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Contenido

5

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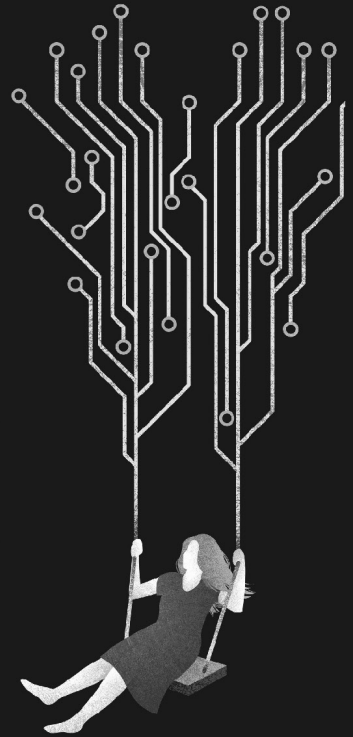
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Editorial

Edgar Lucero[1]

With eight new articles by teacher-researchers of English, the HOW journal keeps maintaining communication among English language teachers both in Colombia and abroad. This time, the research reports continue presenting more perspectives to analyze experiences, perceptions, and understandings of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in varied settings. The studies in this new issue emerged from exhaustive needs analyses, hermeneutical perspectives, epistemological perceptions, and situated examinations of realities that English language teachers, future teachers, and EFL students live in their contexts.

The last issues of HOW journal have given evidence that authors now contemplate ELT research by considering their studies from different angles, as well as localizing them in their teaching and learning contexts. By using varied types of research, which the teacher-researchers have applied to their settings, they have found new insights that add novel understandings to English language teaching and learning practices.

In this new issue, HOW introduces eight research reports. In the first, Martha Isabel Bonilla-Mora and Johanna Patricia López-Urbina present a study about the local epistemological perceptions of Colombian EFL teaching and learning from the voices of English language university teachers. These two authors draw attention to the cultural and linguistic diversity in Colombia and an epistemological reconstruction of English language university teachers.

In the second study, Diego Fernando Ubaque-Casallas examined two English language teachers' professional identities based on their narrated experiences and discourses on language pedagogy. This study places tension on the normative conception of the traditional/ hegemonic notions of pedagogy and teacher identities configured in the Colombian ELT context.

7

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[1]   Edgar Lucero is a full-time teacher educator for Universidad de La Salle, Colombia. He is a PhD candidate in Education at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Colombia. He holds an MA in Applied Linguistics and is specialized in English language Teaching Didactics. His research interests are in classroom interaction and pedagogical practicum.
       elucerob@unisalle.edu.co
       ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2208-5124

Also, about identities, Angélica Pita-Castro and Alicia Castiblanco-Rincón present a narrative study on the way pre-service English language teachers' levels of reflectivity give an account of their identity construction during the space of pedagogical practicum. The study reveals that the most of the participants are unaware of their actual levels of reflectivity, from which they construct their identities in line with the context, the people around them, and the specific time they are in their formation.

Also following a narrative study, Karen Andrea Cuervo-Rodríguez and Jairo Enrique Castañeda-Trujillo present the life histories of how two dyslexic pre-service English language teachers became teachers. This paper unveils how this condition is as serious as any other disability; it generates rejection and negative feelings that the participants overcome by turning their debility into an advantage.

In the fifth study, Angela Patricia Velásquez-Hoyos presents an action research report on the strengthening of EFL pre-intermediate English language students' oral fluency in English through the implementation of six theme-based teaching workshops. In the sixth study, Willian Alexander Mora-Menjura presents a qualitative case study with an implementation of political cartoons for the promotion of critical reading in an EFL classroom. In the seventh study, María Victoria Fernández-Carballo presents an exploration of intermediate-level students' attitudes towards the integration of YouTube in the English language classroom in a primary education degree program. These three studies show positive results both in the use of the designed materials and in the development of the students' target language skills and language learning attitudes.

In the last paper of this current issue, Mónica Patarroyo-Fonseca presents a research article on the interaction between a female teacher and her students to evidence features of feminism within an EFL classroom. This study states that feminism is not determined by gender, but rather, it is an individual choice that is socially constructed and transmitted through power relationships.

We hope that this new issue, containing eight research reports, offers more and more information for issues of immediate importance to the ELT community in Colombia and abroad.

8

HOW

From the President of ASOCOPI

Jairo Enrique Castañeda-Trujillo

As current president of ASOCOPI, I extend a cordial greeting to all the authors, evaluators, and readers of our HOW journal. I also hope that you and your families are doing well despite the hardships that the world is going through. I also take this opportunity to thank the entire ASOCOPI assembly for having placed their trust in my colleagues on the board of directors and in me to take charge of the association during this period 2021-2022.

For us, as an association, it has also been a year with many challenges and difficulties. Despite this, we have tried to work as hard as possible so that ASOCOPI can fulfill its missional objectives of promoting English teaching throughout the national territory. To this end, we have continued programming webinars aimed at the professional development of our associates and the ELT community in general, via going through topics oriented to the design of materials, emotional education, autonomous learning, decolonization in ELT, and critical literacy. We ended 2020 with the webinars of academics Alexander Rámirez, Felipe Micán, Ximena Bonilla, Nancy Carvajal, and Yamith Fandiño. So far in 2021, we have fortunately had the participation of Claudia Suescún, Camilo Dominguez, and Juliana Díaz, and we continue to plan other webinars with relevant topics for the entire ELT community. I want to reiterate my gratitude to all the academics who contributed their knowledge, time, and dedication in carrying out this activity. I invite readers who did not have the opportunity to attend these wonderful presentations to see them on our website or official site on YouTube.

This year, we started the Diploma Courses as a strategy to contribute to English teachers' professional development. We initially programmed two courses, one intended to teach English to children and the other to teach English to youngsters. Each Diploma Course was composed of students from many parts of the country, from Nariño to Santander, passing through Tolima, Cundinamarca, Antioquia, and other departments/states. We are delighted and grateful to the participating teachers for having trusted us. We invite all teachers in the country to join this initiative, either by proposing a new diploma course or participating in them. We hope to open our next diploma course soon focusing on academic writing in order to publish articles, which we hope will benefit those professors who have significant research practice and experiences and who have not dared to submit a paper about them for publication.

We continue with our agreements with other institutions to expand and benefit our affiliates. This year we have made agreements with the British Council to participate in the

9

New Directions Colombia 2021, for which we obtained a 35% discount on registration for our affiliates. Similarly, we participated in ARTESOL (TESOL Argentina), which offered a number of tickets to our affiliates. We continue working with MEXTESOL in a permanent cooperation agreement to join in the events that they organize, and they in ours. As the Board of Directors, we continue to contact publishers and other organizations to achieve even more benefits for those who trust ASOCOPI as the only association that works all year and every year to promote English teaching in Colombia.

Another activity that we believe has been worthwhile was the campaign to donate books and supplies for teachers and students of Providencia Island (Colombia). After being hit by Hurricane Iota in November 2020, the entire community of the island was affected. Many of the Providence Island inhabitants lost their homes and jobs. Schools were destroyed, and teachers and students were left without resources. Therefore, as a way to contribute, ASOCOPI started a campaign with publishers and a number of educational institutions to collect more than 1,200 books. We thank English Language Services and teachers Alicia McAll, Kathie Cuny and Catherine Davidson from Nueva Granada School for their contribution. We want to repeat these aid campaigns for those who have suffered disasters or have not had the possibility of accessing this type of material. We hope for the collaboration of all.

I seize this opportunity to express my condolences to all the teachers and other readers who have suffered losses of their beloved ones, whether due to the global pandemic or other circumstances. For us, it is harrowing every time we send condolence messages on our social networks. In the same vein, I want to take this opportunity to pay a heartfelt tribute to the teachers who have passed away this year. We will always remember their invaluable work and dedication; they will always remain in our memory.

I also want to express appreciation for the work done by the members of our board of directors: Kaithie Ramírez (Vice President), Claudia María Uribe (Treasurer), Adriana Sanchéz (Secretary) and Eliana Alarcón (Spokesperson), and our right hand, Miryam Vera (Administrative Manager). Each of these women has contributed enormously to all the activities and projects we do at ASOCOPI and I appreciate their commitment, dedication, and excellent performance. I am sure they will have the same willingness to work for the remainder of the year and for 2022.

10   Finally, I want to invite everyone to our 56th Annual ASOCOPI Online Conference and 2nd International Conference: Landscapes of Praxis and the Agency of English Language Teachers, which will take place from October 14 to 16, 2021. We look forward to your participation and support in this and upcoming events.

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Local Epistemological Perceptions that Underlie EFL Literature and Teaching Practices in Colombia

Percepciones epistemológicas de la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera en Colombia

Martha Isabel Bonilla-Mora[1]
Johanna Patricia López-Urbina[2]

Abstract

This study aims to understand the local and updated epistemological perceptions of the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Colombia from the voices of English language university teachers. This qualitative research emerges as part of a hermeneutical perspective which allowed the authors to analyze experiences, perceptions, and understandings of teachers in the foreign language-teaching field. Data collection instruments included a literature review using framework matrices and semi-structured interviews. After data analysis, three categories emerged: Pertinence and Relevance of Teaching and Learning of EFL, Teaching and Learning of EFL, and The State of Bilingualism. The study concludes with the recommendation of promoting the teaching and learning of foreign languages based on contextualized necessities of Colombia. We draw attention to the cultural and linguistic diversity in our country. In addition, we raise awareness among preservice teachers towards an epistemological reconstruction that involves the ecology of knowledge, engaging them in critical knowledge and practices from outside the Eurocentric vision.

Keywords: bilingualism, Colombia, epistemology, foreign languages, language policy

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[1]   She is an EFL teacher and researcher at Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Inglés at Universidad Santo Tomás, Colombia. She holds a master's degree in education from Universidad Pedagógica Nacional. Her research works mainly core on the narratives about the English teaching and learning contexts in Colombia. marthabonilla@ustadistancia.edu.co
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8823-2505

[2]   She is a teacher at Licenciatura en Lengua Extranjera Inglés at Universidad Santo Tomás, Colombia. She holds a BA in Philology and Languages and a Master's Degree in Education. She has worked with teachers and pre-service teachers in the rural and urban areas in Colombia.
Johanna.lopez@ustadistancia.edu.co
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1293-8042

Martha Isabel Bonilla-Mora,
Johanna Patricia López-Urbina

Resumen

Este estudio busca comprender las percepciones epistemológicas de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en Colombia a partir de la voz de algunos profesores de inglés. Esta investigación cualitativa surge desde una perspectiva hermenéutica que permitió a los autores analizar experiencias, percepciones y comprensiones de los docentes en el campo de la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras. Los instrumentos de recolección de datos incluyeron una revisión de la literatura utilizando matrices analíticas y entrevistas semiestructuradas. Después del análisis, surgieron tres categorías: Pertinencia y relevancia de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de EFL, Enseñanza y aprendizaje de EFL y, El estado del bilingüismo. Se concluye con la necesidad de promover la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras en función de las necesidades contextualizadas, prestando atención a la diversidad cultural y lingüística en nuestro país. Así mismo, se reitera la importancia de sensibilizar a los docentes en formación hacia una construcción epistemológica que implique la ecología del conocimiento que los incluya dentro de un conocimiento crítico, apartado de la visión eurocéntrica.

Palabras clave: epistemología, Colombia, política lingüística, lenguas extranjeras, bilingüismo

Introduction

English as a foreign language (EFL) has been taught in Colombia from the perspective and the orientation of foreign beliefs, methodologies and under the implementation of policies created by the Ministry of National Education (MEN in Spanish) (Ramírez, 2015). These policies have been framed by the standards and competences outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Although it is true that these policies have had good intentions to raise the development of society as a principle, the adoption of foreign educational and evaluative ideologies and dynamics have not been adapted to the Colombian context (Ramírez, 2015). On the contrary, the different educational actors have been forced to accept and apply them, even when our context, and even other Latin American contexts, do not meet the same initial conditions in their application process if social, economic, or cultural aspects are considered.

Even though the MEN indicates that learning a language is meant to achieve social equality (MEN, 2006), in practice this has not materialized. A clear illustration can be seen in the different national bilingualism plans established for the 2018-2022 four-year period.

> *Resaltar el reconocimiento de que el país ya posee una riqueza cultural y lingüística inmensa, lo que nos hace un país multilingüe y multicultural que reconoce sus lenguas nativas y criollas, mientras le abre las puertas a la construcción de ciudadanía global a través de las lenguas extranjeras.[3] (Colombia Aprende, 2016, Conozca el Plan de Bilingüismo, para. 3)*

[3] To highlight the recognition that the country already has an immense cultural and linguistic wealth, which defines us as a multilingual and multicultural country that recognizes its native and Creole languages, while opening the doors to the construction of global citizenship through foreign languages.

Although the policy recognizes the multiculturalism of Colombia, the level of investment and promotion in teaching and learning either the native language or others has been scarce and faint. An example of the above is that now there are no official documents that promote the learning of other languages as there exist for the teaching and learning of English. It is concluded here that naming aspects of multiculturalism, which in our country is based and enriched on our cultural diversity and the coexistence of different cultures in the national territory, and multilingualism, defined as the use of more than one language in a community or territory (Hakuta, 2009), does not mean that all the knowledge of the territory is being recognized and included in that purpose of social equality.

All of the above brought the authors to reflect on the fact that in spite of English having been taught officially in Colombia for more than three decades (Bastidas, 2017), the efficacy and quality of teaching and learning in the country have not been successful. Therefore, it is crucial to inquire in local and updated epistemological bases in the Teaching and Learning of English as a Foreign Language (TLEFL) and how these findings could foster teachers' movement toward new horizons. Thus, the authors of this current article aimed to answer the following question: What are the local epistemological perceptions that underlie the teaching and learning of EFL in Colombia nowadays?

Epistemology of Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language (TLEFL)

To define the epistemology that underlies the TLEFL, we will refer to Cohen who affirms: "Epistemology is concerned with the nature and forms of knowledge and the epistemological assumptions about how knowledge can be created, acquired and communicated, in other words what it means to know" (2007, as cited in Scotland, 2012, p. 7). In agreement, Guba and Lincoln (2012, as cited in Scotland, 2012) assert that epistemology establishes indissolubly tangled relations between the knower and the knowledge; that is why epistemology asks the question about the nature of the relationship between the would-be knower and what can be known. Assenting to Goldman (1986, as cited in Watson-Gegeo, 2004), epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge and theorizing knowledge; it is concerned with who can be a knower, what can be known, what constitutes knowledge, and sources of evidence for constructing knowledge.

13

Soleimani (2018) states that epistemological beliefs describe individual representations about knowledge and knowing and about the epistemology in the class. In other words, the idea of classroom management originated from child development theories based on different teachers' approaches to classroom management. Regarding the teaching style, the personal tendencies toward learning and pedagogy might be manifested differently in diverse contexts.

Wallace (1991, as cited in Soleimani, 2018) refers to two types of trainee knowledge: The theoretical knowledge and the knowledge in action. The first knowledge is accepted without question; this knowledge includes the teaching terminology as methodologies and approaches. The second knowledge is what teachers learn through classroom situations and reflections on their experience. Schommer, Chan, and Elliott (2004, as cited in Soleimani, 2018) declare that the epistemological belief system contains five dimensions: 1) certainty of knowledge, 2) structure of knowledge, 3) source of knowledge, 4) control of knowledge, fixed to changing and dynamic ability to learn something, and 5) speed of knowledge acquisition quick to gradual knowledge acquisition. Those beliefs play a decisive role regarding how a teacher interprets knowledge, justifies the structure and source of information, and more generally, how the learning process expands.

However, languages are not used in a vacuum chamber nor do they exist without any context; they are used for responding to the reception of discursive contexts that are necessarily always impregnated with the ideology of social systems and institutions (Vez, 2010). Hence, understanding the ideology and the social system in which knowledge of English surfaced is necessary. Junca (2016) describes four occurrences that embrace the cultural, social, and economic complexities of the English as a foreign language knowledge and knowing. Junca (2016) explains that the system of the English language emerges because of the constitution of a language as a privilege under the category of universality. The universality of the communicative approaches is enhanced by center-based textbook editorials which foster the use of certain methods and techniques by means of training sessions offered by the publishing houses for using the books. Opposite to this idea, Kincheloe (2004, as cited in Granados-Beltran, 2018b) states that human knowledge construction does not lead to universal truths nor can it be considered an objective linear process.

The second event refers to the processes of colonization that fostered the idea of English as a cultural prestige language. In the third occurrence, the literature is positioned as an aesthetic canon and as statute for knowledge. Regarding the fourth occurrence, Junca (2016) affirms that American economics, lifestyles, culture, and interpersonal relationships became a frame of reference that the global system expanded across the globe. Consequently, the official language of Colombia was disseminated in the same way, ratifying itself as predominant in the stratification of languages. These discourses foster the instrumentalization and standardization of foreign language teaching and learning, so English knowledge and knowing is reduced to a statute of truth, productivity, accessibility, global economy, and political coercion.

14

Teachers and Teaching Epistemology

In agreement with Soleimani (2018), English language teachers' epistemological beliefs describe the individual representations about knowledge. This means that beliefs are the

engine that triggers values, individual behavior, and knowledge acquisition; facts that determine what teachers do and how they behave in classroom. Donmoyer (2001, as cited in Soleimani, 2018), declares there are some determinant elements defining how a teacher reacts in a classroom and, as well, that make up part of the epistemological beliefs that correspond to the way a teacher interprets knowledge, the approach the teacher follows, and the teacher's style. Kincheloe (2004, as cited in Granados-Beltran, 2018b) explains that the way teachers teach, just as their pedagogical purposes, is tied to how teachers see themselves.

This means that teachers confront themselves with their thoughts and beliefs and about their role as teachers and, in general, the construction of their link to the social, political, economic, and cultural world around them. Unfortunately, and because language teaching in Colombia has been accomplished under the European and North American coloniality of knowledge, the teaching and learning epistemological beliefs, and their representations of knowledge have been shortened and replaced by foreign institutions whose native speakers design, train, and certify teachers. Thus, the teaching and learning are seen as a weak and little explored field that does not have strong foundations and ends up adopting foreign methodologies. The epistemological approach to language keeps being prescriptive thus fostering passive minds and leaving no space for teachers to break with the hegemony of English.

Recent Historical Background and Policies in Teaching and Learning English in Colombia

Colombia is a diverse and pluricultural country in South America and it is proud of its great biodiversity, with enormous energy resources, and multicultural people (Bonilla, Lopez, & Caro, 2018). However, an army conflict, which has lasted for more than fifty years, and poor economic conditions have driven the country's population and indigenous communities to concentrate in the main Colombian cities. This exodus caused the migrating people to forget their knowledge, their language and culture and favor the acquisition of new imposed knowledge. Regarding the languages teaching and learning, the country has been dominated by external linguistic, social, and economic agendas. Usma (2009) asserts that Colombian language policies and reform agendas can be traced to the times of the colony. He also acknowledges that these processes made possible the externalization of discourses, and the stratification of languages, groups, and cultures.

Different actors have been involved in the transition period of English as a foreign language in the national education system: the European Union, the Council of Europe, the British Council, the Centro Colombo Americano and the MEN. All of them have implemented different policies with the purpose of improving the teaching and learning of

15

foreign languages in our country (Bastidas, 2017; Bonilla-Carvajal & Tejada-Sánchez, 2016; Bonilla et al., 2018; Usma Wilches, 2009; Vez, 2010).

By 1991, the National Constitution of Colombia introduced the recognition of decentralization and the autonomy of municipal and departmental entities; the recognition of multiculturalism, pluri-ethnicity, and the autonomous rights of indigenous and black peoples; the recognition of equality for all religions and cults; the primacy of human rights over religious ones. Later, on February 8, 1994, the MEN launched General Law of Education 115. The law 'reorganized the whole school system and established specific goals for foreign languages in the country' (Usma Wilches, 2009, p. 3). This law proposed new curricular guidelines for foreign languages; this meant that methods and approaches were given to the teachers, limiting their autonomy (Usma Wilches, 2009). On the one hand, Law 115 recognized the decentralization and the autonomy of municipal and departmental entities, multiculturalism, and pluri-ethnicity, but the authors observe a disconnection between the concept of native and foreign language and their learning process (Law 115, 1994).

These aspects have remained in the subsequent laws for language education and National Bilingualism Programs, this last one undergoing slight modification in name and constructs but exhibiting low recognition of the cultural characteristics of our country, as well as the marginalization of proper communities and languages that exist in the territory. Bonilla-Carvajal and Tejada-Sánchez (2016) state that the bases of previous policies adhered to the socio-economic context to make the teaching and learning of English more technical, scientific, and efficient.

Along with this brief historical account, it has been demonstrated that despite the new discourses, policies, practices, and linguistic policies, the aim to turn Colombia into a bilingual country has failed to materialize.

Method

To answer the question about what the local epistemological perceptions that underlie the teaching and learning of EFL in Colombia are nowadays, this research study followed the principles of qualitative research, which in Creswell's words (2013) studies a problem addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. In addition, this qualitative study emerges as part of a hermeneutical perspective which is defined as the science or art of interpretation with three basic meanings: express, explain and translate (Ferraris, 1996); this aspect allowed the authors to understand a problem, its definition, and the reconfiguration of new facts from a holistic and descriptive perspective.

On the other hand, the epistemological assumption intends to depict what counts as knowledge and how it is justified (Creswell, 2007). That is why the authors conducted this

16

study based on the experiences, perceptions, and understanding of people in the foreign language-teaching field with the purpose of contributing to the literature or calling for a change regarding two aspects: pedagogical aspects related to EFL teaching and learning, and research in EFL teaching and learning.

The data collection instruments included: a literature review of framework matrices on historical, statistical, and official documents, study reports, scientific articles, and press items, among others. They originated to make a critical analysis of the existing theory on TLEFL in our country. From this literature analysis, the research participants who were interviewed were subsequently defined.

Semi-structured interviews were applied to a purposive sampling of experts in EFL in Colombia to validate information found in the literature review and to dig deeper into aspects that required further exploration. Regarding the experts, we invited all of those who had published academic articles related to the historical and normative Colombian EFL background and expressed their agreement to being interviewed. Interviews included questions related to (a) the importance of learning EFL in Colombia, (b) approaches, methods, and methodologies implemented in the process of learning and teaching English in public and private schools, (c) perception of the National Education Policies of teaching and learning English in Colombia, (d) bilingualism in Colombia, and (e) aspects to consider in designing public linguistic and education policies in Colombia.

Participants

Our purposive sample of participants comprised expert researchers in the field of EFL, teachers from secondary and higher education, and two experts from the MEN in Colombia. The study included 13interviews: 11 university teachers (six of them hold PhDs and 6 hold Master studies related to the EFL education field) and two members of the MEN. Interviews were carried out during the second semester of 2018. Participants were informed of the confidentiality of the interview to protect their anonymity.

Data Analysis

17

The processes of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process – they are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project (Creswell, 2007). That is why in this study, the authors decided to carry out the following phases:

a) Interviews and framework matrices analysis: For this first analysis phase, the authors explored extant texts like, MEN official documents, policies, literature, and research

articles and those allocated in official websites. As a second step, framework matrices were designed as the first instrument of analysis to treat them as an analytical and supplementary source of data and to situate them in context (Charmaz, 2006). In this step, the authors explored the information of the 13interviews collected.

b) The authors analyzed the data following an initial coding to define what was happening in the data and to understand what they meant. Generalizations and concepts emerged from an examination of the raw data grounded in the context itself, rather than verifying predetermined hypotheses; the open coding procedures allowed us to cover new relationships, concepts, and understandings.

c) Organization of analyzed data: Based on the previous matrices, the authors carried out a first triangulation theoretical process, and later a peer review or debriefing process among the members of the research group (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Results

During the process of analysis and categorization, the authors distinguished three vertical levels of categories. In the first level, the authors introduced the central inquiry that occupied this research, while in the second level, they introduced category one, Pertinence and Relevance of the Teaching and Learning of EFL; category two, Teaching and Learning of EFL; and category three, the State of Bilingualism. Once the authors revisited the early categorization and examined connections among the categories, sub-categories emerged. Thus, from the first category, two subcategories emerged, English power and English prestige; from the second category, four subcategories emerged, (a) pedagogy, didactic and linguistics, approaches and methods, (b) the teaching and evaluation standards; (c) Colombian English teachers' identities; and (d) contexts. The following figure illustrates the three main categories and the subcategories. These three categories helped the authors to answer the question: What are the local epistemological perceptions that underlie the teaching and learning of EFL in Colombia nowadays?

The Pertinence and Relevance of Teaching and Learning EFL in Colombia

Power

According to the information gathered, the authors inferred that TLEFL in Colombia implies a powerful benefit in the eyes of the world. Teachers, students, administrators, and parents believe that people around the world must speak English and so this language started
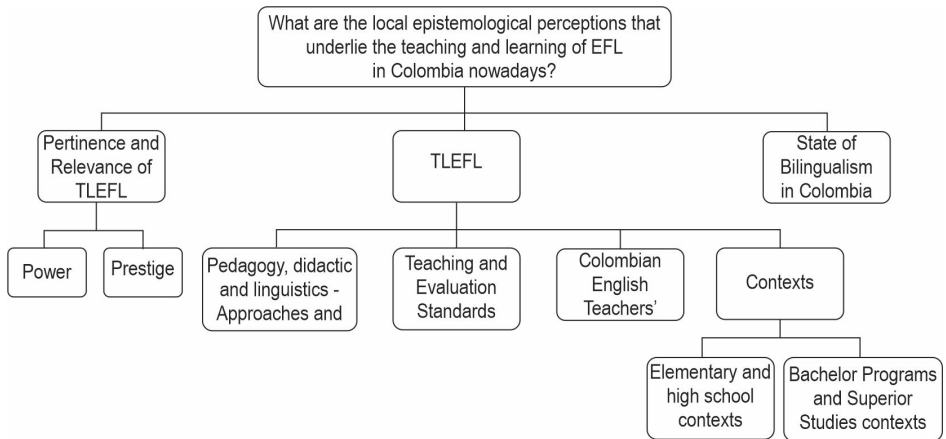
Figure 1. Categories

to be considered as a 'universal language'. In fact, this led the country to adopt policies that positioned the hegemony of English as being without question the universality of English (Ramírez, 2015). A good example of this acceptance is clearly displayed in the main goal of the NPB 'to have citizens who are able to communicate in English with international standards, so that they can introduce the country to the processes of universal communication, the global economy, and cultural openness' (Ramírez, 2015, p. 33).

The interest in including English as a foreign language in the curriculum occurred thanks to the globalization movements in which the country has been immersed. This contributed to the diffusion of English, which means the dominance of English as an international language, leaving aside the recognition of the cultural characteristics of our country, as well as the marginalization of proper communities and languages that exist in the territory.

Interviewee 1 explains how English was inserted in the higher education curriculum:

"Around mid-60s universities began to demand English classes for the different careers. However, in Colombia this requirement was evident by 30s, when the language Institutes implemented the English teaching and learning programs; that started with the private institutes then applied in the public ones." (INTVW. 1)

In agreement, Interviewee 3 affirms that TLEFL in Colombia has been a matter of fulfilling governmental and economic goals:

19

"This could be the origin of integrating a well-regarded language like English in the curriculum, thereby excluding the native languages. But why to be bilingual only between Spanish-English? Why a prestigious bilingualism? In this University, we have students that belong to indigenous communities but also to a minority group that communicate through sign language. So, as a country, we must understand that bilingualism cannot be reduced to a prestigious bilingualism." [sic] (INTVW 3)

Prestige

English was also considered a basic good that gave one prestige. According to Vez (2010), the paradigm of languages focuses on considering languages as basic goods, with an intrinsic utility that the state must give to its citizens. Hence, once again, the instruction of English was prioritized through the enactment of a bilingualism law and four national bilingualism programs, which shared the objective of inserting Colombian human capital into the international dynamics by fostering communicative skills in English (Gómez Sará, 2017). De Mejía (2005, as cited in Valencia, 2013) asserted that 'individuals that possess the symbolic resource of being highly competent in English could easily gain access to other valuable, educational, and material or symbolic resources' (p. 2).

The strong influence of globalization on the country forces Colombians to learn English, which can sometimes be a hard decision because they do not feel the necessity to communicate in a foreign language, but rather to get a good job. In Interviewee 1's words, college students have to learn English because Colombian educational policies demand it. In addition, they know that if students want to have a better job or apply for a scholarship, they must learn English.

"... English gives you the opportunity to improve your status. If a person is interested in joining an important company, he or she will need to speak English fluently." (INTVW. 1)

In addition, Interviewee 1 asserts that English is an important language for connecting with people from other countries: "English is important to understand other cultures" (INTVW, 1).

In Ramírez's words (2015), this means that 'English contributes with a sophisticated form of linguistic colonialism and cultural invasion; it seems that English acts as a passport to higher cultural, political and economic levels, replicating an ideal common culture' (p. 30).

Conversely, English language learning in the country generates some discomfort among students, teachers, and parents because of the lack of pertinence in social contexts. Thus, Interviewee 6 says:

"Although there is great concern in the rural contexts, we usually think erroneously that learning English is not necessary in those places, we do not find a real purpose. Students ask 'Why do I

have to learn English if I don't need it… Even it does not represent any benefit for me…" (IN-TVW. 6)

In addition, Interviewee 9 claims that Colombian social and economic conditions limit the interest of students in learning English and explains curricular aspects that make teachers include English language in their classes because educational policies demand it, but not because they are responding to the social necessities of students:

> "We have not studied the sociocultural situation that our students experience once they start learning a new language. We have forgotten that the student also takes part in this process. Our culture is a culture more of dependence than of independence and autonomy." (INTVW. 9)

TLEFL in Colombia

Pedagogy, Didactics, and Linguistics - Approaches and Methods

Interviewee 2 highlights the situation of undergraduate and postgraduate programs, which are trying to encourage changes in the perception of teaching and learning English that have an impact on what is happening inside the classroom and attend to the social and cultural problems students and teachers face every day. This participant asserts that:

> "In our teaching training programs, the applied linguistics is no longer a theoretical subject and it is like transitioning to what it would be called critical applied linguistics; but not only to promote critical thinking as is traditionally conceived, but to develop that sensitivity to social and cultural problems; we must think of a transdisciplinary approach." (INTVW 2)

In reference to the approach and methodology used, TLEFL in Colombia has been marked by foreign and prescriptive approaches based on a *set of fixed rules*. As stated by interviewee 10, teaching English is seen as a weak and little explored field that does not have strong foundations and ends up adopting foreign methodologies that are in fashion: "Colombia assumes teaching methodologies as *methodological fashions*, these trends bring money, which is captured through publishers, and also bring instrumental models of how to teach a language" (INTVW. 10).

21

On the other hand, participants assert that the MEN proposes reforms that are mostly copied from elsewhere, but these reforms do not necessarily reflect our needs. For example, in the CEFR, some levels are required, but this framework arose in a hugely different context from that of Colombia. Besides, some participants asserted that a structural approach to teaching language is still present in classrooms. As interviewee 8 stated: "Those programs are basically a functional prison of the language; so, you keep looking at English as an

instrument to order in a restaurant, to make a call… as if language were isolated from a context." (INTVW. 8)

As regards the methods, Bastidas (1989) affirms that the teaching and learning of foreign languages in each country have complex features, and that is why a preservice teacher must know in depth all the methods. If teachers in training do not know them, they cannot apply the eclectic method and should not expect good results in class; otherwise, the eclectic method cannot be put into practice. Thus, Interviewee 10 affirms:

"We cannot forget the 'how to teach foreign languages', this, because our students will go out and teach English, and it is important for them to consider the no *parametric*, methodologies. Right now, for example, Kumaravadivelu proposes the post-method and emerging teaching. We should not forget that we do not only teach a foreign language, but we teach communication; at the end of the day, what a person wants to do when he or she learns a language is to communicate." (INTVW. 10)

Teaching and Evaluation Standards

Regarding the national policies, specifically the 'Basic Standards of Competence in a Foreign Language: English' (MEN, 2006), we can identify that this policy assumes the learning of foreign language in a very structural way and makes the student of English appropriate language as a system. Vez (2010) affirms that teachers should not forget that 'standards' means the instrumentalization of the teaching and learning of a language. In addition, Usma Wilches (2009) realizes that the standards and evaluation had become like mechanisms of control and exclusion. From this perspective, the learning of a foreign language frames a deficit perspective, in which language is seen as a competence or a skill to be developed. Interviewee 3 affirms standards have been conceived from a deficient perspective of language:

"When I read the standards of English and I compare them with the standards of other areas, like biology, I see that these last ones were thought [out] ... from a scientific perspective in which they can experiment, to create, to be critic [al] ... while English standards are thought [out] only at the level of the ability to appropriate language as a system." [sic] (INTVW 3)

For his part, Ramírez (2015) states 'the view of language expressed in *Basic Standards* perpetuates the vision of language as neutral' (p. 50). Pennycook (1994, as cited in Guerrero Nieto & Quintero Polo, 2009) asserts that the neutrality of English emerged from two main discourses: the discourse of linguistics and applied linguistics, in which language was a medium for communication, and the discourse of marketing, in which English, along with all the activities related to it, such as teaching methodologies, textbooks, teacher training, tests, materials, etc., are portrayed as a service industry.

Colombian English Teachers' Identities

Interviewee 7 asserts that teachers have a minimal role when facing governmental policies. The participant states that national policies do not involve the concept of teachers as individual and beings, but as reproducers of the knowledge that the policy is requiring from them: "Teachers are not stupid, nor manipulable in the face of policies ... they react and there are proposals of resistance" [sic] (INTVW. 7).

This allows us to understand how teachers enter serious conflicts with themselves when they must accept something that they do not agree with: "It is interesting to analyze how policies generates an inner discomfort and conflict among teachers because they are forced to accept and apply policies they are not agree with" [sic] (INTVW. 2).

TLEFL Contexts in Colombia

Elementary and High School Contexts

Interviewee 3 affirms that it is necessary to redesign the national policies regarding the TLEFL in elementary school. Elementary teachers in Colombia have valuable experience in how to teach children, but the MEN often simplifies their level of knowledge just because they do not know English. Interviewee 3 presents the origin of the problem. In Colombia, elementary teachers who do not have enough knowledge to teach a language must give English classes to their students. On the other hand, although the MEN is aware of this serious situation, it is not willing to hire expert people in the field, arguing a lack of financial resources. In some cases, that situation could be one of the reasons why English levels in these grades are deficient in some Colombian public schools.

According to Guerrero and Maturana (2011), graduates in English are usually assigned to high schools, paradoxically aggravating the problem since the role of the teacher in the basic years of education is essential. This happens in elementary and secondary grades in the rural areas of Colombia.

Colombia's characteristics affect the process of learning inside the classroom as well. When Interviewee 9 was asked for the perception of the teaching and learning of a foreign language in rural areas, this teacher explained that, in some regions, children are forced to leave or pause their education process because they need to work and help their parents in the countryside jobs. In some cases, they are even taken to work in the manufacturing process of illegal drugs. This interviewee states the following:

> "Rural education is perhaps the most neglected area and has not really dabbled in the research in EFL. There, the development of linguistic competences in English is minimal, because of the

23

complexity of our country. When I listen to the graduated teachers, they say 'teacher, what you teach us in class it is important… But, what can we do when students are absent for a month in my school because they must collect coca in Putumayo?' This means they face difficult circumstances to get good results, not only in English, but in education in general." [sic] (INTVW. 9)

Bachelor Programs and Superior Studies Contexts

According to González (2007), the professional development of teachers is a constant concern in research related to EFL but in some cases, the teaching of English as a professional activity in Colombia has not really emerged from the local knowledge.

