

## UNRAVELING RELATIVELY UNCLEAR STORIES: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDENT-TEACHERS' IDENTITY WORK

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### Abstract

Motivated by the need for more empirical evidence of Indonesian-based novice teachers' identity, this paper aims to uncover nonnative English-speaking student-teachers' identity work in their relatively unclear narratives of teaching practicum experiences. (Narrative) discourse analytical perspectives were used to examine two student-teachers' narratives that were elicited in individual interviews. An analysis of one female student-teacher's narrative suggests that digressive plotting—at first glance—and the use of some cryptic, and sometimes idiosyncratic, expressions can be reconstructed by a discourse analyst such that the overall structure and message of the speaker's narrative is streamlined. A relatively unclear narrative was also produced by a male student-teacher. Different from the female student-teacher's detailed narrative with digressive plotting, the male student-teacher's plotting was underdeveloped. However, both student-teachers exercised their agency, though in different degrees, when framing their personal stories. This paper concludes with the notion that the narrative analysis makes more visible student-teachers' identity work in which they, with their sense of agency, overcame (inter)personal tensions or struggles narrated in stories which are not necessarily clear.

**Keywords:** teaching practicum; student-teachers; narrative; identity; agency

Building on the work of Beech (2008), the notion of "identity work" employed in this article refers to "a set of active processes (such as forming, strengthening and revising) which serve to construct a sense of identity" (p. 51). Viewed through a poststructuralist lens, a person's identity is not singular nor always fixed. Rather, identity is potentially multiple, fluid, negotiated in various contexts of interactions, and indexes the person's affiliation (as well as disengagement) with certain social groups (Norton, 2013; Rugen, 2013; Vásquez, 2011). The current literature on narrative analysis and identity work (e.g., Bamberg, 2012; Frank, 2012; Mambu, 2014) also suggests that a speaker positions and constructs him or herself in ways that are either similar to or different from those (positionings) of his/her interlocutor(s) in one or subsequent encounters (e.g., storytelling events).

Positioning and constructing oneself together with one or more interlocutors occurs especially in what Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) termed as "small stories." Small stories take the form of "breaking news" (p. 379), "future or hypothetical events" (p. 381), and other stretches of discourse that are not regarded as autobiographical enough, or "seen as analytic nuisance (e.g., as the result of bad interviewing," or "viewed as an instance of incoherent telling") (p. 380).

In view of the current perspectives on narrative analysis, instances of researchers dismissing elicited stories that do not make sense to them, or

categorizing them as outliers not worthy of careful consideration, represent epistemic marginalization (or a limitation imposed on knowing). Barkhuizen, Benson, and Chik (2014), as cited in Barkhuizen (2016), have reminded ELT researchers to empower research participants, whose narratives are elicited during a research process, by not dismissing their voices. In view of Bamberg's (2012) theoretical lens, dismissing a participant's sharing denies his or her attempt to negotiate his/her identity and of the sense of agency s/he is in the process of creating in the interaction, especially when the participant is engaged in storytelling. Addressing this limitation can increase the explanatory power of narrative research, which is often sensitive enough to document voices of marginalized groups including nonnative English speaking teachers in Asian contexts (e.g., Hayes, 2013) and, specifically, student-teachers whose narratives are hard to understand due to cryptic plotting and/or expressions.

Barkhuizen (2016) recently called for more research into "identity experiences of novice language teachers" (p. 16) such as those of student-teachers reflecting on their teaching practices. This paper aims to answer this call by uncovering nonnative English-speaking student-teachers' identity work in their relatively unclear (i.e., sounding incoherent, perplexing, and/or not clearly developed) narratives of teaching practicum experiences elicited in sociolinguistic interviews.

An important way of understanding novice teachers' identity work is by analyzing narrative forms in terms of cultural scripts/schemas and linguistic resources the teacher draws upon (Pavlenko, 2007) in their stories, no matter how cryptic they are. Gee's (1991, 2011) framework for stanza analysis is useful in this form-oriented narrative analysis, especially in terms of streamlining unclear stories and uncovering a narrator's identity work.

In the next section, the literature on analyzing narrative forms, teaching practicum experiences, and inquiries into speakers' identity work in narratives will be reviewed.

### Analyzing narrative forms

It is not unusual for researchers like Labov and Waletzky (1997) to seek canonical narratives to be presented as exemplars which are relatively easy to make sense of and fit into the a priori framework analysts have had in mind. Some stories told in a context other than that of African-American speakers in the late 1960s in Labov's study have indeed shown that *abstracts*, *orientations*, *complicating actions*, *evaluations*, *resolutions*, and *coda* are essential components in "successful" or "coherent" stories (e.g., written narratives by ESL students in Singapore [see Wu, 1995]; and written as well as oral narratives of teachers' teaching-practicum experiences [Mambu, 2013]).

