

Self and Other-presentation strategies: A Social Psychological exploration of the construction of social and gender identities in the university EFL class

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ABSTRACT

There is now an established literature on the uses of New Technology in the EFL class (Grandjean-Levy, 2002; Ktoridou et al., 2003). In fact, foreign language teachers have attached great importance to integrating Information and Communication Technology (henceforth ICT) into the curriculum. However, some recent studies have moved away from its basic uses and focussed on issues that combine ICT and the acquisition of a foreign language with the first step toward transforming a biased society. The present paper contributes to a growing body of scholarship which attempts to demonstrate that ICT has made a greater impact on education than most teachers realise (Stokes, 2001). For this purpose, the investigation, which involves first year trainee Primary School English teachers, combines a video camera project with an exploration of some dimensions of the construction of social and gender identities. The aim is to present an innovative approach to foreign language teaching that benefits from Social Psychology and expresses the interest in the total person and not simply in the intellect. More precisely, this approach has proved to provide a blend of the cognitive and affective way of teaching future practitioners that makes the university environment more productive.

Key words: gender; social psychology; self and other-presentation strategies; ICT; foreign language teaching.

El autoconcepto: *Yo* versus los *Otros*. Estudio psicológico-social de la construcción de la identidad social y de género en la clase universitaria de inglés como lengua extranjera

RESUMEN

Gracias a los avances significativos que el uso de las nuevas tecnologías ha tenido en nuestra sociedad en las últimas décadas, hoy día contamos con una amplia bibliografía que demuestra los beneficios de su utilización en el aula de inglés. En esta línea, nuestro estudio se nutre principalmente de los principios del enfoque comunicativo y de los fundamentos de la psicología social con el fin de proponer un proyecto de video que sirva, no sólo para mejorar la competencia comunicativa de nuestro alumnado, sino, además, para explorar la construcción de género. Para ello, se ha llevado un estudio con alumnos y alumnas de primero de educación primaria (especialidad lengua extranjera) de la

universidad de Alcalá. El carácter innovador del estudio radica en el hecho de conceptualizar el proceso de enseñanza de una lengua extranjera como un medio para desarrollar una conciencia de género en futuros maestros de educación primaria.

Palabras clave: género; psicología social; educación en valores; uso de las nuevas tecnologías; enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras.

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0. INTRODUCTION

When the language teaching literature is read at a glance, in recent decades, researchers have centred their attention on different ways of teaching a foreign language in a communicative fashion and have been searching for effective language teaching strategies that explore new avenues in the hard task of becoming communicative competent (Celce-Murcia and Hilles, 1988; Harmer, 2003). The second half of the twentieth century has witnessed the acceleration of a digital revolution that has transformed and is transforming the world. This digital revolution is also having a strong effect upon education; namely, the ways in which the use of the video, the camcorder or the computers can be used for creating a visually attractive and stimulating product that lures the students in and gets them excited about the materials we are using in the class (Liu, 1997). In the twenty-first century, most teachers agree that the technology available will never replace good teaching but it does have the potential to enhance and engage students more actively in their own learning process (Bello, 1999; Stokes, 2001).

However, technology has been an integral and problematic part of education since its introduction. As Morris (2000) points out, there have been and still are many obstacles to overcome before technology can be integrated effectively into the curriculum. Since the integration of technology into the curriculum involves the analysis of a whole new field of study, it is not difficult to see that the process of integration is then time consuming and, at times, frustrating (Alessi and Trollip, 2001). Nevertheless, the project presented here shows that success is possible and that the results can be beneficial to both teacher and student.

In an optimistic light, this project not only represents an attempt to apply technology in foreign language teaching, but it also tries to underline the importance of raising students' self-esteem and awareness of gender inequalities in the university EFL class. Section 1 deals with the main reasons for using a video camera project as a way to enhance undergraduate students' learning and motivation. Section 2 presents the methodology followed; that is, participants, data collection, and project design. Section 3 discusses the project in detail. Section 4 concentrates on the results of the video camera project. Finally, section 5 draws up the main conclusions.

