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How best mentors mentor: A metadiscursive investigation of mentoring styles in pre-service teacher training

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Mentorship is a commonly used strategy for career development that has obvious benefits for students in undergraduate pre-service teacher training programs. In contrast to teaching practicum, which generally involves pedagogical supervision and performance evaluation by teachers, mentorship is more focused on sharing experiences, supporting challenges and nurturing skills to promote personal and professional growth. To empower pre-service teachers and prepare them for potential challenges in the context of local English language teaching (ELT), an alumni mentoring programme was established in the framework of communities of practice (CoP), with the mentors being in-service graduates working in local schools and mentees being students on the teacher-training programme in a Hong Kong university. By triangulating audio transcripts of mentoring sessions delivered by three top mentors with data from questionnaire responses and mentor logs, this paper examines the mentoring styles of the three best mentors from the metadiscursive perspective. It was found that, in a community of practice, mentors who may seem to enjoy a relatively more dominant position, in fact, had to strategically and pragmatically employ metadiscursive resources to manage relationships with the mentees and organize talks in the mentoring process. Other attributing factors for a successful mentoring session include mentor self-perceived roles and prior mentorship experiences, nature of the activities in the session and group dynamics. This paper concludes that it is the combination of all the factors that constitute a particular mentoring style. The findings have implications for mentoring programmes in teacher preparation.

Keywords: mentoring, pre-service teacher training, mentoring style, metadiscourse

Importance of mentoring in pre-service teacher training

Mentoring is "a planned and intentional process which is considered to be developmental in that it enhances the individual both personally and professionally" by "sharing of experiences and realities" (Long 1994, p. 1). Placed in the context of professional development of novice teachers, mentoring is defined by Hobson et al. (2009, p. 207) as "the one-to-one support of a novice or less experienced practitioner (mentee) by a more experienced practitioner (mentor), designed primarily to assist the development of the mentee's expertise and to facilitate their induction into the culture of the profession (in this case, teaching) and into the specific local context (here, the school or college)". Copious research has suggested the enormous benefits of mentoring for teacher training. Benefits of mentoring for beginner teachers, according to McIntyre and Hagger (1996), include improvement in confidence and self-esteem, professional growth, self-reflection and problem-solving, among others. During the process of

mentoring, the mentor facilitates learning by demonstrating professional activities such as lesson planning, providing feedback and giving guidance while building and maintaining a trusting relationship with the mentee. It is believed that such support would facilitate mentees' enculturation into the professional community and encourage their commitment to the profession (Forrester & Draper, 2007).

Mentoring in a Community of Practice
Mentoring, as a social practice, is defined by Kemmis et al. (2014) as a specific kind of cooperative human activity in which "doings" are comprehensible through characteristic "sayings". Though it can be performed in many contexts based on a variety of purposes, mentoring as a means of supporting prospective or novice teachers is most often carried out in schools where pre-service or novice teachers are having teaching practicum and at an early stage of their teaching career. It has been found that, with the sharing of professional experience and knowledge, provision of technical and psychological support, mentoring plays a crucial role in pre-service teachers' professional development (Calderhead & Shorrock 2003; Leshem 2012).

Dominguez and Hager (2013), through their literature review, find that mentoring has been approached mainly from three theoretical perspectives: developmental, learning and social. Developmental theories of mentoring take learning as a result of a series of progressive instructional stages; learning theories of mentoring, however, emphasizes the positive impact on the behavior of the mentee and the development of his/her autonomy and independence, whereas social theories of mentoring stress role modelling. The Community of Practice (CoP) framework (Lave & Wanger, 1991) approaches mentoring from a social perspective.

