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Understanding Gender in the Dynamics of the Hidden Curriculum: An ELT Colombian Case Study

Comprendiendo las Dinámicas de Género en el Currículo Oculto: Un Estudio de Caso en el Contexto de la Enseñanza de Inglés en Colombia

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Abstract

This article describes the main findings of a Colombian case study in which an English language teacher, who was enrolled in a gender-based optional course, carries out small-scale research to understand gender in her ELT practices. The study aims at describing what and how English language teachers learn when they incorporate their gender consciousness in their teaching practices. The study focuses on Martha's case who seeks to understand how her learning comes about when integrating the gender perspective in her educational practices and teaching context. The qualitative analysis indicates, among other things, that Martha becomes aware of how the dynamics of the hidden curriculum affect her students' gender subjectivities. Through this learning process, Martha adopts discourses and practices to promote gender equity, eradicate differential treatments, and contribute positively to her students' learning experience.

Keywords: case study, ELT, gender, hidden curriculum, subjectivities, teachers' learning

Resumen

Este articulo describe los hallazgos más importantes de un estudio de caso colombiano en el que una profesora de inglés, quien toma un curso de género en el contexto de la enseñanza de lengua en su programa de Maestría, realiza un proyecto de investigación a escala menor para comprender la relación

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entre género y sus prácticas de la enseñanza de inglés. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo describir qué y cómo aprenden los docentes de inglés cuando incorporan su conciencia de género en sus prácticas de enseñanza. Este estudio se enfoca en el caso de Martha, quien quiere comprender cómo surge el aprendizaje de esta perspectiva en sus prácticas educativas y en su contexto de enseñanza. El análisis cualitativo indica, entre muchas cosas, que Martha se hace consciente de cómo las dinámicas del currículo oculto impactan las subjetividades de género de sus estudiantes. A través de este proceso de aprendizaje, Martha adopta discursos y prácticas para promover la equidad de género, erradicar tratos diferenciales y contribuir positivamente en la experiencia de aprendizaje de sus estudiantes.

Palabras claves: aprendizaje de los docentes, currículo oculto, estudio de caso, género, ELT, subjetividades

Introduction

In Colombia, during the last decade, there has been an increase in the number of publications and research works that focus on gender matters in foreign language teaching contexts. This is positive considering that it is through education that issues of discrimination, segregation, and gender inequity can be abolished in a society with social support (Connell, 2011). Due to the fact that the classroom or school is a place where meanings of gender are produced and have an impact on students' identities, teachers are considered to play a central role in addressing and challenging those discourses that promote sexist practices or differential treatments that little favor students' learning experiences (Litosseliti, 2006; Hruska, 2004; Sunderland, 2000). Consequently, it is pivotal that English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, and all teachers in general, learn to identify and challenge ways in which discourses and classroom practices may produce inequities embodied in dominant discourses (Mojica & Castañeda-Peña, 2017).

In this line of thought, the main aim of this article is to present the most insightful findings of a case study whose teacher participated in a gendered-based optional course offered to English language teachers in a Master's Program of Applied Linguistics of Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Bogotá, Colombia. The objective of the course was to raise gender awareness and to help teachers find or reflect on gender matters in their teaching settings and practices[2]. This is one of the three cases that I, as the researcher of the cited study, addressed as part of my doctoral dissertation with the objective to understand what and how English language teachers learn when they incorporate their gender consciousness in their teaching practices. Thus, this multi-case study allowed me to explore aspects related to English language teachers' education, their learning trajectories, gendered practices, and roles with the aim to reach gender equity in their classrooms.

[2] A complete description of this course can be found in Mojica & Castañeda-Peña (2017, 2021).

Nowadays, integrating national and international mandates to reach gender equity is an important task that the educational systems of all countries committed to the Sustainable Development Goals have; hence, this aim could be reached if teachers are involved in a pedagogical process that leads them to become aware of gender in schooling. On the one hand, while I was doing the literature review of my doctoral dissertation, I learnt that there were a few pedagogical experiences in Colombia that accounted for teachers' learning of this perspective in their teaching contexts (i.e., Calvo et al., 2006). On the other hand, similar experiences in which EFL teachers put into practice their gender awareness in their learning contexts were scarce. In this sense, this research report might provide hints for Teaching English Programs to include gender as a category of learning in their courses. Additionally, English language teachers may find fruitful to learn paths to incorporate this view within their daily reflection and practices.

In this article, I present the theoretical and methodological frameworks under which the study was conducted. After that, the background of the case along with the research questions will be described. Then, a section named findings and discussion presents a few relevant examples of the data collected in the light of the two categories that emerged in the study. At the end, I describe a number of implications and conclusions that may be applied for the contexts of other ELT teachers in Colombia.

