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(Mis)Reading the Classroom: A Two-Act “Play” on the Conflicting Roles in Student Teaching

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Abstract. This case study examined concentric and reciprocal notions of reading—that of high school students, a pre-service teacher, and a teacher educator. An intern charged with teaching students to read, interact with, and compose texts in an English/language arts classroom constructed her role in the classroom based on her reading the “text” of her internship experiences, relationships, and responsibilities. Using interviews and observations, a teacher educator read and interpreted the classroom “text” the pre-service teacher “composed” during her internship and then constructed a two-act “play” which details the conflict in the intern’s enacting the dual role of *student-teacher* and her subsequent reading of the classroom “text” from her stance as student-teacher. Concepts of classroom literacy for teachers and teacher educators are considered.

Keywords: teacher education; reading classroom text; classroom literacy; student teaching internship; stance

Introduction

In light of growing pedagogical, professional, and public awareness that twenty-first century literacy involves more than just printed words on a page and that specific literacies are acquired throughout the duration of an individual’s education (Barton, 2000; Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Buehl, 2014; Clark & Flores, 2007; Draper, 2011; Gee, 2012; International Reading Association, 2012; Langer, 1987; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Maclellan, 2008; National Council Teachers of English, 2007, 2008; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2006, 2007; Rogers, 2000), it is time to consider the professional literacy needs of the very individuals to whom we look to educate our children and our adolescents (International Literacy Association, 2015).

Review of the Literature

Lad Tobin (2004) implies a connection between the disciplinary focus of studying texts and the pedagogical importance of studying classrooms as text by asserting that “teaching is a way of reading and writing. Students learn to teach through, first, learning to read the classroom and, second, learning to write themselves within that classroom” (p. 129). A teacher is simultaneously a reader and a writer of her classroom. Like readers whose meaning making is framed by

the stances they take along an aesthetic-efferent continuum (Rosenblatt, 1978, 2005), the stance or “horizon of expectations” (Popper, 1962, p. 47) with which a teacher approaches a classroom conceivably guides his or her meaning-making process of that classroom text (Edge, 2008; Edge, 2011). How a teacher constructs and enacts her perception of her role as “teacher” is an important focus for investigation; this perception guides the teacher’s stance toward the classroom and potentially shapes how she makes sense of what happens in the classroom. A teacher’s definition of her role in a classroom shapes her stance as a reader and a writer of the classroom text; it influences how she plans her instruction, creates learning opportunities, gauges her students’ learning, and reflects on or assess her own teaching.

While some scholars have alluded to the similarities between reading and writing pieces of text to the reading and composing of a classroom text (e.g. Burke, 2008; Edge, 2008; Tobin, 1991; Tobin, 2004; Perl, 1994), none has yet to explore how stance shapes that reading, what kinds of cues teachers use to read the classroom text, or what implications the reading of the classroom text might hold for prospective teachers or for teacher educators. Given the relative importance of literacy instruction, the gap in our knowledge base between the development of teachers’ professional classroom literacy and the literacy instruction they provide for their students, one must wonder, as Tobin (2004) does, what we are to make of colleagues “who read *everything* as a text—*except* their own classrooms and pedagogical methods? It seems a comically studding act of denial, like Freud asserting that everything is a phallic symbol—*except* his own cigar” (p. 129, original emphasis).

In teacher education curriculum and reform, clinical field experiences and the practice of teaching are topics of perennial interest in the United States (e.g., Edge, 2015; Zeichner, 2012; Zeichner & Beir, 2012). For students in a College of Education, completing their full-time student teaching internship is a culmination of their undergraduate education (Cherian, 2003; Cruickshank & Armaline, 1986; McIntyre, Byrd, & Foxx, 1996) and an influential time (Veal & Rikard, 1998; Wilson, 2006) of transition between being a student and becoming a teacher (Burke, 2008; Graham, 2006). It was the goal of this study to investigate how stance, as revealed in three interns’ expressed perception of their roles in the classroom, guided their teaching experiences. Understandings gained from studying the relationship between the role a teacher enacts and her stance toward reading and interpreting the classroom, could potentially contribute insight into prospective teachers’ classroom literacy (Edge, 2011) development as these teachers move along the teaching-learning continuum, or what Jim Burke (2008) refers to as the “continuum of performance” (p. 22), in transition from being expert students to becoming novice teachers. Specifically, understanding how interns construct their roles during internship offers insight into: a) how interns construct their interpretation of their role in the classroom ; b) how their perception of their role is shaped by their internship experiences and relationships ; c) how the perceived roles of the other members of the internship triad—the university supervisor and the cooperating teacher—influence the stance an intern takes toward her internship; and d) how a teacher educator might learn from reading the text of her university students’ classrooms during their internship.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding how pre-service teachers read and interpret the classroom text is a complex issue. In a transactional paradigm (Dewey & Bentley 1949; Rosenblatt 1978, 2005), reading and teaching share a common theory of meaning making. Like Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading, teaching too is an experience, an event in the moment of a classroom – a dynamic interaction between a particular person's repertoire of experience and the "text" of the classroom itself. To be classroom literate, a teacher must read and make meaning of specific classroom situations, including reading classroom discourse, making meaning of teachable moments, connecting theory and practice, constructing scaffolds to aid students' understandings, questioning and evaluating student progress, "reading between the lines" of students' verbal and nonverbal language, and thinking critically and metacognitively about the process of teaching (Edge, 2011). Couched in the concept of the classroom as a type of living, dynamic "text" (Edge, 2008; Edge, 2011; Tobin, 2004; Witte, 1992) with which the teacher must transact in order to effectively teach, this study is guided by a framework which acknowledges the transactional and communicative nature of teaching and learning (Allen, 1995; Cooper & Simonds, 2007; Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Greene, 1983; Hurt, Scott, & McCroskey, 1987; Langer, 1987; Rosenblatt, 1978, 2005; Smagorinsky & Whiting, 1995) and relies on interpretivism to focus on meanings and the interactive communication of meanings through story (Bochner, 2005).

