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Teachers and Supervisors Negotiating Identities of Experience and Power in Feedback Talk

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This article focuses on the identities constructed and negotiated during work-based talk between in-service English language teachers and a supervisor during dyadic post-observation feedback meetings. Meetings were recorded with participants working in a tertiary institution in a Gulf state. Microanalysis of discourse excerpts shows how both participants (i.e., supervisor and teacher) negotiate identities of power and experience. Analysis reveals that identities are fluid and co-constructed and that power can shift between interactants, regardless of institutional status. Analysis is framed within the ambiguous but influential role of feedback and aims to understand how identities shape and are shaped by the goal of the meeting. In this context, identities of experience and power are prioritized, so feedback is primarily evaluative, despite institutional requirements that a focus on teacher development should be included. This compromises the ultimate aim of improving teaching and learning within the institution. Implications of this study include practical recommendations for supervisor training and critical review of institutional observation forms as well as a call for more language teacher identity research to focus on in-service teachers and on situated work-based talk.

Keywords: language teacher identity; post-observation feedback; in-service teachers

IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED THAT IDENTITY IS “central to the beliefs, assumptions, values and practices that guide teacher actions both inside and outside the classroom” (Farrell, 2011, p. 55). Interest in language teacher identity (LTI) is increasing (Barkhuizen, 2017a, 2017b), evidenced by a growing body of literature, including recent special issues in *Modern Language Journal* (2017) and *TESOL Quarterly* (2016), which highlight the importance of understanding the complex ways language teachers navigate different identities in classrooms, schools, and communities. How-

ever, despite the “profound embeddedness of LTI within the research, teaching, and policy practices of (multi)lingual professionals” (Varghese et al., 2016, p. 545), the identities of experienced in-service language teachers are seldom researched (Edwards & Burns, 2016; Eren-Bilgen & Richards, 2015; Farrell, 2011). Almost all LTI research focuses on pre-service teachers, looking at, for example, identity shifts from student to practicing teacher (e.g., Barkhuizen, 2016) or the development of teacher identities during teacher education courses (e.g., Riordan & Farr, 2015; Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008). If understanding teaching and learning involves understanding teacher identities (Varghese et al., 2005), it is important to investigate the identities of those who make up most of the profession, that is, experienced working teachers. Equally important—and also neglected in LTI research—are the supervisors who play an influential role in the evaluation and development of these teachers. This article therefore examines the identities constructed by in-service language teachers and a supervisor during a

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high-stakes event: the post-observation feedback meeting.

IDENTITY

The rise of poststructuralist theories of language and meaning in recent decades has seen a parallel shift in the understanding of identity, moving away from a core, essentialist view toward the idea of identity as contingent, multiple, and discursively constituted (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). This article aligns with the more current view, seeing identity as active and performative (Butler, 1990), something that a person does in situated social practices (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Roberts & Sarangi, 1999) rather than a predetermined, fixed psychological attribute that a person has. Talk is an important means of identity construction: People articulate, realize, explore, construct, verify, and challenge identities through talk (Aneja, 2016; Varghese et al., 2005). Teachers may use nonverbal ways of performing identity—for example through classroom practices such as use of space, institutional rituals, and physical position—or through personal semiotic resources such as body movements, gaze, appearance, and clothing (Porter & Tanghe, 2016). However, teacher identity is “constructed, maintained and negotiated to a significant extent through language and discourse” (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 23). One site of talk in which teachers and supervisors construct and negotiate professional identities is the post-observation feedback meeting.

POST-OBSERVATION FEEDBACK

Common to teacher education courses, institutional evaluation regimes, and continuing professional development programs, the post-observation feedback meeting is one of the rare opportunities teachers have to talk about themselves and their teaching. However, few researchers have explored this as a site of identity negotiation, despite its potential for “recurrent opportunities for teachers to construct a sense of themselves in relation to their teaching environments” (Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008, p. 1936). Previous researchers have highlighted the potential benefits of post-observation feedback, describing it as the locus of “help-giving and receiving” (Wajnryb, 1994, p. 22), or as an opportunity for teachers to reflect and “critically assess their performance to mediate judicious change” (Farr, 2011, p. 73). However, these meetings have

also been described as “difficult discursive events” (Copland, 2008, p. 67) for both parties: teachers, whose practice is being observed and assessed, and observers, who often have to deliver critical feedback. Underpinning the benefits and difficulties lie two important aspects: the (often ambiguous) purpose of the feedback meeting, and the consequences it may have. It is generally agreed that there are two reasons for providing feedback on teaching: evaluation (i.e., to recognize good teaching, monitor and remediate poor practice, and collect data on which to base decisions) and development (i.e., to improve the teaching and learning experience for learners, and support teachers in helping them identify and address areas for development; Borg, 2018; Copland & Donaghue, 2019). Although feedback meetings may be presented as spaces for professional development, for in-service teachers they are often realized as evaluative events that can have important (and sometimes detrimental) consequences, informing management decisions on employment (Howard, 2016), remuneration (Borg, 2018; Riera, 2011), contract renewal (Donaghue, 2015), career advancement, or sanctions for underperformance (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2013b).

It is therefore unsurprising that experienced language teachers often find the process of observation and feedback threatening (King, 2015), stressful (Howard, 2012), intrusive (King, 2015), intimidating (Cruikshanks, 2012), and inappropriate for their needs (King, 2015). Donaghue (2015) and Akbari and Tajik (2007) also pointed out that giving critical feedback, especially to experienced teachers, often makes observation and feedback difficult for observers too.

Previous discussion about the purpose of feedback has focused mostly on observers in pre-service contexts, looking at observer roles and supervisory styles, which are often presented in dichotomous terms, for example directive/collaborative (Wallace, 1991) or dialogic/authoritative (Louw, Watson Todd, & Jimarkon, 2016). Observers are frequently portrayed as struggling to maintain the conflicting (Brandt, 2008), paradoxical (Farr, 2011), and incompatible (Louw et al., 2016) roles of evaluator/gatekeeper and nurturing developer. However, research looking closely at pre-service teacher educators’ discourse suggests that they typically enact powerful, authoritative identities. Many studies have identified a contradiction between teacher educators’ espoused beliefs about style of feedback and the way it is conducted (e.g.,

Farr, 2011; Louw et al., 2016), with discrepancies involving them professing to value a collaborative, reflective approach to feedback but in practice adopting a directive style. Other studies show that teacher educators are interactionally dominant—they typically control the floor, have longer turns, and initiate talk and topics (Copland, 2011; Hyland & Lo, 2006; Vásquez, 2004). Teacher educators also position themselves as experts in best practice and privilege their views through self-selections, interruptions, and long turns, maneuvering teachers into accepting their views or even silencing teachers by their discourse practices (Copland, 2011). These studies show pre-service teacher educators prioritizing identities of authority and assessment over those of facilitator or developer.

