

Identity and positionality: a framework for video analysis of teaching

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Abstract:

This chapter describes the importance of providing structured opportunities for preservice teachers to engage in identity work through video analysis. Without data of classroom interactions through modes including video, preservice teachers rely on memory and their construction of events to engage in reflection of teaching and learning. Teacher educators can provide that support during teacher education courses. The use of discourse analysis with video in teacher education to foster identity work or teacher development in general is a growing area for researchers. Transcribing and analyzing video-recorded interactions is tedious and difficult work, especially when novice teachers are still learning how to create lessons and manage students. In particular, this assignment challenges students to think critically about both interactive and reflective positionings related to the language they use. Most likely, these are new ways of thinking for student teachers and their first attempts will be surface-level.

Keywords: video analysis | teacher education | teacher identity

Article:

We open this chapter with a story from Hannah, who is a teacher candidate in a high school English classroom. Hannah (a young, White, middle-class female) completed her student teaching at Smartsville High School, a rural school in the southeast United States. The majority of students in her classroom were White, with a small number of African American and Latino/as students all coming from lower and middle-class backgrounds. In the reflection below, Hannah described a video-recorded and transcribed lesson from a tenth-grade honors English classroom in which she facilitated discussion about heroic traits. This discussion was meant to provoke interest in and build prior knowledge about Hercules. In her writing, she reflected on the ways in which her talk shaped how she positioned herself as a teacher and how her students situated her as a teacher.

As far as the discussion is concerned, I try to position myself as a facilitator or “conversation jockey,” posing questions to the students and allowing them to “bounce” answers off one another—sometimes students will ask questions to one another (as occurred in the video at least once) as a result of the conversation. I prefer to facilitate/elaborate on statements rather than dominate the conversation. My students

appeared to position me as a relaxed authority figure—I can be joked around with, we can have little tangents on occasion, we can laugh as a class—but I think they are also well aware of my expectations. I think they also position me as someone who gives them approval. This is an Honors level course and it seems as though discussions can almost become a quest for my affirmation that they’ve done the right thing and this continues to be my main issue with class discussions. . . . Also, as the discussion progresses, there were about ten names/voices I kept hearing over and over again. I think that volunteering is great, but there are twenty other students in the room who aren’t speaking up/raising their hands as much as those ten, and I really need to work on incorporating them into the discussion more. . . . I don’t want to set a limit to student comments or anything like that . . . but I need to figure out how to achieve a balance as far as everyone having something to say. . . . Perhaps simply calling on quiet students and asking what they thought might help.

In the above assigned reflection, Hannah recognized that she successfully positioned herself as a facilitator by posing questions and allowing students to share ideas with one another. This recognition of her interactions connected with Hannah’s teacher philosophy statement that described her ideal classroom as one that is open and interactive. We asked students to write or revise a teacher philosophy statement at the beginning of English methods and post it online for students, parents, and colleagues to see. By teacher philosophy, we mean a statement that provides a clear, concise description of their teaching approach, methods, and expertise. Although she seemed pleased with her enactments, she mentioned that she is not comfortable when students positioned her as teacher who gives approval and affirmation for what is “right” during discussion because it does not foster an open and interactive classroom. She also expressed concern with calling on the same students during a whole group discussion, which potentially only positioned a small portion of her students as participants. As a result, she proposed the possible solution of finding strategies for increasing participation among the quiet students by encouraging them to express their thoughts.

As teacher educators, we value opportunities in the classroom when teacher candidates openly discuss the construction and enactment of their teacher identities. For Hannah, this meant analyzing a moment in which she noticed the complexity of her desired facilitator position. Specifically, in her reflection, she pinpointed specific kinds of talk (e.g., posing questions) that positioned her as a facilitator and interactional patterns (e.g., calling on the same students) that did not foster that facilitator position. With this interactional awareness, Hannah was able to develop concrete ways in which she could foster contributions from more of her students (e.g., calling on quiet students) in the future.

We share the above example to illustrate our belief that awareness of the construction and enactment of particular teacher identities (e.g., Hannah as facilitator) is an important part of the learning process for preservice teachers. Significant moment-to-moment interactions with students during instructional time can be fleeting and largely unrealized by novice and experienced teachers alike; yet, these moments may (and often do) build over time to construct particular identities that have a profound impact on both the individual and the students for whom teachers care. Those who have taken on the role of supporting new or struggling teachers know that moving out of survival mode toward in-the-moment awareness of one’s practice is

slow, deliberate, and at times painstaking work. In this chapter, we present a framework, grounded in research about teacher identity (Alsup, 2006), which can be applied to video analysis to support teachers in building the kind of interactional awareness that Hannah demonstrated.

