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Fostering a Humane and Green Future: Pathways to Inclusive Societies and Sustainable Development



A qualitative study on teaching methods and strategies of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in the teaching for social justice

Rob Cris A. Bagares, John Robin H. Raton, and Carlo G. Soberano

National University, Manila

Corresponding author: cgsobrano@national-u.edu.ph

Abstract: In the field of education, there is policy that foster the teaching for social justice, a term defined by Dover (2013) that inculcates equity and justice in classrooms. This policy promoting social justice manifests in the K to 12 English Curriculum Guide (DepEd, 2016). The benefit of teaching for social justice activates learners' minds and encourages them to participate in a movement for global change. However, research on the application of teaching for social justice in ESL contexts remain scarce. Thus, in this paper, the researchers aim to analyze the English teachers' concept of teaching for social justice by investigating the ways in which they integrate the teaching of social justice in their teaching methods and strategies. Drawing on the notions of postmethod (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) and critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2010), this research revealed how ESL teachers contextualize the teaching of language and integrate principles of social justice in facilitating language classes. This study, through qualitative-case study approach, interviewed 25 ESL teachers in a public secondary high school in Antipolo City, Philippines. Using thematic analysis (Kiger & Varpio, 2020), four themes emerged: (1) Multimodality, (2) Task-based and assessment methods, (3) Art of Questioning, and (4) Differentiated activity. Although these teaching methods and strategies may not be new to English Language Teaching (ELT), it still shed light on the ways on how teachers integrate and scrutinize social (in)justices of the world in the teaching of English.

Keywords: Teaching for social justice, postmethod pedagogy, critical pedagogy

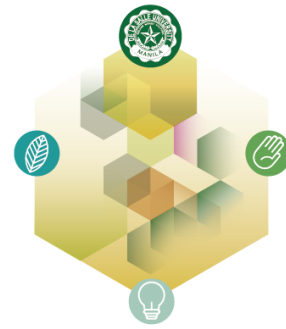
1. INTRODUCTION

In the field of education, specifically in [English] language classrooms (Spitzman & Balconi, 2019), there is an attempt by teachers in promoting equity and justice, which is referred to as 'teaching for social justice' (TSJ) (Dover, 2013). Teaching for social justice activates learners' minds and encourages them to participate in a movement for global change. It opens opportunities for their personal growth and development as citizens of their nation. Through TSJ, the student's social awareness and ability to critically analyze indoctrination and injustices around them and their expected implications will be concretized.

However, research on the application of teaching for social justice in ESL contexts remain scarce. Thus, in this paper, the researchers aim to analyze the English teachers' concept of teaching for social justice by investigating the ways in which they integrate the teaching of social justice in their teaching methods and strategies.

In the Philippines, Quijano (2012) contextualizes social justice as a set of principles that abide by fairness and a sense of being just, exercised in any institution, and either implicitly or explicitly manifested by any member of society. In the country,

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poverty is one of the most overt social justice issues and one of the leading factors that contribute to the high illiteracy rate of the country (Quijano, 2012). One way the Philippines made to alleviate poverty and meet the changing demands of the world is the ratification and implementation of the K-12 curriculum, through the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. Adarlo & Jackson (2017) argues that this new curriculum can only serve its purpose if the approach in education will be done through a globalization from below instead of a globalization from above, especially if the learners are expected to transfigure the despotic social structures through social justice, rather than to focus on foundational skills. To realize this, the English curriculum guide states that multi-literacy is essential in the sense that it helps learners

“to understand that the English language is a dynamic social process which responds to and reflects changing social conditions, and that English is inextricably involved with values, beliefs, and ways of thinking about ourselves and the world we dwell in... to appreciate and be sensitive to sociocultural diversity and understand that the meaning of any form of communication depends on context, purpose, and audience.” (DepEd, 2016, p. 6)

In actualizing this, teachers play an enormous role in achieving social justice at the school level and even at a larger scale of society (Lageson, 2017). Their perspective toward social justice and how they incorporate it into their practices are essential influences on their learners. This highlights that change in practices and anchoring it to the concepts [such as equity and inclusivity] revolving around social justice education is necessary. If this is the case, it should be acknowledged that as early as the pre-service teaching phase, teacher candidates should already be cognizant of the idea that there is a need to teach for social justice in their classes, especially in English language subjects (Spitzman & Balconi,

2019). But some pre-service language teachers believe that the primary goal of language teachers is merely to impart knowledge, specifically macro skills and other language components, such as in the study by Nguyen & Zeichner (2019). In their research in Vietnam, findings showed that although pre-service teachers believe their secondary role is to be a moral guide to their learners, TSJ did not surface in their belief in their roles as educators.

Knowing the essence of the roles of teachers in achieving social justice in society (Lageson, 2017), the challenge that remains is how educators in the country make TSJ a reality by looking at the ways they teach their subjects, considering that the implementation of the new curriculum is to minimize social inequalities through educating for social justice; and tracing its pedagogical roots so as not to tag it as under-theorized.

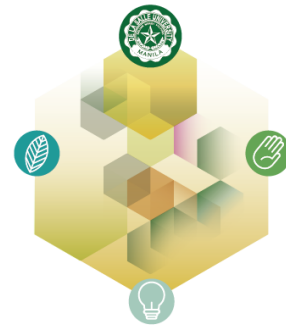
Drawing on the notions of postmethod (Kumaravivelu, 2006) and critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2010), this research reveals how ESL teachers contextualize the teaching of language and integrate principles of social justice in facilitating language classes. Postmethod allows the research to unpack ways of teaching social justice where teacher's autonomy in selecting, crafting, and integrating social issues in their lesson plans are the very essence of critical pedagogy.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study used a qualitative case study to delve into the concept of TSJ and expand the underlying principles and ideas about TSJ utilized by the teachers in their teaching; to contextualize and deeply understand how social justice is integrated into the language classrooms in the Philippines. This research design is used when the researchers aim to have an in-depth and contextualized knowledge of the research problem.