1. NEW TECHNOLOGY: USING THE CAMCORDER IN THE EFL CLASS

Because of the large number of students in many university EFL classrooms, the central focus of concern of many English teachers is teaching writing and reading skills (Liu, 1997). The teaching of listening and speaking has been and unfortunately still is a peripheral concern at best (Morris, 2000). As Johnston (1999) concludes, it is not surprising then that to most students, the experience of learning English is commonly related to fear and anxiety. Initially, the reasons for integrating New Technology into my class were to incorporate a tool that could, on the one hand, help English language learners improve their aural skills and, on the other, to challenge students, build up their confidence, and increase their motivation. In this line of thought, recent studies that explore new avenues to integrating New Technology into the EFL class agree on two basic facts:

- a) The English language teaching profession is one that consistently seizes upon and adapts new technologies to classroom use. In fact, there are a number of good reasons for using video cameras in the EFL class. Basically, they combine visual and audio stimuli. For English language learners, video provides context for learning (Johnston, 1999) and has the added benefit of providing real language and cultural information (Bello, 1999). In practical terms, video cameras and their final product can be controlled; that is, stopped, paused, repeated as many times as necessary. Furthermore, they allow students to see facial expressions and body language at the same time as they hear the stress, intonation, and rhythm of the language (Stempleski, 1992; Bello, 1999).
- b) The video camera is without any doubt one of the easiest and the most useful resources for both teachers and students. With regard to teachers, this technology has been shown to provide interesting and novel approaches to language teaching and learning (Davis, 1999). As for students, they use this technology in their social life; we should not forget that most of them are slaves to the most modern mobile phones that in fact become mobile videophones.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION

At the university of Alcalá de Henares de Madrid, first year students training to be Primary School English teachers are required to take a one-year EFL class called "English as a Foreign Language and its practical applications to the Primary classroom". The current sample used in this study consists of 373 undergraduate students, 254 females and 119 males, all ranging from eighteen to twenty-three years of age and being representative of middle socio-economic status communities. This number of participants corresponds to all the students who have taken this subject for these last three academic years. Due to the uneven number of female and male students, the corpus of data consists of 48 ads created by female

students and 29 ads created by male students and all of them targeting both male and female audiences.

2.2. PROJECT DESIGN

Initially, the project was designed with four aims in mind. The first one was to increase university students' self-esteem and oral proficiency. Given that drama, role-play and simulation tend to increase students' self-esteem, and therefore heighten their interest in learning English and their oral proficiency (Celce-Murcia and Hiller, 1988), all these elements were combined in order to design a project that could engage students in a dramatic activity, build up their self-esteem, and increase their oral proficiency.

The second aim was to fill English lessons with fun. As few language teachers will question that fun is more conducive to effective second language learning, than those lessons that are filled with pressure (Johnson, 2003), it was decided that the above mentioned dramatic experience must be recorded so that students could see what they have done in a later viewing session. The fun ingredient was then ensured. The third aim, closely connected to the former one, was to reduce anxiety. As learners are especially inhibited by embarrassment (Royka, 2002), by doing video camera projects, students were saved from experiencing embarrassment due to the fact that they do not have to face their classmates while recording their speech. Students could decide their own pace. They could stop videotaping whenever one of the actors or actresses had forgotten his/her lines, they could have a break in-between scenes, rehearse one more time and then start videotaping again.

The fourth aim was to promote cooperative learning. Therefore, the project had to be based on group work in an attempt to reduce individual student pressure and to learn and benefit from each other. In Larsen-Freeman's (1986: 56) words: "in a trusting relationship, the threat that students feel is reduced, and therefore, non-defensive learning is promoted [...] Students can learn from their interaction with each other [...] A spirit of cooperation, not competition, can prevail".

