INSIGHTS INTO UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' ROLES IN ONLINE EFL CLASSES IN VIETNAM

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Abstract: Teacher roles in online language classes have been a well-researched area yielding various insights into the potential of online technologies and the need for a consideration of re-defining the roles of the teacher. The proliferation of research in this area has yet called for elaborations of the roles. This paper, drawing on a study of two cases, aims to investigate teachers' roles in EFL classes integrating online technologies at a university. Online classroom observations and interviews with the teachers were used as instruments for data collection. Findings from qualitative data analysis showed major issues relating to university teacher roles. First, online technologies helped enable the development of the teachers' roles, which otherwise was impossible. Second, while online technologies opened numerous learning opportunities and avenues, the teacher role remained the fulcrum for the students in the whole learning process. Among discussion issues, an argument that can be raised concerns how teacher roles developed. This paper implies the need for re-defining university teacher roles in online language classes.

Key words: Case study, EFL university teacher's roles, online EFL classes

1. Introduction

The roles of the teacher in online classes have been a well-researched area yielding various insights into the potential of online technologies and the need for a consideration of re-defining classroom roles. It has been claimed in the literature that there has been a shift in classroom roles primarily on the part of the teacher when online technologies are involved (Alvarez & Espasa 2010; Bennett & Lockyer, 2004; Guasch, Lam & Lawrence, 2002; Smith & Kolosick, 1996). The teacher, while still playing the main roles like those in traditional classes such as planning lesson plans, disseminating knowledge, managing classes, evaluating students, is required to be able to deal with issues emerging from the online environment. Those issues range from technical skills of using a software to those which are far more pedagogical with essentially an understanding of the online environment for the meaning-making process (Salmon, 2000). Since the teacher and students do not meet face-to-face, it is vital for the online teacher to create an environment supporting and maintaining students' interaction and motivation (Bennett & Lockyer, 2004). This remains a potential area for further research into teacher roles in online environments in various contexts.

In the particular context of higher education, Bennett and Lockyer (2004) emphasize a call for a movement from teacher-directed instructional practices to student-centred approaches, claiming that university teachers have primarily relied on mass lectures and tutorials. To respond to the reality and meet the necessity for a change, many universities have offered more online courses involving less face-to-face and more distance or online interaction capitalized by online technologies. This has presented a shift in pedagogy in concert with the implementation of online technologies (Bennett & Lockyer, 2004). The shift has brought about critical changes primarily to the role of the teacher. Specifically, Wheeler (2010) suggests a new pedagogical practice

required of the online teacher, focusing on developing students' collaborative knowledge construction and promoting a culture of sharing and collaboration through Web 2.0 open learning. In the same vein, Salmon (2000) indicates the characteristics that an online teacher needs to develop, concerning not simply technical skills but more importantly online communication skills to engage students online, content expertise to support students' knowledge construction, and the development of students' personal characteristics such as adaptability, positivity, and confidence, all of which can be obtained when/if the teacher has an understanding of the online environment. At the macro level, the shift in pedagogy and practice has been recognized in both literature and the reality (Oliver, 2001).

While much attention has been paid to the necessity of a repertoire of (new) roles required of the online teacher, there has still been a call for an elaboration of the roles (Guasch et al., 2010). As a matter of fact, detailing teacher roles has been done from different perspectives, mostly focusing on competencies required of the online teacher, thus yielding different recognitions of roles (Guasch et al., 2010). According to Guasch et al. (2010), this lack of consensus on what roles are and how they can be distributed can be explained by the fact that roles are shaped in association with particularities of the online context. These researchers therefore claim that the diversity of outlooks on this topic highlights the need to carry out contextualized studies for elaboration of roles. This is where this study fits in. Specifically, this study aims to investigate two teachers' roles when they were teaching online EFL classes over a semester at a university during the COVID-19 pandemic. This lends itself well to the contextualization need. More importantly, the online teaching and learning reality implies that roles are not something ready-made in the online environment but take time to develop in accordance with the context and/or discourse. An observation of how roles develop over a period of time, which is still of little scholarly attention, would provide insights into how roles should be elaborated. The latter serves as the motivation for this study. With that, this study seeks answers to the research question: How do university teachers' roles develop in online EFL classes over a semester?

