



Examining Indonesian Students' Conceptualizations of Their EFL Teacher Roles through Metaphor Analysis

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Abstract

Different roles have been attributed to teachers; from knowledge transmitter to caregiver. These roles are intertwined with one another and their complexity has attracted numerous researchers to investigate. In spite of the extensive literature and studies on teacher roles, very few studies have highlighted the complexity and changing roles of teachers from students' points of view. Whereas, students are the main body of learning, so their conceptualizations to describe their EFL teachers' roles are important and should be included. This study explores students' conceptualizations of EFL teacher roles through metaphor analysis to gain clearer insight on teacher roles. The study focuses on how students describe their English teacher roles and draw emerging themes from the metaphors. The data of this study were collected by a written prompt "my English teacher is like... because..." from 235 Junior High School students. Through thematic analysis, the study reveals that the teacher played many roles based on students' conceptualizations through metaphors. These imply that teacher professional development and teacher competence become a concern in order to optimize the teachers' roles.

Keywords: Changing teachers' roles; junior high school teachers' roles; metaphor analysis; students' conceptualization

Introduction

Teachers' roles shift during the lesson depending on the activities being undertaken and the teaching goals they wish to attain (Zheng, 2015). Teachers' traditional roles have been primarily as knowledge transmitters, where they share knowledge with students on a particular subject through lessons that build on existing knowledge and bring them toward a greater comprehension of the subject. Teachers' roles were anticipated to change in the 1990s, as an emphasis on the student-centered approach intensified. Teachers require to deliver personalized and individual instruction that is adapted to students' needs, learning preferences, interests, and abilities as a part of the learning paradigm transition (McCombs, 2013). Furthermore, students are no longer viewed in the classroom as passive recipients of knowledge. However, Ahonen et al. (2014) discovered that in practice, teachers still described their roles as knowledge transmitters who were responsible for students' learning and development.

When the pandemic began to spread over the world in 2020, teachers were compelled to transition to online learning. Many teachers and students in Indonesia were in a tough situation owing to a lack of infrastructure for online learning. Poor signal, lack of gadget availability, and expensive data packages force teachers to choose the cheapest and most accessible tools or apps for the student, and synchronous learning using video-based apps is often not a good option when compared to asynchronous mode with text-based apps such as WhatsApp. Some teachers may experience confusion about how they should carry out their roles, and students' may have their own conceptualizations to visualize their teachers' roles in these instances.

Substantively, teachers' roles are not a new issue. Previously, scholars have attempted to discuss this issue from various perspectives and contexts. It could be seen that researchers from different countries and cultures investigating teachers' roles through metaphors gathered data from different groups, such as pre-service teachers (Lin et al., 2012; Yalçın-Arslan & Cinkara, 2016; Kavanoz, 2016), students and teachers (Oktay & Vancı Osam, 2013; Wan, Low, & Li, 2011; Asmali and Çelik (2017), practicing teachers (Michael & Katerina, 2009; Torghabeh, Elahi, & Khanalipour, 2009; Yesilbursa, 2012), and students (Nikitina & Furouka, 2008). Asmali and Çelik (2017) conducted a study to explore 24 English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' roles through metaphorical representations. They found 58 teachers' metaphors and categorized those metaphors into seven categories of teacher role: knowledge provider, nurturer, cooperative leader, artist, challenger or agent of change, innovator, and learner.

Another study was conducted by Yalçın-Arslan and Cinkara (2016) who conducted a study to determine the metaphorical representations of EFL pre-service teachers about the concept of being a language teacher. They revealed a total of 134 metaphors categorized into four groups: people, objects, actions, and animals. Kavanoz (2016) conducted a study to examine whether and how the metaphors generated by pre-service teachers at different stages of education show variation. They carried out 87 metaphors from 284 students enrolled in the ELT program. In addition, they also found that pre-service teachers' metaphors were multidimensional signifying subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and affective domains.

