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Mobilizing EFL student-teachers' and primary EFL learners' identities through funds of identity and identity texts

Abstract

In diesem Text werden Inhalte und Ergebnisse eines Forschungsprojektes diskutiert, in der die Methode der kooperativen Handlungsforschung (Collaborative Action Research, CAR) zum Einsatz kommt. Ziel des Projektes ist es, alternative Identitätsoptionen für Lehrkräfte des Englischen als Fremdsprache sowie für Lernende an Grundschulen aufzuzeigen, um eine stärkere Beteiligung der Lehrenden und Lernenden am Bildungsprozess zu ermöglichen. Das CAR-Projekt umfasste zwei Zyklen der Datenerhebung in zwei aufeinanderfolgenden akademischen Jahren (2014/2015 und 2015/2016). An der Durchführung beteiligt war ein Universitätsdozent (Luis) an der Sprach- und Literaturdidaktischen Fakultät der Universität Valencia (Spanien) sowie zwei Studierende (Ana und Violeta), die im Rahmen ihres Bachelorstudiums für das Lehramt an Grundschulen mit dem Hauptfach Englisch als Forschende im CAR-Projekt tätig waren.

1. Introduction

This text very briefly presents the processes and outcomes of a collaborative action research (CAR) project aimed at opening up alternative identity options for EFL teachers and primary learners, in order to help them become more engaged in the educational process. The CAR extended through two cycles of inquiry, during two consecutive academic years (2014/2015 and 2015/2016). It was conducted by a university teacher (Luis) who lectures and researches at the Language and Literature education department at the Universitat de València (Spain), and by two student-teachers-as-researchers (STRs) (Ana and Violeta) who were still registered in the Degree of Primary EFL education while the CAR lasted.

2. Funds of identity and identity texts

In order to mobilize EFL teacher and student identities, the CAR drew on *funds of identity* (Esteban-Guitart/Moll 2014) and *identity texts* (Cummins/Early 2011). Funds of identity have extended previous research on the familial and community contexts (where funds of knowledge are generated) to the realm of personal identity. They have been described as:

historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources that are essential for people's self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding. In other words, the term *funds of identity* [...] denotes a set of resources or box of tools and signs [...] essential for constructing one's identity and for defining and presenting oneself. (Esteban-Guitart/ Moll 2014: 37)

Depending on their origin and content, funds of identity have been classified as *geographical*, *social*, *cultural*, *institutional*, and *practical* (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Through qualitative strategies such as self-portraits and significant circles, teachers have obtained relevant information about learners' funds of identities to design teaching units that built on and honored their interiorized culture and experiences, instead of confronting or underplaying them in the school context.

In this CAR, EFL teacher's and learner's exploration of their own funds of identity gave way to the final production of *identity texts*. According to Cummins and Early (2011: 3), these are

We've discovered the need to include other abilities and skills, and also to treasure the present. Whatever you do, do it because it is worthwhile, not because you want the students to get to high school, university, etc., but because it is something valuable for all of us to do right now.

(Violeta, CAR meeting, 30 May 2016)

What I keep asking myself is: Art being another form of expression, another form of language (and a valuable one at that), why doesn't this school encourage it more? It is something valuable and attractive. By insisting on it, we'd be saying: "I know you have this talent, exploit it." And then, little by little, we could start introducing the more academic skills and forms of expression... that's what I think.

(Ana, CAR meeting, 30 May 2016)

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