On her part, Interviewee 3 expresses a lack of relationship between the contextual and previous knowledge of students and the principles of Foreign Languages National curricula. Even though most of the experts are aware of the positive changes English language bachelor degree programs have had in the last few years, interviewee 3 claims that including a stronger practical approach in the curriculum is necessary, and more importantly in the national English programs. The teacher states that pre-service teachers experience a shock when they need to put into practice all the theory that they learned during their major because of the lack of knowledge related to the realities they face in their contexts. In the following excerpt, the interviewee 3 paraphrases a student's opinion:

"Teachers never teach us that we must go to know the place where the school is located or that we must arrive and go to look and know what the school is, its surroundings, the neighborhood, etc., to be able to locate and know our apprentices, to be able to locate them and be able to adapt the curriculum, teach, build the curriculum. We do not know how to build the curriculum; we do not know how to articulate the standards of student reality and the school environment…" (INTVW. 3)

The teacher also asserts that there is a big failure in the teaching practices and the teachers in charge of the training. Therefore, it is crucial that teachers reconsider the teachers' training processes:

"It turns out that the teacher who speaks less English is assigned to teach in the basic level, and the other who speaks a little more oversees the intermediate level… we are not making good decisions on how and with whom we should count on this learning process and … the way we can help improve that human resource so and the way we can impact the learning context. The quality of education is badly conceived. I think we are really forming some graduates whose proficiency in English is good, but their pedagogical and their curricular skills need to be improved… we are not teaching pedagogy, nor are we teaching curricular design." [sic] (INTVW. 3)

On the contrary, participant 2 affirms that we have shreds of evidence of a good teacher's formation in the Bachelor's degree program in EFL education. For example, the participant says that future teachers are now more critical and more proactive. Nowadays,

pre-service teachers do not see teaching to be instrumental as it used to be. However, the interviewee exhorts other teachers to reflect on how students can be motivated to think epistemologically and logically. The answer must consider a different vision of language and create new social constructs. This participant states:

> "So now, we are already seeing in the teacher training programs, future teachers with a slightly more critical spirit who are beginning to make question, etc. and they begin to propose in their degree projects alternative subjects, subjects no longer seeing language as instrumental as it was seen before. But it goes a little further, again epistemologically speaking. They already have a vision of language different from language as the object of study, but rather to consider language as a vehicle for creating new knowledge, for establishing social relationships and so on.... well, it is fortunate that there are such initiatives, but they are still isolated efforts in the different universities, but I would like it to be of general application." [sic] (INTVW 2)

State of Bilingualism in Colombia

During the interviews, participants recognized a wider understanding of what bilingualism means in education policies, beyond the relation of English and Spanish in the national curriculum. They also claimed the need to conceive Colombia as a bilingual, and plurilingual country, considering the indigenous languages that coexist in our territory. Thus, interviewee 2 harshly criticizes the simple concept of bilingualism upon which the government has based the creation of national linguistic policies:

> "The concept of bilingualism that was initially managed by the MEN was a misconception, so the concept of bilingual education wasn't also very successful (...) There are still problems with the goal of Colombia as a bilingual nation in a short time as a result of a decree or a law (...) We could say that Colombia is not a bilingual country when referring to English; and indeed, from the linguistic, from the epistemological point of view, Colombia is not a bilingual country but a multilingual, because here we cohabit with many other languages apart from Spanish. However, for certain representatives of the government indigenous languages are not even considered languages, they are sometimes regarded as exotic dialects… that is another way of invisibilizing." [sic] (INTVW 2)

This point of view is shared by other participants who claimed in their interviews that the English language, as a prestige language, cannot be the only solution to achieving bilingualism in Colombia. For example, Interviewee 3 illustrated it in the following way:

25

> "But why bilingualism in Spanish-English? Why a prestigious bilingualism? … I believe that the training of teachers must be extended to a more critical view of the conception of languages, so teachers should not assume themselves they are better than others are because they speak English, or because they know the prestige language. We must be binding in the languages and diversity of the population we have in our classrooms. We are not living a bilingualism. Even bilingual schools that define bilingualism from their practices, do not graduate bilingual children." [sic] (INTVW. 3)

In Colombia, English language proficiency levels in high schools are measured by means of standardized tests called *Pruebas Saber*, which have shown that these levels of Colombian students are lower or have stayed the same during the last years. For instance, Interviewee 9 asserts that there has not been a significant improvement in results from the implementation of the bilingualism programs in Colombia:

"Despite Colombia has a national bilingual program, Governmental quality tests, like ICFES which are aligned with British tests, demonstrate that the level of bilingualism remains the same before and after the National Program, or perhaps a little lower according to the results these last few years. It means that our concern would be to see how we can explain the phenomenon of minimum learning that occurred after the General Education Law which introduced English learning in primary school." [sic] (INTVW. 9)

Participants also stated that TLEFL arrived in Colombia because of globalization demands. Unfortunately, bilingualism programs do not deal with the necessities of the regions but rather they replicate foreign approaches. Interviewee 3 affirms:

"[When talking about the PNB] Almost every year we have a different goal, date, and name. Since 2000, a thousand projects have been created ... So, each time we are forced to change all that, and this has been reflected in the local politics; for example, *Machetá ⁴bilingual* or *Pacho bilingual*. Regions have tried to replicate these models at the local level. Then, English was given by means of globalization and replaced the teaching of other languages that once were important historically talking." [sic] (INTVW. 3)

This previous position goes hand in hand with what Usma Wilches (2009) points out: that the purpose of teaching and learning a language should not be to get out of poverty or solve economic problems – this brings an illusion of investment in English.

Regarding further education within the bachelor programs of Colombian universities, the situation seems to be similar to what is happening in public schools. According to Interviewee 9, despite the advancement that further education has had, we cannot affirm that all the students from bachelor programs in Colombia have a C1 level of English proficiency according to the CEFR or even a B2. There is a lot of research on this situation in national scientific journals, in which teachers' evidence a problem in fulfilling the policies established by the MEN for the Bachelor Teaching Programs. This interviewee affirms:

"For example, we have shown that, in the same colleges where we offer bachelor's degrees in the English or French language, we are failing to show that all the students acquire a language level that places them according to the CEFR, at least in a B2 level. But we do not know what to do when the ministry has drawn a standard that states students must graduate with a C1 level. I have had the opportunity to visit several colleges since 2005 for academic high-quality purposes and I

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⁴   Machetá is a town in Colombia in the department of Cundinamarca.

have not found any institution that shows that all its students are in C1 level, in the international standards exams, of course. In other bachelor programs, it is worse." [sic] (INTVW 9)

Nevertheless, participants are not completely negative about the results of the previous bilingualism programs the MEN has launched for the sake of improving the TLEFL in our country. Some of them highlight certain advancements, such as the inclusion of a compulsory foreign language in the national curriculum, a better level of English proficiency of teachers, a slight improvement in the level of English language of public school students, and an increase in hours in English classes, although they are not enough. However, they emphasize that there are some core problems that have not been solved. For example, Interviewee 10 states:

"The underlying problem has not been solved. There are many other vicissitudes that Colombia has. Public policy focused on making people speak English when people do not need it (...) and the peasants who are in Boyacá, Amazonas, among others, need another type of bilingualism. Here [in Bogotá] we teach English and Spanish, but those who live in Leticia that have a border with Brazil, they need bilingual tests in Portuguese. There is an interesting space of bilingualism called border bilingualism. So, Colombia needs to define the type of bilingualism." [sic] (INTVW. 10)

Discussion and Conclusions

In reference to the research question, what are the local epistemological perceptions that underlie the teaching and learning of EFL in Colombia nowadays, data analysis showed that the participants of this study and previous authors consider that there are still weaknesses in the definition of a didactic in EFL that addresses the real needs of the Colombian context (Guerrero, 2010; Guerrero & Maturana, 2011). In addition, the policies demonstrate that TLEFL are still permeated by economic and political interests. Regarding the epistemology of foreign language teaching, analysis demonstrates that Colombia has not escaped from the adoption of foreign models. Teaching and learning are seen as a weak and little explored field, characterized by a denotative function that makes teachers and learners consumers of information, leaving no space for teachers to develop an awareness of the hegemony of English (Cárdenas, 2006; González, 2010; Guerrero, 2010; Robayo-Acuña & Cárdenas, 2017).

27

According to the literature review (Rincón & Clavijo Olarte, 2016; Fandiño-Parra, 2014) and the perceptions of the interviewees, the way in which the teaching and learning of English is taught and conceived in our country has changed. In the previous century TLEFL was more understood as a deepening of the theoretical foundations of teaching; a fact that caused a great consumption of methodologies, approaches, and methods that came from foreign countries.

The teaching of English as a foreign language is now perceived as a practical and critical process. Experts in the field today advocate linking English learning with the real contexts and situations of students, whether political, social, or educational (Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Granados-Beltran, 2018a). There must be a collaborative work between foreign and national pedagogical practices to achieve a meaningful learning of the foreign language. In addition, for decades there has been a need to rethink the teaching and learning of English from a transdisciplinary point of view, but this concept is one of the aspects that requires new proposals regarding its development and inclusion in the classroom.

Teacher identity gives teachers the right to sustain who they are (Castañeda-Peña et al. 2016), so it is crucial teachers develop strategies by which they can construct new understandings of classroom practices and at the same time shape their identity based on their life's experiences. This perhaps is the most important capability that teachers need: to satisfy teaching necessities in a changing and disruptive world (Guerrero & Maturana, 2011).

A reiterative position from the participants of this study points out the necessity of having a dialogue and agreement between teachers and governmental representatives so that they can define policies that benefit Colombian citizens and not just economic sectors of the country. Ignoring experiences, identities, and complexities of the different learning contexts of our country becomes a relevant factor at the time of determining why policies, decrees, projects, and bilingualism plans have not gotten the results policymakers projected when English was enacted as the official language to be included in the National Education System. Additionally, it is compulsory to revise and redesign the language education policy, so it includes not only dominant and prestige languages, but also considers and plans an investment in achieving an equality among languages, be they foreign or native languages.

The interest in including English as a foreign language in the curriculum emerged thanks to the globalization movements in which the country has been immersed. This contributed to the diffusion of knowledge, which means the dominance of English as an international language, leaving aside the recognition of the cultural characteristics of our country, as well as the marginalization of communities and languages that exist in the territory. Apart from considering TLEFL in Colombia as a great world power, English has also been considered a basic good that confers prestige. This prestige of being proficient in English is a part of the symbolic capital. In this way, we intend to put on the agenda the possibility of conceptualizing the learning and teaching of foreign languages, and of any language in the national territory from an ecological position, for instance, which recognizes our multiculturalism, multilingualism, our rurality, and complexity.

Promoting continuous training for English teachers is necessary as well; training based on real learning contexts, a critical position towards theory and learning methods, and the promotion of situated learning of foreign languages. Regarding this idea, the participants

stated that pedagogical practices need to approach their programs with the heuristic development of the teacher. These practices must be based on teaching methods that will allow teachers to cope with the different aspects, issues, or necessities that diverse contexts can present.

Based on the theory and the findings, teachers are exhorted to carry out meaningful teaching practices and to raise awareness related to the construction of the self and knowledge. So, we settle the necessity of working on an epistemological reconstruction that involves, for example, the ecology of knowledge, that engage critical knowledges and practices, leaving apart the Eurocentric vision.

Finally, the authors reiterate the importance of this study when considering the period of validity of the present National Plan of Bilingualism, 2018-2022, presenting an updated state of the art of the current situations teachers and students face while teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Colombia. At the time of closing this article, Colombia and the entire world are under the effects of COVID 19, and this makes it mandatory to re-think new language policies.

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31

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Language Pedagogy and Identity. Learning from Teachers' Narratives in the Colombian ELT

Pedagogía de lengua e identidad. Aprendiendo de narrativas docentes en el ELT colombiano

Diego Fernando Ubaque-Casallas[1]

Abstract

This article examined two English teachers' professional identities based on a series of interviews conducted in two universities in Bogotá, Colombia. This paper examined their experiences and discourses regarding language pedagogy. Accordingly, the study adopted a narrative methodology from a decolonial lens to put some tension on the normative conception of the traditional/hegemonic notions of pedagogy and teacher identities configured in the Colombian English Language Teaching (ELT) context. Findings revealed that teachers enact their language pedagogies by merging their personal selves with their professional ones. As a result, identities and ways of knowing are validated in negotiation between doing and being. This posture towards teaching exposes their ontological and epistemic struggles for humanizing their pedagogy.

Keywords: language, narrative inquiry, pedagogy, teacher identity

Resumen

Este artículo examinó las identidades profesionales de dos profesores de inglés basándose en una serie de entrevistas realizadas en dos universidades en Bogotá, Colombia. El estudio examinó sus experiencias y discursos con respecto a su pedagogía de lengua. En consecuencia, el estudio adoptó un lente decolonial para poner cierta tensión en la concepción normativa de las nociones tradicionales / hegemónicas de pedagogía e identidad docente configuradas en el contexto de la enseñanza del idioma

33

1   He is a language teacher and teacher educator who currently works at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia. He holds an MA degree in applied linguistics to the teaching of English from Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.
dfubaquec@udistrital.edu.co
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8116-9163

inglés (ELT). Los hallazgos revelaron que los docentes promulgan sus pedagogías de lengua fusionando su yo personal con el profesional. Como resultado, las identidades y las formas de conocimiento se validan en la negociación entre hacer y ser. Esta postura hacia la enseñanza expone sus luchas ontológicas y epistémicas para humanizar su propia pedagogía.

Palabras clave: identidad docente, lenguaje, pedagogía, investigación narrativa

Introduction

There is an upsurge in recognizing the plurality and diversity of the ways of living, being, and thinking of English teachers (e.g., Montoya-López, Mosquera-Andrade & Peláez-Henao, 2020; Soto-Molina & Méndez, 2020; Ubaque-Casallas & Aguirre-Garzón, 2020; Ubaque-Casallas & Castañeda-Peña, 2020; Granados-Beltrán, 2016). Notably, the dominant ideology, epistemology, and knowledge-based methodology unquestioned for decades has started to be contested by local knowledges (Walsh, 2009) and ways of thinking and doing *otherwise*. In this respect, I believe that pedagogy is still a whole dimension for English language teaching (ELT), commonly understood as the approach to teaching. By extension, it has conditioned the pedagogical application of some principles merely to implement theories and practices of teaching in which conventional Western *pedagogy* views the teacher as a knowledge holder and the student as the recipient of that knowledge (Freire, 2008). The former evidences the dominance over language and language pedagogy in the ELT field. In fact, in the Colombian ELT context, curriculum and methodologies have dictated the formulas to guarantee a successful teaching practice (Quintero & Guerrero, 2010). This top-down approach has turned out in a vast category, the product of standardized assumptions of teaching (Magrini, 2014) that has served to validate an academic discourse in which "the construction and imposition of terminology reinforce and instill an inferiority complex in the minds of the subaltern." (Kumaravadivelu (2014, p. 12)

This immovable pedagogy has left aside personal theories and practices in which individuals reflect upon and experience different personal, social, political, and cultural realities. I believe there is still much complicity between those who propose the methods and theories of language teaching and we (teachers) who follow them without questioning the coercion, subjugation, and epistemic violence they abet. This assumption derives from my locus of enunciation (Grosfoguel, 2011) as a teacher educator. Departing from my own experience, I have found that some of the central ideologies of contemporary English language teaching have their origin in the constructions of colonialism. This has generated in a specific way the hegemonic construction of unique knowledge, an ideal being, and a universal way of doing that has diminished and weakened the agency's capacity, which is "a key factor to reduce inequalities" (Archanjo, Barahona & Finardi, 2019, p. 73) among whom we educate, and by whom we are educated.

With this assumption in mind, I think it is possible to propose a problematization of the teaching pedagogical practice and knowledge production by enabling the transformation of the discourse and relationships of inequality in the production of knowledge, in educational contexts where colonial and imperial histories (Andreotti, 2011) have been present. Hence, I directly address the ELT field, where most foundations regarding language teaching, learning, and professional identity are rooted in North/Western epistemologies (e.g., Borg, 2003; Johnson, 2006; Mitchell, 2014).

However, I do not intend to deny the fundamental significance brought forth by the implementation of methods and approaches in language teaching. Nevertheless, I aim to re-signify the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological principles to give coherence to a language pedagogy that revolves not only around the nature of the language. I intend to offer an ethical and aesthetic dimension from which the teacher gives meaning to teaching by enacting the possibilities of *being* and *doing* otherwise. Consequently, this study aims to provide a local understanding of language pedagogy in the ELT field. As such, far from opposing existing conceptions of professional identity and language pedagogy, it is interested in enriching existing knowledge regarding the subject of study. This is why data constructed by two teachers of English and reported in this manuscript intend to add a different glance towards a more diverse, local, and alternative vision of language pedagogy that continues to be permeated by a colonial legacy.

This study adopts a decolonial lens to analyze the normative conception of the traditional/hegemonic notion of language pedagogy and teacher identity configured in the ELT context. This assumption is quite essential as the study intends to transition from a critical to a decolonial epistemology/methodology in which both stories and experiences become "counter-narratives that [...] challenge the narratives of the master, modernity, eurocentrism, and coloniality" (Zabala, 2016, p. 3). I also attempt to promote a "local-to-local connection" (Veronelli, 2016, pp. 405-406) among those who are interested in finding an epistemological rupture in which "the subaltern community has to unfreeze and activate its latent agentive capacity" (Kumaravadivelu, 2016, pp. 80-81).

Theoretical Considerations

Notions about Colonial Knowledge

The coloniality of knowledge is a concept this study understands as (1) the power and the epistemic knowledge that has been Westernized (Grosfoguel, 2006) and (2) as the repression of other ways of producing knowledge separate from the white European scientific one (Walsh, 2005). Such coloniality then encapsulates the Euro-American model's dominance over English language teaching, in which language education programs have worked as

engines of coloniality (Shahjahan & Morgan 2015). Nonetheless, such subalternization can be explained due to the economic dominance over education models around the globe.

In Colombia, ELT's coloniality has been tailored and made evident by adopting the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) as the national standard. For instance, the alignment of the national exams Saber 11 and Saber Pro with the reference above, the untouched but not unquestioned instruction and training on methods in language education programs, and the Bilingualism Plans the Ministry of Colombia has been promoting as the only way for Colombian citizens to become competitive in the global market. This interest born inside the nation/state configuration has caused English language teaching worldwide to become regarded as apolitical, ahistorical, and devoid of any moral, cultural or ethical character (Pessoa & de Urzêda Freitas, 2012).

Taking into consideration that the ELT field is ideological as it reflects the interests of individuals or groups who are often in positions of power (Canagarajah, 2008), I want to approach such coloniality of knowledge by mapping local language pedagogies to enact a decolonial option (Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Mignolo, 2011) in matters of teaching. In doing so, I consider that not only can colonial notions of pedagogical knowledge be scrutinized, but they (notions) can also make visible those who are transgressing such colonial heritage by engaging in "ways of knowing which are alternative to occidental hegemony" (Alvarado, 2015, p. 110).

Pedagogy in Language Pedagogy

Western / American ways of knowing have influenced how teachers construct their knowledge and identities. The dominant educational practices in the Colombian ELT setting are based on a monolithic, top-down discourse (Cárdenas, González, & Álvarez, 2010) evident in both Teacher Education Programs (TEPs) and the paradigms that underpin them. As Freire and Macedo (2003) put it, such a discourse creates a culture of silence that, I believe, ends up instrumentalizing English language teaching associating indoctrination and ideological imposition over ways of knowing and doing. There have always been theoretical roots in English language teaching, in which particular emphasis on the absorption of methods and methodologies has been a trend (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Most TEPs in Colombia, if not all, instruct student-teachers in mastering theoretical and practical knowledge where language pedagogy is not the exception (Cárdenas, González, & Álvarez, 2010).

Here, I think it is relevant then to refer to the concept of method since it has been regarded as a "colonial construct of marginality" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 541) and, as a result, has become the theoretical principle by which many teaching practices are governed. Regarding this claim, it cannot be denied that language teaching methodologies have had a considerable influence on how English is taught. In Colombia, this influence has been made

evident in (1) the training workshops offered by international publishing houses (Cárdenas et al., 2010); (2) the extensive and insistent bilingual policies the Ministry of Education imposes (Gómez-Sará, 2017); and (3) by the best practices, usually designed by center-based experts, that supposedly guarantee excellent results. Nevertheless, these approaches have created, as I see it, an incomplete perspective over language pedagogy.

According to Granados-Beltrán (2018):

It is focused on the meeting of standards, which represent a certain level of acquisition of that skill. However, language pedagogy has an ethical goal that goes into the construction of inter-subjective meanings that help us both to understand ourselves and others in the interest of better societies. (p. 175)

I echo this former notion in which language pedagogy has to go beyond the mastering of skills as "pedagogy without a modifier is an official pedagogy, at the service of the political and economic system that sustains, promotes and also drops it in favor of more "efficient" occupations" (Palermo, 2014, p. 4). I argue that *language pedagogy*, in the Colombian ELT field, needs to detach itself from the "educational theories, values, evidence, and justifications of what one needs to know" (Alexander, 2008, p. 47) to become a more personal response to exist in the history, context, and reality where teaching occurs. With this, I mean to advocate for a language pedagogy that not only follows theoretical principles or a set of procedures but also, and mainly, that it be an extension of the personal epistemology and ontology of the teacher of English. In pursuing this, I aim to construct a language pedagogy that can be "understood as an essential methodology within and for social, political, ontological, and epistemic struggles for liberation (Walsh, 2013, p. 29).

Although this abovementioned definition is aligned with Freire's (1972) notion of pedagogy, I would like to add other realms in which pedagogy is perceived in a broader sense:

As something given, as in handed, revealed; as in breaking through, transgressing, disrupting, displacing, inverting inherited concepts and practices, those psychic, analytic, and organizational methodologies we deploy to know what we believe we know to make different conversations and solidarities possible; as both [an] epistemic and ontological project bound to our beingness (Alexander, 2006, p. 22).

Then, to cohere with those above, I believe that in ELT, it cannot be denied that there are evidentiary colonial roots that have made language pedagogy become detached from the ethical goal Granados-Beltrán (2018) talked about. Therefore, as "knowledge is both foundational and fundamental to any attempt at imagining a future that is fundamentally different from the present" (Ndlovu, 2018, p. 95), legitimizing local knowledges and ways of knowing, being, and doing seems essential to re-signify what we understand as language pedagogy in the ELT field.

37

HOW Vol 28, No. 2, July/December 2021–ISSN 0120-5927. Bogotá, Colombia. Pages: 33-52

Consequently, it seems relevant not to oppose existing theoretical and methodological principles in ELT but to enrich language pedagogy by regarding Colombian teachers of English not just as consumers of *one type of knowledge* but as intellectuals who can exercise their epistemological agency. Therefore, based on teachers' construction of practical and theoretical understanding of their reality as Colombian teachers of English, I would like to think of language pedagogy as a space in which knowing, doing, and becoming reflect modes of collective re-existence that might end up in the configuration of new horizons towards the decolonial.

Identities in English Language Teachers

Identity is "both contingent and relational. In other words, "who we are as humans varies according to who we are talking to, where, and for what purposes" (Vásquez, 2011, p. 539). In fact, as teacher identity is a complex but fragmented construction that involves agency, emotions, meaning systems, and the self (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), the identity of a teacher enacts many practices that depart from their personal beliefs of teaching, being, and doing. This is what makes identity a more complicated term to define. Among some definitions that popped up in the literature I consulted, not only is teacher identity maintained and negotiated through language and discourse (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005), but it is also a dynamic and complex process marked by internal and external factors (Bloomfield, 2010). For instance, Barkhuizen (2017) attempted to conceptualize language teacher identities (LTIs). For him:

> LTIs are cognitive in that language teachers constantly strive to make sense of themselves [...] LTIs are also cognitive because they concern teachers' beliefs, theories, and philosophies about language teaching, and they relate to both content and pedagogical knowledge. LTIs are also obviously social. they are enacted, constructed, negotiated, and projected with others - language learners, teacher colleagues, administrators, and policymakers - within both local (e.g., in the classroom) and more global contexts (e.g., the language teaching profession). (p. 4)

Although these definitions have helped me understand what teacher identity might be, these could not fully account for language teacher identities in the Colombian setting. Since being a teacher is a complex activity in which any social being is unique with individual differences (Burns & Richards, 2009), this means that language teacher identities must also depart from "the geo-political and body-political location of the subject that speaks" (Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 5).

Hence, within the Colombian research field, Castañeda-Peña (2018) highlights that "English language teaching and learning identities are more oriented towards that goal of identifying decontextualized forms of being in the field of teaching, where there is a single and monolithic idea of the language teacher and a single and fixed idea of the language

student" (p. 18). This assumption is critical since it supports the premise that just a single type of existence has been allowed in teaching and learning English. This means that a dominant way of existing as an English teacher and, by extension, as an English learner persists (Castañeda-Peña, 2018). Then, this ontological form of colonization and subalternization of being continues to be reproduced through discourses of professional identity linked either to epistemes from the North/West (see Block, 2006; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004) or to notions of recognition from terms such as English Teachers who continue to impose a notion of marginalization in the ELT field. A widespread ideology has privileged native speakers as superior in language learning and teaching (Holliday, 2005).

Paradoxically, even in praxis, LTIs have been relegated to function, from the very conception of language, as a "tool of domination, conquest, and colonization" (García, 2019, p. 152). As a result, there is a state of unconsciousness and passivity regarding teacher identity. For this reason, this study highlights that as teachers build an understanding of who they are in their professional context, their teaching identity is relevant due to their connection with teaching and learning (Izadinia, 2013). Therefore, LTIs could be best understood if language pedagogies are mapped not just to approach the routinization of practice (Schön, 1983) but to include a moment of reflection on the position of ontological hegemony over identity and pedagogy.

Methodology

This study adopts a narrative design (Moen, Gudmundsdottir & Flem, 2003) to approach, via narrative interviews, Lucas' and Patrick's experiences regarding language pedagogy. Since I regard narratives as "the primary scheme by which human existence is rendered meaningful" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 1), I cannot detach myself from a personal assumption in which I decide to focus on how Lucas and Patrick assign meaning to the stories they share with me. Consequently, I commit to using narrative research as a tool to position their and my own political, social, ethical, and *epistemic project of knowledge* if we consider the colonial structures, conditions of power, and epistemic impositions.

Within the methodological responsibility this study assumes, there is a commitment to break the chain of epistemic unconsciousness, which has been tied to methodological interventions in which I also recognize a colonizing genealogy (Patel, 2019); "a matter not considered by intra-European hermeneutics centered on its corresponding methodological proposals with universal scope" (Borsani, 2014, p. 162). It is for this reason that the methodological proposal set forth here looks for an alterative conversation (Ortiz-Ocaña & Arias-López, 2019) that seeks to abandon the claim of "investigative subjectivation" (Haber, 2011) and instead worries about making it clear that teachers of English, as colonized subjects, are capable of managing their pedagogy. In this sense, narrative research becomes

39

a tool to ensure "that the subordinate can speak" (Mendoza, 2016, p. 112). Such an alterative conversation allows me to move from a critical to a more decolonial perspective in which such a research methodology becomes my decolonial doing as a researcher.

Consequently, assuming that each conversation is a narrative *in, from, and about* life, I echo Stone-Mediatore (2003, p. 150), who explains that:

> Telling their own stories enables them (the narrator) to claim epistemic authority as well as to counter the objectified, dehumanized representations of them circulated by others. Narratives that probe ways to articulate and situate unspoken tensions in everyday life can transform experience, helping those of us who have been reduced to victim to claim agency.

Context of the Study and Participants

Two teachers of English who work at well-known universities in Bogotá, Colombia, shared their teaching experiences in this study. Lucas and Patrick (*not their real names*) participated in a six-month study to collect their narratives regarding their pedagogies of teaching in the university contexts where they work. Both hold an MA in Applied Linguistics to TEFL and have more than twelve years of experience teaching English in multiple and varied educational contexts in Colombia. They were invited to converse in this study as they are active members of the local ELT community in Colombia and have provided relevant knowledge on language pedagogy. Something worth documenting in this study.

Data Construction and Analysis

As a narrative is a way of accessing knowledge (Domínguez & Herrera, 2011), I did not look for a process of data collection. Instead, I tried to work on a data construction process from which I could access narrative knowledge. This process started with the conversations I engaged in with Lucas and Patrick. In this process, I positioned myself in what Ortiz-Ocaña and Arias López (2019) denote as Communal Contemplating. This can be understood as the intention of trying to configure a "decolonial feeling-listening-experiencing-observing, a collective listening-perceiving-observing" (p. 10), in which *other* knowledge can emerge since those who participate in conversation do not seek an authoritative position. In doing so, I acknowledged that my positioning was not intended to abstract information from those with whom I was conversing, but instead, I was trying to configure their and my subjectivity by engaging in an Alterative Conversation (Ortiz-Ocaña & Arias-López, 2019) in which "the comprehensive conceptual configurations, the wisdoms - "other" knowledge - are forged" (Walsh, 2013, p. 138). In fact, as conversations with Lucas and Patrick proposed a dialogue about identities, language pedagogies, and their vestige of coloniality in which, according to Grosfoguel (2010), it is necessary to seek not the breaking of the link between the subject of the enunciation, but its positioning within "the colonial power/knowledge structures from

which the subject speaks" (p. 459), they were not subjected to respond to a particular prompt, nor did they receive guidelines to engage in conversation. Instead, they were invited to talk about their pedagogical practices as these were striving to recover pedagogy in language as a mechanism of unlearning, learning, and relearning (Escobar-Gómez, 2019). Finally, I moved into a Configurative Reflection mode to problematize practices, knowledge, and feelings (Ortiz-Ocaña & Arias-López, 2019), functioning as a system of meaning in the experiences shared. This became not only an ethical endeavor in which Lucas and Patrick were invited to read the subjective essence of our conversations but the thing that allowed me to disclose and reveal the intimacy of our conversations in this manuscript.

Findings

Experiences reported hereafter configure the analytical lens to understand language pedagogies after observing, feeling with, and listening to Lucas and Patrick. I consider it worth mentioning that the attempt made in the following memories/narratives was to focus on "the knower rather than on the known" (Mignolo, 2009, p. 4), and as such, the analysis below is one of listening to know what they have to say, and understanding what is said in order not to fall into an extractivist methodology limited to coding or categorizing their experiences.

My Conversation with Lucas

Lucas is a teacher of English who currently works for a private university in Bogotá, Colombia. Lucas has more than 25 years of experience and has worked in various BA programs in which he has acquired vast experience teaching diverse populations. Lucas, for the last 12 years, has been interested in working with pre-service teachers. During this time, he has been able to reconstruct his own identity as a teacher of English and has been able to position himself as a language pedagogy teacher: "I do not really see myself as an English teacher now, I see myself as a teacher of pedagogy perhaps more than an English teacher," he states. The aforementioned is quite interesting as research suggests that identity construction is a socially legitimated process where individuals interpret themselves as a particular person within a specific context (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004). Nonetheless, Lucas narrates his professional persona underlying the interweaving relation between his identity and his practice.

For Lucas, the main reason why he now sees himself more as a language pedagogy teacher is the fact that he builds his professional identity on four keywords. The first one:

> *Bueno, yo en realidad no me veo como profesor de inglés ahora, yo me veo como profesor de pedagogía tal vez más que profesor de inglés. Pero yo creo, como que me definen cuatro palabras, en una cápsula narrativa por*

41

decirlo de alguna manera yo pensaría en cuatro palabras. La primera, como que creo que es la palabra y su poder transformador, yo como docente siento que, gran parte de mi profesión es por la calidad de la palabra y el uso que hago de la misma ya que yo trato de establecer relaciones más amenas con los estudiantes no solo de -yo lo sé, yo les digo- mi poder como profesor no está en lo que impongo, está en cómo me relaciono más justamente. Por eso lo que hago, como lo hago, lo que leemos, busca esto que te acabo de decir. [2]

Lucas seems to engage in the construction of his own professional identity based on more open relationships. Such an agency opens new possibilities to advance in reflections toward other possible ways of knowing in the ELT field that move away from English instruction's colonial histories. For example, Buchanan (2015) underlines that there is a mutual relationship between one's professional agency and professional identity:

An individual's professional agency is reciprocally related to his or her professional identity. As teachers construct an understanding of who they are within their school and professional context, they take actions that they believe align with that construction. Those actions (and how the actions are perceived by others) then [provide] feedback into the ongoing identity construction process. (p. 704)

Now, Lucas' use of the language is essential for establishing more dialogical/open relationships with students. In this respect, although Lucas acknowledges holding some power, it is more constructed than imposed (Ramos, 2004). Importantly, although colonial histories have become a critical concern within TESOL (Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Motha, 2014), power has been regarded, mainly, from a canonical disciplinary lens. However, Lucas challenges colonial ways of thinking about power and identity when choosing not to continue reproducing hegemonic teacher-student relationships within the EFL classroom. Legitimately, Lucas engages in a decolonial pedagogical bio praxis in which his thinking and doing as a teacher consider "the other" and thus avoid subalternization. According to Ortiz-Ocaña, Arias-López, and Pedrozo-Conedo (2018), "the decolonial pedagogical bio praxis are expressed, manifested and materialized [...] in teaching, in learning and in evaluating" (p. 215). Lucas' pedagogical bio praxis mainly made evident his decision of feeling, thinking, and acting otherwise (Ortiz-Ocaña, 2017) in his teaching practice.

The second word Lucas uses to define his professional self is patience.

La segunda, que es un asunto de paciencia. Yo creo que es una habilidad que he venido trabajando a través de los años y es una paciencia entendida no sólo como el hecho de que yo tengo que saber escuchar lo que las

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[2]   Well, I do not really see myself as an English teacher now. I see myself as a pedagogy teacher more than an English teacher. However, I think of four words that define who I am..., in a narrative capsule, to put it somehow, I would think of four words. The first one is word. I think it is the word and its transforming power. As a teacher, I feel that a large part of my profession is due to the quality of the words and the use I make of them since I try to establish more pleasant relationships with the students not just - I know, I tell them - My power as a teacher is not in what I impose, it is in how I relate more fairly with them. That is why what I do, how I do it, what we read, aims to achieve what I just told you.

*demás personas me dicen para poder interactuar efectivamente con ellos. Sin entender que los procesos de
aprendizaje son de un tiempo informado y de un tiempo invertido, pues no puedo enseñar nada. Para mí eso
es la paciencia para entender los tiempos y los tiempos invertidos de la gente en cualquiera de sus actividades,
quienes son, lo que son[3].*

Patience seems to be a relevant category upon which to build his own professional
identity. The fact that Lucas is aware of the importance of listening to interact with students
evidences his effort "to amplify the voices, experiences, and histories of students often
erased in the classroom" (Silva, 2018, p. 375), a practice of subalternization teachers may
engage in when imposing power relationships in the classroom (Gutierrez, 2016), either
consciously or unconsciously.

Lucas give evidence that neutrality and objectivity in teaching seem not to be an option
since we always speak from a particular location within global structures (Anzaldua, 2009;
Mignolo, 2007). As such, nobody escapes "the class, sexual, gender, spiritual, linguistic,
geographical, and racial hierarchies of the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-
system" (Grosfoguel, 2008, p. 2) that we seem to touch upon in the pedagogical praxis.

The third word Lucas uses is conviction.

*La tercera sería como una convicción como una especie de carisma. Yo pienso que en el trabajo de la docencia es
muy importante ver las cosas no siempre desde mi ángulo de aprendizaje, sino desde los ángulos de aprendizaje
de los demás. Si miro solo desde lo que creo pues sería enseñarme a mí mismo. [4]*

Lucas offers a lens to approach a language pedagogy *other* from the regular canon in the
ELT. This epistemic/practical disobedience is what Mignolo (2009) argues as being the one
way to shift the geography of reason and decolonize knowledge. For those reading this article,
by epistemic disobedience, Mignolo means to de-link from the Western epistemological
assumption through which the world is built. In his words:

All knowledges are situated, and every knowledge is constructed. The question is: who, when,
why is constructing knowledges? Why did euro centered epistemology conceal its own geo-histo-
rical and biographical locations and succeed in creating the idea of universal knowledge as if the
knowing subjects were also universal? This illusion is pervasive today in the social sciences, the

43

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[3]   The second one is patience. Teaching is a matter of patience. I believe that it is a skill that I have been
       working on over the years, and patience is understood not only as the fact that I have to know how to listen
       to what other people tell me to be able to interact effectively with them. Without understanding that the
       learning processes are of an informed time and an invested time, I cannot teach anything. For me, that is the
       patience I talk about. Patience to understand the times and times invested by people in their activities, who
       they are, what they are.

[4]   The third would be conviction. It would mean a kind of charisma. I think that in teaching, it is vital to see
       things not always from my learning angle but others' learning angles. If I only look at what I believe, it would
       be like teaching myself.

humanities, the natural sciences...epistemic disobedience means to delink from the illusion of the zero-point epistemology. (Mignolo, 2009, p.160)

Then, Lucas echoes such epistemic disobedience by being a teacher who does not conform to the disciplinary-based instruction traditionally framed by teachers' knowledge and a grand colonial narrative in which linguistic and procedural knowledge have been the central tenet (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012). He devises ways to not only incorporate his learning perspective but to add his students'. I believe Lucas's acting evidences a way of doing *otherwise* and positions knowledge that distances itself from the disciplinary canon in ELT.

Walsh (2007), for example, affirms that knowledge has value, color, and a place of origin, which, in Latin America, is evident "in the maintenance of Eurocentrism as the only or at least the most hegemonic dominant perspective of knowledge" (p. 28). Remarkably, ELT keeps on neglecting or at least relegating the thinking of the localized epistemes that, as in Lucas' case, act otherwise to draw a framework for strategic plans in which student-teachers can recover their agency.