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2.2. Context and Participants

Based on the K-12 curriculum guide, English subject is one among several subjects where TSJ is clearly manifested, whereas language and literacy are expected to be harnessed for learners to achieve social justice. Knowing this, English teachers are fit to be the respondents of this study to further concretize and elucidate how TSJ happens on the ground, especially in ESL classrooms. In this purpose, we draw our attention to 25 ESL teachers from junior high school (grades 7-10), teaching the English subject at a public school in Antipolo City.

2.3. Method and Data Analysis

After accomplishing permit and consent from school administrators and teacher-participants, researchers conducted face-to-face semi-structured interview with 25 teachers. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed by an external transcriber following the transcription and translation guide by Clarke et al. (2017). Afterwards, the interview transcripts were analyzed using the Six-steps Thematic Analysis Framework of Kiger & Varpio (2020): (1) *familiarizing with the data*, (2) *generating initial codes*, (3) *searching for themes*, (4) *reviewing themes*, (5) *defining and naming themes*, and (6) *producing the report*.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Four major themes emerged that are central to the teaching methods and strategies teachers employ in teaching for social justice: (1) Multimodality, (2) Task-based and assessment methods, (3) Art of Questioning, (4) Differentiated activity.

3.1. Multimodality

The participants utilized different teaching-learning resources that enable them to discuss social

issues. Resources such as visual presentations, newspapers, infographics, songs, video clips were adapted to facilitate discussion of current events. Two participants stated, *“I use videos, I use posters, pictures sa social media, sa articles, kanina kumuha ako ng sample na movie review.”* – Teacher 14; *“Usually, I would use video clips of current events and also I would be dealing with infographics, or the latest trends especially let say for examples there will be sensitive topics”* – Teacher 25; *“We are using news articles, and then songs like Tatsulok and Upuan.”* – Teacher 23;

3.2. Task-based and assessment methods

The data analysis showed that tasks-based learning and task-assessment methods are used in measuring learners’ understanding of social justice concepts. Teachers perceived that providing relevant tasks such as writing essays and reflective papers are the ways of teaching and understanding social justice. It enabled learners to express their thoughts, ideas, stance, and share their experiences in relation to social justice that can be a relevant for formative assessments. These are stated by teachers 12, 1, and 10, respectively.

“I’m gonna give them a certain situation and that situation will react, okay, about the situation they will write down what they’re going to do when they are in that kind of situation and in that way, I’ll know if they are really, where they will do the right things.”

“I let them reflect on the quotation given, or else I will give them a particular picture wherein they are going to reflect to it what they are going to do.”

“I really wrap up that asking them the reflection. What are your reflections on this day, what is the lesson... not only for the academic, but also what’s the real life, how will you relate this lesson including your real-life situation, just like that.”

3.3. Art of Questioning

Throughout the learning process, it is evident based on the responses of the teacher participants that

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the art of questioning is vital for them. Through questioning, students can express their thoughts and ideas and share their experiences. It can stimulate their minds and lead them into critical thinking and learners being able to answer and raise their own questions are signals for the teachers of their involvement in the class discussion. Teacher 5 said, *“Students have different opinions eh, so debates will do, interview. They would go around, interview their classmates. Do they agree? Do they have the same opinion or different opinions regarding the social issue? Usually just like that, question, and answer”* while Teacher 23 added, *“How do we start? Usually, to connect with our students, we have to ask their experiences. We are going to provide different questions. That's how we open the topic.”*

3.4. Differentiated activities

Teacher 6 expressed that *“Differentiated activities can be done like for example with that, what I did with the. This one is the racism topic that I had. I let the students first. Of course, you have to cater for the same multiple intelligence to the students. So, when you are crafting your activities, your assessment, it should cater for those different intelligence of the students.”* This means that the participant value the differences of learning styles, capabilities, strengths, and weakness of the learners. It is also a consideration that learners should be able to express their ideas, beliefs, and how they will stand on a certain situation in such activity. This can be supported by the idea of Teacher 22, *“I think I need them do the differentiated activities not only one activity. Like for example, if you have the topic about expressing oneself, one's belief, you need to group them based on their skills, or based on their situation, or religion, it depends.”*

4. CONCLUSION

The qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with the teacher-participants realized in the thematically-organized transcripts provided the

‘on the ground’ workings of teaching for social justice, where teacher are not limited to the established teaching methods and strategies. Rather, teachers accommodate and contextualize the teaching of English and the integration of social justice by adapting multimodality, tasks-based assessment methods, and learner-centered approach in a form of questioning and differentiating learning activities. The researchers acknowledge that these teaching methods and strategies may not be new to English Language Teaching (ELT). However, the ways on how teachers integrate and scrutinize social (in)justices of the world in the teaching of English is what this research needed to fill.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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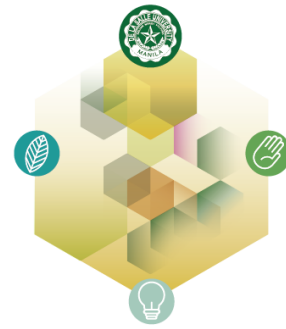
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