THEORIES ABOUT IDENTITY

To further conceptualize theories of identity in relation to learning and teaching, we provide a brief history of identity theories and describe three interrelated characteristics that we use throughout this book. The term identity has a long history that must be explored in order to understand how it is used today in relation to teacher education. Early theories of identity used the term to describe a stable and achieved self (Erickson, 1968). Such theories evolved as social psychologists noted the dynamic processes of identity construction that occur through social interactions (Mead, 1934; Vygotsky, 1978). Later, sociologists and anthropologists (e.g., Bourdieu, 1991) redefined the term to include cultural identity to recognize how individuals are shaped through cultural markers and social positionings. Most contemporary educational scholars, then, draw from multiple fields (e.g., anthropology, psychology, poststructuralism, sociology, and sociolinguistics) to define concepts of identity within education (Bourdieu, 1986; Butler, 1993; Gee, 2000; Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, & Cain, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

For this book, we draw from a theoretical framework that views identity as a process in which people learn how to talk and behave in ways that gain them status and membership in a social group (Brtizman, 1991; Gee, 2005; Holland et al., 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Specifically, we use Holland et al.'s (1998) definition of identities as “self-understandings” or a “key means through which people care about and care for what is going on around them” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 5). Because identities are constantly evolving and are shaped by social, cultural, and political contexts, we discuss identities as fluid, dynamic, and discursively constructed (Holland, et al., 1998; Mishler, 2004). For this book, we build from the following four interrelated characteristics of these theories that we discuss below: 1) identities are fluid; 2) identities are shaped through discursive interactions; 3) identities are shaped by social, political, and cultural contexts; 4) individual's identities also shape the world around them.

Theorists argue that identities are fluid, multiple, and dynamic (Mishler, 2004) and are constructed, enacted, or narrated over time (Anzaldúa, 1999; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Thus, a teacher is not a fixed way of being. Instead, teachers take on various identities (e.g., coach) over time that shift depending on students, colleagues, and experiences. Although identity enactments vary depending on various contexts, people also retain histories of participation that shape how they accept or resist identities within those contexts (Holland et al., 1998). For instance, a teacher might recognize that past instructors impact how they currently teach in their classroom. Teacher identities, then, are constructed through an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences (Kerby, 1991), a notion that corresponds with the idea that “becoming” a teacher is a process of lifelong learning (e.g., Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Day, 1999).

In relation to the recognition that identities are dynamic, we also understand that identities are shaped by and performed through discursive interactions (Holland et al., 1998). When people communicate with one another, they generally have awareness of the social groups with which

they wish to identify and adjust their language and behaviors accordingly. Gee (2005) refers to this as having an “identity kit” or performing ways of being in the world that include speech, gestures, dress, and other nonverbal behaviors. For educators, this means that teacher identities are positions that are accepted and/or resisted through interactions with students, parents, and colleagues. For example, a colleague might position a fellow teacher as an expert in math literacy during a discussion in a professional learning community. That teacher might take up that position by sharing ideas about how to integrate math journals into lessons that challenge students to problem-solve. That teacher, then, enacts teacher identities related to her expertise in math literacy. Paying attention to such discursive moments can provide insight into the identities that we construct and enact over time.

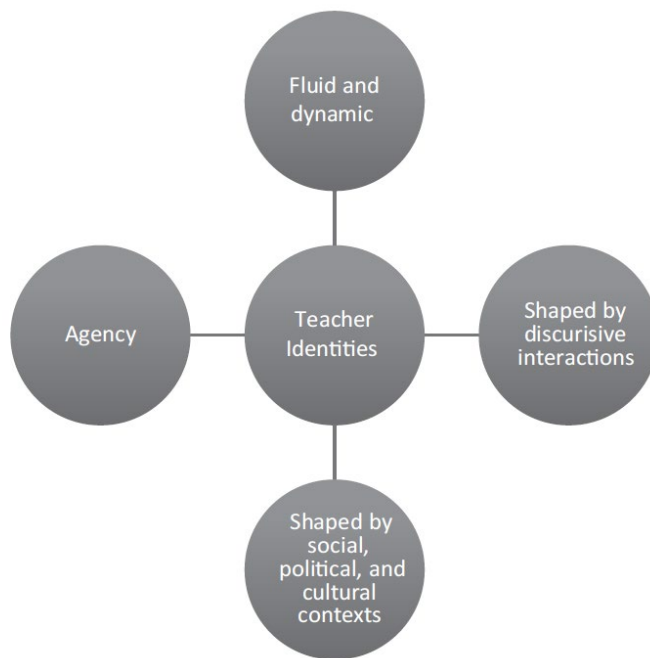


Figure 2.1. Teacher Identities

We also understand that identities are shaped by social, political, and cultural contexts. Enacting a particular identity in a particular situation enables individuals to acquire social status, such as making new friends or receiving a raise. For instance, knowing how to use academic language to construct an argumentative essay in college brings one the social good of a positive grade and the identity of a “good student,” which often opens doors for acquiring other areas of social status, such as a higher salary. Thus, students who have had unequal access to knowledge and skills necessary to perform a “good student” identity may be recognized by others as a “struggling learner” and, as a result, do not earn the social status needed to flourish in the context of school. Therefore, the identities one enacts are always tailored to the purpose of belonging to a particular social group (e.g., “good students”) that has established (and often institutionally bound) norms for participation over time. Teacher identities, then, are shaped by past experiences, such as education or family and community experiences (Cooper & Olsen, 1996; Sugrue, 1997). That prior knowledge or set of internal narratives defines their understanding of teachers and how (or what knowledge) children learn, which can be difficult to broaden in scope (Alsup, 2006). This is related to the concept that specific identities are enacted in order for the individual to be

recognized and gain membership into that community. Learning to be a teacher then involves knowledge of a school community's social and cultural beliefs and practices (Weber, 1991). For preservice teachers, this means that in order to be recognized as a teacher by colleagues, parents, students, and university supervisors, they must use language and behaviors (e.g., collaborate with others, attend meetings) that others within that context associate with "being" a teacher. As a result, teacher candidates will be shaped by what that context values, such as performance data or teacher leadership. How one learns to be recognizable as a teacher in a school is highly subject to institutional norms and current social and political debates on what constitutes effective teaching and learning. In the teacher education programs where we (two English Education professors) teach, effective teaching is demonstrated by developing a supportive learning environment that builds on diverse students' cultural, social, and linguistic needs and interests as a foundation for literacy learning (Gay, 2010). Thus, preservice teachers are encouraged to adopt a culturally responsive teacher identity.