In spite of the extensive literature and studies on teacher roles, very few studies have highlighted the complexity and changing roles of teachers from the junior high school perspective. The previous studies commonly discussed teacher roles from teachers' and pre-service teachers' points of view. Whereas, students are the main body of learning, so their conceptualizations to describe their teachers' roles are important and should be included. Therefore, this study is designed to explore the complexity and changing roles of EFL young teachers from junior high school student's point of view to answer the research question and to fill the gap. Keeping the aforementioned issues in mind, this study was conducted to uncover, how do junior high schools conceptualize their EFL teacher roles

through metaphors? Within the question, it is aimed to identify the metaphors that the EFL junior high school students use to define their English teacher roles.

Teachers' Roles and the Use of Metaphor Analysis

Teachers' roles refer to what teachers perform in classrooms (Keiler, 2018), either as teachers' duties, functions, or responsibilities (Fareh, 2018) either before class, in class, or after class across different instructional contexts (Huang, 2019). There are some classifications or descriptions of teachers' roles. Each scholar has their classification and is sometimes similar to each other. Alvarez, Guasch, and Espasa (2009), for example, classified teachers' roles into five categories, namely designer/planning function, social role, cognitive role, technical domain, and managerial domain. Berge (1995) classified teachers' roles as pedagogical, psychological, managerial, and technical. In addition, instructional design, structure, fostering dialogue, and direct instruction were proposed by Anderson, Liam, Garrison, and Archer (2001); and cognitive, affective, and managerial roles by Coppola, Hiltz, and Rotter (2002). Varvel (2007) proposed managerial, personal, technical, instructional design, pedagogical, evaluation, and social roles. Badia, Garcia, and Meneses (2016) defined teacher roles as managing social interaction, instructional design, directing the use of technology, learning assessment, and learning support. In reality, these positions overlap, making it difficult for classroom teachers to understand their roles and analyze the particular duties and tasks associated with teacher roles due to the overlapping theoretical classification (Baran, Correia, & Thompson, 2011).

Framing teacher roles became a challenge and it may not be so easy for students to articulate the EFL teacher roles played in the classes. This reveals one of the reasons for choosing metaphor analysis to find out how students conceptualize their EFL teacher roles in language classes. As a frame for students' conceptions about their EFL teacher roles, the use of metaphors became the recent tool for the analysis of students' conceptions upon teaching and learning, and this tool has been getting more and more popular (Goldstein, 2005; Saban, 2004; Saban, Kocbeker, & Saban, 2007; Wright, Sundberg, Yarbrough, Wilson, & Stallworth, 2003). Their use in educational research especially began to gain more interest when the focus of researchers' shifted from a wider external context of educational practice to everyday realities of the classroom (Jensen, 2006) affecting the roles teachers play.

Research Methodology

The present research was a descriptive study conducted to determine the metaphorical representations of EFL students about their English language teacher roles. Eliciting EFL students' metaphorical images in a qualitative study will allow participants and researchers to delineate the mechanism of teacher roles vividly (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). Both qualitative and quantitative

research paradigms were employed. The qualitative part included frequencies of the number of metaphors and the qualitative part conducted content analysis to categorize metaphors.

The junior high school was selected based on convenience sampling. The research was conducted among 2nd-grade students enrolled in junior high school in Central Java, Indonesia. This investigation was performed with 235 students (i.e., 102 males and 133 females) chosen according to a random sampling method among 320 students enrolled in 10 classes of the 2nd grade of junior high school. The rationale for choosing the 2nd grade is because they have never once had face-to-face learning, as long as they are enrolled in junior high school, they only get online learning (i.e., through google classroom, WhatsApp, etc.). Therefore, their conceptions (e.g., how they visualize their teacher roles) became a concern and important to be explored. The purpose of the research was announced to the participants and they were told that the submission of the metaphors was not related to any assessments in the courses given by the researcher. It was assumed that turning in the metaphors indicated their consent to participate in this research.

