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TEACHER EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Dialogic investigations of teacher–supervisor relations in the TESOL landscape

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Abstract: The study referred to in this article adopted a dialogic approach, putting the voices of experienced teachers and supervisors into the form of a dialogue in order to examine how both parties perceive, enact and justify their pedagogical practices in actual school settings. Various sets of data were utilised, including interviews, classroom observations and a post-observation conference with Saudi EFL teachers and supervisors. The findings demonstrate that teachers and supervisors all occupy different positions in the school hierarchy in the TESOL landscape, depending on the “type” as well as “amount of capital” they possess. Specifically, although some supervisors continue to believe that their accumulated experience, including teaching credentials, supervision and administrative experience, outweighs the academic and scientific capital of teachers, teachers also claim that their accumulated experience of several years of teaching, their EFL qualifications and training, their knowledge of ground realities in school settings and their experience of two different national educational systems have enabled and legitimised them to devise their own classroom practices. It is therefore concluded that supervisors should re-conceptualise their roles, challenge their own assumptions and be willing to engage in continuous critical discussions with the teachers. Both parties conduct their pedagogical practice with strong sense of agency/engagement. This

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The teacher–supervisor relationship is still perceived as a “private cold war” in many non-English-speaking countries, a concern raised by educators nearly 30 years ago. Through different sets of data, this article attempts to understand how and in what ways do teachers and supervisors perceive each other in actual school settings? Putting the voices of experienced teachers and supervisors into the form of a dialogue, it was found that both teachers and supervisors acquire different roles and forms of capital in the school hierarchy, depending on their teaching experience and qualifications. This paper argues that these different forms of capital should be utilised as a conceptual foundation for professional development and language teacher education programmes, and for understanding teacher–supervisor relations in a school setting. It should be noted that critical engagement between experienced teachers and supervisors in non-English-speaking countries is not often supported by the scholarly literature.

study argues that these forms of agency in language teaching need further scholarly attention, for “they are inherently contextual and dialogic, in that they have a history and a present that resides in an ongoing negotiated state of intense and essential axiological interaction”.

Subjects: General Language Reference; Language & Literature; Language Teaching & Learning

Keywords: teacher; supervisor; capital; dialogic; post-method; English language

1. Introduction

The contemporary discourses of teaching and learning strategies in the fields of TESOL—Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages—applied linguistics and language teacher education have recently emphasised the importance of teachers’ agency in devising context-sensitive pedagogical classroom practices appropriate to the specific intellectual needs of local learners (Barnawi, 2016; Canagarajah, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Phan, 2014; Phillipson, 1992). This notion is also being widely discussed in TESOL teacher training and education programmes, professional development programmes, workshops and classroom observation and supervision (see, for example, Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Phan, 2014, for more details).

Within this framework of understanding in language teacher education, both teachers and supervisors possess multiple forms of “asset” or privilege (Bourdieu, 1986), consisting of economic, linguistic, social, cultural and academic capital. English as foreign language (EFL) teachers have now become, among many other things, autonomous decision-makers, analysts, inventors and critical transformative practitioners. As a result, they are expected to utilise their capital (privilege) to devise their own pedagogical paradigms when teaching in order to accommodate the intellectual needs of their learners (Canagarajah, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Phan, 2014). Language supervisors, in contrast, are required to engage with EFL teachers in a critical instructional dialogue, utilising their own multiple forms of capital, including their accumulated experience of teaching, supervision and administration, with the intention of enhancing overall instructional processes (Kim & Danforth, 2012; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). The above scenario is supposed to represent a relationship based on a co-agency approach and discursive critical engagement between teacher and supervisor in actual school settings.

Nevertheless, the narrative centred on teacher–supervisor relationships in the professional literature continues to be one of unrest (e.g. Kayoaglu, 2012; Trent, 2010); that is, the teacher–supervisor relationship is still perceived as a “private cold war” in many EFL contexts, a concern raised by scholars like Blumberg (1980) nearly 30 years ago. At the same time, studies examining aspects of EFL teacher–supervisor relationships, including tension, disputes and identity construction, often focus on unfolding the adherence of both teachers and supervisors to some rigid school of thought or to institutional policies and practices (e.g. Kayoaglu, 2012; Trent, 2010), or on understanding the hierarchical power relations between the two parties (e.g. Wanzare, 2012) and/or even on investigating supervisor beliefs and reactions (e.g. Utley & Showalter, 2009). To date, however, there have been hardly any studies that specifically capture and document teacher–supervisor engagement in instructional matters with the aim of identifying the causes of conflicts in actual classroom settings. The aim of the study described here was to address this critical gap in the research and at the same time consolidate and move the scholarship forward.

Using Bourdieu’s (1986) forms of capital, together with Bakhtin’s (1981) work on dialogism, as conceptual frameworks, the purpose of the study was to find an answer to the following question: how and in what ways do teachers and supervisors perceive, discuss, practise and justify their pedagogical practices in actual school settings? It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide a new foundation for understanding teacher–supervisor relations in the TESOL landscape. Utilising various sets of data, including those obtained from individual interviews, classroom observations

and post-observation conferences, in this paper the experiences of EFL teachers and supervisors in Saudi public schools are analysed as a case study. Although this paper may not provide definitive answers in terms of fully conceptualising teacher–supervisor relations in the field of TESOL, the findings may encourage teachers, supervisors and teacher educators to reflect critically on their practices and embrace an attitude of openness to alternative and new ideas.