The last word Lucas uses to define his professional self is love.

> *Y la última, yo creo que es, yo creo que es un amor por mis estudiantes, un amor por el inglés, yo creo sobre todo a través de los años, el inglés se convirtió en una herramienta de trabajo, pero ya no lo es. Mi inglés es un asunto ya constitutivo, en la manera de mi ADN cultural entonces ya como que, yo veo el inglés como una manera de extender ese amor.* [5]

Here, although scholars such as Kaur, Yuen, and Kaur (2011) claim that an effective teacher needs to master at least two types of basic knowledge: content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, being the former an extension of disciplinary knowledge, Lucas adds one big relevant category of personal pedagogical knowledge. For Lucas, love is embedded in his own self. As such, this category is not conceived in the North/Western canon of professional identity or pedagogy. Therefore, Lucas' envisions and enacts a more human language pedagogy in which to be human is to exist with and for others (Latini, 2009), a claim in which teaching "must involve a love of the world and of other human beings" (Shakouri & Ogholgol, 2013).

My Conversation with Patrick

Patrick is a teacher of English who currently works for a public university in Bogotá, Colombia. Patrick has more than 20 years of experience and has worked in various BA

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[5] The last one is love. I think it is love for my students, love for English. Above all, I believe English became a working tool through the years, but it is not anymore. My English is already a constitutive issue. It is my cultural DNA. It influences how I see English as a way to extend that love.

programs. Patrick has recently been working on opening an intercultural path for those student-teachers who wish to learn to teach the language. In our conversation, Patrick shared his experience as a teacher of English with me, arguing that he has witnessed the adoption of different methodological perspectives to educate future teachers for several years. Such perspectives have moved from an interest in applying a task-based approach to now being interested in exercising intercultural pedagogies to promote a globalized agenda in ELT.

From our conversation, Patrick evidences his frustration: *"teaching is a complex task, [...] it is at times frustrating"*, he states. Frustration results from the hegemonic impositions that have emerged as teaching parameters in the educational context where he has worked for the last 12 years. Certain impositions are especially evident in the implantation of pedagogical discourses.

> *Bueno, la mayoría de los estudiantes que tenemos en los pregrados de licenciaturas en lenguas, digámoslo así, están en los estratos dos, tres y algunos tendrán estrato cuatro. son estudiantes que vienen con ideales de aprender inglés, más no de ser profesores. Es decir, hay muy pocos que consideran eso como una opción, no lo llamaría vocación. Es complejo a la hora de insistirles en la idea de querer ser docentes o de ver la lengua no solo como eso que van a enseñar. Es decir, ellos quieren aprender y desean hablar y entonces están interesados en el lenguaje, pero en las materias de contenido, relacionadas con pedagogía, didáctica de una lengua, no lo toman en serio.[6]*

Patrick shares that some methodological/disciplinary impositions have led him to ethical and intellectual cynicism when he ends up doing what he must. In this respect, Ubilla (2004) claims that "apparently there is only the possibility of accepting the reality as it is, even if it involves marginalization, impoverishment and exclusion" (p. 65). These ideological, methodological, and even practical impositions have distanced teaching practices from the possibility of intercultural dialogue with other types of knowledge external to such impositions.

I believe that at this point, I could refer to a conceptual reference that addresses a notion of decolonial pedagogy in Patrick's experience. It starts from criticizing some instrumental categories of teaching in which the imperial West's ideologies and epistemologies (Kumaravadivelu, 2012) are still part of the imagination of those who educate and the ones educated to become English teachers. However, when Patrick narrates to deconstruct the canonical discourse in ELT, not only does he engage in a "deliberate attempt to develop a language of critique that enables colonized peoples to understand their present situation as

45

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[6] Most of the students in the undergraduate degrees in languages, let us put it like this, are in strata two, three, and some will have stratum four. They are students who come with ideals of learning English but not of being teachers. There are very few who consider teaching as an option; I would not call it a vocation. It is complex when it comes to insisting on becoming teachers or seeing the language not only as what they are going to teach. They want to learn and want to speak, so they are interested in language. However, in content matters related to pedagogy, didactics of a language, they do not take it seriously.

encircled by colonialism and its structural arrangements and cultural logics" (Zavala, 2016, p. 3), but he also reveals his epistemological positioning about language.

In conversing about his experience, Patrick commits to reclaim who he is as a teacher of English.

> *Desde que yo empecé a ser docente me motivó mucho el cambiar prácticas que tenían docentes conmigo. Entonces yo tuve profesores en la Universidad y uno siempre los considera buenos y malos. Cuando comencé a enseñar me di cuenta de que para ser profesor uno no tiene que ser ni bueno ni malo, sino tiene que ser lo que debe ser, que es, tratar de formar a personas. A veces recuerdo las palabras de un de un rector de un colegio donde trabajé que decía: "lo importante no es llegar, dictar su materia e irse" Dejar el contenido ahí, creo que la mayoría hasta de pronto lo hacemos. Tengo una concepción de la docencia, lo importante es formar personas y a mí me interesa formar personas, y en la universidad lo que les digo es "formar personas y profesionales" y formar personas y profesionales son como esa concepción de que deben ser personas íntegras que le aporten a la sociedad. Yo me veo como eso, como una persona que trata de aportar a la sociedad al máximo[7].*

Patrick's positioning is quite relevant if we want to portray pedagogies *otherwise*. To reach any level of pedagogy that distances itself from North/Western influences, we must first "decolonize our minds" (Phillipson, 2008, p. 39), and therefore identify hegemonic impositions of English (Macedo, 2017). As such, I believe Patrick's doing reflects this, but it also reflects his pedagogical purpose. Interestingly, I could then refer not to a functional pedagogy embedded into positivist rationality but to a more fragmentary pedagogy that emerges from a holistic logic of knowing (Ortiz & Salcedo, 2014) in which closed, rigid, and dominant dogmatic discourses are put down through Patrick's professional agency.

To give closure to my conversation with Patrick, I must say that I understand his language pedagogy as one that configures "horizons of theorizing, thinking, doing, being, feeling, looking and listening - individually and collectively - towards the decolonial" (Walsh, 2013, p. 67). As his pedagogy confronts the monologue of modern/Western/colonial reason in ELT, there is an evident insurgency and intervention that encourages the transgression and displacement of ontological, epistemic impositions that have been present in teaching practices till now.

46

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[7] Since I started teaching, I was very motivated to change practices that teachers had with me. So I had professors at the university, and you always consider them good and bad. When I started teaching, I realized that to be a teacher, you do not have to be good or bad. You have to be what you should be, which is, try to train people. Sometimes I remember the words of a principal of a school where I worked who said: "the important thing is not to arrive, dictate your subject and leave." Leave the content there. I think most of us do it suddenly. I have a conception of teaching; the important thing is to educate people, and I am interested in educating people. In the university, what I tell them is "to educate people and professionals" and to educate people and professionals are like that conception that they should be people of integrity who contribute to society. I see myself as that, as a person who tries to contribute to society to the maximum.

Conclusions

No language pedagogy is neutral. Therefore, as no "approach towards ELT is free of ideology" (Benesch 1993, p. 707), this study also poses ideological and epistemological conclusions that have to be regarded as initiators of a more profound discussion in the field. Furthermore, the conclusions presented hereafter do not intend to serve as local guidelines to decolonize language pedagogy. However, these should function as a bridge for those who, as I, are interested in investigating the establishment of a global narrative of English language supremacy and hegemony (Macedo, 2017) in Colombian ELT. Therefore, the following conclusions configure my liberatory act as a teacher-researcher (Freire, 1998).

Language pedagogy in the Colombian ELT context emphasizes the acquisition of linguistics and procedural knowledge of the language. Unquestionably, not only has this led to a "de-professionalization of language teachers who become consumers rather than producers of knowledge" (Granados-Beltrán, 2018, p. 179), but it has also provoked a universalization of pedagogy in which Colombian teachers of English have become carriers of specific political and strategic intent (not always necessarily consciously). They have served to maintain the colonial architecture of English language teaching in which pedagogy is a colonial political praxis (Madge, Raghuram, & Noxolo, 2009). However, as narratives shared in this study hold it up, language pedagogy also implies constant care for the other. For instance, Lucas evidenced that teaching is about listening to others; it is about loving.

Language pedagogy, seen from the conversations with Patrick, challenges dominant structures of knowledge production. Although the imposition of methods and methodologies over ELT teaching has legitimized a very narrow range of knowledge, most of it instrumental, Patrick evidenced that his pedagogical practice is imbued with decolonial strategies that intend to enable his agency as a teacher of English. We learn that to achieve a closer look at how language pedagogies can become decolonial strategies, it is necessary to change the set of relations that marginalize the language teaching practice from our language and learning conceptions. Then, we must wonder what our theory of language is in order to enact our conception of language and make it evident in pedagogical activities that carry our own epistemic beliefs. It is relevant that we know how it happens in class and to what extent language and learning turn into what Mignolo' (2007) labels as a grammar of decoloniality. As a result, it could be possible or at least feasible to dismantle binaries and hegemonic practices that determine academic knowledge in the ELT field that have imprisoned our own identities as English language teachers. After all, education is a modern institution that, regardless of what our ethical stances are, can install oppression (Patel, 2019).

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HOW

Pre-Service English Language Teachers' Levels of Reflectivity during the Process of Identity Construction in Pedagogical Practicum: A Snowball?

Niveles de reflexividad de los profesores de inglés en formación durante el proceso de construcción de identidad en la práctica pedagógica: ¿Una bola de nieve?

Angélica Pita-Castro[1]
Alicia Castiblanco-Rincón[2]

Abstract

This research study is about the way pre-service English language teachers' levels of reflectivity, proposed by Van Manen, give an account of the construction of their identity as language teachers during their pedagogical practicum in a BA program of English Language Teaching at a private university in Bogota, Colombia. This study follows the principles of narrative research to explore the way the participants live their pedagogical practicum experience. Data were collected from the participants' reflective journals and audio-recorded semi-structured interviews. Findings reveal that pre-service English language teachers possess a level of reflectivity, although they are unaware of it at the beginning of their pedagogical practicum. Thus, their identities as language teachers are constructed depending on the context, the people that are around them, and the specific time; hence, the levels of reflectivity as proposed by Van Manen are set in an incognito manner.

[1]   She studied a BA Languages program at La Salle University in Bogotá, Colombia. She is in process to be certificate in an ELE program at Universidad Externado de Colombia. She is working in a homeschool program in a private school in Bogotá.
apita74@unisalle.edu.co
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9905-6263

[2]   She studied a BA Languages program at La Salle University in Bogotá, Colombia. She is working in a private school at Villavicencio, Meta.
ycastiblanco64@unisalle.edu.co
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3782-1905

53

Angélica Pita-Castro,
Alicia Castiblanco-Rincón

Resumen

Esta investigación trata de la manera en que los niveles de reflexión, propuestos por Van Manen, de los profesores de inglés en formación dan cuenta de la construcción de su identidad como profesores de idiomas durante su práctica pedagógica en un Programa de Licenciatura en Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés en una universidad privada de Bogotá, Colombia. Este estudio sigue los principios de la investigación narrativa para explorar la forma en que los estudiantes viven su experiencia de la práctica pedagógica. Los datos se recopilaron utilizando los diarios reflexivos de los profesores de inglés en formación participantes y las entrevistas semiestructuradas grabadas en audio. Los hallazgos revelan que los profesores de inglés en formación tienen un nivel de reflexión, aunque lo desconocen al inicio de su práctica pedagógica. Así, sus identidades como profesores de idiomas se construyen en función del contexto, las personas que los rodean y el momento concreto; ambientando de forma incógnita los niveles de reflexión propuestos por Van Manen.

Palabras clave: construcción de identidad, educación en lenguaje, niveles de reflexividad, práctica pedagógica, profesor en formación.

Introduction

Throughout time, language teacher identity changes as it is constructed in the way education flows (Beijaard, 1995; Olsen, 2008). This identity is created and developed along the teaching process (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). Nowadays, language teacher identity has received attention in the field of language education around the world. The process of constructing a language teacher identity entails many influences and factors such as social and historical contexts, emotions, beliefs, traditions, as well as job and life experiences, among many others (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Miller, 2009). With those influences, teachers usually create and (re-) construct their own identity, or identities, as a language teacher.

A good example in which those different influences take place is pedagogical practicum. For the context of BA programs of English language teaching, this space helps pre-service teachers to put theory and practice together (Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernandez, 2018; Lucero & Roncancio-Castellanos, 2019). Hence, it is in this space where pre-service teachers find varied social problematics in teaching that they did not expect, and that have them reflect on what it is to be a teacher and what decisions to make in the classroom. As Castañeda-Peña, Rodriguez-Uribe, Salazar-Sierra, and Chala-Bejarano (2016) say, classroom management, confidence, and experience configure the decisions that pre-service teachers make for lesson delivery. Pedagogical practicum is then the most important moment for pre-service teachers since this space greatly helps them construct their identity(ies) as language teachers. Emotions and reactions upon which they reflect from/on their teaching experiences during pedagogical practicum are a fundamental part in that identity construction.

Likewise, reflection during pedagogical practicum gives pre-service teachers more information to analyze both what they do and are in the classroom, as well as how and why they do it (Castañeda-Trujillo, 2019; Lucero & Roncancio-Castellanos, 2019). For instance, the more they pay attention to their students' needs, the more they can be able to think of and develop different activities for the students to learn in their own ways.

In addition, reflection helps pre-service teachers to think critically about the language teaching method and methodology that they use. As Kumaravadivelu (2008) affirms,

> I consistently use a method to refer to established methods conceptualized and constructed by experts in the field (see text to come). I use the term, methodology, to refer to what practicing teachers do in the classroom to achieve their stated or unstated teaching objectives. (p. 84)

In our point of view, this affirmation means that pre-service teachers can follow a particular method, but when they apply it in a language class, it can change due to different factors (student attitude, environment, teacher's explanation, etc.). Eventually, the methodology (putting the method into action) changes to achieve teaching objectives. When this happens, pre-service teachers may start to reflect on the characteristics that they possess as language teachers. This delineates constant and valuable moments for the construction of their own identity as language teachers.

Identity is the sense that a person has of her/his self as an individual, including the person's self-awareness. Also, the notion of teacher identity highlights the individual characteristics of a teacher and how these are integrated with contextual possibilities and factors found in the content and methods of a specific field, as these are realized in specific contexts of teaching (Pennington & Richards, 2016).

Within concrete contexts, teacher identity is constructed from social and personal perspectives (Jiménez-Castañeda, 2013; Olsen, 2008). According to Clark and Flores (2001), Miller (2009), Richards (2009), and Beauchamp and Thomas (2011), social perspectives involve the influences of the context, traditions, experiences, social interactions, culture, working context, curriculum, policies, teaching resources, and access to professional development. Meanwhile, personal perspectives include feelings, emotions, self-reflection, biography, and gender, among others.

55

All these personal and social factors are joined and cause changes in identity construction. Language teachers have the possibility to shape their identities in those changes. Therefore, social and personal interactions occupy an important place in helping teachers develop their identity as language teachers (Glotova & Wilhelm, 2014; Lucero, 2020). Besides, the emotional part complements the teacher's identity. After all, teaching involves intellectual and emotional components. In many cases, the latter component, the emotional, is the most influential (Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

In this project, we concentrate on the personal perspective, working on the self-reflection proposed in Van Manen's theory (1977). In this theory, he explained three levels of reflectivity: technical rationality, practical action, and critical reflection. These three levels should be analyzed from/during past teaching events to improve the class in the future. We consider pedagogical practicum to influence the process to construct the identity of English language pre-service teachers as we know, "The development of a teacher identity is an intersection of different experiences and social interactions within the self, the family unit, the cultural community, and the schooling process" (Clark & Flores, 2001, p. 70). We assume the construction of pre-service English language teachers' identity as a dynamic and complex process.

By considering the levels of reflectivity from Van Manen's perspective and the process of identity construction, the present study seeks to identify the pre-service English language teachers' levels of reflectivity during their pedagogical practicum in the BA program; then, to determine the manner in which their levels of reflectivity give an account of the construction of their identity as language teachers during this stage.

Conceptual Framework

Levels of Reflectivity

This concept refers to Van Manen's (1977) three levels of reflectivity: technical, practical, and critical. In Table 1 below, each level of reflectivity is defined. In unison, these three levels analyze past teaching events to improve a class in the future.

Table 1. *Van Manen's Levels of Reflectivity*

Levels of Reflectivity	Definition
Technical Rationality (TR)	• The teacher is concerned with the technical application of knowledge and basic curriculum principles (i.e., are the students on task?).
Practical Action (PA)	• The teacher becomes more concerned with clarifying assumptions while addressing educational consequences (i.e., if and how are goals being met).
Critical Reflection (CR)	• The teacher is concerned with the worth of knowledge without a personal bias (i.e., how was content important to students?).

Considering these three levels of reflection, a teacher needs to possess three characteristics for being reflective: open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, and responsibility (Dewey, 1933). Open-mindedness is the ability (1) to consider new problems and ideas free from prejudice and [possess] an active desire to listen to more sides than one, and (2) to recognize the possibility of error even in the beliefs that are dearest to the teacher. Responsibility is usually conceived as a moral trait rather than as an intellectual resource; nonetheless, it is an attitude that requires the teacher to win the adequate support of desire for new points of view and new ideas and of enthusiasm for and capacity for absorption in subject matter (Dewey, 1933, pp. 30-32).

In a study about pre-service teachers' levels of reflection, Castañeda-Trujillo and Aguirre-Hernández (2018) found the following:

> The main conclusions indicated that pre-service teachers are engaged in constant reflection and make decisions on the spot based on their own personal vision of what can favor the educational situation, but this reflection just reached the technical level in most of the cases. (p. 158)

This premise helps one see that the level of reflectivity of pre-service teachers of English is the same in the first and last semester of practicum. By using Van Manen's (1977) three levels of reflectivity, we expect to see how the identity of the pre-service English language teachers is constructed from these three levels during their pedagogical practicum.

Identity Construction

In general, from a pedagogical perspective, teacher identity is understood as the distinctive features that a teacher has, or the personal or social meanings they ascribe to themselves (Beijaard, 1995; Olsen, 2008). Numerous studies (see for example the compilation in Bilgrami, 2001) have emphasized teacher identity in the social context of the educational environment. Rodgers and Scott (2008) also define teacher identity as being constructed, maintained, and negotiated primarily through discourse. In Lasky's (2005) point of view, teacher identity is the form in which teachers are defined and how others see them as teachers. Teacher identity is then a construction of the professional who evolves along her/his educational career and who changes due to the influence of school, reforms, political contexts, personal commitment, and personal experiences according to time and place.

57

Pre-service teacher identity is influenced by the internal factor of emotions and the external factor of contexts (Rodgers & Scott, 2008). The school climate, learners' characteristics, and interactions with colleagues and of school administrators can all be factors in shaping a pre-service teacher identity. Rodgers and Scott (2008) suggest that ideologies, discourses, and content play a role in teacher identity. In agreement with this, Franzak (2002) states the following:

> We live in a world of negotiated identity, one where we continually construct and revise our vision of us. Those of us who create "teacher" as part of our identity must negotiate the particular implications of our professional identity in relation to students, peers, the general public, our intimates, and ourselves. (p. 258)

Identity cannot be classified or said to be the same as another. It is an amalgam of the incorporation of factors from social and personal perspectives. As Morgan (2004) says, "a line of research closely analyzes the concept of identity, not as a set of defined and coherent features, but as something complex, often contradictory and subject to changes throughout the time and place" (p. 112).

From Norton's (2006) perspective, the experiences of a teacher, either novice or experienced, as to gender, race, class, culture or sexual orientation, are shaped by the processes of instruction and interaction that evolve within specific sites of bilingual education and second or foreign language. These influencing factors make their process of identity construction a reflective one according to each of the experienced situations in which each one has been confronted. Thus, identity construction is reflected more in the external than in the personal. From this perspective, both professional and personal identity are regulated and attributed with all forms of human activity: oral and written texts, gestures, images and spaces, development within the institutions, academic disciplines, and broader social formations. Hence, teachers' social contexts influence their identity construction.

Pedagogical Practicum

In Colombia, the National Ministry of Education (MEN, 2016) understands pedagogical practicum as:

> A process of self-reflection, which becomes the space for conceptualization, research and didactic experimentation, where the undergraduate student approaches knowledge in an articulated manner and from different disciplines that enrich the understanding of the educational process and the teaching function in it. This space develops in the undergraduate student the possibility of reflecting critically on his practice from the registration, analysis and continuous balance of its pedagogical actions, consequently, the practice promotes the development of the professional competencies of the future graduates. (p. 5)

Also, Richards and Crookes (1988) explain pedagogical practicum as:

> Practice teaching, also practicum, teaching practice opportunities provided for a student teacher to gain teaching experience, usually through working with an experienced teacher – the CO-OPE-RATING TEACHER – for a period by teaching that teacher's class. Practice teaching experiences may include MICRO TEACHING, teaching an individual lesson from time to time, or regular teaching over a whole term or longer, during which the student teacher has direct and individual control over a class. Practice teaching is intended to give student teachers experience of [in]

58

classroom teaching, an opportunity to apply the information and skills they have studied in their teacher education programme, and a chance to acquire basic teaching skills. (p. 14)

In agreement with Castañeda-Trujillo (2019), Lucero and Roncancio-Castellanos (2019), and Ubaque-Casallas and Aguirre-Garzón (2020), pedagogical practicum is the opportunity for pre-service teachers to improve upon what they have learned during the semesters of theory, as well as being a space that can help pre-service teachers to analyze their teaching skills, put into practice techniques, and reflect if these instruments work or not in the classroom. As Fandiño Parra and Bermúdez Jiménez (2015) say,

> *Por un lado, es una noción metodológica sobre aquello que acontece en el salón de clase y de lo que hace cotidianamente el profesor. Por otro, es una noción discursiva, constituida por el triángulo escuela-docente-saber pedagógico. De esta manera, la PP da cuenta tanto de las prácticas como de los discursos que circulan en las aulas con el objetivo de discernir las formas de enunciación y de legitimación de los saberes enseñados en las instituciones.[3] (p. 32)*

This quote provides an explanation of what pedagogical practicum likely is for BA programs of English language teaching in Colombia. We can say that pedagogical practicum in the context of the current research study refers to all the things that can occur in the classroom, all the factors that take place during a class session (the activities, the students' and pre-service English language teacher attitudes, etc.). Also, the pedagogical practicum is the space for pre-service English language teachers to reflect on what they have done during their classes to improve the future sessions; they need to become aware of their own process of practicum (Samacá-Bohorquez, 2012).

Pre-Service Teachers

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), pre-service teachers are "Those students who participated in pre-service training or education, a course or program of study which student teachers complete before they begin teaching" (p. 416). Also, Bransford, Darling-Hammond, and LePage, (as cited in Mergler & Spooner-Lane, 2012, p. 66) and González-Moncada (2003) explain that the goal of pre-service teacher education programs is to prepare students to become quality teachers equipped with pedagogical practices. These teacher-students will work in educational institutions to meet the increasing demands associated with the teaching profession. The above means that a pre-service teacher needs to be open to new pedagogical practices to solve problems in the educational field. Pre-service teachers need to increase the quality of education, "to raise the quality of teaching in order to increase the

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[3]   On the one hand, it is a methodological notion about what happens in the classroom and what teachers do every day. On the other hand, it is a discursive notion, constituted by the school-teacher-pedagogical knowledge triangle. In this way, the PP gives an account of both the practices and the discourses circulating in the classrooms with the aim of discerning the forms of enunciation and legitimation of the knowledge taught in the institutions. (Fandiño Parra & Bermúdez Jiménez, 2015)

effectiveness of schooling and to improve student outcomes," as Mergler and Spooner-Lane (2012, p. 66) state.

Research Design

The type of research of this study is a qualitative narrative inquiry under a descriptive analytical perspective. Quintero-Mejía (2018) talks about narrative as a data collection strategy, namely: *"En la medida en que las historias narradas han sido vividas, hacen parte de la reflexión acerca de la vida humana y se ponen a disposición de otras y nuevas reinterpretaciones de quienes escuchan o leen"* [4] (p. 120). McMillan (2016) explains that the goal of narrative inquiry "is to use individuals' actual lived stories to provide a deep and rich understanding of a specific phenomenon, often best communicated as a story that can be compelling. Narrative research is used to establish and study meaningful stories" (p. 321). This author also presents types of narrative designs i.e., "oral and life history, auto ethnography, bibliographical, and psychological" (p. 321). Concerning these types of narratives, we highlight the following that are closely connected to our study:

- *Continuity of experience,* in which stories are organized and communicated temporally, in a logical and meaningful sequence and chronology.
- *Use of several sources of data,* including participant stories, such as observation, documents, work samples, and others' viewpoints.
- *An emphasis on context and situation,* noting how stories are related to social culture; narratives occur in specific places and situations.
- Exploration of *identity formation,* in which participants define themselves.
- An emphasis on "*turning points*", critical moments that elucidate meanings.
- *The collaborative relationship* between the researcher and participant(s), in which stories are co-constructed.

These characteristics are articulated to our research project in the use of *restoring,* or the "told story" that takes the words of pre-service English language teachers and rewords these texts in the words of the researcher. Serrat (2008) states that storytelling is a way to see how the levels of reflection work on pre-service English language teachers i.e., "Storytelling is the vivid description of ideas, beliefs, personal experiences, and life -lessons through stories or narratives that evoke powerful emotions and insights" (p. 322). To put it in another way, storytelling is the use of stories or narratives as a communication tool.

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[4]   To the extent that the narrated stories have been lived, these are part of the reflection on human life; the stories are then available to others, and new reinterpretations of those who listen to or read them can emerge. (Quintero-Mejía 2018)

Context and Population

The participants are composed of four pre-service English language teachers[5] that began their first semester of pedagogical practicum in 2018 and finished this stage in 2019 after three semesters of practicum. These three semesters of pedagogical practicum cover the last two years of their major in English language teaching. Their first practicum was at a public school from January to May 2018; their last practicum took place at a different public school from February to May 2019. One of the participants did her last practicum in a private university. The participants' original names were replaced by pseudonyms.

Instruments

Two instruments were used to collect the told stories of the participants: reflective journals and semi-structured interviews. The told stories, as McMillan (2016) indicates, "Emanate directly from the participant, through both formal and informal conversation" (p. 321). *Restoring* allowed us, as researchers, to develop a sequence of events reported by the participants in the abovementioned techniques while establishing cause and effect in a chronological line. This form of data collection was for rewriting the experiences that the participants underwent in their first and last pedagogical practicum.

Pre-service English Language Teachers' Reflective Journals

This instrument exposes, as Lavov explains (as cited in Quintero-Mejía, 2018, p. 35), the experiences about situations that the participants lived during their pedagogical practicum in a natural way. The journals served to analyze the processes of reflection that the participants achieved in their first semester of pedagogical practicum. The journals were written by the participants as part of the practicum portfolio. They contained around eight to ten entries, 100-150 words each, in which each participant wrote about (1) what they had lived during the class delivery, (2) the aspects that they considered caused difficulties, or (3) the aspects that made them comfortable.

Semi-Structured Interviews

We applied them in line with McMillan's (2016) suggestions. We audio-recorded and collected details and experiences of pedagogical practicum directly from the participants. We asked them questions selected in advance about the experiences and reflections written

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5   These participants were selected from a pedagogical practicum group that worked on the process of reflection on their teaching experiences through journals. Out of the pre-service teachers of this group, these four participants presented dissimilar teaching experiences and attitudes in their journals. These experiences and attitudes are presented in the section of disclosure below.

in their journal entries; furthermore, we decided the sequence and wording of the questions during the interview with pre-established prompts and probes. With those interviews, we obtained information relevant to determine the construction of the participants' identity as language teachers during their pedagogical practicum.

Data Analysis

We analyzed the instruments by applying matrices of narratives[6]. Quintero-Mejia (2018) says that a narrative helps identify and comprehend situations in a culture or social structure. Accordingly, we compiled aspects that expose the time or period, the experience, the events, feelings and emotions, and the people that participated in the events. We did a matrix of narratives for each instrument and participant. The first matrix was filled with information taken from the journals; we read the four journals and after that we completed the matrix considering the abovementioned categories. The second matrix was completed with information taken from the semi-structured interview complementing or extending the aspects of the mentioned categories.

At the end of the process, we did analyze three different explanatory textual units. The first one compiled the common aspects mentioned by the participants in their journals, and the second, the complementary information collected in the semi-structured interviews. The third textual unit unified the analysis of the two matrixes of narratives and the two previous units. This final text exhibited all the aspects together and the participants' personal preferences and opinions about their period of practicum.

Disclosure

This section is presented in a unique narrative text, combining both Spanish and English. This combination uses direct quotes and citations, which were in both languages, of the participating pre-service English language teachers. Considering that at the moment of listening to and seeing the information in the data collection instruments, the pre-service English language teachers had included much richness when they created their discourse in Spanish, in spite of the fact that they usually used English in academic activities.

Moreover, as Quintero Mejia (2018) says:

El valor ético de la narrativa se ilustra con el género trágico porque se considera que su estructura narrativa revela los vicios y las crueldades humanas que ponen en juego la libertad… Con los griegos aprendimos que

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[6] The matrices are in the appendixes at the end of the article.

en las narrativas encontramos tanto nuestra naturaleza necesitada como nuestra condición de seres frágiles.[7] (p. 116)

Parallel to this, we know that the narrative in the original language is related to other links that establish a relationship between an individual and others. Besides, Quintero Mejia (2018) affirms: "*Una vida sin narrar se reduce a ser un fenómeno biológico, pues careceríamos de interpretación y de reflexión acerca del devenir de la vida y de la cultura*" [8] (p. 85).

We metaphorically associate the narrative of the findings to a snowball. The snowball metaphor is used to explain that by taking advantage of every opportunity to improve skills, greater performance can be achieved, leading to optimal development. We saw that the participants' identity evolved throughout the semesters of pedagogical practicum as a snowball that will continue evolving and helping them to improve their teaching skills.

Starting the Pedagogical Practicum

To start our findings, we want to talk about their first semester of pedagogical practicum. The pre-service English language teachers confronted face to face their identity as language teachers, the same identity that at some point they thought they had defined and which had become unquestionable. Figure 1 below represents the way the pre-service English language teachers see themselves in their first pedagogical practicum. Their level of reflectivity is technical.
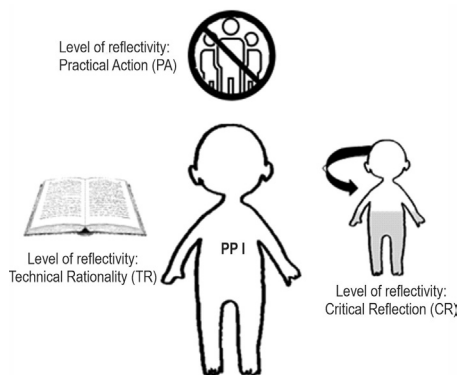
Figure 1. *First Pedagogical Practicum*

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[7]   The ethical value of the narrative is illustrated by the tragic genre because its narrative structure is considered to reveal the human vices and cruelties that put freedom at stake… With the Greeks we learned that in narratives we find both our needy nature and our condition as fragile beings. (Quintero Mejia, 2018)

[8]   A life without narration is reduced to being a biological phenomenon, because we would lack interpretation and reflection about the future of life and culture. (Quintero Mejia, 2018)

The ways of seeing themselves, as Figure 1 represents, goes in line with Van Manen's (1977) technical rationality in his theory of reflectivity. He states that the first level refers to what teachers are supposed to achieve in their classes, to the technical application of educational knowledge and basic curriculum principles in order to achieve a certain end. Regarding this level, Van Manen (1977) explains, "the practical is concerned mainly with means rather than ends" (p. 226). It means that, as Kay (2006) said, "the teacher is concerned with technical application of knowledge and basic curriculum principles (i.e., are the students really on-task?)" (p. 29). Considering this, the four pre-service English language teachers in their first pedagogical practicum reached this level, but in an unconscious way, because there were not enough spaces for self-reflection.

However, those cases in which the pre-service English language teachers were exposed to this type of situations popped up noticeably: "I thought many new words and as the topic of this period are the colors, I decided to use cold and warm colors" [sic], "in this activity, I worked on the topic 'ALL ABOUT ME' so that they could write their likes about movies, colors, and subject and draw their family" [sic] (Valeria wrote in her first class, 2017).

Practical action in Van Manen's (1977) theory refers to "the technical application of educational knowledge and basic curriculum principles pursuing to attain a given end" (p. 226). Following this idea, Kay (2006) explains that practical action is when a "Teacher becomes more concerned with clarifying assumptions while addressing educational consequences (i.e., if and how are goals being met)" (p. 29). Considering all this, the four participating pre-service English language teachers could give an account of this level in their journal entries during their first pedagogical practicum; although in some cases, this level worked in the wrong way: "We were continues [sic] with our activity about the body but this activity is a song, she had to dance and sing," "The song, in the first time played the song, they tried to dance, to imitate the dancer, for the first was ok," [sic] "In the others, when I played the song, they danced and sang, but when the song finished, she began to run around the classroom," "She began to run around the classroom and started screaming," "Everything was out of control" [sic] (Julieth expressed in her journal, 2018).

The last Van Manen's (1977) level is critical reflection, considered as "the process of analyzing and clarifying individual and cultural experiences, meanings, perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments, and presuppositions, for the purpose of orienting practical actions" (p. 226). On this matter, Van Manen (1977) says: "It is assumed that every educational choice is based on a value commitment to some interpretive framework by those involved in the curriculum process" (p. 226). Kay (2006) corroborates that critical reflection is when a "Teacher is concerned with worth of knowledge without a personal bias (i.e., was content important to students?)" (p. 29). In the first pedagogical practicum that the four pre-service English language teachers completed, this level of reflectivity was rather absent, only found at the end of their three semesters of practicum. For example, this was taken from

their journal entries: "Finally on this day, I understood the difficult role of being a teacher," "I understood how my school's professors felt when teaching in a restless and distracted [form]" [sic] (Valeria said in her journal in 2018).

Considering this first experience, the four pre-service English language teachers felt something different: "In the first observation, I was nervous, I was afraid because it was my first time in the classroom" [sic] (Julieth wrote in her journal in 2018), "*Al entrar al salón un grupo de cariñosas niñas me recibieron haciéndome preguntas que paso a paso fui respondiendo,*" "*El control que generó la profesora, me llamó la atención, pues con mucha calma controlaba la hiperactividad de las niñas.*" [9] (Valeria wrote in her journal in 2018). Nevertheless, for them, the homeroom teacher's ideal was to keep a classroom organized, so the students did that accordingly. In most of the cases, the four pre-service English language teachers analyzed the attitudes and behaviors that came from their peers, and used the details that would help them, "I think that we as teachers must understand that kids always want to do something and is going to be really difficult to make them stay quiet and sit two hours, that's really boring" [sic] (María said about her session in 2018), "*Analizaba desde el puesto en el cual decidí sentarme ya que tenía buena visibilidad del salón*" [10] (Valeria wrote in her journal in 2018).

These situations were like a test because of their context. In this case, a classroom full of little heads was not always the expected one in order to apply a certain activity that took a suitable amount of time for its preparation: "Today was a difficult day, the girls did not want to work, other gave the work without following the instruction," [sic] "They were very restless, which made our activity difficult," "Not many felt encouraged to do the task, even those who gave the best activities did not want to try to deliver a good job" [sic] (Valeria wrote in her journal in 2018).

Despite being immersed in those kinds of situations, ("It was very frustrating because they did not know what we were saying, something that did not happen before" [Jhonatan wrote in his journal in 2018]), the four pre-service English language teachers found a balance that gave them a short break from the pressure that they had experienced about being the best teacher or the most loved teacher in the institution, and the best pre-service teacher in their practicum group. This is a way the participants construct(ed) a distinctive feature about themselves: "Although not everything was bad, because as always the wise girls delivered a nice job and were very active asking for the words that appeared in the alphabet soup," "We

65

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[9]   "As I entered the classroom, a group of loving girls welcomed me by asking me questions that I responded to step by step." "The control generated by the teacher caught my attention, as she calmly controlled the hyperactivity of the girls." (Valeria's Journal, 2018)

[10]   "I was analyzing the situation from the place where I decided to sit down as I had good visibility of the room." (Valeria's Journal 2018)

know, not every day is good, and even they wake up without encouragement to do their work" (María reported in her journal in 2018).