As for data collection, similar to what has been done in many other metaphor studies (see Yalçın-Arslan & Cinkara, 2016; Kavanoz, 2016; Asmali and Çelik, 2017), the researcher designed and used a written prompt (Wan & Low, 2015) task in which, there were two sections, one gathering basic demographic information, the other eliciting the students' conceptualization of their EFL teacher roles through the statement "My English teacher is like because". As can be seen in the statement, the students were asked to provide their own conceptualizations regarding their EFL teacher roles. Through their metaphors, the researchers also aimed to elucidate the reason behind the students' conceptualizations.

The researcher developed the instrument into Google Form in order to make it easier for the researcher to share the instrument. To share the instrument with the participants, the researcher asked one of the teachers to help the researcher to share the instrument via the WhatsApp group. The participants responded to the metaphor elicitation task through the statement "My English teacher is like because.....". They were asked to think and provide a word that describes their English teacher roles and elaborate their reasons or rationales why such metaphors could represent their teachers' roles.

Following the methodology of metaphor analysis (Wan & Low, 2015), the data analysis process started with separately identifying the metaphor from each participant. In this stage, all the metaphors produced by the students were separated as units of analysis and explanations. Thus, similar metaphors were brought together and put into an appropriate role category provided by Saban, Kocbeker, and Saban (2006). Therefore, the analysis was based on deductive, theory-driven understanding. The detailed categorization provided by Saban et al., (2006) and the operational definitions for those conceptual categories are given below.

Table 1. The operational definition for the conceptual categories
(adapted from Saban et al., (2006))

Teacher as a knowledge provider	The teacher is the source and the transmitter of knowledge. Teaching is the act of delivering knowledge and skills, while learning entails the accumulation of the teacher's knowledge.
Teacher as a molder/craftsperson	The student is the raw material, and the teacher is responsible for bringing up students as socially useful products and shaping them into a prescribed mold.
Teacher as a curer/repairer	The student is in need of intellectual and behavioral repair. The teacher diagnoses and treats students' illnesses, flaws, and/or deficiencies.
Teacher as a superior authority figure	The teacher has the authority to control classroom variables and decide on what and how to teach. The students have to obey their teachers and submit to authority.
Teacher as a change agent	The teacher acts as a social agent and tries to design a new social culture by changing students' mindsets.
Teacher as an entertainer	Learning should be fun and enjoyable for students.
Teacher as an archetype of spirit	As a role model, the teacher helps students develop a good character and cares about each student's psychological and emotional wellbeing.
Teacher as a nurturer/cultivator	The teacher should attend to the individual needs and interests of the students and support the growth of each student.
Teacher as a facilitator/scaffolder	The teacher acts as a guide in the teaching-learning process and facilitates learning. Students construct their own knowledge in this process.
Teacher as cooperative/democratic leader	The teacher is a cooperative/democratic leader. He/she works together with the students, not in isolation from them.

The categorization provided by Saban et al., (2006) includes 10 role categories, however, it was realized that metaphors and rationales gained through the data only matched to 8 out of 10 categories. Therefore, the role categories which did not match the data were disregarded from the categorization. As for the metaphors which could not match any of the categories of Saban et al., (2006), new role categories emerged and were named as „stranger“. Thus, through the analysis, 9 role categories were achieved.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

As previously stated, the current research primarily examines a group of second-grade junior high school students' conceptualizations of their EFL teacher roles through metaphor analysis. In order to identify students' conceptions regarding their EFL teacher roles, all metaphors created by the participants were analyzed and then codified according to Saban et al., (2006). The findings revealed

that there were 34 metaphors from 235 students, and categorized those 34 metaphors into 9 teacher role categories. The findings gained through the analysis regarding the students' conceptualizations of their English language teacher roles are given below.