Interestingly, while developing the video camera project, it became clear that this project could also be extended to engage students in the personal study of gender differences in order to prevent trainee teachers from passing on gender inequity practices. This last aspect opened up a new avenue to explore, the possibility of combining foreign language learning to raising awareness of those gender issues¹ students should know as future practitioners. In this view, these four aims were eventually combined as to engage trainee Primary School English teachers in an open exploration of the understanding of gender in their own teaching practice. Let us discuss this last aspect in detail:

¹ The term "gender issues" refers "to the social and educational aspects of the pupils" being male or female; that is to say, to the real and perceived biological, genetic, cultural, educational, and indeed lifelong implications of the gender' (Portwood, 2000: 34).

Using EFL as a springboard, students start off the academic year by examining the social conditions and injustices they encounter in their own lives. Although this exercise is a life long lesson (Drake, 1999: 8), the intention is to raise awareness that many of the limitations on and expectations of men and women are social constructs. We, as teachers, should work hard to make these future teachers in particular and any other student in general see that in order to achieve their full potential as individuals, they may have to challenge or reject established traditional gender roles.

The project requires participants to get involved in the creative task of scripting, producing and presenting a television advertisement in English on video targeting either male or female teenagers exclusively. It is important to have students reflect on ways in which gender has shaped their lives, both positively and negatively. Therefore, men and women need to think of ways in which gender has both privileged and disadvantaged them.

Students are then encouraged to work together in same-gender groups to select a product of their choice, real or imaginary. As a guideline, they are presented with some possible products they could advertise (sanitary towels, perfume, sports clothes, etc.). Surprisingly enough, most of them always choose quite a wide and distinct range of products, none of them coinciding with the ones initially suggested (viagra, mobile phones with amazing characteristics, magic elixirs that work wonders for their personality and their physical appearance, etc). As part of students' assessed work for the year, they then create their advertisements of up to about three minutes. This is a chance for students to practise conversational situations in English. In addition, when students present their final advertisement to the class they also prepare some brief presentation on why they have created the advertisement in a certain way, always referring to the key concept of gendered audiences.

All in all, the project attempts to create an active positive learning environment through technology, providing students with students the opportunity to respond to the tasks in their own personal way, leaving room for their own interpretation.

3. PROJECT PRESENTATION

The project is divided into six different scheduled stages that vary in length according to the amount of work students have to prepare for the following deadline. As the project has been implemented in the last three academic years, the six stages the project consists of are the result of all the successes and failures we have encountered in all this time. Let us describe these stages in detail:

Stage 1. Project presentation (timing: one week). This three-year experience has shown that doing the video camera project requires a great deal of time and energy from students. Therefore, students are always informed at the beginning of the term that they must carry out a video project and they are provided with a schedule where all due dates and main tasks are clearly stated. Previous years' experiences have led me to conclude that learning is not always as appealing to

students as it should be; for this reason, the project is presented as a “lifeline” useful for improving students’ marks. This extrinsic motivating strategy helps students take an active role from the very beginning; however, it is worth saying that after some weeks working on the project the mark on the project becomes secondary and pleasure for its own sake leads the way.

Stage 2. Learning right from wrong (timing: one week). After the success of the first video camera project experience, in subsequent academic years, students are able to watch some of the video tapes produced by former students. This gives a clear picture about what they are expected to do. By being shown one or two of the best videos to students, students can be given something to aim for. In other words, this is a simple way to show students that if former students could do it, they can also do it. Even though students are always provided with precise instructions about the type of setting they must choose (right location, enough light, loud enough), viewing some video tapes that are not functional has been proved to be very useful to prevent other students from making the same mistakes. For example, too much noise, not enough volume, a blinking low battery signal in the upper right corner, etc. Even though students do not have professional video taping skills, there are some basic requirements they must bear in mind if they want the audience to understand what is going on (Stokes, 2001).