In social theories, learning is considered to be social and situated. It occurs as participation in problem-solving activities as the *zone of proximal development* under the guidance of experts or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978) through interaction and taking part in contexts such as communities. CoP, as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger &Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 1), hence provides a powerful framework for promoting professional development of pre-service teachers (Hadar & Brody, 2010; Jimenez-Silva & Olson, 2012; Patton & Parker, 2017; Richards, 2010). According to Wenger (1998, p.72), CoPs are defined by three characteristics: joint enterprise (a set of problems or topics members care about), mutual engagement (what members do together as part of practice), and shared repertoire (shared concepts and artifacts). This study takes the CoP perspective to approach mentoring. The mentees' professional development is promoted through regular interaction with more experienced peers, exchanging ideas and pedagogical knowledge, sharing resources and working in partnership and collaboration in their joint enterprise.

Systematic observation, teaching practice and reflection are the 3-stage processes that feature many professional practice courses currently operating in education faculties in the world (e.g. Sim, 2006). Though pre-service teachers are supported and guided by school mentor-teachers and university supervisors, another valuable resource, the alumni community, is often left out in this process. This study, leveraging a "community of practice" where pre-service teachers can learn in a supportive environment from more capable or experienced alumni who are familiar with the teacher-training programme (its strengths and weaknesses), fills this gap. Using the CoP framework, an alumni network was established for the professional development of pre-service teachers in a university in Hong Kong.

CoP of Alumni in this study

The CoP of Alumni consisted of 36 members who have been trained or are being trained in the same ELT teacher education programme of a Hong Kong university. Among them, 9 were in-service teachers working in local primary or secondary schools with different years of professional experience to serve as mentors, and 27 were students of different years of study as mentees for pre-service teachers' professional development. Before mentoring began, there were training workshops introducing concepts of CoP and stages of mentoring to mentors. Mentees were assigned to different groups based on their reported professional needs and interests (e.g. material design) led by individual mentors.

A series of professional activities in the community of practice in Wenger's (1998) framework were organized to discuss career-related topics or problems of common concern (joint enterprise), demonstrate good practices (mutual engagement) based on shared concepts and knowledge of teaching and learning (shared repertoire). The activities include 1) Career Talks on Beginner Teacher Identity; 2) Lesson Demonstrations; 3) Mentoring Sessions, and finally, 4) Symposium on scholarship of EFL teaching and learning. This paper reports on one of the activities: mentoring sessions, with a particular focus on the mentoring styles of 3 best mentors as rated by their mentees. Style matters as to how effective mentors navigate and engage mentees in communication and reflective practices that lead to successful mentoring.

A Metadiscursive Investigation of Mentoring Styles

Linguistic research in mentoring styles remains rather limited. Most research interest seems to be in mentoring proficiency and the diverse roles that mentors play in academic and professional or personal development of mentors. For example, Johnson's (2003, p. 61) "triangular model of mentor competence" proposes three fundamental dimensions that define mentoring proficiency: virtues, abilities, and competencies. Virtues include three sub-categories: integrity, caring and prudence. Abilities include three sub-categories: cognitive, emotional and relational. Competencies include mentee development, relational phrases, relationship structure, mentor functions, boundary maintenance, recognition of dysfunction, cross-gender skills, respect for autonomy and self-awareness. Carey & Weissmen (2010, p. 1374), in the context of medical faculty, have identified a number of "ideal" roles that mentors play in a successful mentoring relationship: as academic coaches, mentors "provide instruction, training, strategic advice, and motivation"; as advisors, they help protégés [mentees] navigate their careers and work toward their own definitions of success and develop skills and self-reliance; and as role models, they "demonstrate behaviors that protégés wish to emulate". Leidenfrost et al. (2014) examined the effects of different mentoring styles on first year mentees' academic performance – a) motivating master mentoring; b) informatory standard mentoring, and c) negative minimalist mentoring and found no specific impact of mentoring styles on the mentees' academic performance. However, how the mentors played their roles and linguistically demonstrated the behaviours remained underexplored.

Studies on a similar supportive activity in educational settings, tutoring, which also involves coaching but more on particular skills, too, tend to focus on behavioral strategies and roles of the tutor. Berghmans et al. (2013), for example, have found that tutors are more inclined to adopt questioning and answering strategies. The roles that tutors play are: *Questioner*, *Informer* and *Motivational Organizer*. Again, linguistic investigation of how a Questioner, Informer or a Motivational Organizer conducted a mentoring session was unknown.

