

English-medium researcher collaboration in a Spanish-medium narrative study: unhelpful complexity or enriched research thinking?

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This paper is prompted by our ongoing collaborative research into the narrativised understandings (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Johnson and Golombek, 2002) of teacher trainees from The University of Córdoba regarding their voluntary two-week teaching practicum in the Western Saharan refugee camps in southern Algeria.* This practicum sojourn initiative has involved 15 trainees for each of the last five years. The impetus for the project lies in the recognition that the trainee teachers are being prepared for the Spanish educational system where issues of multiculturalism and internationalisation are now being strongly felt (Fernández López & Ruzo Sanmartín, 2004; González, 2007). In this way, through the practicum experience and their reflections on it, they might develop further social and global awareness of great value in the future careers (Cates, 1990; Noddings, 2005).

In our study, we are interested in possible indications in the trainee's accounts of intercultural learning which took place during and/or as a result their Saharan sojourn. And we are also looking for indications that this learning might inform their subsequent professional thinking and practice especially vis-à-vis any internationalised and human rights dimensions to that teaching.

Their accounts of their experiences are written primarily in Spanish and Elena's analyses of them also take place primarily in this language. However, once we took a decision to work collaboratively for this study, the process became linguistically more complex since our collaboration takes place primarily in English. This use of English is largely a pragmatic one - Elena has professional competence in English whereas Richard's Spanish is sufficient only for surface-level processing of the texts – but this reliance on English is not just a consequence of working with an example of the infamous stereotype of the linguistically-impooverished English native-speaker speaker.

Rather, we decided to collaborate in this way so that Richard's insights and practices - informed by mostly English-medium literature and research experience - about intercultural learning, narrative methodology and reflexive research writing could cross-fertilise with Elena's similar insights and practices which she acquired as much through Spanish-medium as English-medium scholarship and research traditions. Thus, we hoped that our collaboration would create an English-medium research-and-researcher thinking space in which we could exchange our insights and practices and thereby enrich the

Spanish-medium project.

In this paper, we will reflect on the largely English-medium collaborative process and consider how this interacts with, on the one hand, the largely-Spanish-medium process of data analysis in which we are currently engaged, and, on the other, the largely English-medium process of writing about this research for publication (although we are discussing the merits also of subsequent Spanish-medium publications).

References

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* For more on this context, see:

<http://www.polisario.es/> (in Spanish)

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