A Narrative Inquiry into the Process of Teachers' Change in Indonesian Context

Ikrar[1], Kisman Salija[2], Sultan[3]

Program Pascasarjana Universitas Negeri Makassar, Jalan Bonto Langkasa, Makassar, Indonesia

Corresponding e-mail: ikrark@yahoo.com[1]

ABSTRACT

Educational researchers have made great strides in theorizing teacher professional development, though attention is still concentrated on isolated mental processes. This study therefore reports on a narrative inquiry aiming to reveal the features of teacher's change that appear to facilitate English language teaching and learning. Different data collection techniques including; narrative frame, field notes, semi-structured interview and stimulated recall interview are used to make teachers' behavioral, attitudinal and intellectual component of micro-level development explicit. Two overarching themes that emerge in this narrative inquiry are; the route to be a good English teacher and rediscovering the passion to teach. The important key finding of this study is that the early year of teaching is sensitively crucial to EFL teachers' micro-level development which characterized by positive shift; from constructive experiences and aspiration of better English language learning process to internalization of empathy, attentive and responsive manner. Another key finding of this study is that all novice EFL teachers who spoke positively about implementing changes in their classroom practices, embraced most of the process of micro level development that occurred, based on intuition, without clear theoretical underpinning of pedagogy, and merely classroom-bound focus. However, this study contributes to current knowledge in relation to the crucial role of three distinct patterns of PD; discontent, aspiration and without intention.

Keywords: Novice EFL teacher; professional development; micro-level development process; features of changes.

1. Introduction

There are a plethora of studies responding the issues of novice EFL in Indonesian context (Astuti, 2016; Cahyono, Kurnianti, & Mutiaraningrum, 2016; Munifatullah, Musthafa, & Sundayana, 2016). However, the latter all aim at developing strategies and procedures to support novice EFL teachers during the process of learning to teach. In this current research, the researcher does not only consider novice teachers primarily as technicians but also as developmental processes in teachers as the agent of change. Novice EFL teachers are in a significant phase, their development is seen to be essential because any classroom experiences may either activate or inhibit a lasting commitment to effective teaching. In this regard, Guan and Huang (2013) also propose that an EFL teachers should be able to think critically to expand space for development because an EFL teacher development emerges from a complex process of refreshing and reshaping teachers' existing knowledge, beliefs and morals, practices and reflections in learning environment rather than just simply imposing fresh language teaching theories, methodologies and teaching materials which assume to be highly contributed in their professional learning. It becomes clear that the emergence of what is

subjectively believed to be better whether through happenstance or experimentation will significantly lead to better change

As a part of initial structure of this inquiry the researcher finds intriguing issue emerging in one of a new secondary school in South Sulawesi. Two English teachers whom basically only had teaching experience at tertiary education and needs to build experiences from the outset at the field are able to handle almost all English classes of the beginning of their career and feel confident about their practice as they believe that they are in the right path. Considering servant teachers who enjoy more professional support and development (e.g. scholarships, grants and training), novice teachers are likely to show their quality among those teachers, as well as the voice that expected to be heard by upper levels of the education bureaucracy. Therefore novice teachers' development deserves much greater attention from both government and researchers.

In connection to theoretical construct of PD regarding aforementioned teachers, it seems to be contradicted to the principle of common theories which hold PD as a socially situated experiential learning (Guskey, 2002). Therefore the theoretical lens to explain this phenomenon is based on underlying premise that PD occurs in micro-level particularly when an individual recognizes a *better way* of doing something as proposed by Evans (2014). However, only limited consideration of how the trigger of a teacher recognizing a *better way* of doing something is to be understood theoretically (Boylan, Coldwell, Maxwell, & Jordan, 2018). This research will then focus on revealing the features of changes experienced by two novice EFL teachers in Indonesian context.