Analytical framework of this study

This study attempts to address the research gap by investigating the manner in which individual mentoring styles manifest linguistically. Studying the linguistic features of mentoring by best mentors is significant as findings will offer valuable insights into the success of mentorship and mentorship programmes. The present paper examines stylistic differences of 3 top mentors from the perspective of metadiscourse.

Hyland and Tse (2004, p.156) define metadiscourse as "the range of devices writers use to explicitly organize their texts, engage readers, and signal their attitudes to both their material and their audience". In other words, metadiscourse is a set of "self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings" (Hyland, 2005, p. 37). It incorporates the "personalities, attitudes and assumptions of those who are communicating". As much as personalities, attitudes and assumptions differ, rhetorical strategies inevitably vary from speaker to speaker. Metadiscourse hence provides "a framework for understanding communication as social engagement" (Hyland, 2005, pp. 3-4).

Hyland categorizes metadiscourse into two types: interactive and interactional (Hyland, 2005), with the former being concerned with guiding the reader's or listener's navigation of the text while the latter being concerned with managing the relationship with the reader or listener.

Table 1. A model of Metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005)

Category	Function	Examples
Interactive	Help to guide the reader through the text	Resources
Transitions	expresses relations between main clauses	*in addition; but; thus; and*
Frame markers	refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages	*finally; to conclude; my purpose is*
Endophoric markers	refer to information in other parts of the text	*noted above; see Fig x in Section 2*
Evidentials	refer to other parts of the texts	*according to X; Z states*
Code glosses	elaborate propositional meanings	*namely; e.g.; such as; in other words*
Interactional	Involve the reader in the text	Resources
Hedges	withhold commitment and open dialogue	*Might; perhaps; possible; about*
Boosters	emphasize certainty or close dialogue	*in fact; definitely; it is clear that; I think/believe*
Attitude markers	express writer attitude to proposition	*unfortunately; surprisingly; have to; must; can*
Self-mentions	[make] explicit reference to author(s)	*I, we, my, me, our; we (exclusive)*
Engagement markers	explicitly build relationship with reader	*consider, note, you can you see that, we (inclusive)*

Discussing metadiscourse mainly in English writing, as shown in Table 1, Hyland (2005) classifies interactive metadiscourse into five major categories which are transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and code glosses. According to Hyland (2005, pp. 49-54), the interactive dimension concerns the writer's awareness of a participating audience. The purpose is to shape and constrain the text, to meet the needs of particular readers. It addresses the ways to organize discourse. The interactional dimension, on the other hand, concerns the way the writer conducts interaction by intruding and commenting on the propositional content. The goal is to make his/her views explicit and to involve the audience by allowing them to respond to the unfolding text. Metadiscourse of this category is essentially evaluative and engaging, expressing solidarity or obligation, anticipating objections. Since expressing *obligation* is a salient feature in mentoring, for example, when giving instructions or

directions, a couple of relevant examples of such nature – deontic verbs – *have to, must, can* under the category of Attitude markers have been added on to Hyland's table (2005, pp. 49).

Adaptation and Modifications
This study adopts Hyland's taxonomy of metadiscourse (2005) to study mentoring styles with one important exception. Epistemic verbs such as *think* and *believe*, which are classified as *Boosters* in Hyland, were regarded as "dialogically expansive" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 104) and hence coded as *Hedges.*

Since *Evidentials*, which acknowledges sources of information (e.g. according to x), are an atypical feature of spoken mentorship, it is not included in the data analysis. *Frame markers* and *Endophoric markers* are combined as one category as they are functionally similar, i.e. devices for organization of information, either looking forward or referring backward.