Theoretical Framework

One of the most relevant categories for the analysis of the data collected in this study is the *teachers' learning*. The sociocultural perspective offers a helpful framework called '*Participate and Learn*', or *Communities of Practice* (Wenger, 1998; Johnson, 2009). This category was chosen as it entails features that account for the ways a teacher can learn to raise her/his gender awareness in the teaching endeavor.

Participate and Learn views teachers' learning as an *in-situ* process in which participants construct meanings based on the particular settings and conditions where they work (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Johnson, 2009). In this sense, learning is contextualized, and it depends on an ongoing engagement with other members of the community. In other words, learning is produced as a reflection on the participation in the teaching contexts where teachers are situated. The cited authors connect the issue of the participation with a collaborative work done with other(s), who ideally are more experts on the skill, theme, or perspective that is intended to be learnt. In this interaction, both novice[3] teachers and more experienced teachers produce and co-construct situated learning based on the reflection

[3] A 'novice' teacher in this case refers to a teacher who has little or no experience in incorporating the gender perspective in the teaching practice.

and the dialogic mediation that responds to the questions, the learning objectives, and the situations that they are trying to understand, as reflected in this quote:

> Teaching as a dialogic mediation involves contributions and discoveries by learners, as well as the assistance of an "expert" collaborator, or teacher. Instruction in such collaborative activity is contingent on teachers' and learners' activity and related to what they are trying to do. The assisting teacher provides information and guidance relevant to furthering learners' current goal-directed activity. Both information and guidance need to be provided in a way that is immediately responsive and proportionate to learners' varying needs. (Johnson, 2009, p. 63)

In this case, the dialogic mediation allows novice teachers and the more expert teacher to communicate and verbalize their ideas, beliefs, and assumptions about their gender subjectivities or the historical understandings that have been formed in the culture with respect to gender equity, education, and teaching practices. Hence, learning to be gender aware in the EFL context is a subjective, context-dependent, and in-situ process that is informed by cultural, social, and historical discourses about gender and education (Mojica, 2017; Mojica & Castañeda-Peña, 2021).

Accordingly, language teacher's learning is not produced when they learn generic principles and contents; Kumaravadivelu (2001) argues that teacher's learning does not happen when teachers directly apply the expert theories that they have learned; rather, he sees learning as an individual process in which teachers construct personal theories about their practices as teachers. This model aims at closing the gap between theory and practice by suggesting that it is important to involve teachers in research-like activities through which reflective teaching and learning can be produced. Those activities lead them to discover genuine and relevant questions for the collaborative work between them, as possible novice teachers, and more expert teachers when learning to incorporate the gender perspective in their classrooms.

Gender & Education

Learning to integrate gender in the ELT classroom involves, from a critical approach, understanding that language classrooms are epistemological sites in which students learn different meanings about gender, class, race, and other social categories; thus, what happens in the classrooms is connected to macro social and cultural structures in the society (Kumaravadivelu, 1999; Alonso-Geta & Sánchez, 2011). Within this view, schools are not neutral places where students simply learn knowledge related to a subject; instead, those are places in which students may learn to reproduce the status quo of dominant groups through social and cultural practices or discourses (Giroux, 2006). Clearly, teachers aware of this can play an important role in challenging these forms of inequity to help students discover, critique, and subvert those forms of oppression and domination (Giroux, 2006).

Therefore, in this study, being a language educator entails being concerned not only about teaching English successfully, but also recognizing how teachers' scenarios and practices may reproduce gender inequities.

This study then positions gender as a category beyond the dichotomic sex difference (male or female). Following Butler (1990) and Foucault (1972), gender is a socio-cultural construction in which the bodies are connected and informed by historical and cultural discourses and practices. Litosseliti (2006) shares this vision and argues that "gender refers to the social behaviors, expectations and attitudes associated with being male and female […] gendered identities are both social and individual, but also variable […]" (p.1). The gender identity is an ongoing process that individuals construct drawing on the available historical discourses about men and women; however, these discourses are not fixed, people may adopt or embody different forms of masculine and feminine.

Therefore, to guarantee a more educational and inclusive view of this concept, I find helpful to position gender from a perspective of multiplicity to avoid identifying womanhood and manhood as fixed and opposed discourses. Thus, "there is not a particular masculinity, but masculinities; and there is not a single femininity, but femininities […]" (Castañeda-Peña, 2009, p. 25). The main goal of this perspective is to step aside from rigid, hegemonic, and often discriminatory discourses of how the genders should ideally be and act in the world.