2. Conceptual framework

Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital postulates that, depending on the field and its functionality within the field, capital—as accumulated labour—manifests itself in three primary ways: as “economic”, “cultural” and “social” capital. While *economic capital* “is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the forms of property rights” (Richardson, 1986, p. 243), *cultural capital* occurs in three different forms, namely (i) in a *hidden state*, which is manifested “in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body”, (ii) in an *objectified state*, which occurs “in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries [tools indicative of education and training]) [and that are] ... the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.” (ibid.) and (iii) in an *institutionalised state*, a form of ... “educational qualifications [which] confer entirely original properties on the cultural capital which [they are] presumed to guarantee” (ibid.). *Social capital*, on the other hand, is “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. These relationships may exist only in the practical state, in material and/or symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them” (p. 51).

These different forms of capital are utilised, legitimised and mediated via symbolic capital in such a way that they interact with each other and may cause symbolic power and/or even violence. Indeed, the degree of convertibility or utilisation, as well as the functionality of these different forms of capital, depends on the position occupied by an individual in a given social or educational space. For instance, language teachers possess educational qualifications and credentials, linguistic and teaching experience and cultural capital that have led them to a particular set of dispositions, or habitus. In the same vein, language supervisors also possess a wide range of capital, including accumulated experience of teaching, supervision, linguistics and administration, leading them to a particular set of dispositions or habitus. Viewing the teacher–supervisor relationship from a dialogical perspective (Bakhtin, 1981) will help us conceptualise in more detail how both parties utilise their various forms of capital and meaningfully interact with each other, as well as how they negotiate and construct certain values and institutional rules to form and maintain their own habitus.

Through a process of dialogic interchange, the teacher and the supervisor can engage with each other in developing a critical understanding of their school curriculum and the intellectual needs of their students. In this context, they can also acquire enough space to voice their perspectives and to construct their identities and voices, while at the same time becoming active contributors to the overall teaching and learning processes (Snow-Gerono, 2008; Tucker & Pounder, 2010). This is because, as Lyle (2008, p. 225) states, “dialogism assumes knowledge is something people do together rather than an individual possession”. It is, therefore, through ongoing dialogic discourse that a “pedagogy of mutuality” can be realised between teachers and supervisors, within which each treats the other as a competent thinker in his or her own right (Aubert, Flecha, García, Flecha, & Racionero, 2008; Flecha, 2000). Nevertheless, this view is somewhat paradoxical, because classroom realities are far more complex, and the teacher–supervisor relationship in many EFL contexts, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is still loaded with tensions and conflicts as a result of the social, cultural and institutional ethos attached to the concept of supervision, as I will demonstrate in this paper.

3. Teacher supervision and its models in the TESOL landscape

Before I discuss supervision and its various models in the field of TESOL, it is important to note that the concept of supervision has been defined differently by different researchers in the professional

literature (see, for example, Bailey, 2006; Daresh, 2001; Kayoaglu, 2012; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). It is also important to acknowledge the various definitions and connotations associated with the concept of supervision, including “bureaucratic authority” (Holland & Garman, 2001), “teacher evaluation and assessment” (Kayaoğlu, 2007; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000) and “ghost walk” (Black, 1993, p. 38), among other descriptions. For the purposes of the study described here, however, I used Bailey’s (2006, cited in Hişmanoğlu & Hişmanoğlu, 2010) definition:

[Supervision] is a technical process which aims to improve teaching and learning through the care, guidance and simulation of continued development for not only teachers but also any other person having an impact on the educational context. It is a consultation process, based on respect for the opinion of teachers who are mainly affected by the work of supervision. It is a collaborative process in different stages since it welcomes various views that represent the proper relationship between the supervisor and the teacher so as to address the educational problems and find appropriate solutions. (p. 18)

Bailey (2006) depicts supervision as a collaborative and developmental process where a teacher and supervisor are supposed to form a relationship based on co-agency functions in an actual school setting. This is unlike the traditional model of supervision that positions supervisors as experts, and teachers “as passive recipients of transmitted knowledge rather than active participants in the construction of meaning ... and which does not take into account the thinking or decision-making of teachers” (Crandall, 2000, p. 35).