I have found only three studies (all in pre-service contexts) explicitly investigating language-teacher identity in feedback talk. Urzúa and Vásquez (2008) identified and extracted all occurrences of the future forms *will* and *going to* from feedback meetings, and each instance was coded according to its primary function (e.g., planning or prediction). The novice teachers in this study communicated an image of themselves as confident, knowledgeable, and assertive but also as hesitant and inexperienced, leading the authors to argue that talk about future or potential teaching roles constitutes an important discursive means for teachers' identity construction. In a second study, Vásquez and Urzúa (2009) analyzed instances of reported speech and reported mental states from mentoring and supervisory meetings with novice teachers. Teachers used direct reported speech to foreground accomplishments and developing expertise, enabling them to present themselves as efficient, skillful, and confident. In contrast, when reporting mental states, teachers highlighted uncertainty, gaps in knowledge, or negative feelings and emotions, thereby indexing an insecure, unskilled novice identity. Riordan and Farr (2015) also examined reported mental states and thoughts in hypothetical direct speech. Using narrative analysis, they traced the identities projected by student teachers in narratives during face-to-face and online discussions and found that student teachers constructed contrasting identities of novice and knowledgeable/confident teacher. Unlike Urzúa and Vásquez (2008) and Vásquez and Urzúa (2009), who isolated speech acts and studied only teacher talk, Riordan and Farr (2015) analyzed discourse on a turn-by-turn level, an analytic method that revealed the importance of an interactional partner in identity construction.

The authors demonstrate this with two examples: One shows that the presence of peers prompted a student teacher to present herself in a positive light, and the second shows a mentor denying a novice teacher's "inexperienced" identity and re-constructing a more positive one involving knowledge and experience. These studies all involve pre-service teachers. Little is known about the roles, relationships, and identities in feedback within in-service contexts.

There is also a scarcity of educational research investigating teacher identity negotiation in work-based interaction (Gray & Morton, 2018). In contrast, there is a substantial body of research in medical and business contexts that looks at how identity is indexed through institutional talk. Of interest are studies that show how identities linked to experience and power are accomplished. Research reveals that interactants project identities involving experience by displaying superior situational and expert knowledge (Clifton, 2012; Svennevig, 2011) and by claiming rights to evaluate a conversational partner (Heritage & Sefi, 1992). Identities involving power are constructed by discursive means such as issuing direct orders, instructions, and advice; expressing overt approval; making critical or challenging statements (Holmes, Stubbe, & Vine, 1999); claiming greater turn-taking rights; constraining topic management rights for a conversational partner; initiating new topics (Heydon, 2002); and opening and closing meetings (Schnurr & Zayts, 2011). These studies all view identity as discursively and locally achieved, and all employ micro analysis techniques to uncover identity negotiation in naturally occurring institutional interaction.

In summary, while there is an albeit limited body of research looking at teacher and teacher educator identities constructed in pre-service contexts, very little is known about identity negotiation between teachers and supervisors within in-service contexts. In addition, studies examining institutional interaction are rare in LTI research. This article contributes toward filling this gap.

RESEARCH AIMS

To counter the almost exclusive focus on pre-service contexts found in LTI research, this article examines identities claimed and negotiated by experienced teachers and a supervisor. By using excerpts from real-life talk during feedback meetings carried out as part of participants' work, identities are examined as they emerge in situated interaction. In addition, microanalysis of data excerpts allows examination of the co-constructed

nature of discursive identity negotiation. Analysis is framed within the ambiguous but highly influential role of post-observation feedback and aims to understand how the identities constructed during feedback shape and are shaped by the purpose or role of the meeting. This article aims to answer two research questions:

- RQ1. Which identities do experienced language teachers and their supervisor make relevant during post-observation feedback talk?
- RQ2. What does identity negotiation reveal about the role of feedback?

RESEARCH SETTING

The excerpts featured in this article are part of a larger data set collected over 4 years in a Gulf-State federal tertiary institution. The English-language teachers in the study prepare Arabic-speaking students to study bachelor degree courses delivered in English. The teachers are well qualified (all have a master's degree and teaching diploma) and all have more than 10 years' teaching experience. They have an immediate supervisor whose duties include carrying out annual appraisals to assess and rate teachers' performance and determine whether they pass a probationary year and, thereafter, if their 3-year contract is renewed. This appraisal includes an observation that is followed by a one-to-one feedback meeting between the observed teacher and supervisor. As well as focusing on assessment criteria, institutional guidelines advise teachers and supervisors that this meeting should also aim to help teachers develop and improve their practice. As discussed previously, a dual focus on evaluation and development has often proved difficult to realize in pre-service contexts. In this in-service context, the observation process carries high stakes and the salience of the evaluative process raises questions about whether the aim of teacher development is also possible.

The excerpts in this article feature four teachers (Eric, John, Greg, and Selina) and one supervisor (S1). The excerpts are part of a larger data set of 17 feedback meetings (Donaghue, 2015). To preserve anonymity, I give no specific details about each participant beyond the fact that all have more than 10 years' teaching experience, all are expatriate employees, and all have English as a first language. Informed consent was gained from participants to use these data excerpts for publication purposes, and pseudonyms are used. S1 was employed at the level of supervisor/line manager

and his feedback meeting recordings were made in his second year at the institution. This makes the identities of experience and power particularly significant as S1 was often supervising teachers who had more contextual experience than he had.

I worked in the research institution for 13 years, first as a language teacher and, for the final 5 years, in a position that focused on teacher development and support. This job included one-to-one confidential counselling. Teachers and supervisors regularly arranged meetings with me to talk about problems and worries associated with observations. These meetings triggered an interest in post-observation feedback and led me to carry out a research project looking at identity construction during feedback meetings (Donaghue, 2015). Identities linked to power and experience emerged as prominent from this larger data set, hence the focus on these identities in this article.