2. Literature review

2.1 What is role?

Role is defined as what one does and/or expected to do in a particular environment (Lam & Lawrence, 2002; Lee & VanPatten, 1995; Wright, 1987). It is emphasized that role is not only expressed through what one does but also what other people believe what one should do, the social expectation to be precise (Lam & Lawrence, 2002; Walker & Shore, 2015). The expectation could be prescriptive or norm-based, according to some theorists, and could be preferences according to others (Walker & Shore, 2015).

In the literature (e.g., Lam & Lawrence, 2002, Walker & Shore, 2015; Wright, 1987), role is indicated to be composed of three main factors: i, job-related activities, ii, relationships and communications one has with others, and iii, behaviours and attitudes. Turner (1978) explains the relationship of the three factors in describing how a person adopts behaviours and attitudes accompanying activities, and how social interactions facilitate this process. However, role conceptualization has still been fraught with discrepancies resulting from different perspectives (Walker & Shore, 2015).

Many researchers claim that role and role development is influenced by variables such as attitudes and beliefs (Kinchin, 2004), norms and expectations (Ryu & Sandoval, 2010; Webb, 2009), experience (Eick & Reed, 2002), and social factors (Reiman & Peace, 2002). Role development in the classroom particularly is influenced by other variables like student engagements and levels of interaction (Herrenkohl & Guerra, 1998; Walker & Shore, 2015).

2.2 Roles in the traditional language class

In the traditional class, or the offline class, teacher roles have been well-documented in the literature. It is assumed that teachers have to take full responsibility for everything happening in the classroom (Lam & Lawrence, 2002). Teachers are considered all-powerful and all-knowing, controls over the dissemination of knowledge and learning (Johnson et al., 1998). Teachers are catalysts, vehicles and judges for the learning process (Smith & Kolosick, 1996). Teachers are both responsible for imparting knowledge and creating and managing a condition favourable for learning to happen (Tudor, 1993). In language teaching particularly, the centrality of the teacher has long been held as the norm (Lam & Lawrence, 2002). Finkel and Monk (1997) claim that because the teacher is the only person in the class who has expertise in the subject, the teacher is viewed as the group leader responsible for motivation and enlightenment with a sense of purpose. Students' outcomes are dependent on how they conform to what the teacher requires and on how much knowledge from the teacher that they can grasp (Lee & VanPatten, 1995; Smith & Kolosick, 1996).

2.3 Roles in the online language class

Teacher roles in the online class have been researched and classified widely by many researchers. Despite discrepancies, the classification shares commonalities, including main roles of design, socialisation, cognition and affection, management, technology, and evaluation (Alvarez, Guasch, & Espasa, 2009; Anderson, Liam, Garrison, & Archer, 2001; Badia, Garcia, & Meneses, 2017; Coppola, Hiltz, & Rotter, 2002; Varvel, 2007).

In the particular context of computer-mediated communication (CMC), Salmon (2000) uses the term e-moderator to describe the person who is responsible for building on and responding to the contributions of the online discussion, which is considered the major part of the teacher's roles. The researcher suggests a model indicating five characteristics that the e-moderator needs to develop:

- An understanding of the online environment;

- Technical skills in using the features of the software;

- Online communication skills to engage learners;

- Content expertise to support learners' knowledge construction; and

- Personal characteristics, such as adaptability, positivity, and confidence.

This model concentrates on teaching via CMC, which is distinct from other responsibilities such as subject design, content development, and evaluation.

During the delivery of the course, Coppola, Hiltz, and Rotter (2002) identify three roles of the online teacher: cognitive, affective, and managerial. In these three areas, activities relating to learning, thinking, and information belong to cognitive roles, classroom atmosphere and

relationship with and/or among students relates to affective roles, and managerial to management of the course.