At the end of this first experience, although not all of the four pre-service English language teachers did a reflection of themselves from their own critical perspective, they certainly found details that could be better: "I realized that I didn't consider speed which I was teaching, I was really slowly and some of the students started to feel bored," "That was one of the first things that I realized and learn that no everyone works at the same speed and that we as teachers must have a balance between fast and slow to make the lesson work." [sic]

These previous quotes reveal the way Maria constructs a distinctive feature about herself. These details astonished their lives; the four pre-service English language teachers saw and listened to their students, despite the experience of when they had also been students: "I felt really bad because I felt again that I had wasted my time and that they were not learning" (Jhonatan wrote in his journal in 2018). The four pre-service English language teachers found their interests: "In conclusion, I felt good because I love the children, I wanted this I want to teach to children," [sic] "I prefer preschool, kinder garden, but it's ok," "They are so cute" (Julieth wrote in her journal in 2018).

Finishing the Pedagogical Practicum

In the last semester of pedagogical practicum, the level of technical rationality that the four pre-service English language teachers showed was evident only in response to a semi-structured interview. Figure 2 below represents the way the pre-service English language teachers saw themselves in their last pedagogical practicum. Their level of reflectivity is practical but not technical; the critical level is present although they are unaware of it due to a lack of teacher's assistance.

Also, in this case, as Figure 2 shows, the technical level exists, but the four pre-service English language teachers are not aware of their reflectivity. As Van Manen (1977) explains, this level is about the curriculum and the basic application of the curriculum. In this case, the four pre-service English language teachers did not propose or look for different ways to apply the curriculum or to improve the curriculum in future classes. These situations were remarkable because they tried to go beyond and tried new things: "*Hice una especie de* workshop, *les llevé pues una lectura, entonces digamos yo les leí toda la lectura, les iba traduciendo, les iba diciendo ¡ay esto es tal, esto es tal! la lectura es sobre esto...*" [11] (Jhonatan said in his interview)

Furthermore, practical action level in the last semester of pedagogical practicum was visible in the same interviews. This occurred in the cases when the four pre-service English

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[11]   "I did a kind of workshop, so I gave them a text, so let's say I read all the text with them, I was translating it to them, I was telling them, oh this is it, and this is it! The reading is about this..." (Jhonathan's interview)
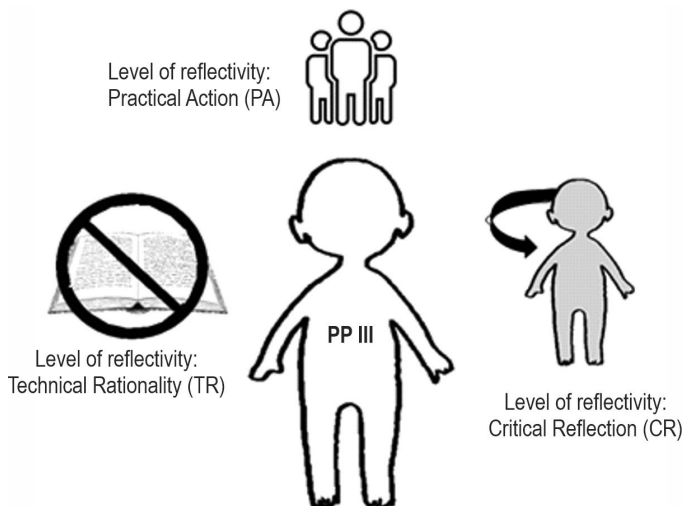
Figure 2. *Last Pedagogical Practicum*

language teachers were aware of their actions to achieve certain goals that they had proposed for their classes. As Kay (2006) affirms, "Teacher becomes more concerned with clarifying assumptions while addressing educational consequences" (p. 29).

Valeria said in her interview that,

> *Vimos una película, los puse a ver una película y como son A1, pues no puedo ponerles así como Terminator, ni nada de esas cosas, entonces tocó ponerles la de la niña ésta de los ojos de botón..." "Pues es acorde al nivel, yo no les puedo poner nada así con unos diálogos ni los hijuemadres, porque no les puedo poner subtítulos." "Los puse a ver la película y no, super distraidos, yo les había dicho que trajeran comida, empezaron a tirar el maíz pira, fue un desastre horrible..." "Eso lo espero de un niño, ni siquiera los niños con los que trabajé en la otra práctica," "Ellas eran super organizadas, ellas ni comían en el salón para no ensuciar los puestos de las otras chicas..." [12] [sic]*

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[12] "We saw a movie, I have them see a movie and since they are A1, I can't give them Terminator or any of those things, then I had to give them that of the girl's button-eyed..." "Because it's according to the level, I can't put anything like that with some dammed great [Hijuemadre: expression used to refer to something complicated or difficult according to the context] dialogues, because I can't set subtitles." "I have them watch the movie and they got super distracted. I had told them to bring food, they started throwing the popcorn, it was a horrible disaster..." "I expect that from a boy, not even the children I worked with at the other practicum," "They were super organized, and they didn't even eat in the classroom not to dirty the other girls' places..." [sic] (Valeria's interview)

This level, practical action, was presented in the interviews with the four pre-service English language teachers. Nevertheless, critical reflection, the last level of reflectivity, was difficult to differentiate in the interviews from the practical action level. The boundaries where one finishes and the other starts are blurred.

The last level of reflectivity in Van Manen's (1977) theory is critical reflection. It is supposed to be the main goal for teachers to improve their future classes. Nevertheless, it was the most complicated level since the pre-service English language teachers were not aware of their process of reflectivity (another way of constructing a distinctive feature about themselves). In this level, the four pre-service English language teachers could reflect on the moments that they lived with their students, as Julieth expressed to her interviewer, "... *uno también aprende a cómo comportarse, a como ellos se comportan,"* *"una vez llegó una estudiante que la estaban cascando,"* *"yo le dije: no, no le pegues,"* *"tú no tienes por qué pegarle."* *"Ahí es cuando uno se da cuenta que uno debería ver psicología en nuestra carrera."* [13]

Moreover, the last semester of pedagogical practicum could promote learning experiences for the four pre-service English language teachers. They had already lived different environments, a lot of individual experiences; however, some of them had similar opinions as in the first practicum. "*Digamos que uno que nunca ha trabajado, esa práctica no le sirve para nada*" [14] (Jhonatan reported in his journal, 2019).

In these instances, the four pre-service English language teachers had already lived different kinds of experiences, and now, they were available to understand the why of those school moments. This shows how the participants constructed more distinctive features about themselves: "... *Como me toca con los chinos* antes del descanso no están tan alborotados,* "*sin embargo, esos detalles pasan una mala jugada. Parce hay veces que lo enloquecen a uno,"* "*La vez pasada intenté un jueguito y jum parce*, les puse el juego, y esos chinos se alborotaron,"* "*me tenían enloquecido, yo era ya que se acabe esta clase*" [15] (Jonathan said in the interview, 2019).

Additionally, the four pre-service English language teachers worked with students just as those but these students studied different things. Nevertheless, they, as teachers, were uncomfortable, because, "*Lo único que no me gusta es cuando llegan a calificarme, me interrumpen la clase, entonces si yo les estoy explicando un tema* (Estudiantes), *dicen como "Yo creo que la mejor forma*

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[13] "We also learn how to behave, also to see how they behave," "Once a student arrived, one that someone was hitting her," "I told him: No, don't hit her," "You don't have to hit her." "That's when you notice that you should see psychology in your major." (Julieth's interview)

[14] "Let's just say that one, who has never worked, that practice doesn't work at all." (Jhonathan's journal)

[15] "As I am with the children*(Chinos: expression used to refer to children without orientation to a specific nationality) before the break they are not so rowdy," "however, those details give us a bad moment. There are times when you go crazy," "Last time I tried to play a little game and jump parce*(expression used to refer to a friend or partner), I put the game on them, and those children* rioted," "I was freaking out, I was just about to finish this lesson." (Jhonathan's interview)

es esta y entonces puedes interactuar con los estudiantes," "*Lo que hace que ellos sientan que yo soy otro estudiante más y que no tengo pues esa autoridad de profesora*" [16] (Valeria said in the interview, 2019).

On the other hand, the four pre-service English language teachers gave an account of their different characteristics that they never were supposed to have (characteristics that construct more distinctive features about themselves): "*O sea yo no soy de los profes de los que empiezan a gritar para que se calmen, yo prefiero que se enloquezcan,*" "*O sea no prefiero que se enloquezca, pero me da una pereza tener que gritarlos.*" [17] In addition, note their preferences for giving lessons as well: "*El semestre pasado que yo estuve aquí tampoco me gustó, porque no me gusta con grandes lo mío son los niños chiquitos.*" "*Yo siempre he querido, estudiar, trabajar con niños porque amo los niños*" [18] (Julieth said in the interview, 2019).

In the same way, "*Pues aprender como tal el rol del profesor, sí, uno se da cuenta que les toca a ellos es muy duro,*" "*Ese tema de las planeaciones, que no se encuentren los unos con los otros, porque uno tiene muchas ideas para la clase, uno tiene muchas actividades que hacer y todo, pero resulta que esa actividad se combina con un tema que vas a ver o ya viste*" [19] (Julieth said in the interview, 2019).

In shorter words, *"… una práctica en colegio como que sí lo pone a uno en la realidad de lo que es,*" "*Porque en él [colegio* público que me tocó], las clases nunca me funcionaron tanto y pues en éste lado también me han funcionado,*" "*Porque ahí si le toca uno… (Sonido de palmada) uno se estrella cuando se le descontrolan a uno, uno es como, marica, ¿qué voy hacer?*" [20] (Jhonatan said in the interview).

Even so, other pre-service English language teachers might have a different perspective about it: "*Igual no quiero ser profesora,*" "*Es que no me gusta,*" "*me gusta más la traducción.*"[21] But

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[16] "The only thing I don't like is when they get to grade me, they interrupt my class, so if I'm explaining a subject to them (students), they say like "I think the best way is this and then you can interact with the students," "Which makes them feel that I'm just another student and that I don't have that teaching authority." (Valeria's interview)

[17] "I mean, I'm not one of the teachers who starts yelling for them to calm down, I'd rather let them go crazy," "I mean, I don't want them to freak out, but I'm lazy to have to yell at them." (Julieth's interview)

[18] "Last semester when I was here, I didn't like it either, because I don't like it when I have big kids, mine are the little kids" "I've always wanted to study, work with children because I love children." (Julieth's interview)

[19] "For learning the role of the teacher, yes, one realizes that it is up to them, it is very hard," "That subject of planning, that you don't meet each other, because you have a lot of ideas for the class, you have a lot of activities to do and everything, but it turns out that the activity is combined with a subject that you're going to see or you saw." (Julieth's interview)

[20] "A school practicum like that does put you in the reality of what you are," "Because in it [public school where I was], the classes never worked such well for me and on this side they have also worked for me," "Because there you have to… (Applause) we crash when we get out of control, we are like, marica* (although a vulgarity, this word is used to refer to a friend or partner in a friendly way), what am I going to do?" (Jhonathan's interview)

[21] "I don't want to be a teacher anyway," "I just don't like it," "I like the translation better." (Valeria's interview)

69

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furthermore, they did not forget it in their future. "*Mientras consigo para la especialización, trabajo como profesora, pero en un jardín de niños*" [22] (Valeria said in the interview, 2019).

When the Snowball Clashes: As a Matter of Discussion

In their first pedagogical practicum, the four pre-service English language teachers accomplished the level of technical rationality; however, this level happened in an unconscious way because there were no spaces for self-reflection in their teaching context and pedagogical practicum tutorials. This is one of our most important findings since we noticed that the levels of reflexivity are reflected in their journals although the participants were not aware of these levels because they did not have spaces for self-reflection. Following this idea, the question is, why did the four pre-service English language teachers not have spaces for self-reflection? Does it happen in all the spaces of pedagogical practicum in the BA programs? If there are spaces for self-reflection, how do they occur?

About the beginning of the pedagogical practicum, the level of critical reflectivity was not much found; it occurred only at the end of the pedagogical practicum. As one pre-service teacher said, "Finally, on this day, I understood what difficult role of being a teacher" [sic]. So, the question is, why do pre-service English language teachers seem to achieve a kind of critical level at the end of the practicum when (levels of) reflection should be present in each academic space, according to the BA curriculum?

At the end of pedagogical practicum, we could notice that the four pre-service English language teachers said something like "*yo aquí tampoco aprendí nada,*" [23] although they were aware of the type of students that they would prefer "*yo siempre he querido estudiar, trabajar con niños porque amo los niños,*" and "*No, a mí me gustan más los niños, es más fácil para trabajar la creatividad con ellos.*" [24] These quotations show how the four pre-service English language teachers were starting to be critical about their process and about their teaching preferences. The question here is, why do pre-service English language teachers achieve awareness about their preferences in teaching only when they are in their last pedagogical practicum? Is it because of the experience gained? Is it because they have constructed a different set of identities that can better fit into a variety of scenarios, with different kinds of people?

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[22]   "While I get for a specialized course, I work as a teacher, but in a kindergarten." (Valeria's interview)

[23]   "I didn't learn anything here either."

[24]   "I have always wanted to study and work with children because I love children," and "No, I like children better, it's easier to work on creativity with them."

Conclusion

We can say that the participating pre-service English language teachers' level of reflectivity was mostly technical, at the start of pedagogical practicum that is, and a bit practical and critical at the end of this stage. It seems to be that they were not much aware of these levels because (1) they did not feel the teacher's assistance in this stage; (2) they did not have spaces for reflection after each pedagogical practicum; or (3) of their lack of interest in personal reflection.

The pre-service English language teachers showed an important aspect about how they construct their identities as language teachers: The identities cannot be classified. That means that each displayed identity of our participants is different and unique in their own context. We then want to clarify that determining the relationship that occurs between identities and levels of reflectivity depends on the environment that each pre-service English language teacher is living and the people around them. The multiplicity of all those identities does not allow a classification of them and a further connection to any level of reflectivity unless the context where they occur and the level of reflectivity that each pre-service English language teacher has are deeply explored. What is also evident is that, in most of the cases, the pre-service English language teachers were not very much aware of their multiple identities since these were varied and multifaceted. We observed that the identities that they may have constructed during the semesters of theory tend to be shown in the practicum. Thus, during the semesters of theory, the language teacher identities seem to be in the dark; as such, during the pedagogical practicum stage, those identities eventually pop up as their teaching experiences start to grow.

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71

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73

Appendix. MATRIX 1. *Pre-service English language teachers' reflective journals*

Date / Place	Experiences	Events	Feelings And Emotions	Who
FIRST PRACTICUM CLASS (Feb 27th, 2018)/ MENORAH SCHOOL	Her first observation	"In the first observation I was nervous, I was afraid because it was my first time in the classroom."	Nervous and afraid	
	Her first contact with the students	"I was afraid that the students made a lot of noise, but when I arrived to the classroom, they saw me so strange because in this school, they never have been a practicum teacher"	Afraid	The students' group
	Her opinion about teacher's activity	"This activity was so crazy because the picture was ugly, it was a picture that the students didn't know"		Teacher and students
		"I think that the activity had to be with a picture that they know like a Peppa Pig, Mickey Mouse, something like that"		
	Her conclusion	"In conclusion, I felt good because I love the children, I wanted this, I want to teach to children.	Good	
	Her preferences	"I prefer preschool, kindregarden but it's ok."		
	Her opinion about students	"They are so cute."		

Date / Place	Experiences	Events	Feelings And Emotions	Who
SECOND CLASS (March 03rd, 2018)/ MENORAH SCHOOL	Her greeting the students	"When I arrived to the classroom, they say hello, but in Spanish, and I said hello in English, they understood that "Hello" is "Hola"."		Students
	Her goal for the next class	"I hope that in the next class they greet in English"		
	Her interaction with the teacher	"The teacher said to me in the last class that in this class the topic was "fruits and vegetables"		The teacher
	Her perspective about the teacher's use of language	"I could see that the teacher sometimes speaks in Spanish for making to them understand better, but the rest of the class he speaks in English but with short phrases.		The teacher
	The method that the teachers apply with their students for silence.	"He has a song in order to they make silence this song consists to say the parts of the body."		
	Her conclusion	"In conclusion, they learnt all the colors and some fruits and vegetables also, it was a good class."		

75

MATRIX 2. *Semi-structured interview*

6:09	The time limits that she had in her sessions	"El tiempo también es muy complicado, porque como todos los pelados no se toman el mismo tiempo para hacer las cosas, porque algunos les da por mirar a la ventana, hablar con la novia, lo que sea, entonces también se prolongan las cosas, y las actividades se vuelven más hartas..."	
6:23	Her position with the students	"Y le toca decirle a uno quiubo, hágale, a pesar de que son estudiantes grandes, entonces ese ha sido uno de los compliques"	
6:30	Movie time	"Vimos una película, los puse a ver una película y como son A1, pues no puedo ponerles así como Terminator, ni nada de esas cosas, entonces tocó ponerles la de la niña ésta de los ojos de botón..."	
6:42	Students' reaction	"Y claro todos súper, aaayyyy no profe pero ya vi esa película, esa película la veo con mi sobrina, no sé qué"	
6:49	Her argument about the movie	"Pues es acorde al nivel, yo no les puedo poner nada así con unos diálogos ni los hijuemadres, porque no les puedo poner subtítulos"	
7:01	Students' attitude	"Los puse a ver la película y no, súper distraídos, yo les había dicho que trajeran comida, empezaron a tirar el maíz pira, fue un desastre horrible..."	
7:09		"Paré la película y les dije recojieran"	
7:15		"Les dije bueno aquí tampoco se van a poner en ese plan "	Angry
7:25	Her attitude about the chaos	"A mí me pareció muy paila"	
7:28		"Y pelados que ya van por los 25, porqué se están lanzando maíz, que verguenza"	
7:35	Her memories about her last students and their disposition	"Eso lo espero de un niño, ni siquiera los niños con los que trabajé en la otra práctica"	
7:42		"Ellas eran súper organizadas, ella ni comían en el salón, para o ensuciar los puestos de las otras chicas...	
8:45	Her greeting the students	"Esa combinación es increíble, el spanglish de ellos"	
8:46	Initiative to use English in different situations.	"Hola teacher, necesito algo y uno mmmm elaboralo, no no te entiendo, imaginemos que yo no te estoy entendiendo lo que estás diciendo, pero te entiendo perfectamente"	

9:07	Students' interaction	"Lo que me gusta es que ellos preguntan mucho"	
9:11	The special student	"Hay un muchacho, que no sé, él tiene ayuditas de alguien, porque en aula virtual el tipo UFFF, vuela con esa aula"	
9:13		"Pero yo lo pongo en el salón y él no entiende cosas"	
9:39	The extra help	"Sí, eso es lo maluco, yo creo que les ayudan"	

77

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HOW

Dyslexic Individuals' Narratives on their Process of Becoming English Language Teachers

Narrativas de personas disléxicas sobre su proceso de convertirse en profesores de inglés

Karen Andrea Cuervo-Rodríguez[1]
Jairo Enrique Castañeda-Trujillo[2]

Abstract

This paper reports the findings of a narrative study with two pre-service English language teachers (PELTs) who have dyslexia. The main objective of the study was to understand how this condition of having dyslexia was present in becoming an English language teacher. The two PELTs participated in a life history interview as part of the data collection. By considering the main objective of the study, the researchers used the information collected to write the narratives and subsequently proceeded to interpret and analyze them. The findings show that dyslexia is as serious as any other disability, and it does generate rejection and lack of understanding on the part of teachers and other PELTs. Furthermore, negative feelings linked to the learning or teaching process are generated in PELTs with dyslexia, which leads them to hide their condition to avoid discrimination most of the time. However, findings also show that once negative feelings were overcome, PELTs turn their problem into an advantage, discovering themselves as more empathetic to those with special needs and making them

[1]   She is a last semester student in the B in Education with a major in English Language Teaching from Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia. She belongs to the research study group "Enseñanza y Aprendizaje en Lenguas Extranjeras, Cultura y Justicia Social" from Universidad Distrital. kacuervor@correo.udistrital.edu.co
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0888-9524

[2]   He is a PhD candidate in the Education Program at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Bogotá, Colombia. He is an Assistant Professor and researcher at Universidad Surcolombiana, Neiva, Colombia. He belongs to the research groups ILESEARCH and ESTUPOLI. His research interest centers on pre-service teachers' identities and professional development by using narratives. jairo.castaneda@usco.edu.co
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3002-7947

79

Karen Andrea Cuervo-Rodríguez,
Jairo Enrique Castañeda-Trujillo

more resourceful teachers. We conclude that although PELTs can turn their weaknesses into strengths, the role of teacher educators is also fundamental in the processes of identity construction; teacher educators might provide spaces and strategies to minimize the conditions that affect the performance of PELTs, both as language students and as language teachers.

Keywords: dyslexia, language teacher education, narrative inquiry, teacher identity

Resumen

Este artículo informa sobre los hallazgos de un estudio narrativo con dos profesores de inglés en formación (PELT) que tienen dislexia. El objetivo principal del estudio fue comprender cómo esta condición de tener dislexia estaba presente al convertirse en un profesor de inglés. Los dos PELTs participaron en una entrevista de historia de vida para recopilar datos para el estudio. Los investigadores utilizaron la información recopilada para redactar las narrativas y posteriormente procedieron a interpretarlas y analizarlas teniendo en cuenta el objetivo principal. Los resultados muestran que la dislexia es tan seria como cualquier otra discapacidad y genera rechazo y falta de comprensión por parte de los profesores y otros PELT. Además, en los PELT con dislexia se generan sentimientos negativos vinculados al proceso de aprendizaje o enseñanza, lo que los lleva a ocultar su condición para evitar la discriminación la mayor parte del tiempo. Sin embargo, los hallazgos también muestran que una vez que se superan los sentimientos negativos, los PELTs convierten su problema en una ventaja, ayudándolos a ser más empáticos con aquellos con necesidades especiales y haciéndolos maestros más ingeniosos. Concluimos que si bien los PELTs pueden convertir sus debilidades en fortalezas; el rol de los formadores de docentes también es fundamental en los procesos de construcción de identidad; los formadores de docentes pueden brindar espacios y estrategias para minimizar las condiciones que afectan el desempeño de los PELTs, tanto como estudiantes de idiomas como profesores de idiomas.

Palabras clave: dislexia, formación de profesores de idiomas, indagación narrativa, identidad del profesor

Introduction

This study arises as part of a hotbed of research in which the research interests revolve around pre-service English Language teachers (PELTs) as principal participants. Furthermore, the decision to focus on PELTs with special needs arises from one of the researchers due to an academic experience in which she analyzed different aspects of this population. Having this in mind, the researchers explored the possible special needs PELTs have, finding that some of the most indistinguishable were those that come because of having dyslexia. There is not much in the literature of the field about PELTs with dyslexia. Most of the studies focus on dyslexia in children, but not much in adolescents and adults, and less on people who are studying for bachelor's degrees in language education.

Moore et al. (2020) and Thorpe and Burns (2016) state that more exploration and research on diversity among teachers and their teaching practices are paramount. Hiscock and Leigh (2020, p. 7) mention that, concerning dyslexia, studies often focus on what

happens to students, but what is related to teachers is invisible. In this sense, Riddick (2003) affirms that the invisibility and peculiarities of some teachers' special needs impact the construction of their professional identity. Furthermore, Thorpe and Burns (2016) state that "dyslexia contributed to the teacher's sense of identity and professional identity" (p. 204). This fact is due to the complexities and constant fluctuations of the teacher's identity that are negotiated through individual processes (which may be connected to personal interests, psychological or physical conditions) and those that are part of the environment and organizations.

The above leads us to think that if this high interest in special needs occurs in in-service teachers, the same may happen with PELTs who have just entered the educational system as teachers. Some Colombian scholars and researchers have become interested in understanding the PELTs' experiences from a narrative perspective (Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernandez, 2018; Montoya-López, Mosquera-Andrade, & Peláez-Henao, 2020; Torres-Cepeda & Ramos-Holguín, 2019; Ubaque-Casallas & Aguirre-Garzón, 2020). These studies show that becoming an English language teacher involves many processes and experiences that include learning, challenges, and decisions. However, none of them have focused their attention on those PELTs who have special needs related to their education e.g., in the particular case of this article, those who have dyslexia.

This article aims to understand two PELTs' experiences with dyslexia within an EFL undergraduate program. In this endeavor, the researchers began searching for PELTs who suffered from dyslexia and were willing to participate in this study. Yet, there were four possible participants at the beginning of the study. Only two of them committed to sharing what they had lived during their process of becoming English language teachers in the EFL undergraduate program.

As far as this study is concerned, PELTs are storytellers and their experiences emerge via stories that reflect the reality in a social space (Golombek & Johnson, 2017; Sikes & Gale, 2006, as cited in Mendieta, 2013, p. 136). Those stories or narratives allow the two PELTs with dyslexia to make the construction of their teacher identity visible and represent an opportunity to open spaces for further discussions on social justice issues within EFL undergraduate programs related to those other PELTs who have special needs.

81

Theoretical Background

As the main objective of this study is to understand the experiences of two PELTs with dyslexia. The theoretical constructs of dyslexia, teacher professional identity, and narrative inquiry are explained below.

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is considered a learning difficulty and, in some other views, a disability that is related to orthography, spelling, word order, and writing and reading in general. Martínez (2016) defines dyslexia as one of the specific learning disabilities considered as neurodevelopmental disorders with a biological origin as the basis for the cognitive abnormalities associated with the disorder's behavioral signs. Dyslexia, in the words of Alexander-Passe (2016), is a specific type of reading and writing difficulty based on the phonological processing of words. Additionally, Martínez (2016) defines dyslexia as follows:

> Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected concerning other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include reading comprehension problems and reduced reading experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. (p. 2)

The author affirms that the scientific community and the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) widely used the previous definition. This definition characterizes and states the repercussions of dyslexia in general terms, which is vital for this research study.

There are other difficulties in identifying the condition because there is a wide variety of characteristics (depending on the type of dyslexia) that are indicators of different conditions such as TDH, or as the difficulty of maintaining concentration. Notwithstanding, it is challenging to identify, especially in adults and adolescents; hence, dyslexia is more common than believed. Martínez (2016) states that many education and psychology professionals have studied this condition in-depth, trying to understand its origins, causes, and treatment. According to Dyslexia and Literacy International, at least 10% of the world population has dyslexia, which equates to around 700 million people (Galluzo, 2019).

Moreover, 52% of them claimed to have experienced discrimination during interview or selection processes. In Colombia, there is no information about adult cases. Still, in the children's cases, García (2016) states that, indicating the situation with adults, prevalence figures between 3.3% and 5.5% have been reported for this specific reading disorder in Colombia. Additionally, she points out that the National Survey of Mental Health of Colombia does not provide data on the prevalence of learning disorders in childhood or those that persist into adulthood.

Sieroff (2017) mentions there are two types of dyslexia, acquired and developmental. Acquired dyslexia is a reading disorder frequently occurring after left or right posterior brain lesions. Developmental dyslexia is the most common type, but it does not happen because of a lesion; there is a broad classification depending on the characteristics: peripheral dyslexia

82

involves reading impairments that result from deficits in the orthographic-visual analysis stage, and central dyslexia, which involves reading impairments in the later stages of the lexical and sub-lexical routes (Friedmann & Coltheart, 2016).

There is not much research on dyslexia in adults. According to Martínez (2016), the research on cognitive aspects is the main current interest of the science of dyslexia in adults; however, there are almost no characterization works. They also mention that the number of adults that get a diagnosis is lower than the real number. Nevertheless, Pallaoro Moojen et al. (2020) said that there is currently a broad consensus in the literature regarding the persistence of deficits in phonological awareness, low word reading accuracy, and lack of reading fluency in adult individuals with dyslexia. Besides, Terras (2016) points out that "dyslexia impacts negatively upon self-esteem, socio-emotional well-being, relationships, education, and career choice" (p. 1). However, Soriano-Ferrer and Piedra Martínez (2017) highlight that those reading difficulties transcend the academic/cognitive domain, negatively affecting the affective-motivational plane. They said that internalizing problems, such as anxiety and depressive symptoms, are a constant among people with dyslexia in adulthood.

Since dyslexia is a complex condition with many characteristics and of various types, it is difficult to identify a person with this condition at first glance. Consequently, the condition becomes invisible and is not considered in the teaching and learning processes. Furthermore, dyslexia affects not only cognitive factors but also feelings and the emotional dimension, which negatively concerns the individual's identity, especially in terms of social relationships, career choice, and self-image as a professional. This invisibility means that individuals with dyslexia are not given the attention they deserve to overcome the learning problems they sometimes face more easily.

Teacher Professional Identity

This article addresses identity from the post-structural theory. Therefore, identity is dynamic, fluid, contradictory, and strongly connected with the context. This connection with the context and the various realities of the individual are built from the discourses since through them, the ways of being, thinking, and acting are expressed (Norton, 2013; Rudolph, Yazan & Rudolph, 2018; Yazan, 2019). At this moment, we affirm that identity is diverse, therefore we speak of identities in the plural. According to Yazan (2019), PELTs develop identity categories like "age, gender, race, previous education, previous learning experiences, academic background, and individual characteristics" (p. 3) when they enter the EFL undergraduate program. These categories have a strong influence on what their identity will be as teachers (Selvi & Rudolph, 2017).

This discursive process by which the PELTs evidence the construction of their identity is nourished from the interaction and participation in specific communities of practice (Yazan,

83

2019). As they build these speeches, the PELTs show how their personal life stories, their commitment to teaching, their agency, and their emotions intersect with the other aspects of their identity (agency, investment, positioning). In this way, the construction of their narratives, which are a discursive form of their experiences, allows the PELTs to construct and reconstruct their identity (Barkhuizen, 2016; Bolivar, 2018; Sarasá, 2017). The construction of identity does not happen spontaneously or automatically but over time; it involves complex interactions that are combined in an individual and social or collective dimension. The individual dimension refers to personal experiences that build identity and is related to personal aspects in human development, such as motivation, self-esteem, image, etc. The social dimension occurs in socio-cultural interaction in many educational, institutional, and work contexts, while the collective refers to how individuals build themselves from others (Cervantes & Dengo Vargas, 2019).

Narrative Inquiry

Understanding that identity is constituted or constructed through discourse and language and that it is the interaction among subjects that gives rise to these discourses, we can agree that identity acquires meaning from life stories (Norton, 2013; Varguese et al., 2005). These life stories are expressed through written or oral narratives. In themselves, these narratives describe the meaning of the events that individuals have experienced or those that they imagine for the future (Barkhuizen, 2016). Referring specifically to PELTs, Golombek and Johnson (2017) state that it is possible to externalize the understanding of PELTs from their past, present, and future experiences through narrative research.

Narrative inquiry becomes an alternative that PELTs have to make sense of their practice through their own language and life stories (Barhuizen, 2016; Barhuizen et al., 2013; Golombek & Johnson, 2017). By doing this, PELTs enable their voices to be heard. These voices, reflected in the narratives, constitute sources of knowledge that affects the pursuit of adjustments, alternatives, and opportunities for the coming PELTs.

Similarly, narrative inquiry enables PELTs to become aware of their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. This awareness influences their decisions on a personal and professional level; this means that PELTs construct, reconstruct, and co-construct their identity as English teachers with this awareness and their decisions (Barkhuizen, 2013; Golombek & Johnson, 2017). The previous statement shows the relevance of narrative research in developing the professional identity of PELTs and in-service teachers. According to Golombek and Johnson (2017), opening spaces for narratives within ELT programs is necessary. Within these spaces, the PELTs may make their intentions, motives, goals, and experiences explicit; thus, they can co-construct and give meaning to their beings as English language teachers together with others who have experienced both similar and different situations.

Research Methodology

This study followed a qualitative narrative research stance. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative research aims to understand how people use language to construct their reality and interpret it by giving meaning to their experiences and theories. The reconstruction of these experiences occurs through texts, which are part of the social construction of realities, everyday practices, and everyday knowledge (Flick, 2009). One of the ways to understand these experiences is through narrative research.

In this study, narrative research allowed access to the participants' stories within a specific time, place, and events related to their experiences of being PELTs as well as being dyslexic (Polkinghorne, 1995). This constant reconstruction of memories allowed the participants to reconstruct their identities by their identifying themselves with other society members and showing affiliation with a particular group (Riessman, 2008). Furthermore, narratives provide access to long-term experiences through hindsight and imagination in multiple settings and contexts (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2013, p. 12). Narratives also allowed the two narrator-participants and the researchers to understand their background, as well as present and future implications of being dyslexic English language teachers. The narrative research involves them (narrator-participant and researchers) in creating the narrative and their interpretation (Barkhuizen, 2016).

To detail the narrator-participants' experiences, we used life story interviews. Atkinson (2007) defines life story interviews as a "subjective approach to expressing the part of one's life as a whole and conveying the meaning taken from them" (p. 233). Additionally, life story interviews reveal how a life event is constructed or reconstructed as a story, focusing on the narrator's whole life or upon one specific moment of their life. For this study, life story interviews were directed to understand the construction of teacher identity of two PELTs with dyslexia. As such, we follow the steps suggested by Atkinson (2007) to do a life story interview.

Firstly, the interview planning took place, assuming that the main concern was on becoming an English language teacher while having dyslexia. Secondly, doing the interview i.e., guiding the narrator through questions that were connected with the main issue of the study. Thirdly, the interview was transcribed, including only the words of the narrator-participant telling the story. Finally, the stories were double-checked by the storyteller to be sure that they responded to what the narrator-participants wanted to tell (Birt et al., 2016).

Context and Participants

This study took place within the context of an EFL undergraduate program at a public university in Bogotá, Colombia. This program prepares PELTs to work in primary and

secondary schools, and it lasts ten academic semesters. Throughout the major, PELTs take a series of courses and seminars that contribute to their professional development in terms of their level of command of the English language and their knowledge of didactics and other aspects of the pedagogical field (materials design, evaluation, ICT in education, research, etc.). Additionally, PELTs must complete four teaching practicum periods in a public school, two in primary school, and two in secondary school. Given the university's public nature, the students who enter it belong to different socioeconomic strata, significantly the lowest.

It is worth mentioning that finding PELTs willing to share their stories for this study was not easy due to the characteristics required of them: that they belong to the ELT undergraduate program, have dyslexia, and have finished at least one of the four teaching practicum courses. In the beginning, four PELTs fulfilled the necessary characteristics for this study. However, two of them did not accept participating, so we had only two participants in the end.

The two participants in this study were Esteban and Natalia (pseudonyms used for ethical reasons). Esteban was a 22-year-old PELT in the 8th semester, and Natalia was a 23-year-old PELT in the 9th semester. Both of them are middle-class. Even though Natalia's and Esteban's conditions are similar, they have some differences. Esteban's dyslexia was the result of a birth accident, and Natalia's is genetic. Esteban also has other conditions such as depression and TDH, but Natalia does not; she affirms that her nuclear family has this condition, so it is a part of their normality.

Data Analysis

As the research questions aimed to understand the experiences of two PELTs with dyslexia, the construction of the narratives began with life story interviews of them. Given that the teachers' identity does not depend solely on the experiences during their passage through the EFL undergraduate program, some of the interview questions aimed to understand PELTs' experiences while learning English and others related to everyday learning processes. Consequently, what the two PELTs answered in the interviews was used as data to write a story that included the most relevant information that allowed the understanding of the main research topic (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2013).

Findings

Esteban's Experience

Esteban's story began in 1997. He was born in Bogotá, at one of the hospitals dedicated exclusively to this type of procedure. Unfortunately, the night Esteban was born, conditions

were not the best. The newborn needed to receive oxygen urgently, but the hospital had problems with electricity, and Esteban was not appropriately treated. Fortunately, the situation did not get worse, and Esteban's life was not in danger. However, few years later, the doctors noticed some problems with Esteban. He did not have adequate physical development, and he did not develop the ability to crawl when he was a baby. Esteban was sent to see some neurologists in the League against Epilepsy, who ruled out the doctors' initial mental retardation diagnosis. However, the neurologists found that Esteban had some learning problems, attention deficit, and coordination, among others.

For many years Esteban received help, but the situation did not change much, even during school. Esteban relates,

> I had therapy and all these kinds of things, but it has been challenging. I don't have a good memory. I don't have good attention, which makes the classes a martyrdom for me. So it has not been easy because I try to pay attention. For example, I try to pay attention to what a person says, but I don't know.

However, when Esteban decided to enter the university, things got complicated. Esteban did not find the same support in the university that he used to have from teachers, psychologists, and coordinators at school; then, he was utterly alone. He explains it as follows,

> Let's say that it has been a complicated process because I have had to fight alone, the teachers do not know it (about his dyslexic condition), and for me, it is problematic because I have to solve things myself.