Table 2. Students' conceptualizations of their EFL teacher roles through metaphors

Role Category	Metaphors	<i>f</i>	%
Teacher as a knowledge provider	Scientist (15), mother/father/parent (22), salesman/saleswoman (8), hero (8), light (2), tour guide (5), lamp (3), sun (2), book, water, computer, internet (2), compass, dictionary (2), reporter, and flower	75	32
Teacher as an archetype of spirit	Mother/father/parent (38), angel (10), hero (5), my dream, and my idol	55	23
Teacher as a cooperative/democratic leader	Coach (11), cheer leader, and police (22), and captain (4)	38	16
Teacher as a facilitator/scaffolder	Customer service (10), time, alarm (6), and teller (3)	20	8
Teacher as a superior authority figure	Boss (7), and creditor (4)	11	5
Teacher as an entertainer	Entertainer (6)	6	3
Teacher as a stranger	Stranger (5)	5	2
Teacher as a nurturer/cultivator	Mother/father/parent (2), and ant	3	1
Teacher as a curer/repairer	Doctor (1)	1	1
Total		235	100

Discussion

Teacher as a knowledge provider

As the table shows, most of the students conceptualized their EFL teacher roles as knowledge providers. To conceptualize their teacher roles as knowledge providers, most students used metaphors „scientist“, „mother/father/parent“, „salesman/saleswoman“, and „hero“. In the first metaphor, the

students conceptualize their English teacher role as a parent because of the characteristics of the parents, such as being patient and always motivating their children when educating their children.

“My English teacher is like my parents, because she teaches us very cheerfully, patiently, and friendly. My teacher's motivation attracted me to be enthusiastic about learning English so that I would be successful in the future. She was patient when I didn't understand the material being discussed, she wanted to explain to me until I understood”
(Participant, 168).

In addition to being patient, parents also have a sincere nature in guiding their children. The student stated that “my English teacher is like my parent because she is friendly, kind, and good at speaking English and teaches me sincerely. That's how a teacher should be, teaching her students patiently and sincerely from the heart” (Participant, 255).

The second students’ metaphor to conceptualize their English teacher roles as knowledge provider is a teacher as a scientist. The characteristic of scientists is to have more knowledge, in this case, not everyone can speak English. The students stated that “my English teacher is like a scientist because not everyone can speak English well. Besides that, she is smart and her English delivery (explanation) is good (Participant, 54). In addition, students also describe that a scientist is a professional person. The students stated that “my English teacher is like a scientist because she is a professional. Her job is not only to educate but also to teach knowledge, guide, train, assess, and evaluate her students” (Participant, 49).

The third students’ metaphor is that teacher is a salesman/ saleswoman. A salesman/ saleswoman needs to know the products and services offered well. Therefore, she/he can easily explain products and services in detail and specifically to their customers. The student stated that “my English teacher is like a saleswoman, because, if there are students who do not understand, she will explain again in detail (Participant, 46). Similarly, “... because she is a good person, likes to re-explain the material in detail” (Participant, 31).

The last students’ metaphor is that teacher as a hero because their English teacher was meritorious for them. The student stated that “my English teacher is like a hero, because my English teacher is credited with imparting knowledge to me, and she does not expect anything in return from me, so the teacher is my hero” (Participant, 143). Similarly, students noted that their English teacher contributed to the expansion of knowledge. They stated that “... because they are instrumental in helping and expanding knowledge” (Participant, 116).

In the present study, the teacher as a knowledge transmitter was the recurrent metaphor. This finding reveals that the junior high school students perceived their EFL language teachers as the ultimate possessors of knowledge whose main role is to transfer their knowledge to students

(Kavanoz, 2016). In line with some other studies (see Saban et al., 2006; Leavy, McSorley, & Bote, 2007; Kavanoz, 2016), the findings show that the prevalent theoretical assumptions reflected through the students' conceptualizations of their English teacher roles are predominantly behaviorist notions of teaching indicating that being a teacher is seen as mechanically transmitting knowledge to students. According to the behaviorist perspective, the learner is passive and knowledge development is achieved by transfer. Teaching and learning in the old paradigm were considered as a task in which teachers were assumed as experts obliged to transfer knowledge to students (Holt-Reynolds, 2000). Thus, the students perceived their EFL teacher roles as knowledge transmitters and learners as a mere recipients of knowledge.