Teachers, however, are not powerless. Oftentimes, educators act as agents who shape the world around them (i.e., school or classroom) (Florio-Ruane, 2002). Individuals, in this case teachers, use resources around them in order to "craft a response in a time and space defined by others' standpoints in activity, that is, in a social field conceived as the ground of responsiveness. Human agency comes through this art of improvisation" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 272). Practically, this means that teachers can change curriculum and policies within their departments and schools in ways that align with their beliefs about pedagogy. For instance, a teacher might change how writing is taught at her school by researching and implementing writing workshop methods in a school that traditionally valued skill and drill writing instruction (Vetter, Myers, & Hester 2014). Agency, then, can be a way for individuals to redefine accepted identities within specific contexts.

IDENTITY WORK IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Scholars (Alsup, 2006; Beijaard et al., 2004) have used theories of identity to frame educational research in several areas. To learn more about how that lens has helped educators make sense of teaching and learning, we discuss those areas of scholarship below. We follow that discussion with an examination of what has not yet been explored and how our research fills that gap.

Teacher education research has used an identity framework to examine how identity markers (e.g., race or gender) shape teacher identities (DeCorse & Vogtle, 1997). For example, scholars have investigated issues of race and power in education by exploring how the racial attitudes voiced by White teachers shape pedagogy and classroom interactions (Pennington, 2007; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). For example, Pennington (2007) explored how preservice teachers' White identities impacted how they viewed children of color in their classrooms. Through seminar conversations about their teaching experiences, she found common threads that included the language of saving and/or rescuing children of color from lives that the teachers perceived to be missing essential qualities. Pennington found that through personal stories related to her own teaching, she and her students were able to review and renew their narratives as White teachers and be honest about how their race impacted their views of students. They learned that it was okay to talk about race and discuss the complexities of how it shaped their daily interactions and assumptions about students' learning experiences. This work, then, recognizes how identity

markers are related to issues of power that impact students' learning experiences (Freedman & Appleman, 2008). For some student teachers, this means examining the specific ways in which identity markers impact learning and instruction so that they can negotiate positions of power with students in ways that foster learning opportunities (Vetter, Meacham, & Schieble, 2013).

Scholarship on teacher identities also examines how preservice teachers negotiate the conflicting discourses of their university and school (Britzman, 1991; Cooper and Olson, 1996; Sexton, 2008) and how those negotiations shape teacher identities (Alsup, 2006; Danielwitz, 2001; Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008). Preservice teachers involved in student teaching experiences must enact identities consistent with school norms in ways that afford them teacher status and membership (Coldron & Smith, 1999; Haniford, 2010). They must also learn to negotiate multiple ideologies from personal, professional, and institutional contexts in order to perform teacher identities that align with their teacher beliefs (Alsup, 2006). For instance, a student teacher might believe in a collaborative learning approach. This might conflict, however, with a cooperating teacher who focuses on direct instruction. As a result, the student teacher will need to figure out ways to merge collaborative learning with direct instruction as a way to situate herself as the kind of teacher she envisions while also respecting the wishes of her cooperating teacher. For student teachers, then, constructing teacher identities consists of borrowing, negotiating, and claiming ownership in a space that is not their own (Britzman, 1994). As a result, many student teachers think it is best to perform the esteemed identities of their cooperating teachers, facilitators, professors, and even students to prosper. For those that resist those valued identities, they run the risk of being ostracized from the school community. If that happens, teachers leave the profession or they conform to their school's belief systems despite conflicting beliefs. These tensions can also negatively impact instruction and learning in the classroom, and potentially the quality of instruction and school-wide achievement (Rex & Schiller, 2009). Thus, in order to be fruitful at these negotiations, teachers must merge individual beliefs of what it means to be a teacher with professional identities (i.e., borderland discourses) (Alsup, 2006).

To help with those complex mediations, research has also focused on the role of teacher education in supporting teachers to notice and use theories about identity to grow as practitioners (Horn, Nolen, Ward, & Campbell, 2008; Ma & Singer-Gabella, 2011). Overall, focusing on identity work in courses has been found to help teacher candidates enact agency within their school (Fairbanks et al., 2010), modify assumptions about what it means to be teacher (Horn et al., 2008) and opens new possibilities for ways of "being" a teacher (Ma & Singer-Gabella, 2011). Program components, such as ongoing communication, support, opportunities to reflect, occasions to practice, and constructive feedback from multiple points of view have been found to be helpful ways to foster the identity work of teachers (Freedman & Appleman, 2008). Specifically, research found that preservice teachers working in urban schools benefitted from being in a cohort over several years because it provided a space for teachers with different backgrounds and experiences to support each other, even after graduation (Freedman & Appleman, 2008). Specifically, these cohorts fostered opportunities for conversation that included reflection and feedback about instructional practices they were practicing in their classrooms (Freedman & Appleman, 2008). Cohorts, however, can also intensify problems, particularly when conversations are not constructive. Implications from such studies suggest that

teacher education programs are ideal spaces for preservice teachers to try on possible teacher identities in a supportive context (Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008).