In a broader view, Goodyear et al. (2001) develop a model encompassing eight roles of the online teacher in association with key competences showing the nature and scope of online teaching. The eight roles are: content facilitator, technologist, designer, manager/administrator, process facilitator, adviser/counselor, assessor and researcher, as shown in the following table:

Table 1. Roles and indicators of key competences of the online teacher (Goodyear et al., 2001)

Role	Task areas
Content facilitator	Facilitate the learners understanding of the content ('In-course' activity)
Technologist	Making technology choices to improve the online environment
Designer	Designing worthwhile learning task ('Pre-course' activity)
Manager/administrator	Administration and record keeping
Process facilitator	Welcoming, establishing ground rules, creating community, managing communication, modeling social behaviour, establishing own identity
Adviser/counselor	Providing students with advice or counseling on a one to one basis
Assessor	Provides grades and feedback
Researcher	Creation of new knowledge relevant to content

In higher education in particular, Guasch et al. (2010) identify three main roles on the part of the teacher teaching through online technologies: pedagogical, social, and design/planning, as shown in the following figure.
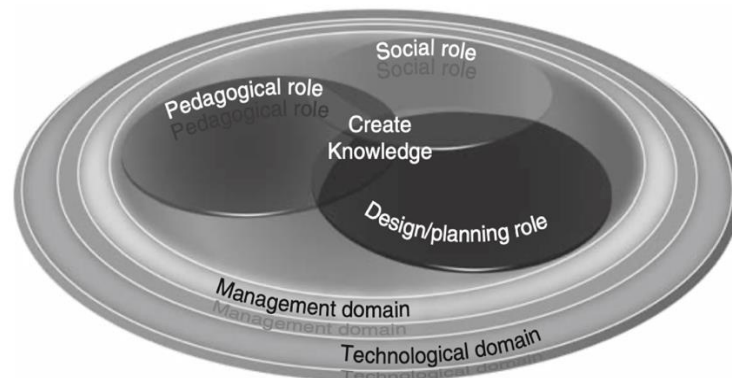

Figure 1. Roles and domains for university teachers in online environments (Guasch et al., 2010, p. 349)

In terms of the difference between roles and domains, the researchers claim that technology is considered part of the environment so it is more of the domain than a specific role, and the same is true for management, which concerns the organizational environment in which teaching and learning take place. For designing/planning role, the online teacher plans activities that assist students in the acquisition of self-organisation and self-regulation skills. It is important to adapt the planning on the dynamics of ongoing learning activities. The pedagogical role refers to the abilities necessary to create learning situations by proposing activities that will have to be linked to specific contents. For the social role, the teacher must foster the creation of a community of learners in order to diminish the feeling of isolation and help create a group identity. The technological domain means the competence to use ICT within an educational framework. The management domain means the competence to organize information before, during, and after the

teaching and learning process. Because of its comprehensiveness and relevance, the framework of Guasch, Alvarez, & Espasa (2010) is used in this study.

2.4 Relevant key studies and research gaps

Studies into teacher roles in online language classes in higher education have been proliferating both in quantity and quality and from various perspectives. Those major studies which either serve as theoretical foundations or are key to discussion of this study are reviewed here so that possible research gaps could be identified.

The study by Guasch, Alvarez, and Espasa (2010) about roles and domains for university teachers to teach in online environments has underpinned my study. Drawing on the large-scaled net-based research study involving 78 experts from 14 universities of 10 European countries, the researchers develop a competency framework of specific roles of university teachers in online environments. The framework is theoretically supported with the notion of socioconstructivist and situated learning, meaning people's actions and the surrounding environment are mutually intertwined, and validated with a European-wide study, thus provides a comprehensive and rigid basis. However, as the overall comment of the study goes, this empirical study points to the nature and complexity of teaching online in the higher education in explaining that teacher tasks in online environments are carried out by different professionals so that a university teacher does not necessarily perform all the roles, meaning overlaps between the roles. This reveals a need to validate the framework with such situations in which the teacher, apart from students, is the only person. That means a need to complexify teacher roles particularly in the university context. This uncovers a possible research gap.