METHODOLOGY

Research into identity in institutional interaction shows that identities are discursively constructed and negotiated in a conjoint process involving other people (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Joseph, 2013). An interactional partner's interpretations, evaluations, and reactions are important:

Whether or not a speaker is trying to project an identity is a relatively minor issue, compared to the much more important one of how that speaker's identity is perceived by other people. (Joseph, 2013, p. 37)

I therefore decided to focus on identity as it emerges in the ongoing flow of real-life workplace discourse, jointly co-constructed, negotiated, and accomplished with interactional partners. I wanted to get closer to teachers' actual practices (Kubanyiova, 2017), and to do an in-depth analysis of "small moments of interaction" (White, 2017, p. 110) in which teachers do identity work.

This article analyzes six excerpts (total time 00:06:21) from audio-recorded one-to-one feedback meetings between teachers and a supervisor (the researcher was not present during recordings). Linguistic analysis of these audio-recorded meetings involved a three-level examination of talk in order to identify how identities are enacted and negotiated: First, repeatedly listening to feedback meetings and carrying out detailed transcriptions enabled a close engagement and familiarity with the data. I then segmented transcripts into thematically bounded units and described

each episode. At the second level, I coded the episodes according to what participants were talking about (e.g., students, exams, lesson activities), and what participants were doing through talk (e.g., justifying, explaining, criticizing, advising, questioning, demonstrating knowledge). The final level involved microanalysis of salient episodes. I looked at how participants' orientations to one another's talk is displayed by their reactions and responses, examining how speakers "orient to what has gone before and what might come after" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 60). This was done by reading the excerpts intentionally and repeatedly and asking myself questions. To provide initial orientation to what was going on and to generate questions for a more intensive microanalysis I started with the following "meso" questions adapted from Rampton (2006):

1. What kind of activity type do we have here?
2. What is the speaker doing here?
3. Why that now?

The questions then generated for microanalysis and specific to the focus on identity were:

1. What identities are being made relevant?
2. How is the speaker claiming an identity?
What linguistic devices are being used?
3. How does the other participant react?
4. Are identities confirmed or rejected by the other participant?
5. How is this confirmation or rejection managed?

I conducted a detailed microanalysis that included using selected conversation analysis (CA) analytic tools. Conversation analysis requires the analyst to provide empirical evidence for participants' orientations by showing how they use language and turn-taking organization to create and negotiate topics, tasks, and identities (Piiirainen–Marsh, 2005). This process is useful in investigating how participants construct identities because it directs analytic focus to the participants' interpretation and evaluation of talk. For example, identity claims can be illuminated within turn-taking conventions such as taking, keeping, and relinquishing the floor; turn length; topic choice; and the way participants start and finish conversations. Interactants' view of themselves and each other can also be revealed when they deviate from these norms, for example when they interrupt each other, hesitate, or leave a long silence before taking a turn. Analysis of adjacency pairs, in which the first part of a pair requires a second (e.g., invitation–acceptance/refusal),

can uncover participants' understanding of each other's utterances. For example, analysis of the ways speakers subtly signal dispreferred seconds (Pomerantz, 1984) and mark delicate or problematic talk through linguistic devices such as mitigation, hesitation, laughter, delays, and indirectness can help identify participants' orientation to identity claims. However, while recognizing the significant strengths of CA, I believe the interaction in the data excerpts featured in this article cannot be isolated from the wider structure of the institution in which they were produced. The "sequential purism" (McHoul, Rapley, & Antaki, 2008) of a full-blown CA analysis would restrict context to that which is locally produced between participants in an interaction. Accepting the importance of meso and macro context to LTI (De Costa & Norton, 2017; Miller, Morgan, & Medina, 2017), and influenced by Creese (2010), Hak (1999), and McHoul et al. (2008), who argued that CA can be enhanced by ethnographic data, I follow Rampton, Maybin, and Roberts's (2015) advice that "paradigms don't have to be swallowed whole" (p. 36), and have therefore appropriated some CA tools to aid a fine-grained analysis of interaction, while adding relevant contextual detail gained from my knowledge of the research site and participants, and from interviews with two of the participants (S1 and Eric) featured in this article.

ANALYSIS

This section features analysis of six data excerpts (see the Appendix for transcription conventions). Excerpts were chosen from episodes where interactants made relevant identities of experience and power. These excerpts were also chosen to reflect the variety of identity negotiations found in the larger data set. Identities are claimed (Excerpts 1 and 3) or ascribed (Excerpt 2) and then either verified by interactional partners (Excerpts 2, 3, 4, and 5) or contested (Excerpt 6). The first two excerpts are taken from the beginnings of feedback meetings. The opening turns of an encounter are important because this is where speakers establish and orientate to identities: "participants establish, through their first turns, a mutually oriented-to set of identities implicative for what is to follow" (Torras, 2005, p. 110). In the first two excerpts, the supervisor claims identities linked to power and experience. The following four excerpts show how these identities are challenged both by teachers and by the supervisor himself. Excerpts 2–6 also show how the teachers and supervisor co-construct

identities of experience, knowledge, and competence for the teachers.

S1 and Eric

Excerpt 1 is from the beginning of the feedback meeting between S1 and Eric, both in their second year at the institution. In Excerpt 1, S1 outlines the structure of their meeting and Eric shows understanding by contributing short response tokens. S1 starts by referring to an institutional observation form which he has completed while observing Eric's class.

S1 begins with "so Eric the way I do this is" (1), immediately setting the scene, getting straight to business, and focusing on the use of the observation form criteria to guide the structure and content of the meeting. Despite the shift in person from *I* to *we* (1–3), it is clear that S1 controls what will happen in the meeting. The identity of institutional representative is indexed through S1's immediate reference to the institutional observation form (1–2) and to the teacher support center, an institutional service (12–18). S1 also positions himself as an experienced teacher and seems to imply that he is a good standard to be

measured against (4–5). S1 establishes an evaluative aspect to the discussion by introducing and explaining the scoring system (4–11). An assessor identity is projected as he claims the right to decide what is "normal," "acceptable," or "expected." Although he allows that there is room for negotiation in scoring (18–22), he makes it clear that the scores will ultimately be his decision: "sometimes I'll change sometimes I won't" (20). He also claims the right to share Eric's ideas or good practice without asking for Eric's permission to do so.