Style matters: How best mentors mentor
Data
The primary data for this study was one fully transcribed mentoring session of three best mentors (coded as M1, M2 and M3) who received highest average ratings from their mentees in the post session questionnaire evaluation. As revealed by the survey, the mentoring sessions were highly regarded by the mentees:

M1's: "*absolutely inspiring*", "*a fruitful journey*", "*adequately nourished*", "*thought-provoking*";
M2's: "*rewarding*", "*rewarding journey*", "*insightful*" and "*inspiring*";
M3's: "*considerate arrangement and immersive learning*", "*abundant advice*" and "*insightful experience*".

In order to gain a better understanding of the meaning-making process of mentoring and mentoring styles, the audio transcripts were triangulated with mentor log sheets, which recorded plans and reflections on each session, as well as mentor and mentee questionnaire responses. Log sheets, mentor and mentee questionnaires were completed in English.

The primary aim of this paper is to investigate the mentoring style of the three top mentors from the metadiscursive perspective. It compares the mentors' stylistic differences as they engage in the reflective practices and attempts to establish attributive factors that shape mentors' stylistic tendencies during the course of empowering the mentees.

Language used for mentoring
Though all the mentors and mentees were ethnic Chinese with a high English competence, in order to ensure more effective communication in mentorship, the mentors were given the freedom, in consultation with the mentees, to choose a language that they felt most comfortable with for communication. It turned out that English was used in M1's session, Chinese was used in M2's session, while interestingly, very much a mixed code of Chinese and English was used in M3's session. Chinese transcripts were translated into English by the project assistant who has a double degree in English Language and Literature and Education in English Language Teaching, and double checked by one of the project coordinators who has a doctorate in applied linguistics.

Advantages of alumni mentoring

Alumni mentoring programs provide distinct benefits to both students and alumni (Dollinger et al., 2019). First, since the mentors were familiar with the educational system, it was easy for them to connect with the mentees and relate to their experiences, including challenges the mentees had (joint enterprise). As a mentor puts it in her mentor questionnaire response:

"*I think my role as an alumna allows me to understand my mentee's struggles more. After all, we share the same background.*" M4

Second, as mentors needed not to assess mentees' work, the mentees presumably would be more willing to participate and contribute to the mentorship, as confirmed by another mentor:

"*As a mentor, I am not also their colleague, and therefore I would not need to appraise their performance in a formal capacity. I think this would make mentees feel more at ease when discussing their challenges in teaching with me.*" M5

Having a shared training background and values (shared repertoire) and no responsibility in performance appraisal was considered conducive to the establishment of solidarity with the mentees, which in turn led to more perceived learning. With the mentees being students of different years of study, there were multiple "zones of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978). The mentees could not only learn from their mentor; they could also learn from each other in the socialization process (mutual engagement) for professional development (joint enterprise) in this community of practice.

Findings

The categories of frame and endophoric markers were combined into one in this study. The recorded mentoring sessions were analyzed for seven categories of metadiscourse markers, namely, Self-mention (SM), Engagement (EG), Hedges (HG), Boosters (BST), Attitude (ATD), Frame/Endophoric (FRM), Transitions (TRN), Code-glosses (CG).

Distribution of metadiscourse markers by the 3 mentors

As the length of the mentoring session by the 3 mentors was different, the data were normalized per 100 words. The normalized frequencies (bold-faced) were presented next to raw counts of each metadiscourse marker in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of metadiscourse use by the 3 mentors

Metadiscourse markers	M1 1.5 hours	(normalized frequencies per 100)	M2 (0.5 hour)	(normalized frequencies per 100)	M3 (1 hour)	(normalized frequencies per 100)
Attitude markers	337	**3.78**	49	**4.58**	71	**1.39**
Hedges	312	**3.50**	32	**2.99**	200	**3.90**
Boosters	46	**0.52**	35	**3.27**	77	**1.50**
Self-mentions	220	**2.47**	164	**15.31**	166	**3.24**
Engagement	506	**5.68**	108	**10.08**	82	**1.60**
Frame/Endophoric	191	**2.14**	175	**16.34**	134	**2.62**
Transition	312	**3.50**	173	**16.15**	211	**4.12**
Code glosses	6	**0.07**	72	**6.72**	96	**1.87**
Total		**21.66**		**75.44**		**31.87**