2. Methods

This study employs narrative inquiry as the research design. To achieve the depth of narrative required for this study, the researchers rely on narrative frames, semi-structured interview, stimulated-video recall and observational field notes as data collection techniques. This inquiry adopts four-step data analysis procedure of narrative research as suggested by Liu and Xu (2011). In coding for themes, it is guided by textual coding in thematic analysis (Huberman & Miles, 2002). In addition, identifying similarities and differences as well as establishing relationship across the data are undertaken manually.

The research takes place at one secondary school in Indonesia, where the participants, two novice EFL teachers are recruited by means of snowball sampling. Table 1 provides brief information about the participants.

Table 1 Participant demographics

Teachers		Qualification	Experience	
Pseudonyms	Gender		Teaching	Age
Indah	Female	Undergraduate	Two Years Three months	24

| Mawar | Female | Undergraduate | Four months | 27 |

3. Findings

In line with the trend of narrative inquiry literatures (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014), the following section will present stories of two novice EFL teachers thematically which address the aims of this study. In brief, there are two overarching themes which encompassing each teacher's storyline, generally on their teaching lives and particularly on their micro-level development as novice EFL teachers.

3.1 The Route to be a Good English Teacher: Indah's Narratives

Indah was born and raised in Matenete Bua, a small village located in Watampone, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. In pursuit of better career, she was strictly influenced by her educations from elementary school to higher education. Though Indah had grown up wanting to be a career woman since elementary school, she did not have clear insights into what she would become until she learnt to be a teacher in STAIN Watampone, a state college which located about 10 miles from her residence. She was highly motivated and surrounded by well-educated people for four years in tertiary education. She also enrolled in a well-known private course in Watampone. The course provided her everything she need to be a good teacher, such as the lesson or material taught, friends and an ideal model of teacher. She was fascinated by the teachers as she felt that there was significant improvement in her competence due to her intensive learning.

3.1.1 Sense of empathy

Indah constructed her teacher knowledge which impacting the process of learning when she learned that breaking away from original perception and became more open-minded benefited to her students and made the lesson far more interesting as she needed not to waste her time with unnecessary efforts. Thinking her as a serious English teacher, she was likely preoccupied with her concerns about students before experiencing the reality of teaching. She used all the instructional material which only matter for her, the material in which she preferred to teach. It took her five and six meeting, a quite long time to realize that her teaching was inefficient after put more efforts and it was not working well. Observing students' responses, looking their assignment in her classroom, and the most important aspect was; considering what she would do or felt if she were in the students' positions (that were trying to learn inconveniently) helped Indah to realize the importance of changing in what she used to do.

3

3.1.2 Responsive

Indah's decisions into her class were often unpredictably emerged and forced her to manipulate every possible technique to follow learning. These however generated a quick reaction into her current practice. In a day as she estimated that she could make more than a hundred instant of decisions. For instance, Indah's decision was influenced by student when instructing the function of descriptive text (Indah: Stimulated Recall, April 16. 2018). She spontaneously agreed with the student's answer who said *memperjelas* (to explain) where she wanted to say *mendeskripsikan* (to describe). The word *memperjelas* according to Indah is more comprehensible in since it was straightforward for her students whereas most of the students from rural area who influenced by their mother tongue and some were second language. The word *memperjelas* is a word that usually considered as the students' second language where *mendeskripsikan* sounded as second language but it was literally translate the word 'descriptive' which was foreign language. Indah realized that the student chose better word than her, so she immediately repeated what this student said. This manifestation of competential change eventually leads to procedural change in a time when she explains the related topic of language learning.

3.2 Rediscovering the Passion to Teach: Mawar's Narratives

Mawar was born at a lovely place in Maccope, Watampone, South Sulawesi. In pursuit of her career, she started her journey and engaged with educational environment in order to obtain a worthy degree of Sarjana (bachelor), in which people around her considered it as a license for having a certain job. Despite the fact that Mawar has engaged with English language teaching and learning over four years and enrolled in a course where the concentration was also at English teaching, ironically in her first job card it was written as 'a staff' in a marketing company instead of 'a teacher'. After graduated from her college, she decided not to be a teacher since it was considered as tough career. More than three years working as marketing staff which basically it was not her major, it made her back to educational environment and finally as an English teacher. Teaching was described as a *soul* who she lived with, and could not live without. She committed to make teaching as her entire life career, so she tried to make the best she could in teaching.

