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From doctor to facilitator: reflecting on the metaphors of early career EFL teachers

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ABSTRACT

When language teachers enter a classroom to teach in their early career years, they hold many different beliefs and feelings about how to conduct their classes that for the main part remain at the tacit level of understanding. However, it is important for early career language teachers to become aware of these beliefs and feelings so that they can critically reflect on their significance during this challenging period. Metaphors can offer early career teachers a rich means of identifying their experiences and beliefs that underpin their understanding of teaching and learning a second or foreign language. This qualitative study sought to contribute to the discussion of the experiences of four early career English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers through their use of metaphors to describe their personal understanding of their beliefs and feeling. Specifically, the case study examined the metaphors used by one teacher in her 2nd year, another in his 3rd year an additional teacher in his 4th year, and one in his 5th year of teaching. Results indicate that teachers in their 2nd and 3rd years chose personal metaphors that ‘diagnose’ deficits and thus must be in control, while in their 4th and 5th years the teachers wanted to motivate and facilitate the learning process rather than control it.

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Introduction

For many early career teachers, defined as novice teachers after their first year and up to their fifth year of teaching (Gordon et al., 2006), initial expectations of what they perceived the education profession to be, and the realities they then face in a real classroom can be very different and deflating. Thus, after their first year, many novice teachers begin to realize that teaching is a far more complex career than they had first envisioned (Melnick & Meister, 2008). These early career years as a TESOL teacher are crucially important for all stakeholders as Feiman-Nemser (2001, p. 1026) point out, because they ‘are an intense and formative time in learning to teach, influencing not only whether people remain in teaching but what kind of teacher they become’. Unfortunately, the experiences of early career language teachers have been generally ignored in the research on language teacher education and development and especially when it comes to their early career experiences. To bridge the research gap in the literature regarding early career language

teacher development, this study examined metaphors the metaphors that four early EFL teachers generated at different stages of their early career years to describe teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL)? More specifically, this case study explores the metaphors generated by four EFL teachers in central America while teaching in the same institution at different years in their early careers: one teacher in her 2nd year (Joan, a pseudonym), another in his 3rd year (Frank, a pseudonym) an additional teacher in his 4th year (Nathan, a pseudonym), and one in his 5th year (Edward, a pseudonym) of teaching in order to learn more about their journeys.

Teacher metaphors

A metaphor, defined by Dickmeyer (1989, p. 151) as ‘the characterisation of a phenomenon in familiar terms’, is often used by people to simplify their experiences. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, pp. 232–233) suggest that a large part of self-understanding is the ‘search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of our lives ... The process of self-understanding is the continual development of new life stories for yourself’. Metaphors are also an important part of teachers’ personal practical knowledge that shapes their understanding of their role as teachers (Clandinin, 1986). Clandinin (1986) suggests that metaphors are indications of the way teachers believe (and even act) about teaching and also guide the way they act in the classroom. As Hamilton (2016) points out, metaphors offer teachers ‘insights into the ways in which teachers understand themselves and their role(s) within the classrooms in which they teach’ (p. 34). That said, because belief systems are complex to capture, their study requires research instruments such as metaphor analysis to be able to capture their complexities (Fábián, 2013). As Fábián (2013) has noted, as a research method, metaphors can integrate oral, written forms of data collection – the main methods of metaphor generation in the study presented in this paper.

In English language teaching, Block (1996, p. 51) has suggested that metaphors can be used as ‘explanatory vehicles’ that teachers can use to explain their beliefs and practices. More recently Brandão (2021) maintain that they help the pre-service teachers not only share, but also make sense of important stages as they become language teachers. As Brandão (2021) points out, exploring and examining personal teaching metaphors is ‘helpful for understanding how teachers make sense of and live out the profession: their learning and teaching assumptions, experiences, professional expectations, personal background, and contexts’ (pp. 103214). Personal teaching metaphors reflect how language teachers believe about themselves and their lives as professionals (Brandão, 2021). Although metaphors pre-service language teachers and in-service language teachers live by have drawn the attention of many researchers (e.g. Farrell, 2019, 2021, 2022; Craig, 2018), there is a dearth of research on the metaphors early career teachers live and teach by” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 71).