Method

Interpretation and the gathering of interpretations are central to case study research (Erickson, 1986; Stake, 1995). Since this study was guided by a framework which acknowledges the transactional and communicative nature of teaching and learning (Allen, 1995; Cooper & Simonds, 2007; Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Greene, 1983; Hurt, Scott, & McCroskey, 1987; Langer, 1987; Rosenblatt, 1978, 2005; Smagorinsky & Whiting, 1995), case study methodology is appropriate for interpreting how a teacher's stance shapes meaning-making within the context of classroom teaching and learning.

Sample. This qualitative case study was originally part of a multiple-case study of three pre-service teachers who served as interns to high schools in a large metropolitan school district in the southeast United States. Each participant was a female, senior, English education major in a College of Education housed in a large research university in the same district that the internships took place.

Participants. The participants were selected using theoretical sampling according to participants' potential ability to contribute to a developing theory (Creswell, 2018; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) for purposes of refining ideas and determining relevant contexts and conditions of a developing theory (Charmaz, 2000) of classroom literacy (Edge, 2011). Prior to this study, each pre-service teacher demonstrated diverse abilities, personality, and internship placement that marked her as a potential participant. As former students in two university courses I taught, Methods of Teaching English and

Methods of Teaching Reading in the English Classroom, I had a context for knowing if these individuals could contribute to an emerging understanding of stance in relation to reading the “classroom as a text,” in general, and stance as a lens through which to understand pre-service teachers’ roles during internship, specifically. Therefore, I invited these three former students to participate, and each agreed. This manuscript focuses on one of the three participants in order to offer “thick description” (Stake, 1995, p. 43) of a central theme that emerged from all three case studies.

Data Collection. Stake (1995) writes that the interview is the path toward discovering multiple realities. To investigate the intern’s reading of the classroom and to identify the stance(s) that she use to read it, interviews were the primary source of data collection. Data also included classroom observations and an interview with the intern’s cooperating teacher to triangulate data obtained through interviews.

The intern participated in an interview at the beginning of her internship, approximately three weeks into her semester-long assignment and in a second interview during the final two weeks of her internship. The second interview took into consideration the themes emerging from data collected during the first round and then formulated questions to further explore these themes and to gather additional details in light of extended experiences in the field. The first interview took place on the internship site and was accompanied by observations of each preparation the intern taught: freshman English and junior honors English. To better accommodate the intern’s schedule, the second-round interview was conducted off campus after school hours and included an email follow-up component. Interviews and observations were digitally recorded. Observations were also videotaped. Copious field notes were taken during the observations and interpretive anecdotal notes were written immediately following observations and interviews.

Data Analysis. The primary data analysis used to investigate expected and unexpected patterns was interpretation of observation and interpretation of interviews (Stake, 1995). Interviews, field notes, and anecdotal notes and interpretations were read and analyzed within the context of each case. Secondary data analysis included coding data into emerging themes and then rereading and analyzing data to refine themes and chart examples of themes (see tables 1 and 2 in Appendix A for examples). Analysis through a search for patterns, called “correspondence” by Stake (1995, p. 78) allowed for construction of meaningful understanding. Although finding similarities across cases was not the goal of this study, a cross-case chart of themes was made in order to aggregate themes across cases and to consider contexts and conditions under which a developing theory (Charmaz, 2000) of stance in teaching and reading a classroom text might exist.

