



Innovating EFL Teacher Training in Spain: Post-Structuralist Approaches to Gender

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Abstract

In this paper we report on the outcomes of a study conducted with 14 pre-service English as foreign language teachers at the Faculty of Education of the University of Granada in Spain. The University of Granada is a highly intellectual and multicultural setting (top 1 Erasmus destination) with about 80,000 students.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001)[1] states that otherness related issues ('sexual identity' in our case) should be treated in the Foreign Language classroom as a means to achieve Existential Competence. Given the fact that our EFL teacher trainees claim that they lack (in)formation to develop these traditionally silenced topics in their classrooms, we make use of ethnography as a qualitative research method in the process of acquiring "sexual identity conscience" from a Queer Theory perspective, a post-structuralist view on gender and identity (Butler, 1990)[2]. Interpretative ethnography provides us with new pedagogical reflexivity and intercultural production. The foreign language area constitutes one of the most relevant areas within social sciences to address these topics since learning a foreign language necessarily requires acknowledging the patterns of a different culture and integrate them within our cognitive, affective, and behavioural schemata.

We pursue the following objectives through the development of this paper:

- To design, implement and develop a well-planned ethnographic project in the EFL teacher training classroom at university level.
- To recognise the core importance of gender/sexual identity education in EFL teacher training.

The participants come from 7 different cultural backgrounds: Spain, United Kingdom, Morocco, United States, Bulgaria, Japan, and Chile. One man and one woman from each country are selected from the whole of exchange students at our University. This is highly positive for our analysis since it confers doses of controversy in discussion. The study is made up of the following stages following Hammersly and Atkinson (1995)[3] and Goetz and LeCompte (1988)[4] and their steps for ethnography: Identification of a phenomenon; identification of participants; selection of the research design: theoretical framework and ethnographic questions; information gathering (fieldwork): Verbal interaction among subjects (content and form), interaction with the researcher (content and form), non-verbal behaviour (gestures, postures, mimics) and procedures: participant observation, interviews, etc.; interpretation of information and elaboration of conclusions and final report.

After designing and implementing this ethnographic-queer research with EFL teacher trainees we conclude, in the light of results, that it is an appropriate didactic method for training teachers since it develops critical thinking, integrate theory and practice in a dialogic mode, and would-be teachers show more awareness (cognition, behavior and affection) towards sexual identity otherness and its treatment within the educational system.

References

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