Esteban explains that it is not easy for him to communicate with others about his condition, especially with teachers, and he clearly states that one of the reasons for this situation is social acceptance:

> I think it's an internal struggle like you're trying to feel normal and admitting that someone is not comfortable in front of someone. You always try to fit in.

He adds,

> Also, I think that at the university, the professors are very closed. They don't allow you to speak, to explain why I did things the way I did. Instead, they say something like 'ah! He didn't get it right, so his grade is 1' or 'ah! He didn't do it right, lousy job', there is no dialogue. [sic]

87

Esteban clearly understands that there are unfair situations within the university and that the lack of interest in the other does not allow us to understand that differences exist. He sees how conditions are the same and that there is no interest in the particularities of individuals or in their needs.

For Esteban, the rejection was not something unknown. He had already experienced rejection; he recalls,

> I think that, in a way, I feel a bit rejected, even sometimes by my colleagues. Sometimes they make fun of me. For example, when I have a presentation on a topic, some say 'oh, you said that word wrong' or 'ush, you're stuck presenting,' and they don't think that maybe I've been trying to learn what I needed to present for a week and what happens is that when the time comes to present it, I forget what I have to say.

These situations have created a barrier within Esteban, which does not allow him to be open to others and express what he truly thinks. He feels at a disadvantage and believes that he will never be able to be on the same level as his classmates or to comply satisfactorily with everything the teachers ask him to do.

In addition to his fear of telling teachers about his dyslexic condition, Esteban discovered that his classmates were people who had excelled in their schools, they had obtained good grades, and they were struggling to keep pace with their learning process during the major. He mentions,

> At school, it wasn't obvious. Still, when I get to university, I find myself in a situation where I am at a disadvantage with others because others have good grades, good averages, and I don't. I see others picking up on things faster, and I don't.

To make matters worse, Esteban found that many of his classmates are competitive and want to stand out continually. In this way, each activity that was carried out in class became a competition to be the best, which overwhelmed Esteban. Despite his great efforts to keep up with others, Esteban reached a point of feeling exhausted. He says,

> We all indeed have to make an effort, but I have been making a double effort in most activities. For example, teachers put a text to read, and for me, it is challenging because I am distracted. I cannot understand it at first, so what a person reads and understands in an hour takes me two.

Consequently, a feeling of inferiority grew in Esteban, to the point of feeling incapable of carrying out some of the requested activities. He expresses it as follows,

> You have in your mind 'you have to be normal, you have to be normal' and suddenly admit that in front of a professor, it means that I do not have enough capacity or that I need a different process, and maybe I do. But let's say I'm afraid, not that he takes it the wrong way, but that he underestimates me and that kind of thing.

And again, the injustices within the program made Esteban feel that he was not the same as the others. This situation made him think that they minimized him by putting him aside and not appreciating or understanding his effort to learn a language and catch up on language teaching classes.

Regarding learning a second language, Esteban saw that his process, in the case of English, has been difficult. And it is that Esteban is not only learning English as a foreign language but also Portuguese. However, it is not that the language was complicated; instead, he alludes to the English language teachers' methodologies and compares it with his Portuguese language teacher. Esteban says,

> It has not been easy in the case of English, not because of the learning process but because of the teachers' methodologies. They are repetitive and very monotonous. Almost everyone follows the book and does not separate from it. On the other hand, the Portuguese teacher is more dynamic, and that has been very good.

As with the English language teachers, Esteban has not told the teacher anything about the reason for his dyslexia. Still, he feels that he is more valued, confident, and safer in learning this language, "I feel smart and happy because I think I can, while in English I cannot," he said.

However, not everything has gone wrong for Esteban. There are some advantages to being dyslexic, especially in the teaching process. He says, "I honestly think this has been good because it makes you more aware of the difference." Esteban has had the privilege of working in schools that follow inclusive education principles and also teach children with conditions such as blindness, autism, dyslexia, etc. This school experience has made him worried about his students facing the same situation as he. He says being there "has made him look for tools to teach them," focusing on each student's particular need. For example, Esteban says,

> In my classroom, there was a deaf child, and the teacher of that course told me 'no, leave it there,' and I said 'but how can I leave it there,' so what I did was look for other alternatives, and it occurred to me that he could work with clay.

In this way, Esteban was able to empathize with the child and understand that his particular need is not a limitation for working in the English language class. Instead, he saw the opportunity to guide him and open the way to other teaching alternatives.

89

> Ultimately, being a PELT with dyslexia has motivated Esteban to help others. He said, Living what I have lived has allowed me to enjoy what I do and benefit children's lives even a little bit, so this has allowed me to take advantage of it to give something better to my students.

Esteban turned his dyslexic condition into a strength. However, it was not easy because he was often carried away by negative feelings and the affective impact of rejection. However, giving up and suffering were not options. He kept getting better and stronger. He said,

I do think it has an emotional effect, because for me, something that I do is not as good as what other people do, and that affects you a lot, but I think you should take that and make yourself stronger.

Natalia's Experience

Natalia has always wanted to be a teacher. From a very young age, her mother, an assiduous Christian, took her to the "Escuelita Dominical," initially to learn. Still, over time, it was Natalia who taught others. Since then, her goal was to become a teacher. Natalia felt that being a teacher was being herself, and she did not want to get away from what she longed for. So, when Natalia finished high school, she enrolled in the initial language teacher program at one of Bogota's public universities. Her dream was getting closer and closer to being fulfilled.

Natalia is dyslexic, a condition that she shares with other members of her family. When Natalia was still in school, she had some problems due to her condition. She remembers that staying in the schools where she studied was difficult for her. For example, when she was in eighth grade, she dropped out of school and did not return to school until she entered college; that is, she was educated at home. But this situation did not stop her desire to learn English and to learn how to teach it.

Natalia had some difficulties learning English as a foreign language. She remembers,

I don't have such marked dyslexia in written form in Spanish because since I was a child, I got used to reading a lot, and when I remember a word, I only remember when it is written. But, in English, I tend to get very confused with the grammatical structure or confuse the words. For example, when I want to say white, I say black, and I only realize it when others tell me about that. I have a terrible memory, and that I am not good at following directions.

Still, despite her difficulties, she never told her teachers that she was dyslexic. She did not feel that saying this was necessary; she thought she could handle it and that she could outdo herself,

I need the challenge to learn. I need to feel like I can do something to improve. But that is my case because each person is a different world.

Natalia really feels that her condition does not limit her and that it does not make her different from others. Nevertheless, Natalia had to face some specific situations daily in the classroom, and her teachers did not notice them,

I get bored when a teacher starts repeating things he has said because I got used to the fact that he had to pay more attention to detail, write, etc. I am having trouble with numbers because I have difficulty writing number sequences. I also confuse the right with the left, I have little perception

of personal space, I am a bit clumsy, and I often confuse the opposites, which generates impressive bullying. But since I know how to handle it, eventually, this creates defense mechanisms to deal with everyone.

For Natalia, remaining silent and not telling anything about her condition was better. She was sure that she was not worth it, that neither the teachers nor her classmates could understand her and that she would be just wasting time. Eventually, she began trying to overcome her fear of teasing and her rejection. She has tried to create that self-image of an independent woman that has allowed her to move forward and not to give up in the process.

Natalia has already done some teaching practice and has been working in a cycle education institute[3]. During these experiences, she has encountered some obstacles as a teacher, which have made her think about her abilities to teach and about her own identity as a teacher. She mentions that she must make a double effort to verify mistakes in writing that is one of her weaknesses. She says,

> For example, it affects when you have to be super vigilant with what you write on the board because there is nothing worse than a teacher who writes something wrong and leaves the error there and that students learn it with errors. You also need to be very careful in the structures you are talking about, and if you make a mistake, you should correct it in time.

Natalia implies that she must be different from other PELTs, especially during the teaching practicum. Her identity as a teacher is affected by her condition because she needs to be more careful since she does not want to be taken as an unknowledgeable teacher. In addition, the student's reaction is relevant, and how she deals with different situations is vital. She adds,

> Students make fun of you when you make a mistake and more because in my speech, if you notice that I deviate a little and talk too much, but you say, 'Guys, that's learning. Because I am a teacher, it does not mean that I know everything perfectly'.

These experiences have helped Natalia see her dyslexic condition from a different perspective. She has even found some positive things about having this condition as she says,

> I have never seen dyslexia as a learning disability but rather as a way of seeing and understanding the world. It becomes a strength. Although everyone overcomes their challenges in their own way, I feel that the good thing about this condition is that I become more understanding for people who do not see it that way and that there are many ways to be understood, so it makes me a little wittier.

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[3]   Cycle education institutes are regulated by the Colombian Ministry of National Education, and allow adolescents, youth and adults to advance in their secondary studies in a more flexible way than a regular school, since it gives the option of taking two school grades in a year.

Learnings from the Two PELTs' Experiences

From the narratives of dyslexic PELTs, we have found some commonalities and differences in identity construction. Likewise, we have been able to identify some coincidences with what was explained in some previous studies related to the condition and its impact on the professional development of teachers in training in terms of identity. Also, some ideas and thoughts of the PELTs coincide with those in previous studies related to the condition and its impact on pre-service teachers' professional development in terms of identity.

There are similarities between Esteban and Natalia. They have been facing many challenges during their lives. For instance, both of them experienced bullying. Esteban lived this experience when he mispronounced some words, and his peers laughed and judged him. The same happened to Natalia when she made spelling mistakes on the board. Esteban and Natalia also experienced rejection from their peers, and they usually were called lazy, slow, and awkward. Esteban and Natalia have experienced discrimination; this has affected their teacher identity directly. Due to this rejection, they could probably hide their difficulties so as to become accepted. This mask that they put on may protect them from future professional issues with students and the educational staff. When dyslexia is seen as a problem or an illness, the most probable response is that teachers with this condition will be rejected because that could affect students' learning process and cause difficulties with their students' writing and spelling (Hiscock & Leigh, 2020).

Another challenge is related to their learning processes. Esteban and Natalia expressed that they have had to face many difficulties in learning a second language. Both said that they had problems with pronunciation, spelling, and grammar. Pallaoro Moojen et al. (2020) noted that there is currently a broad consensus in the literature regarding the persistence of deficits in phonological awareness, low word reading accuracy, and lack of reading fluency in adults with dyslexia.

The professional development of pre-service teachers' identity is vital for teacher educators' role during the learning process. Their beliefs and actions shaped and reshaped their students' identity (Sardabi, Biria, & Golestan, 2018, p. 618). Some teacher educators ignore their students, which results in an invisibilization of their difficulties and their selves. Esteban expressed that he differentiated two different teaching methods; he exemplifies it through his experiences learning Portuguese as a third language. His teacher was very open-minded and assigned activities different from copying on the board and teaching grammar rules (which are not recommended for students with learning difficulties). Esteban expressed that it was a dynamic class, and thanks to his teacher, he felt comfortable. While his English language teachers were different, Esteban pointed out that the teachers are not interested in their students' differences; they are more preoccupied with scores and with working with the fastest and more productive learners in the class.

Natalia and Esteban expressed that their English language teachers are not prepared to face the situations that they have had to face with them, such as a lack of attention and time management while solving the different classroom activities. Their teachers are not much involved or informed about their condition. Esteban and Natalia think that some factors contribute to this, such as lack of communication between teacher-student, fear of rejection, and perceptions of the teachers and partners about themselves. This last factor is vital to professional identity because identity is constructed through social interaction. If they are rejected or seem as "different" or "bad" by the others, it implies an emotional affectation, for example, loneliness and frustration (Bolívar, 2018).

However, they took this feeling and transformed it into an armor. Both agree this is a personal fight, and that they could not give up. Esteban and Natalia see their condition as a challenge, in fact, a challenge that becomes a strength. They took advantage of their condition in different ways while teaching. They have some things in favor of their teaching; first, they have to make an extra effort, which helps them obtain refined results; this makes them more conscientious about the difference in the classroom. They project themselves as better and more open-minded teachers than the ones that they have found during their degree studies. They expect to be able to see students' difficulties and understand their situations and contexts. Then, they will be able to bring a change to English language education in inclusive classrooms.

This point is vital for professional identity. Moore et al. (2020) mention that teachers with disabilities can have an advantage in relating to their students with disabilities. They pointed out that it "facilitates positive professional identity development and a sense of purpose for teacher candidates" (p. 4). They see themselves as resilient and excellent teachers because of the identity they have constructed. However, the fact that they have to face a complicated process of identity construction is evident. The previous is due to their perceptions of what makes a "good teacher," which has been constructed during their whole learning process; furthermore, as they were rejected by reason of being dyslexic, they might have assumed that they were insufficient to fill this concept of "good." In fact, their professional identity, which should be constructed under the guide of education, was built by themselves and their experiences, the ones that have empowered them to discover who they can be as teachers.

93

Conclusions

There are a number of critical points to conclude in this research study. One of the most important is the necessity of more research in this field of learning difficulties, with dyslexia and other conditions that could affect PELTs' professional identity. This lack of information invisibilizes the problem and the population itself, thus creating more barriers for the PELTs; this resorts to discrimination.

Another important point is that PELTs have to face many challenges that affect their professional identities. Rejection, bullying, and academic problems make them feel inferior and lose their self-confidence, which affects their self-esteem, vital for professional identity construction.

The role of teacher educators is crucial for their students' professional identity development. They have to be open-minded, communicative, and understanding; they have to look for their students' needs and be attentive to those who may need more help. Teacher educators are the ones that contribute to future generations of teacher development. They have to teach theoretical knowledge, and the abilities required to face the unexpected, and this knowledge has to be coordinated with their actions. Maunsell (2020) highlights that "Foreign language learners with dyslexia should benefit from a positive and motivating learning environment" (p. 102). It means that teacher educators must motivate and provide a good learning environment, shaping their students' identity, besides teaching theoretical knowledge.

The last point to mention refers to the positive attitudes of being dyslexic; taking advantage of adverse situations is possible. Despite the challenges of PELTs in this condition, they have been able to reshape their self-image, transform their barriers into a strength, and focus on their role in their classrooms, especially with their students and their differences. It is evident that these PELTs with dyslexia see themselves as more suitable to teach those having the same condition because they can understand their needs and context by their own experiences.

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95

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HOW

Theme-Based Teaching to Promote Oral Fluency in a University in Colombia

La Enseñanza basada en temáticas para promover la fluidez verbal en una universidad en Colombia

Angela Patricia Velásquez-Hoyos[1]

Abstract

The present qualitative study with an action research orientation focuses on the strengthening of students' oral fluency in English through the implementation of six theme-based teaching workshops. The participants were students of an EFL pre-intermediate English language course in the institute of foreign languages at the Technological University of Pereira, in Risaralda State, Colombia. Besides the implementation of theme-based teaching, this study includes the speaking phases of rehearsal, performance, and debriefing to impact students' oral fluency. This project emerged from an exhaustive needs analysis which showed that the university's students, as future professionals, had difficulties with their oral performance i.e. their being unable to speak about topics related to their university life in English; hence, the need of including themes aligned with their academic contexts was highlighted with the purpose of helping them improve their oral fluency in English. The findings indicate that the students improved in their oral fluency in terms of vocabulary, intonation, and a reduction in the number of long pauses when speaking in English.

Keywords: oral fluency, smoothness of speech, speaking skill, theme-based teaching, university students, vocabulary range

Resumen

El presente estudio es una investigación cualitativa con una orientación de investigación-acción que trata sobre la implementación de seis talleres basados en la metodología de enseñanza por temas

1 She holds a Master in English Didactics from Universidad de Caldas. She is an adjunct professor in the Bilingual Teaching Program at Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira UTP. She recently coordinated the bilingual project in this department. She was a Fulbright scholar at Ferrum College, Virginia, in 2017-2018.

anpavelasquez@utp.edu.co

ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9743-5769

97

para fortalecer la fluidez oral de los estudiantes. Los participantes eran estudiantes de un curso de inglés EFL pre-intermedio del instituto de lenguas extranjeras de la Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira, en el departamento de Risaralda, Colombia. Además de la implementación de la enseñanza basada en temas, este estudio incluye las fases orales de ensayo, desempeño y reflexión para impactar la fluidez oral de los estudiantes. Este proyecto surgió a partir de un exhaustivo análisis de necesidades que mostró que los estudiantes universitarios, como futuros profesionales, tenían dificultades en su desempeño oral y no podían hablar sobre temas relacionados con su vida universitaria; de ahí que se resalte la necesidad de incluir temas alineados con sus contextos académicos con el propósito de ayudarlos a mejorar su fluidez verbal. Los hallazgos indicaron la mejora de los estudiantes en su fluidez en aspectos como vocabulario, entonación, así como una reducción en el número de pausas largas al hablar.

Palabras clave: conexión en el discurso, fluidez verbal, estudiantes universitarios, la habilidad de hablar, la enseñanza basada en temáticas, vocabulario

Introduction

As part of internationalization processes, universities in Colombia are making efforts to help students to achieve better competences in a foreign language, namely, English. Thus, with the purpose of enabling students to be part of international mobility programs, they need to strengthen their professional profile with different skills. Most of these programs require high English language proficiency levels, especially in oral fluency. In fact, The National Accreditation Council (2020), the governing body that establishes the criteria that higher education in Colombia must follow, includes internationalization and second language learning as part of the requisites for accreditation. Therefore, universities in Colombia have adopted a second language policy that includes having students taking English language courses.

This is the case of the Technological University of Pereira in Colombia, a state university in Risaralda, Colombia, which, committed to help students to achieve better English language proficiency levels, offers free English language courses through its Institute of Foreign Languages. After conducting a needs analysis[2], in one of those courses, difficulties in students' oral performance in English were identified; especially, problems with oral fluency. For example, students' speech had long pauses, they did not have enough vocabulary to talk about their academic life, and they could not have continuous speech because they used isolated words without being able to connect ideas. Since students were unable to talk about their academic experiences, a theme-based teaching approach seemed to constitute the strategy that could help students to accomplish better fluency and learn vocabulary to talk about their academic experiences in English. Hence, this study emerged as a need to

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[2] The data collection instruments used in the needs analysis stage were: a students' questionnaire, a journal completed by the teacher-researcher, an outsider observation carried out by an English language teacher, and students' artefacts in the form of recordings.

assist students to improve their oral fluency while speaking in English and increasing their opportunities of participating in mobility programs.

The relevant role that oral fluency plays in the language classroom is undeniable, particularly, for undergraduate students who would like to pursue scholarships and/or job opportunities in national and international contexts. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages –CEFRL- (Council of Europe, 2018), oral fluency is a measure of how easily a person can interact and share ideas clearly in a speech (p. 191). For the purposes of this study, I regard oral fluency as a mean for university students, from different university programs, to grow professionally and be able to communicate in a second language. The aim of this study, then, is to analyze students' oral fluency process through constant reflection on the implementation of theme-based teaching in the English language classroom. Its importance relies on providing the research community, interested in the development of communicative abilities of English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, with a different understanding of a theme-based teaching approach to improve students' fluency components as range, connected speech, intonation, and pauses. In addition, this project excels at the possibility of encouraging EFL teachers to explore other alternatives in the class that facilitate the use of multiple strategies to overcome students' oral fluency problem. Another important consideration regarding this project is the contribution it can make to change students' perceptions toward the teaching of the English language. For university students, English is perceived as a requirement for graduation and not as an alternative to enrich their professional profile. After the implementation of this study, the participants could see the significance of learning English to be part of academic events where they need to have high levels of oral fluency. The following research question was raised in this study: To what extent can theme-based teaching lessons develop the oral fluency of a group of students in a pre-intermediate EFL course at a public university in Colombia?

Conceptual Framework

There are two key concepts in this study: oral fluency and theme-based teaching.

Oral Fluency

Nowadays, internationalization has become an essential word in different academic programs that are in the process of leading students toward professional networks. A good command of a foreign language, which involves the ability to communicate orally, can be an asset that facilitates becoming part of those networks. Consequently, there is a variety of strategies and approaches to develop students' speaking skills, mainly oral fluency. Koponen and Riggenbach (2000) define oral fluency as a performance phenomenon that includes the mastery of different components such as range, continuity, smoothness of speech, and

intonation. In similar ideas, Derwing et al., (2004) state that oral fluency is correlated with other aspects such as length, frequency, distribution of silent pauses, and non-lexical fillers. In a study conducted by Lestari (2019), oral fluency, as part of the speaking skill, is perceived to be a challenging process because it demands the speaker's language knowledge and skills to be activated in real time. The ideas proposed by Lestari were also discussed by Harmer (2015) when he says that oral fluency is determined by the speaker's knowledge about the topic being addressed, the time for planning, and the familiarity of the speaker with the topic.

Different perceptions regarding oral fluency emerged from a study conducted by Herrera and González (2017); they clearly identify oral fluency as an assessment indicator of spoken production in English. These researchers point out that oral fluency is the skill which allows learners to express genuine ideas verbally; something considered on certification exams such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) in which fluency is connected to coherence as "fluency and coherence refer to the ability to talk with normal levels of continuity, rate, and effort and to link ideas and language together to form coherent, connected speech" (IELTS, n.d., p. 3). In the same vein, the Educational Testing Service (2020) in their TOEFL examination presents fluency as a "well-paced flow", and in the assessment rubric for oral tasks, fluency is assessed by criteria of delivery (p. 1). This definition proposed on the TOEFL exam is similar with the one provided on the MET exam (2020) in which fluency is assessed in the intelligibility and delivery descriptors.

Segalowitz (2010) differentiates three different types of oral fluency. The first type is cognitive fluency associated with speech production; it includes the knowledge of the topic. The second type is utterance fluency that refers to the components of oral fluency as smoothness of speech, intonation, and number of pauses. The last type is perceived fluency; this is the listener's impression about the speaker's efficient language production skills. Segalowitz's ideas can be complemented with what Richard and Schmidt (2010) propose. They similarly perceive fluency as the level of proficiency in communication that includes the cognitive ability to produce written and/or spoken language with ease; also, the ability to speak with clear, not perfect, pronunciation or grammar to produce continuous speech without causing problems in comprehending the message. Richard and Schmidt (2010) also mention that fluency provides the features that give oral speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including the use of pausing, rhythm, intonation, stress, rate of speaking, and use of interjections and interruptions. Even though Richard and Schmidt (2010) clarify different elements necessary for achieving oral fluency, their definition does not specify types of fluency as Segalowitz's (2010) does.

Related ideas about oral fluency components come from Blevins (2001), who points out that oral fluency has some components that let teachers know if a student is fluent or not at speaking in English. This author explains that the fluency components are smoothness of speech, intonation, and phrasing. Smoothness of speech refers to accurate, quick word,

100

grammar, and topical recognition and connection to express ideas clearly. Blevins (2001, as cited in Cadavid & Jimenez (2017) expresses that:

> Although students may recognize words, their oral speech may be expressionless and/or lack coherence. Accuracy deals with the correct use of the grammatical aspects of the language. Intonation has to do with the speakers' ability to use the appropriate words with an effective tone of voice for the audience [to] understand the main points of a speech. Finally, phrasing is related to the ability to re-state and re-organize the main ideas of the speech with the purpose of clarifying ideas. (p. 49)

Gatbonton and Segalowitz (2005) highlight that oral fluency should focus on the development of smooth speech, intonation, tone of voice, and rapid language use that is mostly mastered through repetitive practice and oral class participation. That is why this research paper considers that to build up oral fluency, students require certain components such as vocabulary range, smoothness of speech, natural pauses, intonation, and class participation. Cadena-Aguilar et al., (2019) explain the importance of working on all these components to be fluent. Thus, this research implemented theme-based teaching workshops as this approach proposes the inclusion of contextualized topics, tasks, and materials that enable learners to follow examples of fluent conversations and speakers.

Theme-Based Teaching

The theme-based teaching model is derived from content-based instruction, which has been implemented worldwide to teach subject matters instead of teaching the language structures in isolation. Cameron (2001) argues that, in theme-based teaching, students can practice the language through content that is connected to their real context. This teaching approach provides realistic and motivating uses of the language with meaning and purpose as learners learn content that they can use in their real lives. Cameron (2001) also states that theme-based teaching facilitates learners to become more proficient in a language as it allows them to strengthen language skills because they learn the language in context and not in isolation.

Brinton et al., (2001) explain that in the theme-based approach, there is a selection of topics or themes that provide the content from which teachers extract language learning activities that suit students' real context and necessities; in the case of this current study, university students who are required to take certification exams and participate in academic events. Chamot and O'Malley (1990, as cited in Brinton & Snow, 2003) propose a series of stages when planning lessons based on content; they suggest that it is important to begin the class by *setting the stage*; this means that the facilitator will activate students' background knowledge. The second stage is *providing input*, in which students are exposed to the content and the grammar presented in an implicit and contextualized way. Once the input is provided,

101

students will participate in a *guided practice*, in which students work in small groups developing a specific task that is under the teacher's guidance. Then, students continue with an extension activity, in which they need to carry out a specific task, for which the use of the content learnt in the class is evident.

In a study conducted by Tussa'diah and Nurfadillah (2018), theme-based teaching is conceived as a vehicle for teaching the language and content; that creates a sense of students' interest and enthusiastic participation as they are talking about themes of their interest. In a different study developed in the Colombian context, Padilla (2016) states that when working with theme approaches, there needs to be an integration of the content with the language and the teaching objectives. In this paper, the theme-based approach is perceived as an alternative that will give students the possibility to learn new vocabulary and increase their level of oral fluency through the implementation of the speaking phases proposed by Di Pietro (1987), namely: rehearsal, performance, and debriefing. In the rehearsal phase, students prepare themselves for the speaking task, writing some notes, and asking their partners and teachers for help. In the performance phase, students speak about the theme they rehearsed and learnt in the lesson. In the debriefing phase, peer correction, self- assessment, and reflection are fostered. There are some guiding questions to activate students' self-reflection about their fluency during the performance.

Methodology

This section aims at explaining the methodological procedures implemented in this research study.

Participants

Seventeen students at a public university in Pereira, Colombia, were the participants of this study, which was developed in a pre-intermediate EFL summer course in the Institute of Foreign Languages (ILEX) at the Technological University of Pereira in Colombia. This course was taken by students during their vacation time[3]; that is why it is called a summer course. The students enrolled in the course consisted of seven males and ten females whose ages ranged from 17 to 35 years old. These students belonged to different academic programs of the university, as children pedagogy, environmental sciences, industrial technology, ethno-education and social development, and veterinary medicine. Concerning students' English language background, they were exposed to English for over a year. Each English language course is sixty-four hours per semester, four hours weekly; these students were at an A2

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[3]   A period in which students are not studying their academic semesters, but universities offer summer courses that students take to help them enrich their professional development.

English language proficiency level having as a reference the standards proposed by the CEFRL.

Data Collection Instruments

During the development of this action research, I completed a journal that provided me with thoughtful insights about the class. In this journal I wrote information regarding the development of the class, oral tasks proposed for each workshop, the students' oral performance and oral participation. In this study, I used my journal as an instrument to collect this information since I wanted to have pieces of evidence from my own point of view as the teacher and researcher.

For this study, registering the data from another perspective was also necessary, in this case, an English language teacher completed an observation form (see Appendix A) that mainly aimed at documenting information such as the students' preparation, performance, and oral participation in each session as well as their reflection before, during, and after the speaking task. These observations were done every class for six workshops.

Moreover, to explore students' perceptions toward the class and their oral performance, I administered a questionnaire; this included eight questions that enabled students to reflect upon their oral performance. This questionnaire was administered in each session (see Appendix B).

Additionally, to accomplish the purpose of this research study, a number of the students' artifacts were collected to identify and reflect upon their achievements regarding their oral fluency in English. These students' artifacts came in the form of recordings, videos, and pictures, and they were gathered in the diagnosis and action stages (see Research Design below).

Finally, to assess students' oral performance, I designed a rubric with the following fluency aspects: intonation, vocabulary, smoothness of speech, and long pauses. At the end of each oral intervention, as the facilitator of the course, I assigned a grade from 1.0 as the lowest to 5.0 as the highest (see Appendix C).

Research Design

103

The research methodology of this study was developed from an action research perspective following the steps proposed by Burns (2010): planning, action, observation, and reflection. Burns (2010) describes the planning as the process of identifying the problem that students have; the second step, action, has to do with the pedagogical intervention the teacher researcher implements to solve the teaching situation. In observation, the teacher researcher collects the data that comes from the interventions. In the reflection step, the

teacher researcher reflects on, evaluates, and describes the effects of the action to make sense of what has happened.

I started with the identification of the problem which was the lack of students' oral fluency in English. Once I identified the problem, I started to read some literature to learn the best strategy to solve this problem. Since the participants of this project belonged to different university programs, the implementation of a strategy that would enable them to talk about their academic programs and participate in academic events, such as symposiums and congresses, was necessary. That is why, after the revision of theory and literature, theme-based teaching seemed to be the strategy to follow with the participants as this suggests teaching different themes through situations that are familiar to the learners.

Planning: Diagnosis Stage

One of the graduation requirements for students at the Technological University of Pereira is to take a proficiency English language examination that assesses reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. This examination is adapted from the Key English Test (KET). After the analysis of students' results in semesters 2018-2 and 2019-1, I found that, on average, students had similar difficulties in the four skills, with a slightly lower result for the speaking skill, as shown in Figure 1.

Based on the results of the English language proficiency test, I conducted a diagnosis in the pre-intermediate EFL course to corroborate whether these students still had the same difficulties. To analyze the data, I followed the parameters proposed by Creswell
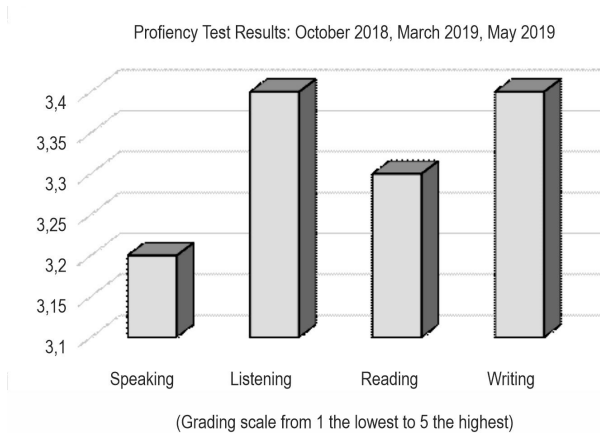
Figure 1. Proficiency Test Results from 2018-2 and 2019-1

(2008), who mentions that there is a need to digitalize and codify the information, generate categories, and count the number of occurrences of each category throughout the instruments; therefore, the data can be quantified using numbers and percentages to be analyzed and later described.

After the data analysis, the main difficulties identified consisted of the students' problems as regards communicating ideas orally in English, their lack of speech-coherence evident in the use of isolated sentences or words, and their use of a great number of long pauses when performing a speaking task in English. The diagnosis proved that speaking was not only an issue for the proficiency test takers at the university, but for the students who were taking the pre-intermediate English course. After reading the data, I came across four categories that were frequently repeated in each instrument: problems with vocabulary range, problems in pronunciation, as well as difficulties with oral fluency and absence of oral participation. Table 1 below illustrates the number of occurrences each category had after counting the number of times these were repeated in each data collection instrument; therefore, it was paramount to take actions to overcome this issue.

Table 1. *Diagnostic Stage Results*

Speaking Difficulties				Frequencies Totals
Categories	Data Collection Instruments			
	Teacher's journal	Outsider Observer	Ss' Questionnaire	
Problems with vocabulary range	2	3	1	6
Problems in pronunciation	1	2	1	4
Difficulties with oral fluency	9	9	15	33
Absence of oral participation	2	2	2	6

105

Action

The intervention for this study started with the methodological design of six workshops within the framework of the theme-based teaching approach. Workshops included the following themes: *Daily university life*, *social life at university*, *an academic experience*, *a trip to a natural park*, *making predictions about living and nonliving objects*, and *comparing interesting facts*. These themes were selected based on the syllabus of the course and the participating students'

consensus. The workshops were designed based on the stages provided by Chamot and O'Malley (1994), previously explained in the conceptual framework section above: provided input, free participation, and extension.

Table 2. Description of the Intervention

	Theme	Task
Workshop 1: Daily university activities	College life	Creating a 2-minute conversation expressing usual activities students do at university.
Workshop 2: Social life at university	Is social life important at university?	Creating a 3-minute photo-story based on 10 pictures taken.
Workshop 3: An academic experience	Anecdotes in my professional degree	For 3 minutes, talking about an academic experience at the university.
Workshop 4: A trip to a natural park	Types of animals	Planning a 4-minute conversation about a trip to a national park.
Workshop 5: Making predictions	Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future?	Preparing a 5-minute speech explaining some predictions for the future.
Workshop 6: Comparing interesting facts	Landmarks and natural wonders	Giving a 5-minute presentation by making comparisons about world facts.

For the extension part, in which the students would perform orally, I included three speaking phases suggested by Di Pietro (1987): rehearsal, performance, and debriefing. In the rehearsal phase, I practiced the vocabulary learnt with the students; they could have the chance of listening, watching, or checking a model of speech. They analyzed the model, took some sentences, or analyzed if the person used anecdotes or questions to engage the audience. Once we checked some samples, in the rehearsal, the students wrote ideas and practiced pronunciation. As the facilitator of the course, I monitored and assisted the students in this phase.

In the performance phase, the students presented their speaking task. While they were presenting it, I videotaped them and completed the assessment rubric that I designed to assess students' oral performance (see Appendix C). In the last phase, debriefing, the students worked in pairs and provided peer feedback by mentioning aspects they did well on or fairly well. Then, I provided the students with general feedback by emphasizing

elements of fluency as intonation, pauses, cohesion of ideas, etc. The students were asked to answer these questions: What went well? What did not go so well? What was the most interesting thing of your speech? What was the most challenging aspect of your speech? These questions fostered the students' discussion, self-reflection, and comments on their oral fluency and language learning.

Observation

In this stage, after the development of each workshop, I analyzed the students' speaking performance based on the entries in the journal that I wrote for the study, the outsider's observation, the students' answers in the questionnaire, and the points that each student got in the assessment rubric. To analyze the data provided by these instruments, I considered the a priori data analysis. In this type of analysis, the codes are developed before examining the current data; it means that these are pre-established. Creswell (2009) argues that a priori analysis is carried out to delimitate the data and to avoid losing the focus of the research. The codes I predetermined before the data analysis are shown in Table 3.

Reflection

This is the last stage proposed by Burns (2010) in action research. Every workshop was an opportunity to see what the students needed in order to develop their fluency; I evaluated the way theme-based teaching developed the students' oral fluency in every single lesson. I made decisions and changes for further interventions.

Results

I present the results according to the information collected in the six workshops. The first result has to do with vocabulary range and how this fluency component helps the students to be better at performing orally in English. The second result deals with oral participation as a key element for oral fluency in English. The third result describes the significant reduction in the number of long pauses while the students were speaking in English; the fourth explains the importance of intonation having a balance in the tone of voice, and the last one has to do with students' ability to connect ideas when speaking in English. The following table summarizes the analysis done from workshop 1 to workshop 6 by counting the number of occurrences that each code was repeated in the data collection instruments.

107

The previous table indicates the significant development that the implementation of theme-based teaching workshops had on the participating students' oral fluency and its components: vocabulary range, oral participation, pauses, intonation, and smoothness of speech. This significant development is explained as follows.