Some other stories are not that clear-cut, though. In fact, some may sound incoherent, e.g., for white American teachers not sharing the same oral tradition of children raised in many African-American families (see Gee, 2012, p. 141 where Leona is described as "rambling on" or "not talking about one important thing" by her white teacher), or according to doctors "with little sophistication in linguistics" who listened to a person labeled as "schizophrenic" (Gee, 1991, p. 17). Through his "linguistic"-oriented analysis inspired by ethnopoetics, Gee (2011) dissected "incoherent" or "rambling" stories into lines, stanzas, and episodes (of repetitions and parallelism, among others), such that the stories' structures become more transparent for researchers and readers alike. His findings strongly refuted previous presumptions that "incoherent" stories are worthless. The structures of "incoherent" stories are certainly more complex than canonical narratives as delineated by Labov and Waletzky (1997) and like-minded researchers. However, the complexity of narrative structures does not justify their exclusion. Researchers must be meticulous in their observations and analysis so that the interconnections of elements which might seem incoherent at first glance are recognized as being of equal validity, just as a conductor seeks not only to hear but to understand a complex composition of classical music (Riessman, 2008, p. 81). Attention to such complexity and fine detail in a narrative of teaching-practicum experience is hence crucial if we

do not want to marginalize nonnative English-speaking student-teachers whose stories may initially register as digressive or cryptic.

### Teaching practicum experiences

Though not observed using a narrative inquiry framework, recent studies (e.g., Anindra, 2016; Ragawanti, 2015) have taken up themes of student-teachers' concerns during teaching practicum which they have documented in their teaching reflections. Some major concerns are related to teaching methods (including classroom management issues), personal problems, lesson planning, and communication problems. Additional research into teaching practicum experiences should strive to go beyond paying attention to concerns which are perceived as bad or undesirable. The current study fills in this gap by closely scrutinizing a sense of agency in student-teachers' narratives—however unclear they are—in which they framed the experiences of teaching practicum from a more positive/desirable light, instead of viewing them as full of discouraging concerns.

Documenting "good" teaching experiences has actually been addressed elsewhere (Mambu, 2013). However, in that study, more attention was paid to canonical narrative structures/forms in light of Labov and Waletzky's (1997) theoretical framework. Here I still extend what Pavlenko (2007) regards as a form-oriented analysis, but with Gee's (1991, 2011) theoretical lens of stanza analysis that allows discourse/narrative analysts to explore the interplay between narrative forms/structures and a narrator's identity.

### Identity work in narratives

In navigating one's identity, Bamberg (2012) argues, a narrator is engaged in (1) negotiating a sense of "constancy and change over time" (p. 103); (2) positioning him or herself closely to or distantly from other characters being narrated; and (3) displaying different levels of agency. The first is consistent with a poststructuralist view that one's identity is not fixed, but is likely to change (Norton, 2013). Regarding agency, Bamberg (2012) suggested that a narrator can select "devices from discursive repertoires" (p. 106), such as choice of words, among others, either to indicate "low-agency marking" or exhibit oneself as an "agentive self-creator." The former constructs "a victim role," or at least a character who is "less influential, powerful, responsible," and hence "less blame-worthy." The latter accounts for "the construction of a heroic self—a person who comes across as strong, in control, and self-determined" (p. 106).

Recently, Barkhuizen (2016) reported that Roxanne, a graduate student working as an English teacher at a university in New Zealand, challenged her white superior who addressed her with "baby" at their workplace. In Roxanne's view, that word "has

a very strong sexual connotation!” Infuriated, she declared: “I am not his Asian baby!” (p. 9). Seen through Bamberg’s (2012) lens, Roxanne is a strong agentive self-constructor.

Another recent study by Kayi-Aydar (2015) documents how pre-service classroom teachers demonstrated different levels of agency; that is, they felt either being powerful (e.g., having the capacity to be “effective, caring, and responsible teachers”) or less powerful (i.e., “when they questioned their capacity to act and teach [English language learners]”) (p. 101). More studies on the identity work of nonnative-English-speaking student-teachers in undergraduate language teacher education programs in non-English-speaking countries are needed. This study addresses this gap and sheds more light on how Indonesian student-teachers exercised their agency in different degrees during storytelling events. The particular research questions that guide my present inquiry are as follows: (1) How are unclear stories of teaching practices streamlined by means of Gee’s (2011) narrative analytical framework of stanza analysis?, and (2) How do the streamlined or reconstructed narratives help to display student-teachers’ identity work, especially agency?

