

Implementing Feminist Pedagogy in ESP Reading Courses for Vietnamese English Majors

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Abstract:

Although English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is becoming important because it prepares for careers in various industries, teaching it in Vietnam remains ineffective. This is mainly because most teaching methods are still 'traditional', such as teacher-centered lectures, reading comprehension exercises and grammar and vocabulary exercises. To address this issue, I believe that using the 'Feminist Pedagogy' can create a more interactive learning environment.

1. Definition

Feminist Pedagogy (FP) is more than teaching gender issues; it is a way of thinking, learning and teaching those challenges disrupting oppressive power structures (Schniedewind, 1993).

2. Practical Application

I always started each lesson with an emotional check-in, asking my students how they felt. This activity helped them feel comfortable and ready to learn because feelings are essential to learning (Forrest & Rosenberg, 1997). Then, I encouraged them to share opinions on lesson topics, helping quiet students feel heard and improving their communication skills. This activity also created a safe environment for students' self-expression (hooks, 1989; Yoshihara, 2017).

During the lesson, I mainly used panel discussions with FP principles. For example, students could decide what topic to prepare and how to lead a discussion (Forrest &

Rosenberg, 1997). They also took turns discussing the content and engaging participants with suitable activities and were empowered to use relevant social-justice-related case studies for the discussion. Finally, the panel members evaluated each other's contributions to ensure fairness.



After the lesson, students reflected on their learning by sharing their key takeaways or writing short essays, showing a core FP principle – the connection between knowledge and real-world improvement (Schram, 1976, p. 158).

3. Benefits of Applying FP

According to Yoshihara (2017) and Cates (2002, 2004), language teachers should teach students linguistic knowledge and empower them to address global issues. Therefore, when applied in my ESP class, FP offered several benefits regarding critical consciousness, language development and inclusive learning environments.

First, FP helps students understand power dynamics and marginalization. By reflecting on their personal lived experiences, which are often ignored in mainstream education (Forrest & Rosenberg, 1997), students will become more aware of social injustices and feel empowered to create positive changes. In one lesson, for instance, my students discussed gendered norms in jobs, such as why police officers are seen as male-dominated roles while babysitters are viewed as women's work in Vietnam. Second, FP can be a useful language development tool (Cannizzo, 2021). When engaging with business-related topics through a feminist lens, my students were motivated to participate in non-judgmental dialogs. This improved their L2 communicative skills and taught them to use 'non-sexism language,' such as 'they' for neutral references or

'businesspeople' instead of 'businessman' or 'businesswoman'.

Finally, FP fosters inclusivity by valuing students' voices. In my class, students could use L1 when uncomfortable answering any question in English, which helped them understand business content and enhanced their critical thinking and analytical skills on social issues (Yoshihara, 2017). This pedagogy also allowed me to join students' collaborative activities or discussions, contributing to the process of co-constructing knowledge and challenging traditional methods focusing on grammar translation. (Crabtree et al., 2009; Parry, 1996; Schniedewind, 1987)

4. Conclusion

Teaching English is not just about teaching grammar, vocabulary and linguistic information; it also educates students to address global issues, such as equity, justice and human rights. Although applying FP in teaching TESOL in Vietnam has challenges, such as large classes or rigid curriculums, it has great potential for educational improvement. Therefore, more research is needed to explore its effectiveness in Vietnam's TEFL context.

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Research Interests: English language teaching, teacher's education, Feminist Pedagogy and Computer-Assisted Language Learning.