Table 3. Intervention Results: Data Triangulation
from the Six Theme-Based Teaching Workshops

Codes	Operationalization	Workshops Frequencies						Total
		W1	**W2**	**W3**	**W4**	**W5**	**W6**	
1. Students' effective use of vocabulary through themes	Code describes the use of the appropriate vocabulary at the moment of speaking.	16	17	17	22	30	42	144
2. Positive class participation	Code describes the students' interest towards the class represented in the students' willingness to participate orally and improve fluency.	0	7	9	11	14	14	55
3. Students' long pauses when talking about themes	Students' long pauses and hesitation in the oral task.	19	18	10	7	6	9	69
4. Students' lack of intonation while speaking	Students had low tone of voice, and intonation problems.	12	17	7	7	7	8	58
5. Students' lack of smoothness of speech while using themes.	Students do not connect their speech; they use isolated sentences.	12	13	10	5	6	2	48
Total		59	72	53	52	79	75	374

Theme-Based Teaching to Increase the Students' Vocabulary Range

One of the paramount benefits of the implementation of theme-based teaching workshops is the impact it has on expanding students' range. The first category, *Students' effective use of vocabulary through themes,* indicates that, as shown in Table 3, vocabulary increased progressively from workshop 1 to workshop 6. In workshops 1, 2, and 3, there were no changes concerning this fluency component; however, there was an outstanding improvement in workshops 4, 5, and 6. This category displays the highest number of occurrences from the analysis of the instruments applied in each workshop demonstrating that during the development of the interventions, the students gained new vocabulary that allowed them to express their opinions, establish discussions, describe, and participate actively in the lesson activities. This is explained by the outside observer:

> *The students are using previous knowledge and vocabulary they have learned in the course. They expressed their ideas using words from other classes; that has facilitated them to speak without too much hesitation and pauses. [sic] (OB4)*

Not only did the students improve their vocabulary but also they learnt the importance of practicing it in each lesson. At the end of the interventions, the improvement that the students reported was evident since they could recycle the vocabulary in the speaking tasks. As the workshops included an integration of language skills, the students could also recognize and use the vocabulary that was given in the different tasks such as reading a story, listening to a radio program, and writing an e-mail. One student expresses the importance of recycling vocabulary in their oral activities:

> *In this course, I learnt vocabulary. I like so much because I could use the vocabulary learnt in class one in other classes, so that me ayudó [helped me] to remember it and use it easily when I was speaking. [sic] (ST8)*

I highlight the fact that the implementation of theme-based teaching facilitated the learning of new vocabulary that was contextualized to the students' interests, needs, and context; a situation that enabled them to be better at performing tasks related to their academic programs. One student explains it this way:

> *All the vocabulary and the speaking activities I have learnt in the class have helped me in my degree. That is why, I am very sure that this will help me when I will be working. [sic] (ST5)*

Another significant outcome that springs from the applicability of the six workshops based on themes is how much this helped the students to be more proficient in the English language, particularly in vocabulary. This proficiency may allow them to get better job opportunities; consequently, they will likely have more alternatives to grow personally and professionally as manifested by a student as follows:

> *English is the universal language that is why, knowing vocabulary and speaking English well helps me to find a better job; particularly, this class has helped me to learn vocabulary about my program and improve the way I speak, and I am very sure that this skill will help me in my career. [sic] (ST3)*

The Impact of Theme-Based Teaching on the Students' Oral Participation

The second category displayed in Table 3 is *Positive class participation*. When the students participated orally in English in class, they had more chances to improve their speaking performance in this language; thus, oral participation is a benefit that theme-based teaching has on the students' oral fluency in English. Even though this category did not have a high number of occurrences in workshops 1, 2, and 3, it began to increase in workshops 4, 5, and 6. Themes such as *types of animals* and *social life at university* encouraged the students to talk and practice some of the vocabulary in English that they had usually learned in their academic programs. Additionally, the evidence gathered showed that the students' oral participation helped them gain oral fluency in English. This is notable from an excerpt taken from the outside observer in workshop 6:

109

Students participate during the class very actively. They take the initiative to participate and it is evident that they want to practice grammar because they ask the teacher if what they are saying is correct or not. They also respond to elicitation very well and it is seen progress in terms of speaking skills and students' fluency. [sic] (OBS6)

The students also responded effectively to elicitation impacting significantly their oral participation and fluency in English, as shown in this piece of evidence from my journal in workshop 4:

Students participate during the class very active. They respond to elicitation very well and it is seen progress in terms of speaking skills and students' fluency. [sic] (Jou4)

In similar terms, the students agreed with the idea that having an active oral participation in class helped them achieve better levels of oral fluency in English. In workshop 5, one student responded:

I think that the classes helped me to improve my class participation because the topic of the class was interesting, and this engaged me to participate orally and to be more prepared when I had to speak. [sic] (ST1)

Effective Use of Speech Pauses

Another relevant outcome from the implementation of theme- based teaching workshops is the decrease of the students' long pauses while performing orally in English. Table 3 above illustrates the way the *students' long pauses (when talking about themes)* changed progressively from workshop 1, with 19 occurrences, to workshop 6 with 9 occurrences. Although the number of long pauses increased in workshop 6 in comparison to workshop 5, these pauses helped the students to have a better transition from one idea to another. At the initial point of the workshops, the students were unable to communicate ideas effectively, produce continuous speech, or connect ideas properly in English; they stopped without completing the idea. In workshop 1, one student answered:

In this class I felt that my oral performance was not good, I used the vocabulary learnt in class, but I stopped many times because I didn't know how to conectar [connect] the words and the ideas I wanted to say. [sic] (ST9)

At the end of the six workshops, the students were able to maintain the flow of the conversation, continuously speak about a topic, and think about a transition to continue with a different idea. The pauses that they made were positive because those assisted the students in reflecting how to connect ideas and use the appropriate vocabulary to present complete thoughts in their speech in English as indicated in the following excerpt from the observation in workshop 6:

> *Students' speeches have some pauses but they were able to continue speaking. They did not use isolated sentences, they stopped for a little time, but they were able connect their ideas and switch from one topic to another with coherence. [sic] (OB6)*

The presence of pauses in the students' oral performance after the six workshops is a sign of their new language awareness; the students certainly engaged in pausing, but it enabled them to select the words and ideas that they wanted to express in English better.

The Role of Theme-Based Teaching in the Students' Intonation

In the category *students' lack of intonation while speaking,* the most successful outcome that the theme-based teaching implementation reported in terms of intonation was the improvement of the students' voice projection and tone of voice. As Table 3 displays, this category did not have a constant progression during the six workshops given the fact that, in each workshop, this had different ups and downs. The analysis of the collected data for the study demonstrated that, at the beginning of the intervention, the students knew little about how to intonate words and sentences properly in English, or how to phrase the words or how to raise or lower intonation in order to catch the audience's attention. The following entry taken from the outside observer in workshop 2 exemplifies this:

> *Students had difficulties with tone of voice and phasing. It was difficult to understand due to their voice projection. [sic] (OB2)*

At the end of the intervention, the students made progress in their tone of voice. Therefore, tone of voice was a significant improvement for the participants of the study because the students listened to words in context and imitated intonation patterns. My journal in workshop 6 showed the progress that they made regarding intonation.

> *Students' intonation was outstanding. They had good voice projection and it was easy to understand what they said. They used a variety of fillers that made the speech more fluent; they played with the intonation to call people's attention. [sic] (TJou6)*

The students then understood the importance of intonation, mainly tone of voice, in their speaking performance in English as a key feature of being a fluent speaker. In workshop 5, one student answered:

> *During my oral intervention, I had good intonation and pronunciation. In these classes, I improved a lot my tone of voice which made me sound more fluent: [sic] (ST3)*

111

This excerpt explains how the implementation of theme-based teaching and the speaking phases of rehearsal, performance, and debriefing helped the students to reflect and overcome the major difficulties that they had in terms of intonation. The students expressed that they achieved a better speaking performance since playing with their tone of voice made their speeches sound more fluent in English.

Theme-Based Teaching to Build up the Students' Smoothness of Speech

Smoothness of speech is one of the most relevant factors that influenced the development of oral fluency. It is true that range, intonation, and pauses play a vital role when building up oral fluency in English, as pointed out by Gatbonton and Segalowitz (2005). *The category students' lack of smoothness of speech while using themes* showed that the students were unable to connect ideas properly in workshop 1, whereas, in workshop 6, only with 2 occurrences, they were more coherent at the moment of speaking in English. Thus, they could switch from one idea to the other by using proper vocabulary, intonation, and pauses. This is evident in the outside observer's notes in workshop 5.

> *Students spoke with coherence and appropriate flow. They used complete sentences and they connected them quickly. Their speeches were not made up of isolated sentences. It was a set of ideas that one leads to the other. [sic] (OB5)*

At the beginning of the intervention, the students' speech in English lacked smoothness; they probably used certain vocabulary but showed long pauses and performance at the sentence level. They struggled to connect ideas, as noted in the following piece of data taken from the students' artefacts in workshop 1:

> *I usually, I have class in the morning. After class, eh I go to library a read a book, I go to do exercise, for example: eh fitness weight in the field, mmm also I like do friends, I like go to. [sic] (ST3)*

After being exposed to six theme-based workshops, the students' speeches in English showed a high level of smoothness because they spoke with a certain degree of spontaneity. Additionally, the students could use the appropriate grammar and vocabulary in the right context, and transition words and English language fillers to move from one idea to the other. Being those characteristics relevant in a smooth speech, theme-based teaching facilitates the development of the students' oral fluency through contextualized lessons. The following is an example taken from the students' artifacts in workshop 6; it illustrates the students' progress from workshop 1 to workshop 6.

> *In two days I am going to start studying my academic semester at the university. So far, I want to enjoy my holidays. For example, this afternoon I am going to read about different types of animals and their habitats because I want to be prepared for this semester that is about to start, by the way, I study veterinary. Eh in the weekend, I am going to visit my grandmother. She has many animals in her farm. She has cows, horses, pigs. For me horses are as big as the cows and the pigs are eh eh more small than the horses. For my next holidays I am going to travel to Cartagena. I consider that Cartagena is hotter than Pereira, but Cartagena I think is bigger than Pereira. I am sure that in Cartagena I am going to see different animals as the sea horses, turtles and dolphins; they are all aquatic animals and need special conditions to live… [sic] (ST3)*

112

In summary, the results of this research study demonstrate the meaningful influence that theme-based teaching had on the students' oral fluency in English. Throughout the workshops, students' progress was notable, mostly in the reduction of the number of long

pauses, the effective use of vocabulary, the accomplishments in smoothness of speech, and the intonation in English. The implementation of theme-based teaching allowed the students to develop better levels of oral fluency, be able to express their opinions in class, create more elaborated and continuous speeches, and use proper intonation in English.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study sought to know the extent to which theme-based teaching develops EFL pre-intermediate students' oral fluency in English. As shown in the previous section, the implementation of six theme-based workshops facilitated learning new vocabulary for the participants of the study; this helped them create ideas orally and participate in class more actively as themes were chosen. The findings of this study corroborate Tussa'diah and Nurfadillah's (2018) insights about theme-based teaching being a vehicle for activating oral participation in class as it progressively enables learners to build their oral fluency. Moreover, the outcomes of this study are in line with the work of Gatbonton and Segalowitz (2005), who explain that to foster oral fluency, working on different fluency components is necessary, as smoothness of speech, intonation, and tone of voice. Those are achieved through constant and contextualized language situations.

On the whole, the study revealed that when EFL learners are exposed to highly contextualized lessons, as theme-based teaching workshops, they have more opportunities to develop better levels of oral fluency as compared to learners exposed to traditional teaching in which grammatical structures are the focus of the lessons. Thus, one outstanding pedagogical goal of this study is to help learners understand the importance of oral fluency in English for their future professional career; as such, themes allow learners to know about different topics that are useful in a variety of academic, professional, and social contexts. Eventually, this will help learners to participate in mobility programs or get better job opportunities.

The findings of this study can be beneficial for English language teachers and curriculum planners since, to strengthen oral fluency, proper planning of oral activities, which also integrate other language skills, are paramount to fulfilling learners' needs, interests, and learning preferences. These help me create a positive classroom environment in which EFL learners can become willing to participate. Further studies need to be conducted to shed light on the best uses of the theme-based teaching approach within the ELT field.

Furthermore, the results of this study point to the significance of designing theme-based teaching workshops by means of improving classroom dynamics; as in this case, the lack of oral fluency in English. Action research is an appropriate way to help learners overcome a problem, so I open the invitation to English language teachers to explore this type of qualitative studies to help learners to improve and reflect on their language performance.

113

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114

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115

Appendix A.
Observation format

Workshop N°	Development of the class (general comments)	Students' oral participation (general comments)	Oral fluency task (General comments)	Fluency process	Tick ✔
	Theme of the class:		Intonation:	Rehearsal	Students use the target language:
			Range:		Students ask other students questions:
			Pauses:		Students recycle vocabulary they already know.
	Activities and students' response:		Smoothness of speech:	Performance	Students' speech is understandable.
					Students connect ideas easily. Students use the right intonation.
				Debriefing	Students recognize mistakes.
					Students follow teachers' recommendations.

116

Appendix B.
Students' questionnaire

After completing the oral production task, reflect on your process before, during and after the activity. Answer the following questions according to your performance on the oral intervention.

1. During the planning of the oral activity, did you use the English language while speaking with your partners? How did you do it? _____
    _____
    _____

2. During the planning of the oral activity, did you require the help of a dictionary, partner, or the teacher? How useful was the help provided? _____
    _____
    _____

3. Did the presentation of the theme of the class help you in the creation of your ideas for the presentation of the oral task? Explain. _____
    _____
    _____

4. During the presentation, was it easy for you to present your ideas orally? Explain__
    _____
    _____

5. Select an answer (a, b) according to the following sentence. **During my oral intervention, I had good intonation and pronunciation**.

    a. Definitely not
    b. Definitely yes

6. Select an answer (a, b) according to the following sentence. During the oral presentation, I had to stop my oral intervention frequently.

    a. Definitely not
    b. Definitely yes

7. Select an answer (a, b) according to the following statement. I used the vocabulary presented in class.

    a. Definitely not
    b. Definitely yes

117

8. Select an answer (a, b) according to the following sentence. Suggestions from the teacher and my classmates helped me to perform better on my oral intervention.

   a. Definitely not
   b. Definitely yes

General Comments: Briefly describe your process before, during and after your oral intervention. _____
_____
_____

Appendix C. Teacher's assessment rubric

Student's name: _____

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5
Range: Has a sufficient range of language to be able to develop the task without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.					
Intonation: Has a clear tone of voice that makes the speech understandable and possible to differentiate language chunks.					
Pauses: Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although he/she may hesitant as she/he searches for patterns and expressions.					
Smoothness of speech: Can connect the ideas by using appropriate rate, range, intonation and there are a few pauses that do not affect the flow of the speech.					

Global achievement

5= The criterion is fully accomplished.

4= The criterion is accomplished although with a few mistakes.

3= The criterion is barely accomplished, and a significant number of mistakes occur.

2= The criterion is not accomplished, and many mistakes occur. Though, the presentation is possibly understood.

1= The criterion is not accomplished, a huge number of mistakes occur, and the presentation is not easily understood.

Comments: _____

119

_____

_____

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Promotion of Critical Reading through the Use of Political Cartoons

Promoción de la lectura crítica por medio del uso de caricaturas políticas

Willian Alexander Mora-Menjura[1]

Abstract

Critical exploration of socio-political issues has been a topic strongly carried out in English classrooms in the last decades. This article is the result of a research study that shows what the use of political cartoons reveals about the promotion of critical reading in an EFL classroom at a private university in Colombia. The study was developed with fourteen students under a qualitative case study method. Workshops, teacher journals and focus-group interviews were used to collect data. The emerging categories show the positive results of using political cartoons and the change that the students had in their thoughts and actions in both the academic and social context. In the results, the students portray how they have perceived the ELT classroom, the importance of being a critical reader of texts and contexts, and how the different activities helped them construct their own critical awareness concerning social and political issues.

Keywords: critical reading, ELT classroom, political cartoons**,** social awareness, socio-political issues

Resumen

La exploración crítica de cuestiones sociopolíticas ha sido un tema muy desarrollado en las aulas de inglés en las últimas décadas. El presente artículo es el resultado de una investigación que muestra lo que revela el uso de caricaturas políticas sobre la promoción de la lectura crítica en un aula de

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[1]   He holds a BA in Modern Languages and an MA in Language Teaching from Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia -UPTC. Currently, he is a full-time teacher and a member of IMCLE research group in UPTC, Sogamoso Campus. His interests focused on critical literacy, curriculum design, and applied linguistics.
willian.mora@uptc.edu.co
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4446-1349

121

inglés como lengua extranjera en una universidad privada en Colombia. El estudio se desarrolló con catorce estudiantes, bajo un método de estudio de caso cualitativo. Se utilizaron talleres, diarios de profesor y entrevistas de grupos focales para recopilar los datos. Las categorías emergentes muestran los resultados positivos del uso de caricaturas políticas y el cambio que tuvieron los estudiantes en sus pensamientos y acciones tanto en el contexto académico como social. En los resultados, los estudiantes muestran cómo han percibido el aula ELT, cuál es la importancia de ser un lector crítico de textos y contextos y cómo las diferentes actividades les ayudaron a construir su propia conciencia crítica sobre temas sociales y políticos.

Palabras clave: caricaturas políticas, lectura crítica, temas sociopolíticos, aula EII, conciencia social

Introduction

Most of the courses that English language teachers follow either at schools or universities in most Colombian educational contexts are not developed under syllabuses that take into account socio-political issues. Instead, the syllabuses in many institutions have been designed mainly to enhance grammar or communicative skills. It does not mean that these teachers only focus on these skills, but unfortunately, the material, the policies of institutions, and even tests are developed to improve the previously mentioned skills. The lack of awareness about what happens in reality starts emerging and increasing since these topics are rarely considered in the EFL classroom (Kaura & Sidhub, 2013). Likewise, Ortega (2009) argues that sociocultural and sociopolitical issues cannot be limited to only certain subjects or spaces of formal education, but these must transcend and generate transformation processes both in the subjects and their realities.

Based on Crookes and Lehner (1998), this occurs because there is a lack of teachers' training by professional learning programs in topics related to sociopolitical issues. That is why most English language teachers would prefer focusing on only aspects related to the language, instead of teaching topics that perhaps they do not know well. It must be recognized that many institutions have currently been under a process of curricular reform in order to make programs and subjects more related to social and political issues, with transversal and interdisciplinary syllabuses. In that sense, Echeverri (2020) states that since the end of the 20th century, there has been a great push in Colombia to promote the teaching of English, but still, curriculum and policies are developed under the European framework that seeks to improve proficiency particularly in terms of linguistic aspects.

Ramos and Aguirre (2011) state that universities that promote language teaching programs should foster skills in pre-service teachers in order to educate critical educators, with the idea that "teaching English is not only related to the structural aspects of the English language, but that it also accounts for the social dimension English language teaching implies" (p. 170). In that sense, Samacá (2012) highlights the importance of having a critical perspective, especially in a language teacher preparation program. She indicates how critical

practices "provide a new opportunity for pre-service teachers to re-think their pedagogical experiences for social transformation" (p. 194). Likewise, a research study conducted by Cortés and Rativa (2015) shows the change that pedagogy in Colombia had undergone between 1980 and 1990 as a consequence of the pedagogical postulates of Paulo Freire in terms of critical pedagogy within and outside the classroom.

But, why is it important that students in general learn to read images from a critical perspective? Nowadays, we live immersed in a world where a great deal of information comes to us through technology. Currently, the information that comes to us is strongly marked by the use of images, such as cartoons, where the different messages and meanings have to be carefully read to understand our society. In that sense Dominguez (2017) indicates that texts such as advertisements, signs, cartoons, and graffiti are carefully designed to transmit and depict a social and political message. The problem appears when readers do not have enough skills to understand this kind of texts, because it may mean that the communication might be broken or interrupted or simply, the message of the author is not well perceived.

In some activities about critical reading of images developed with a group of students of an English language intermediate class at a private university in Colombia, two main difficulties were identified: first, the lack of understanding and exploration of sociopolitical issues, and second, the lack of critical reading that they were supposed to be doing on the cartoons. Thus, two main questions were used for this research study: (1) What does the use of Colombian political cartoons reveal about the promotion of critical reading, and (2) What reading strategies do students use while they are involved in the practice of SCAMS (a technique used to read cartoons)?

This study sought to promote critical reading through the implementation of political cartoons about sociopolitical issues. The study was developed under a qualitative paradigm. The research method implemented was case study with intervention. Different sources such as workshops, journals, and interviews done through the focus-group method were used to collect data. Grounded theory was the method used to analyze the collected data.

Theoretical Framework

123

Critical Reading

Most of the theory found about critical reading defines this ability considering written and/or print texts. Although all those definitions are a fundamental base, it is paramount to mention that the main interest of this study is focused on visual/ text political cartoons. Critical pedagogy in the education theory analyzes social, political and economic factors, as well as ideologies that lie behind any national education system and the way teachers,

students, scholars and communities perceive education and the process of teaching and learning (Barrow & Wood, 2007). On his part, Mclaren (2003) argues that "critical pedagogy has been a widely discussed project of educational reform that challenges students to become politically literate so that they might better understand and transform how power and privilege works on a daily basis in contemporary social contexts" (p. 65).

Considering the previous authors and relating their definitions with the main aim of this study, it is found that critical pedagogy influences in the ways of production of subjectivities, and in the process of construction and generation of sociopolitical practices (Ortega, 2009). That is to say, critical pedagogy becomes a key component in the formation of students as social, critical, and aware human beings.

In addition to what was already mentioned, another concept that contributes to this study is critical reading. Freire and Macedo (1987) state that "reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world" (p. 29). Reading the word is perhaps a process that is mostly carried out inside the classroom. However, reading the world implies to comprehend, interpret and understand society. On his part, Hudelson (1994) claims:

> Reading is a language process in which an individual constructs meaning through a transaction with a written text that has been created by symbols that represent language. […] The interpretation is influenced by past experiences of readers, language background, and cultural framework, as well as the reader's purpose for reading. (p. 129)

Additionally, Buitrago (2010) states that critical reading:

> …not only seeks to develop the ability to interpret texts, but also, the ability to perceive the connections between social conditions and reading practices, to develop a critical awareness in order to take action in learning processes. From this viewpoint, it is important to encourage this kind of reading in the English class because it allows students to reach deeper ways of understanding and thinking, to stimulate language production, and to encourage autonomy in learning processes and independence in building knowledge. (p. 28)

Through critical reading, students become readers via going beyond the single text in order to investigate their reality; "this is the starting point of transformation which may develop in the long run into their choices for social change" (Short, 1993, p. 34). Wallace (2003) refers to critical reading in language education as a social and critical process where the text is the center of departure. She argues that there are very few studies based on critical reading in the ELT field. She states that for early or beginning readers, it has been seen that reading has to do with decoding texts, pronouncing words correctly or practicing language structure. On the contrary, for advanced readers, it has been seen that reading has to do with comprehension activities.

Political Cartoons

Cartoons are designed with images, gestures, or single words or expressions that are semantically created under certain semiotic systems such as linguistic, visual, gestural, and spatial that cause cartoons to be classified within what academics name a multimodal text. Kress (2010, as cited in Michelson & Álvarez, 2016), states that:

> Multimodality is concerned with the use of several modes of communication, their relationships, and the ways they are combined in processes of communication and representation. […] Social semiotics delves into how meanings are made and structured in processes of communication and acknowledges that semiotic acts and products are constituted and shaped through historical, cultural, and social uses of signs. (p. 236)

For Halliday and Hasan (1976), "a text is best regarded as a semantic unit; a unit not of form but of meaning" (p. 2). As these authors state, it does not have to do with the length or the form, but with the meaning. In that sense, cartoons are drawings that, besides portraying reality, are created with meaning to be understood, read, analyzed, and interpreted by others.

Neuberger and Kremar (2008, as cited in Mackay, 2017), state that "political cartoons have the ability to change people's opinions" (p. 28). This may happen because cartoonists portray a reality that sometimes people do not perceive in other sources. As these are not long texts that people have to read, the different images, expressions, gestures and short phrases are created with the intention to make people change their opinions and ways of seeing and reading their world (Ammons, King, & Yeric, 1988).

Dougherty (2002) states that political cartoons are an excellent classroom tool to raise students' critical thinking skills and to get students into classroom discussions about topics that relate to their lives. In order to interpret and understand a political cartoon, Dougherty (2002) argues that the reader must be familiar with social and political issues as well as the cultural context, and be capable to make analytical judgements.

Research Design

This study is based on a qualitative paradigm. Bell (1993) states that qualitative research is "more concerned with understanding individuals' perceptions of the world. It seeks insight rather than statistical analysis" (p. 6). Additionally, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) claim that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach: "This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3).

The method used in this current research is a case study design with intervention. This method is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in

125

its real-life context. According to Yin (2016) and Adelman et al., (1977, as cited in Nuñez & Tellez, 2012), case study responds to the need of "analyzing a particular phenomenon in detail during a specific period and in the natural context in which it happens" (p. 56). Furthermore, Hancock and Algozzine (2006) argue that case study is highly descriptive and "it employs quotes of key participants, anecdotes, prose composed from interviews, and other literary techniques to create mental images that bring to life the complexity of the many variables inherent in the phenomenon being studied" (p. 16).

I interpreted and described the experience, taking into account Stake's (1995) suggestion. He highlights the importance of revising the results of the intervention in order to determine three phases for the development of case studies. The first phase has to do with collecting information about the initial status of the participants. The second phase refers to compiling data during the intervention. These data were compiled through different sources such as the workshops and the teacher's journals in situ. The last phase has to do with registering possible changes which occurred after the intervention.

Research Problem

The research study took place in an intermediate English language class, composed of fourteen EFL students (five males and nine females from 19 to 22 years old) at a private university in Boyacá, Colombia; all of them from the Graphic Design Program of the university. In the class, a number of activities about discussing social issues that are relevant in their local context were proposed. At the beginning, the students rejected them because it was an English language class, and they were supposed to learn about grammar, verbs, pronunciation, as the syllabus states. After I explained the importance of exploring and analyzing Colombian social topics in order to create a different society in which people can comprise part of the solution of the different problems that affect everybody, they accepted them.

The students were given a text about sociopolitical issues, but they expressed that they were not used to this kind of written texts, neither were they used to discussing these topics. As most of them belong to the Graphic Design program of the university, I used different kinds of texts and political cartoons with images, messages, and symbols. The common activity was to read them, then, discuss them in groups; the students always had the chance to express their opinions about this kind of texts. I developed the same exercise in more than three sessions; the students seemed to have little knowledge and information about the topic of each cartoon. The way they tended to read them was mainly descriptive, not in depth. This allowed me to think about two possible difficulties: first, the lack of understanding and exploration of sociopolitical issues; second, the lack of the students' critical reading on the cartoons.

Park (2011) and Zyngier and Fialho (2010) state there is a lack of deeper understanding and critical exploration of sociocultural issues in certain fields of education, and that students hardly recognize their reality and the problems their society has. One of the reasons why this happens is that students are not exposed to this kind of issues, and when they are exposed to these topics, it seems that there is a general tendency to accept what authors of different texts state; students hardly question their opinions and representations (Kaura & Sidhub, 2013). By the same token, Samacá (2012) recognizes that critical practices allow learners to gain social skills to actively participate in a transformed and inclusive democratic community. These authors reinforce the idea of implementing critical praxis within the classrooms, precisely because there has been little formation and exploration of these topics, which could make the process of social transformation more difficult.

According to Huang (2011), "students mainly regarded reading as a means for information-gathering and entertainment and not for social critique" (p. 145). Likewise, Bosley (2008) states that one of the problems students in higher education face concerning reading is that high schools have mostly taught students to read receptively and to read for gathering information; students have not then been taught to read actively or critically and to construct their own knowledge as they read. Furthermore, Giroux (2011, as cited in Echeverry, 2020) argues that due to the social and political orientation of critical reading "critical pedagogies should pay attention to the formative culture that takes place outside the walls of a classroom or schools, which includes media" (p. 27).

Research Procedure

In order to promote critical reading in this group of students, they were asked about the most common sociopolitical issues in their local and national contexts. They all agreed on the following topics: corruption, education, minimum wage, peace, and poverty. After knowing the topics, the search and selection of specific cartoons started. Once the first workshop was created and applied, the researcher, author of this current research article, considered the students' opinions in order to design the next workshops.

For the design of each workshop, different activities, based on Bloom's taxonomy (1956), were considered from the level of difficulty of the activities; that is to say, in the first two workshops, the students developed a number of basic activities by enhancing lower-order thinking skills (as remembering, understanding, and applying); in the other two subsequent workshops, they were asked to develop more complex exercises to improve higher-order thinking skills (as analyzing, evaluating, and creating).

127

The four workshops were designed and applied throughout eleven weeks in one academic semester. To analyze cartoons critically, a technique called SCAMS, proposed by Martínez (2011), was implemented. The students applied this technique in the second and

third workshop. In the last workshop, the students did not apply this technique, because the researcher wanted to know how much they had learned about analyzing cartoons critically.

In 2011, Martínez proposed a technique named SCAMS to analyze cartoons critically. Each one of the letters stands for a different purpose.

- <u>Subject</u>: The readers are asked to identify the topic of the cartoon.
- <u>Caption</u>: The author suggests that the readers should recognize what the titles of the cartoons are, not only for identifying them, but for recognizing what their meanings are.
- <u>Actions</u>: The readers recognize all that is happening; in other words they describe movements, actions, and dialogues as well as what the characters are doing, thinking, or saying.
- <u>Messages</u>/<u>theme</u>: Perhaps this is one of the most complex steps, since the readers are asked to recognize what the author's point of view is, what the theme of the cartoon is, and what the purpose for making the cartoon is.
- <u>Symbols</u>: With this step, semiotics is remarkable since the readers are asked to analyze different aspects of the semiotic systems such as single letters, the size of the words, signs, images, body language, gestures, facial expressions, colors, and the position of certain elements.

The following table describes the sociopolitical topics selected to design the workshops, whether SCAMS was applied or not, and the different processes that the students carried out during the implementation.

Table 1. *Workshops (WS)*

WS	Topic	Objective	Cognitive Processes
1	Education	To engage students with vocabulary and questions related to social and political aspects.	Matching words, identifying and learning vocabulary, describing cartoons, learning about the topic, giving points of view.
2	Corruption	To implement SCAMS to analyze social and political cartoons.	Remembering vocabulary, relating words, defining concepts, understanding the topic, giving points of view, interpreting information, understanding and applying SCAMS, analyzing and evaluating cartoons.
3	Minimum wage/ Peace	To analyze cartoons through SCAMS and to create my own cartoon.	Applying SCAMS, interpreting information, analyzing and evaluating messages, giving points of view, creating cartoons.
4	Education, poverty and corruption	To analyze cartoons, to relate them with my own context, and to portray my own perspective of my reality.	Remembering and using previous information, interpreting information, analyzing and evaluating messages, giving points of view, creating cartoons, relating and comparing information with their own local and national contexts.

As a final product, in the last week, the students were asked to write a short reflective text in which they expressed how useful the process was with the implementation of workshops and the use of political cartoons to promote critical reading.

Data Collection Strategies

Students' Artifacts

This is a tool to interpret and assess students' performance (McMillan & Schumacher, 2000). Also, these are "the range of written and symbolic records kept by or on participants in a social group" (Goetz & Lecompte, 1984, as cited in Merriam, 1991, p.105). The following artifacts were used in the current study:

- Workshops in which the students had to develop different activities such as describing and creating images, giving points of view, defining concepts, analyzing the local and national situation, and answering questions about sociopolitical topics portrayed in political cartoons.

- A final reflection paragraph, in which the students were asked to write a passage about the use of SCAMS and the implementation of the political cartoons in the workshops. They developed this task at the end of the process.

Teacher Journal

In vivo journals were used to register the different ideas, knowledge, and opinions that the students had while engaged in the development of the different activities. Freeman (1998) states that journals are useful instruments to record thoughts, reflections, and different aspects that researchers observe in their researched population.

Focus Group

This method allows one to know and study the different opinions and attitudes of a determined public. Commonly, it is associated with interviews, although the researcher (moderator) does not ask direct questions of a specific participant (Yin, 2016).

129

I used this method to discuss the perspectives of a group of eight of the participating students; also, their final reflections and opinions in terms of the whole process to promote critical reading through the use of political cartoons, the considerations of these topics inside the EFL classroom, and the discussions raised about social and political issues of Colombia. This instrument was applied at the end of the process.

Data Analysis

I based the analysis on the grounded theory method, which looks to find new concepts, constructs, categories, and relationships established among them. Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that in grounded theory, theory emerges from the data collected through the implementation of an inductive process rather than a deductive one. Núñez and Téllez (2012) highlight the effectiveness of this approach, because "it involves the constant comparison of the data in order to group and classify them for the construction of a theory" (p. 63).

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), analyzing the data requires a constant revision and reading of the information collected from the sources that were applied in the study. In this case, I decided to use the three instruments to collect the information: the students' artifacts gave me insights about their position and understanding in order to determine what the use of Colombian political cartoons reveals about the promotion of critical reading. The teacher journal provided me with data related to the reading strategies that the students used while they were involved in the practice of SCAMS technique to read cartoons. Finally, the focus-group interview expanded and clarified the data collected with the other instruments as well as informed what the students had experienced during the implementation of the project.

I based this data analysis on three principles of the grounded theory, as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Urquhart (2013). For these authors, there are mainly three phases to analyze data. The first phase accounts for the first step which is the *open coding*. In this phase, I went through the data gathered and underlined all relevant information that was found in each of the instruments. I read and reviewed the data, then I classified the information by using charts in which I recorded the frequency of the answers and commented on what those answers could mean.

Then, I followed the next step which is *central or axial coding* in order to highlight and select the suitable information related to the research question of this study. In this phase, I identified relationships among the open codes and found some similarities in the different instruments used to collected data. Then, I proceeded to identify the common patterns and grouped them into concepts to make sense of them. I named them and could mainly identity two big categories; I established some subcategories for each one of the emerging codes. Figure 1 shows the name of the initial categories.In the last phase, *theoretical or selective coding*, I considered a number of theories and authors that supported the different categories and subcategories. "Theoretical coding is when we relate the codes to each other and look at the nature of the relationships between those codes" (Urquhart, 2013, p. 26).
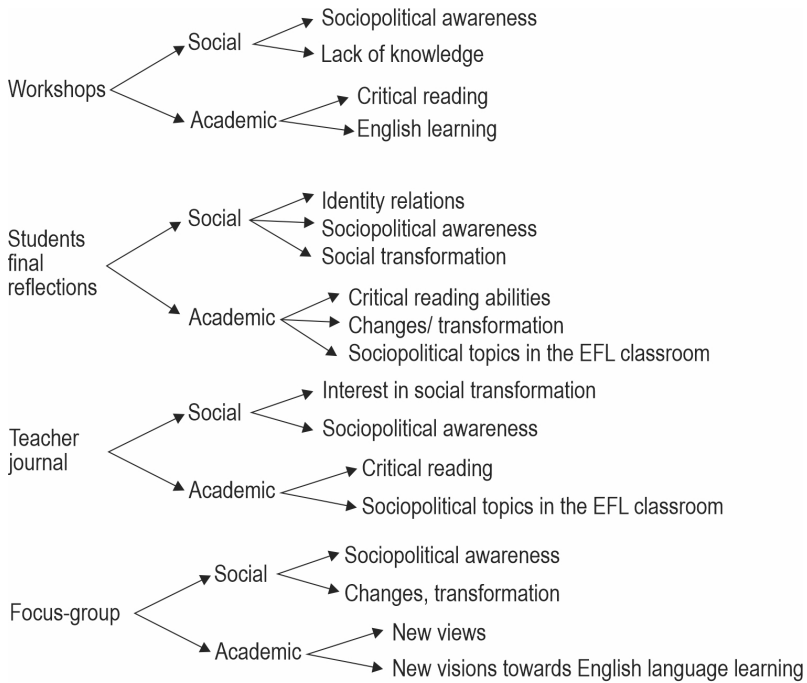
Figure 1. Example of Central Coding Process

In the process of indicating data, I used a number of codifications to identify the parts of the information from each collection instrument. To understand the source of the different excerpts in the section of Findings, I illustrate the codifications adopted in this study in the table below.

Table 2. Codifications of Instruments

Codification	Meaning
FG	Focus group
WS- 3	Workshop No. 3
FR	Final Reflection
TJ- 2	Teacher's journal
Designer, Pickles, Chepe…	Pseudonym of students

131

Findings

In this section, I present the findings of the research study. These are divided into categories and subcategories. A number of excerpts were considered and analyzed to support the name of the emerging categories. These were related to the main question. I divided each category into two subcategories as shown in the following table.

Table 3. *Emerging Categories and Subcategories*

Research Question and Sub-Question	Categories	Subcategories
What does the use of Colombian political cartoons reveal about the promotion of critical reading in students of an intermediate English class at a private university?	1. A critical reader inside and outside the classroom	1.1 I am a social human: My world, my country, my society, myself 1.2 The English classroom: A space to see and transform reality
What reading strategies do students use while they are involved in the practice of the SCAMS technique to read cartoons?	2. Building the pathway to become a critical reader	2.1 Opening my mind 2.2 Establishing relationships

A Critical Reader Inside and Outside the Classroom

This category is closely related to the common concept of critical reading as stated by Freire and Macedo (1987). The different excerpts presented here were carefully selected because these are representative and meaningful for the study. The following excerpt portrays the importance of developing activities related to critical reading to generate changes.

> It is important that we do this activities in the classroom, to make good actions in our house and society, in this way, we generate a positive change for the country and there will be a better future for all. [sic] (FR, Canelita)

When *Canelita* states that "it is important to develop these activities within the classroom and also to make good actions in the house or society," she intends to take what she learns in the classroom to her real life. This was one of her final reflections after the process finished. This excerpt relates to the idea of transformation from the classroom.