Credibility. For consensual validation (Eisner, 1991 as cited in Creswell, 2018), two other English education teacher educators, who had no prior knowledge of this study or participants, reviewed both ongoing interpretations of classroom observations and the findings. Coded data and interpretations from

interviews were also member checked with participants (Creswell, 2018). Findings from multiple data sources were composed with attention to structural corroboration, (Creswell, 2018; Eisner, 2005), thick description (Stake, 1995), and researcher reflexivity.

Methodological Concerns. A few limitations of this study need be acknowledged. First, as previously mentioned, the participant was my former student in two university methods courses. While it appears that familiarity allowed her freedom to speak without feeling as if I were assessing her, it is possible that traditional student/teacher power dynamics could still have limited both the scope of what she revealed as well as her ability to be candid about ways in which her university experience did or did not prepare them to be successful in her classroom. Second, although I did observe the intern teach in conjunction with her first interview, it is plausible that this limited exposure did not provide context enough to fully understand the subtleties of the feelings, ideas, and experiences she shared with me in interviews. Hillocks (1999) has suggested that classroom observations are necessary to understand the more subtle nuances of teachers' thinking. While I did get to know the intern over the span of an academic year prior to her internship, that knowledge was limited to her being a student and a preservice teacher in simulated teaching experiences to their peers. Prolonged observations might offer additional insight and serve to further crystallize (Richardson, 2000) my understanding of interview data. Finally, interpretation of data is very much shaped by my own conceptual framework. Although findings were analyzed in light of literature on field experiences and triad relationships, I openly acknowledge that in any given reading, there exists a text, a reader, a context, and an intertext that greatly influence the meaning made. To account for this, I have tried to make my own reading transparent when possible.

Findings

To offer "thick description" and "experiential understanding" (Stake, 1995, p. 43), the findings of this study are organized around a central theme that emerged in the case of Teri Thompson (the participant's name and school site have been changed to protect and respect her anonymity) who approached her internship from her stance or mindset as a student. I later refer to this as a student-teacher stance to underscore the divided nature of reading the classroom from the perspective of a student who is attempting to be the teacher. The blurred roles of student and teacher appeared to make the intern feel like she was doing neither as well as she wished. Furthermore, this student-teacher stance shaped the manner in which she evaluated her success in the internship placement, her ability to take on the role of "teacher," and her thoughts about her future as a high school English teacher.

Although case studies are not "stories" in the traditional sense (Stake, 1995), detailed portions of this case are heuristically presented as a two-act play to allow others "to develop vicarious experiences" (Stake, 1995, p. 63) through the detailed "snapshots" into the text of this case. The telling of Teri's story is organized around classroom moments when her student-teacher stance revealed

tensions in her role as teacher, and it is set within Teri's physically, emotionally, and educationally bifurcated classroom, where I observed her teaching.

Findings are reported and framed by my own reading of the participant's classroom. This reading took place during my observations of her teaching and interviews, and is read in light of both the specific context I observed and, at times, in light of my long-term reading of the participant as a university student.

Teri: A Two-Act Play on the Tensions of Teaching

Act One: The Conflict of Playing Two Roles

As I slip into a student desk in Teri's classroom and into a lesson that is now well underway, I quickly gather that students are reading a play. The majority of the students sit in desks facing forward, listening and watching or following along in their books, but a few are seated at the apex of the room as if on stage, reading parts from their textbooks. Teri stands front and center, reading the narrator's part with enthusiasm and inflection, pausing from time to time to comment or to ask a question from the students; she seems quite pleased and comfortable to be the focal point on this classroom "stage." Over the last year, I have come to know Teri to be confident, passionate, and outspoken, a noticeable presence in any room, so what I see doesn't surprise me. What *did* emerge as a bit of a surprise is that this one lesson captured the crux of the actual "plot" and "conflicts" in the story of Teri's internship. The text of Teri's classroom is written around a series of related tensions: the tension between simultaneously enacting student and teacherly roles in the context of her internship and the tension created in (mis)reading students from her own vantage point and history of experiences as a student.

In trying to simultaneously enact a dual role—that of participant (student) and director (teacher) in the living "dramatic" text of her internship—Teri blurred the bounds of classroom student and teacher in a way that created not only tension, frustration, and uncertainty in her perception of herself as teacher, but also left her feeling as if her role was written, and her part must be carried out until the end of the "show." As she later told me,

In my [honors] classes, and I know this isn't right, but unfortunately, this is the foot I started out on, and now it's going to be difficult to correct it, I am "cool Mrs. Thompson" who tries to do fun activities. They kind of take me seriously sometimes, and they *will* work with me. My age, I think is a bit of an aid, and um, at the same time, it prohibits the full range of my teaching abilities. They look at me like I'm their peer. "Who is this *girl* telling me what to do?" Well, this *girl* has an almost bachelor's degree, a house, a marriage, another job—this *girl* has a lot more life experience than you do, so just shut up and listen to this girl!