During the discussion of scoring, S1 hints that aspects of Eric's teaching may have been below standard in a matching clause—*anything above* followed by *anything below* (7–8)—arguably a way to introduce bad news. S1 also positions Eric as a new teacher with "this is your first year" (11–12), and his mention of the teacher support center (12–18; *Helen* [13] is the center coordinator) and his suggestion that Eric might want to access the services offered, "which a lot of new teachers do" (14–15), suggests the possibility that Eric might need help, projecting an inexperienced teacher identity for Eric.

EXCERPT 1

1	S1	so Eric the way I do this (.) is I'm going to call up the hard
2		copy I mean the soft copy you have the hard copy in front of you
3		(.) we just kind of go through the observation em before we do
4		it a three is what I give myself when I teach so three is GOOD
5		[anything that's a 3 is normal acce- accep- you know accepted
6	Eric	[ok
7	S1	ex- [expected in the classroom if there's anything ABOVE that
8	Eric	[expected
9	S1	it's something that either stood out or that you do very WELL or
10		maybe I'll share with other TEACHERS anything below that is
11		something you might want (.) to look at em I know that (this is)
12		your first year so I don't know if you've taken (.) any em of
13		the special courses from Helen or had her come into the
14		classroom or even videotape your class which a lot of new
15		teachers do so you might want to just think about it just to get
16		some ideas and it's always good [to see yourself teaching back
17	Eric	[yeah yeah yeah
18	S1	on video even though you don't like the way you look but em this
19		is a LIVING document so we can (.) change things clarify things
20		you can argue sometimes I'll change sometimes I won't it just
21		depends (.) on the on your point but I can type the stuff in the
22		comments in the bottom (.) so we'll start on the first page↑
23		which is mostly about the class and the s- em says and student
24		behaviour and management (.) everything here was good the only
25		one was the first one 4.1.1. it says the teacher made good use
26		of available resources I think you could do MORE but I
27		understand you only have lab access once a week so your...

At the end of the opening sequence, S1 moves to the first criterion on the observation form: "so we'll start on the first page ... the first [criterion] 4.1.1." (22–25). Eric's opinion of the lesson is not solicited, and S1 sets up a trajectory where his own evaluation of the lesson is the meeting focus. In this short excerpt, S1 constructs an identity which manifests experience, authority, power, assessment, and control as he takes and keeps the floor, controls what happens in the meeting, sets out the meeting structure, and claims the right to assess Eric's teaching.

S1 and John

Excerpt 2 also comes from the beginning of a meeting, and again S1 takes the floor for the

opening turns. This excerpt is remarkably similar to Excerpt 1, and in fact all of S1's nine meetings in the larger data set start the same way (see Donaghue, 2015), which suggests S1 has established routinized opening turns through which he performs his role of supervisor and makes identity claims. However, although S1 starts the meeting in his usual way by explaining the scoring system, setting up the meeting structure, and indexing an identity of authority, the power dynamics then subtly shift in favor of the teacher. One reason for this may be because the teacher, John, has been teaching at the institution for over 10 years and so has considerably more contextual experience than S1.

EXCERPT 2

1 S1 John the way I do it i:s (.) we just kind of go through point
 2 by point (.) eh a three is what I give myself when I teach
 3 [which is you're doing what you're supposed to be doing and
 4 John [right
 5 S1 everything's fine
 6 John mm hmm
 7 S1 anything above that is stuff that I think oh this is cool or I
 8 can learn from this or I can use this with other teachers
 9 anything below is something that maybe (.) you know (.) could
 10 be worked on or improved or made better eh the last page is
 11 kind of odd (.) the one about (.) quality and communication
 12 (.) almost everybody gets only 3s for that I mean as native
 13 speakers and having done this for a long time I find it kind
 14 of odd that they would actually have that many bullets about
 15 quality of communication but that's only that's my personal
 16 thing
 17 John right
 18 S1 and then this is still like a living document so at any time
 19 throughout you can question things we can modify things you
 20 can clarify you can say [S1] you forgot this or I don't agree
 21 with that and I ty- I actually type it into here so that the
 22 final one that we type up and sign is one that we've actually
 23 discussed and gone back and [forth so but you've been doing
 24 John [ok
 25 S1 this a long time so you probably just wanna get out of here
 26 right (*laughs*) as quickly as [possible (0.2) em
 27 John [no that's fine
 28 John I think my em lesson plan on my hard drive was: number sixteen
 29 so I must have done nearly sixteen times
 30 S1 °wow° really yeah so you're an old hat at this em (0.2)
 31 now let's see start off with the first part you had mostly
 32 everything was positive I think

S1 again indexes an identity of authority by setting the agenda, managing access to the floor, and indicating his right to evaluate the lesson (Holmes et al., 1999). However, there are differences between this meeting's beginning and that of Eric's. S1 spends less time talking about possible negative aspects of the lesson (9–10) and there is no mention of the teacher support center or having the coordinator observe or video-record John. S1 delays the suggestion that there may be aspects of the lesson that need to be improved: He pauses twice, inserts a delay phrase (*you know*) and uses adverbial and modal mitigators (highlighted in bold): “anything below is something that **maybe** (.) **you know** (.) **could** be worked on or improved or made better” (9–10). This suggests an orientation to “delicacy” (Miller, 2013) and perhaps a reluctance to broach this subject. S1 then criticizes the observation form (10–16) and uses the deictic *they* in line 14 (which refers to the management team who wrote the criteria for the observation form prior to S1's appointment), thereby distancing himself from the institutional hierarchy and indicating alignment with John. S1 again places emphasis on the negotiation aspect of the feedback form (‘this is still like a living document’ in line 18), but there are subtle differences between the way he explains this to Eric (Excerpt 1) and to John (Excerpt 2):

so we can (.) change things clarify things you can argue sometimes I'll change sometimes I won't it just depends (.) on the on your point (Excerpt 1: 19–21)

so at any time throughout you can question things we can modify things you can clarify you can say [S1] you forgot this or I don't agree with that (Excerpt 2: 18–21)

Eric can clarify and argue but S1 retains control: “sometimes I'll change sometimes I won't” (20). John can question, clarify, tell S1 he forgot something and disagree (18–21) “at any time” (18), and with John the first person plural pronoun is used: “we can modify things” (19), suggesting a more inclusive, collaborative process, further indexing a relationship of equality.