Indeed, what Bailey (2006, p. 6) refers to as the “developmental focus” of supervision is also reflected throughout its various models in the field of teacher education. For instance, there is a supervision model that projects the supervisor as a “coach”, “mentor”, “consultant” and “cooperating teacher” (Acheson & Gall, 1997; Hişmanoğlu & Hişmanoğlu, 2010; Kayoaglu, 2012). Researchers like Gebhard (1984) describe the supervision process using five models: (1) directive, (2) creative, (3) non-directive, (4) collaborative and (5) alternative. Another common supervision model is called clinical supervision, in which the focus is on “the professional development of teachers, with an emphasis on improving teachers’ classroom performance” (Acheson & Gall, 1997, p. 1). This model is usually teacher-centred, interactive and democratic in nature. The aim is to create mutual trust and respect between teacher and supervisor, to identify and address instructional gaps, and at the same time assist the teacher to adopt a positive attitude towards the notion of continuous improvement (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993; Stoller, 1996). According to researchers like Sullivan and Glanz (2000) and Stoller (1996), these aims involve three steps: (i) planning—when a teacher and supervisor meet together in order to identify instructional gaps and then in subsequent meetings to make decisions as colleagues on how to address the gaps; (ii) a classroom visit—the supervisor observes the class with the intention of ensuring that the instructional gaps discussed at the planning stage have been filled, and (iii) a feedback session—when the teacher and supervisor meet in order to discuss additional gaps to the ones that have already been dealt with and agree on specific solutions. At this stage, as Kayoaglu (2012) argues, “the feedback conference may turn into a planning conference with teacher and supervisor working cooperatively to collect further observational data” (p. 106). Also, importantly, both the teacher’s and the supervisor’s multiple forms of “asset” or privilege (Bourdieu, 1986), including economic, linguistic, social, cultural and academic capital, can be of great importance at this stage in making the conference engaging, effective and meaningful. This constructive type of supervision would also pave the way for a democratic, dialogic and yet reflective approach to EFL instruction to come to the fore (Akbari, 2005; Phan, 2014). Language supervisors, as fellow workers, can engage in critical discussions with teachers by constructively supporting and critiquing the pedagogical classroom strategies used by teachers. While this is happening, both parties are expected to respect each other’s scientific and academic capital through negotiation, discussion and justification in a classroom setting.

Within the above-mentioned supervision models, potential conflicts between teacher and supervisor in instructional matters may be negotiated, and at the same time the benefits of supervisory

processes can be maximised, making supervision an enriching experience for teachers as well as for supervisors. It is unlikely that such a scenario would appear in practice, however, because instructional supervision is a complex and highly demanding experience for both parties, given the constantly changing nature of classroom realities. Additionally, the discourses that take place between teacher and supervisor during the supervision process can have a significant effect on the relationship between both parties. If the discourse used by a supervisor is “internally persuasive”, teachers will accept it. At the same time, they will often reject “authoritative discourses” (Bakhtin, 1981) used by supervisors. This is especially the case with experienced teachers who have been teaching for a long period of time, as I demonstrate in this paper.

In addition to the above, studies on the scholarship of language teacher supervision are often imported from the West to other settings; as a result, the concept of supervision always carries different orientations, interpretations and justifications at practical levels in differing EFL milieus (see Atay, 2007; Yan & He, 2010 for more details). Furthermore, supervision can become an emotionally charged experience for teachers when a supervisor has more “economic” or “social” power, so that their input into classroom supervision includes aspects such as “retention”, “promotion”, “dismissal”, “reward” or “reprimand” (Day & Gu, 2007). It is for these reasons that this study aimed to obtain insight into how both teachers and supervisors—building on their different forms of capital—perceive, enact and justify their pedagogical practices in actual school settings. Before describing this endeavour, I provide background information on English education and supervision in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to familiarise readers with the context of the study, since there are always differences in the orientation, perception and conceptualisation of supervision across EFL contexts.

4. An overview of EFL instruction and supervision in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The rhetoric of English education in the KSA—the most conservative country in the oil-rich Arabian Gulf region—has long been controversial. This is because EFL instruction has been associated with religious, political, sociocultural and economic debates among different groups of stakeholders. Nevertheless, recently, as Phan (2014, p. 6) point out, “the pursuit of English as a desirable form of social, linguistic, political, cultural, intellectual and economic capital has also been central at all levels in the KSA. The Ministry of Education ... [has] ... been investing enormously in ELT across the country”. The English language has been introduced as a core subject from the fourth grade of primary school to secondary school level and it has become the medium of instruction at college and university levels across the country.

As in many other EFL contexts in the Arabian Gulf region and beyond (see, for example, Hişmanoğlu & Hişmanoğlu, 2010; Kaya, 2006), supervision has been an indispensable component of the Saudi Ministry of Education’s (MoE) policy and practice since its establishment in 1942. This can be seen clearly in its official documents. It has developed from policing practices, to humanistic supervision and then to instructional supervision. Supervisors were called *شرفم* in Arabic, which means inspectors. Traditionally, the primary roles of supervisors were to (i) pay surprise visits to schools in order to inspect teachers and their adherence to the instructional methods and techniques defined by the curriculum of the MoE, (ii) to look for shortcomings in classroom instruction, (iii) to measure student performance in classrooms by asking random questions about the subject being studied, (iv) to record findings from the classroom observation, (v) to share the outcomes of their observation with the teachers after the class and (vi) to take appropriate administrative action. These authoritative practices on the part of supervisors caused tension and a lack of trust between the two parties. For these reasons, supervision in the Saudi context was never particularly helpful, as has been reported by several researchers (e.g. Al-Harhi, 2001; Jeto, 2013; Ovanda & Huckestein, 2003). The nature of supervision has now changed from its original policing form to a more humanistic type of supervision that pays more attention to the feelings of the teacher and the respect of the supervisor for the teacher, as Jeto (2013) points out. It focuses on a more humanistic type of supervision that pays more attention to the feelings of the teacher and the respect of the supervisor. It positions teachers, as Kayoaglu (2012) articulates,

in the process of supervision as fellow workers rather than subjects with an emphasis on teachers' pride, dignity, professional goals, and individual freedom. The supervisor is expected to function primarily as a resource person having a democratic attitude and empathetic relationship when interacting with teachers, regardless of their education backgrounds. (p. 105)