Even though Teri laughs off the seriousness of her perceived inability to be seen as "the teacher," this tension is quite apparent in her relationship with her students. In one of her eleventh grade honors classes, a student asks,

“Where’s Dr. B [the cooperating teacher]?”

“*I’m* Dr. B. now,” replies Teri.

“No, you’re *Tommy*,” concludes a second student.

The student’s tone is playful but serious, as if to remind Mrs. Thompson of her place. Teri responds by playfully poking her tongue out a little. Her light-hearted attempt to save face and brush off the students’ remarks only position her further into the role of a “student-teacher” simultaneously both student and teacher and yet fully neither.

In her ninth-grade class, similar patterns of interaction emerge. After a student answers a question correctly during the introduction to her lesson, Teri excitedly slaps the student a high-five.

“Ouch!” he yelps. “Your ring hurt me!”

“Well, don’t give me a high-five on my ring hand!” she retorts through a grimaced face and then playfully sticks her tongue out at him in an exaggeratedly childish manner.

As I watch, I surmise that she seems embarrassed and struggles to regain the professional role of the teacher and still be liked by her students. The students don’t seem to know how to respond either.

Later into her lesson—a lesson designed to help the ninth-grade students prepare for the standardized writing exam that they would be taking the following day—Teri writes the words “And,” “But,” and “Because” in big letters on the board to emphasize the ways students should not begin their sentences when they write. One student frowns at his graded practice essay, glances back up at the words written on the white board, and then responds,

“I’m retarded. Damn, I’m so *retarded!*”

His comments indicate that he hears her as an authority figure who evaluates and finds writing such as his to be poor. Nevertheless, his choice of language is a subtle statement, heard by the *entire* class, that her authority does not extend to what is acceptable language in the composition of the classroom. Another student openly challenges Teri in a way that implies she is not his authority figure,

“*You* began a sentence with ‘Because’,” he snidely accuses.

“That wasn’t a sentence, it was a fragment,” she quickly rationalizes in her rebuttal. Despite her quick wit, a brief but awkward silence hangs like a thick curtain of tension in the classroom. Teri appears unable to “rewrite” or redirect the flow of the lesson. The act of classroom learning ends without *dénouement*. Nevertheless, these scenes illumine Teri’s tension in not being fully “teacher.” Although she is a full-time university student, she is not among peer

students here either. Teri seems to have no clearly defined space in which to write her role into the text of this classroom.

During a second interview conducted through email in the final week of her internship, Teri reveals with what she describes as “brutal honesty” that this tension remains unresolved:

I have found establishing a relationship with my students to be challenging. Part of me enjoys the same music and movies that my kids do, and find common grounds in that aspect. Part of me looks down on my kids for having such superficial worldviews, and I have made that clear to them (oops) in the past. I’m torn between two worlds myself – I’m 23, and find some juvenile things interesting and humorous (for instance, I quote “Family Guy” with my kids sometimes) but I’m also married and a homeowner, and these experiences have broadened my perception and made me wonder why my kids, who aren’t that much younger than I am, still only see value in superficial nonsense. I think I have a lot of self-discovery to do, and I don’t know if I’m going to be at a healthy mentality by fall. Regardless, I have to teach next year – I can’t wait tables forever. But I’m wondering if I need to consider middle school or (YELP) elementary school, where such a dramatic age difference exists between me and my kids that some of my neuroses aren’t exposed. I’m wondering if all new teachers feel that way, or if I have some baggage I need to unload before I can be a successful mentor.

The tension in trying to take on the role of a teacher while still trying to relate to students from her stance as a student leads her to question her emotional maturity and thus, her ability and future plans to teach high school students.

In her interviews, Teri’s perception of other’s roles and her definition of a successful internship underscore how her liminal role as student-teacher in the high school classroom is related to her overall place in the internship triad. For instance, as much of Teri’s language connotes, and nearly all of her comments combine to reveal, her primary stance toward her internship experience is that of an advanced student or a teaching apprentice—someone who is charged with mastering discrete components of teaching. The following excerpts from her interviews underscore this primary stance:

Researcher: How would you define a successful and a failed internship?

Teri: Successful? Fulfilling the requirements set by [the university], establishing a good rapport with students and colleagues, learning about the system from within...
Failed? Not meeting any of the aforementioned benchmarks.

Researcher: How would you define your role within your internship?

Teri: I feel like a young Jedi knight...These other teachers [gesturing to the teachers she usually shares lunch with] took me under their wing...I'm not just Dr. B's intern, I'm some woman who's going to be teaching, maybe teaching their kids if they have little ones. They want to make sure I do it right and represent the field well... I'm a little Anakin Skywalker...but I won't go to the dark side..."