A study by Lam and Lawrence (2002) examines changes in teacher roles and student roles in a computer-based project conducted in a university foreign language class. What is noticeable from this study is the focus of foreign language teaching online. In this computer-based class, the teacher's expertise in the foreign language was threatened because the students had ready access to a vast amount of information online that the teacher could not control, including not only grammar rules that the teacher was not very sure but also authentic texts of the foreign language. This posed a potential erosion to the expert role of the teacher. While this study shares the similar teaching context with my study, it may imply a consideration of adjusting the lesson objective in the language class to validate the possible relationship between lesson objective and teacher roles in online environments. Exploring this kind of relationship remains an under-researched area.

A study by Salmon (2000), which has been reviewed in section 2.3, puts forth a model indicating five characteristics that online teachers need to develop. Among the five characteristics, namely an understanding of the online environment, technical skills, online communication skills, content expertise, and personal characteristics, which are widely recognizable in the literature, what stands out is the item of personal characteristics. As a matter of fact, when online teaching advances quite fast, it really matters how people can catch up the speed and develop adaptive personal characteristics. This really motivates my study to contextualise Salmon's model in this aspect.

In the context of Vietnam, recent research into university classroom roles has been pivoting the reform of teaching and learning approaches in language classes from various

perspectives. Thanh's study (2008) investigates the role of the teacher in Vietnam when cooperative learning is introduced to the classroom, indicating some mismatch between traditional teacher roles and the innovation. Le Ha (2004) investigates university classroom roles when Western methods, known as Communicative Language Teaching, were introduced to the class. Her study reveals how teachers contested the cultural stereotypes. Nguyen and Habók (2021), with a big sample of 1565 EFL learners, concern students' belief about teachers' roles, typifying a tendency towards teacher-centredness, showing the important roles the teacher plays in the students' language learning process. Despite a considerable number of relevant studies, previous research has been looking at role as something fixed or ready-made, and investigation into how role develops over a period of time in the online environment remains of little scholarly attention.

To sum up, a review of relevant key studies above uncovers some possible research gaps. First, teacher roles in the context of higher education should be complexified particularly when the teacher is the only person, apart from students, in the whole process that the online environment involves. Second, is there a relationship between lesson objectives and teacher roles, particularly in the context of online foreign language learning? Finally, personal characteristics such as adaptability, a key component alongside other components relating to skills and expertise, should be contextualized.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research approach

Qualitative case study research is the approach chosen for this research. As suggested by the nature of case study, which provides an in-depth and multifaceted investigation of a single case (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 2016), this study relies on this approach to portray two teachers' roles to see how the roles developed over a period of time. More importantly, as the aim of this study is to contextualise role development for an elaboration of roles in an online teaching environment, it is particularities of the case under investigation that matter. This is where a qualitative case study research approach fits in.

3.2 The teachers and their classes

The focal participants of the study are two EFL teachers, pseudonym mised teacher A and teacher B. Teacher A was in charge of a Listening class, in her age of 30s, and held an MA at the time she participated in this study. Teacher B was in charge of a Writing class, in his age of 50s, and held a PhD at the time he participated in this study.

Teacher A's class was Listening 5 (listening and note taking) which took place from September to December 2021, school year 2021-2022. Teacher B's class was Writing 4 (paragraph and essay writing), took place from March to June 2022, school year 2021-2022. Both classes were within COVID-19 period, when social distancing was obligatory, and thus was conducted online totally. The classes relied on the university's Learning Management System (LMS) as the official platform for class contacts including class announcements, assignment guidelines and submission, and materials upload, all of which were accessible to every student enrolled in the class. Every week, the classes took place via Zoom in the scheduled time (two hours/week/class) for lectures and/or tutorials. On Zoom, the teachers normally conducted the

classes basing on lessons in the textbook (for example a listening exercise for the Listening class or writing theories for the Writing class), then had the students do controlled practice followed by correction via computer shared screen.

3.3 Data collection instruments and analysis

Semi-structured interviews conducted with the individual teachers were used as the major source of data collection. The interview protocol centered around the teachers' roles with the particular focus on role development. The interview was conducted in Vietnamese for the interviewees' convenience of expression, lasted for approximately an hour, was recorded, and transcribed verbatim.

Guided by the research question, the interview transcription was scrutinized for generating initial codes. The codes were thematized drawing on the literature. Then recurring themes were grouped for hyper-themes, which were cohered for a complete story.