Teacher as an archetype of spirit

Second, the students' conceptualization of their EFL teacher roles is as an archetype of spirit. To conceptualize their teacher roles as knowledge providers, most students used metaphors, „mother/father/parent“, „angel“, and hero. In the first metaphor, the students conceptualize their English teachers' role as a parent. Students used metaphor as a „parent“ to indicate the characteristics of the parents, not only as patient and motivated when educating their children but also as a role model for their children. Students stated that “my English teacher is like my mother, because she is patient, always advise when I make a mistake” (Participant, 224). In addition, “...because she is kind” (Participant, 221), and “...because she is gentle (Participant, 70).

Similarly, students also used the metaphor „angel“ to conceptualize their English teacher roles, because an angel is kind, wise, commendable, and perfect. The student stated that “my English teacher is like an angel because she is very kind and very wise” (Participant, 30). Other students noted that their English teacher is patient and sincere. The student stated that “...because she is patient and sincere (Participant, 106). In addition, the students also noted that their English teacher has good morals. The student stated that “my English teacher is like an angel because my English teacher is very good and has a commendable character” (Participant, 212).

Another metaphor, students used the word „hero“ to conceptualize their English teacher roles as an archetype of spirit. Students noted that their teacher is like a hero (i.e., she is like a role model for them) because she taught them without ulterior motives. The student stated that “my English teacher is like a hero because my English teacher has been teaching selflessly” (Participant, 39). In addition, their teacher is great at teaching. The students stated that my English teacher is like a hero because my English teacher because she is great at teaching us” (Participant, 252).

In line with some other studies, teachers help students to internalize the moral virtues of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility by modeling and continually reinforcing what is right and good (Lumpkin, 2008). Being a role of model, a teacher does not only stress both aspects of academic achievement and moral values on the students theoretically but also should be represented on the performances practically as a direct model to the students. In addition, the teacher should

optimize his/her roles as role models so that it becomes the model of character and noble character for students (Fithriani et al., 2021).

Teacher as a cooperative/ democratic leader

Third, the students' conceptualization of their EFL teacher roles is as cooperative/ democratic leaders. To conceptualize their teacher roles as knowledge providers, most students used metaphors, „police“ and „coach“. In the first metaphor, the students conceptualize their English teachers' role as police. The students conceptualized their English teacher roles as police because their English teacher is firm and disciplined. The student stated that “my English is like police because she is a strict and disciplined person” (Participant, 179). In addition, the students noted that their English always taught them to be disciplined. The student stated that “...because she always teaches us to be disciplined” (Participant, 137).

In the second metaphor, the students conceptualize their English teacher role as a coach. The students noted that their English teacher always guided them to become better and successful like a coach who always guides and develops the potential of his/her students. The student stated that “my English teacher is like a coach because my English teacher always teaches and guides us well” (Participant, 178). Similarly, “...because My English teacher can guide us to be better and successful” (Participant, 22).

Similar to what Asmali and Çelik (2017) concluded, the students' conceptualization of their EFL teacher roles as leaders could suggest that the teachers tended to adopt the role to care for their students and to direct their learning process, including whats and hows of their learning. Therefore, if the teachers are cooperating leaders, then they are responsible for motivating, encouraging, and inspiring their students to achieve their potentials. Besides, the tendency to see the teachers as cooperating leaders, despite being superior, the teachers also acknowledged that they were jointly involved in the learning and teaching adventure with their students.

Teacher as a facilitator/scaffolder

The next students' conceptualization of their EFL teacher roles is as a facilitator/scaffolder. To conceptualize their teacher roles as a teacher as a facilitator/ scaffolder, most students used metaphors, „customer service“, „alarm“. The first metaphor, the students used the metaphor „customer service“ to conceptualize their English teacher roles, because their English teacher always responded to their message. The students stated that “my English teacher is like a customer service because when I chat to send assignments, she always responds” (Participant, 105). Similarly, another student stated “...because she is friendly, fast response, and explain in detail” (Respondent, 194).