Methodology

Considering the participants' role and the research objective in this study, two methodological paradigms were implemented: Case study (Stake 2006) and Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). As stated above, I report here the insights that emerged from one of the cases that I selected in the doctoral research project. The participant of this case is a teacher who enrolled on an optional course of a Master Program for English language teachers. The learning objective of the course was to raise gender awareness in the English language teaching contexts. To do this, the student-teachers (STs) were asked to do a small-scale research project in which they posed genuine questions that they wanted to explore as part of their learning in the course. While doing this, some STs accepted to be assisted by one of the teachers of the course (ToT) to do their data analysis. In fact, the cases selected for this study were STs who were willing to work collaboratively with one of the teachers in this course (ToT)[4] in their own research agendas concerning gender in their English teaching scenarios.

[4] ToT refers to the acronym Teacher of Teacher coined by Maggioli (2012).

Since the category of teachers' learning of gender was going to happen through the research-like activity, the ST became a researcher and participant of this research. Thereby, one of the methodological frameworks I drew on in this study was Participatory Action Research. My participation in this study was not only to observe and collect data, but also to assist the STs with their small-scale research project. Within this context of the collaborative work between the STs and the ToT, PAR is a paradigm that facilitates the production of knowledge based on the participation and the collective learning in the research activity (Small, 1995; Calderon & Cardona, 2014). In this sense, the learning is a process of co-construction that emerges through the interpretations of the participants, in this case the STs and the ToT, while experiencing the small-scale research.

The second paradigm chosen was a case study. This framework was selected as it allows researchers "experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its context and its particular situation" (Stake, 2006, p. 3). In this study, 'experiencing the activity of the case' means that both the STs and the ToT account for their interpretations of the situations lived as they progress on the small-scale project. In this line of thought, the case study is a qualitative research framework that is based on the participants' experiential knowledge (Stake, 2006). These two epistemological frameworks are congruent in that both promote the construction of the reality using the intersubjective meanings and interpretations that are produced in the participants' mutual interaction of the situations and contexts under study (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

Several instruments of the qualitative research were used and designed to collect the data. For example, for the participant Martha (see further information below), to whom I focus on this article, I visited her teaching context and video recorded seven of her English language classes. The school where she worked gave us full support and consent to do the recordings and to develop her small-scale project. Afterwards, she and I met three times to talk about the video recorded class observations. I also transcribed and recorded those encounters that lasted from one to three hours each. Additionally, I designed a series of semi-structure interviews based on the class observations and the Martha's logs from the course. The interviews were to raise gender awareness, orient the analysis, and cover key issues that emerged during the class observations and connected with her research questions.

Grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) was the approach used to analyze the data collected since I intended to identify the categories that naturally emerged in each case. In this process, the data were organized using a software to do an open coding (axial coding). These codes were labeled and grouped with other codes that share similar features; this merging process allowed me to discover the complexity and scope of each category. At the end of this process, I used two forms of triangulation associated with peer triangulation; one in which I asked the STs to validate the interpretations of the data analysis and the other in which I invited other researchers familiar with the study to cross-examine the data and interpretations.

Background of the Case Study

This case study is about an English language teacher named Martha, a pseudonym, who has more than 10 years of experience as a teacher. She works for a private bilingual school in Bogotá- Colombia, she is a homeroom teacher[5], and she also teaches Math, Science, and Religion in different grades of the primary section. However, she decided to conduct her small-scale study with a group of third graders in her English language classes since the study aimed at understanding the relationship between her English language teaching practices and the category of gender. Martha's group is compounded of 14 girls and 11 boys whose ages range between eight and nine years old. English is taught six hours per week.

As a student in the course about gender and language learning, Martha kept a journal in which she reflected on her teaching context. In one of her class observations, she noticed unusual behaviors from one of her male students that did not correspond to the social expectation of what male students are supposed to do. This reflection allowed Martha to formulate a first genuine research question: How are gender identities expressed through interactions in my EFL classroom of third graders? Hence, most of our collaborative work focused on understanding the issue of interaction gender-wise. Nonetheless, two questions guided this research study: "What does this English language teacher learn about the meaning of a gendered practice in the framework of a gender-oriented course in their English language teaching education?" and "How does this English language teacher learn to incorporate her gender awareness in her teaching practices?" Based on these two research questions, I present the main findings and categories emerged from the data collected.

Findings and Discussion

Figure 1 below shows a summary of the category and subcategories that answer the first research question. These categories emerged from the cross-analysis of the three case studies that I analyzed for the doctoral dissertation.

Nonetheless, I only present here the data from Martha's case to illustrate what happens in the teaching practices of the *hidden curriculum* since the *interaction* is the main issue that Martha is interested in learning. The hidden curriculum is usually understood as the set of values and norms that are transmitted to students through implicit messages by which they are socialized about issues related to gender, race, class, authority, academic knowledge, abilities, among others (Posner, 2005). In other words, the hidden curriculum corresponds to

[5] A homeroom teacher usually has more formative responsibilities with a particular group. Martha decides to work with the third-grade group as she feels that she knows it more since she has a closer relationship with those students.