S1's next comment clearly constitutes John as an experienced teacher: “so but you've been doing this a long time so you probably just wanna get out of here right (*laughs*)... as quickly as possible” (23–26). S1's comment seems to indicate that both he and John consider this feedback meeting a necessary institutional evil of limited

value to John because of his experience, with *right* functioning as a solidarity marker, assuming agreement. This is an example of double-voicing: talk that shows the speaker has a heightened awareness of, and responds to, the concerns and agendas of others, an anticipatory move to dilute possible criticism (Baxter, 2014). S1 anticipates John's concerns (that the meeting is a waste of time) in order to deflect criticism. According to Baxter (2014), this strategy is often used to resist threats from more powerful others, so by double-voicing, S1 seems to be casting himself in a less powerful role. S1 appears to be defending himself from personal criticism by reminding John that he is playing a role in an institutional ritual. S1's laugh invitation (Jefferson, 1984), coming directly after *right* (26), appears to be seeking alignment but is not shared by John who responds politely, “no that's fine” (27). This is significant: Both seem to orient to the idea that the supervisor is apologizing to the teacher for the inconvenience of the feedback meeting, and John accepts the apology and seems to give permission for the meeting to proceed, subverting expected power relations and strengthening indications of equality in S1's previous turn. John may also be acknowledging that he is complicit in the feedback “game” and recognizes the institutional ritual and roles that he and S1 must play. Emergent, thus, in this nuanced interaction are shifting power identities and relations as S1 indexes authority, but also alignment and deference to the teacher's experience. John then co-constructs the identity of “experienced teacher” by referring to the fact that he has been observed 16 times in this institution (29), and S1 ratifies this identity: “wow ... so you're an old hat at this” (30). The delicate balance of power then tips back to S1 as he initiates a topic change: “now let's see” (31); turns their attention to the observation form: “start off with the first page” (31); and makes an evaluative comment: “you had mostly everything positive I think” (31–32).

What follows this opening sequence is a short meeting lasting 13:16 minutes, of which 7:33 is spent talking about the lesson and the rest of the time talking about other topics. The 7:33 minutes consist almost entirely of S1 praising John's lesson, thereby ascribing him a “good teacher” identity, for example:

everything was stated clear I mean you've been doing this a long time you could give a lesson on how to run the class you know (.) it's funny they still make you do after all these years (xxx) observations

Note the deictic referent *they*, signaling alignment with John and disalignment with the institution (despite the fact that S1 belongs to the management team that “makes” teachers do observations). S1 gives no negative feedback during the meeting. At one point (Excerpt 3), he attempts to make a suggestion that John could have used a YouTube video.

S1’s suggestion at the beginning of the excerpt is half formed and tails off mid-construction: “I did find some YouTube stuff about that Brunel guy which I thought you know but your class is not laptop yet cos you’re not foundations haven’t moved up” (2–3). S1 does not complete his suggestion and stops after *which I thought*. S1 goes on to suggest that the video may not have been possible without students using laptops but as every classroom has a projector for the teacher’s computer this comment seems to function as a mid-utterance opt out. John then corrects him, demonstrating superior knowledge (5–7). John’s slight hesitation *eh* (5) before doing this and S1’s fairly incoherent response (8–9) both indicate awareness of a dispreferred turn. John makes relevant his greater knowledge of the class and program and then gently rejects S1’s suggestion: “I **just** have to be a **little bit em** aware of time you **know**” (10), which is a reference to the pressure teachers feel to get through the syllabus at this level as they have only 4 hours a week with their class. John’s use of mitigators (indicated in bold) seems to suggest that he is orienting to delicacy and is aware of the potential face threat in rejecting S1’s suggestion. The fact that he offers an explanation in lines 10 and 12 reinforces this

interpretation. S1’s subsequent concession is extreme—he performs an about turn, exaggerating and denigrating his suggestion, “having fun (*laughs*)... showing eight minute YouTube videos” (15), as he completes John’s turn and animates his voice, a move that demonstrates alignment with John (Lerner, 1996). S1 laughs, but this laugh invitation (Jefferson, 1984) is rejected by John who instead makes the interactionally more powerful move of agreeing with S1 (thereby agreeing with himself): “yes exactly” (16). This short exchange shows S1 co-constructed as the less knowledgeable, less powerful participant despite his institutional position, contrasting with a co-constructed identity of an experienced and knowledgeable teacher for John.

S1 and Greg

Excerpts 4 and 5 are taken from a meeting between S1 and Greg, who has been teaching at the institution for over 10 years. The meeting, like John’s, is very short (14:19 minutes) and again both participants make relevant an identity of “experienced teacher” for Greg. After S1’s usual start, Greg takes control of both the floor and S1’s computer and spends 4 minutes demonstrating his ideas about using the Microsoft application OneNote for lesson outlines. This is an interactionally powerful move. S1 responds by suggesting that Greg give a professional development session on this for other teachers, clearly indexing an identity of expertise for Greg. Excerpt 4 begins as Greg finishes this sequence.

EXCERPT 3

1	S1	you had good use of resources you had eh the photos the little
2		power point set up I did find some YouTube stuff about that
3		Brunel guy which I thought you know but your class is not
4		laptop yet cos you’re not foundations haven’t moved up
5	John	eh these are level 3 students
6	S1	right so
7	John	and they’re I.T. so they do have laptops
8	S1	oh so they do ok so they can they do have that kind of stuff
9		all right so as they come up
10	John	I just have to be a little bit em aware of time you know
11	S1	yeah
12	John	because we’ve got so much time pressure
13	S1	right right
14	John	[(xx) other stuff I can’t spend too much time
15	S1	having fun (<i>laughs</i>) showing eight minute YouTube videos
16	John	yes exactly

EXCERPT 4

- 1 Greg and I think we should look at homework portfolios you could
 2 [call it a homework portfolio
 3 S1 [uh huh
 4 Greg but it's not really it's a learning portfolio and I think we
 5 should be giving that whole thing not just that little bit on
 6 independent learning tasks
 7 S1 right right
 8 Greg but we should be giving the whole thing em a a mark on you
 9 know of this eight percent that goes to independent learning
 10 it's managing your learning and displaying what you it's
 11 really an important part of the whole thing (.) sorry
 12 S1 ahh very [cool
 13 Greg [back on track

Greg has initiated this discussion and keeps the floor with extended turns while S1's responses are minimal, subverting expected interactional patterns and also power relations. The repetition of *we should* (1, 5, 8) shows confidence and assertiveness (compare this with *could*) and the fact that Greg talks about changing assessment practice indexes authority and knowledge. At the end of the turn, Greg says "sorry" (11), ostensibly apologizing for taking the floor and dominating the talk with his own ideas. However, he again indexes power by turning the conversation "back on track" (13) as topic shift is normally the domain of the supervisor.