Educators, however, would benefit from more research that examines how novice teachers enact, notice, analyze, and at times adjust their classroom identity work in their teacher education courses. We argue that discourse analysis of classroom interactions captured through video is one way for teacher candidates to critically examine how they construct and enact teacher identities over time. Scholarship illustrates the important relationship between discursive interactions and learning (Allington, 2002; Applebee, Langer, Nystrand & Gamoran, 2003). It makes sense then that to improve teaching and learning, teachers would benefit from studying their everyday language use and nonverbal interactions in classrooms. Engaging in such analysis provides a robust method for reflecting and improving upon their practice (Juzwik & Ives, 2010), such as pinpointing specific interactional patterns that enable or prohibit them from enacting preferred teacher identities (Vetter et al., 2013). We borrow the term “interactionally aware” from Rex and Schiller (2009), who use it to describe teachers who are aware of the how talk impacts instruction and learning in their classroom. Such awareness opens opportunities for teachers to become more responsive to the diverse learning identities of students because they recognize that learning is shaped by multiple factors, such as personal relationships (de Freitas, 2008). Such awareness might also provide space for teachers to note that when learning identities are confined by classroom discourses, such as assumptions about what it means to be a “good” reader or writer, teachers can trouble those assumptions of what it means to be successful in school (de Freitas, 2008; Rex & Schiller, 2009).

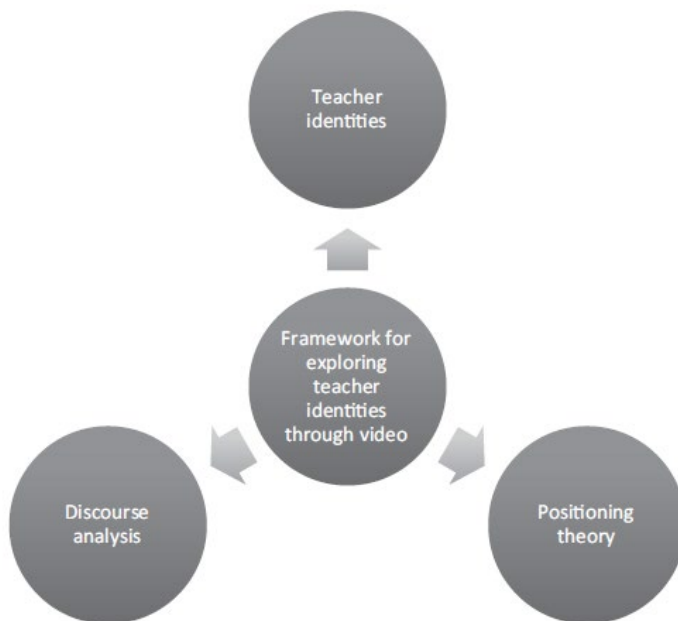


Figure 2.2. Framework for Exploring Teacher Identities through Video

We share Rex and Schiller’s view that fostering interactional awareness is paramount to teacher learning and professional development. This book provides teacher educators and their students with support to build their interactional awareness by analyzing classroom interactions using video. Video as a medium is advantageous because it captures both language use *and* nonverbal

communication as a means to support this work; video also allows a single event to be reviewed multiple times and used as a data source for analysis. To support and examine how student teachers undertake identity work as a means for building interactional awareness, we used positioning theory with discourse analysis (Davies & Harré, 1990). We found that these concepts used together help candidates become aware that the structure and content of their talk and nonverbal actions relate to their identities and the way they are perceived by others (Rex & Schiller, 2009).

Positioning Theory

We view positioning theory as essential to our framework because it reveals how teachers construct and enact identities over time and in relation to their students and colleagues. We draw from the following definition of positionality: “The discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 91). In other words, positionality is how people engage in conversation in ways that “take up or resist positions others create for them” (Rex & Schiller, 2009, p. 9). Within discursive interactions, individuals position themselves either interactively (i.e., when a person positions another person or is positioned by someone else) or reflexively (i.e., when a person positions themselves) (Davies & Harré, 1990). These first-order positionings may occur when a teacher situates a student as an engaged writer, and in turn that student may take up that position by reading their refined composition aloud to the class. Dependent on issues of power and status, positions can be resisted or taken up during interactions, and new positions can be created, both spontaneously and purposefully.

