

IDEOLOGICAL DIFFICULTY AND PEDAGOGICAL RESPONSE TO GENDERED PROVERBS IN EFL TEACHING

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Abstract:

This study examines how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers interpret English proverbs and consider their use in the classroom, with particular attention to perceived difficulty with figurative language. Drawing on a qualitative dataset of 216 questionnaire responses (12 teachers × 18 proverbs), the study analyses patterns in teachers' interpretive and instructional reasoning.

The findings show that teachers were generally able to interpret the meanings of proverbs, but frequently evaluated them as problematic, particularly when they were perceived as sexist or culturally inappropriate. This indicates that difficulty is not limited to challenges of interpretation but may arise when interpreted meanings produce tension in relation to classroom use.

Based on these results, the study advances a conceptual framework in which difficulty arises through the interaction of interpretation and evaluation and gains significance when evaluation triggers constraints on pedagogical action. These constraints shape instructional responses, including critical reframing, contextualisation, and, in some cases, avoidance.

The present research contributes to current exploration of figurative language and language pedagogy, showing that understanding does not necessarily resolve difficulty, but may instead produce evaluative tensions that influence how, or whether, language is used in teaching.

Keywords: *EFL teachers; Figurative language; Gendered proverbs; Ideological difficulty; Pedagogical constraints; Teacher cognition.*