## METHOD

The current data come from a larger narrative analysis project I initially did in 2007 (see Mambu, 2009). My original intention was to find out how nonnative English-speaking student-teachers narrated and evaluated (in Labov & Waletzky’s [1997] term) their teaching-practicum experiences in multiple tellings. The narrative structure of stories which were relatively easier to understand has been reported elsewhere (Mambu, 2013).

## Participants

In this paper, I concentrate on how to make sense of relatively unclear stories by Diva and Bruno (pseudonyms), final-year undergraduate students majoring in English language education at a Christian university in Java. At the time of data collection, they had just completed their teaching practicum at different schools.

## Instrument

The main prompt to elicit Diva’s and Bruno’s narratives was a question: “What good experiences did you have when doing your teaching practices?” The same prompt was asked for the first written telling, second oral telling, and third written telling. Multiple tellings allowed me to identify what themes and expressions transpired, as well as differed, across tellings. The conversations and storytelling analyzed here originate from Diva’s and Bruno’s second tellings. Their second tellings were recounted directly to me and Vic, my American

colleague, in two separate sociolinguistic interviews.

In a Labovian sociolinguistic interview, interviewers are usually required to be as quiet as possible when a narrator recounts his or her story. In sociolinguistic interviews that I designed, I allowed both Vic and myself to chime in and ask student-teachers (including Diva and Bruno) to elaborate on certain points, in both the first written narrative and the second oral storytelling, which we found unclear or not sufficiently “evaluated” with descriptions, comments, and animated speech of other people or the narrator him or herself in the past (Labov & Waletzky, 1997).

## Data analysis

Some excerpts from the first written tellings, which Vic and I read to Bruno and Diva respectively when asking them for clarification, were included in the transcript. The transcription conventions are based on: 1) a conversation analytic format for conversations (see Appendix) between the interviewers and the students and, 2) Gee’s (2011) strategy of dividing a narrative into lines and stanzas. The former provides the context shaping the conversation and Diva’s extended storytelling. The latter facilitates the structuring of Diva’s story that may seem cryptic to some readers. Lines and stanzas allow me to put one connected thought in one chunk. Apart from transcriptions, some tools used for analyzing the narrative data here include *the frame problem tool* and *the context is reflexive tool* (Gee, 2011), among others, as well as Bamberg’s (2012) perspective.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Reconstructing Diva’s story

#### Temporal sequence

Overall, Diva’s story can be divided into two large parts. First, Diva recounted her “pre-teaching,” “whilst-teaching,” and “post-teaching” experiences (Stanzas 1-16; Conversations A-D; see Excerpt 1). Diva mentioned pre-teaching and post-teaching explicitly, but whilst-teaching was determined from implication. Second, during the teaching practice, Diva spotlighted her tension and sense of victory in handling a “remarkable student” (Stanzas I-VI; Conversations E-G; see Excerpt 2). The second part seems to be embedded in the first part. Jos is the author of this article. He interviewed the two student-teachers.

Excerpt 1. Diva’s recounted pre-teaching and whilst-teaching sessions.

#### Conversation A

Jos: >You said that the class is very active but a dangerous one<=

Diva: =ya

Jos: And then you also elaborate (--) in the written narrative about the pre-teaching=

- Diva: =oh=  
 Jos: =and then the discussion of technology in human life=  
 Diva: =↑oh↓ uh i- at that point I turn- u:h I used like (.) a game in in the final tea- in the final teaching I wa- oh no ((closing eyes with her both hands))  
 Not final teaching but [(\_\_\_\_)]  
 Jos: [Ya you also used the icebreaker (.)  
 [[like  
 Diva: [[Ya like uh  
 Jos: Like(.) what is the icebreaker?  
 What is the example [of icebreaker?  
 Diva: [((mumbling something about “teaching”)) ok=  
 ((smiles))  
 Jos: =ok

**Stanza 2–Previous teaching event**

3. what I had been taught to them
4. it was if I’m not mistaken is if-clause

**Stanza 3–Pre-teaching: An earlier plan (i.e., a quiz)**

5. And my friends / no / my partners
6. that also teaching the same class
7. we have an agreement
8. that it should be ended with a quiz

**Stanza 4–Pre-teaching: A later plan (i.e., disputing the quiz plan)**

9. but then we realize
10. if a quiz then they had a bad perception
11. or a bad image about the one
12. and they could not doing easily
13. I mean in the full of spirit like that