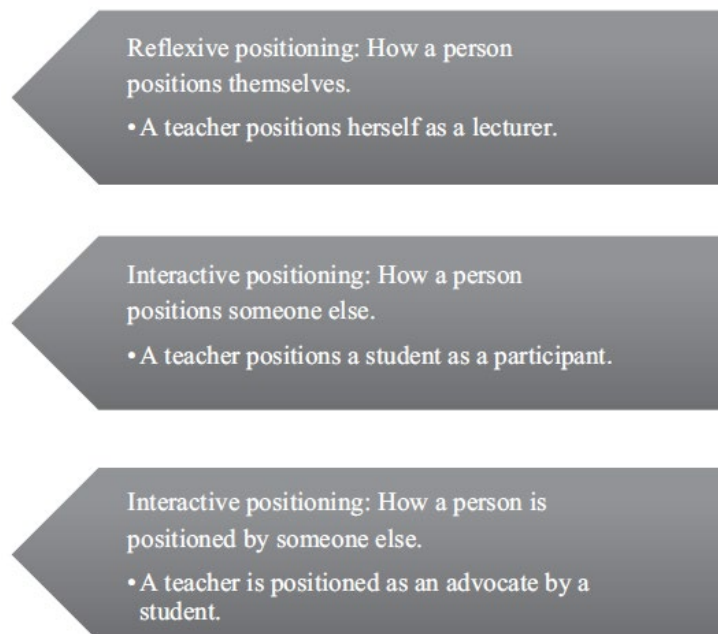


Figure 2.3. Reflexive and Interactive Positionings

When a student resists that position of an engaged writer by refusing to write, second-order positioning occurs. Such challenges occur frequently in classroom interactions and they can reveal issues of power and status that might hinder learning. When individuals challenge first-

order positionings within a separate discussion about the first conversation, third-order positionings occur. For instance, in a conversation with a cooperating teacher about a past interaction, a preservice teacher might reposition a student as a disengaged writer after noticing that they did not share their work in a small group read aloud. Third-order forms of positioning are considered to be descriptive, as they take place within talk or written discussion about past interactions. Students' analysis of transcribed interactions and interviews about those transcriptions are examples of third-order positionings.

Educational research has used positioning theory to investigate how teachers and students position themselves and others within classrooms (Clarke, 2006; Leander, 2002; Vetter, 2010). Such work illustrates how teachers intentionally or unintentionally situate students in ways that shape their learning and membership in a classroom community (Reeves, 2009; Wortham, 2004). The reflective and interactive positionings of teachers certainly shape instructional practices (e.g., writing process) and also students' access to identities (e.g., capable learner) (Reeves, 2009). For preservice teachers, the examination of how such positions occur during moment-to-moment interactions can be helpful because it opens occasions for them to examine their identity enactments over time. In other words, positioning and identity theory can help preservice teachers think critically and purposefully about how to "become" the kind of teachers they want to become and negotiate identities within specific contexts (Ma & Singer-Gabella, 2011). This book offers several examples for how positioning theory was used as a tool for self-analysis with preservice teachers. However, we realized that preservice teachers needed a method to access how they position themselves and their students. Thus, we taught them how to examine specific interactional moves using tools associated with discourse analysis as described below.

Teachers Studying Their Own Discourse: Why is it Important?

Discourse analysis is the study of how people use discourse (naturally occurring talk and other identity markers such as gestures or dress) to position themselves in strategic ways to belong to a particular social group. Moje and Lewis (2007) also refer to these social groups as discourse communities. Alternatively, discourse analysis may reveal that individuals position themselves in ways that are outside of the group's accepted norms, and thus struggle to find acceptance. A preservice teacher who identifies as a culturally responsive educator in a school that focuses on packaged curriculum and test preparation would struggle for acceptance in this situation; learning to speak back to powerful discourse communities and enact preferred teacher identities amid testing pressure is a frequent struggle for our teacher candidates.

Informed by classroom studies that demonstrate the importance of talk and social interaction to learning (Allington, 2002; Applebee et al., 2003; Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Stuart-Faris, 2004), we note that to improve teaching and learning, teachers need to study their everyday language use in classrooms. Juzwik et al. (2013) concede that the need for teacher candidates "to gain knowledge and experiential understanding of how discourse can shape teaching and learning" is a central problem in teacher education (p. 4). Whereas the aforementioned studies and others have focused on studying how classroom discourse impacts teaching and learning (Cazden, 2001; Dyson, 1993; Heath, 1983; Rex & McEachen, 1999, 2001, 2002; Wortham, 2004), we know of few studies that document teachers analyzing their own classroom discourse to examine and improve their practice. Rex and Schiller (2009) provide a

practical text for both preservice and inservice teachers to analyze classroom interactions to improve instruction. Such work found that teachers and students benefitted from the being interactionally aware in their classrooms. In addition, Orland-Barak and Yinon (2007) conducted a study of how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Israel examined a transcript and lesson artifacts from one full lesson during the student teaching experience. Using guiding questions from the course instructor, candidates examined their transcripts for patterns of turn-taking and interaction to note any gaps between what they think they did and what actually happened during the lesson. Candidates also identified their strengths and made suggestions about how to modify their future classroom discourse to improve teaching and learning. Findings from three case studies demonstrated that candidates noticed tendencies to dominate classroom discourse, articulated understandings about teachers' questioning practices, and used theory to analyze their discourse in generative ways. The authors suggest these findings "shed an optimistic light on the potential of novices to reflect at levels beyond 'what works in the classroom'" (p. 966). They also learned that the context of a course that supports the student teaching experience offered student teachers a safe learning environment for troubling classroom discourse from both an emotional and objective or analytical stance. Orland-Barak and Yinon also recommend that teacher candidates would benefit from analyzing their classroom discourse at multiple points over time to track patterns and observe changes.

A more recent study (Juzwik et al., 2013) demonstrates how video-based tools supported English teacher candidates to analyze their classroom interactions in order to more effectively implement dialogically organized instruction (DOI). Dialogically organized instruction can be characterized as open-ended, academic discourse where students develop questions and are the primary contributors to classroom talk. Juzwik and her colleagues at Michigan State University implemented and researched a pedagogical design they call Video-Based Response and Revision (VBRR) to understand the effectiveness of this approach on candidates' learning about DOI.