3.2.1 Feature theme 1: From being inattentive to becoming attentive

Mawar became aware of modifying her behavior into better state, from being inattentive to becoming attentive. In her remark; *if I could be more sensitive, these two boys |students| would be noticed as well.* indicated that she would be more attentive upon students the next time she experience the same condition. Her past event provided a basis, which is not to repeat the same mistake. Having been able to notice the less effective activity in the classroom and expected to have satisfied results, Mawar perhaps manifested high morale.

3.3 Summary of two novice EFL teachers' development

At this last finding section, Indah and Mawar's account of professional development will be concluded. All the process included in this section is the extended account of the conceptual framework of this research. Indah and Mawar's learning was made up of the teachers' schooling experience as a student. They endorsed three apparent sources that play the most significant role in their learning process, *Pre-service education*, *Internship* and *Private English course*. These sources were vital parts of their teaching practice which then to some extent shaped micro-level development process which can only occur in formal teaching practice.

Before the participants manifest several changes that are essential for both teacher and students, they begin with distinct patterns which defined the interaction of cognitions, those are; discontent, aspiration and without intention. Indah and Mawar in teaching practice underwent *discontent* or feeling of wanting better state from their existing situation. In a more strict fashion, this *discontent* was not only limited to classroom situation, but also existed in the context of the school culture which was wider aspect of what education involves. Besides the feeling of wanting better treatment or an improved situation which emerged before undergoing changes, the teachers also have a strong desire for high achievement to initiate change. This *Aspiration* is different with *Discontent*. While *discontents* were negative-state-oriented of teachers and predisposed by other parties (principal, students' behavior and school culture), this *aspiration* derived purely from teacher's desire of wanting to improve students (competence, performance, response) by also improving other aspects, such as the materials use or even the teacher herself (teaching conception, management skill). The last, the experience of micro-level development, particularly teacher's change can occur *without intention*. Unlike the last two features, better ways which occurred without intention was not predisposed by any party because it occurs spontaneously and there was no clear aspiration since it was happen without prior recognition of deficiency. This feature was only included in Indah's narrative and was evident particularly when the Indah spontaneously decided to change her answer immediately because of the student's response, specifically when her idea and student's idea were being met and there was no contradiction of both ideas after sort them out through her rationale, then the teacher may accept the idea although it might result in inaccurate notion.

There are three distinct features of change which appeared based on the participants' narrative; they are *sense of empathy* in which the teacher positioned their role as students and finally realized the importance of changing in what she used to do. *Responsive* in which she generated quick reaction into her current practice due to classroom interaction. And the last is *attentive manner*, in which the teacher gradually understood about the value of classroom management after facilitated through video.

4. Discussion

The section begins with a discussion of the key findings arising from the evidence generated in this research. Attention will then focus on the crucial process of micro-level development in teachers' life and how this process relates to research literature.

The key finding of this research is that early year of formal teaching experiences was sensitively crucial to EFL teachers' micro-level development which characterized by positive shift; from constructive experiences and aspiration of better English language learning process to internalization empathy, attentive and responsive manner. Drawing on evidences from Indah's narrative especially on the first theme, it shows that her interpretive understanding about a good teacher is to keep *live* on it, after having difficult problems. Considering the occurrence where the students' competence went improved because of her own effort to some extent link to her satisfaction. As added by Harada (2017) that this sense of achievement seem to have the most powerful effects on teacher motivation management. As the consequences of this conception, Indah learned to do the best she could in which allowing the experiences sharpened her sensitivity, trained perseverance, and became motivated that these processes would eventually lead to a beneficial situation. The path to address Indah's development process lies out on many cases mediated by self-efficacy belief (Bandura, 1997) in which she think optimistically on her aspiration in the struggle of being an English teacher during teaching process in formal classroom.