Although humanistic supervision has created somewhat healthier teacher–supervisor relations in Saudi school settings, it still neglects issues such as teaching, the curriculum and student performance (Jeto, 2013). In recent times, however, the style and approaches of supervision in Saudi schools have gone through several drastic changes. It has shifted from a humanistic style of supervision to a more instructional regime that pays close attention to the instructional growth and professional development of teachers. It aims to promote cooperation and coordination between teachers and supervisors through discussion and negotiation about teaching methods and techniques as well as assessment practices. It also focuses on guiding and assisting teachers to ensure that their classroom pedagogical practices are of a high quality. In addition, it focuses on fostering leadership skills in teachers both inside and outside of their classrooms (Al-Harathi, 2001; Jeto, 2013; Ovanda & Huckestein, 2003). While it is possible to conclude from the official documentation of the Saudi Ministry of Education that supervisory practices have taken the form of professional development and improved instruction, we should not lose sight of the fact that classroom realities rarely reflect such desired outcomes. As Kayaağlu (2007) articulates, “no matter how eloquently the official documents state the goal of supervision, it is the picture on the ground that tells us how much or to what extent the supervision is to be [influential] on teacher performance” (p. 16). This is particularly true when the teacher–supervisor relationship is loaded with tension and a lack of trust, as in Saudi Arabia. It is for these reasons that this study attempted to understand how both teachers and supervisors are utilising the multiple forms of capital bestowed on them in the TESOL landscape to improve the overall instructional process in EFL classrooms.

5. The study

A qualitative research approach was adopted for the study in order to capture and document how both teachers and supervisors, building on their multiple forms of capital, perceive, discuss, practise and justify their pedagogical practices in a given social and educational space. It is worth noting that because a co-educational system does not exist in the Saudi context, the researcher had access only to male participants. Additionally, the data presented in this study are part of a longitudinal research project focused on understanding the EFL teacher–supervisor relationship in Saudi public schools (Phan, 2014). The data were collected between 2011 and the present day. In this article, the data obtained from 13 supervisors and 9 teachers are presented. Multiple data collection methods, including individual interviews, classroom observations and post-observation conferences, were utilised throughout this study. It is important to note that the experiences of those 13 teachers and 9 supervisors were selected here “because they offer various voices with mixed views, positions, thoughts and feelings respectively” (Barnawi, 2016, p. 11). This very approach of data selection and sampling would let “sets of data flow from one to the other and work interactively to demonstrate” (Phan, 2014, p. 6 see also Creswell, 2007) how both teachers and supervisors, building on their multiple forms of capital, perceive, discuss, practise and justify their pedagogical practices in a given social and educational space (Baxter & Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2007; Park, 2013; Rao, 2000). Simply put, by selecting and presenting “a diverse array of voices offering mixed perspectives, positions, and emotions” in such qualitative research approach would “represent the diversity” (Phan, 2014, p. 6) of the subjects of the study in a holistic manner and at the same time offer rich, detailed and descriptive accounts of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2007).

The data analyses were based on the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Evans, 2013) discussed in the literature review section: (i) Bourdieu's (1986) theory of forms of capital, (ii) perceptions of teacher–supervisor relations in the TESOL landscape and (iii) teacher–supervisor relations in actual school settings. Below I report on individual interview responses from both teachers and supervisors. This is

followed by an extensive report on the experiences of the two Saudi public school EFL teachers and supervisors from whom most of the data were collected.

It is important to note that the individual interviews were conducted using a mixture of Arabic and English to allow the participants to convey their beliefs and thoughts in a natural and reflective manner. While most interviews lasted about an hour, some went on even longer depending on the answers I obtained from each subject. Consent forms were obtained from teachers and students as well as supervisors. The participants in this study were all Saudis and their minimum qualification level was a BA in EFL and over 10 years of teaching experience in Saudi public schools. It is for these reasons that I refer to both the teachers and the supervisors who took part in the study as “experienced”.

6. Findings and discussions

6.1. English qualifications as multiple forms of capital in the Saudi context

The findings of the study revealed that both teachers and supervisors perceive their status—as English educators in the Saudi context—in different ways. These perceptions range from authority, rights, autonomy, economic, social, professional, institutional and cultural capital (Phan, 2014). A teacher called Adnan, for instance, stated that, “being a language teacher at XXX secondary school for over thirteen years has offered me great experience, confidence and even professional respect in our school, especially among non-English teachers” (Adnan, Interview, 1, 14 March 2011). Likewise, Abid commented, “frankly speaking, after eleven years of classroom practice at various school levels, I should not be worried about my job status or even classroom performance. There is a pressing need for EFL teachers in the country. I have learned enough and thus can survive under any conditions ...” (Interview, 1, 16 March 2011). These statements reflect the view that the acquisition of a language teaching position in Saudi Arabia has its own cultural tradition, values and imperatives which teachers define as social capital and economic investment (Bourdieu, 1986; Niadoo & Willima, 2014). Additionally, possessing an international qualification in the field of EFL instruction has been of great value to teachers in the Saudi context, as echoed throughout the responses of most participants. For instance, Fouad believed his position as a multilingual teacher with an international CELTA qualification is a primary source of recognition by and good relationships with his colleagues:

