Making the intrinsic explicit: a cultural constructivist exploration of the subjective educational ideologies of trainee Malay, Tamil and Chinese language teachers in Singapore

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Making the intrinsic explicit: A cultural constructivist exploration of the subjective educational ideologies of trainee Malay, Tamil and Chinese language teachers in Singapore.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

PETER THOMAS BODYCOTT

Faculty of Education
1995
constant support which has helped maintain my personal balance. Throughout life, Syl has brought to each day, to each new twist in the journey, insight, optimism, strength, love and commitment. Her contributions are immeasurable and for them I am eternally grateful.
ABSTRACT

This study explores the intrinsic relationships between the personal constructs of teaching and learning that trainee language teachers bring to their formal teacher education study. The analysis represents an effort to look, from a cultural constructivist perspective, at the subjective educational ideology of trainee language teachers in Singapore. Subjective educational ideologies are grounded in the personal history of trainee involvement in both formal and informal educative cultures. This study demonstrates that it is possible to augment advances in understanding previously gained through research by examining those individuals and cultures that have principally and directly influenced the thinking and learning of the trainee i.e., teachers, parents, family members, peers and schools. Repertory grid and self characterisation written biographies, it is argued, provide a hermeneutic dialectic approach to cultural constructivist inquiry. These techniques are synergistic and ideally suited to the purpose of exploring trainee teacher thinking and underlying ideology.

Analysis of the data indicates that trainee teachers from different cultures, and educated in different mother tongues display a range of intrinsic constructs about language learning, language teaching pedagogy and language teacher characteristics. These trainees, upon entering a formal professional preparatory program, display a knowledge about the language teacher's personal and interpersonal skills and their role in creating an environment that facilitates language learning. Trainee knowledge and constructs about language teaching and learning are grounded in their personal history. That is, both informal and formal experiences of language, teaching and learning environments affect the development of subjective educational ideology.
These ideological principles form the foundation of trainee language teacher thinking and are more closely associated with elements from the informal educative culture of the home, that is, with one or both parents. Furthermore, the closeness of these associations suggests that this group of trainees validated these culturally influenced, personal constructs of language teaching and learning against elements from their formal education. The trainees' preferred approach to language teaching was found to reflect the way they learned language in the context of the home.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ............................................................................................................ i
Abstract .......................................................................................................................... iii
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................ v
List of Figures ................................................................................................................ xi
List of Tables ................................................................................................................ xii