In addition, because teaching is a complex, personal, and social activity and that it involves the whole personality of the teacher (Cochran-Smith, 2005), identity includes a composite of teachers’ beliefs, values, and emotions about teaching and being a teacher. Within language teaching, Burns and Richards (2009, p. 5) have suggested that identity ‘reflects how individuals see themselves and how they enact their roles within different settings’. Early career language teachers are still in the process of learning

how to teach, and as Kanno and Stuart (2011) maintain such learning is not so much gaining knowledge of language-teaching methodology and skills but also the development of a teacher identity. Indeed, early career teachers may possess different and competing professional identities leading to where professional identity is in a continuous process of formation and reformation (Eslamdoost et al., 2019). Therefore, in order to be more aware of shifts in their professional identity, language teachers should be provided with the opportunity to reflect on how they see themselves as teachers (Avalos-Rivera, 2019; Barkhuizen, 2017). This paper suggests that metaphorical exploration and reflection may be helpful for early career teachers in attempting to come to terms with the complex nature of articulating their professional identity. This study explores the metaphors generated by four early career English as a foreign (EFL) teachers in a country in central America at different points in their early career years through their use of metaphors. The main aim of the study is to deconstruct and analyze the metaphors in order to track the pathways of their experiences and locate the sources of their beliefs and theories shaping their early career years. As Berliner (1990, p. 86) has noted, for teachers, 'metaphors are powerful forces, conditioning the way we come to think about ourselves and others'.

Research methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative case study research approach in order to gain insight into early career EFL teachers' use of metaphor in Costa Rica, Central America. A case study approach was chosen for this study because it is 'particularistic' in that it focuses on a particular phenomenon (metaphor use by early career EFL teachers), 'descriptive' in that it provides rich description of instances of the phenomenon, and 'heuristic' in that it is written with the view of enhancing understanding of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). As van Lier (2005, p. 195) indicates, rigorous analysis of a case study of just one teacher can provide in-depth insights into intricate pedagogical and contextual issues that, 'cannot be done adequately in any other common research practice'.

Participants

The participants in this study were four EFL teachers in Costa Rica, Central America, one female and three males. The first participant was a female teacher (Joan, a pseudonym) who has been teaching for two years and is currently working on her Masters of English teaching. The second participant was a male teacher (Frank, a pseudonym) who has been teaching for three years and completed a bachelor's degree in English teaching. The third participant was a male teacher (Nathan, a pseudonym) who has been teaching for four years and holds a bachelor's degree in English Teaching as a Foreign Language (ETFL). The fourth participant was a male teacher (Edward, a pseudonym) who has been teaching for five years and holds a bachelor's degree in English Teaching as a Second Language (ETSL). All four teachers expressed interest in the study because they said they wanted to explore different avenues of professional development outside of the current institution they work for.

Context

All four teach EFL to local students at a prominent English-teaching institution in Costa Rica. Most teachers in such institutions are non-native speakers of English, but must have an academic background in teaching, hold a score of 950 on the TOEIC, and have one year of teaching experience. EFL teachers in this sector are contracted to teach up to three, 3-hour length classes, every day except Sunday. For example, all four teachers typically start their day at 9 a.m., teaching in 3-hour blocks with breaks in between until 9 p.m. at night. Classes typically have 10 students and are taught fully in English, occurring up to three times a week depending on the level and course.

Data collection

Uluso (2022) points out that metaphors have been shown to help teachers distance themselves from and to reflect on their beliefs and experiences. Thus, the metaphors of four EFL teachers were the focus of data collection. They were collected 'overtly' by deliberately asking each teacher to think of metaphors (Leavy et al., 2007). and 'covertly' by documenting metaphors that naturally emerged during the research processes (e.g. Craig, 2018). In order to help the early career EFL teachers overtly generate metaphors, I used narrative frames to provide structure (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008) and following the work of Saban et al. (2007) for metaphor generation, I provided the following prompts: 'An EFL teacher is likebecause' 'An EFL student is like because' When considering their answers, I also asked them to think about the following questions also: 'What is the teacher's role in the classroom? How should learning take place?'

