



Positioning of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the Classroom: The Role of Teachers and Instructional Pedagogy

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Purpose & Research questions

The study focused on the dynamics of classrooms in which the teachers interact with ELLs, with a specific focus on how teachers offer or limit opportunities for the students' participation in classroom activities. Purpose was to examine classroom teachers' views of their roles with regard to English Language learners (ELLs) To examine the relationship between their teaching approaches and the students' reactions and positioning of themselves in the classroom.

Research Questions

How do regular classroom teachers describe their roles with regard to ELLs?
How do the teachers' pedagogical approaches relate to the ELLs participatory actions in the classrooms?

Theoretical Framework

Positioning theory (Harre & Van Langenhove, 1991)

To make sense of the dynamics of evolving social interactions: how persons position themselves and how they are positioned by others within a specific context.

Two modes of positioning were used as a framework of the study:

1. Intentional positioning: how one positions oneself,
2. Interactive positioning: how one person position another, how individual sees themselves

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Framework

(Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1994, 1995)

Teaching ELLs to include understanding the pedagogical application of cultural and social framework.

To help students be academically strong, culturally competent, and socio-politically critical.

Methods

A case-controlled method(Stake,1995) was used as preferred strategy when how or why questions were being posed, when the investigators have little control over the events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.

Sample: 3 Regular teachers and teachers who had some professional training in English as second Language instruction and have ELL students in their classrooms
Three elementary classrooms observations
English language arts teachers for 18 observations = 18 hours = observations twice a month each of the classroom for three months

Data set: Field Notes from Observation

Field notes observations:

1. Focus on the interactions between teachers and the focal students
- 2.Focus on focal students' reactions to the classroom activities, such as withdrawing or participating
- 3.Speech and acts, students' dialogue

Data set: Interviews

To identify how students perceived positioning: Asked students emotions in specific event, e.g. :

"How did you feel at that time?"
"Tell me about what happened at that time?"

Data Analysis

Data from observations was analyzed descriptively using Spradley's (1980) taxonomy and Merriam's (1998) two stages of analysis:

- the within-case analysis – within the classroom
- the cross-case analysis – with another classroom

The observation data were triangulated by the interview data

Data from interviews (teachers and students) were coded [open coding system(Strauss & Corbin, 1999) using Ladson-Billings' (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy that illuminated the teachers' roles and approaches and their attempts to meet the students needs.

Findings

Teachers' views of their roles varied based on their positioning of themselves as teachers for all students, as teachers for regular education students or as teachers for a single subject.

The teachers' different approaches were related to the ELLs different levels of participation and their positioning of themselves as powerful or powerless students.

The teachers' approaches need to focus on what are the ELL student's needs and how are they being met.

The study breaks important ground in our understanding of the complex interactional classroom dynamics that influence the teaching and learning of English Language Learners (ELLs).

If teachers collaborate with each other more and look more deeply into ELL students' experiences and needs, there is a better chance that students will participate and interact more.

Creating a more culturally and linguistically responsive environment/classroom will help to address the needs of ELLs.

Findings

Teacher 1: Preschool teacher with ESL training:

Teaching Beliefs: "I am a teacher of children."
Teaching all children including ELLs is her responsibility: "I am approachable; they see me as someone who is willing to help them move forward."
Relevant Experience: Culturally relevant teaching along with embracing ELLs needs. Building trust and celebrating ELLs differences: "They need friendship and support, and they need to know that they can count on someone. I am putting value on their lives and their cultures. I want my non-ESL kids to know that their beliefs and their cultures are different. I really enjoy having all ESL kids on our team."
ELL competency: Powerful
1. Active participation, emotion and, comfort level
2. Non-ELLs support and encouragement, accepted ELLs, learning partners, inviting, inclusive, supportive and, friendly
3. Interested Non-ELLs in ELLs culture as cultural resources

Findings

Teacher 2: First Grade Teacher with no ESL training :

Teaching Beliefs: "I never seen myself as an ESL teacher."
"I don't do a lot of special things for my ESL students. I do not trained to work with ESL and I think the ESL teacher's job is to make their time beneficial."
Relevant Experience: American mono-culturalism: excluding ELLs needs.
Views himself as "a model of English speaker"
Democratic classroom: couldn't care less if ELLs participate or consider to include their cultures in the subject contents.
Not open to provide possibilities to ELLs
ELL competency: Disengaged
1. Unintentional consequences of using American culture as frame of reference
2. Inadvertently positioned the ELLs as powerless and isolated
3. ELLs as incapable which incites peer resistance, unwelcome partners

Findings

Teacher 3: Third Grade Teacher no ESL training:

Teaching Beliefs: "I am their teacher."
Role as a language teacher, focusing on language skills when teaching ELLs and let the ESL teacher taking care of other ELLs needs
Relevant Experience: Limited consideration in the ELLs needs Emphasized student's individual work Believe native language can facilitate second language learning Positioning content knowledge over learner knowledge Has positive perception towards ELLs who worked well without particular assistance.
ELL competency: Invisible
1. ELLs lacked on participation, put less hours in work, less initiatives
2. ELLs keep everything to themselves, teacher paid less attention
3. Their needs are not met; expresses their difficulties

SAMPLE

Table 1
Sample and Data Source

Classroom Interview	#	Observation (Mins)	Teacher (# of Interview)	Student (# of Interview)
Preschool	1	1,080	1 (1)	3 (1)
First Grade	1	1,080	1(1)	3 (1)
Second Grade	1	1,080	1(1)	4(1)
Total	3	3,2400	3 (3)	10(3)

Major Data Categories for Each Teacher

Table 2
Major Data Categories for Each Teacher

Teacher	Positioning	Roles for ELLs	Pedagogies
1	Teacher for Students	Broad ELLs diverse Needs	Multiculturalism Understanding of ELLs' needs Culturally relevant teaching
2	Teacher for Regular Education Students	Narrow ELLs' linguistic needs	American monoculturalism Unaware of ELLs' cultural and social needs Student-centered teaching
3	Teacher for a single subject	Narrow ELLs' linguistic	English monoculturalism Indifference to ELLs' cultural and Social needs Teacher- controlled teaching

Note: ELLs =English language learners