**Stanza 5–Pre-teaching in action (i.e., it is a “game”)**

14. And because of that well we said that it was a game
15. but then when I saw that / okay
16. if I taught in this class
17. it means that I had to do some changes in my strategy

**Stanza 6–Pre-teaching in action (i.e., an opinion-generating activity)**

18. Because of that I thought
19. when I started the pre-teaching
20. I asked them a lot of questions
21. And one of them gave her opinions about technology

**Stanza 7–Pre-teaching in retrospect, planning on the spot**

22. and then when I think about that
23. Why didn’t I ask them the same questions

24. I want to know what their opinion about the technology
25. Because it was like a trend in this world that technology was better if we use it
26. than we use the traditional one

**Stanza 8–Identifying self as a debater**

27. And then because of that
28. I were debaters
29. I mean in the past ((laughs))

**Stanza 9–Whilst-teaching in retrospect, planning on the spot**

30. Because of that I tried to change it into debate//
31. And then I bring a topic that finally gave them
32. the chance to convey
33. what they think about the technology
34. and what it will be useful for their life//

**Conversation B**

- Jos: =is it what you meant as a meaningful noise? ((uses two fingers of both hands to give a gesture quoting Diva’s phrase of “meaningful noise”))

**Stanza 10–“Meaningful noise”: What the class was notorious or known for**

35. ya meaningful noise
36. because when several of my friends taught at that class
37. they said that “no, it was a trouble”
38. or “it was like a disaster if you taught at that class
39. because that class very noise.
40. But they are very smart

**Stanza 11–Whilst-teaching in retrospect, planning on the spot**

41. And then I thought again “how can I teach them?”
42. And then when I found that strategy
43. that it actually less than / no more than 30 minutes

**Stanza 12–Whilst-teaching in retrospect, Diva and her mentor**

*A. Mentor teacher’s comment*

44. Because of that the teachers was not disappointed
45. but felt like it was too: lo:ng so for that discussion
46. Because it could influence the post-teaching

*B. Diva’s own comment in response to her mentor’s comment*

47. but according to me it was a meaningful noise



influence the post-teaching”; lines 45-46, Stanza 12A). Diva was fully aware of the necessity of being faithful to the teaching structure (pre-, whilst-, and post-teaching). Her sense of agency, however, seems to have enabled her to put much more emphasis on the debating activity.

### Grammar use

Grammatical errors, which occur frequently in Diva’s narrative (e.g., “what I had been taught to them” [Stanza 1 line 1]; “and they could not doing easily” [Stanza 4 line 12]; “I were debaters” [Stanza 8, line 28]), may interfere with comprehension, and yet understanding the big picture—thanks to Gee’s (2011) transcription convention using lines and stanzas—helps to clarify the overall narrative discourse.

To clarify this point, I will identify the usage of a number of discourse markers. The somewhat frequent “because of that” as a discourse marker in Diva’s narrative (lines 14, 18, 27, 30, 44 [Excerpt 1]) and lines l and p, [Excerpt 2]) is particularly interesting. She also uses “because” (lines 25, 36, 39, 46, and 48). The use of this expression and prevalence of this word combine to form part of her unique discourse fingerprint, as it were. Other students I interviewed (including Bruno) did not typically use “because [of that]” very frequently. While listening to her story, I felt that she said “because [of that]” overly frequently. However, after counting the total number of times she said “because [of that],” I have to admit that the number of times she said “because” (5 times) and “because of that” (7 times) was not excessive. Regardless, as I am analyzing her narrative, I begin asking what the function of this “because [of that]” marker is. In *the context is reflexive tool*, Gee (2011) states that “[s]peaking reflects context and context reflects (is shaped by) speaking (what was said)” (p. 85). In view of this, Diva’s use of “because [of that]” in her narrative reflects the context of debating, and the context of debating reflects (or is shaped by) saying “because [of that].”

I am not saying that all debaters use “because of that” very frequently or all the time. Rather, because debaters are trained to justify (or are used to justifying) their arguments, and the most typical way of justifying is by using the word/phrase “because of that,” I gained insight into an aspect of Diva’s identity. Put another way, the use of “because of that” — I have no space to discuss “because” here — is a strong indicator that Diva is a debater. In line 14, she decided to frame the activity in a “game” and not a quiz, which was a relatively good reason for the students to keep their enthusiasm in Diva’s teaching practice. In line 18, she instructed her students to ask questions as a result of her change in her strategy (line 17) from a “quiz” to a “game.” “Because of that” in line 27 did not make sense if simply followed by “I were

