


Chapter 3

Exploring Storytelling in EFL Pedagogy: The Case of a Queer Lecturer at a Thai University

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines how queer positionality shapes storytelling practices and pedagogical decision-making in the work of an LGBTQIA+ lecturer teaching English as a Foreign Language at a Thai university. Situated within queer pedagogical scholarship, the chapter presents a qualitative single-case study conducted in a heteronormative institutional context. Using thematic analysis of a narrative interview, classroom observation, and informant insights, the study examines storytelling as an embodied and relational pedagogical practice. Five themes are identified: Prioritizing Emotional Safety in Classroom Interactions; Enacting Storytelling Through Performance and Embodiment; Expressing Deep Empathy Toward Vulnerable Learners; Adapting Teaching Practices Within Institutional Constraints; and Building Relational and Student-Centered Connections. The findings show that queer pedagogy operates as a pedagogical sensibility rather than identity disclosure, becoming visible through everyday instructional decisions that foreground care, responsiveness, and relational ethics in EFL teaching.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, teaching in higher education has increasingly been understood as an affective and relational practice rather than a purely technical or neutral activity. Recent scholarship highlights that pedagogical work involves emotional labor, ethical judgment, and sustained relational engagement with learners, particularly in language classrooms where communication, vulnerability, and participation are central to learning processes (Song, 2025; Zembylas, 2021). This perspective shifts attention away from instructional techniques alone toward how teachers manage classroom relationships, respond to student needs, and make moment-to-moment pedagogical decisions during instruction. Teaching is therefore conceptualized as lived practice shaped by values, sensibilities, and professional judgment rather than as the mechanical implementation of standardized procedures.

Within this broader understanding of teaching, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education offers a particularly rich context for examining affective and relational dimensions of pedagogy. Storytelling pedagogy, in particular, relies on voice, performance, embodiment, pacing, and emotional attunement, which require teachers to make continuous instructional judgments in response to learners' linguistic abilities, affective states, and participation patterns (Mora & Coyle, 2023; Yuniawati, 2024). Rather than functioning as a fixed instructional method that can be applied uniformly, storytelling involves decisions about narrative content, delivery, interactional structure, and meaning-making. These features position storytelling as a pedagogical practice that renders teachers' interpretive, affective, and ethical labor especially visible in everyday classroom interaction.

At the same time, pedagogical practices such as storytelling do not emerge independently of teachers' positionalities. Research on language teacher identity demonstrates that teachers' social locations, professional histories, and relationships to institutional discourses shape how they interpret classroom moments, exercise agency, and position themselves and learners in interaction (Li, 2023; Weng et al., 2023; Wu, 2022). In EFL contexts, qualitative studies further suggest that identity-related sensibilities often surface indirectly through teaching priorities, interactional styles, and ethical commitments rather than through explicit identity disclosure or personal narratives (Oculares & Trakulkasemsuk, 2024). Attending to teacher positionality therefore allows for a deeper understanding of how pedagogical practices are enacted and sustained in everyday classroom contexts.

From this perspective, queer pedagogy offers a theoretical lens for examining how teaching practices challenge normative assumptions about neutrality, professionalism, and emotional restraint in education. Recent queer pedagogical work in TESOL conceptualizes queering as a critical orientation to language teaching that interrogates normativity, builds more inclusive participation structures, and supports

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