This co-constructed "experienced teacher" identity seems to make it difficult for S1 to maintain ownership of the critical feedback he has recorded earlier on the institutional observation form. In Excerpt 5, S1 starts by reading out a negative written comment about the pace and number of activities in Greg's lesson.

The institutional power gap between S1 and Greg seems to have narrowed to such an extent that their roles have reversed: Greg agrees with the written criticism (4), but S1 then seems to justify Greg's actions (5–7), and only after Greg twice insists that the activities were problematic (4, 8)

does S1 accept his own written comments (9). Even then, his acceptance is phrased as a question first, as if dependent on Greg's evaluation of the lesson, not his own.

An interview comment from S1 reveals his attitude toward observation and feedback with teachers like Greg and John:

Umm the teachers have been here a long time, they'll send me their plan the morning of or the day before. Then I'll **just** go and watch it. **Usually it's really good.** Then I'll write it up. **We may even talk for just a few minutes afterwards.** I think the teachers who are really good and competent **just** see it as **a little thing they have to do for [me].** (Interview, May 1, 2014)

The parts highlighted in bold suggest that S1 finds the observation process with these teachers unnecessary, an interpretation supported by S1's remark to John, "you probably just wanna get out of here" (Excerpt 2, 25). S1's description of the feedback meeting, "We may even talk for just a few minutes afterwards" is curious because he suggests that meeting is optional (*may*) or unusual (*even*) but in fact meetings are a mandatory part of the observation process and the observation form cannot be signed off until after the meeting. S1 also downplays the length (*just a few*

EXCERPT 5

- 1 S1 learning objectives were referred to but the quick pace of the
 2 class and so many different activities yeah left some of them
 3 [behind
 4 Greg [yeah yeah it was too ambitious definitely
 5 S1 but you know you had mixed levels in there too (.) [and most
 6 Greg [yeah
 7 S1 of them kept up↑
 8 Greg but I think it was eh I think it was a bit much
 9 S1 was it? ok

minutes) and importance (*just ... a little thing*) of the meeting.

S1 and Selina

Most institutional discourse involves asymmetry (Drew & Heritage, 1992). Higher status speakers usually have more rights to ask questions, especially those with a challenging stance. However, in Excerpt 6, this norm is reversed as the teacher

produces a challenging question and therefore assumes a more powerful identity. Excerpt 6 comes in the middle of a meeting when the teacher, Selina (a teacher in her second year at the institution), questions why she has not been given the highest score (of 4) for a criterion on the institutional observation form: "The teacher stops inappropriate behaviour promptly and consistently, but with respect to the student's dignity."

EXCERPT 6

- 1 Selina I believe that I'm quite strong with this
 2 S1 ok
 3 Selina I can actually (.) MANAGE
 4 S1 right ok for this one it ah- usually is when there's stuff
 5 that is BAD↓ when they're having behavioural issues in
 6 yours they didn't↓ (.) so that's why I just gave it
 7 [neutral
 8 Selina [they didn't because I've been training them
 9 [eh (S1's name) [(laughs)
 10 S1 [ah ok [all right
 11 Selina honestly (*the phone starts ringing*) and eh and eh (.) the
 12 same thing em goes for em the next point
 13 S1 right
 14 Selina and eh I try very hard actually to em just eh (*S1 gets up*)
 15 °ok°
 16 S1 (*S1 moves to the phone*) keep going I'm just gonna turn it
 17 off ok I c- mean ok what I can do is I can change them to
 18 to not applicable if you want and explain why
 19 Selina mmhm
 20 S1 be-because they're re- I mean I couldn't judge (.) your (.)
 21 how can I say dealing with the behaviour cos there wasn't
 22 any there were no problems-
 23 Selina if there is no problem so that means I mean then em in
 24 order to get four here then that means that there should be
 25 some problems [so next time
 26 S1 [exactly there should be problems
 27 Selina next time I'll create some problems [(xxx)
 28 S1 [NO NO NO don't do that
 29 no no
 30 Selina so then I ca- I can never get a [four
 31 S1 [I can change (.) you're
 32 well↑ [unless then a problem comes up in [the class but lot
 33 Selina [so in your case [but
 34 S1 of times a lot times people I just give a three it's better
 35 to get a three and let me explain (.) that you know the
 36 reason that everything was fine was because you've prepared
 37 them cos a four would have to be an incident happens and
 38 how do you handle like with Greg we were we were talking
 39 there was some girls in the back who were giving him
 40 problems (.) and every few minutes he would just throw the
 41 question to them directly Moza? What's what's the question
 42 for number three what's the answer for number three? Or you
 43 know I know you speak Arabic but you gotta speak English
 44 cos I don't understand [Arabic
 45 Selina [this is what I do [as well because

46	S1		[ok but they
47		didn't it didn't come up in this	[lesson it didn't have to
48	Selina		[but (S1's name) do you
49		understand my point what I'm saying in order to get a four	
50		here	
51	S1	right	
52	Selina	then em next time I'll make sure that em (there) cause a	
53		problem	

The teacher (Selina) begins with a confident, strong assertion (1–3) that contains an implicit reproach, that is, *I deserve a score of 4 and want to know why I didn't get it*. Selina invokes an explicit identity of expertise with “I believe that I'm quite strong with this” (1). There is no delay or hesitation and the only mitigation is *quite*, which is counterbalanced by the strength of *I believe* and another strong statement “I can actually (.) MANAGE” (*manage* presumably referring to managing students). The stress on *manage* adds weight to her assertion. In addition to an identity of competence, Selina also assumes a stance of authority as she requires S1 to justify his score and creates an inversion of their institutional power relations. S1 then produces an account (4–7). S1's falling intonation (5–6) indicates certainty and he seems to expect acceptance. However, this is immediately challenged by Selina (8). Her challenge is an unmitigated, direct disagreement which again indexes authority, but the use of S1's name with a slight pause and laugh afterwards may indicate that she is aware of the social delicacy involved in the disagreement. S1's reply looks at first to be a concession: “ah ok” (10) but Selina then extends her challenge to include another criterion (11–12).