Besides the interview, online class observation (including Zoom and LMS observation) also served as a supplementary source of data. Online class observation was conducted by the researcher on Zoom when the classes took place as scheduled. Apart from Zoom, LMS also showed class activities, which were recorded in history, for example obligatory peer evaluation of individual students' writing assignments. Data from online classroom observation and LMS history were used to triangulate the interview data and contributed to building up the overall picture.

4. Findings

4.1 Teacher A

In terms of role, teacher A was most clearly realized through two remarkable roles, as she clearly perceived herself and articulated in the interview, the co-learner and the teacher.

The co-learner

The role of co-learner, as what she called herself, with layers of meaning and intention, was the most salient role of the teacher in this online listening class. According to the teacher, this role developed from some critical factors. First, this was especially relevant, as she stressed in the interview, when the COVID-19 took place unexpectedly and exerted huge influence upon the traditional or offline teaching. This situation required all teachers to learn particularly how to use technologies. While for other teachers generally, learning how to use technologies was something as a must to switch to online teaching, for this teacher, it rooted from her identity as a teacher, someone she believed as a fulcrum for students, as she said:

> I am often interested in technologies but I don't know much. In this unexpected situation, since I find myself not knowing enough [emphasised by the teacher], I have to be a learner. Because I am instructing the students I have to learn and know the technologies thoroughly beforehand so that when they encounter problems, I must be able to help them no matter what, or they will cry out. [Interview, Teacher A]

She stressed that it was her teacher identity to force her to learn a new technology before giving instruction to students because she did not allow herself being in situations that she could not be of help to the students due to not knowing the technology.

Second, being a co-learner was what the teacher did with intention as a pedagogical strategy to create a favourable learning atmosphere, as she revealed in the interview:

Being a co-learner means I study alongside the students. I often told the students "this is what I have just learnt and now I tell you. It is not that I am superior." By saying so I created a space, a favourable atmosphere for them to learn. I wanted them to feel that teachers are not someone knowing something superordinary but also have to learn normal things to transfer to students in an optimal manner. [Interview, Teacher A]

The teacher's pedagogical strategy was also meant in a different aspect, as she continued:

Sometimes, for some things I had already known but when the students spoke out, I was kind of acting out [the teacher's words], saying "wow I didn't know these things when I was at your age". They then felt they were appreciated for their effort in answering that and thus aligned to the tone of the lesson and started to learn. I find this way very effective in getting the students to follow me [the teacher's word]. [Interview, Teacher A]

In the particular relation to the listening class, teacher A emphasized the development of co-learner role as related to her identity of a learner of listening skills. This is what she explained in the interview:

The starting point was that I was a learner hugely challenged by the subject of Listening. I didn't have a favourable start when I first learnt English in general, and had difficulties in Listening skills in particular. This subject is known as student-killer. So, when I teach Listening, I know students' problems, which were mostly mine as a former learner. Being a co-learner can support both the students both spiritually and academically, and me as a teacher. [Interview, Teacher A]

According to the Zoom class observation, the way this teacher often referred to a certain issue throughout the lesson as the problem she as a learner had faced also helped 'equalize' the teacher and students in the class.

The ultimate role of a teacher

If the role of a co-learner was most salient to this teacher's perception, the role of a teacher was packed with substances that may help transform the meaning of who a teacher is. First, instead of being the person providing answers to students' problems, as teachers generally do, what teacher A did was to raise problems for her students, as what she told in the interview:

I saw their mistakes but didn't show them. I instead told them "well, in order to solve this problem you have to research this and that". Then in the following class they told me they knew why they had that problem, and realised the root of the problem. So, what the teacher did was using the students to self-teach themselves drawing on their real inquiry and capitalized by online resources. [Interview, Teacher A]

From a different perspective, the role of a teacher, particularly in the Listening class, was emphasized by this teacher, that she was not simply teaching Listening skills, which, by its nature,

226

has little to teach. She said she often embedded other subjects like grammar, phonetics, phonology in her lessons drawing on what the students had researched beforehand as home assignments. More importantly, her teaching was often driven by what she called neuroscience, which was meant by her to equip the students with knowledge to become life-long learners, things like how to retain information, how the memory works, how to summarise, classify, and synthesise information. With these, teacher A stressed the irreplaceable role of a teacher, even in the Listening class, in which the students needed her to instruct them precisely what they needed among numerous alternatives provided by the internet.