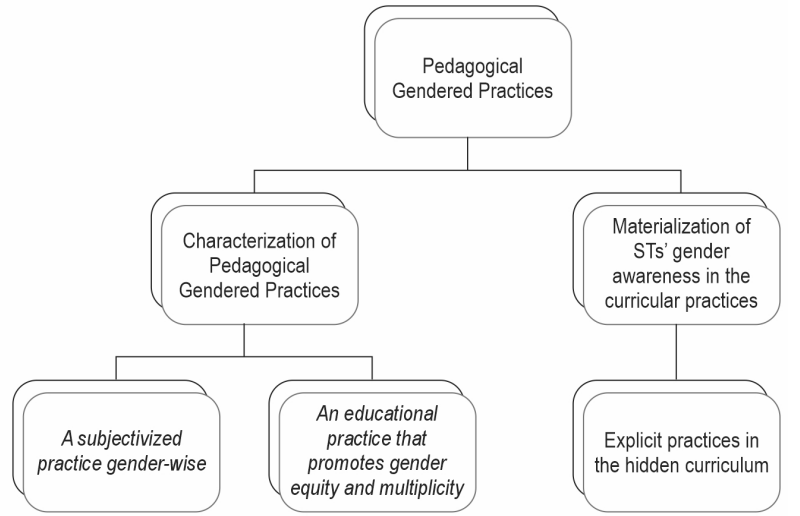

Figure 1. Pedagogical Gendered Practices 1

the discourses of the school culture, and intentional but subtle actions camouflaged inside the dynamics of everyday class interactions.

The category of Pedagogical Gendered Practices is divided into two subcategories: characterization of the pedagogical gendered practices and the materialization of the ST's gender awareness in the curricular practices.

Characterization of the Pedagogical Gendered Practices

The analysis of the data indicate that the characterization of the pedagogical gendered practices has two main features: (a) it is a subjectivized practice gender-wise in which the practice is educational; (b) it promotes gender equity and multiplicity. Thus, what does a subjectivized practice gender-wise mean? The following example is helpful to illustrate this:

Extract 1

"I had always taken for granted that gender relations among my students were "normal", "normal" in terms of the socially fixed roles of girls and boys in everyday situations. What I had evidenced [sic] in the gendered behavior of the children seemed "natural": on the one hand, girls helping me organize the classroom's tables into perfect rows, playing with their teddy bears and dolls during recess time, keeping their uniforms really neat, behaving respectfully, or having conflict with other

girls (as it happens among women); on the other hand, boys playing only soccer or other rough games, employing rude words, behaving disrespectfully and disruptively, or being careless about their personal appearance. To me it had been always the way it had to be just because, as claimed by Connell (2002, p. 3), "These (gender) arrangements are so common, so familiar that they can seem part of the order of nature." (Log.)

As it can be noted in this extract, Martha presents a few of her gender subjectivities constructed in her experience as a teacher. The subjectivity refers to a set of meanings that individuals construct because of their participation and socialization in the world. Following García-Muñoz (2014), this concept is based on the relation subject-culture through which people make sense of themselves (how to be, feel, and act) in the interaction with others in the world. This subjectivity implies an understanding of the masculinity in opposition to the femininity, Martha positions these gender differences as something that is normal according to the social behaviors for the sexes in the school organization and the cultural practices.

Other evident aspects in this first extract become part of our conversations with Martha. First, there is an explicit exercise in which this teacher becomes aware of daily gender practices at the school. This is important for Martha's learning since she begins to identify what she has usually taken for granted; this implies opportunities of reflection and transformation. Besides a process of awareness, Martha describes several negative consequences that these gender behaviors may bring, such as the fact of accepting that boys are disrespectful and disruptive in classes as it is inevitable for them to act like that because they are boys. The third aspect of the analysis shows that Martha writes the word *normal* using quotations, this may be interpretated as a way of questioning the naturalization of these gender constructions. To sum up, Martha becomes aware of these gender arrangements that had passed unnoticed and made her believe that they were part of the "natural order" of her classroom dynamics. Discovering and reflecting on these issues suggest a step forward in Martha's understanding of how gender subjectivities are configured and materialized in the socialization process (García Suárez, 2004).