Each teacher was interviewed twice in English about their answers to the narrative frame prompts above and lasted between 30 and 45 minutes each. The purpose of interview data was to 'enter into the other person's perspective' (Patton, 2015, p. 426) because much of what is thought and intended cannot be directly observed. All interviews were recorded via internet video-conferencing due to distance and transcribed to authenticate the factual account of the researcher as well as ensure that data is not distorted by the account of the researcher (Maxwell, 1992). Each teacher was also observed three times while teaching on zoom. Each recorded class was later transcribed to not only document their actual classroom actions but also to explore emergent metaphors (Breault, 2006) that naturally appear covertly in their unfolding classroom practices. In addition, each teacher was interviewed before and after each of the three classes. All interviews were transcribed and analyzed for metaphors that emerged naturally as they shared their ideas during these interviews. Although such metaphor use is covert, according to Craig (2018) they are 'alive' because they surface in 'the midst of action' (p. 302).

Data analysis

All data were transcribed and analyzed for emergent themes related to the main research question: 'what are metaphors of 4 early EFL teachers at different stages of their early career years to describe teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL)?', within

an overall interpretivist paradigm (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Specifically, the data were coded by hand due to the small numbers of participants which began by separately identifying the metaphor from each participant. Using an iterative approach, the metaphors were then grouped according to their beliefs about teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language that emerged from the responses. As much as possible, I used 'in vivo codes, that is the exact words of the participants' (Creswell, 2002, p. 448) during this coding phase. Once all the data were coded and charted, I re-read the transcripts and re-examined these categories to ensure I had a good understanding and classification of the metaphors that emerged in the data as a snapshot of each EFL teacher's experiences of teaching at their particular stage of early career development year.

Findings

The findings present four vignettes. Each vignette presents the main metaphor used by each individual language teacher as 'explanatory vehicles' (Block, 1996, p. 51) directly during their interview discussions, and indirectly during classroom observations over a two-month period.

Joan

Joan has been an early career EFL teacher for two years and said that her passion for teaching comes from understanding 'the need of people to learn the language'. Throughout the two months of Joan's overall reflections on her practice, she used the metaphor of 'teacher as a doctor' in many of the discussions. Joan defined this metaphor as a 'teacher who needs to find medicine for students because student are patients with different conditions'. Joan said that she sees her students as 'patients with different needs', and thus she said that her 'job as doctor' is to 'try to find the medicine they need to make them more proficient in the language, maybe filling a gap in grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary'. She noted that her role as a language teacher then is just like that of a doctor who looks for 'correct medicine' that would help her students 'develop their proficiency in the English language'. Joan said that she thinks her 'teacher as doctor' metaphor has come from the fact that her sister is a medical doctor and that she grew up listening to her stories about 'patients and how they are so different, with different ideas, different backgrounds so that you end up knowing about their situation and needs'. Another result of identifying with the role of 'teacher as doctor' and listening to her sister doctor's stories over the years is that Joan said that she realizes that doctors, like teachers, also have needs. Joan remarked, 'doctors are not immune, they also need medicine and check-ups'. She then said that teachers also need to take stock of who they are and what they are doing. By 'check-ups, Joan explained that 'teachers also need check-ups' because they do not know everything and so they are in need of constant training as well as consulting with each other for new ideas. Joan continued: 'As doctors need to go to other doctors sometimes, we teachers also need to get ideas from other teachers as a source of learning as well'.

Frank

Frank has been an early career EFL teacher for three years and said that he became a teacher because of his perceived skill of being a good explainer and that he takes pride in this skill. Frank remarked, 'I became a teacher because I had always liked the idea of explaining things to people. I have always enjoyed talking to others, explaining, and the idea of doing that for a living was exciting since I was a child'. As a teacher Frank said that he intends to provide tools to his students to go along with his 'clear explanations' because he said he wants his students to be independent learners. Frank said that he really cares for his students and so he noted that he tries 'to be like a doctor whose patients are not only healthy, but also happy with the attention they received, and aware that they have to take the pills (do the practice, study, do some extra tasks) in order to be healthier (better at their own learning process)'. Although similar to Joan's metaphor use above, however, unlike Joan, Frank said that he does not see his students as patients. Rather, Frank suggests his students are like 'driving students who want to learn the techniques, the theory, and the strategies necessary to drive safely in many situations'. However, nowhere else during the two months of reflection did Frank say he identified as a driving instructor, yet he said that he considers 'learning English similar to taking driving lessons'. Thus, we must infer that he identified his role as teacher to a driving instructor as he continued: At the end of the driving lessons, a successful student will get a license, but they have to decide whether they are going to drive correctly or not, if they are going to continue driving or not." Then Frank noted that for English language learning a similar process emerges; he continued: 'The same thing happens with English. At the end of any program. it's their decision to incorporate English in their lives and use the tools they got during the process'.