After a telephone interruption (16), S1 makes a slight concession: “What I can do is I can change them to not applicable if you want and explain why” (17–18). His next utterance, a return to the explanation, is more hesitant: “be-because they're re- I mean I couldn't judge (.) your (.) how can I say dealing with the behaviour cos there wasn't any there were no problems” (20–22). S1 has now conceded and seems less confident, which suggests a loss of authority and power. This is magnified by Selina interrupting him (23), a powerful interactional move because Selina (the participant with lower institutional status) forces S1 to relinquish the floor to her. In lines 23–25, Selina looks at first as if she is checking understanding of S1's account and this seems to be S1's interpretation: “exactly there should be problems” (26). However, Selina's following turn indicates she has instead been leading up to another disagreement

and direct challenge: “next time I'll create some problems” (27). The strength of the challenge is reflected in S1's loud and emphatic plea (28). Selina's next response seems to sum up the sequence: “I can never get a four” (30). The participants then repeat the same points with S1 giving the same account and Selina challenging the account in the same way (31–53). Selina, although the less powerful participant in terms of institutional role, has directly challenged S1 in a confrontational manner. S1 is unable to reconcile the conflict between his and Selina's interpretation of the criterion so he changes the score from 3 to *not applicable* and he types an explanation onto the observation form as he reads it aloud “There were no issues as Selina has them well trained.” Selina contests S1's “assessor” identity by challenging S1 and forcing him to change his score. These scores, permanent and far-reaching judgments of her teaching competence, are clearly important to her, and her focus in this feedback meeting is on creating a good representation of herself for the human resources file. S1 partially relinquishes his identity of authority because he cannot persuade Selina to accept his scores and they reach an uneasy compromise.

DISCUSSION

At the beginning of his feedback meetings, S1 constructs an identity that manifests experience, power, assessment, and control. This identity is similar to the authoritative identities prioritized by pre-service teacher educators in feedback meetings (Copland, 2011; Hyland & Lo, 2006; Vásquez, 2004). The means by which S1 accomplishes this identity are similar to the ways managers perform powerful identities in business contexts: opening meetings (Schnurr & Zayts, 2011), claiming expert knowledge (Clifton, 2012; Svennevig, 2011), exercising the right to evaluate a conversational partner (Heritage & Sefi, 1992), taking and keeping the floor (Heydon, 2002), and initiating new topics (Heydon, 2002). Previous feedback research has shown that pre-service teacher educators also signal identities

of power by being interactionally dominant (Copland, 2011; Hyland & Lo, 2006; Vásquez, 2004). However, in this study, teachers too index powerful identities through interactionally authoritative moves. For example, Greg initiates new topics and takes and keeps control of the floor with extended turns, and Selina assumes the more powerful identity of questioner while positioning S1 as the less powerful explainer and justifier.

In this study, identities shift in nuanced interaction. S1's claimed identity relies on verification from his interactional partner to be upheld. S1 himself initiates an "experienced teacher" identity for John and Greg, which they then co-construct. This seems to reverse the institutional power hierarchy, positioning S1 as less knowledgeable and less powerful, and S1 is unable to commit to the critical feedback he has recorded prior to the feedback meeting. S1's authority also wavers when Selina contests his institutional identity of recorder of information, measurer of abilities, judge of acceptable teaching, and gatekeeper to her job by challenging his scores and asserting an identity of experience and competence for herself. This fluidity of identity and shifting power dynamic is rarely discussed in the post-observation feedback or LTI literature. Also neglected is the key role of a conversational partner in verifying or challenging identities (Joseph, 2013).

The identities performed in feedback between these in-service teachers and their supervisor shape the role of feedback in their context. As S1 performs an identity of power, he makes mostly evaluative statements and asks teachers very few questions. This means that there is little room for participants to engage in collaborative, reflective, or developmental discussion. In addition, the co-construction of a strong experienced identity for John and Greg seems to restrict S1's repertoire of actions to the extent that he is unable to assert the identity of advisor and expert and to carry out his institutional duty of delivering negative feedback. Instead, his feedback consists almost entirely of description and praise. Greg, for example, is denied the opportunity to examine and explore S1's observations and loses potential learning opportunities. Teachers construct powerful identities of experience and knowledge, aware that the institutional observation form represents a formal assessment of their teaching. This document plays an important role in deciding if they keep their job, so teachers are understandably reluctant to highlight weaknesses, seek advice, or ask for help. Thus, despite institutional requirements that post-observation meetings serve both evaluative and developmental purposes, there is

no evidence in these excerpts that the developmental needs of teachers are addressed. The dominance of identities of experience and power for both parties means that feedback is primarily evaluative. This interpretation is supported by an interview comment from S1 when discussing the purpose of feedback: "to tell the teachers what they're doing really well and what they need to improve on, if anything." Note the use of *tell*. S1's focus on identities involving authority and assessment means he does not try to learn about the teachers, their potential, aspirations, or difficulties; neither does he engage with them responsively to support their development. Note also S1's modifier *if anything*. At times, S1 seems to view feedback as an "empty formality" (Holland, 2005, p. 67), that is, an unnecessary administrative duty. In an interview, Eric recognized this attitude: "I think [S1] was just ticking a box to sign off" (Interview, September 16, 2014). Feedback as a box-ticking duty does not fit the dual feedback purpose of evaluation and development presented in the literature (Borg, 2018; Copland & Donaghue, 2019). Another aspect of the literature also challenged by these excerpts is the idea of supervisory styles. Underpinning the idea of supervisory styles are the assumptions that feedback is directed solely by the supervisor, that supervisors are generally the more knowledgeable participant, and that supervisors consciously adopt a specific style. These excerpts show, however, that at times the teacher has more knowledge than the supervisor, that teachers can also enact powerful identities, and that teachers also influence the direction of feedback talk. The in-service supervisor's role is also shown to be more nuanced, delicate, and complex than the developer-institutional gatekeeper dyad presented in the literature.