One of the central themes discussed with Martha had to do with what happens in the interaction when the gender expectations unmet traditional gender constructions, or when the masculinities or femininities differed from what people attributed for boys or girls as normal. The next extract describes what Martha found in her context:

Extract 2

"A gender issue I have been able to identify in the educational field I am immersed in has to do with a boy who is constantly "on the girls' side". Such "out of order" gender behavior made me really concerned as I thought it could possibly bring rejection on the part of the boys or even on the part of the girls. I started to closely observe the possible implications his "feminine" behavior could be bringing in his relationships with peers, but I could evidence [sic] nothing about

> bullying, rejection, or inequality in the relationships of the group. Then, something else happened, his mother told me about how his behavior troubled her and his dad. She asked me to provide opportunities for him to feel integrated into "more masculine" activities." (Log 02)

This "out of order" behavior is what inspired Martha to formulate her initial research question. Martha described this boy as a different student who did not behave as it was described in the Extract 1. In other words, this boy does not have, according to Martha, a hegemonic masculinity. Under this circumstance, this boy's masculinity is misjudged causing others to question its legitimacy, as it can be read in this example: a boy who is constantly "on the girls' side". This conveys a risk in educational scenarios, children who do not fall into these hegemonic subjectivities can be object of rejection, bullying, and inequality as it was well stated by Martha.

Another aspect that is interesting to notice is the fact that this boy's mother is also able to identify this type of masculinity as something strange or as Martha mentioned "out of order". In this respect, García Suárez (2004) states that subjectivities are not a product of individual thought but rather a set of understandings produced in the interaction with others in the world and in the processes of intersubjectivity that are constructed in everyday conversations. Therefore, it is not strange to see that both Martha and this boy's mother have hegemonic subjectivities in relation to the masculinity. Then, the hegemonic subjectivities refer to fixed and essentialist ways to interpret and see the masculinity and femininity. They are sustained from a patriarchal perspective from which the gendered bodies are materialized in a symbolic order of the cultural practices and discourses about women and men (García-Muñoz, 2014).

Contrary to the hegemonic subjectivity, this boy embodies attitudes and behaviors often associated as feminine; in this scenario, Gramsci's work contributes to understanding the power relations and culture "one group claims and sustains a leading position in social life. At a given time, one form of masculinity [or femininity118] rather than others is culturally exalted" (Connell, 2005, p. 77). Conversely, the Extract 3 shows that Martha, through the collaborative work and our dialogues, becomes aware of adopting alternative ways to interpret her students' gender subjectivities and embrace the difference as part of having a more educational discourse or practice as a language educator.

Extract 3

> "I would say that my perception on gender has changed. I used to think of girls and boys from a differential perspective, assuming fixed manners in which they should behave, talk, and interact with others, but I have **become aware** of the multiplicity of gender identities coexisting in my teaching environment and how they can hinder or foster learning opportunities." (Survey)

This example is taken from a survey that Martha and other STs filled out at the end of the course about gender and English teaching contexts. Here, it is possible to identify

that a gendered practice implies becoming aware of gender ways that are different from the binary hegemonic constructions; this is what I named in this study as 'resisting subjectivities.' These refer to those discourses in which there are alternative ways to interpret and embrace the masculinity and femininity (Mojica, 2017). Thus, the gendered practice allows a teacher to adopt a more inclusive and pluralistic view or discourse through which it is possible to recognize these non-traditional constructions as legitimate and valid (Muñoz-Onofre, 2004).

In this sense, teachers who adopt a gender view within their teaching scenarios can orientate a more educational practice that promotes gender equity and multiplicity. The following extract illustrates the second feature of a gendered practice. An educational practice that promotes gender equity and multiplicity.

Extract 4

"You see… generally what happens in the classroom when their school bags are disorganized, that you noticed it is quite common, eh, I always used to say "three girls who help me organize the bags" but I have not done it lately. Then, in that sense I am assuming one of those three positions, I mean… last time you were not here (ST referring to the ToT), but I assigned Tomas, the big one […] to do that and I have just become aware of this; that I used to say "three girls who help me with the bags, a girl who stays in and tidy this room up, and I realized that boys also like to help with that too […] absolutely, then I cannot imagine that by saying "three girls who tie up" I was reinforcing that social construct that comes since… I do not know when." (Interview 3)

An educational practice, according to this example, means that the ST recognizes how she may reinforce messages that contribute to perpetuating traditional sex roles through her discourses and interactions; in this case, girls are usually assigned to do tasks related to tidying the classroom. This is considered an educational practice in which Martha makes changes in her discourses to send implicit messages that promote gender equity; as a result, her students can learn that this type of task can be performed by either girls or boys. In the hidden curriculum, these types of implicit messages break with traditional and normative discourses, which are relevant for the construction of her students' gender subjectivities. This extract exemplifies the way this ST puts into practice her gender awareness in her curricular practices.