Nathan

Nathan has been an early career EFL teacher for four years and said that he became a teacher to inspire students and to 'make a difference' in the world. Nathan's main metaphor during his reflection period was that of 'teacher as motivator'. Nathan said that this metaphor comes from his stated reasons for becoming a language teacher as he said he wanted to 'inspire students to unlock their potential'. Nathan continued, 'I want to help students boost their confidence by learning English and discover their untapped potential'. In order to encourage his students, Nathan said that he considers himself to be a 'receptive teacher' where he said, 'the only power relation I would like in my classroom to prevail is the power of encouraging and motivating students to always give their best version of themselves'. As a language teacher, Nathan says that he is careful about letting his 'personal morals/religious beliefs intermingle with the content' he is teaching. Nathan continues: 'I do care about showing my moral interpretation of some phenomena (with the disclaimer that it's only my opinion), yet I prefer to sit back and listen to my students' opinions without being judgmental.' Nathan said that he tries to make his students' learning 'the closest to their realities' and as a result he said that he thinks his teaching is more effective. Nathan also said that he does not consider that his lessons should be entertaining because his students may not be fully invested in such lessons. Nathan

continues, 'classes should not be entertaining, but if they're interesting enough then students are going to be paying attention, they're going to be participating'.

Edward

Edward has been an early career EFL teacher for five years. His main metaphor use during his reflection period was that of 'teacher as facilitator'. When explaining this metaphor, Edward said that he always tries to 'exercise patience and get to know students as well as facilitate knowledge and set an example of expectations'. Edward noted that he constantly tries to encourage his students to learn 'on their own in every way possible' and so he said that he tries to get to know them each term so that he can call their names and encourage them to participate a lot. Edward maintained that he always tries to put his learners' needs before his own personal beliefs. Edward continued, 'my job is to teach in a way that others will learn, so I don't want external factors to negatively impact my practice'. Edward noted that even after teaching for five years, he still considers himself a learner and that he does not know the correct way to teach or even to 'facilitate my students learning'. So, he said that after five years of teaching 'I am still trying to find the best way to transmit this to my students'. Thus, Edward said that he seeks out colleagues' ideas about effective teaching methods as he finds this helpful and this was also one of the reasons he volunteered to take part in this case study. Edward continued, 'I discuss teaching with my colleagues to always find ways to improve, innovate. We are constantly asking our coworkers for techniques'.

Discussion

The findings outlined above are a freeze frame of the four EFL teachers' images of teaching through the use of metaphors they use to aid frame their classroom practices at different stages in their early career years. The main aim of this study was to explore rather than intervene the four early career EFL teachers' metaphors. As Roberts (1998), maintains, the real test of the teachers' metaphors is not whether they are 'right or wrong' according to an outsider's perceptions, but 'the extent to which they are useful for the teacher' (p. 67).

The findings indicate that the two teachers in their 2nd and 3rd years wanted to control their learning environment, while the two teachers in their 4th and 5th years were more focused on their students' learning. For example, the metaphor of 'teacher as doctor' used by Joan and Frank in their second and third years seem to suggest they need 'diagnose' things just like a doctor trying to help improve a patient's health. Joan for example, describes her current role as a teacher as that of 'an intern who is being transformed into a doctor in the classroom so that I can find the correct medicine to make students proficient in English language'. In order to 'make her students proficient in English', Joan said she does not improvise while teaching and does not teach what she has not prepared. Joan continued, 'I do not use classroom time for anything that is not related to teaching and learning'. Synonymous with her metaphor of 'doctor', Joan described her students as 'patients' who have 'different needs' which impact their language learning. Thus, she needs to give them the 'correct medicine' to help them become proficient in English.

Frank in his 3rd year of teaching, also expressed an early metaphor of teacher as doctor and said that he views his students as 'patients who are healthy, happy with the attention they received, and aware that they have to take the pills (do practice, study) to be healthier'. In addition, Frank said that he does not want his students to use their first language (L1) during class. Frank said he thinks 'L1 is a last resource' because he said that he first 'tries every other possibility and if at the very end the students are not getting the idea, I'll use the L1'. Overall, Frank said that he 'doesn't feel comfortable using the L1 because it gives students the sensation that it is okay to translate' which he thinks inhibits the language learning process.