Having regard to Mawar's narrative, she also successfully manages her rationale to profit, as she is able to control her emotion in her first four-months of teaching. Novice EFL teacher is, as evidently illustrated in the Arizmendi Tejeda's, de González, Scholes and López Martinez (2016) work, the one who had lacked self-confidence and masking his/her performance with conflicting attitude in mind. In Mawar's condition, she handled the situation in which the rationale to the purpose of learning was greater than her personal feelings. This condition as supported by earlier works, has an important role in teacher's daily functioning and well-being, as well as in their ability to attain their teaching and educational goals (Sutton, Mudrey-Camino, & Knight, 2009). In addition Asi, Aydin, and Karabay (2018) claim that by maintaining this emotional quality, it may be useful to help to create positive classroom climate. This therefore demonstrates that Mawar in the early year of teaching to some extent fulfills their development process with constructive cognitive experiences.

The central argument of this research to address Mawar's and Indah's development as novice EFL teachers' that these processes began in schooling, where the teachers have extensive experiences of classroom which defines early cognition (Borg, 2006). In addition, there was also a competing argument that pre-service education was also situated as an essential part which constructed EFL teachers' cognition (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2017). The current findings, however, showed new ground that pre-service education only constructed EFL teacher's cognition partially. From Indah's and Mawar's narrative, in-service education is seen as the centre of language teachers' development. When they deal with real classroom

environment, they are striving with complex problems and various classroom problems. And during that process, they must change (because of discontent) or have to change (because of aspiration) to overcome the issue. In fact the change could also occur without intention which in turn will shape their behavior, attitudes as well as their intellectual.

Considering the complexity of micro-level development issue, both Indah's and Mawar's recognition of what they perceived as *incidental* improvements in their process of becoming an English teacher was also evidently described by Evans (2018) as *implicit* learning when one of her participant said; "I spoke, and I learned, and I spoke, and I learned." When someone sometimes can make a lot of mistakes, sometimes he/she can also make certain condition right in that process. Unlike Evans' (2018) finding, which involved informal professional learning of experienced professor with higher level of intellectual, the finding in this research involved the process of interaction where a novice EFL teacher learnt or experienced "better way" after gaining the feedback from a student and ended up with ideas acceptance. It suggests that if the teachers with their deficiencies desire to learn as a part of their professional learning, they should elicit an active interaction among students.

Another key finding of this research is that all novice EFL teachers who spoke positively about implementing changes in their classroom practices, embraced most of the process of micro level development that occurred, based on intuition, without clear theoretical underpinning of pedagogy, and merely classroom-bound focus. This condition is aligned to what Hoyle (1974) called this continuum of professionality as "restricted" extreme rather than 'extended' extreme. However Indah who was two years younger than Mawar showed one comment in which her intellectuality to some extent lay towards the "extended" professionality: *The handbook due to school regulation cannot be brought home…, but it was not enough, so the condition triggered me to find another relevant textbook…* as evidenced in Indah's narrative.

Indah's rationale about adding more books in the learning process class was based on serious evidences generally intended to the school regulation which impacted upon students learning. This value may not always be strikingly evident in the way in which English teacher find another supplementary books. Indah found herself constrained by school's regulation and indicated the voice of less satisfactory, since her realistic expectation where students were able to learn conveniently were not being met as indicated in her further comment: *…thus the children |students| would learn conveniently*. However from this evidence, Indah manifested both behavioral and intellectual development. It is obvious that she also views teaching as a career which incorporates continued personal and professional development underpinned by self-appraisal and self-improvement (Evans, 1999).