Thus, while this study confirms previous findings from post-observation and LTI research about the identities that supervisors index and the ways they do this, the analysis in the previous section also contradicts conclusions drawn from post-observation literature about supervisory styles and the purpose of feedback. This study also contributes new knowledge about identities of in-service teachers, the means by which these identities are discursively accomplished, and the effect this has on the goal of feedback.

LIMITATIONS

It is important to recognize the limitations of this study. Perhaps the most significant limitation is a lack of participant perspectives. In other

studies (Donaghue, 2015, 2018, 2020), I was able to supplement linguistic analysis with data from participant validation interviews in which teachers and supervisors commented on specific feedback excerpts. This added deep, nuanced ethnographic detail as participants verified my analysis and illuminated aspects of the data I had not previously noticed or known. However, none of the participants featured in this article were available to comment on the excerpts. I carried out interviews with Eric and S1, but these interviews focused on their general feedback experiences, and so are limited in relevance. To combat this limitation and to try to strengthen the validity of my analysis, I have shared and discussed the excerpts with academics in different research groups and at academic conferences. Although this has helped verify my own interpretations and has given me added insight, the lack of participant perspectives remains a significant limitation.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The analysis of post-observation feedback excerpts in this article reveals how in-service English language teachers and their supervisor construct and negotiate identities of power and experience. By prioritizing these identities, feedback participants shape the role of feedback, making it predominantly evaluative. The focus on evaluation means that for these teachers there are few developmental opportunities to reflect or to discuss and solve problems. Thus, the ultimate feedback aim of improving teaching and learning within the institution seems to be compromised.

The analysis in this article supports the theory that identity is achieved in social interaction (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Roberts & Sarangi, 1999). Identities are shown to be fluid and co-jointly constituted, moment by moment, by both participants. This article also supports the literature on identity theory by providing empirical evidence of how identities are discursively accomplished. Benwell and Stokoe (2006) maintained that despite repeated reference to “discourse” in identity theory, empirical studies are scarce. Similarly, LTI researchers rarely engage with situated examples of institutional interaction (Gray & Morton, 2018). A key recommendation from this study is therefore that more research examines different instances of teachers’ work-based talk to see how identities are negotiated and developed and how this impacts teachers’ practice and development.

These findings also have practical implications: The first highlights the importance of researchers

and institutions finding out what is happening in feedback and whether it fulfils institutional requirements. If teacher development is an institutional goal, teachers need opportunities to experiment with and explore different identities (Clarke, 2009; Varghese et al., 2016) without being concerned about presenting a good image of themselves. If this is not being done within the process of observation and feedback, alternative developmental opportunities need to be found (see Mann & Walsh, 2015, for suggestions).

The second practical implication is a recommendation that supervisors be given opportunities to examine their own practice. Edge (2011), Johnson and Golombek (2016, 2020), and Mann and Walsh (2015) argued that teacher educators need to be more aware of what they do and say in their interactions with teachers. This advice is equally pertinent to those supervising in-service teachers. Johnson and Golombek (2016, 2020) suggested teacher educators make explicit their motives, intentions, goals, expectations, and the consequences of their practice. This, however, requires time and may require assistance. Supervisors have few professional development opportunities and are seldom encouraged to study aspects of their own practice. To help supervisors become more critically aware of their professional talk, they could be guided in analysis of excerpts from their own feedback talk, looking at the identities that are manifested and how this impacts the goal of the meeting, a process that may help them shape their practice. S1, for example, may be unaware that the assessor/authority identity that he prioritizes restricts opportunities for teacher interaction, collaboration, reflection, and development. He may also be unaware that in his feedback meetings he asks few questions, tending instead to make declarative statements as he structures his meetings around the observation form criteria. S1 may also benefit from examining his attitude to feedback and questioning his intentions and goals and the consequences these have for the teachers he is supervising.

The final practical implication concerns the influence of the institutional observation form, which dictates the content and structure of S1’s feedback meeting. Although there has been some critical analysis of observation instruments, this has focused mainly on design (e.g., OECD, 2013a) and scoring reliability (e.g., Borg, 2018). S1’s use of the form reinforces a focus on evaluation and gives prominence to his own perception of the lesson, thereby limiting opportunities for teacher interaction. These findings suggest that it is important to look beyond the design of observation

instruments and examine also the use and influence of artefacts in feedback.

This study aims to help fill a gap created by the almost exclusive focus on pre-service teachers in the fields of teacher identity and feedback discourse research. In previous studies I have examined how in-service teachers and supervisors use (im)politeness as a resource to negotiate and co-construct identities during critical feedback (Donaghue, 2018) and have shown how in-service feedback talk fashions, normalizes, reifies, and prioritizes an identity related to government and institutional initiatives (Donaghue, 2020). These studies show that identities negotiated within in-service post-observation feedback are important to individuals and reveal much about how feedback participants view themselves, each other, and their practice. Identity also influences institutional processes and goals. These insights lead me to call for more research into how in-service teachers and supervisors negotiate identities during feedback and other situated, work-based talk. The present study contributes to this broader research agenda by revealing how identities of power and experience shape and are shaped by the role of feedback within an institution.

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APPENDIX

Transcription Conventions

[indicates the point of overlap onset
(0.3)	an interval between utterances (3 tenths of a second in this case)
(.)	a very short untimed pause
WORD	indicates a stressed word
we:ll	the::: indicates lengthening of the preceding sound
-	a single dash indicates an abrupt cut-off
↑	rising intonation, not necessarily a question
↓	falling intonation
◦ ◦	utterances between degree signs are noticeably quieter than surrounding talk
(xxxx)	a stretch of unclear or unintelligible speech
(guess)	indicates transcriber doubt about a word
(sighs)	additional information
(laughs)	indicates laughter
eh, ah, um	fillers
mm/mmhm	backchanneling indicators
non-standard forms	cos (because); gonna (going to); yeah (yes); wanna (want to); ok
(00:01:18)	total time of excerpt (1 minute 18 seconds in this case)

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.