



## Getting to the heart of the matter: Discursive negotiations of emotions within literacy coaching interactions



Carolyn S. Hunt

Illinois State University, School of Teaching and Learning, Campus Box 5330, Normal, IL 61790, United States

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Literacy coaches and teachers experienced conditions of vulnerability, which encouraged feelings of shame, guilt, and fear.
- Dominant discourses of teaching and learning influenced how emotions were enacted within coaching interactions.
- Literacy coaches and teachers may benefit from acknowledging emotional aspects of their work.

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 4 January 2016  
Received in revised form  
29 August 2016  
Accepted 5 September 2016

#### Keywords:

Professional development  
Literacy coaching  
Emotions  
Microethnographic discourse analysis

### ABSTRACT

In this study, a microethnographic approach to discourse analysis was used to explore how literacy coaches and teachers discursively enacted emotions as they negotiated issues of identity, power, and positioning during video-recorded literacy coaching interactions. The coaches and teachers avoided shame, fear, and guilt as they positioned themselves and each other in relation to idealized notions of *best practices* and *good teacher*. Findings suggest that literacy coaches and teachers may benefit from acknowledging the emotional aspects of their work and from entering into discussions about emotions in order to support the development of a shared vision for teaching and learning.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

### 1. Introduction

Literacy coaching involves complex emotional work within the physical and ideological spaces in which coaches and teachers interact (Hargreaves, 1998). Expectations for literacy coaches vary greatly within and across contexts, and as such they perform many different tasks related to facilitating teacher learning, including observing and debriefing classroom practice, providing curricular resources, implementing staff development, and supporting literacy reform agendas (Bean et al., 2015; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014). Although it can be difficult and uncomfortable for coaches to navigate these multiple and often conflicting expectations (Galloway & Lesaux, 2014; Hunt & Handsfield, 2013), coaching holds great potential to support the development of complex understandings over time (Crafton & Kaiser, 2011) and promote teacher reflection and professional growth (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Despite the promise of literacy coaching, there are many

documented challenges and tensions, such as navigating shifting identities (Rainville & Jones, 2008), determining who holds expert and novice status (Crafton & Kaiser, 2011; Hibbert, Heydon, & Rich, 2008), and balancing policy demands with the needs of teachers and students (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; MacGillivray, Ardell, Curwen, & Palma, 2004).

Given the inherent tensions in literacy coaching (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012; Hibbert et al., 2008; Hunt & Handsfield, 2013), it is important to explore emotions in coaches' and teachers' work, especially in the context of high-stakes accountability and reform (Schutz & Zembylas, 2009). Since literacy coaching is an outgrowth of the current educational climate, it may be worthwhile to investigate how power and positioning within accountability structures impacts teachers' and coaches' "emotional labor" (Hargreaves, 2001). As Schutz and Zembylas (2009) argued, "there is often an underestimation of the complexity of teaching: teaching is often perceived as a rational activity, but the emotional complexity of teaching is neglected" (p. 10). Literacy coaching is emotionally complex as well, so it is essential to examine the role of emotions in coaches' work and interactions with teachers if it is to

E-mail address: [cshunt@ilstu.edu](mailto:cshunt@ilstu.edu).

be a successful endeavor.

While emotions play an important role in coaches' daily work and their interactions with teachers (Gibson, 2006; Hunt & Handsfield, 2013; Kissel, Mraz, Algozzine, & Stover, 2011; Mangin & Dunsmore, 2013; McKinney & Girogis, 2009), few studies have specifically explored emotions in literacy coaching. This study seeks to deepen the understanding of how coaches and teachers "do emotions" (Zembylas, 2005b, p. 211) as they discursively position themselves and each other in relation to dominant discourses of teaching and learning. I asked: How do literacy coaches and teachers discursively enact emotions as they negotiate issues of identity, power, and positioning during coaching interactions?

To answer this question, I begin by reviewing existing research of emotions in literacy coaching interactions and outlining the theoretical frame that informed the study. Then I explain the research context and the microethnographic approach to discourse analysis that supported my analyses of four video-recorded coaching interactions. In the findings, I highlight how the coaches and teachers avoided shame, fear, and guilt as they discursively positioned themselves and each other in relation to idealized notions of *best practices* and *good teacher*. I conclude by arguing that literacy coaches and teachers may benefit from acknowledging the emotional aspects of their work and from entering into discussions about emotions in order to support the development of a shared vision for teaching and learning.

