

Preservice EFL Teachers' Background Knowledge in and Experiences with Genre

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Abstract

Extant studies conducted with English as foreign language (EFL) preservice teachers (PTs) on writing and genre mainly investigate how writing various genres is taught to PTs. The well-known importance of background knowledge and previous experiences on learning is commonly disregarded. In this qualitative study, before teaching EFL PTs how to write various genres, their background knowledge in and personal experiences with genre in their native (Turkish) and target language (English) is taken under investigation in the Turkish context. 12 EFL PTs volunteered for the focus group interviews and data were analyzed through open coding. Results revealed that the PTs who studied in social versus science fields in high school had different experiences with genres in Turkish. In English, none of the PTs neither had any conscious exposure to genres nor did any hands-on writing activities in high school. They were exposed to only a few types of genres during reading activities, without focusing on the features of the genre. These results are informative for teacher educators as they reveal the diversity in the PTs' background knowledge in and experiences with genres in Turkish and the overall limited knowledge of genres in English. Therefore, while designing writing courses, teacher educators should consider PTs' background knowledge and previous experiences both in their native and target language, and should offer more practice-based writing courses for the teaching of genres, especially in English. Without creating proper background knowledge and providing hands-on experience, teaching the writing of various genres may fail reaching the targeted outcomes.

Keywords: English as foreign language; genre; preservice teachers; qualitative research; writing