I Am a Social Human: My World, My Country, My Society, Myself

This first subcategory accounts for the exploration, description, and analysis of this study in relation to the social context. This subcategory emerged from one of the contexts where the students had changes: the social context. I found that the different activities carried out in the classroom helped the students to think, reflect and be more aware about the different social issues of their world. I was aware of this in the following entry of my teacher journal:

> A student tells me that the failure in the plebiscite about the peace processes affected their community drastically, because they have had to live war for more than 20 years. She says that she thought that plebiscite was going to be the end of many years of violence. For her, it was frustrating that people who voted "NO" do not know or have not lived war as she has. [sic] (TJ- 3)

Her opinion allows me to see that she has suffered war and is perhaps more conscious of this problem than those who have not lived it. Her situation, context, and experience made her become a person who thinks about how hard and frustrating it is to live surrounded by violence. In this respect, Sager (2013) says, "our realities are shaped by our context, and we need to be critical about this situation" (p. 9). The excerpt below portrays how the English language classroom is perceived in this institution.

> The different images make part of our own culture and symbolize fundamental aspects of our daily life. However, these topics are rarely taken into account in the classroom. Maybe, people from Law and Political Science see these topics, but everybody should see them. [sic] (FR, Katepache)

Katepache is conscious of the importance of these topics within the classroom. When she expresses that everybody should study these topics, it allows me to think about the lack of opportunities that the students have had to make a critical exploration of these topics in the English language classroom. The following response highlights the importance of critical reading activities and the way that a research study like this fosters positive changes in students.

> Perhaps we can't do too much against corruption, but education and project like this have taught me that through critical reading I can perceive these issues different and that the solution to those problems starts from me. Unfortunately, although you don't agree with the decisions that politicians make, you finally have to accept them. So, we, young people can have the power to transform that reality. [sic] (WS-2, Pickles)

133

When Pickles refers to the important role that education plays when facing social and political issues, she makes it clear that knowledge and comprehension are possible ways to transform reality. However, critical reading demands from people the use of reading as a means to label the world from their own perspectives, then, to transform those social inequalities (Freire & Macedo, 1987). This student clearly has a critical point of view, because

she analyzes the way they can change people's minds towards the idea and concept of politics; this can be a starting point of transformation which may develop their choices for social change in the long run (Short, 1993).

The English Classroom: A Space to See and Transform Reality

This subcategory emerges from the information related to the academic context, the English classroom. Nowadays, with the emerging theory of decolonization proposed by some authors such as Walsh and Mignolo (2018), and Quijano (1998), having students reflect on "the political, economic and social environment in which they grow up" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 174) becomes important. The excerpt below shows a number of positive patterns in regard to the English language class and activities developed during the process.

> *During the development of the activities, the teacher implemented a new methodology that I had not seen in any other class of English. The use of cartoons helped to wake up our brain and make it wonder about the possible and different ways to read and understand reality and give solution to the problems of the world. [sic] (FR, Rivers)*

When Rivers states that the use of political cartoons helped him to "wake up" his brain and wonder about the different ways to understand reality in order to give solutions, the use of these tools in the classroom becomes paramount in order to contribute to the transformation of society. Awareness of social issues should be a topic considered in the English language classroom as stated in the next excerpt:

> *At the beginning it was weird for me to see these topics in the English class. Normally we see these topics in other subjects, but it was interesting to contribute with solutions of different problems from the class of English. It is a problem that affect everybody. [sic] (FG, Laupa)*

In regard to what Laupa expresses in the interview after asking about the relationship between the English language class and sociopolitical topics, she mentions that social problems affect everybody and that these topics should also be considered in the English language classroom. This allows highlighting the crucial role of education when facing and treating sociopolitical issues.

Building the Pathway to Become a Critical Reader

This category is closely related to the process and reading strategies that the students used to read cartoons through a technique called SCAMS. The different activities that the students developed gave me, as the researcher, insights about the possible strategies that the students used when reading critically. In this category, two subcategories emerged: Opening my mind and establishing relationships.

Opening my Mind

This subcategory arises from the transformation that the students made at the end of the study after having passed through different cognitive processes that allowed them to foster their critical reading. The name of this subcategory shows that it is closely related to one of the concepts of critical reading that Jurado (2008) proposes. For him, critical readers are characterized by being skeptic, not in the sense of not believing anything, but in the sense of being curious about the origin of the information they receive, and being open minded to the different messages that people communicate. The next excerpt illustrates what one of the participants thinks about the technique (SCAMS) used to analyze cartoons:

> *These scams are good to improve our intellectual capacity, are cool because we can give our opinion without fear to be judged, because we are free to express what we think or feel. [sic] (FG, Green Eyes)*

When Green Eyes states that they can give their opinion without fear of being judged, it relates to the idea of being open minded as proposed by Kruglanski and Boyatzi (2012). This means being willing to listen to someone without judging them or jumping to conclusions before they have finished. When the student says "we can give our opinion without fear to be judged," one could think that either they rarely have the opportunity to express, or that expressing in Colombia may be seen as a fact to be judged. The response below shows the difficulty that is sometimes present as to reading and understanding cartoons:

> *Sometimes I don't read cartoons because I could not understand the messages that the author wanted to give us, but now I started to open my mind and leave the common perceptions I had towards this topic, I started to understand the messages. There were some cartoons that changed my mind a lot. [sic] (FG, Sebas)*

Sebas states that reading some messages in political cartoons was hard for him at the beginning. Then, he says that one the strategies that he used in order to be able to understand those messages was to abandon the common perceptions that he had towards the cartoons and their topics; he had to open his mind to listen to and read the other. This fragment shows that promoting critical reading through political cartoons not only fosters social awareness in students, but also helps them learn to read actively and critically; furthermore, through the creations of their own written texts and cartoons, they could construct their own knowledge. The technique implemented to analyze cartoons was a good source for reading these from a critical perspective as stated in the following excerpt:

135

> *With the implementation of SCAMS, although you know how to read them, it requires that people analyze well what the title, or an expression, or an image want to say. My thinkings changed and now I consider I am more critical with respect to the social and political topics of my country. [sic] (FG, Drawer)*

By reading and analyzing the excerpt above, I can notice that his thoughts changed, as he now considers himself a more critical person. The way he had to be very open minded

in order to become what he is now is noticeable, as well as the way he thinks and reads his world as regards social and political issues.

The word *now* clearly means that he might consider himself acritical before the study. This reinforces the idea that promoting critical reading in education through political cartoons fosters students' becoming more aware of the different social and political problems of their society. Next excerpt shows a number of perceptions described by the researcher-author at the end of the process.

> *This is the last session and this time they are not using SCAMS. However, I can see that the way they reflect about the different problems is different. It seems they are more aware about social and political topics. Although there is a different interpretation, their ideas and arguments are more critical, deeper and stronger, generating awareness and new knowledge about these topics. [sic] (TJ- 4)*

Establishing Relationships

This subcategory emerges as one of the strategies that the students used the most while doing the activities; this also has to do with how the students established relationships among segments their reality, their own experiences, and the text. The following excerpt illustrates feelings, thoughts and perceptions of students registered by the researcher during one of the sessions.

> *Students are told to discuss about corruption stories they know in their towns, cities or departments. They seem to be worried and sad to realize about how money is stolen in this country. They argue that the future depends on the kind of professionals they will be and that they cannot only complain about the corruption, but to fight against it. They say that they did not realize about the big social and political problems of this country, till they started to study these issues deeper. All of them think about different ways to finish with this problem that they say is getting worse and nobody does anything. [sic] (TJ- 2)*

During this activity, the students had to discuss their own experiences in relation to corruption and their reality as students in order to be able to understand the text and be able to read it critically. Their commitment to contribute with solutions, the responsibility they had as students and future professionals took them to decode the messages hidden in the different images of the cartoons. The following excerpt shows a number of patterns related to social awareness, the English language classroom, and critical perspectives:

> *With the development of these activities we acquire new skills to learn new words, write texts in English and others. Also, one thinks more about the life that one lives in this country, about the education we have received, the problems of corruption, health, etc. and how from our career and from own actions we can manage to solve these problems. All these things help to understand the text from a more critical perspective. [sic] (FG, Designer)*

Being critical and aware of the different social and political problems of the world does not only mean to talk about transformation. It requires that people start not only thinking but also acting differently. In this sense, Giroux (2004) indicates that:

> Part of the challenge of linking critical pedagogy with the process of democratization suggests constructing new locations of struggle, vocabularies, and subject positions that allow people in a wide variety of public spheres to become more than they are now, to question what it is they have become within existing institutional and social formations, and to give some thought to what it might mean to transform existing relations of subordination and oppression (p. 35).

The above quote shows the effectiveness of the activities developed in class to think and reflect more about what happens around us. In the interview, Katepache states that it is easier to reflect on social and political issues because experiences are analyzed in relation to reality:

> *It is excellent to strengthen socio-political awareness through these types of tools, since they are not boring or tedious. These activities tend to remain more easily in memory, because one puts own experiences at stake, and see how those experiences are related to reality and that helps to think and reflect on how to make better decisions for the country.* [sic] (FG, Katepache)

The relationship among the reader's experiences, reality, and the text helps to shape the notion of critical reading from the reader's perspective, which is a basis for the construction of meaning and new knowledge. According to Jurado (2008), readers hardly develop critical reading because they rarely use strategies that can take them to observe and analyze their own reality, their prior knowledge and their own life experiences.

Conclusions

The analysis of the different data showed significant information in order to describe what the use of political cartoons revealed about the promotion of critical reading in an EFL classroom. The implementation of political cartoons seemed to be a great and useful pedagogical strategy to achieve this objective. Also, the examination of the different information collected for this current study showed that the different activities and processes carried out in the EFL classroom helped enhance the way the participating students read the world.

137

In that sense, I found that the use of political cartoons to foster critical reading brought changes mainly in two different but connected contexts: the academic and the social contexts. The students highlighted the importance of treating sociopolitical issues in the EFL classroom. This may be a big step to start seeing the English language not only as system but also as a means of communication and contact with the world. The transition from being a non-critical reader to becoming a critical reader took time, awareness, commitment, good habits, and being willing to be a different human, student, and future professional.

Colombian reality was brought into the English language classroom, where we as English teachers are many times in charge of considering other foreign cultures instead of using our culture and local context. I found a different way to create critical awareness in my students via political cartoons as well as to make them different readers of everything they see around them.

Pedagogical Implications

Critical reading requires a curious, probing stance towards both texts and contexts, where readers can understand, interpret, and establish relationships between what they read and their own reality. Based on the findings of this study, English became a different subject for the students and even for myself, as both a language teacher and researcher. For them, they practiced different skills and learnt new vocabulary related to social and political issues. In the same way, they fostered their social skills when listening to others and working in groups. For me, integrating the language skills and considering social issues in the EFL classroom were interesting teaching actions.

Finally, I now believe that this kind of topics, social and political issues, should become part of the English syllabuses of the different educative institutions. Nowadays, it is seen that the world is suffering in ecological, social, political, and cultural issues, among others. Thus, educating students to be aware of the different problems of their society becomes necessary in order for them to contribute with solutions. I suggest not forgetting that problems in education also make up part of political issues and that any teacher is called upon to empower students so that they can become critical humans, conscious of what they read in texts and in their contexts.

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139

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140

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University Students' Attitudes towards the Use of YouTube in the EFL Classroom

Actitudes del alumnado universitario hacia el uso de YouTube en el aula de ILE

María Victoria Fernández-Carballo[1]

Abstract

Noticing the generally lower-than-desirable English language proficiency level with which Spanish students start university, I considered trying a different approach in which the use of a familiar application would be introduced in the classroom. The main objective of this work is to explore Primary Education degree programme students' attitudes towards the integration of YouTube in the English language classroom. To this end, 46 third-year intermediate-level students participated in the study. It adopted a mixed-method approach, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The results show that, although participants mentioned some drawbacks, they reacted positively to the use of the platform. Given these results and the benefits offered, the integration of YouTube in the foreign language classroom is highly recommended.

Keywords: attitudes, authentic videos, EFL, university, YouTube

Resumen

Observando el nivel de competencia en lengua inglesa, en general inferior al deseable, con el que los estudiantes españoles comienzan la universidad, consideré la posibilidad de utilizar un enfoque diferente en el que el uso de una aplicación familiar para ellos se introdujera en el aula. El objetivo principal de este trabajo es examinar las actitudes de los estudiantes de Educación Primaria hacia la integración

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1   She obtained a PhD from the University of Vigo (Spain) in 2003 with a dissertation on CALL. She is now working as an Associate Professor of English at the University of Vigo. Her research focuses on various topics related to TELL. She has published her works in different journals such as *Computer Assisted Language Learning, Teaching English with Technology Journal Portalinguarum, Onomazein, EUROCALL review, Mextesol, or Glossa*, among others.
     victoria@uvigo.es
     ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8864-8332

141

de YouTube en el aula de inglés. Con este fin, 46 estudiantes de tercer curso con nivel intermedio participaron en el estudio. Este adoptó un método de análisis mixto, en el que se utilizó la combinación de los métodos cualitativo y cuantitativo. Los resultados muestran que, aunque se mencionaron algunos inconvenientes, la reacción de los participantes ante el uso de la plataforma fue positiva. A la vista de estos resultados y de los beneficios ofrecidos, se recomienda altamente la integración de YouTube en el aula de lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: actitudes, ILE, universidad, vídeos auténticos, YouTube

Introduction

This research study arises from the low proficiency level of English detected in many Spanish students who enter university. Considering that in Spain people start learning English at the age of 3, one would expect a much higher level[2] than what they usually reveal, but that is not the case, as several Spanish studies have already shown (Castilla Polo et al., 2012; Halbach et al., 2013; Ruiz-Garrido, 2007; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2014).

With the implementation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), exchange between European universities is favoured and minimum language requirements are necessary to study abroad. A large part of Spanish students do not meet those minimum language requirements, which in many cases prevents them from being part of this exchange. Travelling abroad and coming into direct contact with the target language (TL) clearly favours its acquisition (Culhane, 2004). Moreover, contact with speakers of the other language, in turn, seems to promote favourable attitudes towards it (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005). Besides that, one of the big problems we face in Spain, in general terms, is the lack of interaction with foreign-language speakers.

With these data in mind, we considered the need to find an alternative that was most similar to immersion in an English-speaking country, in which the student could be exposed to the language spoken by speakers of the TL and even interact with them. The answer was found on the most popular video platform that exists today called YouTube (YT).

YouTube is an Internet portal created in 2005 by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim, and acquired by Google in 2006. This network allows videos to be viewed and shared without downloading (as in streaming) and also to be included in other Web pages just by copying an HTML code. The platform allows, in a simple and free way, to upload any type of video and share it with whomever an individual wants, as well as to make comments.

Considering the ranking of the main social networks worldwide, according to the number of active users in April 2019, offered by Statista, YT has 1.9 billion users worldwide,

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[2]   A B1 or a B2 level (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), depending on the university.

with Facebook being the only social network with the most monthly active users[3], followed by WhatsApp, with 1.6 billion users. Moreover, 79% of users claim to have a YT account[4]. According to 2018 data[5], YT is used by 28 million Spaniards per month, who watch 36 minutes of content per day on average. Men aged from 18 to 24 are the most active users on the net, bordering on 80 minutes of daily consumption, followed by women of the same age range with about 65 minutes a day. Spaniards mainly watch YT videos via mobile phones (57.2%), PCs (26.3%), and tablets (16.5%).

Looking carefully at these data, men aged from 18 to 24 are the most active users in the network and they are followed by women of the same age range. University students fall precisely within this age range, which leads one to believe that their familiarity with the application will enable them to access it or use it in language learning without difficulty (Purnamasari, 2018).

Considering the importance given to attitude and motivation in the field of second language learning (Gardner, 1985), the purpose of this study is to investigate the perception that students have of learning English through the YT application. I will hypothesize that students' perceptions of it will be positive, since it is a tool that they use in their daily lives and are therefore very familiar with (see Balbay & Kilis, 2017; Purnamasari, 2018).

If the use of this tool provokes in them the desire to learn the language and different studies offer positive results of its effectiveness (see Hakim, 2019; Heriyanto, 2015; Kabooha & Elyas, 2018; Riswandi, 2016; Saputra & Fatimah, 2018), the inclusion of YT in foreign language learning and teaching will be thoroughly supported.

Theoretical Framework

According to the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML), in multimedia educational environments, students are exposed to both verbal (on-screen text or narration) and visual material (static materials such as photos or illustrations, and dynamic materials such as video or animation). Although verbal forms of material presentation have dominated education for a long time, there is evidence that student knowledge can be improved by adding visual forms of presentation (Mayer & Moreno, 2002). According to Lindstrom (1994, as cited in Raj et al., 2019), students remember and digest better when they see, hear, and do.

143

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[3]   https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/600712/ranking-mundial-de-redes-sociales-por-numero-de-usuarios/

[4]   https://www.oberlo.es/blog/estadisticas-youtube

[5]   https://produccionaudiovisual.com/produccion-video-digital/consumo-youtube-en-espana/ (ThinkWith Google from comScore VideoMetrixMarch 2018)

The combination of audio and images that students can access through YT has made many teachers consider including this tool in their teaching. The idea that input in different modalities improves language acquisition is supported by Paivio's Dual Coding Theory (Paivio, 1986, 1991). According to this theory, verbal and non-verbal stimuli are processed by two different systems (verbal and non-verbal) that are interconnected and interact with each other. The activation of both systems results in better recall and processing.

There are several works on the effectiveness of YT in terms of improving different language skills, such as vocabulary acquisition (Hakim, 2019; Heriyanto, 2015; Kabooha & Elyas, 2018), speaking (Riswandi, 2016; Watkins & Wilkins, 2011), listening (Saputra & Fatimah, 2018; Watkins & Wilkins, 2011), writing (Mayora, 2009; Watkins & Wilkins, 2011), reading (Watkins & Wilkins, 2011), or pronunciation (Watkins & Wilkins, 2011). However, other studies point out some disadvantages, such as lack of motivation to use this website as a medium to study English outside of class and develop some degree of autonomy (Kelsen, 2009); poor sound quality, pronunciation mistakes, and slang language (Ghasemi et al., 2011); low writing performance (Styati, 2016); or the fact that schools may have blocked the YT website because students might use it for non-educational purposes (Alhamami, 2013).

On another note, Gardner and Lambert (1959) discussed a significant relationship between motivation and second language acquisition. These authors introduced the concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation. According to Gardner (1985), motivation is one of the main elements that determines success in learning a second language. Motivation refers to the combination of effort and desire to achieve the objective of learning the language together with favourable attitudes towards learning it. Attitude towards the other community and culture is another important factor for language learning (Gardner, 1985; Gardner and Lambert, 1972). Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie (2017, as cited in Dörnyei, 2019), however, argue that the concept of integrative motivation has lost some of its influence. According to these authors, its link to the learners' attitudes towards the L2 community has become problematic when it comes to the learning of Global English, which is associated with a non-specific global community of English language users. Thus, the type of identification they speak of is one with a projected future image within the person's self-concept, rather than identification with an external reference group such as the L2 community, as occurs in Gardner's notion of integration.

144

Different recent studies have addressed the issue of university students' motivation and attitude towards the use of YT in EFL. Alkathiri (2019) analysed the attitudes of 30 Arab EFL students towards the use of YT in improving motivation to express themselves orally. The results showed that YT use represents an attractive method, and this motivates the student to participate. In the same line, Damronglaohapan and Stevenson (2013) investigated the attitudes of 78 business students towards the use of YT video clips to learn English

and improve listening skills. According to the authors, the results showed positive attitudes in general towards the use of video clips as complementary material. Similar results were reported by Purnamasari (2018) in his study on the perceptions of 26 Indonesian EFL students towards the use of YT to improve pronunciation in a blended learning environment. The author found that most participants considered it interesting and fun. The results obtained by Zaidi et al. (2018) revealed, as well, that the students were interested in using the application. Kabooha and Elyas (2018), on their part, investigated the perceptions of the participants towards the inclusion of YT for vocabulary learning. Most agreed that using YT in the classroom provided an interesting and engaging learning environment and motivated them to learn faster and better. Similar results were obtained by Kelsen (2009) when exploring the use of YT as supplemental material with 69 EFL students in Taiwan. Participants valued the use of YT to study English in a favourable way regarding the concepts of "interesting" and "somewhat motivating" in the classroom. Lastly, Silviyanti (2014) investigated the interest of 45 Indonesian students in the use of YT videos for listening practice, both inside and outside the classroom. The results showed that, according to the study participants, the use of the application motivated them to study English in the classroom. There are also studies concerning students' motivation and attitude towards the use of YT in EFL (see Kelsen, 2009; Silviyanti, 2014), which indicate that it is not so clear whether the use of YT in the classroom motivates students to use the application outside it or whether it contributes to the development of their autonomy.

Despite the existence of the above-mentioned studies, among others, there is still a paucity of research on students' attitudes towards the use of YT and the concerns that students may have when learning a foreign language through YT (see Almurashy, 2016; Zaidi et al., 2018). This research, therefore, aims to contribute to the literature by addressing this issue in an empirical way.

Research Methodology

Sample

The sample of this research is made up of 46 (n= 46) Spanish university students, 13 men and 33 women, enrolled in the third year of the Primary Education degree programme. The "convenience sampling procedure" (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011) was used in selecting the participants because of the ease of access to them. They were all taking the subject ICT for language learning, which the researcher was teaching when the present study was conducted. To ensure that participants did not feel conditioned by the study, they were not previously informed of the nature of the work. Students were told, in broad strokes, that they were

145

going to try a different methodological approach in which they would use the YT application for aiding them in learning the foreign language.

Research Phases

The first phase of the investigation was to identify the problem. On the one hand, I saw that the students' proficiency level of English, in general, was not the desirable one and, on the other hand, I realized that a number of students were not motivated, especially when the traditional teaching model, based on master classes in which the teacher takes a central role and the students a passive one, was used.

The next phase led me to think about the introduction of the YT application to supplement the language classroom. With this idea in mind, I located a YT video[6], created by a professional company, related to a topic of the students' interest, and added a link to it on the virtual platform that students were using in the course. I asked participants to answer an online questionnaire that consisted of two well-defined parts. The first part consisted of 12 general questions related to English language learning (Appendix A) and a second part contained five questions related to gender, access to computers, and previous experience in using YT (questions 1-5, Appendix B).

Next, I asked them to watch the short YT video and do some work on it. All participants had a computer with Wi-Fi connection and the activities they had to carry out included practice in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), plus grammar and vocabulary. The video selection was based on the attractiveness of an English-speaking place (Sydney), since many of the participants had expressed their desire to travel to an English-speaking country. Finally, they were asked to answer a questionnaire regarding the use of the application (questions 6-15, Appendix B).

The last phase of the study encompasses data collection and analysis, results and discussion, and conclusions.

Data Collection and Analysis

To achieve the research objectives, I created a first questionnaire (Appendix A) with ten general questions about students' general experiences related to English language learning. This questionnaire was answered before the students' in-class experience with the YT application.

Regarding the second questionnaire, although the possibility of creating my own was initially considered, I later decided to carry out the analysis of a series of questionnaires

146

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[6]   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9jnTP093zQ&t=85s

already created on the subject matter of the research, namely the students' perceptions of the use of YT in English language learning. Finally, I chose to adapt the questionnaire created by Kelsen (2009) by adding the last four questions.

The second questionnaire (Appendix B) consists of 14 questions, in which the first five refer to gender, access to computers, and previous experience in using YT. These first five questions were answered by students before working with the application. Questions 6 to 14 were related to their experience with using YT and were answered after their working with the application.

The questionnaires were completed electronically and sent to me through the virtual platform (Faitic). The research method used is a mixed analysis method consisting of a combination of the qualitative and quantitative methods. In the study, quantitative techniques were applied, through closed-ended questions (multiple-choice, "yes" or "no", and Likert) but also qualitative techniques, through the use of open-ended questions (see Appendixes A and B).

Results and Discussion

The first question asked of the participants has to do with the number of years they have been studying English. One hundred percent have been doing it for more than 15 years (between 15 and 20 years). Considering the number of years that students have studied English before reaching university, one sees their level, in general, should be much higher (Castilla Polo et al., 2012; Halbach et al., 2013; Ruiz-Garrido, 2007; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2014, among others), which could suggest that we EFL teachers should have a critical and reflective position regarding this issue.

Apart from external factors such as the dubbing of cinema and television since Franco's time, the feeling that people can travel the world if they speak Spanish, or embarrassment issues when it comes to speaking a foreign language; one of the possible reasons for this situation could be reflected in the fact that only 15.2% of the participants claimed to have received English language classes "only in English", while 84.8% answered having received them "in English and Spanish". The importance of the student's exposure to the TL (Krashen, 1982, 1985) should be considered.

147

According to the study subjects, their EFL teachers had always paid more attention to grammar (84.8%), followed by vocabulary (47.8%). On the contrary, the skills that had received less attention from these teachers were the passive oral skill of listening (13%), and the active oral skill of speaking (2.2%), as can be observed in the following table (Table 1), which could explain the low proficiency level of English detected in many students, especially in oral skills. If I already mentioned the importance of language exposure, I now

highlight the importance of its production (Swain, 1995), with oral speaking skills receiving the least attention in EFL classrooms.

Table 1. Attention to Skills

	N (%)
Grammar	39 (84.8)
Vocabulary	22 (47.8)
Reading	8 (17.4)
Listening	6 (13.0)
Writing	18 (39.1)
Speaking	1 (2.2)

* Multiple answers were allowed

However, when asked about their preferred learning style, 43 students (93.5%) answered that they liked to learn "by seeing" and 32 (69.6%) "by listening". Twenty-six students (56.5%) answered that they liked to learn "by reading". All participants, without exception, are interested in learning the language, and although 89.1% state that they are currently happy with their way of learning, there are 6.5% who are not.

When asked if there was another way in which they would like to learn the language, if I group the answers under common headings, participants stated that they would like to see more videos, series, and movies; more contact with speakers of the TL, more listening skill practice, and more practice in the speaking skill.

One hundred percent of the students consider that English is important for their future and also 100% study the foreign language thinking about their future careers, although there are 63% who also study it to integrate with the speakers and cultures of the foreign language. It is very important to notice this last relatively high percentage, as the importance of integrative motivation when learning a foreign language should not be forgotten (Gardner, 1985). In any case, I consider that both types of motivation, instrumental and integrative, do not have to be exclusive (Brown, 2002). A learner can be motivated both instrumentally and in an integrative manner, but the degree of motivation may be different.

The participants in the study range in age from 20 to 23 years (Table 2). All students are in the age range of 18 to 24 years, the range in which the most active network users are

found, bordering on a daily consumption of 80 minutes in the case of men and 65 in the case of women[7].

Table 2. Ages

	N (%)
20 years	23 (50)
21 years	10 (21.7)
22 years	4 (8.7)
23 years	2 (4.3)

Likewise, all participants affirm that they have access to a computer with a high-speed connection outside the classroom and all have used YT before; the frequency of use being as follows (Table 3):

Table 3. YT use frequency

	N (%)
Very often	28 (60.9)
Often	9 (19.6)
Normal	8 (17.4)
Not very often	1 (2.2)
Not at all	

Nowadays, the ease of high-speed Internet connection outside education centres allows students to work online from their homes, having access to different applications useful for language learning, among which is YT, an app that the majority of participants (80.5%) declare to use often (19.6%) or very often (60.9%) outside class. Considering these data and given other findings (see Purnamasari, 2018), I could hypothesize that familiarity with the application could lead to its use in the classroom.

Of the participants in the study, 100% stated that they use the application normally for entertainment, 54.3% for education-related issues, and 37% to study English. These data are indicative of the fact that the tool motivates them, since nobody forces them to make use

149

of it. It is clear that a good percentage had already used YT outside the classroom to study English (37%). Thinking about the importance of motivation in foreign language learning, EFL teachers should, therefore, consider introducing it in their classroom teaching practice.

After working with the application, all participants without exception (100%) agreed (45.7%) or strongly agreed (54.3%) that the use of YT had made the class more interesting. Considering that 93.5% affirm that they like to learn "by watching", I believe that this fact may have something to do with the answer, apart from the general attractiveness of the video content (Kelsen, 2009; Silviyanti, 2014).

Regarding the question of whether the material used had been relevant to what was being studied, most participants (95.7%) agreed (69.6%) or strongly agreed (26.1%) that it had been so. There were two people (4.3%) who did not answer this question. The fact that participants were currently dealing with the subject of ICT for language learning made the task especially relevant, because students can find a sense of purpose in learning.

All participants (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that the use of YT in the classroom had been beneficial for their English. The feeling of being exposed to authentic material (not specific to learning English) and English language speakers, I believe, greatly influenced such a positive response (Kelsen, 2009; Silviyanti, 2014). Specifically, they stated that watching authentic videos made them improve their listening (97.8%), vocabulary (97.8%), reading (84.8%), grammar (84.8%), speaking (80.4%), and writing (63%) skills, in this order.

When asked if the use of YT in the classroom had motivated them to study English, most participants (97.8%) agreed (54.3%) or strongly agreed (43.5%) with this question. Only one participant (2.2%) was neutral. Here, the results obtained are more similar to Silviyanti's (2014) than to those obtained by Kelsen (2009), who mentions students' taste for the use of YT, especially for entertainment, as a possible explanation. In fact, in Kelsen's study, only one student (n= 69) had already used YT to learn English autonomously and three students had already used it for education-related issues; while in the current work, 37% had already used YT to learn English on their own and 54.3% had already used it for education-related issues. The fact that the use of YT motivates students to study English is one of the main reasons for using YouTube videos in the classroom according to several studies (see Alimemaj, 2010).

150   The students were also asked if the use of YT motivated them to use the application outside the classroom in an autonomous way and, in this case also, 45 of the 46 participants (97.8%) agreed (67.4 %) or strongly agreed (30.4%), and 2.2% were neutral; these percentages are again much higher than those found in the study by Kelsen (2009), in which only 46.7% were neutral, agreed or strongly agreed; so that 53% were less than neutral[8]. In this study,

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[8]   Kelsen (2009) offers as a possible explanation on the lack of intrinsic motivation on the part of Taiwanese students.

percentages related to motivation are also higher in this question than those obtained by Silviyanti (2014). Bearing in mind, as I mentioned before, that 37% had already stated that they had previously used the application to learn English autonomously and that the percentage now rises to 97.8%, I strongly recommend that EFL teachers consider exploiting this application both inside and outside the classroom.

Regarding the open-ended question about what the students like the most about the use of YT in the classroom, if I group the answers that go in the same direction, I can summarize them in 5 items: a lot of fun (Fleck et al., 2014), motivating, very dynamic, they can listen to speakers of the TL, and it allows them to work on all skills. On the other hand, regarding the open-ended question about what they like the least about the use of YT in the classroom, if I group the answers that go in the same direction, I can also summarize them in another five items: lack of control over students, technical problems that may arise, distractions, the need for an Internet connection, and lack of interaction with the teacher. Either way, 100% of the students stated that they wanted to continue using YT in the English class.

Conclusions

Concerned about the foreign language needs of students, especially their oral skills, I bring to the table an application, more than familiar to them (see Purnamasari, 2018), that allows the exploitation of speaking and listening skills, along with writing, reading, grammar, and vocabulary skills. Through the use of authentic videos, these skills are exploited in a motivating way (Alimemaj, 2010) and students come into contact with speakers of the language who have different accents and come from different parts of the world (Almurashi, 2016).

Through this work and considering the importance given to attitude and motivation in the field of second language learning (Gardner, 1985), the intention was to investigate the use of YT in the EFL classroom through the participants' views. I had hypothesized that the students' perceptions of it would be positive, since it is a tool that they use in their daily lives and are therefore familiar with (see Balbay & Kilis, 2017; Purnamasari, 2018).

The results obtained showed that, according to the subjects of the study, the use of YT makes English classes more interesting, the material used is relevant to what is being studied in the classroom, the application is beneficial for the participants' English language, and it does motivate the students to study English not only in but also outside the classroom. The participants found the experience a lot of fun, motivating, very dynamic, and appreciated listening to speakers of the TL, as well as working on the different language skills. However, the lack of control over the students, technical problems that may arise, the existence of

distractions, the need for an Internet connection, and the lack of interaction with the teacher were also mentioned as drawbacks.

After analysing the results, and given the good reception of the application, the use of YT in the classroom is proposed, with short videos being recommended to be effective (Bravo et al. 2011; Green et al., 2018; Hakim, 2019). According to authors such as Alwehaibi (2013), the good atmosphere that is created in the classroom when using videos results in students being motivated to learn.

Moreover, the use of YT outside the classroom is also encouraged in order to practise autonomous language learning, enhancing the taste for the foreign language, its speakers, and their cultures, something which will cause a high degree of motivation to learn it. However, due to the huge amount of material that can be found on YT, I recommend that some organization and guidance from the teacher should be considered, both inside and outside the classroom (Watkins & Wilkins, 2011) for students not to get lost.

Limitations of the Study and Future Lines of Research

The first limitation is the small sample size. Thus, the interpretation of the results cannot be generalized to a greater population. The second limitation was time. A longer intervention period may have produced more stable data. Even though I was present throughout the fieldwork, I'm aware that, since the questionnaire was written in English, some doubts arose, which some participants solved by asking for help, while others left answers blank or marked the neutral response choice instead. There was even some response answered in Spanish. Also, the lack of other data collection tools, apart from questionnaires, may have deprived the study of other perceptions that would have rendered more reliability and validity to the study.

On the other hand, although the questionnaire was anonymous and it was reported that it would not be considered when grading, I am always in doubt as to whether the answers sought to please me in any way. As all participants belong to the same study area, the results cannot be extrapolated to other groups, so the same type of research with students from different areas is proposed. Likewise, further works are suggested on students' academic proficiency in the different language skills, by comparing groups that use YT with groups that do not use the application and thus see its effects on language acquisition and learning.

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153

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155

Appendix A: English Language Learning Questionnaire

1. How long have you been studying English?

2. How did you learn English?

   In English   In Spanish   In English and Spanish

3. How do you like learning?

   By watching   By reading   By listening   By doing

   Other:

4. Your English teachers used to pay more attention to:

   Grammar   Vocabulary   Reading   Listening

   Writing   Speaking

5. Are you interested in learning English?

   Yes   No

6. Do you enjoy learning English the way you are learning it now?

   Yes   No

7. Would you like to learn English in a different way? How?

8. What's your favourite social network? (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter…)

9. Do you think English is important for your future? Yes   No

10. Why are you learning English?

Thinking of my future career   To integrate with the speakers and cultures of

   the other language   Other:

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out this survey.

Appendix B: YouTube Questionnaire

Source questions 1-10: Kelsen (2009)

1. Male   Female   Age

2. Do you have access to a computer with a high-speed connection outside of class?
    Yes   No

3. Have you used YouTube before?
    Yes   No

4. How often do you use YouTube outside of class?
    1(not at all)   2   3   4   5 (very often)

5. When you use YouTube on your own, what do you usually use it for? (You may choose more than one answer)
    Entertainment   Education   Studying English   Other (please specify):

6. Using YouTube material made the class more interesting
    Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree
    Strongly agree

    Please state why or why not:

7. The YouTube material used was relevant to what was studied in class
    Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree
    Strongly agree

    Please state why or why not:

8. Using YouTube in class has been beneficial to your English
    Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree
    Strongly agree

    Please state why or why not:

9. Using YouTube in class motivated you to study English
    Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree
    Strongly agree

    Please state why or why not:

10. Using YouTube in class motivated you to use it yourself to study English outside of class

157

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree
Strongly agree

Please state why or why not:

11. What do you like about using YouTube in your English class?

12. What do you dislike about using YouTube in your English class?

13. Watching authentic YT videos has helped me to improve my:

Skills	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Grammar					
Vocabulary					
Reading					
Writing					
Speaking					
Listening					

14. Would you like to keep on using YT videos in your English language class?
Yes   No

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out this survey.

HOW

Feminism in a Female Teacher's Discourse in an EFL Classroom

Feminismo en el discurso de una profesora en la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera

Mónica Patarroyo-Fonseca[1]

Abstract

This research article on feminism gives an account of the interaction between a female teacher and her students at a public university in Tunja, Colombia. The study aims to evidence features of feminism within an English as a foreign language classroom by analyzing the transcriptions of the teacher's discourse using the Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis. As a result of the study, it can be stated that feminism is not determined by gender, but rather, it is an individual choice that is socially constructed and transmitted through power relationships. Findings suggest that being female or male does not guarantee having a definite position towards feminism; instead, it is mostly demarcated by the specific situations and circumstances that each individual experiences within a society.