## Chapter 1: Introduction ............................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Introduction ........................................................................................................... 2
  1.2 Purpose and objectives of the study .................................................................. 2
  1.3 Subjective educational ideology: Theoretical presuppositions ................... 3
  1.4 Background to the study .................................................................................... 5
  1.5 Rationale for the study ....................................................................................... 7
  1.6 Conceptual locus: A cultural constructivist perspective ............................. 11
  1.7 Subjective construction: Interpersonal cultural influences ......................... 13
  1.8 Culture and language ......................................................................................... 14
  1.9 *A priori* assertions ........................................................................................... 15
      1.9.1 Prior experience influences thinking ..................................................... 15
      1.9.2 Subjective formations of knowledge, understandings, and beliefs are the frame or cultural construction of meanings which human beings express and refer to themselves at a particular point in time ........................................................................ 16
      1.9.3 Personal constructed views can be elicited and interpreted for meaning .................................................................................... 16
      1.9.4 Knowledge of personal constructs will be beneficial to trainers and trainees ....................................................................... 17
  1.10 Physical locus of the study ............................................................................... 18
      1.10.1 Singapore ............................................................................................... 18
      1.10.2 Education context .................................................................................. 18
          1.10.2.1 Historical developments ................................................................. 19
          1.10.2.2 The British period ......................................................................... 20
          1.10.2.3 Post war developments ................................................................. 20
          1.10.2.4 Self-government: A period of rapid expansion ......................... 20
          1.10.2.5 The Goh report and beyond ......................................................... 21
  1.11 Methods ............................................................................................................. 24
      1.11.1 Participants ............................................................................................ 24
      1.11.2 Design .................................................................................................. 24
  1.12 Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 25
Chapter 2: Review of Literature .......................................................... 27
  2.1 Introduction ........................................................................... 28
  2.2 Teacher thinking research ..................................................... 30
    2.2.1 Subjective theories of teachers ........................................ 31
    2.2.2 Implicit theories .............................................................. 32
    2.2.3 Personal history .............................................................. 33
    2.2.4 Teacher knowledge ......................................................... 35
      2.2.4.1 Teacher knowledge: Personal schemata vs ecological views .............................................. 36
      2.2.4.2 Knowledge of practice ............................................. 38
      2.2.4.3 Learning to teach .................................................... 40
  2.3 The Influence of culture ......................................................... 42
    2.3.1 Cultural knowledge, models and talk ............................... 44
    2.3.2 Hermeneutic enquiry ..................................................... 46
  2.4 Constructivism ..................................................................... 47
    2.4.1 Constructivism and education ........................................ 49
    2.4.2 Schools of constructivist thought .................................... 50
  2.5 Kelly's personal construct theory ............................................ 54
    2.5.1 The concept of constructs .............................................. 55
    2.5.2 The act of construing .................................................... 57
    2.5.3 Constructive alternativism ............................................. 58
    2.5.4 Construct awareness ..................................................... 58
    2.5.5 Types of constructs ...................................................... 59
      2.5.5.1 Core constructs ..................................................... 59
      2.5.5.2 Loose-tight constructs .......................................... 61
      2.5.5.3 Pre-emptive, propositional and constellation constructs .................................................. 62
    2.5.6 Fundamental postulate and corollaries ............................. 63
      2.5.6.1 Construction corollary ........................................... 64
      2.5.6.2 Individuality corollary .......................................... 65
      2.5.6.3 Organisation corollary .......................................... 66
      2.5.6.4 Choice corollary ................................................... 66
      2.5.6.5 Modulation corollary .......................................... 66
      2.5.6.6 Fragmentation corollary ....................................... 68
      2.5.6.7 Sociality corollary ............................................. 68
      2.5.6.8 Commonality corollary ....................................... 69
    2.5.7 Criticisms of Kelly's theory ............................................ 69
2.6 Implications and applications of PCP

2.6.1 Constructivist learning: Individual fulfilment

2.6.2 PCP and language learning: A theoretical foundation

2.6.3 PCP and language education in practice

2.6.4 A PCP approach to language teacher education

2.6.5 Changing trainee thinking and practice

2.6.6 Personal construct change and teacher training

2.6.7 Trainer constructs and teacher training

2.7 A cultural constructivist perspective

2.7.1 Assumptions underlying a cultural constructivist perspective

2.8 Conclusion

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Methodological orientation

3.3 Constructivist methods

3.3.1 PCP methods in education

3.3.2 PCP methods in teacher thinking

3.3.3 PCP methods in cultural studies

3.4 Methodological design

3.4.1 Prelude to decision making

3.4.2 Case study design

3.4.3 Trainee participants

3.4.4 Methodological rationale

3.5 Data collection

3.5.1 Phase one: Written biography - Self characterisation

3.5.2 Phase two: Role construct repertory grid

3.5.2.1 Element identification and construct elicitation

3.5.2.2 Rating of constructs

3.5.2.3 Repertory grid analysis

3.5.4 Written recounts—context of construing

3.6 Data analysis

3.6.1 Case report analysis

3.6.2 Cross-case analysis

3.6.2.1 Cross case analysis: Axial coding

3.6.2.2 Cross case analysis: The final stage
3.7 Benefits of the methods used ................................................................. 123
3.8 Cultural constructivist methodology: A hermeneutic dialectic process ................................................................. 123
  3.8.1 Fairness ......................................................................................... 124
  3.8.2 Ontological authenticity .............................................................. 125
  3.8.3 Tactical authenticity ................................................................. 125
3.8 Conclusion ..................................................................................... 126

Chapter 4: Case Study Reports ................................................................. 127
  4.1 Introduction ................................................................................ 128
  4.2 Case study organisation and structure ........................................... 128
  4.3 Trainee: Language information ....................................................... 128
  4.4 Trainee case study: Delaina .............................................................. 131
  4.5 Trainee case study: Normah .............................................................. 142
  4.6 Trainee case study: Norlieza ............................................................ 155
  4.7 Trainee case study: Ernie ................................................................. 170
  4.8 Trainee case study: Faizah ............................................................... 188
  4.9 Trainee case study: Shuh Yi ............................................................ 203
  4.10 Trainee case study: Teow Hiang .................................................... 216
  4.11 Trainee case study: Connie ............................................................. 232
  4.12 Trainee case study: Regina ............................................................ 247
  4.13 Trainee case study: Vimala ............................................................. 261
  4.14 Trainee case study: Bucktha .......................................................... 275
  4.15 Trainee case study: Serena ............................................................ 290
  4.16 Conclusion ................................................................................. 306

