

Enabling EFL / ESL Pre-Service Teachers to Connect Theory to Practice

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Abstract

ESL teacher education programs comprise many second language acquisition and instructional theories alongside teaching techniques, usually via explanations or examples provided by their lecturer. However, not everything learnt can be implemented and experienced in their practicum in schools. As a result, some graduates might start their teaching careers without always being able to connect the theories they have studied to practical classroom use and thus lack confidence in their teaching ability. This study set out to develop a method that enables us to tailor our teaching to the needs of the pre-service teachers.

Micro-teaching and reflective teaching served as a base for the revision of our pedagogical courses. Both theories enable the connection of theory to practice through collaborative peer work, peer teaching, reflections and feedback, which led to the development of the APK (Accessing Prior Knowledge) method. Action Research served as the foundation for the methodology employed in our study. Using a mixed-method approach, Pre and Post questionnaires per skill were administered to 33 pre-service teachers. The data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative results revealed some significant findings. However, the qualitative analysis indicated an increase in pre-service teachers' confidence, motivation and a feeling of being better prepared for their teaching career. Implications of this study on the need to acknowledge pre-service teachers' prior knowledge will be presented.

Keywords: *EFL; ESL; pre-service teachers; teacher training; theory to practice*