Keywords: discourse analysis, feminism, feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis, interaction, power

Resumen

Este artículo de investigación acerca del feminismo da cuenta de la interacción entre una profesora y sus estudiantes, en una universidad pública, en Tunja, Colombia. El estudio busca evidenciar rasgos propios del feminismo dentro del salón de clase para el aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera, analizando las transcripciones de su discurso por medio del Análisis del discurso Feminista y Poses-

1   She currently teaches general English to undergraduate students at Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia -UPTC. She holds an MA in Language Teaching, a specialization in Educational Management, and a BA in Foreign Languages. Her research interests include discourse analysis and teaching materials.

monica.patarroyo@uptc.edu.co

ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1916-7567

159

tructuralista. Como resultado del estudio, se puede afirmar que el feminismo no está determinado por el género en sí mismo, sino que es elección de cada individuo construida socialmente y transmitida por medio de relaciones de poder. Los resultados sugieren que ser de sexo femenino o masculino no garantiza tener una posición definida frente al feminismo, sino que dicha posición está más bien demarcada por situaciones y circunstancias específicas de cada individuo dentro de la sociedad.

Palabras clave: análisis del discurso, análisis del discurso feminista y posestructuralista feminismo, interacción, poder

Introduction

Teachers exert their power to guide learning (Richmond & McCroskey, 1992), and power is revealed within their discourse. These powerful or powerless discourses have a significant impact because they strengthen or undermine the awareness of gender equity, and in this case, feminism. Currently, gender is vital in the EFL classroom since Norton (2000) claims that gender relations may affect the learning and teaching process. For instance, Goldberg (2016) considers that boys are disciplined more severely, provided with more praise and feedback, and encouraged to enroll in math and science courses; these pieces of evidence propose that learning is being affected and suggested because of the student's gender.

Based on the premise that gender affects the learning process, and that gendered discourses may be involuntary executed by the teacher in the EFL classroom, a study of that discourse becomes necessary to identify features about gendered issues. As a consequence, this research study focuses on recognizing specific discourse patterns related to feminism through the interactions in an EFL classroom and the tensions that emerge in the female teacher and her students' discourses. Based on this, two research questions were considered: (1) How is feminism evident through the interaction between the female teacher and her students in the language classroom? (2) What does the teacher's discourse reveal about her interactions with students in terms of feminism?

This research study took place at a public university in Tunja, Colombia, where the participants were a female English language teacher and the students of three undergraduate groups enrolled in English language courses. Data were collected from video recordings. Then the discourses were analyzed by using the Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA). The findings from this research study led to the understanding that everyone has the power to choose feminism as a way of thinking (understanding it as the promotion of equal rights and respect between males and females). Society shapes what a person is and how she/he behaves, and teachers and students have the power to transform opinions and perceptions about gender inequality.

Review of the Literature

Gendered Discourses and Interaction

Weatherall (2002) recognizes gender as a process built over time through intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. It can be created, encouraged, and maintained through social structures. Connell (2009) describes gender as "a key dimension of personal life, social relations and culture" (p. 9). In other words, gender implies the relationship that a human being has with the environment that surrounds him/her, and this shapes the person; so, gender is molded by external factors.

Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) and Baxter (2003) coincide in what discourse infers; one part relates to the structure and patterns, and the second implies the function, use, meaning, and practice, which is received by an audience or interlocutor and is shaped socially and ideologically. For example, students transmit at home what they learn in the classroom, and bring to the classroom what they learn at home. That is to say, gendered discourse is a social and ideological construction.

Castañeda-Peña (2008) summarizes gendered discourses when he considers that female teachers are "undermined by subtle discourses" (p. 314) in which boys resist female positions of power. In this current research study, gendered discourses entail a multifaceted version of the person that has been socially constructed and is able to transmit what his/her convictions, experiences, and thoughts are through power relationships.

Kurhila (2006) states that interaction is not just the controlled and manipulated linguistic contributions of the speaker to others. Instead, it is how people understand and are understood by others. Interaction is not only the interchange of linguistic patterns, but also implies aspects of communicating effectively and with a meaning, such as negotiating meanings and sharing and exchanging knowledge and thoughts about the world and the particularities of individuals. In Wells' opinion (1993), moves and turns in interaction are more significant than how large the units of discourse are. Interaction has the power to influence others through what individuals do and say. According to Wagner (1994) "interactions are reciprocal events that require at least two objects and two actions. Interaction occurs when these objects and events mutually influence one another" (p. 8).

161

The core of these constructs is to recognize that interaction occurs when two or more individuals exchange their verbal and non-verbal discourses. So, in order to transmit what is felt and thought, these discourses are, in most cases, influenced by ideologies and the society where the individual is immersed. If an individual has been exposed to gendered discourses that undermine the opposite point of view, this person will probably be influenced by such gendered discourses.

Power in Teacher Talk

For this study, the teacher's power was centered on Richmond and McCroskey's (1992) considerations, namely: the role of the teacher involves a social influence, and the use of power is built into the job of a teacher. A teacher must have a considerable amount of power to conduct learning, and a teacher's power must be granted by the students. In Foucault's (1972) words, knowledge gives power to the teacher. Castañeda-Peña (2015) complements it by confirming that teachers occupy a privileged position of power due to their assigned official roles, wherein they assign turns of speaking, assessing, interrupting, etc. In addition, Dangel and Durden (2010) attest that the most powerful classroom tool to convey and construct meaning is teacher talk i.e., a teacher's work is mediated by power, and discourse becomes the means to transmit it.

In a critical view, the teacher in this study is not seen as the mere transmitter of knowledge, but also the transformer of thoughts, realities, and behaviors. For instance, if a teacher has the power to transmit positive attitudes and behaviors towards a certain situation, her/his students could transmit and reinforce that message. That is what Giroux (1988) called the transformative intellectual; the teacher has enough power to influence students through discourse.

Feminism

"One is not born but becomes a woman."
Simone de Beauvoir, 1949

Beauvoir (1949) clearly stated what being a woman meant to her; women are molded by life experiences, not by the label/name per se. In this study, feminism is addressed as the position of each individual in the language classroom who seeks the promotion of equal rights for both females and males. It is an egalitarian position regarding women, and it can be accepted, respected, and promoted equally by males and females.

According to Mills (2017), the feminist movements took their form in three main waves. The first is predominately associated with women's suffrage in the US and Western Europe. The second is identified with the political and social change that took place in the 1960s regarding a reaction against sexual discrimination and the widespread promotion of equal opportunities for both sexes. The third refers to the deconstruction of gender identities and certain relations within specific communities. The most recent wave incorporates constructivist principles and post-structuralist feminism. Mills formulates six aspects in the third wave that describe the diversity and multiplicity of women's identities:

– The performative rather than the essentialist nature of gender.

- A focus upon context-specific gender issues rather than generalized questions.
- The importance of co-construction.
- Power not as a possession, but as flowing omnidirectionally in a web-like fashion.
- An emphasis upon notions of female resistance.
- A reinterpretation of stereotyped subject positions rather than notions of struggle against the subordination of women.

Feminism in Colombia has had a short history in comparison with other countries. Until 1931, women were not allowed to receive salaries or they received less salary than men, even if they worked at equal tasks as the men (Cabal & Motta, 2005). In the 60's, one factor that influenced the appearance of feminism was the fact that women started to wear pants at church, even if the bishop demanded the use of elegant dresses. Also, women started to mobilize, work in markets, attend classes at a university in and outside Colombia (in the United States and Europe, especially postgraduate studies). As a consequence, three main scenes emerged: leftist parties and labor unions, public and private universities, and small feminist groups. In the 80's, action and theory took place in which research was used to make visible critical aspects about feminism in public and private sectors.

Feminism both in Colombia and worldwide has sought visibility throughout time. Feminism in the ELT field cannot escape from it either, since the language classroom becomes an exemplary place to convey what humans are and think. In that sense, Mojica and Castañeda-Peña (2017) claim that language teachers should be aware of their possible gendered discourses and power issues since "this may help or hinder learning opportunities, language access, and meanings that students may learn about gender representations" (p. 140). That is to say, that the teacher's discourse has the ability to strengthen or weaken her/his students' learning process.

The abovementioned theoretical constructs reveal the implications of the teacher's and the students' verbal and non-verbal discourses in the EFL classroom. For this reason, this research study seeks to understand the discourse of a female teacher and her students in terms of feminism, where the medium is the learning and use of EFL, whereby it becomes the vehicle to transmit equality, tolerance, and respect towards others.

163

Method

Setting and Participants

This research study took place at a public university in Tunja, Colombia, where its students are socially, educationally, politically, and religiously diverse. The International

Languages Institute of the university is in charge of providing general English language courses for undergraduate students. The participating students belonged to three different English language courses. The reasons to select these groups were because they engaged in respectful, natural, spontaneous, and genuine communication with the teacher.

The students voluntarily decided to take part in the study after being informed about the nature of the project and the use of video recordings. They agreed by signing a consent form. The number of participants was as follows: Group 1= 24, Group 2= 28, and Group 3= 22 (total=74, women=44, men=30). Their ages ranged from 16 to 19 years old.

The teacher is in her twenties, has worked at the university for 3 years, and holds a bachelor's degree in foreign languages. She was in charge of six undergraduate program groups. The teacher decided to participate in the project voluntarily because, as a teacher, she understands that words have power. At the time of the study, she was also a candidate for a master's degree in language teaching.

Research Design

As this study focuses on analyzing discourses, qualitative research suits its characteristics. Qualitative research is devoted to developing an understanding of human systems, small or large (Savenye & Robinson, 1996). The method for collecting data is from participation in the setting (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The research approach is that of a descriptive and interpretative study, in which the first part focuses on the description of the speech form or the tangible aspect of the interaction, and the second part attempts to unveil the discourse implications by comprehending and analyzing its nature.

Data Collection Instruments and Analysis

The main instrument used to collect data was video recordings, supported by theoretical background. The video recordings show the interaction between the teacher and the students in the classroom and serve as access to primary data. They capture the daily life of the group under study (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

The process of video recordings started with the pilot stage, the purpose of which was, on the one hand, to prevent technical problems (sound, image, volume, etc.), and on the other, to look for the best place to set up the video camera in the three classrooms. In this stage, participants got used to the camera because it became part of the environment. In the second stage, "real" video recording started. This process took two and a half months (twenty-five video recordings were collected and organized by video number, group, and date). The third stage was that of observation which involved focusing on aspects such as words and gestures. Then, words related to the object of the study were written in the

form of notes and the relevant parts of the video were fully transcribed, using discourse transcription conventions (Bartlett, 2014). The process for gathering data is shown in Figure 1 below.
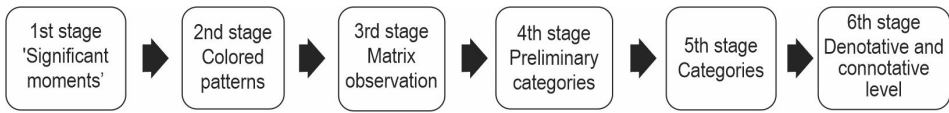
1st stage Video recordings piloting	2nd stage Video recordings	3rd stage Video recordings	4th stage Note-taking	5th stage Transcriptions

Figure 1. Data Collection Process

In terms of data analysis, the FPDA proposed by Baxter (2003) was employed. FPDA consists of identifying certain patterns that evidenced the presence of feminism through the interaction between the teacher and the students. Baxter (2008) defines FPDA as "an approach to analyzing intertextualized discourses in spoken interaction and other types of text […]. The feminist perspective on poststructuralist discourse analysis considers gender differentiation to be a dominant discourse among competing discourses when analyzing all types of text" (p. 245). In other words, FPDA considers how speakers negotiate positions, meanings, and power through discourses in enunciation contexts (Baxter, 2003).

FPDA has two distinct dimensions: it is post-structuralist (practices that shape the object) and feminist (gender equality). According to Baxter (2008), the FPDA approaches micro-analysis functions through two main levels or procedures: denotative and connotative. The first level attempts to describe the verbal and non-verbal interactions of a social group, that is, a description of events. The second level aims to interpret the data according to how speakers are continually positioning themselves in terms of power, based on competitive and intertextualized discourses.

In the first stage of data analysis, examples of feminism began to be identified in the transcriptions and were recorded using a color-coding system. Baxter (2008) terms these as 'significant moments' in the discourse. These colored patterns were placed in a matrix of three sections (excerpts-topics-theory). The matrix was created according to the consolidation of the data and the relation with theory from similar studies in order to comply **165** with the parameters of validity and reliability. At this point, a number of common patterns (topics) started to emerge.

At the end of that process, a vertical matrix had been formed. Afterward, a fourth column, called *memos*, was added. This column was intended to narrow down the previously identified topics. Categories emerged from common features within the memos. Later, a process of denotative and connotative analysis took place in each of the chosen excerpts.

The first part consisted of making a description of the verbal and non-verbal discourses.

| 1st stage 'Significant moments' | 2nd stage Colored patterns | 3rd stage Matrix observation | 4th stage Preliminary categories | 5th stage Categories | 6th stage Denotative and connotative level |

Figure 2. Data Analysis Process

The second part was done by analyzing the nature of those discourses. The process of data analysis is shown in Figure 2 below.

Likewise, it is imperative to clarify that the trustworthiness of this data analysis depends on the following notions:

– In a post-structuralist approach to discourse analysis, it is in the act of self-reflexivity that the connection can be made explicitly between 'what is being analyzed' and 'how it is being analyzed' (Baxter, 2003).

– Discourse analysis is not taken as a discipline, but as a systematic, rigorous way of suggesting answers to research questions posed in and across different disciplines throughout the humanities and social sciences (Johnstone, 2008).

Bearing these notions in mind, and following the process of analysis, two categories emerged: power reflecting gender equity and social norms shaping feminism.

Findings

The findings of this research study emerge in two major categories: power reflecting gender equity and social norms shaping feminism. The first one summarizes what Foucault (1972), Richmond and McCroskey (1992), Dangel and Durden (2010) and Castañeda-Peña (2015) consider in terms of power, in which the language teacher owns the power to share knowledge, influence, and shape her students through discourse. The second category reflects the fact that society is the tree that accompanies and allows people to choose their favorite and most convenient branch. In words of Beauvoir (1949), Mills (2017), and Mojica and Castañeda-Peña (2017), feminism is shaped by society and is demonstrated in peoples' discourses. Feminism is not born necessarily from a female person; rather, feminism is for everybody (Hooks (2000).

Power Reflecting Gender Equity

This category emerges from the fact that power is always present in the EFL classroom and, most of the time, power is used to show and promote gender equity, either by the

teacher or the students. For instance, by addressing her male and female students in the same manner, the teacher is promoting gender equity through the power that she possesses in the EFL classroom. Power is visible throughout the teacher's and students' discourses.

The excerpts below and their corresponding analysis are presented first at a denotative level, followed by the connotative level. The excerpts are based on the Transcription Conventions by Bartlett (2014) (See Annex 1).

Excerpt 1 illustrates the first attempt at finding a feminist position in the female language teacher. It displays a conversation (open questions and answers) about "meeting someone new".

Excerpt 1.

28. S2 (F):   the last time (.) I met someone new was on vacation
29. T: on vacation (.) ok (.) second question (.) where did you meet them or her or him ⬇
30. S2 (F):   in Rondón

[Transcription #1. Group 1 - Mar 29th]

In line 28, the female student is answering the teacher regarding a specific question. In line 29, the teacher reinforces the student's answer, and decides to ask the same student a second question. It can be inferred that the teacher keeps control of the interaction, in which she uses the language to ask questions, and the student uses it as a vehicle to say something that she has experienced in her life.

At the connotative level, the use of the terms "them or her or him" indicate that the teacher's discourse does not mention one kind of person that her students might meet. She considers that meeting someone new may imply a man, woman, group, or a non-conforming person. This idea matches what feminists look for; the same rights, importance, and conditions for women and men, regardless of the context. Based on Hooks (2000), feminism is seen as a movement founded on gender equality, which promotes justice. In Excerpt 1, the discourse of the teacher does not evidence a gendered tendency, because she does not favor any gender per se. There is no obvious sign of using discourse to favor males or females, but rather her discourse promotes an egalitarian position towards gender. Excerpt 2 evidences a feminist position, too; but this time, it comes from two male students. The teacher is promoting the reading of an established conversation.

167

Excerpt 2.

109. T: conversation number two (0.3) someone raised a hand over there (.) Camila (.) who
          accompanies Camila ⬇ # two male students raise their hands at the same time#

[Transcription #1. Group 1- Mar 29th]

In line 109, the teacher is calling for volunteers for the next conversation. While the teacher is waiting for a volunteer, a female student raises her hand. However, the teacher keeps asking for volunteer participation. The teacher uses the term 'accompany' to let her female student know that she would not have to do the activity alone. In response to her request, two male students raise their hands simultaneously. They do not hesitate, as their reaction is immediate. This fact shows that the male students are interested in supporting their female classmate.

At the connotative level, regarding the female teacher's discourse, when she asks "who accompanies Camila?", the teacher promotes equal participation from her students; she is not favoring any gender, but giving them the opportunity to be part of the class activity. This analysis matches what Holmes (1992) states when saying that "a dominant discourse of gender differentiation tends to construct 'men as more willing than women to contribute in public or formal contexts' " (p. 132). The male students seem to be more eager to support this female classmate than the other female classmates were.

The next excerpt has radically changed the previous course, since it reveals a non-feminist position in the teacher's discourse. Some instructions are being read to complete a task.

Excerpt 3.

130. T: Yes (.) ok (.) student A introduces himself (.) student B introduces himself and ask questions (.) student A answers those questions and he can ask again (.) and so on

[Transcription #1. Group 1- Mar 29th]

In Excerpt 3, the teacher is giving instructions about an activity. She is showing an example of how the activity is going to work. The teacher does not use the students' names but letters of the alphabet instead, so she does not specify whether the student is male or female. It is demonstrated that the conversation has to be carried out by two people. However, there is a clear tendency to refer only to males by using the words "he" and "himself" throughout the intervention.

It can be inferred that the teacher omits the possibility of considering females as part of the instruction. According to Snyder (2008), feminism "creates conditions of freedom, equality, justice, and self-actualization for all people" (p. 192). It would appear that the teacher is not promoting gender equality in this situation. This is the kind of discourse that perpetuates females to remain hidden within certain formal and informal contexts. In consequence, these seem to be "right, common, and correct patterns" over time. However, as Baxter (2003) explains, people can recognize, take up or resist postures.

Excerpt 4 exhibits "shared power" among the classroom agents. This instruction is given in the beginning of the class.

Excerpt 4.

01. T: good morning everyone (.) today you will be the teachers (0.2) I will divide you into
           groups and you will present the topics from the workbook
[Transcription # 5. Group 2 – Apr 7th]

In Excerpt 4, the denotative level shows that the teacher wants to give power to her students. First, the teacher formally greets her students and, from the beginning of the session, lets them know the plan for the class. She assigns a new role to her students, which consists of being the official presenters of an already learnt topic. She also mentions that she is going to divide the class into groups to carry out the planned activity, which consists of presenting certain topics from the workbook.

At the connotative level, the teacher changes roles. The students will become the teacher and vice versa. With her discourse, she is informing that even if she is the one with the power in the classroom, it can also be shared. Feminists aim to obtain equal rights and responsibilities for men and women. In this session, power will be exerted by the students. They will also have the responsibility of accomplishing a certain goal. In terms of the students' new responsibility and position of power, it can be said that they will feel important because they have control over the teacher and the other classmates.

The second part of this category is focused on the students' discourse through the interaction with the teacher. The following excerpt considers a position of power that cannot be executed by the student. The students are working in groups but one of them is chosen to explain the topic.

Excerpt 5.

13. S3 (F):   just me ((she raises her eyebrows and lowers her voice)) #the female student
               seems nervous and looks around#
14. T: yes (.) but you have a group that can help you
[Transcription # 5. Group 3 – Apr 7th]

In line 13, it is evident that the female student does not feel comfortable about having all the power and the responsibility of having to complete a classroom task on her own, since she muttered: "Just me?" The tone she uses denotes a certain fear regarding what she has to

do. In line 14, the teacher confirms that she has to do the activity alone, but she can count on her class group to support her.

In terms of the teacher's discourse, it is manifested that she understands her student's fear by letting her know about that; first, she considers her to be capable of accomplishing the task, and second, even if she cannot do it, the female student has a group to support her. Apparently, the student cannot handle the acquired position of power. Concerning Castañeda-Peña's (2008) statement, this female student undermines herself in terms of her role in the classroom. Furthermore, she is in a position of power because of her new role, but powerless because of her attitude towards it.

Different people in the same situation can experience power in different ways. This fact demonstrates that having a central role does not always mean having the ability to exert power. Walkerdine (1998, p. 65) points out that "individuals are powerless or powerful depending upon which discursive practices they enter as subject".

To sum up this category, power is always present in a classroom and this power is, most of the time, used to show equity. Sometimes, power belongs to the teacher or to the students depending on the activities that are taking place. On the one hand, even if the teacher has the power, this can be shared with others. At that point, the responsibility of having power is divided. On the other hand, if the student possesses the power, it does not mean that the student can take total advantage of it because he/she will not necessarily know how to use it.

When power is related to feminism, it gives the opportunity to express and shape the conceptions of others regarding its definition. For instance, if a feminist has the power to express in their immediate surroundings what feminism entails, this can bring about a new understanding of the concept. The immediate ambience/environment for teachers is the classroom. The classroom then becomes a place where respect and tolerance exist. Power can be used to allow people to understand that feminism does not just favor women, but men and women equally.

Social Norms Shaping Feminism

Feminism is concerned with the social norms that rule people's lives; society shapes people's discourses. Fairclough (1992) and Baxter (2003) consider that discourse is formed by social practices and language is the vehicle to express it.

In the following excerpts, society plays an important role in the female teacher's verbal and non-verbal discourse, and it is analyzed at a denotative and connotative level. Excerpt 6 entails the teacher's distinctive version of herself in terms of what she has learnt from society, experience, etc. In this transcription, the teacher is guiding the reading of the material used in class.

> **Excerpt 6.**
>
> 36. S3 (F): #the student touches her chin# we talked about ((unintelligible))
> 37. T: ok thank you (.) mmm ok (.) David would you mind reading the part of the vocabulary ⬆ plea:::se
>
> [Transcription #1. Group 1- Mar 29]

In line 36, the female student is thinking about the answer that she is going to give the teacher. This can be deduced by the way she uses her hand to touch her chin. After thinking about it, she finally comes up with an answer. In line 37, the teacher reinforces her answer by saying "ok". In addition, she is thankful for the answer to her question. Next, the teacher has to choose another person to participate. She calls on a male student and asks him, in a polite way, to follow her instructions. She finishes her intervention by saying "please". Regarding the teacher's discourse, it sounds very polite and respectful.

In Excerpt 6 above, the female teacher tends to be very respectful and polite towards her students. She says "thank you", "would you mind", and "please" in one single sentence, which demonstrates that politeness is important for her, independently of whom she is addressing. However, this cordial trait is not a result of belonging to a determined gender, but depends on one's own idiosyncratic version in relation to the attitudes of the society (Stoller, 1994). In her discourse, she can promote a feminist viewpoint, in which she demonstrates that being respectful and polite is necessary with all people.

Next excerpt, both the teacher and the female student are aware of the importance of tough matters in society, since they can be harmful or inappropriate if people are not prepared to respect and accept others' beliefs and political preferences.

> **Excerpt 7.**
>
> 63. T: yes Michelle (.) so (.) what's the idea ⬇
> 64. S10 (F): do not talk about religion or politics
> 65. T: Yes (.) remember that these topics deserve a lot of care because we all do not belong to the same political parties or religion
>
> [Transcription #1. Group 1- Mar 29]

On the denotative level, the teacher approves what the female student is saying and, additionally, wants to know what the student had understood. In line 64, this female student comes up with a clear answer, in which she is conscious that topics such as politics and religion should be addressed with a lot of care. In line 65, the teacher reinforces her student's position, and overtly states that certain topics, in certain circumstances and contexts, may be uncomfortable for some people. She places emphasis on this when saying the word

'remember', implying that this should be mandatory for her students to comprehend and apply. She also includes herself as one of those who may not share the same views, but respects those of others, and for that reason, others should respect hers.

At the connotative level, the female student and the teacher fulfill their function as social agents through language. They use their discourses to position themselves as women and human beings who respect differences. Consequently, they transmit this message to the rest of the class. The teacher's position shows that social aspects must be constructed within the classroom. The teacher has the right and duty to promote equity in all senses. Society tends to judge differences wrongly, and there is no room for other people's opinions and perspectives. The social role that the teacher plays is very meaningful in terms of promoting respect in and outside the classroom.

The following excerpt also demonstrates the attitude of a male student regarding respect. This student has probably brought to the classroom what he has learnt at home. The teacher is mediating the sequence of a reading activity.

Excerpt 8.

61. S8 (M):   me↓(0.3) sorry (.) I didn´t listen to you
62. T: ok (.) the reading section which has the
63. S8 (M):   [the art of conversation]
64. T: yeah
[Transcription #3. Group 2- Mar 29ᵗʰ]

In the preceding excerpt, in line 61, the male student seems a little bit surprised when he is asked to do the reading, and for that reason, he apologizes because he did not hear the teacher's intervention, and he clarifies why he could not follow the instruction. In line 62, the teacher does not mind repeating to her student, although he was not listening to her. In fact, she says that it is 'ok' or that she does not have any problem. She waits for a second and repeats the instruction. While doing so, the male student realizes what he must do and completes the teacher's instruction. Finally, she confirms what he has to do.

At the connotative level, the perception of being socially shaped is confirmed in this excerpt, when this male student apologizes to the teacher in a polite way. This apology proves that this male student has formed his discourse from his own experience. The male student's discourse demonstrates that he respects her, as the teacher, as he would do with a male teacher in the same situation. In other words, this male student could be considered a feminist, since he applies equal rights and respect to everybody (Hooks, 2000). He is promoting feminism in his classroom because females and males deserve equal respect and politeness. In addition, the teacher shows herself to be an individual who can accept apologies from others, and not

judge them. The act of apologizing is seen as good behavior that should be promoted in every context.

Excerpt 9, which is completely opposite to the previous one, confirms a non-respectful attitude towards the female teacher. The student is supposed to ask someone else a series of questions but he is not in the mood to do so.

Excerpt 9.

131. S18 (M):   ugh (.) how can I ask ten times ↓# the male student waves his hand
                  upwards and laughs # I ask ten times and that's it
132. T: you can use hi (.) hello (.) nice to meet you

[Transcription #1. Group 1- Mar 29]

In line 131, the male student does not appear to be in agreement ("ugh") with something the teacher said. His discourse may not be appropriate for addressing the teacher, considering her role, but he does not seem to care. This male student also "speaks" with his body since he uses his hands to keep showing his position towards the instruction. Usually, in Colombia, waving the hand upwards means that the person does not care about what is being said, or does not agree with it. So, this non-verbal language demonstrates that he is not in the mood to do what the teacher has instructed. When he laughs, this implies that he finds the instruction to be amusing. In fact, he goes further by proposing his own instruction. In line 132, the teacher tries to reduce the impact of her instruction in response to the student's position by mentioning that simple utterances also count towards the activity that the students had to do.

At the connotative level, the student's intervention does not seem to be a discourse that promotes respect in the classroom. This is related to what Castañeda-Peña (2008) states, namely, "Female teachers and girl-teachers are seemingly undermined by subtle discourses in which boys resist and aim at suppressing female powerful positions" (p. 314). It is inferred that this male student behaves in the way he has learned from society. Fairclough (2013) asserts that social practices shape what individuals use in their language discourses. The student maintains that attitude and addresses a woman in whatever way he likes. If he behaves that way towards his teacher, which is likely the way he addresses other females. Also, he also seems to "mock" his teacher by trying to diminish her power. Castañeda-Peña (2008) states that masculine discourses sometimes ridicule feminine ones, by showing their opposition.

173

In excerpt 10, a non-respectful attitude towards the teacher and classmates is confirmed, this time by a female and a male student. This event occurs in the beginning of the session because students are starting to get the material to work in class.

> **Excerpt 10.**
>
> 19. T: (((\[A female student is giving money back from the copies to the students around all the classroom, and talking to them while the teacher is speaking. Also, a male student stands up and leaves the classroom to get a set of copies made\]))
>
> \[Transcription # 6. Group 2– Apr 26th\]

In this excerpt, even though it is the teacher's intervention, the non-verbal language of her students plays a significant role. While the teacher is addressing the class, this female student is distributing the copies. She is also talking to her classmates and does not seem to be paying attention to what the teacher is doing. In addition, when a male student realizes he does not have the copies and that he would not receive them from his female classmate, he decides to stand up and leave the classroom.

This excerpt shows how these two students, through non-verbal language, demonstrate that respect towards others is not important for them. It can be inferred that the class was divided into two groups: the students that were not paying attention because they did not have the material, and those who had the material and were trying to pay attention. The first group of students never asked for permission or gave an excuse for interrupting the class. These students do not conceive that respect must be extended to everybody, as Hooks (2000) noted from experience.

The previous excerpts elucidated that social norms are acquired by means of interacting with the people who surround us. People learn from others; people are not isolated parts of society. Humans learn both good and bad things, and it depends on each person what aspects they decide to take on and apply. People who are immersed in a language classroom do not escape from this fact; the teacher and the students reflect on what they have learned from society or their immediate place of interaction.

Based on the theoretical concepts and the categories emerging from this study, it is considered that the feminist side (teacher and students) was not always undermined by powerful male discourses, as most male students were eager to support their classmates and respect their teacher. Only a small number of students (males or females) did not take a position of respecting the teacher and their classmates. However, having respectful and fair-minded students can also affect others positively, and thus, a small change will occur in the classroom, at home, and in society. Teachers and students have the power to transform other people's opinions and perceptions about gender inequality. The key element is to transmit the sense of egalitarianism if possible, without attacking others but rather helping them to become aware of the situation. In terms of EFL learning, language becomes the vehicle to promote those little changes in the classroom; changes that will strengthen our students' behaviors to build a stronger society in terms of equity.

Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

The research questions that are intended to be answered are: (1) How is feminism evidenced through the interaction between the teacher and her students in the language classroom? (2) What does the teacher's discourse reveal about her interactions with students in terms of feminism? The first research question can be answered as follows: Feminism is evidenced through a discourse that promotes gender equity, a non-verbal language that considers everyone in the classroom as equals, respect towards others and their differences, and sharing power with those who do not usually have it within the classroom. Likewise, power is the key to impact our students' thoughts and behaviors towards feminism. The second question can be answered by understanding that the teacher changes her discourse by generally considering (in her verbal and non-verbal language) males and females to the same degree, and not giving more importance to one group or individual. The teacher's discourse visibly demonstrated that she tends to consider a feminist view in her role as teacher and person.

As a first conclusion, concerning feminism, it can be said that it is not an innate characteristic of all humans; it is shaped over time through lived experiences. For that reason, feminism is a way of thinking. Feminism then becomes a powerful tool in order to think and act differently. It allows the validation, through verbal and non-verbal discourse, that all humans must possess the same rights. In this research study, data analysis indicates that the female teacher promotes feminism since she encourages, in most cases, the participation of girls and boys, shares her power in the classroom, and tries to give the same importance to all her students. However, recognizing that she sometimes tends to favor the male side is valuable. Similarly, most female and male students evidence a feminist view and behavior since they respect their equals through their verbal and non-verbal discourses.

Second, male or female students do not shape themselves in terms of respecting others in the language classroom; they are shaped by the society that surrounds them and, based on that, they experience, think, and behave accordingly. Students bring to the EFL classroom what they have learned outside. The EFL classroom should then become the first place to use language as a means of social transformation, as a way to share opinions, and ideas, as well as be the perfect place to listen to diverse viewpoints in order to foster empathy.

175

In terms of interaction, the first category demonstrates that feminism is revealed through power, because it is through power that people have the opportunity to declare their thoughts, ideas, feelings, etc. Later, these ideas can be heard by a specific audience (EFL students), an audience that decides if what they have learned deserves understanding and action. For instance, an agent (teacher or student) that possesses power in a classroom can defend and promote feminism within the setting. Once the agent has stated their ideas clearly, they might influence and transform the perceptions of others.

In terms of pedagogical implications, the teacher does not only teach a foreign language through her verbal and non-verbal discourse but also shares and serves as a model of respect for differences, becoming an agent of change that contributes to shaping her students' thoughts and behaviors to become better individuals in society. Language is the means of communication, but what is being communicated is more relevant.

Another pedagogical implication is that the female teacher might change her discourse in terms of equity since she is now conscious of its influence. Once she, he, they are knowledgeable about the issue, it is their responsibility and duty to make changes and generate a positive impact on the students using EFL. Henceforth, the bases of fairness are established.

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Annex 1. Transcription Conventions

Analyzing Power in Language by Tom Bartlett. 2014 Routledge.

T	teacher
S	student
F	female
M	male
SS	students at the same time
=	no perceptible pause between words

(Unintelligible) unclear speech

# #	non-verbal language
:::	stretching sound
[…]	overlapping
(( ))	transcriber's comment
(.)	short pause in speech (up to 2s)
( )	timed pause in speech
xxx	said laughing
↑	higher than expected pitch
↓	lower than expected pitch

178

Accumulative index of published articles in HOW Vol. 28 (2021)

179

Publication Ethics and Publication Malpractice Statement

The purpose of this declaration is to clarify the expected duties and ethical behavior for all the parties involved in the process of submission, evaluation, and selection of manuscripts sent to the *HOW* journal.

Duties Expected of the Editor

- The Editor is responsible for maintaining the quality of the contents of the journal and, as such, has the final say on whether to accept or reject a manuscript.

- The Editor ensures that all submissions comply with the editorial policies and the guidelines for authors found on the journal website and in the print version.

- The Editor guarantees that all authors are treated fairly and their manuscripts evaluated without regard to the authors' race, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, political philosophy, ethnic origin, institutional affiliation, or citizenship.

- The Editor is expected to be in constant communication with authors and reviewers about the status of a manuscript or about any other issue that may arise along the process of submission, evaluation, and selection of manuscripts and which requires the attention of some or all of the parties involved.

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field by presenting data that are easily replicated and relevant to interested readers. Falsification and manipulation of data are unethical and unacceptable behaviors.

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- The Author must be aware that practices like parallel submission (sending the same manuscript simultaneously to other journals), plagiarism, and self-plagiarism are unacceptable. All manuscripts with evidence of any of those practices will be immediately rejected and no future submissions from the same author will be considered for evaluation.

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- The authorship of a manuscript is only granted to the people who made significant contributions either during the development of the study or during the composition of the manuscript. The inclusion of "guest authors" (people who did not actually collaborate at any point but who, for some reason, are listed as authors) or the omission of "ghost authors" (authors who made significant contribution but who are not listed as authors) are unethical and unacceptable practices. People who made minor contributions can be labelled as collaborators and their help mentioned in an acknowledgement note at the end of the manuscript.

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183

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184

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HOW is a biannual publication by and for teachers of English who wish to share outcomes of educational and research experiences intended to add understanding to English language teaching practices (ELT). Therefore, the journal falls within the field of education and, specifically, the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language (ESL, EFL).

HOW is an academic publication led by ASOCOPI, the Colombian Association of Teachers of English. The journal is indexed in the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Latindex, Redalyc, SciELO Colombia, and Publindex-Minciencias, classified in **category B**.

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Papers must not exceed 7000 words, including the abstract, key words, footnotes, references, and annexes. Please indicate at the beginning of the manuscript your total number of words. The manuscript should be saved as a Word document, double-spaced, Times Roman 12, and with all margins at least three centimeters. Do not write your name or biodata in the article. Manuscripts should contain an abstract of no more than 250 words and a list of key words in alphabetical order (no more than five). The abstract and the key words should be both in Spanish and English.

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187

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  Harlow, H. F. (1958). Biological and biochemical basis of behavior. In D. C. Spencer (Ed.), *Symposium on interdisciplinary research* (pp. 239-252). University of Wisconsin Press.

Journal Citations

- Reference in the text
  About coloniality, Colombian authors have expressed their voice, "This type of coloniality has been perpetuated until our times and it is perceived in the sociocultural expressions of the modern experience of individuals" (Nuñez Pardo, 2020, p. 115).

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  Nuñez Pardo, A. (2020). Inquiring into the coloniality of knowledge, power, and being in EFL textbooks. *HOW, 27*(2), 113-133.

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American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *APAStyle.org: Electronic references.* http://www.apastyle.org/manual/index.aspx

Conference Presentations

Rodríguez, M., Cárdenas M. L., & Aldana, C. (2008). *The design of Alex virtual courses: Challenges and implications for ELT* [PowerPoint Slides]. Plenary Session 8 at ASOCOPI Conference, Tunja, 2008.

Unpublished Master's Thesis

Ochoa, M. (2004). *Meaning negotiation in EFL project work: How students express themselves and interact with others* [Unpublished master's dissertation]. Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.

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189

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190

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191