To participate in VBRR, candidates uploaded video clips of classroom discussion to a web-based platform and used Web 2.0 technologies to analyze their classroom interactions and support one another to move toward more dialogically organized modes of instruction. Key findings from their study support that "focusing on *key focal concepts* in teaching is a more powerful pedagogical use of video work than considering teaching practices *in general*" (p. 33, emphasis original). Thus, having candidates examine their classroom discourse through a particular lens (such as the focus on identity and positioning in this book) can improve teaching and learning in the classroom. This book meets a need for more empirical research about how novice teachers examine their own classroom discourse to improve their practice.

ANALYZING CLASSROOM DISCOURSE TO EXAMINE IDENTITY AND POSITIONING

Discourse analysis that fosters the investigation of both positioning and identities can help preservice teachers notice how and why they construct and enact particular identities during classroom interactions. With that information, teacher candidates can make informed decisions about how to communicate and position themselves and their students in ways that support their desired teaching identities. There exist numerous theories and methods related to studying classroom discourse (Rex & Green, 2007). For the purpose of using these tools with novice

teachers, we borrowed elements of Gee’s (2000) broader approach to discourse analysis. Gee’s broader approach examines how everyday language practices (e.g., questions, pronouns, etc.) connect to larger ideologies and social groupings, or identities. This approach provided us, and our students, with the methodological tools to connect micro-level practices such as classroom dialogue to larger macro-level ideas that informed our candidates’ desired identities (e.g., constructivism or a facilitator identity) (see Table 2.2). To modify the analytic process for preservice teachers, we presented candidates with a list of questions that prompted them to apply these analytic tools to the three video-recorded lessons without overwhelming them with theoretical and methodological constructs used by linguists and educational researchers (see Table 2.1). For an example, we provide information from the first video assignment. In this analysis, candidates selected a 5–10 minute clip to transcribe and focused primarily on the ways they used language and nonverbal communication to position themselves and their students.

Table 2.1. Questions From First Video Analysis Assignment

| |
|---|
| <p><i>Video One</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videotape an entire lesson of you facilitating learning in direct or indirect instruction. This can include a lecture, mini-lesson, discussion, and/or reading instruction. • Transcribe 5–10 minutes of instruction, including both teacher and student talk. • In a 2–3 page analysis, answer the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who does the most talking? ○ What kinds of questions are posed? What kinds of answers are facilitated? ○ How do you talk to students? What is your tone? Do you use directives? Questions? Praises? Criticisms? ○ How do you think your words positioned your students as readers and writers? How do you think your students positioned you as a teacher? How did you position yourself as a teacher? ○ How might these positionings be shaped by how you were taught? By the kind of school you attended? By your race, class, gender, and/or sexual orientation? ○ What are the strengths? What will you do differently? ○ How did these positionings align (or not) with your desired teacher identities? |
|---|

Table 2.2. Discourse Analysis Chart for Video-recorded Lesson

| |
|--|
| Number of lines of teacher talk |
| Number of lines of student talk |
| Number of closed questions |
| Number of open-ended questions |
| Describe teacher tone |
| Describe student tone |
| Number of general praises (“Good job.”) |
| Number of specific praises (“It was helpful how you provided evidence to back up your claim.”) |
| Number of general criticisms (“No, that’s wrong.”) |
| Number of specific criticisms (“Interesting claim. What evidence do you have to back it up?”) |

Students examined their transcript and video clip for specific language use (e.g., teacher talk, open-ended questions) and made note of their nonverbal behaviors (e.g., standing at the front of the room). They then considered how these specific choices positioned them and their students in ways that either aligned or misaligned with their preferred teacher identities. Although there are many ways of studying classroom talk, we used positioning theory because it helps to examine how preservice teachers construct and enact teacher identities during moment-to-moment interactions. For instance, many teacher candidates espoused constructivist theories they had been introduced to in their teacher education program that call for teachers to act as a facilitator of student learning. To examine their enactment of this desired identity, candidates analyzed if and how they asked open-ended questions to position students as knowledge builders and valued student input in their videos.

Try it Out: Explore Teacher Positions

To further illustrate these concepts, let's look at a brief transcript from one lesson in Hannah's classroom. As you read, take note of both reflexive and interactive positions. Use the following table to take notes.

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, this video-recorded and transcribed lesson took place in a tenth-grade honors English classroom. Hannah's objective was to facilitate discussion about heroic traits in an attempt to provoke interest in and build prior knowledge about Hercules. Before students discussed, she asked them to write down initial thoughts about the broad concepts they discussed in the conversation.

Hannah: Okay . . . for number one. Can a person who has committed murder become a hero?

Hattie: No.

Hannah: Alright . . . why?

Hattie: Because they've killed somebody! For like, okay . . . I mean, it depends on what their murder was. Which obviously, which I would think it would be like if they killed somebody for no apparent reason. So . . . they should not be allowed to be considered a hero.

Hannah: Okay . . . so you're saying across the board, no.

Hattie: Yes.

Hannah: Okay . . . Corey. What do you think?

Corey: Yes.

Hannah: Yes? Okay. . .

Corey: Because . . . Moses killed an Egyptian before . . . So Moses killed an Egyptian and God chose Moses to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land. So obviously God found favor with Moses.