I speak three languages: Fallati, Arabic and English. Also, my international CELTA qualification allows me to teach even at university level, as my fellow workers have said: I am an internationally certified teacher. My colleagues always consult me when they want to adopt new ideas in their classrooms. Also, teachers of religious courses often ask me to translate different texts for them. (Interview, 20, February, 2012)

Similarly, Abdullah noted that, “I have a master’s degree in education in TESOL from the UK, and have contributed to several publications and participated in several conferences. I am entitled to teach at all school levels and take leading positions like school principal or language supervisor. However, I enjoy teaching and cannot see myself away from students” (Interview, 10 February, 2014). Some teachers also saw their local training coupled with international qualifications as credentials which gave them recognition in the Saudi context. Taher reported that, “I have a BA in English education, [certificates from] several training courses in New Zealand and one of the most popular qualifications in the world, the DELTA certificate from Cambridge University. I have enough understanding of local needs. I am qualified to be a teacher and a supervisor” (Interview, 2012). Likewise, Nader believed that his accumulated capital was derived from the traditions of EFL teaching and his awareness of local culture: “... those years of experience in classrooms and several international training certificates have given me the autonomy to make pedagogical decisions and approach my colleagues with confidence” (Interview, 2013).

The above responses indicate that Saudi teachers’ academic/cultural habitus is informed by their “beliefs in, and the struggle for, the acquisition of scientific and academic capital” (Niadoo & Willima,

2014, p. 5). This means that, while some teachers perceive their different forms of capital to be derived from their accumulated experience of teaching in the local context and from their EFL certificates and training, others see them as being the result of their experience of two different national educational systems—having both local and Western qualifications and training. Central to the notion of capital is the social, historical and relational (Bourdieu, 1986) status of English in the Saudi context, as discussed above. While the government has been offering full scholarships to all Saudi citizens to pursue their education in the West, local universities have also been constantly—and even aggressively revising—their vision and mission statements to internationalise their academic programmes by innovations such as adopting international curricula, using English as the medium of instruction and launching joint TESOL programmes (see Barnawi & Phan, 2014; Phan, 2014 for more accounts on these issues). Within this social space, the agents—teachers and supervisors—are positioned “relative to others in hierarchal ordering and at a different distance from each other” (Colley, Chadderton, & Nixon, 2014, p. 107), so they struggle over areas such as qualifications, job status, skills and knowledge.

The language supervisors, on the other hand, perceived the primary sources of their credentials in the profession as being their past experience of teaching, their conducting of training and workshops and their abilities in administration and supervision, as well as their qualifications. These forms of habitus seem to affect the ways in which they (re)construct themselves as supervisors of English language teaching in the Saudi context. A supervisor called Ali reported that, “having experience in both teaching and supervision has meant that school teachers not only respect my presence, but also value my comments during observations” (Interviews, 2013). Other supervisors also regard their successful completion of supervisory requirements such as exams and interviews held by the Saudi Ministry of Education as crucial for intellectual recognition in their profession. These perceptions mean that some supervisors also are “oriented to struggle over intellectual renown” (Niadoo & Willima, 2014, p. 5). Khaled, for instance, asserted that, “... I have passed all the supervision exams and attended local as well as international training and workshops on effective school inspections and supervision etc. So I do not feel like a guest any more when I visit schools” (Interview, 2011).

Notably, the habitus of Saudi supervisors—who have credentials from the Ministry of Education, administrative and supervisory experience and international degrees—has predisposed them to have a sense of having the upper hand when supervising teachers. This notion was clear in some of the statements highlighted above. For instance, Nasser said, “I have a master’s degree in educational administration; thus, it is not a daunting task to monitor classroom performance and offer effective strategies to teachers when observing their classes” (Interview, 2012). Talal added, “I have a master’s degree in TEFL from North America and I am officially nominated by the Ministry of Education. My seventeen years of conducting training/workshops for school teachers and supervising classrooms has taught me enough”. Other supervisors also reported that, “understanding the concerns of students, parents and society at large” (Ahmad, Interview, 2013), “qualification in educational leadership” (Zakaria, Interview, 2012), “Western TESOL qualification” (Badur, Interview) and “clinical experiences” (Mohammed, Interview, 2012) were sources of power in their profession.

Overall, these findings suggest that teachers regard their accumulated experience of teaching, their strong desire to be a teacher—even though some believe that they are qualified to be supervisors—Western qualifications/training and their social status as credentials which give them recognition in the society. On the other hand, language supervisors perceive their experience of teaching, supervision, conducting training and workshops and administration, as well as local and international qualifications, to be symbols of intellectual capital (Bourdieu & Collier, 1988).