debaters” (line 28), and yet it was because of the fact that she was a debater that she framed class as a debating activity (line 30). Having some meaningful extended activity in class (line 43) constitutes a reason for Diva’s mentor teacher not to be disappointed (line 44). Logical reasoning may also account for the use of “because of that” in lines l and p in Excerpt 2. That is, the expression “because of that” functions as a signal for me, as a narrative discourse analyst, to mark a transition from one stanza to another when transcribing Diva’s narrative (i.e., line 14 Stanza 15; line 18 Stanza 6; line 27 Stanza 8, line 30 Stanza 9; and line 44 Stanza 12A). Thus, what I felt as a distractor that initially made me think of Diva’s story as cryptic actually made perfect sense and was completely coherent! The explanations of her reasoning might not have been extensive, and yet “because of that” helped her to construct an identity as a debater and to explain some motives of her decisions in class.

Excerpt 2. “A remarkable student.”

### Conversation D

- Jos: And what you mean by remarkable students (1.5) quote unquote s- =  
 Diva: Remarkable students=((laughs))  
 Jos: =who started to ignore your activity  
 What do you mean by remarkable here?=-

*On a “remarkable student”*

### Stanza I—Setting

- a. remarkable ((laughs)) here is there was a boy
- b. that actually they said that he was the most vicious person ((laughs))
- c. I mean there was a naughty but *licik* [sly]
- d. the first time is that he behaved so nice

### Stanza II—Conflict

- e. but then when I explain some things
- f. then he tried to questions all the thing I said//
- g. And then I said “listen it first then you question” /

### Stanza III—Crisis

- h. But then he also like murmur something that I don’t know what it was about
- i. And then suddenly the three of them
- j. I mean the friends beside him was laughing
- k. And then I said “Oh my God it may be some jokes that related to me”

### Stanza IV—Resolution

- l. ((laughs)) Because of that after I explain
- m. then I gave him several question and always him
- n. after his friends it was him again
- o. it was him again//

### Stanza V—Coda

- p. Because of that maybe I was sly I think

### Conversation E

- Jos: Hm okay =  
Vic: =I'm glad you asked that because (.) my assumption with remarkable is positive connotation  
Diva: ((laughs))  
Vic: The most clever / the most brilliant  
Jos: No I I suspect [that it is  
Vic: [(-) okay that changes [that changes  
Diva: [but ((laughs))  
Vic: °That's fine°  
Jos: So my prediction [is right in this case  
Vic: [((laughs))  
Diva: Uh but uh (2.5)  
Jos: ((looks at my digital voice recorder))

### Stanza VI–Evaluation

- q. the first time I thought that he was like  
r. a naughty person that didn't have a brain at all  
s. but then it turns out to be /  
t. ya actually he was smart  
u. ya it showed from what he gave in the debating

### Conversation F

- Jos: Oh so he contributed a lot [in the debate?=  
Diva: [ya  
=ya  
Jos: =despite his being remarkable and sly?

### Stanza VI continued

- v. he was critical actually

### Conversation G

- Jos: Critical?  
Diva: Mhm  
Jos: So you have good time  
Diva: Good time

### Diva's identity work

Gee's (2011) *the frame problem tool* will be used as a starting point to answer this question as I analyze the data: Why is being a debater used by Diva to frame her narrative? To dispute an argument is an action, but the act(ions) of extended conversations where arguments are juxtaposed by questions or rebuttals is part of debating as an "activity" (i.e., "a socially recognized and institutionally or culturally supported endeavor that usually involves sequencing or combining actions in certain specified ways" (Gee, 2011, p. 89). Diva made explicit in line 28 (Stanza 8, Excerpt 1) that she used to be a debater, and this seems to have made her more comfortable integrating a debate-like activity in her class. As debating is her forte, Diva responded to my interest in eliciting stories of "good experiences" in her teaching practicum, which I verified at the end of

my conversation with Diva (see Conversation G, Excerpt 2). Her relative strength and degree of comfort in debating, regardless of her grammatical inaccuracies, are reinforced throughout her narrative in both parts—see Excerpts 1 and 2. Whereas in Excerpt 1 the debating activity drove her teaching practice to the extent that she sacrificed post-teaching, thus resisting the typical structure of teaching practice by a student-teacher doing teaching practicum, in Excerpt 2 her strength in debating was used to manage her notoriously noisy class where there was at least one "remarkable" student.