Hannah: Okay. . . let me throw a curveball, though. Doesn't *The Bible* also say, "Thou shalt not kill?"

Corey: Whoa! He was forgiven!

Hannah: He was forgiven? Okay then. Jamaal?

Jamal: I would say if he does it under reasonable circumstances. I mean, you shouldn't kill somebody for the fun of it. I mean, people do it. Reasonable circumstance, that's all I have to say for that one.

Hannah: Give me an example of a reasonable circumstance. What do you mean?

Jamal: Police officers. I mean, they're in a situation where they kill somebody that might kill them. I mean obviously the police officer is going to kill them, so like I said, reasonable circumstances.

Hannah: Like a kill or be killed kind of situation . . . okay. Kristen.

Kristen: I said yes, because like, well I mean there's people in prison who change the way they see things.

Hannah: We've all heard stories about people in prison for murder who, you know . . . did stupid things when they were young, were under the influence of drugs, who have completely reformed their lives. And sometimes, you know, it seems like they really mean it. So, it is kind of possible sometimes to change your ways. Alright . . . Harriet.

Harriet: Well, like with military people . . . they kill people for a living and they're considered to be heroes who are fighting for our country. So, people that kill people to protect others for the greater good. I think they could be considered heroes.

Hannah: Very good. Excellent.

From Hannah's teacher philosophy statement that she wrote for class, she stated that she valued classroom dialogue that is open and interactive. To align her teacher philosophy with classroom practice, Hannah would need to enact a facilitator teacher identity. To be a facilitator, one needs to pose open-ended questions and put students' responses into play with one another to construct a deeper conceptual understanding of a topic (Elizabeth, Anderson, Snow, & Selman, 2012; Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan, & Heintz, 2013). To provide an example of this kind of analysis, we include our interpretation of Hannah's classroom interaction, followed by her own written analysis. At the end of the chapter, we provide guiding questions to promote reflection and discussion about your own thoughts in relation to this example.

Table 2.3. Analysis Chart for Reflexive and Interactive Positionings

| Evidence from transcript or reflective statement (list transcript lines or describe interaction). | Reflexive Positioning: How did the teacher position his or herself? | Interactive Positionings: How did the teacher position students? | Interactive Positionings: How did students position the teacher? |
|---|---|--|--|
|---|---|--|--|

We see several specific instances where Hannah's talk aligned with her enactment of a facilitator identity. For example, she began the discussion with an open-ended question that ties the reading to the concept of heroism ("Can a person who has committed murder become a hero?"). Her initial posing of this question positioned herself as a teacher who facilitates students' knowledge, rather than an authority on this topic. Thus, she also positioned her students as intellectually capable readers and thinkers about the topic at hand. In the next turn, a student, Hattie, replies "No," but does not offer an extended explanation for her answer. Rather than accept Hattie's limited response and fill the void with her own thoughts, Hannah pushed her to elaborate

("Alright . . . why?"). This interactional move positioned Hattie as a valued member of the discussion who is capable of contributing her own interpretation, rather than searching for the correct response for which the teacher already knows the answer. A few turns later in the transcript, Hannah built on Hattie's ideas by asking for another student perspective ("Okay Corey . . . what do you think?"). Here, Hannah positioned herself as a teacher who facilitates students' ideas and multiple perspectives. We also see that Hannah encouraged students to justify their responses with evidence. Next, when Jamal shared that there are reasonable circumstances that might lead one to commit murder, Hannah scaffolded his academic thinking by asking him to follow up with evidence ("Give me an example of a reasonable circumstance. What do you mean?"). Her directive placed the intellectual work on the student and positioned him as a capable student. Throughout the interaction, we witness students construct deeper understandings about the nuances associated with heroism and consider multiple contexts concerning police officers and the military that made this conversation messy and complex—the very markers of an academic discussion that research supports builds students' social and cognitive skills and academic language use (Applebee et al., 2003). Therefore, by strategically using language to position herself as a teacher who invites students' responses (and students as capable literacy learners), we see alignment of Hannah's teacher philosophy and her enactment of her desired facilitator identity.

Although Hannah positioned herself as a facilitator during this discussion, there were a few missed opportunities that are worth discussing. First, as a facilitator, it is important to capture the thoughts of the speaker, especially when repeating thoughts for the rest of the class. At the beginning of the excerpt, Hattie explained that a person cannot be considered a hero if they kill a person for no reason. Hannah repeated her thought by saying that Hattie believed that across the board, there is no way a person who killed someone could be considered a hero. We would argue that there was more complexity to Hattie's thought and the class might have benefitted from talking about the complexity. Second, at the very end of the excerpt, Hannah said, "Very good. Excellent." These praises were most likely meant to provide positive reinforcement to the students, however, they may be fostering the need for students to gain approval or affirmation from the teacher, a position that Hannah resisted in the opening reflection. One way that Hannah could offer praise that fosters more learning opportunities is by making her feedback more specific. In other words, she might have rephrased her comment to say, "That thought brings up an interesting point about how killing can be considered to be heroic by our society. What do others think of this point?" That way, the class would have the opportunity to understand why the point is worth praising and it opens opportunities for others to add their perspectives to the discussion. By discussing these missed opportunities, we do not mean to criticize Hannah's interactions, but instead facilitate growth in a teaching skill (facilitating discussions) that is extremely complex.