Materialization of STs' Gender Awareness in the Curricular Practices

This category describes the ways Martha discovers that she may impact or affect her students' learning (as indicated in Extract 4 above). In Figure 1, this category has a sub-category named explicit practices in the hidden curriculum. These practices correspond to intentional but subtle actions or discourses camouflaged inside the dynamics of everyday class interactions (the hidden curriculum). According to the data analysis, Martha's practices are a result of her reflection on matters related to the interaction among classroom actors and class participation.

An important theme that was analyzed in our collaborative work had to do with identifying different types of femininities and masculinities. To do that, Martha and I observed her video-recorded classes; then, we made a few notes concerning issues of class interaction among her students and talked about them as they emerged. The following example shows what happens in Martha's class when students are asked to work in groups.

Extract 5

Martha: […] and **he** sits right next to a boy like Tom who is a manipulative boy [sic], and sometimes intimidates others, and he is domineering […] but I had to immediately take him away from him; and I know that Ricky is more… he is more supportive with his classmates, and with the girls, he has good cross-gendered relationships with those girls, they love him. (Interview 2)

I contextualize the situation to understand this example. Martha is describing here three boys, the first one [he] is a boy who is a well-behaved and quiet student; he is also constructed by Martha as a low achiever who hardly ever participates in class. Tom, the second student, is characterized by hegemonic masculinity as explained by Martha in Excerpt 5. The third one is Ricky, a boy who seems to get along with the girls and boys; he is constructed as a good student, academically speaking, who is appreciated by the girls in the group but who does not often participate in class; yet, when he is asked a question, he can answer it correctly. Characterizing Martha's students during our conversations allows us to identify different types of masculinities and femininities in her classroom. Thus, for instance, the first boy's masculinity is constructed considering the characteristics described earlier; therefore, he is classified in the group of the *'quiet boys'*. Ricky's masculinity belongs to the group of the 'bookworm boys' and Tom's masculinity belongs to the group of the 'naughty boys'. There was a total of four groups that we managed to identify during the analysis. Nonetheless, why is this analysis an example of an explicit practice in the hidden curriculum?

Besides recognizing the different masculinities and femininities in this group, the exercise is helpful for Martha in that she discovers that masculinities are not fixed constructions but that there are other legitimate ways of being masculine. More importantly, when Martha problematizes femininities and masculinities and the relationship that her students established with others, the existence of certain masculinities and femininities that facilitate or hinder group activities or collaborative work among peers in her class was evident. In Extract 5, Martha comments that she had to relocate the 'quiet boy' to another group because his group work would be affected negatively and because there may be problems between Tom and this boy. Within this view, Martha learned that these types of relationships may affect the interaction among the students in ways that support or constrain the possibilities of learning together in the classroom. This finding suggests that teachers who learn to recognize the complexities of the class interaction gender-wise will be able to find ways to deal with those complexities within their teaching contexts.

Class participation was another point of analysis and transformation in the development of collaborative work. One of the first things Martha and I learned about participation in this particular group was that not all students had the same access to the process of participation. As it is illustrated in Extract 6, participation was constructed through power exercises produced within the class interaction.

Extract 6

"There are four well-differentiated groups in the class: (1) SOCIALLY SKILLED- ACADEMICALLY "POOR": They are popular among their peers, very talkative and outgoing. Although their discourse is dominant, their participation is not relevant to the development of the lessons, they tend to be disruptive. There are girls and boys in this group (more boys than girls). (2) SOCIALLY SKILLED-ACADEMICALLY SKILLED: They are respected and valued among peers. Their participation is really relevant for the development of the lessons. There are as many girls as boys in this group. (3) SOCIALLY POOR- ACADEMICALLY SKILLED: Although they are academically very talented, their social skills are not well developed, they are not very popular among their peers, and their shyness does not allow them to interact very successfully in class. (4) SOCIALLY POOR-ACADEMICALLY POOR: They are not popular among their peers, they depend on what the others say and rarely participate not only because of their lack of social skills but because of their lack of academic strength." (ST'S Final research report)

In this example, Martha characterizes three types of participation: academically, disruptive, and silent. In this process, we discover three elements that constitute access to class participation: knowledge or lack of knowledge, popularity in the group, and students' disruption. Although Martha explains that there are boys and girls in each of these accesses to participation, she eventually recognizes the existence of several tendencies in which boys usually have more access to class participation. This analysis is done considering the different types of femininities and masculinities identified in the group. For instance, more boys were classified with disruptive participation given their masculinity. We also identify more girls than boys who seem to be better academically; despite this, they were classified with silent participation. Nonetheless, the analysis suggests that there are girls and boys with low participation.

Within the analysis of the class participation, Martha and I revised her video-recorded classes and identified aspects of frequency of class participation, strategies to access class participation, inequalities in participation, and ways in which power relationships were evident in the class. While doing this, Martha became aware of her role during class participation. The next example illustrates this.

