

Narratives as a methodological tool: Re-presenting stories for further reflection on the racial and linguistic aspects of English language teacher identities

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The co-constructed nature of narratives as an “interactional accomplishment” (Gubruim and Holstien, 2009: 93) is a widely discussed concept in narrative studies. This paper explores the methodological considerations when using a narrative that has been reconstructed using data from two sources and then re-presented to the participant in order to generate further reflection upon the racial and linguistic aspects of their identities.

This paper is situated in the professional world of TESOL, where teacher-identity is often framed in terms of each teacher's status as either a native-speaker or non-native speaker of English (NSE/NNSE), thereby creating a binary distinction between Native-English speaking teachers (NESTs) and non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) (see Medgyes, 1992; Nemetchinova, 2005). Further, within the international English language education business, English-speaking nativeness is often associated with a particular racial profile. As a NES of Filipino ethnic origins, I am visibly not part of this profile and, as I have experienced, VEM-NESTs can find that their NEST identity is not acknowledged by those who value the Anglo-profile (see Kubota, 2006; Holliday, 2009).

As a VEM-NEST myself I am also a participant in this study. I have written a narrative about my experiences of being a VEM-NEST and sent a copy of this to each of my research participants who are also VEM-NESTs who then wrote their own narratives in response to my story. Next, I conducted one to one interviews with each participant and generated further narrative data. Then, using both data sources, I thematically reconstructed the participants' stories in order to feature the racial and linguistic features that shape the professional identities of VEM-NESTs so that the re-presented narrative may generate further reflection from the participant when read. In this way narratives can be used explicitly as a methodological tool.