4.2 Teacher B

Teacher B's roles in the class during the whole semester were conceptualized by the teacher himself in three major ones: the creator, the instructor, and the evaluator.

The creator

The creator was what the teacher called himself when being interviewed. The teacher was the only one person to design and create the whole model of writing process of individual writing and peer evaluating on LMS before the class took place. The design was woven from writing theories, which stressed writing as a process, features of technologies on LMS such as Wiki, Workshop, and Assignment, and learning tasks (as shown in Figure 2). Remarkably, what he aimed at in his design was not only developing students' writing skills but more importantly their role of peer evaluator, which, according to the teacher, helped develop their writing skills in return. The latter, according to the teacher, was capitalized only with online technologies, meaning it was impossible in the traditional class. This was expressed in his interview response:

> Before [in the traditional class], I couldn't evaluate students' peer feedback because there was no recorded evidence. But now I can do that because I can see it [through the page's history]. The point is my role before is I often control students a lot because the students often rely on the teacher's evaluator role as the sole one. But now, as facilitated by the online environment, I step back and allow more space for student role of peer evaluator to develop. [Interview, Teacher B]

> Note: The text in the square brackets [ ] is added by the researcher for clarification.

According to teacher B in the interview, his creator role was critically different from that in the traditional class, where the teacher is obliged to do that role too. He explained the critical difference like this:

> The online environment makes us and enables us to create beforehand. I couldn't wait for the class to begin to do so. Because the access time was very long, I had to have everything ready-made before the students logged in. The scope was also big. That required me to envision how their roles would develop in the online environment when I designed learning tasks. [Interview, Teacher B]

Generally speaking, the teacher role of creator was mostly determined and developed before the course took place, as the teacher remarked in the interview.
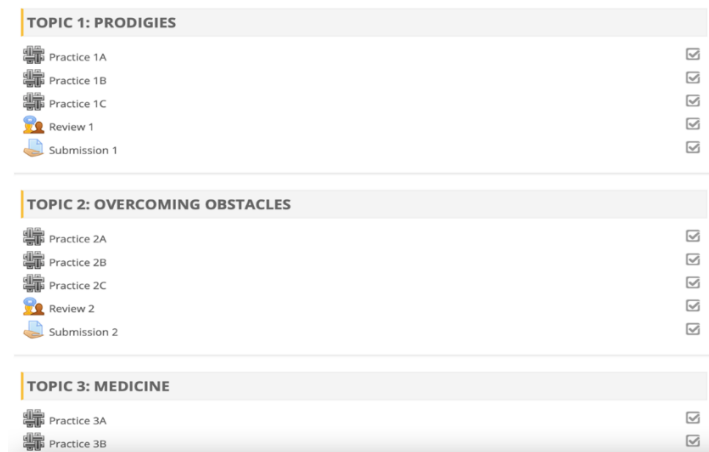
Figure 2. The LMS design by teacher B

The instructor

Teacher B's instruction was implemented in two areas: writing theories and learning tasks on LMS. The instruction of writing theories was often implemented in Zoom classes. Particularly, the teacher often first had a little lecture of paragraph and essay writing theories, followed by a little controlled practice activity for the students. This kind of instruction was mostly controlled by the teacher and was not different from that in the traditional class. The instruction of LMS tasks was done through two channels, a written Guidance on Writing Process, which was posted on LMS beforehand, and the teacher's verbal instruction in Zoom classes. About the latter instruction, the teacher said:

> I had to instruct the students very carefully from the beginning. I created interaction platforms, guided them, and let them do according to their own need and pace. I then just removed my presence. [Interview, Teacher B]

As suggested by the nature of writing, a kind of communication, according to the teacher, students needed ample time for interaction without the communicator's presence. He said:

> Once the teacher instruction was provided, the students did not need me by their side to ask. The nature of writing activity does not require directness, and interaction can be postponed. The students were advantaged by the online environment and just did the task at their own pace. […] I guided them to that level and kind of told them "That's it. Do it now" and they just did it themselves. [Interview, Teacher B]

The interview response emphasized the purposeful distribution of teacher role of instructor, which, arguably, depended on the nature of writing activity.