5. Conclusion

This research provides ideas and values of teacher's professional development which to some extent have not evidently shown by previous research. The significant aspects of the professional learning that occurred in two novice EFL teachers participated in this research

was that it was not only about doing things differently or developing new ideas and generating great result from their learning, it was also about how they manage their deficiency in their novice period and understand the problematic area in their teaching. The teacher also tends to show constructive process in their teaching as they find a problem by themselves and initiatively overcome the problems by their own way. Moreover, unpredictable events occurring in the classroom have fruitfully shaped their development. Particularly in the way of novice EFL teacher learn, this research had made attempt to present each teacher's life by explaining their learning and change and finally tracking three distinct patterns of PD; discontent, aspiration and without discontent. Furthermore, investigating these patterns separately in different national, cultural or educational contexts provides new horizons for researchers and their potential findings will contribute to professional development literature significantly.

6. References

Arizmendi Tejeda, S., de González, G., Scholes, B., & López Martínez, C. L. d. J. (2016). How Novice EFL Teachers Regulate Their Negative Emotions. *How, 23*(1), 30-48.

Asi, D. S., Aydin, D. G., & Karabay, S. O. (2018). How preschool teachers handle problem situations: Discussing some indicators of emotional issues. *Journal of the European Teacher Education Network, 13*, 126-135.

Astuti, P. (2016). Practitioner of Cooperative Learning as Part of Novice Teachers'professional Identity. *TEFLIN Journal, 27*(2), 132.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W. H. Freeman & Company.

Barkhuizen, G., Benson, P., & Chik, A. (2014). *Narrative Inquiry in Language Teaching and Learning Research*. New York: Taylor & Francis.

Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language education*. London/New York: Continuum.

Boylan, M., Coldwell, M., Maxwell, B., & Jordan, J. (2018). Rethinking models of professional learning as tools: a conceptual analysis to inform research and practice. *Professional Development in Education, 44*(1), 120-139.

Cahyono, B. Y., Kurnianti, O. D., & Mutiaraningrum, I. (2016). Indonesian EFL Teachers'application of TPACK in In-Service Education Teaching Practices. *International Journal of English Language Teaching, 4*(5), 16-30.

Evans, L. (1999). *Managing to motivate: A Guide for School Leaders*. London: Cassel.

Evans, L. (2018). Implicit and informal professional development: what it 'looks like', how it occurs, and why we need to research it. *Professional Development in Education*, 1-14.

Guan, L., & Huang, Y. (2013). Ways to achieve language teachers' professional development. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 3*(11), 2112.

Guskey, T. R. (2002). Professional development and teacher change. *Teachers and Teaching, 8*(3), 381-391.

Harada, R. (2017). Effective Strategies to Enhance and Maintain University English Teacher Motivation in Japan. *Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics (PAAL), 21*(1), 1-20.

Hoyle, E. (1974). Professionality, professionalism and control in teaching. In V. Houghton (Ed.), *Management in Education: the Management of Organisations and Individuals*. London: Ward Lock Educational in association with Open University Press.

Huberman, M., & Miles, M. B. (2002). *The qualitative researcher's companion*. London: Sage.

Liu, Y., & Xu, Y. (2011). Inclusion or exclusion?: A narrative inquiry of a language teacher's identity experience in the 'new work order'of competing pedagogies. *Teaching and teacher education, 27*(3), 589-597.

Munifatullah, F., Musthafa, B., & Sundayana, W. (2016). Indonesian EFL Teachers Professional Knowledge Development during Their Participation in TSG: A Case Study. *English Language Teaching, 9*(8), 62.

Öztürk, G., & Gürbüz, N. (2017). Re-defining language teacher cognition through a data-driven model: The case of three EFL teachers. *Cogent Education, 4*(1), 1290333.

Sutton, R. E., Mudrey-Camino, R., & Knight, C. C. (2009). Teachers' emotion regulation and classroom management. *Theory into practice, 48*(2), 130-137.

This article has been checked up via https://my.plagramme.com/ on September 8[th,] 2018