A new approach to TESOL microteaching practice-designing personas

Abstract

I will demonstrate how personas can be implemented into microteaching (MT) to help increase the authenticity of the task. I will then present the findings from the project conducted with a group of MSc TESOL students who used personas in their microteaching practice and discuss how the use of the theory impacted their MT experience.

Summary:

One of the common criticisms of microteaching practice on teacher training programmes is inauthenticity of the task (He &Yan, 2011). While students appreciate the opportunity to plan and teach lessons, they often comment on the challenges of teaching their lessons to an imaginary group of students acted by their peers.

To address this problem, I have used the User Centred Translation (UCT) theory (Suojanen, Koskinen, Tuominen, 2014). The process of planning lessons for microteaching is similar to the process of translating. Just as the translator needs to think of the audience they are translating for, the teacher needs to construct a mental model of the students (i.e. personas) they will be teaching. Teacher trainees need to collect as much information about the target group of learners as possible i.e. their age, interest, assumed knowledge, current level of English and their personality.

In the project I conducted with a group of MSc TESOL students on a practical methodology course, the students were asked to draw and design their personas (i.e. students) and use them when planning and teaching their lessons in microteaching. After each MT session, they reflected on their experience of using personas by answering questions in an open-ended questionnaire.

In this talk, the participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their own teacher training experience, find out more about the application of personas to microteaching practice and learn more about the findings from my research project. I am hoping that this session will give practical ideas to use in teacher training programmes.

References:

He, C. and Yan, C., 2011. Exploring authenticity of microteaching in pre-service teacher education programmes. *Teaching Education*, *22*(3), pp.291-302.

Suojanen, T., Koskinen, K. and Tuominen, T., 2014. *User-centered translation*. Oxon, Routledge.