Phase 3. Brainstorming and Group formation (timing: one week). Students are then divided into small groups of four to six people. They are free to choose their own workmates as long as they work together in same-gender groups. Allowing students the freedom to choose who they would like to work with definitely improves their cooperation and thus the outcome of the performance. Once the groups have been formed, students begin to work out ideas for the video advertisement. Although they are always given some ideas to start with, the reality is that students end up choosing some other items that one could never have imagined. I strongly agree with Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988) in their claim that the more freedom students are given, the more creative they tend to be. Every year it can easily be seen how the project helps students develop their creativity and imagination.

Stage 4. Market research and Script preparation (timing: two weeks). Once the group has decided the items they want to advertise, the different groups have to do some market research about male and female preferences; for this reason, students are encouraged to talk to their classmates, friends so as to find out which products men and women like, why they like them and which products they would like to buy if there were on sale. After carrying out their research, they are ready to work on the actual scripts. Each group has to write two dialogues (one for each ad) that must be handed in for later correction. This correction aims, on the one hand, at making sure the language students use is grammatical correct and idiomatic - without losing students’ spontaneity, and, on the other, at collecting students’ recurrent structural errors that can later on be covered in class.

Stage 5. We are on air! (timing: three weeks). Once their dialogues have been corrected, individual meetings with each group are held and the insights of the advertisements are discussed. After the meeting, students have to type them up and

make enough copies for each member of the group. Then, it is time for individual students to work on their own lines. Although their own personalities and acting styles are much more effective than any piece of advice they may be given, they are always welcome to pay as many visits as necessary to work on pronunciation, intonation, movements, gestures and facial expressions.

The rehearsal is the prerequisite for the videotape performance. Students are asked to rehearse their ad numerous times. Above all, students will be reminded to speak as clearly as possible so that their performance can be understood and to act out in a natural way. Then, students are ready to videotape their performance. It is worth saying that the video camera is user-friendly, students seldom have problems operating it by themselves. They were born in the new technology era.

Stage 6. Viewing and Class debate (timing: one week). The advertisement is due in week 10, together with the script. After watching all the advertisements, the video presentations are arranged to be viewed in two to three weeks. On the one hand, it is show time, the moment the whole class has been waiting for. Students enjoy seeing themselves and their classmates on television. On the other hand and after enjoying the fun of the video presentations, students are encouraged to discuss their opinions about gender issues in a class debate. In other words, students reflect upon what they themselves and their classmates have done in all the advertisements: how men and women are depicted; whether they agree or disagree with the other gender on the depiction presented, etc.

4. RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

Prejudice and discrimination are unquestionably two of the greatest problems faced by humanity (cf. Williams et al., 2003). Because prejudice and discrimination stand squarely in the path of enlightenment, the project was developed to make trainee Primary School English teachers understand how people make, and behave in accordance with, assumptions about our abilities and aspirations on the basis of gender. The aim of scripting different advertisements targeting male and female audiences was two-fold. On the one hand, these undergraduate students were expected to be fully aware of the paradox existing: prejudice is socially undesirable yet it pervades social life (Hogg and Vaughan, 2002). Conversely, the project was a useful tool to make them realise that there were gender differences in the distinct proposals students have made in their own script. These two objectives were based on the assumption that it is difficult to solve a problem if we do not know it exists (Fletcher and Clark, 2002).

In this view, the point of departure of the project was based on the social psychological claim that “social psychology is uniquely placed to rise to the challenge of understanding prejudice” (Hogg and Vaughan, 2002: 343). In fact, prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviour is doubly social: it involves not only Primary school children’s feelings about other children but it also involves actions towards each other. In addition, the project attempted to throw light on the

causes and consequences of having a sexist attitude in the Primary School. As Hogg and Vaughan (2002: 342) argue, one of the reprehensible aspects of prejudice is that it involves the dehumanisation of an out-group. In this sense, prejudice while teaching Primary School students is therefore associated with stripping children of their dignity and humanity (e.g. restricted opportunities and narrowed horizons to each gender) (Jackson and Joshi, 2004).

