The impact of emotions on a NNES teacher’s development

Dominik Wolff¹, Peter De Costa²

¹West Chester University, USA
²Michigan State University, USA

Building on recent developments which have emphasized teacher agency (Campbell, 2012), teacher emotions (Benesch, 2012), and teacher confidence (Freeman et al., 2015), we draw on a larger year-long study which sought to (1) examine teacher identity development in a U.S. MATESOL program, and (2) assess the impact of the program on this development.

For this presentation, we examined how our focal non-native English-speaking and teaching (NNEST) participant, Puja, was confronted with and successfully negotiated numerous emotional challenges in her first year in a U.S. MATESOL program. Furthermore, we investigated the impact emotions had on her overall teacher identity development and how, in return, her future students might also be affected by her growth as an educator. Following past research that viewed teacher emotions through a narrative lens (e.g., Barkhuizen, 2014), we created Puja’s ‘story’ by analyzing data sources which included interviews, teaching observations, journal entries, and stimulated verbal and written reports.

Our narrative construction was guided by Miyahara’s (2015) three-dimensional space narrative structure and included a focus on the reflexive relationship between Puja’s emotions and her subsequent identity development. While we acknowledge that emotional tensions are part of teachers’ identity development (and potentially more so for NNESTs), Puja largely navigated emotional challenges in a positive manner. Puja’s successful journey provides rich insights into the emotional obstacles foreign MATESOL students face, how to overcome them, and what role English language teacher preparation programs could play in providing suitable support for these teachers as they negotiate their burgeoning teacher identities.

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