The larger question remains: What does being a debater have to do with a teaching practice in a school? In Gee's (2011) perspective, identity is constructed through a person's engagement in an activity like debating. Also from his perspective on *the frame problem tool*, "we should see if we can look at the context again" (p. 37), like Diva's teaching practice in a junior high school, "and widen what we take to be relevant" (p. 37), like Diva's engagement in a debating society outside the teaching practice context. Embodying an identity as a debater who has some experiences of participating in debating competitions allows Diva to inhabit a powerful space and exert herself as an "agentive self-constructor," in light of Bamberg (2012), inasmuch as she constructed herself on the basis of possessing a background that both her mentor teacher (see Excerpt 1) and her "remarkable" student (see Excerpt 2) did not have. In a typical Indonesian school hierarchy, especially in the context of teaching practicum, a mentor teacher usually maintains a very powerful position. Student-teachers who do their teaching practices under mentor teachers' supervision are meant to become the next stratum of this hierarchy. This tendency toward subjugation increases the likelihood that novice teachers who do not have sufficient knowledge, teaching skills, or confidence will fall prey to their students' (or even mentor teachers') ridicule.

Anecdotes abound as to how student-teachers were stressed out (see e.g., Anindra, 2016), sometimes to the point of bursting into tears, when they taught students with or without (draconian) mentor teachers present in class (see also Barkhuizen, 2016). Diva attested feeling stressed when sharing that her friends labeled the very class she was teaching as "a trouble" (line 37, Stanza 10, Excerpt 1) and that "it was like a disaster if you taught at that class/because the class very noisy" (lines 38-39, Stanza 10, Excerpt 1). Diva even experienced a tricky situation in class (e.g., when she felt that one of her students questioned "all the thing" she said [line f] and some others made fun of her; see Stanzas II and III, Excerpt 2). To cope with this challenge, Diva used her debating experience as a means of handling difficult situations related to

her students' behaviors. One tactic useful in dealing with the "remarkable" student was her ability to keep formulating questions (akin to rebuttals in debating competitions) directed to the student: "... after I explain/then I gave him several question and always him /after his friends it was him again/it was him again/" (lines l, m, n, o, Stanza IV, Excerpt 2). Diva complained that the "remarkable" student is "*licik*" (i.e., sly; line c, Stanza I), and yet she used her slyness to keep asking the student questions.

Even the word "remarkable" is important here to build up a relatively positive image (or identity) of Diva herself. Choice of words is important in analyzing discourse, especially a keyword that shapes a description of a particular thing or person (cf. Gee's [2011, p. 54] notion of *the why this way and not that way tool*). Diva did not use a negative or derogatory expression for her student, although she was very much annoyed by him. Vic and I would have probably perceived Diva negatively if she had done so. Although I sensed that "remarkable" was used to ironically depict the student, my fellow interviewer Vic thought of the word as engendering a "positive connotation" (see Conversation E, Excerpt 2). Diva then seems to have successfully created ambiguity through her use of "remarkable." In retrospect, as I analyzed her story, "remarkable" was indeed utilized to imply both positive and negative connotations. The student was annoying and yet he was amelioratively "smart" (line t, Stanza VI) and "critical" (line v, Stanza VI). The conciseness of "remarkable" to mean "annoying," "smart," and "critical" at the same time is also effective in constructing her identity as a relatively competent speaker during storytelling, as I mentioned earlier. Diva sounded rational, rather than emotional, in handling a difficult student. Furthermore, Diva did initially think of the student as "naughty," and not "hav[ing] a brain at all" (lines q and r, Stanza VI, Excerpt 2). Nevertheless, the next clauses overthrew the negative image: "but then it turns out to be/ya actually he was smart" (lines s and t, Stanza VI, Excerpt 2). The initial thought about the student, in other words, was backgrounded, and a more positive image of the student was foregrounded. Even when "sly" (line c, Stanza I, Excerpt 2) was foregrounded and the initial observation of the "nice" behavior of the student was backgrounded (line d, Stanza I, Excerpt 2) to set the stage for conflict between her and the student, Diva concluded with a balanced view of the student. That is, conversations E, F, and G, together with Stanza VI are replete with Diva's positive "evaluation"—to use Labov & Waletzky's (1997) term, which is also used by Gee (2011)—of the student.

#### Reconstructing Bruno's narrative

Compared to Diva's story, Bruno's is less elaborate. Similar to Diva's story, Bruno's is also relatively

unclear. To illustrate, I expected him to recount his teaching experience more autobiographically (see my attempts before Stanzas 5 and 6, Excerpt 3), but Bruno only responded to my probing questions very briefly.

When Vic asked him to expand on what he wrote in the first telling, Bruno elaborated (in Stanzas 7 and 8), though with a moralizing tone; that is, teaching allows a teacher to feel happy with their students' success, despite their meager salary (lines 29-30).