## 2. Emotions in literacy coaching interactions

Although emotions are often mentioned in literacy coaching research, there are few substantive discussions of how emotions are enacted within interactions between coaches and teachers. Researchers highlight specific emotions experienced by literacy coaches, such as frustration with unclear expectations and teacher resistance, and insecurity within their positions as literacy experts (Gibson, 2006; Kissel et al., 2011; Mangin & Stoelinga, 2011; McKinney & Girogis, 2009). Teachers' emotions are most often considered in relation to whether they resist or value literacy coaching (Matsumura, Garnier, Correnti, Junker, & Bickel, 2010). For instance, in a qualitative case study of a literacy coaching initiative in a high-poverty, urban elementary school, Otaiba, Hosp, Smartt, and Dole (2008) reported that teachers resisted the literacy coach's reform efforts because they felt overwhelmed by the pressures of learning a new reading program and participating in professional development (PD) activities. Buell, Han, Blamey, and Vukelich (2010) found that teachers valued literacy coaching more when they felt comfortable with their coaches. The researchers highlighted how relationships between teachers and coaches were "highly personal and expressed more on emotive dimensions such as trust and guidance rather than the more emotion neutral description of peer-to-peer feedback" (p. 49).

When emotions *are* discussed in the research literature, they are rarely considered as an essential element of analysis. One notable exception is Darby's (2008) qualitative study in which she conducted critical incident interviews with 19 teachers concerning their emotions related to a comprehensive school reform effort. She noted that teachers felt fear and intimidation during their initial interactions with university faculty and the school-based literacy coach. Over time, however, they felt more positive emotions such as pride and gratitude as their students' achievement scores increased and they experienced greater self efficacy. Similarly, Shernoff, Lakind, Frazier, and Jakobsons (2014) argued that effective coaching requires emotional supports, such as empathizing, listening, reassuring, and validating.

Other research highlights the emotional work of coaches and teachers as they navigate an educational climate of reform and

accountability. For instance, Cobb, Sargent, and Patchen (2012) explored how a literacy coach and three teachers coped with restrictive mandates that often conflicted with their ideals and beliefs about effective teaching and learning. They argued that teachers' emotional responses contributed to how they made sense of the mandates and their decisions to accept or push back against constraints on their teaching. Hunt and Handsfield (2013) focused on the emotional experiences of first-year literacy coaches who felt significant pressure to live up to unclear expectations within a district that emphasized a narrow-view of best practices based in a particular model of reading and writing workshop. The coaches were simultaneously positioned as experts who should support the district's reform agenda and as collaborative equals who should build trusting relationships with teachers. These conflicting discourses were difficult to negotiate and left the coaches feeling susceptible to failure and uncomfortable with their emerging professional identities as coaches.

## 3. Theoretical framework

I understand literacy coaching as involving the negotiation of competing power structures and expectations that influence coaches' work. This view of social practice builds on the work of de Certeau (1984), who theorized about the everyday tactical negotiations that ordinary people make in response to space and power. Identities are multiple, shifting, and socially constructed within micro-level negotiations of everyday interactions (Gee, 2001; Moje & Luke, 2009) in relation to macro-level policies and ideologies of teaching and learning. Coaches and teachers may, however, choose to resist discourses within these contexts by taking up language and texts in unintended ways and renegotiating identities and roles (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Stuart-Faris, 2005; de Certeau, 1984). Within this perspective, emotions are intricately related to identities in that they index how we view ourselves, our positions within local and global contexts, and how we want to be recognized (Harré, 1986; Solomon, 1993). Emotions are performed and co-produced as people "do emotions" (Zembylas, 2005b, p. 211) and cannot be separated from enactments of social identities (Haviland-Jones & Kahlbaugh, 2000; Zembylas, 2005b). As such, it is important to consider *what* emotions are expressed within coaching interactions and *how* they are enacted as coaches and teachers negotiate issues of identity, power, and positioning.

### 3.1. Emotional rules

Emotional expressions, when viewed as socially constructed discursive acts (Harré, 1986), are one way in which coaches and teachers can negotiate the "construction of teacher identity, subjectivity, and power relations" (Zembylas, 2005b, p. 189). Emotions help to determine positions within a moral order (Parrot, 2003) as "emotional rules" develop based on which emotional displays are considered acceptable within a context (Zembylas, 2005a, p. 936). These tacit rules limit the power of emotional expressions, but may be resisted when emotions are used as tactics for negotiating social expectations (Zembylas, 2005a). This discursive enactment of emotions is not necessarily intentional but is performed within moment-to-moment interactions between the self and others (Bamberg, 1997; Davies & Harré, 1990; Erickson, 2004) in relation to dominant discourses.

Attention to emotional rules challenges "traditional philosophical and popular views of emotions as individualistic, natural, private, and universal" (Boler, 1997, p. 226) and highlights the complex power relations that are inherent within the collaborative construction of emotions and emotional understandings (Boler, 1997; Madrid & Dunn-Kenney, 2010). This view of emotion resists

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6850423>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6850423>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)