How does Hannah leverage these concepts to make sense of her classroom interactions? Next, let's see how Hannah applies the guiding questions focused on the nature of who does the talking, the kinds of questions that are posed, and the tone established for her first video analysis:

From what I observed in my video, I think that there was a fairly good balance of students and teacher talk. Given that it was a class discussion that centered around the student's opinions/perceptions, I made sure that every student who had a statement to

make was able to make his/her voice heard. I think that the students had ample opportunities to vocalize their opinions, and I likewise allowed myself a little time to reflect and respond to what the students were saying. I also made a connection between our class discussion and the readings we were about to begin. I think that the conversational, casual tone of the class discussion made for a good balance—from what I can tell, the students did just as much as, if not more, talking than I did, which I consider to be a good thing (as long as it's relevant to the lesson at hand).

Here, Hannah noticed a few classroom discourse patterns that supported her vision for the discussion. She noticed that the conversation was more student-centered than teacher-dominated and that she used her language to make sure students who wanted to contribute were heard. Also, she characterized the tone of the class discussion as “casual,” which may have contributed to students taking more risk with sharing their ideas. Next, Hannah examined how her use of language positioned students as readers and writers and how she positioned herself as a teacher during this interaction.

I think that my words positioned students as readers and writers by providing them with a “jumping off” point for the discussion concepts. After asking a question, I really let them take it up by writing about the issues and then allowing them to talk in a discussion. I think that allowing students that time to process really strengthens their analytic skills and their discussions as well. I position my students as having the power to incorporate their own opinions and experiences into the readings and discussions, which I feel really empowers my students. I think that my students feel comfortable with and accept me as their teacher and as an authority figure. With that said, I think that my students also recognize that I hold them all accountable for their words and their actions. I think I've positioned myself as a laid-back teacher who loves student input and involvement, but requires some sense of order.

Hannah commented that she positioned her students as readers and writers through the use of discussion questions. Specifically, she observed that giving these questions to students and asking them to write down their initial thoughts before the discussion allows students the opportunities to analyze their thoughts in relation to a future reading. She also recognized that providing opportunities for students to voice their perspective in class is a way to push back against the traditional power relations between teacher as knower and learner as listener. Through the use of discussion questions, Hannah understood that her students situate her as someone with whom they can share their perspective (i.e., “comfortable”). Hannah stated that students also situated her as an authoritative figure who holds them accountable for their words and actions. Although we do not see evidence of Hannah managing behavior, the respectful dialogue from students and teacher could be evidence that students position her in that way. To end, she confirmed that she positioned herself as a laid-back teacher who invited dialogue and maintained order so that students could safely engage in conversation.

Does this align with her preferred teaching identities? Hannah addressed the assignment's guiding question to consider how these positionings might be informed by her own history of classroom interaction:

I think that these positionings come chiefly from my educational background, to be honest. I was held to a very high standard as far as academics throughout my educational career, and I was very successful in my high school English classes. I've been trying very hard in my planning and in my student teaching to translate a lot of the positive experiences I had in my AP course into similar positive experiences in my own classroom. Part of that to me is creating an open environment and a strong classroom community where my students and I feel comfortable with one another. I think that the way I talk with my students has come out of years of feeling comfortable with my own teachers and paying careful attention to classroom dynamics even before I ever started student teaching.

Hannah observed that she adopted the ways she was positioned as a student by her own teachers in an Advanced Placement course as a resource for conducting her own classroom. Her own teachers positioned her as academically capable (“I was held to a very high standard”). The strategic ways she used language to create a casual classroom environment were informed by her own models of teacher and student interaction that she felt contributed to her positive growth and school and academic success. Therefore, Hannah was able to align the desired teacher identities she felt positively contributed to her identity as a student with how she enacted a facilitator identity in her own classroom. We recognize, however, that Hannah’s own experience was not the only factor that opened opportunities for her to create an open and interactive classroom. Because she worked with students from similar backgrounds, she was able to quickly build rapport with them and students felt comfortable sharing opinions and experiences. This is not always the case when students and teachers come from different backgrounds, as we will discuss in chapter three.

Teachers typically depend on the use of particular discourse patterns for guiding, monitoring, and assessing the instruction they facilitate for their students (Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Mercer, 2000). Specifically, teachers use questions, recaps, elaborations, and reformulations as a way to foster discussion about a topic, summarize salient features of past events, clarify what has been said, and make connections to academic discourse of the curriculum (Lemke, 1990; Wells, 2000). These discourse patterns are most effective when teachers challenge students to give evidence for their statements, organize interactions and mutual support among students, and encourage students to actively participate in classroom events (Nassaji & Wells, 2000). Based on that information, we wondered if Hannah effectively used teacher talk to create an open and interactive classroom. What more could be done? Would you argue that students are constructing knowledge and negotiating meaning about heroic stances through this discussion? Why or why not?

EXPLORING THE FRAMEWORK IN PRACTICE

Using the tools of discourse analysis with video and transcripts to track positioning and identity, Hannah and other teacher candidates you will read about in this book were able to identify both instances of alignment and misalignment as they attempted to enact preferred teaching identities. We believe these analytic exercises provide novice, struggling, or even experienced teachers ways to improve their practice and ultimately increase student achievement and self-efficacy in

school. In the remaining chapters of this book, we focus on different desired identities that student teachers in this study both adopted and struggled to enact, as described in chapter one.

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