Overall, Bruno's narrative is comprised of tidbits of stories: His amazement that his students at a rural school respected him (Stanzas 1 and 3); his past self who was "naughty" and liked to make fun of student-teachers (lines 4-5, Stanza 2); a brief comparison between his and other teaching practicum sites (Stanza 4); snapshots of his teaching session (Stanzas 5-6); and what being a teacher means to Bruno himself (Stanza 8).

Excerpt 3. Bruno's "small stories."

#### Stanza 1—Abstract

1. The best experience actually / that is happen when I taught there in (a rural school)
2. I was amazed by the students there.
3. I didn't thought that / the response from the student will be good

#### Stanza 2—Reminiscing on an earlier self as a student

4. I used to be naughty also that / the practical teacher
5. I used to play around to them

#### Stanza 3—Returning to his teaching session

6. And then it is happen to me ((laughter))
7. I was also amazed that
8. They pay attention and concentrate to my lesson
9. To my speech all the time
- ...

#### Stanza 4—Comparing the rural school to other teaching practicum sites

10. When I heard from my friends
11. That have already taught in many places
12. The students are lazy, naughty, and something else
13. But in this places I didn't get it at all
- ...

Jos : So what specifically happened in the first teaching, as far as you can remember?

#### Stanza 5—Recalling what happened in the class

14. I just tried to be communicative
15. I thought I had to act like uh ordinary teacher
16. They talked like this this this and this
17. But I tried to / at my first teaching / I tried to encourage them to speak

18. To answer whatever uh my question

Jos : By the way, what was the topic on that day?

**Stanza 6—Recalling the topic of his teaching session**

19. Simple present tense and present continuous tense  
20. I tried to measure what skill they (--) supposed to be  
21. And I found that they actually know that- that-uh that tenses  
22. But they didn't / maybe they know only the uh surface  
...  
Vic : I have here a sentence in which that I would like you to explain for me. You said it seems that being a teacher is like doing a social job. You give the best to them, and don't expect reward from them. Is that a conclusion that you had before this experience or one that you had after this experience?

**Stanza 7—Responding to Vic**

23. I think it is after  
24. And after I taught them that  
25. I got nothing that uh only- only the:: (--) situation that  
26. So lovely and uh the environment so different

**Stanza 8—The moral of Bruno's story**

27. That encouraged me to- to- to do more (.) to- uh to be a teacher  
28. I realized that being teacher is not good /  
29. Especially for the salary  
30. Is not good for the living  
31. I know in Indonesia it's kind like that  
32. But the feeling that you get when you teach them  
33. And the students will succeed finally  
34. Hm (.) it seems like you accompany them  
35. To bring them to reach their success  
36. that kind of feeling you will not get from- from another occupation.  
...

**Bruno's identity work**

Instead of providing vivid details of his teaching session, Bruno framed his narrative in a less agentive manner than Diva, when viewed through Bamberg's (2012) theoretical lens. He must have thought that he would be victimized by his students in the teaching site. Bruno did overcome his teaching fear, but it was mainly after he found that (or because) his students were cooperative. Bruno's level of agency was not as high as Diva who performed a confident debater identity. Moreover, when asked to elaborate on what happened in class,

Bruno's responses became vaguer (see e.g., line 16, Stanza 5), which also gives an impression that he is not very agentive.

It does not mean Bruno has no agency. Bruno's comparison between his teaching practice site at a rural area and other schools (Stanza 4), from the viewpoint of Gee's (2011) *the frame problem tool*, seemed to highlight a stark contrast between Bruno's sense of agency, which grew out of his favorable experience of interacting with attentive rural school students (lines 1-3, Stanza 1; line 13, Stanza 4), and his friends' stories of teaching in other schools (lines 10-12, Stanza 4). It can be argued, therefore, that a narrator's sense of agency is contingent upon his/her perceivably good experience in one place, as opposed to one or more places inhabited by others, at a particular past event.

Agency is also displayed through activities reconstructed, and/or a sense of identity idealized, in a narrative. For instance, Bruno "tried to be communicative" and "encourage [his students] to speak" in class (lines 14, 17; Stanza 5). More importantly, and as Vic noted based on Bruno's first written narrative, Bruno raised a powerful remark: "...being a teacher is like doing a social job; you give the best to them" (between Stanzas 6 and 7). Moreover, even if Bruno's statement that "...the feeling that you get when you teach them, and the students will succeed finally...to bring them to reach their success" (lines 32-33, 35) is hypothetical, it indicates his idealized (or romanticized) identity and view of the teaching profession. Bruno did struggle with the fact that he had to teach. The likelihood that he would encounter "naughty" students like himself and those in other teaching sites (lines 4 and 12) was his real source of tension. However, at least in the storytelling event, he agentively concluded his satisfaction: "that kind of feeling you will not get from another occupation" (line 36).