By relying on their own gender-differentiated advertisements, students are responsible for characterising their own and others' gender. As these advertisements were designed with the intention of capturing the targeted gendered viewers' attention, it is much easier to highlight gender differences and much harder for students to deny the presence of stereotypes and/or biased attitudes in their heads while creating their ads. In practical terms, an inspection of the advertisements shows that:

- a) Both genders appear to use self-enhancing illusions; in other words, both male and female students portray an unrealistic positive view of their own gender. These unrealistic views are mostly about their own talents, abilities, and social skills.
- b) Male and female pitched ads created by the other gender clearly carry negative biases; that is to say, students tend to distort the perceptions of the other gender and depict women and men in a stereotyped way.

The fact of using self-enhancing illusions responds to the general view that people have positive biases about themselves (Potter, 1996). Conversely, the negative depiction of the other gender is a clear case of a downward social gender comparison (Shotter, 1993). After having viewed all the advertisements, it is not difficult to see that students are truly convinced that different genders think differently, this is a perfect point of departure for taking a step toward transforming a biased society and making school environments more palatable and productive for students.

In ways similar to Donahue (2001), I believe that teenage gender identity construction is based on two relational dimensions: autonomy and affiliation. The present analysis, broadly influenced by Social Constructionism (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Potter, 1996), aims to show that there is indeed a dialectic relationship between the presentation strategies selected to construct the identity of their own and the other gender and the underlying ideologies that move each gender to present multifaceted self and other images to others (Potter and Wetherell, 2003). In understanding the notion of Self, whether a male or a female Self, as a social and discursive project (Giddens, 1991), this study combines the study of teenage gender identity construction with the acknowledgment that individuals become themselves only in relation to others (cf. Shotter, 1993). In what follows, the results of the analysis will be discussed. First, men's and women's depictions of their own gender will be addressed. Second, men's and women's depictions of the other gender will be presented.

4.1. DEFINING YOURSELF: SELF-PRESENTATION STRATEGIES IN ADVERTISEMENTS TARGETING THEIR OWN GENDER

With regard to the Self-presentation strategies chosen to depict their own gender in the different ads created, close inspection of the data reveals a non-conventional relationship between the product chosen and the uses proposed for them. In other words, most advertisements were created to sell ordinary products such as perfume, clothes, make-up, etc. However, and in spite of the conventionality of the products chosen by both genders, the uses proposed by students were able to work wonders for those who wanted to buy these products. For example, sanitary towels that “absorb” all the problems women may have or men’s razors that can make you become stronger or more intelligent.

Both men’s and women’s advertisements are a clear reflection of gender relations in society. Male products are always related to the importance of acting in life and not being acted upon (e.g. magic shoes that make you feel more confident in life, sunglasses that help you make decisions, etc.). These portrayed behaviours validate the stereotypes roles: men always get their sense of self from achievement, they tend to be task-oriented and it is important to them to be self-reliant (Tannen, 1996). In this same line of argument, female products reinforce patriarchy (e.g. sweet perfumes that help you catch a boyfriend, a shampoo that balances your face, accents your figure and highlights your entire look so that you can date any man you want). In addition, most of the ads targeting a female audience share the following features: three or four friends are having a drink and chatting about boys, another friend breaks in because she has discovered something that these other girls must know and that will change their lives. By contrast to males’ depictions, women get their sense of self from relationship and tend to be relation-oriented (Coates, 1996).

In addition to these stereotyped roles, both male and female advertisements are tied to certain roles that can be used to define the male self and the female self (Jackson and Joshi, 2004). In other words, what masculinity and femininity mean to students. Those advertisements targeting a male audience are always action-oriented where the product will allow the buyer to prove himself, to build up their competitive nature and prove that he is competent to do anything much better than any other man (Coates, 2002). No matter the product, male students constantly use conditional sentences and superlatives to highlight all the qualities that the buyer will have if he buys that item (e.g. “If you want to be the strongest, buy now this isotonic drink”; “If you want to be the most intelligent in your class, buy now this school bag”, etc.).