6.2. Teacher–supervisor relations in the TESOL landscape: conceptualisation of roles in EFL instruction

Throughout the study, both teachers and supervisors showed a high critical awareness of the importance of devising classroom practices responsive to local needs, and of building on their accumulated experience of teaching and supervision, respectively. As Abid reported, “my several years of

teaching experience have given me enough space to use my own methods in classrooms, particularly in the village where I teach. I can use Arabic in the classroom whenever it is necessary and adapt my teaching strategies freely” (Interview, 2013). Similarly, Adnan added that, “in the post-method era, teachers should not give up classroom pedagogies that work effectively in their contexts. Instead, they can reflect on and validate their teaching practices through ongoing assessment in collaboration with their students” (Interview, 2013). Taher reported that, “I cannot wait for my supervisor to tell me what, when, why and how any more. I am also an expert in my classrooms” (Interview, 2013). Sami said, “Memorisation, together with focus on intense grammar and drilling, is no longer taboo. I can also differentiate between effective and ineffective methods in the classroom based on my students’ feedback” (Interview, 2014). These responses suggest that the teachers owe much to the fact that the post-method condition is recognising their intellectual rigour and valuing their beliefs and professional identity by contesting the monopoly of the Centre Linguistic Circle (Arikan, 2006; Barnawi & Phan, 2014). It offers them a space to “develop their own tradition of professionalism and expertise” (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 149).

In this context, one teacher called Talak stated that, “... it is all between me and my students; their responses always offer genuine feedback, not the supervisors’ words ...” (Interview, 2012). Tarik described the scenario of Saudi EFL classroom pedagogical practices in a rather provocative manner: “my autonomy and classroom experiences are fully respected now ... neither commercialised materials, nor supervisors’ comments can be taken for granted” (Interview, 2013). These responses suggest that Saudi teachers no longer consider focusing on intense grammar, using L1 or memorisation as constraints; instead, they value their local knowledge and utilise it as a means of localising classroom pedagogies (Barnawi & Phan, 2014; Widdowson, 1990). Such a habitus demonstrates how classroom pedagogical practices are being generated in the Saudi context and at the same time how teachers’ accumulated experience, reflections, intuition and different teaching strategies have been generated.

On the other hand, language supervisors look at their current roles in the Saudi context from different perspectives, taking into account aspects such as the shifts in their role, opportunities for negotiation, self-conceptualisation, intellectual renown and reflection. Hamid, for instance, stated that, “no, there is no consensus on what are the most effective classroom strategies and it all depends on your local needs. However, our years of experience in the field of EFL instruction can inform our decisions when observing classrooms and guide teachers toward effective strategies” (Interview, 2013). Saeed contended that, “our prior knowledge and experience in both supervision and teacher training have great potential in offering organic solutions to teachers” (Interview). While Hamid and Saeed continued to see teachers as clean slates onto which they could impose a set of optimal classroom strategies based on their prior knowledge and experience, others believed that the time for packaged solutions of methods has passed. Zakaria argued that, “we need to be more critical and democratic when observing classrooms. In this way, we can learn from each other”. Similarly, Asad believed, “it is time now for teacher and supervisor to engage head-on with each other in negotiating potential pedagogies responsive to their needs” (Interview, 2013). Azhar added that, “Collaboration and democratic communication with colleagues will always open a space for creativity and innovation on the part of teachers and supervisors, and our students will benefit a lot if we put our hands together” (Interview, 2013).

Likewise, Badur said, “there is a new shift in our roles today. We should adopt critical attitudes towards our colleagues when supervising them and also challenge our own assumptions and beliefs related to day-to-day classroom practices, observations and so on” (Interview). Essam postulated that, “with my over ten years of experiences in the field I can comfortably discuss teaching strategies, attitudes, linguistic knowledge and commonly neglected problems in Saudi classrooms with my colleagues in real-life classrooms” (Interview).

The above responses indicate that teachers and supervisors are located in different positions in terms of “hierarchy and status” as a result of the “type and amount of capital they possess” (Neave,

2012). That is, some supervisors continue to believe that their prior knowledge and accumulated experience as both teachers as well as supervision outweighs the academic and scientific capital of teachers (Bourdieu, 1986). At the same time, however, there is also a clear shift among some supervisors in their attitude towards discovering and challenging their own assumptions, their willingness to collaborate and listen to teachers and to reflect on their practices when observing classrooms. On the other hand, teachers believe that they are also capable of devising their own classroom strategies and building on their accumulated experience in actual classroom settings. However, the questions that need to be addressed are: How do teacher and supervisor engage in an instructional dialogue in an actual classroom setting? What sort of classroom pedagogical practices do both parties demonstrate in order to justify their positions? These questions are addressed below.

6.3. Teacher-supervisor relations in actual school settings: quest for a co-agency approach in instructional matters

Adopting Bakhtin's dialogic perspective, in this study I put the voices of teachers and supervisors into a dialogue in order to capture and document the ways in which both parties exercise their multiples forms of capital in actual school settings. In order to do this, semester-long classroom observations, individual interviews and a post-observation conference were conducted. Below, I report extensively on the findings of two cases of teacher-supervisor experiences in Saudi public schools: (i) Adnan (teacher) and Taher (supervisor) and (ii) Badur (teacher) and Abid (supervisor). The classroom observations were centred on (a) overall pedagogical strategies employed by both teachers to address their local needs, together with the underlying assumptions informing their practices and (b) the supervisors' responses to the teachers' classroom practices, and their justifications of their position. This is because, as Barnawi and Phan (2014) point out, "Classroom realities often do not correspond to any recognisable method; in other words, a teacher might commence his class with a specific method in mind, but then might be influenced by classroom contingencies to alter his strategies as he goes on" (p. 11).

