and moving from one position to another. Johnston concurs, offering up the fact that the relative ease for teachers to go from one job to the next might lead to teachers walking away from the profession relatively easily.

However, it might be possible that the relative ease that leads some teachers to leave the profession actually helps other teachers to stay in the profession by allowing them to leave jobs that do not satisfy them for ones that more properly help them align their real and imagined identities. Perhaps one way NES EFL teachers stave off burnout and increase their career longevity is by changing jobs frequently. So, while some teachers choose to leave teaching altogether, others choose to reset their “five-year burnout clock” by getting a new teaching job. This in turn, could give a teacher another opportunity to shape their identity by changing many of the external factors that conflict with the identity they are constantly trying to construct.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study and the results obtained. First, the sample size for the study consisted of a very small number of participants. This means that the conclusions drawn need to be looked at and compared with much larger studies. The study also was asking teachers to reflect on the totality of their careers, which means that it was reliant on participants' memories of how they felt, which may not be as reliable as something like a diary or notes from one particular day. Ideally, interviewing a larger group of participants multiple times over the course of several years might yield more reliable data.

Another limitation of this study was the interview process. The length of the interview was relatively short (30-55 minutes) and the topics broad ranging. This was done in an effort to elicit the most information from participants. Unfortunately, this format often made it difficult to get participants to give concise answers with concrete examples from their past. Also, the broad ranging nature of the interview often meant that the participants' answers were quite lengthy, with frequent off-topic diversions. At times during each interview it was necessary to cut off lengthy responses or interject as a way to steer the conversation back to the guiding questions of the research. Additionally, there also seemed to be a great deal of overlap when it came to the subject of teacher roles and teacher responsibilities and some confusion on how best to express one's commitment to teaching. More precise questions, longer interviews, or follow-up interviews could have helped with this limitation.

Finally, there was some limitation due to the technology needed to conduct the interviews. The interviews were all conducted via Skype but, due to the many locations and vast distances between myself and the participants, there were a number of technical difficulties and sometimes lag between when one person spoke and another person was able to hear it. This,

along with a lack of visual cues that come with not being in the same room as the participant, and the fact that I was speaking with these people for the first time, resulted in dialogs which were more stiff and formal than I had hoped and made candid conversations difficult.

Reflections

Conducting this research has helped me to grow significantly as a researcher. Gathering and reading the many articles, studies, and chapters written on this topic, and then distilling the information down to the most salient points has given me a new appreciation for the complex and time consuming process that researchers undergo in order to come up with the most valid and reliable data. Conducting my own study, and the interview process, has given me new respect for the collection of data and the interpretation of results.

This research was conducted in an attempt to understand the motivations behind becoming and continuing to be an EFL teacher. It aimed to look at how EFL teachers' identities are formed and transformed throughout their careers. As I processed the data collected and filtered it through the previously published research, I began to realize just how complex the topic really was. I discovered that there is no single mindset or identity for an EFL teacher. There are so many variables involved that trying to classify them could take a lifetime. Just looking at the four participants in this study, they were teaching a diverse range of students from elementary school to adults and in many different settings.

Throughout the study I was continually wondering how these differences could affect the results. Looking at my own experiences, I can see vast differences between teaching at a university (similar to Diane) and teaching at a language academy (like Brian). The same goes for the differences between an intensive language program (like Amy) and a teacher exchange program (like Charlie). One teacher might be happy in all these settings, while another teacher

might be satisfied at one location and miserable at the others. Management plays a big role in how satisfied one is with a job, as do other external forces that may have little to do with what takes place in the classroom.

However, this study was meant to be more of an entry point for further exploration and not an exhaustive encyclopedia of every in-and-out of EFL teaching. Further studies breaking down groups by some of the many variables, including types of schools, NES teacher vs NNES teacher, how much of a foreign language the teacher knows, and cultural assimilation, would be good follow-ups to this one.

Conclusion

This capstone has been an exploration of motives and identities of EFL teachers, but it has also been a personal exploration as I looked at my own growth as a teacher over the years. Throughout the process I found a diverse group of participants who each had a unique and compelling story to tell. I think, after having gone through all of the research I have learned a lot about the types of people that teach EFL and a lot about myself.

