

Teacher's role in the process of identity construction in language learners

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Abstract—Much of social research in language learning in the past twenty years has been devoted to explore issues of identity construction and its sociological implications in terms of mobility and inclusiveness. How this is linked to learners' sense of investment and empowerment, especially in contexts where a sense of an autonomous self can be suppressed for social, religious or cultural reasons, form an important part of this thesis. Previous research has provided a wealth of insight and suggested remedies, but in this researcher's opinion they have come short in providing any definite answers as to how to implement them or as to the outcomes they might yield, and this is exactly the area this study aims at investigating.

This research seeks to understand issues of socio-cultural identities and thus make a significant contribution to knowledge in this area by attempting to provide some answers to the above issues through investigating the type of pedagogical interventions needed to assist language learners in the process of identity construction in order to achieve further social inclusion. It will also have applied relevance for those working with diverse student groups, especially taking our present social context into consideration: we live in a highly mobile world, with large communities of migrants relocating to wealthier, more developed countries which are also culturally different and, each posing their own particular set of challenges for these communities.

The study will be conducted as in-classroom ethnography and the following methods will be used for data collection:

1. Questionnaires to investigate learners' attitudes and feelings in different areas divided in four strands: themselves, their classroom, learning English and their social context.
2. Participant observations, conducted in a naturalistic manner.
3. Journals, which will be used in two different ways: on one hand, learners will keep semi-structured, solicited diaries to record specific events as requested by the researcher (event-contingent). On the other, researcher will keep his own journal to maintain a record of events and situations as they happen in order to reduce the risk of inaccuracies.
4. Person-centered interviews, which will be conducted at the end of the study to unearth data which might have been occluded or might be unclear from the previous methods. The interviews will aim at gaining further data on experiences, behaviors, values, opinions,

feelings, knowledge and sensory, background and demographic information.

Conclusion

The question this study aims at answering is:

What kind of pedagogical interventions are needed in order to help language learners in the process of identity construction so they are able to offset unequal conditions of power and gain further social inclusion?

It will attempt to do this through a qualitative approach that can hopefully inform both teachers and learners on how to navigate the aforementioned process, and that can allow for a thorough analysis of the students' experiences as language learners, their degree of investment, inclusion/exclusion and attitudes, both towards themselves and their social context.

This is relevant because an individual's insight and understanding of their own identity shapes their relationship with the world and their ability to continue constructing this relationship. At the same time, because these relationship is influenced and shaped by power, and such power is greatly determined by (linguistic) capital, a goal of this study is, as we assist learners in their process of identity construction and as their investment increases, to help them feel and become more empowered by increasing such capital, which in turn we hope might result in a greater ability to integrate themselves socially in their respective communities. Exactly how this help will be provided will vary as data is unearthed through questionnaires, focus groups and the actual participant observations being carried out.

Keywords—Identity construction, second-language learning, investment, second-language culture, social inclusion.