Interestingly, those advertisements targeting a female audience reinforce our line of thought. The products on sale show how women enjoy the process and are more verbal-oriented rather than action-oriented (Coates, 2003). This can be seen in the cooperation behind the presentation of any product. A close friend or relative has just discovered something that will make a difference in their lives and needs to be shared. Most products are introduced by following the following conventions: “Look! What I have found”, “You’re not going to believe this”, “I have got something that is going to change OUR lives!”.

A superficial analysis of these Self-presentation strategies may lead us to claim that female identity just revolves around interconnectedness and relationship while male identity only hinges on separation and independence (cf. Donahue, 2001). However, a deeper analysis of students' advertisements shows that there are two fundamental dimensions underlying the construction of both gender identities in students' advertisements: autonomy and affiliation. Close inspection of those ads targeting a teenage male audience allows me to argue that men, upon describing their own respective gender, show low interdependence and high affiliation. As Donahue (2001: 21) argues in his study of the language of conflict in relationships, the construction of gender identities also involves a relational paradox. As for the construction of male identity, within advertisements lies a cooperative paradox which is based on the opposing conditions in which men remain independent of one another, yet they are highly affiliative.

In line with Donahue's (2001) study, this state is paradoxical because male students appear to depict men, on the one hand, as autonomous people that exert little control over one another, and remain socially independent, but, on the other hand, they enjoy sharing some masculine habits. This can be seen since most male advertisements are based on a self-centred presentation; that is, men move with other men in the sense that they construct contrast between self and others of the same gender. As argued above, this self-presentation is done by means of a constant presence of superlatives and conditional sentences.

Men's depictions of their own gender use the dimension "low dependence-high affiliation" to conceive of and evaluate a common sense of self (Donahue, 2001: 22). The dimension is hard to operationalise in the dialogues acted out as individuals differentiate an independent self from a more dependent social role, as they conceive of self as relatively stable across contexts, and as they express self as a unique arrangement of personal qualities (e.g. the strongest, the most intelligent, etc.).

Conversely, women, upon describing their own gender show a high degree of dependence and affiliation; that is, women move towards one another in the sense of cooperatively negotiating their difference and sharing their similarities. Interdependence centres on the two issues of rights and obligations. Since women's interdependence is high, their behaviour is constrained by their sense of obligation in adhering to previously negotiated role relationships, yet they also enjoy a wide range of rights associated with their roles. The role of affiliation is the key to determine whether adherence to obligations or the exerting of rights will dominate female relationships. If such affiliative expressions as attraction and openness prevail, the individual will honour role obligations by behaving as any other woman is expected to behave, while foregoing individual rights. They will be content to subordinate their individual rights to their role obligations. For instance, most female advertisements reflect common stereotyped behaviours (Cameron, 1998; Coates, 1996; Tannen, 1996): one friend has discovered a new shampoo that will change the life of her female friends (this change involves being attractive to men); or she will explain to the rest of the group where to buy those clothes or cosmetics that will make them more attractive. In all the advertisements, the product chosen is the key to establish their identity as belonging to the group; that is, the product

advertisements, the sense of self, either a female or male self, arises from socially reprehensible behaviours. Men's and women's depictions of the other gender are constrained by the need to project images that deviate from the socially desirable standards.

As Wetherell and Potter (1998) point out, there is no doubt that speech style has become stereotypically sex-typed. The analysis of these gender-differentiated ads showed that both genders have widely shared and simplified evaluative images of the other gender. Interestingly, students' depiction of the other gender adopted a traditional sex-role orientation, whereas their own gender depiction was non-traditional. In my view, individuals' selection of specific roles for Other-gender presentation is both influenced by the underlying ideologies of the discourse context in which they are deployed and to some degree shapes these ideologies (cf. Shotter, 1993). In other words, even though the roles chosen for the other gender have a socio-cultural basis rather than being unique to each individual, they are performative devices or tools which individuals construct and use to communicate to others their public self (Lorenzo-Dus, 2000).