From Table 2, it can be seen that M2 used the most metadiscourse markers, or *rhetorical strategies* in Crismore's (1989) words, to manage both the listeners and speech, with 75.44 instances, compared with 31.87 by M3. M1 used the least number of metadiscourse markers (21.66). To a certain extent, it can be said that M1 made the least effort or found it least necessary to negotiate meanings, managing relations and organize messages via the use of metadiscourse.

An illustration of metadiscourse use by the 3 mentors
The use of meta-discourse markers in the mentoring session by the 3 mentors and how they were coded are illustrated below:

M1:
1a. ***You can*** write them down or ***you can*** type that up later.
    EG ATD   EG ATD
1b. ***I actually*** timed ***myself*** for 30 seconds...
    SM BST   SM
1c. *I* asked them to identify what **I** did and ***then I*** let them do it.
    SM   SM   FRM SM
1d. There ***might*** be things that are important but ...
            HG   TRN
1e.. ...***for example*** dear someone, someone...
            CG

M2:
2a. ***So   I   always think*** that they are all connected.
    TRN SM BST   HG
2b. ***But I   always*** find this process so redundant!
    TRN SM BST
2c. ***We*** touched a little on why eating snacks and sweet food are unhealthy...
        EG
2d. ***Because*** that is ***exactly*** what **I** was ***thinking***...
            TRN   BST   SM   HG
2e. ***Then*** let ***us go back to*** discuss what is on ***our*** hands
        FRM   EG   FRM   EG

M3:
3a. ***Actually, sometimes*** (when) ***we*** set the paper, ***we might*** even modify...
            BST   HG   EG   EG HG
3b. What **I** mean is..
            SM CG
3c. ***I probably*** will not give...
        SM   HG
3d. As for ***me***, ***usually*** when **I** set the paper...
            SM   HG   SM
3e. Now ***first*** [we] ***should*** talk about which form it is
            FRM   ATD

Interactional and interactive metadiscourse use of the mentors
Dividing the metadiscourse markers into interactional and interactive ones would elucidate what kind of effort that the speaker made more: listener-oriented (interactional) or text-oriented (interactive). In one way, it will show whether the mentor found it necessary to look after the relationship with the listeners more in order to be persuasive or organize the speech better in order to be clear.

Table 3. Distribution of interactional metadiscourse markers

Interactional Metadiscourse	M1	Normalized Frequencies	M2	Normalized Frequencies	M3	Normalized Frequencies
Attitude markers	337	3.78	49	4.58	71	1.39

Hedges	312	3.5	32	2.99	200	3.9
Boosters	46	0.52	35	3.27	77	1.5
Self-mentions	220	2.47	164	15.31	166	3.24
Engagement	506	5.67	108	10.08	82	1.6
Total	1421	**15.94**	388	**36.23**	596	**11.63**

Table 4. Distribution of interactive metadiscourse markers

Interactive Metadiscourse	M1	Normalized Frequencies	M2	Normalized Frequencies	M3	Normalized Frequencies
Frame and Endophoric markers	191	2.14	175	16.34	134	2.62
Transitions	312	3.5	173	16.15	211	4.12
Code Glosses	6	0.07	72	6.72	96	1.87
Total	**509**	**5.71**	**420**	**39.21**	**441**	**8.61**

As revealed by Table 3, M2 made the biggest effort in organizing the mentoring process as shown by the use of interactional metadiscourse, with a total of 36.23 instances, compared with 15.94 (less than half) by M1 and 11.63 (one thirds) by M3. In terms of the use of interactive metadiscourse markers, M2 still ranked the highest (39.21), almost 5 times that of M3 (8.61), 8 times that of M1(5.71). Table 4 shows that M2 again used far more interactive metadiscourse markers (39.21) than M1 (5.71) and M3 (8.61).