The first criterion Teri used to define success is meeting the university's objectives. To her, she is foremost a student, working to complete her coursework and earn a good grade. Her second criterion, establishing a good rapport, also resonates with the kind of student—well-liked by students and teachers—she was prior to her internship. Furthermore, her description of herself as a young Jedi knight is a clear statement of her position or stance as a student apprentice. In the movie *Star Wars*, a Jedi Knight is an apprentice who is taught the ways of “the force” by masters. Jedi Knights are also socially well-received, even “popular” in the *Star Wars* galaxy.

Teri also described her specific relationships with her cooperating teacher (CT) and university supervisor (US) in light of her being a student whose goal it is to learn from masters and to demonstrate her learning to her supervisors. For instance, when I asked her to describe her relationship with her CT, Teri referred to her as “Dr. Grandma.” Someone who “has taken a very maternal role” with her, yet someone “who expects certain things” and shows her what to do with “a voice of experience.” Someone who “sees where [she] is weak, and pulls [her] up a little.” Teri also said that Dr. B. was someone who might possibly evolve into the role of a mentor by the time internship concluded. However, when I asked if her US could be a mentor, she corrected, “No, no, he's an evaluator” who grades her, and “he's a supervisor and a source of information.” Teri's relationships with the other two members of her triad communicate that she sees herself as a student who is evaluated and an apprentice who is to be taught and nurtured by experienced teachers in the profession.

Her professed focus and goals for the semester also reveal her student stance in that she focuses on what she has not yet mastered. Teri eschews her own assessment of herself as “an excellent planner” and chooses to center her comments on talk of classroom management and the need to be able to “recognize how kids learn.” Her focus is not necessarily on what students are or are not learning, although she does communicate that she is concerned with their learning; rather, her focus is on herself as someone who is not yet able to master a skill of teaching. This student-apprentice focus fuels a second, related conflict in her classroom: her struggle to comprehend students who are unlike her.

Act Two: Conflict Created from Misreading the “Text” of the Classroom
“Acts One and Two” in Teri's teaching schedule are separated by an intermission of lunch. When the bell rings, Teri takes me “back stage” to the teacher's cafeteria where I conduct her first interview. Initially, Teri had only

invited me to observe her eleventh-grade honors English class, but before lunch ends, she extends her invitation to ask me to watch her ninth-grade “regular” English class – the “class from Hell,” as she put it, that Teri initially did not want me to observe. Unlike the eleventh-grade honors classes where she feels she must be “Cool Mrs. Thompson,” in her ninth grade classes Teri describes her role as someone who has to be the locus of control and “the gatekeeper of knowledge” for students.

...I’m a drill sergeant, a jail warden, prison guard, wicked witch, and, uh, behavior corrector, manners enforcer, “No, we don’t pull on girls’ hair,” “Sit back down in your seat,” “Don’t use ‘aint’,” “Don’t use the F word in my classroom,” and so on and so forth.

Within minutes, maybe even seconds of the beginning of the next class period, I see the shift in roles that Teri articulated during her interview. She seems to step into character according to how she perceives her role as the classroom teacher. The juxtaposition of the two types of classes she teaches further depicts tensions created by Teri’s teaching from her stance as a student-teacher.

Teri’s fifth period freshman English class has 17 students present, 11 males, six females; five students are students with special needs. Just before class, Teri warned me that she would be “laying down the law” with this class today, and true to her word, class begins with a speech that seems designed to remind student who is boss, who is not, and that referrals await any who don’t want to play the “right” role. As I watch and listen, I come to contextualize the interview responses she shared with me, and I begin to see her room as a metaphorical stage and a means of understanding her bifurcated teaching roles, as she explained them to me.

Separated by a moveable wall best described as a heavy curtain, Teri’s room is really two rooms, one a tiny classroom and the other a book closet. In the center of the room, the curtain is pulled back, but it doesn’t recede all the way to the walls, causing it to jut out a little and create an odd configuration and a one-room-two-room sensation. Some students sit on the bookroom end of the partition, but the majority are in the classroom section where the whiteboard is, and where Teri writes as she teaches.

The room itself seems to echo the tensions Teri communicates in her interview and in her stance as a student-teacher. On the one side of her internship experience, Teri teaches students who are like herself – bright, self-motivated, mostly middle-class, traditional honors students. On the other side, she teaches students who are very different from herself, and she has trouble “reading” them from her stance as a traditional, successful, well-liked student.