The evaluator

According to the teacher, the whole semester in terms of the development of his roles could be described roughly in a timeline as follows:

The creator -> the instructor -> the evaluator

In the three roles, that of evaluator was the hallmark of this Writing class, as commented by the teacher. Since one of the two class objectives, which was set by the teacher, was to develop

the students' role of peer evaluator, the teacher role of evaluator was indeed evaluator-evaluator, meaning he evaluated the students' role of peer evaluator. That was described by the teacher in the interview as follows:

> I trained the students' feedback in that I evaluated their feedback. Particularly, for a writing paper, the students had to do peer feedback. Peer feedback was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, peer feedback was done in words, meaning student A commented student B's paper in words. In the second stage, peer feedback was done [by cross-group members] in both words and score. For my evaluation, I evaluated both the writing and the feedback. Particularly, a paper with 100 score had 60 from the peer and 40 from me. [Interview, Teacher B]

Commenting on his evaluator role, the teacher said:

> My evaluator role was upgraded to a higher level. I evaluated the students' evaluation. This role developed from the basic one like in the traditional class but upgraded in the online environment. [Interview, Teacher B]

However, in order for the teacher's evaluator role to develop to the role of evaluator-evaluator, it took time. In the interview, the teacher explained this as follows:

> It needed ample time for them to settle in a role. They needed to settle in trust and a well-established relationship. That means they didn't do well the role of peer evaluator from the beginning. I had the biggest difficulty at Unit 1 and Unit 2 because they didn't know anything. They were like *peripheral learners* [the interviewee's words]. Not until Unit 4 [in 8 units totally] did they get settled in the role. [Interview, Teacher B]

That is to say, the development of the teacher role of evaluator depended on the students and the favourable class relationships to develop to that of evaluator-evaluator.

From a different perspective, even after ample time for the students to settle in the task of peer evaluation, there revealed an underlying factor of peer evaluation, as the teacher remarked in the interview:

> I am not pleased about peer evaluation because they were not used to the role of peer evaluator. I am not sure if this was because of our culture, but people are normally reluctant to evaluate others. When I reminded them to evaluate their peers' papers, some of them said it was hard for them because they thought they should feel better than their peers before they decided to evaluate. [Interview, Teacher B]

With that, the teacher emphasized a possible relationship between role and culture.

5. Discussion

The cases of teacher A and teacher B have uncovered issues about role development that are worth discussing.

First, as for teacher A, there reveals the relationship between identity and role development. No matter what role teacher A played between the co-learner or the teacher, it rooted from her identity, as she stressed. As a former learner of listening struggling how to grasp this skill, teacher A intentionally distributed the co-learner role as a pedagogical strategy, as she clearly stated in the interview. As a teacher tailoring her lessons to resonate with the students' tastes, she confirmed "I must be in tune with them to catch their trend so that I can hit the spot". At the core of this was her trait of being someone who was passionate, trendy, and sensitive, as

she featured herself in three words. In terms of role development, what the case of teacher A may suggest is that the drive for a new role to develop should start from within.

Second, as for teacher B, his role of evaluator-evaluator held complex layers of substances. Before the class took place, teacher B had designed his role of evaluator-evaluator through the writing process on LMS: being the evaluator of students' peer evaluation, which was advantaged by the online environment. However, the development of teacher B's role of evaluator-evaluator revealed two critical aspects. First, it was the task of peer evaluation that mattered. According to the teacher and also from class observation on LMS, not until half of the semester did the students start to get settled, meaning they knew what to do in the whole process and started to evaluate their peers' papers. However, the teacher was still concerned about peer evaluation from another perspective that he wondered if it was students' culture, as revealed in his interview. This implies the critical difference between peer evaluation as a task and the student role of peer evaluator.