6.4. Adnan (teacher) and Taher (supervisor) in the post-method landscape

Adnan teaches an integrated skill English course to first-grade students at a secondary school in Saudi Arabia. He meets his students four times a week, and each class lasts 45 minutes, which is a regular practice across the country. Throughout the semester, it became clear that Adnan's classroom pedagogical practices were predominantly based on four strategies: preaching, repetition, narrative and dialogue. He often started his class by telling the students to "ask me for advice on all issues related to your course and be firm and exact" (Adnan). He would then list new vocabulary for the lesson on the board and read it aloud three times. After that, he would ask each student to read the new words aloud as many times as he could and then ask students to write the words in their exercise books without looking at the board. Adnan justified his practices as follows: "I want to give each student a space to count and measure the number of repetitions he needs to master the new words" (Interview). While this was happening, he would walk around the class and offer feedback on pronunciation, spelling and so on, using the expression "practice makes perfect" (Observation notes). He would also use Qur'anic and prophetic stories to put the new vocabulary into full sentences and discuss issues such as tense, structure and syntax. Before the end of each class, he would write a story and write several questions on the board. After that, he asked his students to team up with each other to address these questions. While the students were engaged in this pair dialogue, he would walk around the classroom and offer feedback where necessary. Adnan contended that, "asking them to debate on parable questions helps trigger their attention as well as their intellect in classrooms" (Interview). Notably, at the post-observation conference, Taher (the supervisor) had different perspectives on Adnan's classroom pedagogical practices, as reflected in the following dialogue

Taher: It is interesting to see that your classroom practices are organised and orchestrated in a systematic way. It keeps the students focused all the time. Also, religious and cultural values and tradition are fully maintained in your lessons. However, there two major problems I can see in your class: (i) you are talking a lot and giving less time to your students

to practise their communicative competency, and (ii) the majority of your students do not talk or ask questions during the lesson, even though you advised them to do so at the beginning.

Adnan: I do not think there are major problems in my class, particularly in an era where there is no right or wrong method. My students are silent because they comprehend the lesson and also I gave them chance to practise it every day.

Taher: But it is clear that you were pressurising them to repeat new words and memorise them in a short period of time. Such strategies may create linguistic pressures for them and demotivate them as well.

Adnan: Do you not think it the best technique in learning how to spell, pronounce, punctuate and read texts? This is how they learn Arabic and Quranic texts at school. As you know, there is a longstanding tradition based on memorisation of words/texts recited by teachers in Arabic schools, and these students are familiar with such pedagogical techniques I believe. You can assess their reading, writing or even grammar knowledge to see the effectiveness these strategies.

Taher: I get your point. However, as a former teacher for over twelve years in secondary schools, I think you need to reconsider those practices with your students. Your classroom practices should be more active, whereby critical thinking, collaboration, democracy and other issues need to be fostered. I am not asking you to eliminate your current pedagogies; instead, I want you to combine or amalgamate them with more progressive strategies as well as a student-centred approach.

Interestingly, the above positions presented by both teacher and supervisor draw upon socially available discourse on the EFL teacher–supervisor relations in the Saudi context. Although the supervisor is implicitly asking Adnan to acknowledge the fact that there are some “major problems” in his classroom practices and that he should embrace more progressive strategies like active and student-centred learning and creativity in the classroom, Adnan seems to unwilling to internalise such an authoritative discourse, on the grounds that “there is no right or wrong method” (Interview) in today’s teaching. This means that the discourse of the post-method pedagogy—as a ground-up approach—was persuasive to him because it offers him space to build on his experience of teaching, his intuition and his awareness of local pedagogical conditions and realities (Arikan, 2006; Barnawi & Phan, 2014; Canagarajah, 2002). As Adnan argued, “moving from preaching to a dialogic approach throughout my classes gives the students a high level of active control over their lessons as well as learning processes. They can count and measure their learning effectively; they know what is learnt and how it should be learnt” (Interview, 2012). Here, we should not lose sight of the fact that it might be paradoxical to ask teachers to create an environment that imposes on students “their rights to speech, as if their silence was by default an inferior and undesirable state”, as Phan (2014, p. 4) convincingly argues. This is because such a “paradox could enable another form of oppression to both teachers and students, whose positions are defined in expert terms rather than in their own chosen terms” (ibid.) in EFL classrooms.

6.5. Badur (teacher) and Abid (supervisor) in the post-method landscape

Similar to Adnan, Badur teaches an integrated skills English course to third-grade secondary school students in Saudi Arabia. He meets his students four times a week and each class lasts 45 minutes. Throughout the semester, it was noted that Badur’s classroom pedagogical practices were based on localisation. He would often start his classes by asking each student to talk about the values of the English language, and then he would talk about his learning strategies, like self-assessment and reading techniques, among others. Based on different learner responses, he would move on to conduct his classes; he would, for example, either write on the board to elaborate some language structures, vocabulary or verb tenses, ask the students to work in pairs or groups and carry on with some reading tasks in the classroom. After that, he would ask each student to write down three things he had learned and three things he had not learned from the lesson, with justifications for each one. At the end of each class, he asked the students to discuss their notes in a group and offer suggestions to each other. While the students were engaged in sharing their notes, he would go round the class

and offer feedback to them on areas such as modelling grammatical structures and contextualising speaking activities. Badur contended that these practices were “organic learning opportunities for him as well as his students” (Interview, 2012). He further articulated that, “these students have long been victims of our trial and error classroom practices together with our complicity with the cultural politics of EFL instruction in Saudi Arabia. Building on their prior knowledge and local needs will not only help them learn better and learn how to learn, but it will also allow teachers to re-examine and challenge their beliefs” (Interview, 2012).