The second metaphor, the students used the metaphor, „alarm“ to conceptualize their English teacher roles, because their English teacher always reminded them (e.g., to finish and submit their assignment, etc.). The student stated that “my English is like an alarm because when the English

assignment has not been done, the teacher reminds who has not pursued it” (Participant, 251). Similarly, another student stated that “...because when we are late in sending an assignment, we are always reminded”.

Sanjaya (2008) noted that the role of the teacher as a facilitator is to provide services to facilitate students in the learning process. As a facilitator, the teacher is obliged to provide services for students so that the learning process can run well and smoothly. The findings revealed the teacher provided services to support the students, such as the teacher always fast responding to the chat when students asked about the materials or assignments, and the teacher always reminded the students (e.g., to finish and submit their assignment, etc.).

Teacher as a superior authority figure

The next students’ conceptualization of their EFL teacher roles is as a superior authority figure. To conceptualize their teacher roles as a teacher as a facilitator/ scaffolder, most students used metaphors, „boss” and „creditor”. The first metaphor, the students used the metaphor „boss” to conceptualize their English teacher roles, because their English teacher always gave them a lot of assignments. The student stated that “my English teacher is like a boss because we are definitely given materials and assignments at every meeting” (Participant, 117). Similarly, another student stated that “...because my English teacher always gives material, not only assignments but sometimes giving us a lot of assignments, up to 10 pages, so sometimes it is hard to manage time to learn English” (Participant, 43)

The second metaphor, the students used the metaphor „creditor” to conceptualize their English teacher roles, because their English teacher always asked students to submit their assignments must be on time as ordered. The student stated that “my English is like a creditor because every time we give an assignment, we have to submit it on time” (Participant, 87). Similarly, another student stated that “...because every time we give an assignment, we have to complete and submit it on time as ordered” (Participant, 75).

Mesrabadi, Badri, and Vahedi (2010) described that the teacher has authority, where the teacher has the power and jurisdiction of decision making about activities of its classroom. The present study revealed that the students conceptualized their EFL teacher roles like a boss, where their English teacher always gave them assignments, and sometimes too many assignments for them. In addition, the students also conceptualized their EFL teacher roles like a creditor, because their English teacher demanded them to submit their assignments on time. In this case, the teacher used her authority to control her classroom. Tirri and Puolimatka (2000) preferred to use the term „deontic authority”, where the teacher needs deontic authority to control the classroom situation and to maintain order.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on students' conceptualizations of their English teacher roles, the findings revealed that there were 34 metaphors and categorized into 9 teacher role categories, teacher as; a knowledge provider, as an archetype of spirit, a cooperative/ democratic leader, a facilitator/scaffolder, a superior authority figure, an entertainer, a stranger, a nurturer/cultivator, and a curer/repairer. Similar to the findings of previous studies (e.g., Saban et al. 2007; Seferoğlu et al. 2009; Yalçın-Arslan & Cinkara, 2016; Kavanoz, 2016; Asmali & Çelik, 2017), the metaphorical images of the students' conceptualizations about their EFL teacher roles emerged in this study confirmed that teachers have multiple roles which can hardly be condensed into one single metaphor.

This endeavor into the process of understanding personal conceptualizations through metaphor elicitation made it evident that metaphor construction is a valuable activity for unmasking junior high schools students' conceptualizing their EFL teacher roles. The results of this study urge the teachers to increase their professional development and competence to maximize their roles. Finally, it would have a positive effect on the success of student learning. As mentioned earlier that the students are the main body of learning, therefore, teachers are expected to develop their roles in a positive direction so the students learning process can be maximized and successful.

Nevertheless, the study has limitations, such as sample size and issues related to self-report. It used a small and convenient sample of junior high school students from one single institution. With a limited number of participating EFL students, this study might have limitations in generalizing the results to represent all the junior high school students in Indonesia, specifically junior high school students in Central Java, Indonesia.

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