Both teacher A's and teacher B's cases shared insights into how new roles develop particularly in the university classroom context. Among one of the three factors constituting role (which are: i, job-related activities, ii, relationships and communications one has with others, and iii, behaviours and attitudes) which was indicated in the literature (e.g, Lam & Lawrence, 2002, Walker & Shore, 2015; Wright, 1987), the factor of behaviours and attitudes should be, arguably, viewed to the fullest that may concern identity, as in the case of teacher A, and/or culture, as in the case of teacher B.

Another issue emerging from the findings of the two teachers is the teacher role as the fulcrum particularly in the university EFL classes. If the study by Lam and Lawrence (2002) may suggest that teacher roles in the online language classes can be confronted when students have access to a huge body of authentic language online, which may help degrade the teacher as the main source of language model, this study implies the need to reset lesson objectives particularly of the language class and how that would induce a change of teacher roles. As what teacher A did, she used the students to self-teach themselves drawing on their real inquiry, and what left for her to do was to intrigue and guide the students' autonomy. That ultimately pointed to the vital role of teacher A as the sole source of instruction to what the students precisely needed among numerous alternatives on the internet during their autonomous learning process. As for teacher B, on the one hand, he still perceived himself as the fulcrum of the learning process regardless of traditional or online classes, and what he did in the class helped strengthen that role. On the other hand, as they were taking the online class, the teacher aimed to employ the online environment and/or online technologies to expand students' learning resources, which not simply include learning materials but more importantly human resources, as reflected through the peer evaluator role. Paradoxically, the bigger the repertoire of new roles students may have online, the higher need for the teacher as a fulcrum they have.

6. Implications and conclusion

This paper was derived from a study into classroom roles in online EFL classes to showcase two teachers in terms of how their roles developed over a semester. The findings of teacher A showed how she intentionally distributed her roles as the co-learner and the teacher, which fueled each other, for pedagogical purposes. The findings of teacher B implied the

complexity of the development of evaluator-evaluator role, which, thereby, indicated the difference between peer evaluation as a task and the role of peer evaluator. The two cases revealed issues centering university teacher role as the fulcrum particularly in the EFL online classroom.

The findings of this study, although do not lend themselves to generalizability, can have a few implications. In terms of theory, the findings call for a need to consider redefining university teacher roles particularly in the online language class. In terms of practice, it is salient from the findings that the online environment should be viewed resourceful for developing not only skill and language/knowledge but more importantly roles and potential pool of identities.

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HIỂU THÊM VỀ VAI TRÒ CỦA GIÁO VIÊN ĐẠI HỌC Ở CÁC LỚP TIẾNG ANH TRỰC TUYẾN Ở VIỆT NAM

Tóm tắt: Vai trò giáo viên ở các lớp ngôn ngữ trực tuyến là một chủ đề được nghiên cứu nhiều, mang lại nhiều kết quả về tiềm năng của công nghệ trực tuyến và cho thấy có thể cần định nghĩa lại vai trò của giáo viên. Tuy nhiên khối lượng lớn các nghiên cứu trong chủ đề này cũng cho thấy cần có nghiên cứu phân tích cụ thể hơn các vai trò. Vì mục đích này, bài báo này, dựa trên nghiên cứu điển hình, nhằm tìm hiểu vai trò của giáo viên ở các lớp tiếng Anh sử dụng công nghệ trực tuyến ở một trường đại học. Nghiên cứu này sử dụng công cụ thu thập dữ liệu là dự giờ lớp trực tuyến và phỏng vấn giáo viên. Kết quả nghiên cứu từ dữ liệu định tính cho thấy hai vấn đề quan trọng liên quan đến vai trò giáo viên đại học. Thứ nhất, chính công nghệ trực tuyến giúp phát triển vai trò giáo viên. Thứ hai, trong khi công nghệ trực tuyến mở ra vô số cơ hội và hình thức học tập, giáo viên vẫn là điểm tựa chính cho sinh viên trong cả quá trình học. Thảo luận của nghiên cứu này liên quan đến việc phát triển vai trò giáo viên. Bài báo này cho thấy cần định nghĩa lại vai trò giáo viên đại học ở các lớp ngôn ngữ trực tuyến.

Từ khoá: Nghiên cứu điển hình, vai trò giáo viên EFL ở đại học, lớp EFL trực tuyến