Both Joan and Frank probably want to be seen as 'professionals' and as such are qualified to diagnose learning challenges faced by their students, and as such they decide the 'correct' instruction methods to ensure 'recovery' that thus are teacher-centered. As a result, Joan decided to use a 'rule-based methodological approach to teaching English speaking where my students learn all the rules' because she said she finds such an approach most effective for her students' learning. And Frank will not allow his students to use their L1 in class as he considers this bad for their learning health. Instead, he maintains that his students must imitate correct language models in the L2 and to help this he presents grammar rules explicitly to his students to memorize.

In contrast, the metaphors used by Nathan ('motivator') and Edward ('facilitator') in their fourth and fifth years of teaching respectively are more learner-centered and seem to portray a loosening up of that control and to focus more on their students' learning needs. For example, Nathan, in his fourth year of teaching, identified himself as a 'motivator' where he notes that 'building rapport with students' allows him to 'lower the barriers for the students' so that they can progress in their language learning. Nathan encourages more self-expression from his learners and wants them to become more autonomous. Thus, rather than trying to control his lessons, Nathan said he believes that it is vital to consider the needs of his individual. Nathan continued, 'if I see that there are a couple of students struggling with learning, I'll dedicate a bit more of attention to them particularly so that this one student doesn't fall that behind'. As he remarked, 'we are teaching the students rather than anything else'. Indeed, Nathan recalled that when he was teaching in his first year, he was more content-focused, but now in his fourth year of teaching he said he realizes that he has changed because of his experience with his students. He continued, 'I have been gradually shifting from content to student-centered learning with the liberties of including different teaching methods in class'.

Edward also maintains that language teaching should focus on his students' needs and that he tries to 'facilitate their learning' and that his students also 'accept more responsibility for their learning'. Edward said he believes 'not everyone learns the same way' and so he said this requires him to consider the needs of different students and that being flexible and adaptive is the key to navigating needs as they are encountered. Edward also noted that he believes 'building rapport with students is an important aspect of language teaching'. He admitted that it was challenging to connect with students during his first year of teaching, but now, five years on, he said that he views his first years teaching experiences 'as a tool for gaining a greater understanding of how best to deliver my lesson'. However, he also pointed out that he must balance his students' needs his institution's learning goals, and objectives. For example, although Edward noted that his institution employs an 'English Only' policy, he said that he is comfortable using their

L2 (unlike Frank above) because he said that he believes it is necessary when accommodating low-level students struggling with comprehension and output. Moreover, he justified that utilizing L1 at times is the most realistic and practical approach to addressing immediate needs, and that pushing students beyond their current capabilities may have negative repercussions.

In the early career years (2nd and 3rd) of teaching it seems that both Joan and Frank entered the profession optimistic that they could help students learn but ended up expressing metaphors for their experiences that depicted a desire to control because of various difficulties they encountered while teaching. Thus, they were both more focused on surviving their own teaching experiences because perhaps they have not had sufficient experiences or knowledge of students, and classroom procedures. As such, classroom control was seen as a major means of survival, where a 'doctor' instructs 'patients' about what to do in order to learn (i.e. 'recover'). In contrast, Nathan and Edward, the two EFL teachers in their latter early career years (4th and 5th) of teaching, used more nurturing type metaphors such as 'teacher as motivator', and 'teacher as facilitator' indicating they have adjusted their beliefs somewhat about their roles as language teachers from their earlier years. Both teachers seemed to have reassessed their expectations of who they are as language teachers and set more realistic expectations about what they could achieve in light of their teaching experiences as they began to focus more on supporting their students' needs, rather than their own. Such a shift in their perceptions of their roles seemed to have been the result of trial and error during their second and third years of teaching and thus incremental rather than sudden.