I believe that there are several implications from this research that can be useful to both teachers and administrators. First, it is important for teachers to have a network of support and a way to share ideas. Teachers need to be open to sharing ideas and employers need to encourage the sharing of ideas amongst teachers. Because NES EFL teaching is a global endeavor with many people switching jobs and/or locations every year, it's important that this network of support contain both local co-workers as well as colleagues around the world. Having such connections can help teachers with both their personal well-being and their professional growth.

Next, it's important for administrators to listen to teacher concerns about both their classes and their workplace. Large class sizes, unmotivated students, and over-reliance on tests

can quickly lead to teacher frustration and burnout. It is very easy for teachers to leave one job for another and if they feel like their concerns are not being taken seriously they will not stick around for very long. Even if administrators cannot solve the problem, sometimes simply giving teachers a forum in which they feel like these concerns are valid can go a long way towards improving overall job satisfaction.

Lastly, it's important for all teachers and administrators to mutually understand and respect each other. Being an NES EFL teacher means living in a foreign country where the attitudes, beliefs, culture, and language are frequently new and different. Employing NES EFL teachers means accepting foreign workers whose ideas and actions might conflict with societal norms. Administrators and teachers need to be aware and understanding of this fact. There will be frequent miscommunications and certain aspects of the job will be "lost in translation" either by teachers who might not fully understand local culture or administrators who might take offense when no offense is intended. It's important that everyone work together to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and cultural understanding.

Additionally, I think there are three very important take-aways from all of my research that every perspective NES EFL teacher should be aware of upon entering the profession. The first is to be ready for constant change. Your colleagues will be changing every few months as teachers burn out, walk away, or pursue better jobs. You will probably be moving every few years as you try to grow professionally, pursue better jobs, and fight through the many frustrations that come with living and working in new cultures. You will need to be prepared for these changes and you will need to adapt accordingly.

Second, I would advise perspective teachers to never stop learning. Continue to take classes, get certificates, earn degrees, and do as much professional growth and development as

you can. This will ensure that you will be able to get a job at the best possible schools and make a wage that is fair and sufficient for your needs. This will also help you to get jobs if you decide to give up living overseas and want to teach in the United States.

The last piece of advice is to fall in love. If you want a long term career teaching overseas, this must happen. You don't necessarily have to fall in love with a person, although for some that is probably the most inevitable path. Fall in love with a place, fall in love with a job, but the point is you will need to fall in love with something. When you are teaching in a new country, within a new culture, under the dominance of an authority that may seem alien, the only way to make a successful career is to fall in love. If you aren't going to love it, you might as well go home.

APPENDIX A

Background Questionnaire

1. Are you currently teaching? If so, where?
2. What are your teaching qualifications? Do you have any degrees/experience outside of teaching?
3. How long have you been teaching? In what contexts have you taught so far?
4. Do you currently have any other jobs, in addition to your teaching job (translating, private lessons, etc.)?

APPENDIX B

Data Collection Interview

(Adapted from Johnston, 1997 and Abednia, 2012)

A. Job Motivation

1. How did you get into teaching?
2. Do the reasons that you initially had in mind for becoming a teacher still exist? Which? Why?
3. How committed do you think you are to your job? To what degree are you committed to teaching as a whole?
4. How do you evaluate your commitment to teaching?

B. Teacher Roles and Identity

1. What do you see as your role as a teacher in EFL? Did you always see this as your role?
2. At the start of your teaching career, what type of teacher did you think you would be? In what ways have you become that teacher? (How has that changed over time?)
3. What has most influenced your teaching beliefs and performance?
4. How do you judge your abilities with other teachers' abilities (skills and knowledge)? In what areas are you weaker/stronger than them? Why?

C. Job Perception

1. What do you see as your responsibilities as a teacher to the students?
2. What do you see as your responsibilities as a teacher to the school/administration?

3. Is there ever a conflict between the two? How do/did you handle it?
4. In your current position, what things nurture you?
5. What is your greatest challenge in the classroom? What is your greatest challenge outside the classroom?
6. At what point did you feel like a “real teacher”?

D. Future perspective (Teaching as Long Term Career)

1. Is there any possibility of leaving teaching as your main career? What may make you do so?
2. What ambitions and plans do you have for the future? (What do you think will happen in the future with regard to your development of teaching in terms of quality, scope, etc.?)
3. What type of teacher do you want to be in the future?

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