Their knowledge is sophisticated but worldly rather than academic, and they struggle to follow Teri’s vision for the lesson as they fidget through a traditional listen-and-take-notes kind of class. It appears to me that because Teri is interpreting the happenings of the classroom from her own student stance, she does not know how to read her students and connect with them. In fact, she seems to repeatedly misread their comments as deliberate attempts to thwart her lesson and rebel against her as the teacher. For instance, Teri attempts to think-

aloud some ideas for answering an essay prompt, “After 2:52 [the end of the school day], you’re not learning—”

“Yes we are,” a student interrupts. “I’m learning football plays.”

“I’m learnin’ tricks on my bike,” shouts out another student.

Suddenly the room is bustling with students talking over one another about everything they learn after school is over. Teri is frustrated at the direction the conversation is taking and appears to interpret their comments as attempts to annoy her. “Hands, hands! Simmer down, guys, simmer down.” The majority of the students appear *really* willing to participate by offering their opinions and personal experiences at a point in the lesson that they can connect to. This is frustrating to Teri who doesn’t quite know how to read their responses or channel their energy, and so she collectively chides them for being “silly like middle schoolers.” She doesn’t hear them making connections between their own personal, less academic, perceptions of learning; she heard talk that seemed irrelevant to her conception of learning and interpreted their actions as disruptive behavior that interrupted the lesson she had prepared.

The lesson on this day is geared to prepare students for the standardized writing test that the students will take the following day. Teri’s plan is to first use students’ practice essays as a vehicle for talking about what to do and what not to do when they write, and then to think through an essay prompt with students. These students have a hard time following her oral construction of an essay intermitted with asides on the proper use of conventions. As a result, Teri ends up doing the majority of the mental work by telling students what to think and do from her perspective as a successful writer.

“When I got a [highest score possible] on my [state writing assessment] , I ...”

The learning objectives appear distant from students’ background knowledge and interests, but several students try to please her by responding when they can. When they do respond, Teri tends to misinterpret what they say and then responds with the lion-tamer mentality that she feels defines her role in these classes. For instance, Teri begins the lesson by holding up a student’s practice essay.

“This person is using vivid details from her life experiences. This is a very good example of what students should do.”

And then a moment later,

“Do not use “you” unless you are addressing a specific audience. I want to see everyone writing this down in their notes—”

“How do you spell *audience*?” calls out one student.

“What?” Teri seems shocked out of her train of thought.

“Repeat that, Miss,” requests a second student who has been fumbling with his paper.

“What’s *vivid*?” a boy in the front of the room asks.

“Don’t interrupt me and call yourself stupid,” Teri chides and then sighs, exasperated with what she interprets as misbehavior.

A few minutes later, a girl who has been silent the entire lesson offers an idea for the essay they are constructing out loud as a class, “Teachers hate us. That’s what we should write about.” When Teri responds with disbelief, the class quickly becomes loud as students shout out (*vivid*) examples of how teachers demonstrate their negative feelings toward them.

“Talk to them,” Teri ironically replies.

“They don’t listen!”

An exasperated Teri stops to hush the class and proceed with her lesson. She misses the fact that students are speaking from their personal experiences (the writing trait she praised in the beginning of the lesson), and that by listening to them she could use their experiences as a bridge to help them conceptualize ways to write a persuasive essay. Teri talks in terms of things to do and not to do from her personal knowledge of her own successful, academic writing experiences while the students respond from their knowledge base of experiences outside of school and to their negative experiences with teachers in school. As a result, students and teacher talk at and over one another, never really connecting. Much like the layout of the classroom itself, a wall seems to separate their ability to accurately read and understand one another.

Discussion: An Epilogue for Educators

Positioning theory has been used to explain how triad members take on roles or parts to play within the unfolding classroom story. For instance, Bullough and Draper (2004) write, that “[w]ithin storylines, actors take different parts, and the parts they play and how they play them reveal the meaning of events as well as present definitions of self and other” (p. 408). They also assert that “context...personal characteristics and individual biographies...profoundly affect the kind and quality of relationships that form between beginning teachers and those who would assist them in learning to teach” (Bullough & Draper, 2004, p.409). In light of Teri Thompson’s conflicts, I might add that such factors potentially profoundly influence the quality of teaching and the relationships that form between beginning teachers and the students they assist.