Extract 7

"Whereas Sara and Blanca immediately obey the teacher's direction and sit down without making any attempt to negotiate the rule, Tom intends to manipulate the situation and looks at the teacher

as if he wanted to subvert the rule imposed on him. Also, the teacher gives a differential treatment to the situation; when the two girls approach her, she doesn't look at them or hear what they need to say, she just tells them to sit down and that is exactly what the girls do. In Tom's case, the teacher stops talking, approaches him and looks at him for a moment, reminding him of the necessity to be attentive in class. As soon as the teacher turns, Tom continues to behave disruptively. Through such a differential treatment, the teacher unwittingly fosters inequalities among girls and boys, empowering who is already empowered and silencing the powerless." (Small-scale report)

Here Martha problematizes her own role within the process of participation. First, she identifies the strategy employed by Tom to negotiate the class rule; then, she compares the way she as a teacher reacted with the boy and the two girls, indicating a differential treatment. Finally, she judges herself for this treatment and recognizes the consequences this has on her students' subjectivities. The process of critical reflection in Martha's small-scale project becomes paramount to discover things that had passed unnoticed in her daily teaching practice. Within this process of critical reflection, the Extract 8 shows the way Martha starts implementing strategies to promote different subtle messages to her students and to bring more gender equity in her class participation.

Extract 8

"[…] that's something I tried to do because, I found the recordings really relevant; because there are some things that I am not aware of while giving the class. The other day I told you, Clara raising her hand for more than 10 minutes and I think... was I there? So why I didn't see her, and she was in front of me. So, I was trying to take care of that situation and to empower those students as I said here, as I wrote, some of them, Richy for example, Pamela, they are academically speaking good but they never, they very rarely say, they rarely participate [...]". (Audio-recording)

Based on the inequities identified in this group, Martha proposed several strategies to improve the balance in the class participation. These changes aimed at empowering those students with low participation, such as Richy and Pamela in Extract 8, and at reacting more effectively in class when students with a high participation drew on their strategies to obtain a turn to speak in class. In Extract 9, Martha acknowledges that this is not an easy task; however, she was convinced that it was important to regulate and lessen the gender inequities in her teaching context to guarantee a better learning experience for all her students.

Extract 9

Martha: So, I was telling you that my intention was to empower those silent students, to provide them with more opportunities to participate in class, right? In that sense, I started to regulate their participation more and to make it more evident. Although sometimes I notice that manage to do it, but sometimes I cannot do it, right? Like in the last class that [inaudible] he was rising his hand during the whole class, and I thought… but how come? (Interview)

This example shows that although Martha tries to regulate the speaking turns to empower the silent students to participate more in class, she still needs to manage this with more balance. Consequently, this is an ability in which Martha needs to keep working to improve her students' learning opportunities.

So far, I have presented data to answer the question 'What does this English language teacher learn about the meaning of a gendered practice?" Now I present data to address the question "How does this English language teacher learn to incorporate her gender awareness in her teaching practices?"

Martha's Learning Trajectory

The following figure shows the characteristics of Martha's learning trajectory according to the data analysis.

The question about how a ST learns and owns this perspective in his/her teaching practices can be addressed by analyzing what happened in the experience of doing the small-scale project in collaboration. Therefore, learning emerges as a result of having engaged in reading, observing, experimenting (innovating new practices), talking to a ToT, who helped the ST reflects on what had happened in their classroom. In Martha's case, and as it is illustrated in Extract 10, learning means to become aware of naturalized daily practices in the dynamics of her hidden curriculum.

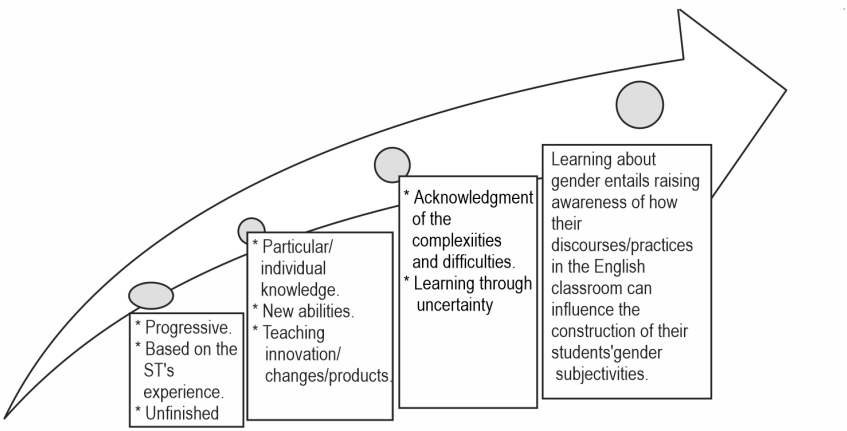

Figure 2. Learning Trajectories 1

Extract 10

Martha: If I had to tell someone what the course was about, I would say that it was aimed at empowering teachers with useful tools to unveil the gender identities present in the educational scenarios and the way in which they are connected with learning opportunities, power relationships, or inequities not only in the classroom but in different areas of social interaction. (Survey)