Mentor 1
As found from the mentor questionnaire survey, M1 prioritized the achievement of the mentoring objectives of the session and accomplishment of tasks over emotional support for mentees.

> *Knowing that both I and the mentees have a busy schedule, there may be little time or capacity for small talk and building relationships further. While I am willing to listen to my mentees' concerns, I tend to offer solutions and fixes rather than emotional support.* (M1 – Mentor Questionnaire)

The type of activities carried out in the session may have a bearing on the way the session was conducted. As shown in M1's mentor log, the activities in this session were "*sharing textbook and school-based materials and identifying ways to adopt them flexibly in lessons*". When the mentoring session was based on pre-prepared materials, there was understandably less need to guide the listeners to navigate the speech as the materials at hand and issues predetermined for discussion largely decided how the session was conducted.

By examining the audio recording, it was found that M1's mentees were a responsive group, eager to answer questions or respond to issues raised so the mentor might not have felt a strong need to prompt the mentees in the discussion. It is interesting to note that, among his interactional markers, the mentor still made the biggest effort in engaging the mentees (Engagement: 5.67), followed by attitude markers (3.78). Though he saw "little time and capacity for building relationship" with mentees, Mentor 1 made considerable effort in packaging his statements (Hedge: 3.5). However, his Boosters ranked the lowest (Booster: 0.52), which could mean that he was willing to negotiate meanings and leave dialogues open in presenting propositions.

Mentor 1 did not use too many interactive metadiscourse markers either. Transitions ranked the highest (3.5), followed by Frame/Endophoric markers (2.14). Code glosses to elaborate on an issue was the lowest, with only 0.07.

Mentor 2
M2, in contrast, cared about relationship with her mentees very much by trying to be "a comfortable talker". She described her effort in inspiring her passive mentees as such:

> *"I try to be a 'comfortable talker' to my mentees. Even though my mentees won't give active feedbacks right after I share every time, I would like my sharing to be insightful and it inspires them in different ways."* (M2 – Mentor Questionnaire)

According to the M2's mentor log, the activities for the session in the study were discussion on "*ways to improve the current learning and teaching situation [a real teaching dilemma] in mentor's P4 class*". Since the session was mainly the mentor's introduction of the teaching and learning situation in her own class, the mentees might have felt having little role in it. The audio-recording of the session confirmed that this group of mentees were indeed more passive and less responsive.

As the mentees did not have to prepare anything and there were also no specific tasks for the mentees in this session, the responsibility lay more with the mentor to lead the discussion and to engage the mentees through rhetorical strategies. This perhaps explains why the instances of metadiscourse use were the highest (Total: 75. 44) compared with the other two mentors (Table 2). M2 used almost as many interactional markers (36.23) as interactive markers (39.21), both far higher than that of M1 and M3, indicating that the need for her to look after the listeners as well as to organize her talk was deemed as high.

Among the interactional markers, the highest was Self-mention (15.31), followed by Engagement (10.08). This again is understandable as she was talking about her own experience and the pedagogical strategies she used in her class while trying to engage her passive mentees. Among the interactive markers, the frequencies of Frame/Endophoric markers (16.35) and Transition markers (16.15) were equally high, which shows her considerable effort in guiding the listeners by making references and signaling the logic between statements. Even her use of Code-glosses was markedly higher (6.72) than that of M1 and M3.

Mentor 3
M3 described her mentoring style as a friendly one:

> *"Rather than the mentor and mentees, we are more like friends, and I would like to address myself more their 'little big sister' rather than the 'mentor'"*. (M3 – Mentor Questionnaire)

Though considering herself a friendly "little big sister" with supposedly a close relationship with the mentees and hence would not be expected to package her propositions through devices such as Hedges to leave room for negotiation, M3 used more Hedges (3.9) than any other interactional metadiscourse markers. *Self-mention* was also relatively high (3.24) when she strategically presented her evaluation of the mentees' design of the reading comprehension questions, especially less well-developed

ones, by sharing her own experience or demonstrating how she would design the task, instead of giving a negative comment.