Considering that student teachers come to the classroom after spending a lifetime in an apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) from the vantage point of the student desk, transitioning from playing the part of a student studying to teach, to actually *being* the classroom teacher to other students requires a challenging and complex shift in thinking. This transition is complicated by the

regular role shifting (Bullough and Draper 2004; Veal & Rikard, 1998; Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004) student teachers must do in order take on competing roles as student and as teacher during the semester of their internship. The relationships of the roles played by each member of internship triad is one which often results in power shifts, depending on who is present (Bullough & Draper, 2004; Veal & Rikard, 1998). When a student teacher is alone in the classroom, she is expected to be the teacher; when the university supervisor comes to observe and brings an assessor stance, she must shift to student; and when the cooperating teacher is present, the intern could be expected to assume a stance anywhere along the student-teacher continuum. When we consider what it is that we ask interns to do – walk out of the world they know and step into one they’ve only studied and then straddle both worlds while the line distinguishing the two continues to move, it is a wonder pre-service teachers don’t feel more academically and professionally schizophrenic during their internship. It’s not a surprise then, that each participant studied during this investigation expressed degrees of failure in terms role ambiguity and developing “a sense of self-as-teacher” (Sudzina & Knowles, 1993, p. 255) through questioning her emotional maturity and whether she would actually pursue a teaching position after internship. The fact of the matter is that prospective teachers *are* students, and stepping into a classroom does not a teacher make (as Yoda might phrase it). Simply trading the college campus for a secondary school campus does not instantly transform a student into a teacher any more than stepping into an operating room makes a medical student a surgeon or stepping into a courtroom makes a student of the law an attorney. Can we, as teacher educators and mentor teachers expect interns to bring to their internship a stance *other than* student or student-teacher? After all, aren’t teachers like Teri *supposed* to be learning from their internship experiences? Well, yes. And yet, potential exists for the scenes from Teri’s classroom to be re-envisioned, revised, and re-composed.

Re-Envisioning Alternate Tales from the Cut Scenes of Teri’s Two-Act Play. The Holmes Group (1986) reported in *Tomorrow’s Teachers*, “[p]aradoxically, teachers are the butt of most criticism, yet singled out as the one best hope for reform.” Before I proceed further, I think it should be said that despite Teri’s misreading her classroom text and her struggle to construct a teacherly role within the already composed lines of the parts she perceived she needed to play during internship, Teri was a pre-service teacher who communicated both a desire to be and the knowledge to do the kind of teaching which resonates with best-practice research and literature. That she repeatedly acknowledged the dissonance between what she knew she *should* do and what she realized, with dismay, she was *actually* doing demonstrates a level of awareness that holds hope for her ability to see and perhaps to re-compose her. This alternate version of Teri’s tale can be pieced together from fragments of data that didn’t make it into the “two-act play” production of her classroom teaching.

In Teri’s first interview, she shared that her understanding of and reasons for teaching had changed significantly in the last year. When asked to explain, she suddenly spoke in a high pitched and excessively jovial voice that

sounded like a cartoon character's, "You know, I, I—like everybody—I wanted to guide others to learn." I interpreted this tin voice as her way of expressing the naiveté of her initial perception of teaching. Speaking once again in her adult voice, Teri listed two factors which helped her to gain a more three-dimensional conceptualization of teaching: a methods course in teaching reading and her present, "real-life" experiences.

What Teri's two turning points have in common is that each required her to work closely with students. In the methods of teaching reading course, Teri wrote a case study after working with a struggling reader. From this experience Teri realized, "I never knew there were people who didn't have the capacity to do certain things and had to be shown and given skills in order to help them learn. Before, I just thought I would give them information." Prior to her experiences in the methods course, Teri looked at readers through her own stance as a successful reader who never even gave much thought to the complex moves required to make sense of written texts. However, in working with a struggling reader, she took a stance that differed slightly from that of "student stance" to what I'd like to call a *learnership* stance. In both stances, Teri was learning; however, when she had guided opportunities to reflect on and make meaning of her working closely with a student who was very different from her, she was able to take on a transactional learnership stance that enabled her to read her interactions with this student in a way that taught her from *his* experiences. Thus, the experience was transactional—each perspective informing the other. Teri read and made meaning from her experiences working with students

Reading Classrooms as Texts. Students potentially teach the teacher when a learnership stance guides the teacher's reading of the classroom. In the same way that the transactional nature of a written text can lead a reader toward exploration (Rosenblatt, 1938), meaningful understanding, and new knowledge, so too can the transactional nature of communication (Cooper & Simonds, 2007) lead teachers to make meaning of and to generate new knowledge about their profession. Said another way, because of the transactionally communicative nature reading and writing share with teaching (Cooper & Simonds, 2007; Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Greene, 1983; Hurt, Scott, & McCroskey, 1987; Langer, 1987; Rosenblatt, 1978, 2005; Smagorinsky & Whiting, 1995), what is known about readers' and writers' processes can also offer frameworks for understanding how teachers develop their ability to read and to communicate with their classrooms. In a transactional paradigm (Dewey & Bentley 1949; Rosenblatt 1978, 2005), reading and teaching share a common theory of meaning making. Like Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading, teaching too is an experience, an event in the moment of a classroom—a dynamic interaction between a particular person's repertoire of experience and the "text" of the classroom itself (Edge, 2011). To become *classroom literate*, a teacher must read and make meaning of specific classroom situations, including reading classroom discourse, making meaning of teachable moments, connecting theory and practice, constructing scaffolds to aid students' understandings, questioning and evaluating student progress, "reading between the lines" of students' verbal and nonverbal language, and thinking critically and metacognitively about the