These perspectives echo the fact that, after years of contestation between the “Self” and the “Other”, the direction of pedagogical developments in the field of TESOL today is based on (i) considering classrooms as being learning opportunities, (ii) re-conceptualising learner motivation and language acquisition issues from a sociocultural perspective and (iii) classroom pedagogies that are based on ground-up approaches (see Barnawi & Phan, 2014; Canagarajah, 2002; Pennycook, 1998 for more details). As a result, today EFL educators have become much more critical with regard to their professional and classroom practices. The following dialogue between Badur and Abid during one of their post-observation conferences is one example of this:

Abid: I love your classes as well as the strategies you craft to address the needs of Saudi students. You are very cautious in your strategies and I think I should do the same when observing teachers’ classrooms.

Badur: Oh, thanks for this critical observation. It is painful to notice that for years we have been told by supervisors as well as the mainstream TESOL literature not to use grammar translation and audio-lingual methods in classrooms; instead, we were asked to embrace the communicative approach and active learning as ideal methods through professional workshops and training. Ironically, today there is consensus in the profession that there is no right or wrong method; instead, our local knowledge and expertise is what matters most in classroom practice.

I believe the best way to realise the essence of our classroom pedagogies is to have a culture of shared re-conceptualisation and responsibilities in our profession. We really need to believe that our classroom is a site for continued growth and learning opportunities for both of us.

Abid: Well, my years of experience in the TESOL profession tell me that classroom supervision is all about collective efforts between teacher and supervisor with the aim of improving overall classroom instruction.

Badur: Umm ... for me it is important to talk about our students’ realities that we are encountering in classrooms. I do not want my students to be inducted into the norms and values embodied by Western pedagogies. We have to connect the English language to Saudi social values and cultural traditions.”

The above dialogue implies that both Badur and Abid have internalised many discourses circulating within the domain of post-method conditions (Kumaravivelu, 2003). This has created a relationship based on a co-agency approach and discursive critical engagement between them in which each one is striving to make sense of his early experience of teaching, critical conceptualisation of the profession and intuition in classroom instruction. They both seem to accept the fact that struggles between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses—which have long been penetrating the field of TESOL—have now helped shape the history of their “consciousness” and their “critical view” (Bakhtin, 1981) of their profession. Specifically, Badur, who remained “closed” and “deaf” to his own intuitions and experience in the past, has now found that bottom-up strategies have shed light on his classroom pedagogical practices. He perceives his classes as ongoing learning opportunities, and sees crafting a ground-up approach as the optimal way to realise overall pedagogical strategies in an EFL context.

7. Conclusion and recommendation

The study referred to in this article investigated how and in what ways teachers and supervisors perceive, discuss, practise and justify their pedagogical practices in actual school settings, in the hope that the findings would offer new grounds for understanding teacher-supervisor relations in the TESOL landscape. The findings demonstrate that adopting a dialogic perspective (Bakhtin, 1981), by putting the voices of teachers and supervisors together in actual classroom settings, sparked more critical discussions centred on the re-conceptualisation of their roles, values and academic and scientific capital. As shown in this study, teachers see their role, among many other things, as being that of autonomous decision-maker, analyst, inventor and critical transformative practitioner. As a result, they are expected to utilise their various forms of capital (privilege) in order to devise their own pedagogical paradigm when teaching so as to accommodate the intellectual needs of their learners (Canagarajah, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Phan, 2014). Supervisors, on the other hand, believe that their multiple forms of capital, including their accumulated experience of teaching and supervision, administration and the like (Kim & Danforth, 2012; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000) are the primary source of their credentials in the profession. Under the aforementioned conditions, both teachers and supervisors have been challenging assumptions and critiquing each other's practices in actual school settings (see the case of Abid and Badur above). Hence, both teachers and supervisors' multiple forms of capital, including qualifications, accumulated teaching experience and linguistic capital, should be utilised as a conceptual foundation for professional development and language teacher education programmes, and for understanding teacher-supervisor relations in a school setting. It should be noted that critical engagement between experienced teachers and supervisors in EFL contexts is not often supported by the scholarly literature; nevertheless, such practices could foster morally responsible pedagogies when coupled with classroom supervision based on constructive dialogue and enriching experiences.

The dominant discourse in the post-method era is liberation (Kumaravadivelu, 2003), as it values bottom-up strategies, local realities and the autonomy of educators. It rejects mainstream classroom pedagogies, which have led teachers and supervisors to arrive at different conclusions in terms of rationality and self-reflexivity, as demonstrated in this study. Indeed, these endeavours are inherently dialogic; they have a history and a present that reside in an ongoing negotiated state of "intense and essential axiological interaction" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 10). It is the dynamic tensions between teachers and supervisors, as well as between "the past and present that give[s] shape to one's individual voice" (Hall, Vitanova, & Marchenkova, 2013, p. 3). It is recommended that researchers should continue to examine teacher-supervisor relations from different perspectives, including those of students and school principals.

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