Her own perceived lack of experience also contributed to her mentoring style. As she says in the Mentor Log, "*As I'm after all not so much more experienced than my mentees, I tried to stay friendly, caring, and humble as I shared with them.*"

As shown in M3's Mentor Log, the activities conducted in this session was "setting of reading comprehension questions for different levels; presentation of comprehension questions set [by mentees] … and [giving] feedback on mentees' work". The mentees presented the reading comprehension questions that they had designed before the session and received feedback from M3. There was little pressure for M3 to organize the session because the tasks were pre-determined and the flow was autonomous. The audio recording of the session also confirms that this was an engaged and cooperative group. That is perhaps why the overall use of interactive metadiscourse was low, among which the most effort was made in Transitions (4.12).

Turn-taking of the 3 mentors

The types of activities as a contributing factor to the interactivity of the mentoring session are supported by findings in turn-taking. A comparison of turn-taking by the three mentors reveals the huge disparity between the three mentors (Table 5) in terms of interactivity. M2's average turn length was the longest, 36 seconds per turn, indicating that there were comparatively the least verbal interactions with her mentees. M1's average turn length ranked second, with 24 seconds per turn. The most interactive session was M3's, with 12 seconds per turn.

Table 5. Average turn length of the 3 mentors

Average Turn Length (in seconds)		
M1: 24	M2: 36	M3: 12

M3's session consisted of cycles of mentees' presentation of their pre-designed reading comprehension questions and mentor's evaluation and comments. Her mentees therefore had plenty of opportunities to talk so her average turn length was the shortest. M1's session, though not as strictly sequenced as M3's, consisted of cycles of mentees' views on how to flexibly adopt textbook materials and mentor feedback. The mentees were invited to give their suggestions and participate in the construction of knowledge so his average turn length stood in the middle among the three. M2's session was mainly sharing of her own teaching so it was not surprising to note that her average turn length was the longest. This objective evidence indicates that the type of activities arranged for each session, among other factors, impacted the interactivity of the session and perhaps necessitated different strategies to rhetorically manage the session.

To sum up, though they have distinct mentoring styles as indicated by their use of metadiscourse markers and average turn lengths, all the three top mentors effectively and successfully achieved their mentoring goals. Mentors' self-perceived roles and prior-experiences, mentee group dynamics and activity types in the session were certainly contributing factors. Self-perceived "assertive" M1 made considerable effort to negotiate meanings, engage his mentees as well as help them navigate through the meaning-making process. Describing herself as "a comfortable talker", with a passive mentee group, M2 used a much greater interactional and interactive effort in her session, doubling the amount of M1 and tripling that of M2 in total metadiscourse use.

The friendly "little big sister" M3 also showed much caution in presenting her ideas (via Hedges). Tasks or activities in the session played a role too in shaping mentoring styles. Mentee-oriented tasks (as mentee presentations in M3's session) required less effort to engage mentees because the pre-determined process largely decided the sequence and speaker responsibilities in the session.