Chapter 5: Shared Meanings and Relationships: Cross Case Analyses and Discussion ................................................................. 307
  5.1 Introduction ................................................................................ 308
  5.2 Description of the categories and subcategories ................................ 309
    5.2.1 Aspect 1 – Language learning guidelines ..................................... 309
    5.2.2 Aspect 2 – Language teacher characteristics .................................. 311
    5.2.3 Aspect 3 – Pedagogical approaches to language learning ............... 312
  5.3 Commonalities ............................................................................. 314
    5.3.1 Commonality within cultural groups - Language learning guidelines . 314
Appendix

Appendix 1 Information to participants regarding research and rep grid................................. 396
Appendix 2 Instructions to participants for identifying elements................................. 398
Appendix 3 Instructions to participants for eliciting constructs................................. 400
Appendix 4 Instructions to participants explaining the rating of elements................................. 402
Appendix 5 Trainee demographic information................................. 404
Appendix 6 Extracts from Written biography – Self characterisation data................................. 407
Appendix 7 Extracts of Written recounts – Contexts of construing data................................. 409
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 A cultural constructivist perspective of meaning creation.......................12
Figure 2.1 Overview of literature reviewed, major principles and conceptual influence.................................................................29
Figure 3.1 Structural outline and methodological research influences..............91
Figure 3.2 Completed repertory grid.................................................................109
Figure 3.3 Flow chart of construct elicitation and rating.................................113
Figure 3.4 Cluster analysed repertory grid............................................................114
Figure 3.5 Flow chart for the FOCUS algorithm.....................................................115
Figure 3.6 Consensus, correspondence, conflict and contrast in construct terminology of individuals.....................................................120
Figure 3.7 Summary flow chart of data collection and analysis procedures.................................................................122
Figure 4.1 Case report structure........................................................................129
Figure 4.2 FOCUS repertory grid: Delaina............................................................134
Figure 4.3 FOCUS repertory grid: Normah............................................................145
Figure 4.4 FOCUS repertory grid: Norlieza............................................................158
Figure 4.5 FOCUS repertory grid: Ernie.................................................................174
Figure 4.6 FOCUS repertory grid: Faizah...............................................................194
Figure 4.7 FOCUS repertory grid: Shuh Yi.............................................................207
Figure 4.8 FOCUS repertory grid: Teow Hiang.......................................................220
Figure 4.9 FOCUS repertory grid: Connie.............................................................235
Figure 4.10 FOCUS repertory grid: Regina............................................................252
Figure 4.11 FOCUS repertory grid: Vimala............................................................265
Figure 4.12 FOCUS repertory grid: Bucktha..........................................................277
Figure 4.13 FOCUS repertory grid: Serena............................................................293
Figure 5.1 Structural overview and developmental links as a result of cross case analyses................................................................310
Figure 5.2 Model of subjective educational language teaching ideology.................................................................330
Figure 5.3 Links between superordinate constructs and comprehensive constructs of language teaching.................................336
Figure 5.4 Core construct foundation of trainee teacher construing....................339
Figure 5.5 Cultural influence on trainee language teacher construing...............342
Figure 6.1 Structural framework and reflexive nature of the research journey........................................................................347
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Written biography – Self characterisation instruction sheet</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Element title list</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Element ratings on elicited constructs</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Instructions for completing written recounts of context of construing</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Tabular synopsis of case report organisation, trainee teaching specialisation and mother tongue language</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Language learning guidelines – Malay trainee perspectives</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Language learning guidelines – Chinese trainee perspectives</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Language learning guidelines – Tamil trainee perspectives</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Language teacher characteristics – Malay trainee perspectives</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Language teacher characteristics – Chinese trainee perspectives</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Language teacher characteristics – Tamil trainee perspectives</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>Pedagogical approaches to language teaching – Malay trainee perspectives</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>Pedagogical approaches to language teaching – Chinese trainee perspectives</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>Pedagogical approaches to language teaching – Tamil trainee perspectives</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>