It is interesting to note that a previous similar study by Kanno and Stuart (2011), who followed the identity development of two novice language teachers in their first year of teaching, observed that as novice teachers' identity became more solidified, they became more distant from their students. As Kanno and Stuart (2011, p. 249) observed, in exchange for a "more established identity as a teacher, they grew more disengaged from their students. The findings of this study suggest similarly that the two EFL teachers in their early novice years (2nd and 3rd) also were more focused on themselves and their survival as teachers and remained a bit distant from their students. However, as their teacher identities solidified in their latter novice years (4th and 5th), these two EFL teachers actually became more engaged with their students and their students' learning needs. The findings of this case study suggest that novice EFL teacher identity development may be a slow process initially in the first three years, but over time as teachers hone their teaching skills through practice and while engaging in more interactions with colleagues and administrators, their professional identity begins to solidify in their 4th and 5th years of teaching. Thus, there may be a steep learning curve in these first three years of EFL teachers' careers before they begin to become more comfortable with their own image of themselves as teachers, and as they begin to focus more on their students' learning. Indeed, Ahmadi et al. (2013, p. 1765) point out that, 'a teacher's identity is a continuous process of being informed, formed, and reformed which develops over time mostly through having interactions with other members of their discourse community and also through reflection over teaching practices'.

Perhaps the shift from a teacher's perception of the need to control to empower students (or from 'doctor' to 'facilitator' as was the finding in this case study) may be a natural progression of an early career teacher's identity as a result of having more

time to obtain teaching experience. For example, it took time for Joan and Frank to develop to where they could relinquish some control and focus on their students' learning needs rather than on their own needs to survive. However, as early career language teachers hone their teaching skills through classroom practice and engage in more interactions with their students, colleagues and administrators, perhaps they can begin to settle more into the profession and get a greater sense of 'who' they are and 'who' they want to be as language teachers, as Nathan and Edward seemed to experience. This is a similar result as Fernando Macías Villegas et al. (2020) who also concluded that as a result of more teaching experience as well as continuous interaction with members of their community of practice, early career teachers moved from an initial sense of conflict to a more settled professional identity development.

Language Teacher identity development then seems to be an ongoing process that evolves as teachers gain more experiences in their early career years (Flores, 2020). Consequently, learning to teach, can be seen as a process that begins, but does not end, in pre-service education and continues throughout their first five early career years as novices (Farrell, 2019, 2021, 2022). This information should be made available to pre-service language teachers so that they will have a clearer idea of what to expect in terms of the process of development in the early part of their early years of their teaching careers. In addition, pre-service teachers at different stages of their training (as they enter a program, during the program, during teaching practice and in their first years if possible) can be encouraged to generate and examine the metaphors they use so they can become more aware of their beliefs about teaching and learning and compare these to what they are being presented with in their teacher education programs. Such use of metaphor-generation can be a powerful pedagogical tool for teacher educators when presenting alternative metaphors for consideration and/or identifying new ones that may be more representative of their current beliefs. In addition, early career EFL teachers should also be encouraged to generate and examine the metaphors they use to talk about and reflect on their experiences of teaching in their first years. This knowledge can be fed back into language teacher education programmes in order to better prepare learner language teachers for the reality of the different contexts in which they will be teaching.

There are several limitations associated with the small number of teachers in this study (four) and the fact that they are all teaching in the same context and school which could and probably did influence their beliefs about teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Indeed, as

Clandinin et al. (2014) point out, metaphors teachers articulate are shaped by their contexts, that include their personal and professional knowledge landscapes. However, such limitations can also provide possibilities for future research in that it can be repeated in different contexts and settings by following early career English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' metaphors during their early career years.

Conclusion

The use of metaphors in this case study provided a means for exploring the development process that early career EFL teachers go through to make their complex experiences visible. The results of this study indicate that early career EFL teachers

may go through defined stages of development in their 2nd and 3rd years of teaching where they seek to control the learning environment for their own survival. However, in the 4th year of teaching, the teacher lessened this control in order to motivate his students, while in the 5th year of teaching any semblance of control was replaced with a focus on student learning and the teacher facilitating their needs. The change in metaphors, from 'teacher as doctor' in the second and third years, to 'teacher as motivator' in the 4th year and 'teacher as facilitator' in the 5th year, indicate the change of perception from years two and three where the two EFL teachers considered inability to control the classroom events as failure, to years four and five where the two EFL teachers evaluated success from a less control-oriented perspective to a more settled sense of self where they began to focus more on their students' learning needs. Perhaps early career EFL teachers may need to go through stages of control until they build up sufficient skills to be able to step back and facilitate their students' learning when they have had sufficient teaching experience during their first three years.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Thomas S. C. Farrell is Professor of Applied Linguistics at Brock University, Canada. Professor Farrell's professional interests include Reflective Practice, and Language Teacher Education. Professor Farrell has published widely and has presented at major conferences worldwide on these topics. A selection of his work can be found on his webpage: www.reflectiveinquiry.ca

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