process of teaching. Couched in the concept of the classroom as a type of living, dynamic “text” (Edge, 2008; Edge, 2011; Tobin, 2004; Witte, 1992) with which the teacher must transact in order to effectively teach, pre-service teachers can learn to construct their perception of teaching using their prior knowledge of their pedagogical training and learning to attune to the cues of a classroom as *text*. Through a learnership stance, Teri could conceivably learn to read the classroom as text and to compose her role in it by transacting with her students even as they transact with the texts they learn to read and write.

Learning to read, and learning from one’s misreading of the text of the classroom is a first step toward developing teacher literacy. For interns like Teri, shifting from a student-teacher stance where meanings are fixed based on previous readings of the classroom from her perspective as a student, to a learnership stance where the transactional nature of teaching and learning is valued and cultivated through a classroom community, places emphasis on the process of making meaning in the classroom context. It invites students to participate in the construction of their learning. It shifts power dynamics. It empowers teachers to create and revise teaching roles that are not scripts set in type.

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Appendix A: Themes Emerging During Data Analysis

Table 1

Teri: Interview Themes

Theme	Examples from Teri's Case
Guiding Image or Metaphor for Internship	Sees herself as a Jedi Knight who is to learn the ways of the force
Relationship to students	Concludes, "They hate me"; feels like she must be the cool one because she started off that way; thinks students view her as a "peer"; in another class she must be the "prison warden"; speaks of students as both a collective class unit and as individuals
Relationship to Peers	Perceives her situation to be "lucky" in comparison to other intern's; adopts struggling peer interns; seeks council of experienced, practicing teachers as professional peers
Relationship with Cooperating Teacher	"Dr. Grandma" is both an experienced, credentialed, professional, who expects results, and a maternal figure to turn to for professional support and guidance
Teacher Role	Characterized by tension between who she wants to be and the role she is currently in; Ideally a teacher is a mentor who facilitates and provides opportunities and choices for students to engage in personally meaningful learning; a teacher is someone who provides students with tools to become successful and to "be something big"; a teacher is an agent of change
Primary Stance Toward Internship	Student apprentice stance; inclination to master learning opportunities and objectives; sees herself as "a young Jedi knight" who "won't go to the dark side"
Primary Foci when Teaching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Classroom management 2. Relating to students 3. Knowing when students are learning
Personal Learning	Internship has helped her "grow up a bit," but she still "questions [her] own maturity" and struggles to establish a balanced relationship with students
Definition of Successful Internship	"[F]ulfilling the requirements set by [the university], establishing a good rapport with students and colleagues, learning about the system from within"
Self-Evaluation of Internship	Successful with "mini failures scattered intermittently"
Most Influential Aspect of Internship	How students respond to her

Table 2
Teri: Synthesized Themes

Theme	Examples
Tensions Between Ideal and Real	Sees her early notions of teaching as naïve; feels conflicted by what she knows to do and what she actually does. “I know I shouldn’t raise my voice”; “Proximity control is supposed to work, but students keep talking even though I stand right there”; “I know you told us not to threaten students with writing, but I do...”
Focus on what She Struggles to Accomplish or Needs to Master	Asserts that she is an excellent planner, yet her focus is on her inability to manage student behavior and manage student questions in fast-paced honors courses with multiple projects going on at once
Role of Teacher Defined by Different Classes’ Responses to Her	Defines and differentiates her role in terms of how different students respond to her, especially negative responses; in some classes she is the “cool” “peer,” the “facilitator” or the “mentor,” and in others she is the “gatekeeper of knowledge” or the “prison warden”
Relationship to Others	Evaluates success of her own conception of teaching in light of how others respond to her
Perception of the Triad	Her role is to learn as much as possible; her university supervisor is an evaluator and a source of information; her cooperating teacher is a professional guide who is to make sure specific things are accomplished, who provides scaffolding for Teri’s learning, and who acts as a nurturing source of support.
Stance as Student/Apprentice in a Teaching Situation	An overall synthesis of Teri’s responses reveals her focus to be on mastering what she is unable to do; yet she is frustrated by her not knowing how to use what she does know and how to learn what she does not know; she is a “Jedi Knight” and a “mentor” to her peers simultaneously; the possibility of teaching every grade level by the end of the semester thrills her; revises her prior understanding of teaching to assimilate new experiences; her perception of a successful internship is defined in terms of meeting the university’s objectives.