Conclusions and implications for pre-service teacher training

"A mentor's job to a large extent is to inspire, encourage, and empower his or her students. Mentors' efforts in the classroom, the laboratory, and the field are meant to serve as springboards for mentees' own exploration of the world and to inspire them to seek answers to questions about the nature of the world around them" (Ramirez, 2012, p. 59). Several conclusions can be made based on the findings, which may have implications for pre-service teacher training. They are listed as follows: 1) Best mentors exhibit admirable personal qualities; they are *inspiring* and *insightful* – qualities that the mentees attributed to all the three mentors, qualities that define successful mentoring. Best mentors are able to motivate and empower mentees to achieve their goals through their enthusiasm, compassion and selflessness and academic and career advising (Cho et al., 2010, p. 2), similar to an Advisor and Role Model (Carey & Weissmen, 2010) and a Motivational Organiser (Berghmans et al., 2013). They use different rhetorical strategies in response to different group dynamics, as reflected in their use of metadiscourse markers to achieve successful mentoring. Group dynamics may be an important factor that shapes the mentoring style. Mentors have to make bigger interactional efforts to engage audience and negotiate meanings, and bigger interactive efforts to organize their talk and keep it going when faced with a passive or quiet group as M2 did in the process of professional communication and socialization. They simultaneously play the role of Questioner and Informer (Berghmans et al., 2013) or Academic Coach (Carey & Weissmen, 2010) where appropriate in mentorship. 3) Styles of effective mentoring may be related to the activities in the session and whether they are mentor-oriented or mentee-oriented. Less structured 'free' sessions may require more effort in both interactional and interactive strategies to manage the mentees and the talk, as indicated M2's session. 4) The language for communication used in the mentoring session may have affected the choice of discourse strategies as language is cultural and differences in rhetorical strategies can be attributed to cultural influences (Mauranen, 1993). Contrastive rhetoric assumes that different languages have different rhetorical preferences. In a writer-responsible culture like English, metadiscourse is used to guide readers through a text; in a reader-responsible culture like Japanese, connection between various parts of a text is more commonly left implicit (Hinds, 1987). Chinese can be said to be a reader-responsible language that prefers implicitness (Qi & Liu, 2007). If such a cultural orientation holds in spoken Chinese too, further investigation is necessary as for why M2 used a significantly more interactional and interactive metadiscourse in her session. 5) Personal experience and personal traits may also influence the way a mentoring session is conducted. As one mentor (Mentor 6) put it in the mentor questionnaire response: "*I think my mentoring style is more affected by my own personality instead of my role as an alumna.*" Another mentor (Mentor 7) also attributed style to prior experience: "*As an alumnus, I believe the mentoring I received, together with my personal traits, somehow shapes my mentoring style.*"

In addition, the mentoring program itself, the selection of the three "best" mentors, and their professional experiences, including their prior mentorship experiences, may have all affected their mentoring styles. I would postulate that all the factors interact to constitute the particular style of a mentor. Whether a session is successful is largely

dependent on a combination of the factors. In one way, it can be said that best mentors use a variety of metadiscourse strategies to bigger or lesser degrees in response to different mentor group dynamics and different mentoring activities that allow them to demonstrate good practices (mutual engagement) based on shared pedagogical concepts and knowledge (shared repertoire) in discussion of practical or theoretical issues or problems of common concern (joint enterprise).

Even though this study set out to investigate the mentoring styles and compare the stylistic differences of the three mentors, another strand of this study also sought to explore the role of alumni mentoring on the professional development of pre-service teachers in the CoP framework, which could offer some insights for future similar programmes.

A couple of limitations should be acknowledged. It was not possible to include the low-rated mentoring sessions in this study as the mentors concerned either did not submit the recording or the quality of the recording was too bad (e.g. with overpowering noise). It would be useful to also study low-rated mentoring sessions and compare them with high-rated ones and identify the differences. The findings will offer valuable insights for mentor training. Furthermore, for the benefit of effective mentoring, the mentors were allowed to use a language they felt most comfortable with. Since there are cultural differences in rhetorical strategies (Mauranen, 1993, Hyland, 2005), the use of Chinese language may have weakened the strength of the findings. Future research can compare sessions that use the same language to enhance validity. And the sample size should be bigger in order to ascertain whether there are indeed any patterns of matadiscourse use in oral mentoring or there are only idiosyncratic linguistic differences.

Style and language matter as to how effective mentors deploy linguistic resources for sharing, inquiry and critique in situated professional learning. Interactional and interactive metadiscourse can be a valuable linguistic resource for mentors to use for achieving mentoring goals. The exploration of mentoring styles through a metadiscursive approach would usefully inform future mentoring programmes in teacher education.

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