**CONCLUSION**

The craft of understanding (if not also appreciating) a story is not solely reliant upon its highly detailed telling, error-free grammar in a second language, and rigidly linear sense making on the part of a narrator. The results of the current study are along the lines of *the new literacy studies* pioneered by Gee (2012), among others, in which attention to rambling narratives told by people of a disadvantaged group like the African Americans in U.S. school contexts has been of paramount importance. This study also supports both Hayes' (2013) suggestion to pay more attention to the agentive role of nonnative English-speaking teachers and Barkhuizen's (2016) recent call for listening to novice teachers' voices and identity.

With regard to Diva, she had to be submissive to a mentor teacher and to make her students

satisfied with her teaching practice (e.g., by engaging them in games). As a former student-teacher, Diva was again in an imbalanced power relation with Vic and me. Regardless of these intricate power relations in which Diva was socio-culturally situated, her telling somehow constructed a positive image of her as a person who was capable of managing her class, particularly with her debating skill. It is often the case that classroom management is one of the most challenging skills for novice teachers, especially in handling students' noise (Ragawanti, 2015). However, a narrative analysis of Diva's story provides a better outlook of how a novice/student-teacher managed her class through her sense of agency as a debater.

I cannot support the assertion that Diva's teaching-practice session was entirely successful based on these conversations alone — I would need to triangulate her story with what her mentor or her students thought of her teaching practice as well. Likewise, the extent to which Bruno's impression that his students were cooperative needs to be verified by his rural school students.

Assessments of successfulness were not the aim of this study, however. Instead, the narrative analysis makes more visible student-teachers' identity work in which they, with their sense of agency, overcame (inter)personal tensions or struggles narrated in stories which are not necessarily clear in terms of plotting and detail. Put another way, the narrative analysis provides some evidence of student-teachers' identity work, especially in their attempts to construct the identity of agentive student-teachers. Recall that Diva accentuated rationality by justifying her utterances with "because [of that]," the use of "remarkable" that backgrounded her negative emotion, or the use of "game" instead of "quiz." Diva also showed resourcefulness in managing a notoriously difficult class. Concerning Bruno, despite his low-agency marking (in view of Bamberg, 2012; Kayi-Aydar, 2015), he exercised his agency as a student-teacher who both encouraged his students to speak in his class, as well as to be successful in life, and idealized the teaching profession.

Still interesting to explore is how an original narrator (like Diva or Bruno) would respond to an analysis like mine, especially after a considerable lapse of time. What remain(s) the same or differ(s) over the years, and why?

In the context of language teacher education, the current narrative analysis has at least one pedagogical implication. Samples of student-teachers' perplexing or vague narratives can be used by (English) language teacher educators to engage their student-teachers in dialogue. Questions that might be raised to foster dialogues with student-teachers include, but are not limited to, these: (1) If you had the chance to interview a student-teacher narrator like Bruno or Diva, what would you ask?

(2) If you were the narrator, how would you narrate your planned and/or implemented teaching procedure? (3) What could you have done differently in class, had you been the narrator? (4) What agentive role can you play in class? The degree to which student-teachers are facilitated by responding to these questions in their preparation for (and reflection upon) teaching practices is worth investigating.

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## APPENDIX

Transcription conventions (adapted from Wray & Bloomer, 2006):

=	:	A latching symbol.
[[	:	Two people begin at the same time.
[	:	Someone's speech that overlaps his/her interlocutor.
(.)	:	A very short pause.
(1.5)	:	A pause of measurable length.
.hh	:	An in-breath.
((smiles))	:	A non-verbal cue (e.g., smiling).
(name)	:	An intentionally deleted or changed name to ensure anonymity.
lo:ng	:	The colon indicates a prolonged sound.
(--)	:	An indecipherable syllable, word, or expression.
Lenny, shut ↓up	:	The arrows signal a rising and a falling intonation respectively.
°utterance °	:	A quiet utterance.
>faster spee ch<	:	An utterance between inverted angle brackets speeds up.
Utterance / utter ance	:	The slash indicates a pause and marks the end of an idea unit (Gee, 1991) in a line. A line looks like either a complete clause (i.e., with a subject and a verb) or a truncated clause (e.g., because the narrator jumped to another thought)
Fal- false	:	The dash denotes a false start.