What occurs here is that both genders appear to style the other to define themselves in opposite terms. For instance, most products chosen for the other gender were imaginary devices that depict the other gender in negative terms: a mobile phone that tells the potential buyer where his girl friend is so that he can keep an eye on her whenever needed, that allows him to see his favourite football team matches, etc. In this light, women's depictions of men are based on the stereotypical male characteristics: controlling their girlfriends, watching football, and drinking alcohol. With regard to the products chosen for women, they are mainly "magic wands" that allow women to do their household chores faster, magazines that train them to be perfect housewives, magic pills that can turn an ugly duckling into a beautiful swan in a flash.

This Other-presentation strategy is based on a class of behavioural response and is used when individuals belong to a group that is inherently closed – race and gender are prime examples (cf. Augoustinos and Walker 1995: 113). Male and female Self want to evaluate their social category membership positively and this is achieved through social comparison between in-group (male or female) and out-group (female or male). In my view, this strategy seems to respond to the belief that the relative status of each gender can be altered. Advertisement aim at enhancing their social identity by presenting the other gender under a negative light.

By means of advertisements, each gender attempts to introduce some new dimension on which the in-group may fare more favourably. The other gender is negatively valued by highlighting the stereotyped characteristics: men's inability to understand women's feelings, ideas, interests or women's tendency to speak ill of other women. In other words, the strategy relies on social creativity (cf. Tajfel and Turner, 1979) as they ascribe negative characteristics to the other gender to cast themselves under a positive light. The other gender is negatively valued through social comparison: men are jealous and we, women, are not, or women are phoney and we, men are not.

Social Psychology has studied the consequences of accepting a negatively valued group membership and more specifically Social Identity Theory has only addressed the consequences of threats to social identity. The flip-side of the coin –the consequences of casting a group under a favourable light by using a downward social gender comparison– has not been a matter of study. Both genders send disaffiliative messages in the context of low interdependence, then the assertion of rights and resistance to role obligations prevails. This condition is paradoxical because it involves simultaneously contradictory expressions. On the one hand, they push away from the other gender socially and psychologically by their expression of disaffiliation. On the other hand, they intensify their interdependence to redefine role parameters; that is, redefinitions cannot occur if parties are interdependent. In my view, both genders attempt to style the other gender to define themselves. This construction of their identities points out most important gender inequities: men always act and women are always acted upon; men always make decisions and women do whatever their couple says; etc.

Far from succeeding in their strategy, both genders fail to seek positive distinctiveness for their own gender, since by exaggerating the characteristics of the other gender and altering the elements of the comparative situation (cf. Tajfel and Turner, 1979), they do not change the group or gender status. Interestingly, as an inter-group strategy, it is a clear failure since the other gender (the out-group) cannot be swayed into accepting the new dimension; however, the strategy succeeds as an in-group strategy. This is due to the fact that while viewing the advertisement in class both women and men strongly agreed that these new comparisons were right or at least a theatrical presentation of reality. In-group acceptance is all that is needed for the strategy to be successful in bolstering social identity (cf. Augoustinos and Walker, 1995: 115).

The matrix displayed as Table 2 represents the differences found in students' advertisements when depicting the other gender.

Table 2. Relationship development matrix on gender-differentiated ads

	Men depicting women	Women depicting men
Low affiliation	Moving against women	Moving against men

Low interdependence



5. CONCLUSION

In studying inter-group aspects of language behaviour and in drawing conclusions to be applied to any inter-group context, the project has been presented as an example of how these trainee Primary School English teachers, as far as gender inequalities are concerned, still have a biased attitude.

The project has shown that trainee Primary School English teachers have clear beliefs about what being a man or woman means. Not only has this project proposal been one way to make use of New Technology in the university EFL class, regarded as an attempt to enhance the learning experience and to motivate students, but it has also been an effective way to raise awareness of how language embodies and disseminates cultural assumptions and relations of power.

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