Several aspects can be analyzed in this extract. First, Martha refers to the word 'unveil' in different moments of our conversations to describe that this learning experience helped her become aware of things that she used to take for granted or as normal. In this sense, learning can be assumed as a process of discoveries that STs make in their teaching context. Learning is in-situ as Wenger (1998) describes it; consequently, what Martha learned was not the same as what other STs of the course learned. Second, Martha considers her learning to represent a 'tool' to improve her students' learning experiences as well as to understand and discover gender inequities that may be taking place in her teaching scenario. Martha also believes that, beyond discovering gender inequities, it is important for her to find ways to lessen or eradicate them and to better her students' learning.

In the following extract, Martha reflects on the role the ToT had within this process.

Extract 11

ToT: […] How do you feel about the analysis Martha?

Martha: well, I feel it helps me, in the sense that … and I was telling you the other day, I do not know up to what point my eyes can see, no, no, no

ToT: they cannot see…

Martha: Yes, yes, and somehow your questions, without saying that I have not thought about it before, they give me a path, they help me. The first time we met, we managed to explain so many things that I had thought about before but not in that systematic way. Maybe pieces here and there and somehow the questions helped me to orient the whole thing. And new little things keep emerging in the way. (Audio 2) [Own translation]

I would like to emphasize the fact that I unexpectedly directed Martha's actions or decisions in her small-scale research experience. The way I see it, this process was more about discovering things *with* the ST as we lived the experience of working together on her project. As it can be read in the example, Martha recognizes that working in collaboration with the ToT oriented her analysis and helped her reassure what she had seen and taken as normal in her classroom. In the first part of the analysis, Martha talks about what she could or could not see in the recording of her classes. She manifests that sometimes she felt she could not see anything in her classes and that she was uncertain of her reflections and observations. Hence, she acknowledges that doing this small-scale project was a difficult process in which the collaborative analysis had a key role. In summary, learning is progressive; Martha is

learning as she lives the experience of her reflection and observation in her research activity. However, this is an unfinished process. Martha needs to continue learning; for example, how to find ways to create strategies to lessen gender inequities. In the case of the analysis of the participation, Martha states that it is difficult to do this; she sometimes manages to regulate her students' speaking turns, but she still cannot react at the right moment. Consequently, she needs to keep sharpening her learning abilities gender-wise.

Conclusions

The analysis of this pedagogical experience led me to conclude several aspects that can be generalized for other teachers in the process of integrating gender within their teaching practices. This view offers teachers the possibility to think of themselves more as language educators rather than just language instructors. I present a key conclusion that Martha manifested in the last interview:

> **Martha**: And above all, I'd say learning with respect to how I can remove that veil from my eyes, and see a bit beyond, I think […] and I have opened my eyes in such a way that now I am able see other things and not only the worksheet, the filling the blank activity, or the song, but more in relation to other matters related to power relations […]. (Interview 3)

This conclusion suggests that teachers may discover the complexity and the political responsibilities they have as teachers through these experiences. Martha points out that her learning can be compared with being able to see things that passed unnoticed by her in her teaching exercise. Therefore, recognizing the role that students' subjectivities play in the construction of a country that aims to reach gender equity in society is important to learn. Within this view, a teacher can recognize her English language classrooms not only as places where students learn English but also as places where gender meanings are reproduced in the dynamics of the hidden curriculum. In this scenario, teachers may have opportunities to create strategies or ways to promote gender equity according to the contexts, needs, or situations where they work.

Additionally, in the exercise of learning this perspective, Martha develops a critical analysis in which she had to interpret and problematize those meanings of gender that did not promote values of equity, justice, and tolerance towards gender difference. This suggests that teachers become aware of their social and political responsibility as language educators by understanding their own hegemonic and resisting subjectivities in tune with educational practices or discourses. This allows teachers to propose ways to incorporate discourses and practices to work against meanings of oppression, domination, and discrimination.

Finally, this study also leads me to conclude that English language teachers' professional development needs to prepare future teachers to become aware of gender matters

in schooling. To do this, schools of education in Colombia ought to construct a critical teaching proposal that leads teachers to live an experience in which they can be autonomous researchers who are constantly analyzing their classes, problematizing what happens in their teaching milieu, finding solutions, and critically judging the practicality of those solutions in their contexts. As discussed in these findings, teachers' learning of this perspective is facilitated when assisting them in their reflection processes and their research projects.

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